



The Episcopal Church
Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music
Addressing General Convention Resolution 2009-C056, *Liturgies for Blessing*

**Resources for General Convention Deputies:
An Overview**

October 2011

Introduction

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music is continuing to share information, invite discussion, and gather feedback about its work on General Convention Resolution 2009-C056. This Overview and related materials are intended to inform diocesan deputies and others throughout the Church about the Commission's work related to blessing same-gender relationships, as well as the Commission's intentions for presenting the resources developed to the 2012 General Convention. Following is information about:

- The Commission's timeline for releasing resources
- The resolutions that the Commission is planning to present at the 2012 General Convention
- The Commission's plans for making presentations at the nine provincial synod meetings
- Educational materials that are available now for use by deputies and others throughout the Church

These materials are intended to invite the Church to engage the Commission's work regarding same-gender blessings. Our approach is not to advocate for any position, but rather to invite open dialogue from many perspectives. We believe this will allow us all to hear the Holy Spirit with the most clarity.

Timeline for Final Resources

The Commission has completed its work on developing resources for blessing same-gender relationships and has turned those resources over to the General Convention Office, which is preparing them, along with other General Convention materials, for release to the deputies and the wider Church. The Commission has requested that the General Convention Office make the Blessings Project resources available by March 1, 2012.

Resolutions

The Commission is planning to present two resolutions to the 2012 General Convention:

- **A resolution addressing Resolution 2009-C056, Liturgies for Blessing.** This resolution will ask General Convention to:
 - Commend the Commission's resources regarding blessing same-gender relationships for study and use during the next triennial

- Authorize the liturgy of blessing for trial use, under the direction of the diocesan bishop or ecclesiastical authority
 - Allow bishops, especially those in dioceses in civil jurisdictions with legal recognition of same-gender relationships, to provide generous pastoral response to members of the Church, including adaptation of the liturgy
 - Charge the Commission to review the materials, inviting responses from throughout the Church, and report back to the 2015 General Convention
- **A resolution regarding the study of marriage.** This resolution will ask General Convention to authorize and fund a task force to identify and explore biblical, theological, historical, liturgical, and canonical dimensions of marriage. During its work on Resolution 2009-C056, the Commission was often asked: What is a blessing? What is a marriage? What is the difference for the Church? Legal, social, and cultural changes regarding marriage are ongoing, so the whole Church would benefit from such intentional work. General Convention called for such study several times over the last 80 years, yet little action was taken.

Provincial Synod Presentations

We hope to have members of the Commission and the Blessings Project Task Groups make a formal presentation at each provincial synod's pre-General Convention meeting for deputies and bishops. The presentation will allow each deputation to:

- Engage the theological and liturgical work of the Commission in response to Resolution 2009-C056
- Understand the legal and canonical issues regarding same-gender blessings
- Discuss the educational and pre-blessing preparation resources presented as part of the Commission's report
- Understand the intent of the draft resolutions the Commission will bring to the Convention

We are working with representatives of each province to tailor our presentation to meet their gathering's particular schedule and logistics.

Additional Resources

To support the introduction of the materials related to blessing same-gender relationships to The Episcopal Church, we have developed the following resources for use in your diocese:

- **Educational Materials for Diocesan Meetings of Deputies**

These materials are intended to help your deputation engage the preliminary work of the Commission and two of its primary documents on theology and liturgy. They are organized into five sessions:

- A. Understanding Resolution 2009-C056 and the Commission's Work
- B. Understanding the History: How We Got Here
- C. Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationships
- D. Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials

E. Exploring the Complexity of Civil and Canon Law

We hope that deputations will arrive at General Convention with a thorough understanding of the Commission's work and report, so the time there will not be about clarifying the material and resolutions, but discussing the merits of the work for the future mission and ministry of the Church.

- **Helping Dioceses Understand Resolution C056**

These materials are intended for use at your diocesan convention but can also be used by congregations. Included are outlines and PowerPoint presentations for three ways to engage the work of the Commission:

- A. Understanding Resolution 2009-C056
- B. Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationships
- C. Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials

The approach is to open discussion about the topics, encouraging storytelling and providing an opportunity for feedback.

- **Engaging the Church in the 21st Century**

We will use the same-gender blessings area of the Commission blog, the email distribution list for deputies who attended the Atlanta Church-wide Consultation, and other electronic means to post materials and invite feedback. This will be a "stepped process," starting with the preliminary material you have here and adding material as it is approved. The blog is located here:

<http://liturgyandmusic.wordpress.com/category/resources-for-same-gender-blessings/>