

Communion Across Difference Task Force: Minutes of March 19-21, 2019 Meeting

The initial meeting of the Communion Across Difference Task Force was held on March 19-21 at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Chicago.

Those in attendance included:

Co-conveners: *John Bauerschmidt and Susan Russell*

Members: *Isaiah Shaneequa Brokenleg, Fred Ellis, Thomas Ely, Miguel Escobar, Scott Garno, Anna Haeffner, Jordan Hylden, Moises Quezada Mota, Tanya Wallace and Christopher Wells.*

Absent with regret were:

Gregory Brewer and Mary Gray-Reeves

Tuesday, March 19:

The task force gathered for an initial introductory session on Tuesday evening, March 19.

The agenda included:

- Brief introductions
- Reading through our enabling resolution (2018-A227) [Appendix A]
- Responding to the question “What calls you to the work of implementing Resolution A227” ... defined as: seeking “a lasting path forward for mutual flourishing consistent with this Church’s polity and the 2015 “Communion across Difference” statement of the House of Bishops, affirming:
 - (1) the clear decision of General Convention that Christian marriage is a covenant between two people, of the same sex or of the opposite sex,
 - (2) General Convention’s firm commitment to make provision for all couples asking to be married in this Church to have access to authorized liturgies; and also affirming
 - (3) the indispensable place that the minority who hold to this Church’s historic teaching on marriage have in our common life, whose witness the Church needs.

Wednesday, March 20:

The task force was grateful for the presence of GCO Executive Officer **Michael Barlowe** who spent time reflecting on the scope of the work ahead and answering clarifying questions.

After lengthy and extremely fruitful discussion, the collaborative work of the task force focused on two output goals for this initial meeting:

- Coming to consensus on a definition of the term “mutual flourishing” which is foundational to the lasting path forward our enabling resolution calls us to seek.
- The creation of a process to encourage and equip members of the Episcopal Church to participate in conversations across difference that will model mutual flourishing and build up the Body of Christ for its work in the world.

The task force broke into two working groups: one to craft a draft definition and one to draft a reflection process.

Thursday, March 21

The task force adopted a working definition of “mutual flourishing” [Appendix B] and spent the rest of the morning experiencing a “trial run” of the reflection process created by the curriculum working group.

Before adjournment the task force agreed on the following action items:

- Release the adopted definition of mutual flourishing in our press release to the Church
- Request the GCO consider funding an additional (3rd) incarnational meeting in the fall of 2019 to continue to build on the good work begun in Chicago;
- Commit to refine the reflection process during Easter Season and create a system for focus groups to use it throughout the church;
- Schedule ZOOM meetings to continue the work moving forward.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Reverend Canon Susan Russell
Diocese of Los Angeles

Appendix A: [Resolution 2018-A227]

A227 Communion Across Difference

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention direct the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies to appoint jointly a Task Force on Communion across Difference, consisting of not more than 14 people, who represent the diversity in this Church including members from countries other than the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That half of the members appointed hold that marriage is a “covenant between a man and a woman” (BCP, 422), half of whom hold that marriage is a “covenant between two people” (Resolution 2018-A085), in the presence of God, and that all of those appointed seek a pathway toward mutual flourishing in The Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force seek a lasting path forward for mutual flourishing consistent with this Church’s polity and the 2015 “Communion across Difference” statement of the House of Bishops (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/mind-house-bishops-statement-‘communion-across-difference’>), affirming:

- (1) the clear decision of General Convention that Christian marriage is a covenant between two people, of the same sex or of the opposite sex,
- (2) General Convention’s firm commitment to make provision for all couples asking to be married in this Church to have access to authorized liturgies; and also affirming
- (3) the indispensable place that the minority who hold to this Church’s historic teaching on marriage have in our common life, whose witness the Church needs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force consult widely with members of this Church who represent its diversity of cultural background, age, race, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, particularly its members in countries other than the United States; and also with representatives reflecting the diversity of views and voices of the Anglican Communion, our full-communion ecumenical partners, and those churches with whom we carry on ecumenical dialogues; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force report and make recommendations to the 80th General Convention, ending its term at that time except by further action of General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$75,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Appendix B: [Definition of “Mutual Flourishing”]

The General Convention Task Force on Communion Across Difference is charged with the task of “*seeking a lasting path forward for mutual flourishing*”¹ in The Episcopal Church. Our understanding of mutual flourishing includes:

- To grow together in mutual love, affection and trust, recognizing our differences.
- To honor the polity of The Episcopal Church and the authority of the General Convention.
- To respect the dignity of one another as we engage the challenging work of discernment and transformation, so that all members, faith communities and dioceses of The Episcopal Church may experience an equal, indispensable and unqualified place and voice in the shared Body of Christ.
- To speak and listen to one another and strive, wherever wounds may exist, to do all in our power to labor together toward reconciliation, walking together in the way of love so that God’s reconciling mission may flourish.
- To pray without ceasing for one another and for God’s grace to guide us more deeply into loving relationships.

Adopted by the General Convention Task Force on Communion Across Difference at our March 19-21, 2019 meeting.

¹ From General Convention Resolution A227: *Resolved*, That the Task Force seek a lasting path forward for mutual flourishing consistent with this Church’s polity and the 2015 “Communion across Difference” statement of the House of Bishops (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/mind-house-bishops-statement-‘communion-across-difference’>), affirming (1) the clear decision of General Convention that Christian marriage is a covenant between two people, of the same sex or of the opposite sex, (2) General Convention’s firm commitment to make provision for all couples asking to be married in this Church to have access to authorized liturgies; and also affirming (3) the indispensable place that the minority who hold to this Church’s historic teaching on marriage have in our common life, whose witness the Church needs.....