

Task Force on Communion Across Difference

January 30, 2020 | Zoom Meeting

All members of the Task Force were present for the January 30th meeting held via Zoom. An initial glitch with translation was solved when Mary Gray-Reeves volunteered to translate via iPhone for Bishop Moises. We are grateful to Bishop Mary for her translation gifts, to Bishop Moises for his grace and patience and to the General Convention Office for their expression of regret at the calendaring error and promise to make sure translation is available moving forward.

The meeting began with a check-in and welcome to our newest member Megan Allen (Austin, Texas) appointed to fill the unexpired term of Shaneequa Brokenleg who has assumed new responsibilities as the Episcopal Church's Staff Officer for Racial Reconciliation.

Items for Review

John Bauerschmidt led us in reviewing our charge from our enabling resolution (2018-A227) and the Definition of Mutual Flourishing the Task Force adopted as a tool for living out that charge:

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 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

Our Definition of Mutual Flourishing - adopted at the March 2019 meeting of the Task Force

- 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.

Items for Discussion/Reflection

Report from VTS "When Churches in Communion Disagree" Consultation -- led by Tom Ely.

Those in attendance at the consultation from the task force included Jordan Hylden and Christopher Wells along with three of our bishops – Tom Ely, John Bauerschmidt and Greg Brewer. Appreciation for the collegial nature of the gathering was expressed by several in attendance. Of concern to a number of members of the task force was the lack of diversity of those invited, specifically the presence of only two identified members of the LGBTQ community. Multiple documents from the consultation were shared

on the extranet and commended to the task force members. Organizers are considering a follow up gathering which would be more broadly diverse.

Report from Diocese of Dallas by Fred Ellis & Jordan Hylden

The ongoing work of communion across difference continues in the Diocese of Dallas including plans to introduce the “Mutual Flourishing” exercise developed by the task force. *(A reminder that the exercise is formatted into a handout entitled “An Invitation from the Task Force on Communion Across Difference” and available in both English and Spanish.)*

Report from doctrine/polity/liturgy sub-group by Fred Ellis, Mary Gray-Reeves & Jordan Hylden

The sub-group met via conference call and shared their conversation exploring the issues of doctrine, polity and liturgy as related to our work of communion across difference. There were differences of perspective expressed on what is and what is not within the scope of the work of this task force and consensus that this was important work we would continue to do together as we move forward toward developing our Report for the Blue Book.

Action Items:

In response to the discussion on expanding distribution of the “Invitation from the Task Force on Communion Across Difference” handout developed for the September House of Bishops Meeting:

- John Bauerschmidt will encourage its use by other members of the HoB.
- Susan Russell will request HoD President Gay Jennings to commend its use in an upcoming House of Deputies newsletter.

Next Meetings:

- A Doodle poll will go out to determine the best time for another Zoom meeting in late February/early March.
- Our face-to-face meeting is scheduled April 21-23, 2020 in St. Louis

The meeting was adjourned after a closing prayer by co-convenor John Bauerschmidt

Respectfully submitted,
(The Reverend Canon) Susan Russell
Task Force on Communion Across Difference co-convenor