

Q15

Since December 2015 the Episcopal Church has made marriage liturgies equally available to both opposite and same sex couples. Can you share a personal story of the impact this has had on you, your congregation or your diocese?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 108

No impact

1/3/2017 1:08 PM

No impact

1/3/2017 12:15 PM

We celibate the fringe in the relationship world. I believe we have turned our back on the core of what makes up the church population, and it is reflected declining attendance and membership. The church now sees more funerals than marriages. Marriage and children raised by a married couple is the corner stone of success in the US, yet rarely if every have I seen this celebrated. Well except at my grandson's Baptist Church which is growing and attacking young families with children. Marriage and children raised by a married couple is the corner stone of success in the US. Churches have showers for unmarried women expecting children, this gives a large degree of acceptability to the beginning of a disaster for that child. Of course I bring this up and I instantly get "Oh No this will be different". Which ethnic group has the lowest rate of poverty? Asian. Which group has the highest rate of poverty? American American. Asian out of wedlock birth rate? 17%, African American 72%? The Poverty Cure: Get Married Black children bear the brunt of single parenthood's harms. Why is this problem never addressed? In case you think me a bigot, I work with homosexuals, and transgender, I share meals with and share after work activities with them. It is not up to me to judge these individuals and they so not judge me because I do not carry their banners. The country is sick of this celebration of fringes groups and that gave the results in the last election. If you find my post offensive, I am sorry, but I believe I am following the teachings of Christ.

11/22/2016 12:23 PM

A family I grew up with in the church left, because of the church's decision to open and affirming. I personally agree with the church's stance on gay marriage. I know many people, who grew up feeling ostracized by society, because of who they choose to love. I'm very happy to be part of a church that embraces all people the way God does. I hope for the day when gay children can grow up without any knowledge of feeling persecuted, but loved and welcomed for who they are.

11/18/2016 5:39 PM

Seems to be quite open and accepting of them.

11/18/2016 12:16 AM

And I have not darkened the door since

11/8/2016 4:46 PM

We are so very grateful for the support and affirmation from the Church for our relationship and marriage. After 30 years together, the opportunity to legally marry in the eyes of the state was certainly very welcomed by us, especially as we look ahead to our retirement and senior years. As we were starting to plan our wedding, our priest (Father Joshua Hoover) at St. James, Birmingham (MI) approached us and made it very clear that he would be honored to officiate and work with as planned the liturgy. To have the support both from our local parish

and the larger Church was overwhelming and so very much appreciated.

11/8/2016 12:10 PM

It has been wonderful to join loved ones in same gender relationships celebrate the joy of their union

11/6/2016 9:36 AM

While we haven't yet been able to solemnize our relationship in the church, having the church's approval for our marriage is huge for us. There are many forces in the world that tell us our relationship isn't valid... our love isn't real... our marriage is a sham. Having this validation strengthens us and reaffirms our commitment to religion. There was a long period of time when I felt God didn't love or care about me, because I was living a life I thought to be sinful and no matter what I did, I couldn't erase or change my feelings. I believe God made me to be the person I am. I believe it is imperative that the church stand up for its LGBTQ brothers and sisters. Making the marriage liturgies available is a powerful way of affirming the inherent worth and dignity of these individuals.

11/5/2016 11:42 PM

My husband and I feel stuck between a rock and a hard place. We are both retired clergy, canonically resident of the Diocese of Colorado but residing in the Diocese of Florida where we are licensed to officiate and have found a wonderful church home at St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Jacksonville. The rector uses both of us on a regular basis to preach, teach, and celebrate. The congregation is a lively predominately African American group of people who understand the impact of the gospel in terms of justice and equality as well as being a people committed to prayer and one another. They have welcomed us with open arms and if it were not for them we would not renew our licenses to officiate. Bishop O'Neill, our bishop has given permission for clergy to officiate at same sex marriages, however, Bishop Howard has refused to let the clergy use the liturgies for same sex marriage and even though we participate in the diocese we have yet to see any provisions made for allowing same sex couples to be married other than referring them to Bishop Henderson, an assisting bishop. We have been approached by a same sex couple in our neighborhood who have been in a committed relationship for ten years about officiating at their wedding. However, due to the fact that we do not want to jeopardize our relationship with St. Philip's we have had to refuse.

11/4/2016 8:19 AM

I will never participate in a "marriage" ceremony for same-sex people.

11/3/2016 10:28 PM

I think it is a good idea, but have had no personal connection with it. (Incidentally, our congregation did go through the preparatory materials on homosexual relationships years ago when it was available, and it was helpful.)

11/3/2016 10:06 PM

I have seen no impact on my congregation or diocese other than a general acceptance of all marriages. One of the reasons I belong to the Episcopal church!

11/3/2016 5:22 PM

It's great to be in Christian fellowship with friends, including, clergy, of both opposite and same sex couples who have had their relationships blessed in the Church.

11/3/2016 3:27 PM

We have a number of same sex couples in our church, although the majority of people are heterosexual (at least as far as I know). Several years ago we had a reconciliation weekend concerning same sex marriage, bringing together members of our congregation who supported the idea, those who rejected it, and those who were on the fence. I was one of those on the fence. Moderating the weekend were individuals from other parishes, some of whom were practicing homosexuals. One of them, a woman, stayed overnight with my

husband and me. I think she was the first lesbian that I had ever met and had conversation with. During the weekend, our priest said that he knew of several homosexual couples, both men and women, who were members of our church. He said, "I don't think you know who they are, but I do, and they are welcome." Several years later two men started attending our church, and were an openly gay couple. One of them was baptized at the Easter Vigil, and both started singing in the choir. The next year they were married in a ceremony at the home of our Music Director, officiated by one of our Assistant Pastors, and attended by our Priest and his wife. The couple is now an established part of our church, and one has just finished a three year term on the Vestry. It took me a while, but I can now accept same sex marriage.

11/3/2016 3:08 PM

This decision has had a large impact on me personally through the crisis of conscience it has aroused in my husband, who wishes to become a priest but has an objection to equating Marriage with all forms of covenant unions. Neither of us is opposed to gay marriage within secular society; we celebrated the recent Supreme Court decision as a step in the right direction toward making our society more just. However, we have both been formed as Christians to consider marriage in light of several foundational principles that form part of a holistic theology of God, creation, and human dignity, and our experience of the Episcopal Church thus far does not seem to bear this theology out. We joined the Episcopal Church before the decision to open the Sacrament of Marriage to gay couples was made. From the beginning of our experience in the Episcopal Church, we have found what was already in the Book of Common Prayer regarding covenant unions to be of great value as something equal in dignity to, but apart from, sacramental marriage - but it did not seem that our fellow Episcopalians, or the Episcopal Church as a body, were aware of (or, if aware, in agreement with) the good that was already present in the Prayer Book. We made our marriage vows according to the Rites of the Roman Church, which included a provision for the welcoming of children and a commitment to raise the faith. I have meditated many times on the meaning of those vows since becoming Episcopalian. The responsibility to grow the Church through the bearing and raising of children is an awesome one; God has literally given us charge over young, vulnerable souls, with the duty to teach them as we have been taught to walk with Christ. Over and above our duty to help grow the Church alongside God - which, frankly, could be accomplished through adoption as well as procreation, and therefore could belong to any number of covenant unions, not just those where procreation is biologically possible - is the strong and sound teaching on human dignity that I experienced in the Roman Church. It is no secret that the Roman Church is "pro-life," but as a well-formed Catholic, I learned that the RC Church's teaching on life comes from a greater understanding of human dignity: All people are formed in the image and likeness of God and belong to God as His children, no matter their stage of life or development, the choices they have made, the identity they claim. The same teaching that informs the Roman Church's stance on bioethics also informs its stance on affirming the dignity of homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered persons, and while the Roman Church may not be as "progressive" as others in abandoning any sort of moral authority when it comes to sexual ethics, the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church at least bears out its understanding across many and diverse social issues with consistency. On the other hand, in my experience, the Episcopal Church has no such unifying theology. Marriage - especially gay marriage - seems to be one of only a few "hot-button," culture wars issues on which the Episcopal Church seems willing to take a stand, and I have experienced it doing so within no particular theological context. Apart from some vague notions of "justice," "fairness," and "equality" - which are not necessarily the same thing in a fallen world (that is, a world that simply is not as it should be) - the Episcopal Church's stand on gay marriage appears to be nothing more than a political position born of

the polarized climate of American politics. Perhaps this is why my husband and I have found it impossible to carry on a meaningful conversation with those who hold a position different from ours on gay marriage within the Church. We have had plenty of great exchanges of ideas with others who seem to share our views or something like them, but we are not interested in self-segregating into a community of like-minded people. We want to be able to disagree civilly on this - and are increasingly finding that we can't, but not for lack of trying on our part. I strongly believe that our goal in "all being one," as Christ prayed, is not conformity, but harmony - and as any student of music could tell you, it takes the right amount of tension to create harmony. A diversity of perspectives holding each other in tension will make us stronger, not weaker; yet, for a tradition that claims to stand for allowing individuals to come to their own conclusions through careful study and with a well-formed conscience, I have found the Episcopal Church to be intolerant of a diversity of perspective when it comes to gay marriage. My husband and I are not anti-gay. We do not subscribe to the vitriolic rhetoric of those who claim to be "disenfranchised" White people or "persecuted" Christians within (an unjust) society that still treats Whiteness and Christianity as normative, and therefore, superior; rather, this rhetoric is as hateful and appalling to us as it is to our more theologically liberal brethren. But because our notions of marriage are rooted in a strong understanding of sexual morality (a priority of my husband's) and the sanctity of human life, particularly the creation of human life (my own priority), we find ourselves branded bigots, dismissed as "papists" (in the pejorative sense), or simply afraid to speak our minds to other Episcopalians. We also don't necessarily like that we feel compelled by conscience to come to the conclusions on gay marriage that we have - namely that within the Church, gay marriage is something necessarily apart from Sacramental Marriage, albeit a calling of equal dignity and validity; separate from, but equal to, just doesn't seem to be fair, considering the painful legacy of that "separate but equal" language within American history. This is not an issue that he and I can approach with complacency; rather, we feel constantly called toward conversion and further discernment. We struggle with gay marriage and are challenged by it - and I believe this is the way it should be. I don't think faith exists to confirm us in what we already believe, in the politics we already hold. If faith isn't challenging us to reexamine our pre-conceived notions, then I question how much "faith" we really have. Above all, I believe the Church should be seeking to heal these painful divisions, not to reinforce them. My husband and I have not experienced much humility on the part of the prevailing (pro-gay-marriage) culture within the Episcopal Church, nor has either of us experienced anyone on the pro side sincerely seeking to find out where we are coming from, or to take us seriously. What we have experienced is a lot of name-calling, offhand remarks, and other behaviors that seek to undermine and "otherize" those of differing viewpoints. If the life and works of Christ have taught us anything, is it not to see Him in those whom we consider "other?" And yet, we as Christians seem to be experts at anathematizing those with whom we do not identify. On the subject of gay marriage, I hope my husband and I have seen the humanity in those with whom we disagree. We are simply waiting for our fellow Episcopalians to return the courtesy.

11/3/2016 1:03 PM

It has made us more aware that love has no gender.

11/3/2016 11:25 AM

I have served as an LGBTQ ally for the past 36 years in 4 different Diocese. The equality of marriage liturgies is a visible sign and the reality of an answer to prayer. In my past work as a licensed marriage and family therapist in California and Colorado, I counseled gay & straight couples and individuals. I have always believed God created every human being in the image of God and every couple to reflect God's love to the world. I've had the great joy using the marriage liturgy for a gay couple in my current parish and experienced this as a Sacrament.

11/3/2016 11:20 AM

I have not participated in any same sex liturgies in the Episcopal Church but I have participated in other denominations and the love and celebration are the same as in heterosexual marriages. So proud that the Episcopal Church has opened this option to same sex couples. Thank you.

11/3/2016 11:06 AM

It has depreciated the meaning of the word marriage. Many of those of us who are organists have had to refuse to play for these marriages as they are a farce. A marriage is that which occurs between a man and a woman. Nothing less.

11/3/2016 3:18 AM

Our church was the first in the diocese to celebrate the joining of same-sex couples. We lost one member. Sad to see her go, but her husband still comes. Since then, there have been many more such marriages, and now the whole congregation sees no difference between the liturgies.

11/2/2016 11:01 PM

This has been a positive movement within the church! After all, we are ALL God's children...even Paul says "there is no male, no female"....and also, we are not to be so darn judgemental! When the 3 bishops from the state of NC put together a pastoral letter concerning this particular issue, the letter was not even mentioned in my parish! When confronted, the former pastor said he didn't want to make waves. I don't recall in any place within the gospels that Jesus acted or stated that he didn't want to make waves! If Christians are not to speak out for social justice in this world, who will do so???? Bishop Michael Currey says we should all be "crazy Christians"...and he is so right! But I do not see clergy in this diocese speaking out on social issues, or becoming involved, as I do see with other denominations. We cannot afford to be the "frozen chosen" before God and our fellow mankind! We are given 2 commandments: love God and love our neighbors....nowhere are we given the command (or the right) to judge our neighbors...that is reserved for God alone. I now lead a hands-on lay ministry...I "do" ministry on a daily basis with persons from all faiths, all backgrounds. My staff and volunteers are dedicated to simply doing God's work in our ministry. This is not a job...it is ministry in a very pure form serving over 450 families monthly. This could have been a beacon of Episcopal ministry, but it is not. We are very ecumenical in our make-up, and it is a true blessing for me to serve in my position. God is good in spite of all that has happened.

11/2/2016 8:43 AM

Well..... that decision felt like it was long overdue! Living a good deal of our life together in Vermont, we'd had many years of Civil Union ceremonies. One of us was on the diocesan Standing Committee when Civil Unions became legal, and supported our bishop (Mary Adelia McLeod) in allowing the very first Civil Union in the Cathedral. It took a long time for the rest of the church to catch up.

11/2/2016 8:34 AM

The issue of homosexuality/same sex relationships has been an ongoing discussion/subject of controversy in the Episcopal Church since my childhood (three decades!) and one that took far too much time and energy away from other topics of importance. I am hopeful that with the marriage liturgy now being equally available to both opposite and same sex couples that the Episcopal Church can now move on and refocus its energy on other issues.

11/1/2016 8:48 PM

Unfortunately, we are unable to have a complete marriage ceremony and register with the state because we are both on Social Security and if the government finds we are married then our income will be reduced to half of what it is now. Otherwise, our clergy and members

are very supportive of our relationship.

11/1/2016 6:58 PM

When we renewed our vows at our 50th anniversary we used the vows from the same sex liturgy. We liked the idea of the solidarity with our same-sex friends and we also liked the words themselves.

11/1/2016 4:56 PM

Most people celebrate this. It has not caused any noticeable conflict but has brought those from a neighboring diocese that does not agree.

11/1/2016 4:02 PM

It has made me think a lot about relationships. I have had to really discern how same-sex couples should be included in marriage. What I have come to learn is that it does not matter what the sex of the partners is in the marriage, but the relationship and love they share and the desire to commit to a life-long partnership which includes God.

11/1/2016 3:50 PM

It has been my privilege to officiate at the marriages of two same-sex couples using the authorized Blessing liturgy. For the couples involved, this was a wonderful grace, and they still get excited and emotional (in a good way) when they celebrate anniversaries. Our congregation has been supportive and happy as well.

11/1/2016 3:49 PM

We were one of the first LGBT weddings conducted in NY State as it wasn't legal in Pennsylvania. Many of the attendees were Catholic or other religions. And they thought the service was much nicer than the standard wedding service. It showed more of a solid committed relationship in regard to the language of the liturgy

11/1/2016 3:22 PM

I was privileged to write the draft of A054, and proud to preside at the first gay marriage in Europe.

11/1/2016 1:18 PM

We are seriously considering being married within the Episcopal Church soon, in part because we feel so welcome now that it is "legal" for us to be married. We look upon this as a true celebration and would look forward to having our marriage within the church rather than simply in the courthouse or performed by a judge. We are both very spiritual and very much at home in the Episcopal Church (though not yet full members), and cannot think of being married outside of the church and a sacred space.

11/1/2016 12:52 PM

This has not yet had an impact on me or my congregation, other than we are grateful for this decision. We are very open and accepting of all God's children. In my diocese, some are not as accepting of this change, but I don't personally know anyone who has had either a positive or negative experience as a result of this decision.

10/30/2016 9:40 PM

Yes. It has caused damage to the fiber of this conservative diocese. Causing doubt of your leadership and trustability. Who can say that JESUS is not the only way and the bible is not the only word of God. You know that the Bible gives no authority for man to change the will of God. Stop it. Repent for your grievous sin against Christianity.

10/28/2016 3:41 PM

I still haven't found a loophole in the Bible that says gay marriage is ok. I don't perform these marriages. We have many friends who are either in committed relationships or are legally married who are gay. They understand my feelings and are very supportive of my commitment. And it is easy for us to love each other just the way we are. Many go to my church. And they are loved and welcomed. They are never made to feel as outcasts. I still

counsel with one guy from pulse. She never had a priest who love him just the way he was. He knows that I love him. Love is the way to break down barriers. Then let God handle the rest.

10/28/2016 3:14 PM

None. We do not condone nor celebrate same sex "marriages."

10/28/2016 1:51 PM

We have attended the same-gender Episcopal marriages of our friends and have found the experience to be very moving and meaningful.

10/28/2016 1:17 PM

My sister is gay and has been partnered a long time. I have wanted her to have the type of security (financial) offered to married couples. I am so glad that they can make health care and other decisions for each other. My sisters spouse is a loved member of our family. My congregation has for many years refused doing marriages until all could be married. So after this ruling, marriages are taking place in our church instead of the court house followed by a blessing in the church. Our diocese is very liberal and our bishops have been strong advocates for all people to have the right to be married to the person they love. Our diocese had for a time, the first lesbian bishop in the church. The marriage liturgies provided tools for us to honor their marriage.

10/28/2016 1:10 PM

Negative. This has only served to further divide people into camps for and against while dismissing scripture and tradition while making a mockery out of reason. Love for all people, yes. Respecting the dignity of every human being, absolutely. Calling sin righteousness foolish, unloving, and disrespecting of the one we really should be concerned about. We should support the first six promises of our Baptismal Covenant without neglecting the last two. We have managed to exalt the last two regardless of what it might mean for the first six. We all have room to grow and be challenged. Why don't we go back to the basics and let God lead us from there.

10/28/2016 12:48 PM

none

10/28/2016 12:01 PM

It has allowed for maximum pastoral mobility in counseling pre-marriage couples. No longer is there a double standard for heterosexual and same-sex couples. It gives an advantage to the Episcopal Church in being to say unequivocally that we bless and marry ALL couples who meet our standards of pre-marriage preparation. I recently had an opposite sex couple (who were fairly new to the Episcopal Church) use the liturgy originally fashioned for same-sex couples. Likewise I have had a same sex couple (one of whom grew up in a traditional Episcopal Church) choose the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (2). So it has been a great resource for me as a Priest to be able to offer all three liturgies to couples who come for the blessing of the Church.

10/27/2016 10:27 PM

There is a significant number of people who do not believe that tradition or the Bible supports marriage between two people of the same sex. It may be appropriate for civil rights, but dubious for the church. I know a priest whose vestry asked him to leave because he would not perform a same sex marriage. He was willing to have another priest officiate, but that wasn't enough. I know a nominee for the Episcopate who was very popular, until he said that he wouldn't perform a same sex "marriage," even though he would permit his clergy to do so. People speak to me privately, but won't speak in public for fear of being labeled as homophobic.

10/27/2016 7:20 PM

I was privileged to officiate at the marriage of a same sex couple who had already lived together for 38 years.

10/27/2016 6:53 PM

In both of the stories I have told I felt that I was living out the "inclusiveness" of our Church that I have been preaching for almost 50 years. The stories were, in my view, a proclamation of The Gospel.

10/27/2016 6:33 PM

Priests here have performed a number of same gender marriages. This has directly brought new people into the Church and has caused LGBTQ members to feel that they and their relationships are now afforded equal dignity. We have lost no congregations. You could count the members we have lost in one hand. And we have gained new straight members in part because of our respect and inclusion.

10/27/2016 6:19 PM