

A Memorial to the 79th General Convention Supporting A085: Trial Use of Marriage Liturgies

To the Deputies and Bishops of the Episcopal Church assembled at the 79th General Convention:

We write in response to Resolution B012, "Marriage Rites for the Whole Church," aware as well of Resolution A085, "Trial Use of Marriage Liturgies," proposed by the Task Force on the Study of Marriage.

Forty-two years ago, General Convention declared, "homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church" (Resolution 1976-A069). We have an opportunity at this General Convention to take a decisive step toward making this a reality by adopting legislation that would add gender-neutral marriage liturgies to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

Resolution B012, which calls for an unlimited extension of trial use of these liturgies, would continue to relegate gender-neutral marriage liturgies to second-class status, sending a message to LGBT Christians that they do not in fact have a full and equal claim upon the pastoral care and concern of the Church.

Such a message hampers our proclamation of the Gospel.

Resolution A085, in addition to setting in motion the process for adding gender-neutral marriage liturgies to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, would change "Concerning the Service" of Marriage and the Catechism, as well as the proper prefaces for marriage, to state that marriage is a covenant between two people. This language would create a broad tent encompassing different views, including those who believe that marriage is available to any couple, regardless of sexual orientation, and those who believe that the two people must be one man and one woman.

We urge General Convention to adopt for trial use all the revisions of the Book of Common Prayer proposed in Resolution A085.

In addition to providing a clear path toward full marriage equality, General Convention has the opportunity to ensure that every couple that wants to be married in their home church by their priest will be able to do so. Resolution B012 claims to do so by calling for use of "Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight" (DEPO). The House of Bishops has provided DEPO in various forms since 2004, yet in the eight United States dioceses where the bishop has not allowed couples to be married in their home parishes by their priest, none has utilized DEPO to provide this access. It is not clear from Resolution B012 what would be different in the coming triennium.

The June 28, 2018, statement from Bishops Provenzano, McConnell, and Knisely, who proposed and endorsed Resolution B012, cites the statement from some bishops of Province IX

that “the Ninth Province will have to learn how to walk alone” [if the Prayer Book is revised]. We note that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a decision in January 2018 requiring member states to enact marriage equality (“Inter-American Court: States Must Recognize Gender Identity, Same-Sex Marriage,” <http://tinyurl.com/inter-american-court>). When this decision is fully implemented, all dioceses in Province IX will have civil marriage equality in at least some portion of their jurisdiction. This means that Province IX, like the rest of The Episcopal Church, is confronted by a rapidly changing cultural landscape when it comes to marriage. We look forward to walking together as Episcopalians in Province IX live into a new legal reality.

The bishops also express concern about immigrant communities in the U.S. who might object to full marriage equality. We do not believe this correctly assesses the diverse and emerging reality our Church faces as we minister to the immigrants in our midst. Our context, in the Diocese of California, is diverse; our cities and our state as a whole are majority-minority in terms of race and ethnicity, and we are blessed by the presence among us of many immigrants from many cultures. We are a sanctuary diocese, committed to raising our voices and providing support for immigrants whose families and lives are under attack in the present time. We are also a diocese that overwhelmingly embraces our LGBT members, many of whom are also immigrants, and has welcomed their full inclusion in the sacramental life of our congregations and diocese. We know there are diverse views on marriage equality within all of our communities. We have seen growing support for civil and ecclesial marriage equality across all of our communities as marriage has become a possibility and a lived reality for our gay and lesbian neighbors and loved ones.

It is our fervent hope that our actions at this and future General Conventions will not divide the interests of our LGBT sisters and brothers from the needs of members of other minority groups in the Church and the communities we serve. In Resolution A085, we see significant accommodation for a diverse Church with a diversity of perspectives on marriage, and we believe this resolution will move us forward together.

While we recognize that this approach presents a difficult path for some, we hope that with continued engagement and sincere efforts at mutual understanding, we can continue to walk together as we address the needs of the whole Body of Christ, including those drawn into the life of the Church as they undertake one of the most important covenants of their lives.

Submitted in the love we all share in Christ Jesus,

The Bishop and Deputation of the Diocese of California:

The Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, Bishop of California
The Hon. Warren Wong, L1
Ms. Sarah Lawton, L2
Mr. Christopher Hayes, L3
Ms. Carolyn Gaines, L4
Ms. Anna Marie Hoos, L5

Ms. Diane Fitzgibbon, L6
Ms. Karma Quick-Panwala, L7
Mr. Ronald Hermanson, L8
The Rev. Eric Metoyer, C1
The Rev. Vanessa Glass, C2
The Rev. Merry Chan Ong, C3
The Rev. Hailey McKeefry Delmas, C4
The Rev. David Ota, C5
The Rev. Ruth Meyers, C6
The Rev. Sloane Larrimore, C7
The Rev. Br. Richard Edward Helmer, C8