

TASK FORCE ON COMMUNION ACROSS DIFFERENCE

Members

The Rt. Rev. John Bauerschmidt, Co-Chair	Tennessee, IV	2024
The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe, Co-Chair	Central New York, II	2024
The Rev. Kelli Joyce, Secretary	Arizona, VIII	2024
The Rev. Phyllis P. Bartle	Central Florida, IV	2024
The Rev. Gary Wm England	California, VIII	2024
The Rev. Canon Christine Faulstich	Texas, VII	2024
The Rev. Canon Jordan Hylden	Dallas, VII	2024
The Rev. Mark Michael	Washington, III	2024
Karen Perka	Maine, I	2024
The Rt. Rev. Bonnie Perry	Michigan, V	2024
The Rt. Rev. Moises Quezada Mota	Dominican Republic, IX	2024
Mr. Randy Winn	Springfield, V	2024
Ms. Julia Ayala Harris, Ex Officio	Oklahoma, VII	2024
The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Ex Officio	North Carolina, IV	2024

Mandate

2022- A056 Communion Across Difference

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention directs the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies to appoint a second Task Force on Communion Across Difference to continue the work started but limited by the COVID-19 pandemic, consisting of not more than 12 people, who represent the cultural, generational, racial, ethnic and theological diversity in the Church, including especially members from dioceses outside 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 hold that marriage is a “covenant between two people” in the presence of God (Resolution 2018-A085), 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 will seek to build on the Blue Book report of the previous triennium, continuing to 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 open to 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 our Church needs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force develop and publicize further tools for engaging the members of this Church in the substance of the Task Force on Communion Across Difference Blue Book Report to this Convention, including but not limited to videos documenting experiences across this Church that demonstrate positive examples of communion across difference, and materials that broaden the conversation beyond matters of human sexuality and marriage; 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 from 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 80th General Convention commends to dioceses, parishes, and churchwide staff the Conversation Tool created by the Task Force on Communion Across Difference included in the Supplemental Materials section of their Blue Book report to this Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force report and make recommendations to the 81th 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.

Summary of Work

The work of the Task Force on Communion Across Difference is centered around the mandate given to us by the 80th General Convention. We seek a lasting path forward for the mutual flourishing of all Episcopalians, amid our differing theological convictions about Christian marriage. We have been guided not only by a shared commitment to the pursuit of such a sustainable path forward, but also by three specific realities articulated in our mandate. We all recognize that General Convention has made a clear decision that marriage in the Episcopal Church is open to same-sex couples. We also recognize that General Convention has acted to ensure that all couples seeking to be married in the Episcopal Church have the opportunity to do so using authorized liturgies, in every diocese where same-sex marriage is provided for in civil law. Finally, we affirm that there is an indispensable place in our common life for members of this Church, now in the theological minority, who believe that Christian marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman.

All work toward the possibility of a healthy common life depends on the genuineness of a shared commitment to each other's well-being, in which all sides are willing to sacrifice at least some of their preferences, but in which no one is asked to sacrifice either conscience or dignity. Mutual flourishing is not the same as mere co-existence. We cannot accept a future in which we would essentially have two separate "churches" operating within their own silos - a larger one, progressive on the question of same-sex marriage, that makes up the majority of the Episcopal Church, and a smaller and isolated conservative one. Instead, we reaffirm the understanding of mutual flourishing offered by the first Task Force on Communion Across Difference in its Blue Book Report to the 80th General Convention. Mutual flourishing asks our willingness:

- 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.

We also recognize, however, the reality of past and present barriers to such mutual flourishing. We are not starting from a blank slate. Many of us have experienced rejection or mistreatment over the years. Solutions or pathways that might work in theory may be impossible in practice if there is not a

sufficient and shared desire to move toward relationships of trust and support, and to unite around areas of common belief and commitment. The pain of the past must not be papered over or dismissed, even as we seek a way forward to a new future of genuine communion across difference.

We are persuaded that safety is an essential prerequisite for healthy relationship and mutual flourishing. The history of past conflict means that such safety cannot simply be presumed; it must be actively pursued. Different people and communities will need different things in order to feel safe as we undertake this work, based on both their past experiences and current vulnerabilities. No policy or program can guarantee a way forward where everyone feels safe at all times, or where no vulnerability is required. Yet we believe that “perfect love casts out fear.” (1 John 4:18) Although courage, hard work, and time for the healing of old wounds will be necessary for us to feel consistently safe together, as far as possible, it is our shared desire that everyone be safe in our congregations, dioceses, and in the Episcopal Church as a whole.

Safety does not mean or require agreement, nor does it mean pretending that we think our disagreements are in some way unimportant. There are those on "both sides" who believe the other "side" is committing or endorsing serious sin. This is not a light matter. The only way forward that can promote mutual flourishing is one in which we are willing to acknowledge that it is possible for others to disagree with our own theological position in good faith, and to be genuinely seeking to love God and their neighbor, acting neither from animus and bigotry nor from any disregard for sexual ethics and the sanctity of Christian marriage.

We also note the importance of distinguishing between theological commitments and political positions. As Christians, our theological and political beliefs are neither wholly identical nor wholly disconnected. Our theology can shape our politics and our politics can shape our theology, and yet, knowing someone's theology of marriage is not the same as knowing their political position on marriage. A conservative position on the theological definition of Christian marriage can co-exist with a firm commitment to civil rights and legal protections for LGBTQ people. We note with appreciation, for example, the Communion Partners' public statement in November 2021 that they were “gravely concerned by proposed legislation criminalizing LGBTQ+ people in Ghana,”¹ and the unanimous statement of the House of Bishops in March of 2022, denouncing “legislative initiatives and governmental actions targeting trans children and their families.”²

In our own discussions, we were united in our appreciation of language taken from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's 2009 social statement on human sexuality, which emphasized that while there was significant theological disagreement among them regarding same-sex marriage, “this church is united on many critical issues. It opposes all forms of verbal or physical harassment and assault based on sexual orientation. It supports legislation and policies to protect civil rights and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public services. It has called upon congregations and members to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to advocate for their legal protection.”³ We, too, consider ourselves united on these critical issues.

Grounded in these shared principles, we have worked to understand current sources of conflict, fear, and pain that impede reconciliation and mutual flourishing, and to imagine alternative approaches that would allow for greater and healthier fellowship. Each of these approaches would require mutual compromise, but none of them would require compromise of conscience or dignity. We have structured our conversations around three major categories: Ordination and Clergy Deployment, Prayer Book and Liturgical Revision, and Common Life.

Ordination and Clergy Deployment

There is a shared concern among the members of our task force regarding the current state of access to the discernment process for ordained ministry and to search processes for employment. Although under the canons of the Episcopal Church no one should be categorically excluded from genuine access to such processes either for holding a theological position on marriage compatible with the one expressed in the catechism of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer or because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or marital status, such exclusion does appear to occur with some frequency. Nevertheless, the existence of such categorical exclusions is unlikely to be officially acknowledged by those with the authority to enact them. Even if no overt discrimination in the ordination process, call process, or acceptance of letters dimissory is evident, if a diocese intentionally discourages certain categories of people from entering those processes or sending letters dimissory, the discriminatory effect is the same.

In dioceses where there is little to no internal disagreement regarding same-gender marriage, this may not be an issue of major concern. However, the problem can be quite acute for parishes who affirm a theology of marriage that is not the same as that of their diocese or its bishop. Our work on this topic has focused on the principle of reciprocity, and seeks to find a way forward in which parishes throughout the Episcopal Church are meaningfully enabled to call a member of the clergy whose views on marriage are compatible with their own and to sponsor for genuine discernment of a call to ordination any individual in whom they perceive such a call. We see no pastoral or theological benefit in forcing any congregation to hire a priest whose theology of marriage is contrary to their own. In the case of the ordination process, we propose a system of partnerships between dioceses that would allow an aspirant whose theology of marriage is contrary to that of their diocese to engage in parish-level discernment in their home congregation, then continue the remainder of the ordination process in a companion diocese.

Prayer Book and Liturgical Revision

Our conversations about liturgical revision have centered around two primary topics. The first is the question of what marriage liturgies will be authorized for use in the future. For progressives, it is crucial that an inclusive marriage liturgy be approved via the process laid out in Article X of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church, and thereby be given “prayer book status.” For conservatives, the continuing authorization for use of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and its marriage liturgy is key. We do not

see these desires as mutually exclusive. The formal adoption of an inclusive marriage service as part of the prayer book can take place alongside continuing churchwide authorization of the 1979 marriage service for those who prefer it.

The second focus of our conversation has been the implications of revisions to the marriage service on the canonical definition of the doctrine of the Episcopal Church. The Book of Common Prayer is a defining standard of the doctrine to which all members of the clergy vow their loyalty, and it is an offense under Title IV of the Canons to hold and teach “publicly or privately, and advisedly, any Doctrine contrary to that held by the Church.” We believe that it is possible to authorize an inclusive marriage service at the prayer book level, and to produce new language for the catechism, in such a way that those who hold to the theology of marriage expressed in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer will not be in violation of their vows. Our hope is that revision of these texts will value expansiveness in its language. We also believe it is prudent to specify explicitly in Title IV’s canonical definition of doctrine that ordained persons who hold the theology of marriage expressed in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer have no reason to fear that this will become forbidden under the canons. Just as Episcopalians who hold widely diverging theologies of the Holy Eucharist can affirm the statements made about the Eucharist in the catechism, so too we hope that any future doctrinal definitions of marriage will be written to emphasize our points of agreement without making claims about the areas where we disagree.

Common Life

The topics discussed under the heading of Common Life are those matters that cannot be meaningfully addressed by legislative action on the part of General Convention, which nevertheless play a key role in determining the possibility of mutual flourishing and genuine relationship rather than mere co-existence. For example, a shared commitment to standards of pastoral care that reject conversion therapy and other attempts to change an individual’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a matter of great importance to many progressives, especially when considering the possibility that LGBTQ youth will be raised and nurtured in the faith in the context of theologically conservative Episcopal parishes. Similarly, we believe that transparency on the part of priests and parishes concerning their theology of marriage and human sexuality is crucial, so that LGBTQ individuals can make an informed decision when determining whether they wish to join a given community.

There may be situations in which a particular member of the clergy is unable to provide necessary pastoral counseling – for example, a priest who holds that marriage is only between a man and a woman may be unable to provide adequate pastoral care to an individual whose same-gender marriage is experiencing difficulty. In such cases we hope that Episcopal clergy will proactively seek out colleagues to whom they may refer individuals in need, so that all people might have access to pastoral care in our Church. Under no circumstances should any individual be denied pastoral care or access to the sacraments on the basis of their theological position on same-gender marriage.

Conclusion

Our work together as a task force has been for us a source of fellowship, joy, and hope. We have experienced firsthand the reality expressed in the claim that we are indispensable to each other. Our theological differences are in many cases quite profound, but in our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the safety and dignity of all people we are entirely united. The proposals that we now offer to General Convention are the product of a process characterized by mutual vulnerability and honest listening, with present fears and past injuries taken seriously by all. They have been shaped by fervent prayer, both together as a task force and individually in our private prayers.

Detailed explanations accompany each of our proposed resolutions. The work of this task force, however, cannot be reduced to any one of our formal legislative proposals, or even to all of them taken together. We believe that these proposed resolutions are necessary elements of a just and sustainable path toward continued fellowship, but they represent only a part of the *beginning* of such a path, not its end. We believe that institutional and hierarchical power should not be used to drive out or keep out those whose theological belief concerning marriage is in the minority within a given diocese or the wider church. Canonical changes to this effect are essential, but alterations to formal policies can only clear the space for processes of healing and reconciliation to begin, they cannot complete them. That will require the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals, worshipping communities, dioceses, and the whole of The Episcopal Church as we choose to walk together along a path to mutual flourishing that can only be walked by faith.

End Notes

- 1 <https://communionpartners.org/criminalizing-lgbtq-in-ghana-nov-10-2021/>
- 2 <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2022/03/22/house-of-bishops-condemns-ukraine-war-anti-transgender-legislation-at-first-in-person-gathering-since-covid-19-pandemic/>
- 3 <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Human-Sexuality/>

Proposed Resolutions

A090 Authorization of 1979 Book of Common Prayer

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention amend Canon II.3 by adding a new Section 9 thereto, to read as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

II.3

Sec. 9. The Book of Common Prayer as accepted by the General Convention of this Church in 1979 is authorized for regular use at any service in all dioceses of this Church.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

II.3

Sec. 9. *The Book of Common Prayer as accepted by the General Convention of this Church in 1979 is authorized for regular use at any service in all dioceses of this Church.*

EXPLANATION

The 1979 Book of Common Prayer was memorialized by General Convention Resolution 2018-A068, “ensuring its continued use.” Our proposed canonical change would continue to ensure continued use of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, providing it with a clear and stable place in our Church’s worship. Like the memorialization of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, this resolution is proposed in anticipation of future additions to and amendments of the Book of Common Prayer as provided for in Article X of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church.

A091 Definition of doctrine

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention amend the definition of “Doctrine” in Canon IV.2 to read as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

IV.2.

Doctrine shall mean the basic and essential teachings of the Church and is to be found in the Canon of Holy Scripture as understood in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds and in the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer. For the purposes of this canon, the Book of Common Prayer and any Book of Common Prayer memorialized by General Convention are understood as sufficient statements of the doctrine of this Church.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

IV.2.

Doctrine shall mean the basic and essential teachings of the Church and is to be found in the Canon of Holy Scripture as understood in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds and in the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer. *For the purposes of this canon, the Book of Common Prayer and any Book of Common Prayer memorialized by General Convention are understood as sufficient statements of the doctrine of this Church.*

EXPLANATION

Canon IV.4.1.h.2 specifies that all members of the clergy shall refrain from “holding and teaching publicly or privately, and advisedly, any Doctrine contrary to that held by the Church.” Therefore, any addition to or amendment of “the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer” has potential disciplinary implications for members of the clergy whose beliefs would no longer be reflected in the Book of Common Prayer as defined in Article X of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church. This addition would ensure that neither the emendation of the Book of Common Prayer to include a marriage service for use by opposite-sex or same-sex couples nor the alteration of the understanding of marriage presented in the Catechism to remove reference to gender would place members of the clergy who believe that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman in violation of Title IV or their ordination vows.

A092 Access to ordination and deployment

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention amend Canon III.1 adding new sections 3 and 4 and renumbering all subsequent sections, as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

III.1

Sec. 1. Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including:

- a.** Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's mission at all times and in all places.
- b.** Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation.

Sec. 2. No person shall be denied access to the discernment process or to any process for the employment, licensing, calling, or deployment for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, immigration status, national origin, sex, marital or family status (including pregnancy and child care plans), sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons. No right to employment, licensing, ordination, call, deployment, or election is hereby established.

Sec 3. No person shall be denied access to the discernment process or to any process for the employment, licensing, calling, or deployment for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of their conscientiously-held theological belief that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman, or that marriage is a covenant between two people. No right to employment, licensing, ordination, call, deployment, or election is hereby established. In dioceses where the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority (or, where applicable, ecclesiastical supervision) is unable, for reasons of conscientiously-held theological belief, to ordain a person who holds one of the above-named theological beliefs, the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority (or ecclesiastical supervision) shall invite another bishop of this Church to provide access to the discernment process for ordination.

Sec. 4. No priest or deacon shall be denied licensure or canonical residence in any diocese of this Church because of their conscientiously-held theological belief that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman, or that marriage is a covenant between two persons. No right to canonical residence or licensing is hereby established.

Sec 5. The provisions of these Canons for the admission of Candidates for the Ordination to the three Orders: Bishops, Priests and Deacons shall be equally applicable to men and women.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

III.1

Sec. 1. Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including:

- a. Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's mission at all times and in all places.
- b. Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation.

Sec. 2. No person shall be denied access to the discernment process or to any process for the employment, licensing, calling, or deployment for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, immigration status, national origin, sex, marital or family status (including pregnancy and child care plans), sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons. No right to employment, licensing, ordination, call, deployment, or election is hereby established.

Sec 3. *No person shall be denied access to the discernment process or to any process for the employment, licensing, calling, or deployment for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of their conscientiously-held theological belief that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman, or that marriage is a covenant between two people. No right to employment, licensing, ordination, call, deployment, or election is hereby established. In dioceses where the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority (or, where applicable, ecclesiastical supervision) is unable, for reasons of conscientiously-held theological belief, to ordain a person who holds one of the above-named theological beliefs, the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority (or ecclesiastical supervision) shall invite another bishop of this Church to provide access to the discernment process for ordination.*

Sec. 4. *No priest or deacon shall be denied licensure or canonical residence in any diocese of this Church because of their conscientiously-held theological belief that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman, or that marriage is a covenant between two persons. No right to canonical residence or licensing is hereby established.*

~~Sec. 3.~~ **Sec 5.** The provisions of these Canons for the admission of Candidates for the Ordination to the three Orders: Bishops, Priests and Deacons shall be equally applicable to men and women.

EXPLANATION

The non-discrimination provisions of Canon III.1.2 have not been sufficient to end the perception, and often the reality, of discrimination within the discernment and employment processes of The Episcopal Church. The prohibition on discrimination based on sexual orientation or marital status is undermined in its effect insofar as it remains licit to discriminate in these protected processes on the basis of one's theological belief concerning same-sex marriage. Furthermore, we see no legitimate practical or pastoral benefit to denying access to these discernment processes on the basis of the belief that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman. If a congregation wishes to hire or discern a call to ordination with an individual who is otherwise qualified, they should not be prevented from doing so on the grounds of a mismatch between that individual's theological belief about same-sex marriage and the theological belief of the bishop or their diocese. Section 3 would ensure genuine access to discernment processes for hiring and ordination while also providing for cases in which a bishop is unable, as a matter of conscience, to ordain someone whose theological belief regarding same-sex marriage is incompatible with their own.

Section 4 is a logical extension of Section 3. While Canon III.9.4.d provides that a priest's letters dimissory must be accepted in the absence of information "which would form grounds for canonical inquiry and proceedings under Title IV" and that letters dimissory cannot be refused "based on the applicant's race, color, ethnic origin, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, or age," this section applies only in cases where a priest has been "called to a Cure." We do not believe that a member of the clergy's theology concerning same-sex marriage, whether for or against, constitutes legitimate grounds for canonical inquiry under Title IV. We also believe that all members of the clergy should have equal access to the process for establishing canonical residency in a diocese regardless of their beliefs concerning same-sex marriage, not only those to whom the provisions of III.9.4.d apply.

This resolution does not create or imply any right to canonical residence or licensing. It simply requires that the letters dimissory of all members of the clergy should be processed without any distinction based in their theological belief concerning same-sex marriage.

A093 Add provisions of 2018-B012 to canons

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention amend Canon I.19.3 to add a new subsection e thereto, to read as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

I.19.3

e. Bishops exercising ecclesiastical authority, or where appropriate ecclesiastical supervision, who hold a theological position that does not embrace marriage for same sex couples, shall in the case of remarriage after divorce, invite another bishop of this Church to oversee the consent process and to receive any report of such Marriages, as provided in Canon I.19.3.c.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

I.19.3

e. Bishops exercising ecclesiastical authority, or where appropriate ecclesiastical supervision, who hold a theological position that does not embrace marriage for same sex couples, shall in the case of remarriage after divorce, invite another bishop of this Church to oversee the consent process and to receive any report of such Marriages, as provided in Canon I.19.3.c.

And be it further

Resolved, that Canon III.12.3.a be amended to add a new subsection 3 thereto, to read as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

III.12.3.a

3. In dioceses where the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority (or, where applicable, ecclesiastical supervision) holds a theological position that does not embrace marriage for same-sex couples, and there is a desire to use such rites by same-sex couples in a congregation or other community of faith, the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority (or ecclesiastical supervision) shall invite, as necessary, another bishop of this Church to provide pastoral support to the couple, the Member of the Clergy involved and the congregation or other community of faith.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

III.12.3.a

3. In dioceses where the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority (or, where applicable, ecclesiastical supervision) holds a theological position that does not embrace marriage for same-sex couples, and there is a desire to use such rites by same-sex couples in a congregation or other community of faith, the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority (or ecclesiastical supervision) shall invite, as necessary, another bishop of this Church to provide pastoral support to the couple, the Member of the Clergy involved and the congregation or other community of faith.

EXPLANATION

The compromise of General Convention Resolution 2018-B012 has simultaneously ensured that same-sex couples have access to trial-use marriage liturgies in every diocese where same-sex marriage is permitted under civil law and authorized bishops to delegate their pastoral oversight in such cases when their theological convictions require it. Because those provisions are tied to the authorization of specific liturgies for trial use, they would not automatically apply if a marriage rite suitable for use by same-sex couples were to be added to the Book of Common Prayer.

Because Article X of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church provides that the Book of Common Prayer “shall be in use in all the Dioceses of this Church,” no specific canonical changes are necessary to ensure continued access to authorized marriage rites once they are incorporated into the Book of Common Prayer. This resolution formalizes those provisions of B012 concerning the responsibilities of bishops whose theology does not embrace same-sex marriage when a congregation within their diocese intends to perform same-sex marriages. As is already the case under B012, each bishop will discern the extent to which pastoral support from another bishop is necessary to ensure both the protection of their own conscience and full access for same-sex couples to authorized marriage rites.

A094 Communion Across Difference

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention directs the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies to appoint a third Task Force on Communion Across Difference consisting of not more than 12 people, who represent the cultural, generational, racial, ethnic and theological diversity in the Church, including especially members from dioceses outside 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 hold that marriage is a “covenant between two people” in the presence of God (Resolution 2018-A085), 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 will seek to build on the Blue Book reports of the previous two triennia, continuing to 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 open to 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 our 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 from 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 82nd 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.

EXPLANATION

In light of the serious constraints placed upon the first Task Force on Communion across Difference by the Coronavirus pandemic, the 80th General Convention directed the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies to appoint a second iteration of that task force to continue its important work. In its explanation for its proposed resolution seeking another triennium in which to work, the original task force reported that “[m]embers of the current Task Force believe that building the kind of relationships needed to take this work further were severely hampered by the Covid-19 pandemic and our inability to meet face to face.” That observation proved to be correct. With the benefit of two in-person gatherings the Task Force on Communion across Difference was able to make remarkable

headway on the issues implicated in its mandate – and its members were able to build collegial and respectful relationships of trust and goodwill with each other.

Nevertheless, the shortened time frame available for committee work between the 80th and 81st General Conventions presented a constraint of its own. The liturgical and canonical concerns raised by this task force are unlikely to be permanently resolved by a single General Convention. The principles for a sustainable path forward that have been articulated in our Blue Book Report to this Convention will need to be fleshed out and applied to new situations. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, the work of building relationships across difference remains crucial, and it requires more time and the contributions of more voices. The members of the second Task Force on Communion Across Difference believe that this crucial work calls for a task force to have a full triennium in which to work and pray together in person, collaborate with other interim bodies, consult with Anglicans from around the world, and reflect on all that unites us – without papering over or discounting the reality of our differences.