



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
THE GENERAL CONVENTION

16 July 2009

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Rowan Williams
Lambeth Palace
London

Dear Archbishop Williams,

We greet you once again as we write regarding another significant resolution adopted today by the 76th General Convention. Like Resolution D025, about which we wrote to you several days ago, Resolution C056 will impact both the life and work of The Episcopal Church and have implications for our relationships within the Anglican Communion. A copy of Resolution C056 is attached to this letter.

While the Resolution honors the diversity of theological perspectives within The Episcopal Church, it does not authorize public liturgical rites for the blessing of same-gender unions. The Book of Common Prayer remains unchanged, the marriage rites are unaltered and the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer define marriage as a “solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God.”

The Resolution encourages this Church and its members to engage in several actions over the coming three years until The General Convention gathers again as the only body of The Episcopal Church that can speak definitively for this Church. Resolution C056:

- Calls on the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (an interim body of The General Convention made up of laity, clergy and bishops) in consultation with the House of Bishops and House of Deputies to collect and develop theological and liturgical resources around the blessing of same gender unions and report the results of its work to the 77th General Convention which will convene in 2012. The collection and development of these theological and liturgical resources is a way by which further theological inquiry and debate/discussion can take place, but does not commit any future General Convention to formal adoption of any rites.
- Calls for wide participation in an open process of conversation and consultation across The Episcopal Church in congregations and dioceses and with individuals. We pray this work will contribute to the Listening Process on all levels since we earnestly desire to listen to all as encouraged by successive Lambeth Conferences.
- Allows bishops, particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, to provide a generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church.

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It is now left to each bishop to determine what such a generous pastoral response might mean in her or his diocesan context. This Resolution neither forces nor demands any bishop, diocesan convention, congregation or clergy to take any action it considers contrary to its will. The Resolution honors and acknowledges this Church's continuing commitment to and honoring of theological diversity and the inclusion of a variety of points of view on matters of human sexuality.

The House of Bishops received Resolution C056 from the legislative Committee on Prayer Book, Liturgy and Church Music (made up of bishops, clergy and laity). A group of over 25 bishops representing diverse and divergent views gathered informally and, using the Indaba process learned at the Lambeth Conference 2008, had thoughtful, loving and candid conversation. The fruit of their conversation and prayer was presented to the House of Bishops in the form of a revision to Resolution C056 which was adopted by both Houses thus becoming the action of the General Convention thus speaking definitively for The Episcopal Church. This resolution is seen as a continuation of the pastoral response and listening process asked for and encouraged by successive General Conventions and Lambeth Conferences.

As our letter of July 16 stated, "it is not our desire to give offense. We remain keenly aware of the concerns and sensibilities of our brothers and sisters in other Churches across the Communion." The Episcopal Church treasures our relationships and partnerships as a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, and prays fervently for its life and mission, as we pray for you, brother Rowan, and your ministry as the spiritual leader of the Communion.

With all prayers and best wishes, we remain,

Your sisters in Christ,

Bonnie Anderson, D.D.
President of The House of Deputies

The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop and Primate