

A DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE VESTRY OF THE CHURCH OF
SAINT PAUL IN THE DESERT OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
OF SAN DIEGO CONCERNING HOLINESS IN RELATIONSHIPS
AND THE BLESSING OF SAME-GENDER RELATIONSHIPS

WHEREAS, the people of the Church of Saint Paul in the Desert are called by God to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God; and

WHEREAS, we believe that all people are worthy of respect and honor, because all are created in the image of God, and all can respond to the love of God; and that Jesus Christ promised in a New Covenant to bring us into the kingdom of God and give us life in all its fullness such that we believe in Him and love one another as Christ loves us; and that the Holy Spirit enables us to grow in the likeness of Christ such that we recognize the truths to be taught by the Holy Spirit when they are in accord with the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures; and

WHEREAS, we believe that as the community of the New Covenant, we are called as Christians and as members of the Church of Saint Paul in the Desert to restore all people to unity with god and each other in Christ; and that, in our worship together, we unite ourselves with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God's Word, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments; and that the sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace; and

WHEREAS, among the sacraments which evolved in the Church is holy matrimony, which is defined in the Canon law of the Episcopal Church as "a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with the intent that it be lifelong"; and that under the current legal and sacramental understanding and definition of what types of partners may be married within the Episcopal Church, the sacrament of Holy Matrimony is not a sacramental option for same-gender couples; and

WHEREAS, following the directive of the 1985 General Convention, the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego ("Diocese") has engaged in a discussion over the issues of sexuality, one result of which was the adoption by the 2008 Diocesan Convention of Resolution 08-09, which provided the following charge:

Be It Resolved, that the Bishop of the Diocese of San Diego is urged to appoint a theologically diverse Task force of clergy and lay people reflective of the Diocese, to study Holiness in Relationships and Blessings in Churches of the Diocese from the perspectives of holy Scripture, church history and tradition; practical, pastoral and sacramental theology; and the movement of the Holy Spirit; and then prepare an academic paper on he subject to be presented to

the 2009 Convention of the Diocese of San Diego, with additional recommendations as that Task force might deem appropriate.

; and

WHEREAS, a Task force was appointed by the Bishop, comprised of fifteen members of both clergy and lay people, including co-chairs Rev. Robert Nagy and Suzanne Foucault, as well as Michael Carson of Saint Paul in the Desert; which Task force first convened in August 2008 and by May 2009 completed its Report of the Task for on Holiness in Relationship and the Blessing of Same-sex Relationships (“Report”); which Report offered recommendations for the Bishop, the Diocese, and clergy and Parishes of the Diocese (attached as Appendix A), including study and discussion within each parish of said Report and to advise the Bishop of the character and outcome thereof; and

WHEREAS, in July 2009, the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church was held, during which convention Resolution C056 was adopted (attached as Appendix B), which encouraged the Church to be engaged in a pastoral response to same-gender relationships; and

WHEREAS, the Vestry has reviewed the Report of the Task force and finds that the Report offers a thoughtful, thorough and wide-ranging discussion of the issues, and further provides important and worthwhile recommendations for the Vestry and the Parish; and

WHEREAS, on _____(date)_____ a committee of the Vestry conducted a parish forum to discuss the issues surrounding the blessing of same-gender relationships, as expressed in the Task force Report, as well as a draft of this resolution, at which forum _____(number)_____ parishioners attended and _____(number)_____ provided comment (attached as Appendix C); and

WHEREAS, the Vestry has determined that the community of Saint Paul in the Desert includes people seeking the blessings of the Church for their relationships as holy and as a union for their mutual joy, and for the help and comfort given one another.

NOW THEREFORE, the Vestry of the Church of Saint Paul in the Desert having prayerfully considered the Task force Report, the comments of parishioners and thoughtful discussion among its members, does hereby resolve:

1. That the Rector, Wardens and Vestry of the Church of St. Paul in the Desert support all women and men who desire to follow Jesus and organize their lives to include the vocation to faithful relationship, including same-gender couples.
2. That the Church of St. Paul in the Desert has long supported this vocation for couples who wish to be married, and also recognizes the

opportunity to support the vocation to relationship for couples who have not traditionally been able to request such support.

3. That such support includes the availability of the church sanctuary for the appropriate recognition and blessing of same-gender couples.
4. That an appropriate liturgy be prepared by the Rector for the recognition and blessing of same-gender relationships.

ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 201__.

Craig A. Ewing
Senior Warden

Bruce Blauvelt
Junior Warden

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Appendix A
Recommendations of the Report of the Task for on
Holiness in Relationship and the Blessing of Same-sex Relationships

1. We encourage individual parishes and missions to study and discuss this report and to advise the Bishop of the character and outcome of their efforts.
2. We encourage our 2009 General Convention deputation to support measures that allow the exercise of an “option” to perform blessings of same-sex relationships, rather than measures that would direct such blessings to be performed or direct such blessings to be prohibited.
3. Should an “option” approach to the blessing of same-sex relationships be enacted by General Convention, we encourage our Bishop to put into place a process by which a church can discern if the blessing of same-sex relationships is appropriate to occur within its community.
 - a. We encourage this discernment to include extensive study and discussion of the appropriate General Convention resolution, this Task Force report, and the effects of the decision on the spiritual life of the congregation.
 - b. We also recommend against coercion or sanction that might be brought against any priest or congregation choosing to exercise or not to exercise such an option.
4. In discussion of these questions, we encourage congregations to follow the guidelines for discussion adopted by our task force and included in the Appendix to this report.
5. We encourage our Diocese and its congregations not to take any unilateral action that will knowingly further endanger the relationship of The Episcopal Church with the Anglican Communion.
6. We encourage our Diocese to advocate for changes at the State and Federal levels that grant domestic partnerships and civil unions the same legal rights and privileges as married couples, including the elimination of financial penalties for those who marry. In addition, we encourage our 2009 General Convention deputation to support resolutions that would commit The Episcopal Church to similar advocacy on these issues.
7. We encourage our Diocese to continue to advocate for equal protection under the law regarding domestic partnerships and civil marriages.
8. We encourage readers of this report to explore its bibliography, appendix, and references included in the endnotes with the intent of achieving a balanced view of the issues raised in these pages.

Appendix B
Resolution Number C056 of
The 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (2009)

RESOLVED, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 76th General Convention acknowledge the changing circumstances in the United States and in other nations, as legislation authorizing or forbidding marriage, civil unions or domestic partnerships for gay and lesbian persons is passed in various civil jurisdictions that call forth a renewed pastoral response from this Church, and for an open process for the consideration of theological and liturgical resources for the blessing of same gender relationships; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in consultation with the House of Bishops, collect and develop theological and liturgical resources, and report to the 77th General Convention; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in consultation with the House of Bishops, devise an open process for the conduct of its work inviting participation from provinces, dioceses, congregations, and individuals who are engaged in such theological work, and inviting theological reflection from throughout the Anglican Communion; and be it further

RESOLVED, That bishops, particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the members of this Church be encouraged to engage in this effort.