



**Episcopal Parish
Network**

Where the Church Gathers

Rooted in LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Marriage Equality: Rising in Faithful Resistance to Political Backlash



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A brief history of the Episcopal Church's engagement with LGBTQ+ inclusion





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The Role of General Convention



The Episcopal Church has been officially debating the issue of human sexuality, particularly as it applies to gay and lesbian people, since 1976 when General Convention resolutions began to frame the parameters of the debate.



1976

“Recognize the Equal Claim of Homosexuals”

Resolved, that it is the sense of this General Convention that homosexual persons are children of God and have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church.

Minneapolis, 1976: Resolution A069



1991

“Affirm Church's Teaching on Sexual Expression”

The 70th General Convention ...affirms that the teaching of the Episcopal Church is that physical sexual expression is appropriate only within the lifelong monogamous "union of husband and wife" ...and that this General Convention confesses our failure to lead and to resolve this discontinuity through legislative efforts.

Phoenix, 1991: Resolution A104



1991

“Affirm Church's Teaching on Sexual Expression”

The Convention opted for a process of continued study and dialogue across the whole church, with a report to be issued from the House of Bishops.

Phoenix, 1991



1994

“Continuing the Dialogue”

- In 1994 the House of Bishops publishes “Continuing the Dialogue.”
- Bishop Jack Spong issues his “Statement in Koinonia,” to which 71 bishops sign on.

Indianapolis, 1994



1994

“Continuing the Dialogue”

General Convention adopts the following resolutions:

- **(C042) Prepare Report Considering Rites for Same-Sex Commitments**
- **(D006) Call on US Government to Extend Benefits to Gay and Lesbian Couples**

Indianapolis, 1994



1994

“Continuing the Dialogue”

The only canon to deal with the issue of homosexual orientation in any specific way was adopted in 1994:

“All Bishops of Dioceses and other Clergy shall make provisions to identify fit persons for Holy Orders and encourage them to present themselves for Postulancy. No one shall be denied access to the selection process for ordination in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, or age, except as otherwise specified by these Canons.”

Indianapolis, 1994



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1996: The Righter Trial

In 1996, the Court of Trial for a Bishop refused to hear charges filed against Bishop Walter Righter for ordaining a gay man living in a relationship.





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1996: The Righter Trial

The court determined that there was no doctrine against such an ordination and that there is no canonical bar to gay and lesbian ordination in the Episcopal Church.





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1997

“Apologize for the Church's Rejection of Gays and Lesbians”

Resolved, the 72nd General Convention apologize on behalf of the Episcopal Church to its members who are gay or lesbian, and to lesbians and gay men outside the Church, for years of rejection and maltreatment by the Church...

Philadelphia, 1997: Resolution D011



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1998: Lambeth Conference

The Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, meeting in July at their every-ten-year gathering in Canterbury, passed Lambeth Resolution 1:10 which was entitled "Human Sexuality."





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1998: Lambeth Conference

It included the majority opinion of the bishops gathered at that conference that "homosexual practice is incompatible with Scripture" and that they "cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions." *Lambeth Resolution 1:10*





2000

“Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage ”

Passing overwhelmingly by a voice vote in the House of Deputies and by a 119-19 margin in the House of Bishops, this important resolution broke new ground by acknowledging the reality of couples living in “other life-long committed relationships” within the Body of Christ and articulating a common set of values the Episcopal Church expects for all relationships.

Denver, 2000: Resolution D039



2000

“Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage”

Resolved, That the members of the 73rd General Convention intend for this Church to provide a safe and just structure in which all can utilize their gifts and creative energies for mission; and be it further

Denver, 2000: Resolution D039



2000

“Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage ”

Resolved, That we acknowledge that while the issues of human sexuality are not yet resolved, there are currently couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in marriage and couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in other life-long committed relationships; and be it further

Denver, 2000: Resolution D039



2000

“Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage ”

Resolved, That we expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God; and be it further

Denver, 2000: Resolution D039



2000

“Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage ”

Resolved, That we denounce promiscuity, exploitation, and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members; and be it further

Denver, 2000: Resolution D039



2000

“Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage ”

Resolved, That this Church intends to hold all its members accountable to these values, and will provide for them the prayerful support, encouragement, and pastoral care necessary to live faithfully by them; and be it further

Denver, 2000: Resolution D039



2000

“Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage”

Resolved, That we acknowledge that some, acting in good conscience, who disagree with the traditional teaching of the Church on human sexuality, will act in contradiction to that position; and be it further

Denver, 2000: Resolution D039



2000

“Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage ”

Resolved, That in continuity with previous actions of the General Convention of this Church, and in response to the call for dialogue by the Lambeth Conference, we affirm that those on various sides of controversial issues have a place in the Church, and we reaffirm the imperative to promote conversation between persons of differing experiences and perspectives, while acknowledging the Church's teaching on the sanctity of marriage.

Denver, 2000: Resolution D039



2003

“Blessing of Committed Same-Gender Relationships”

In addition to consenting to the election of V. Gene Robinson as the Bishop of New Hampshire, the 2003 General Convention in Minneapolis passes a landmark resolution moving the church forward on the blessing of same-sex unions.

Minneapolis, 2003



2003

“Blessing of Committed Same-Gender Relationships”

“We recognize that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions.”

Minneapolis, 2003: Resolution C051



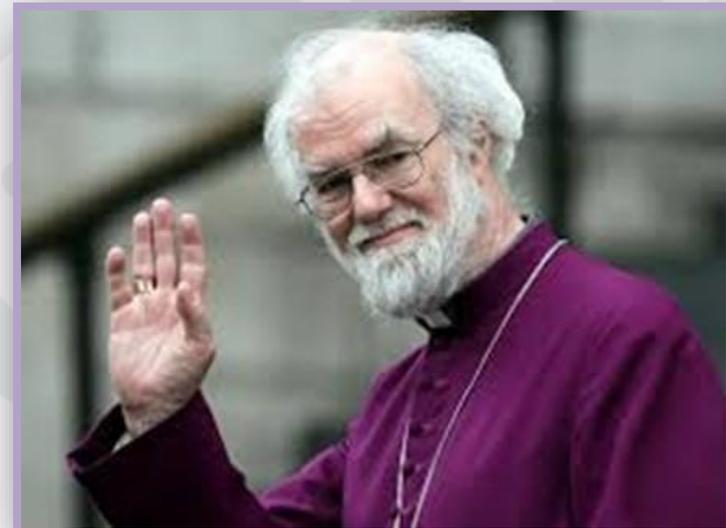
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2003

“Blessing of Committed Same-Gender Relationships”

Following the General Convention decisions made to consent to the election of Bishop Gene Robinson and to recognize same-sex blessings, pressure was put on the Archbishop of Canterbury and the wider Anglican Communion to censure the Episcopal Church.



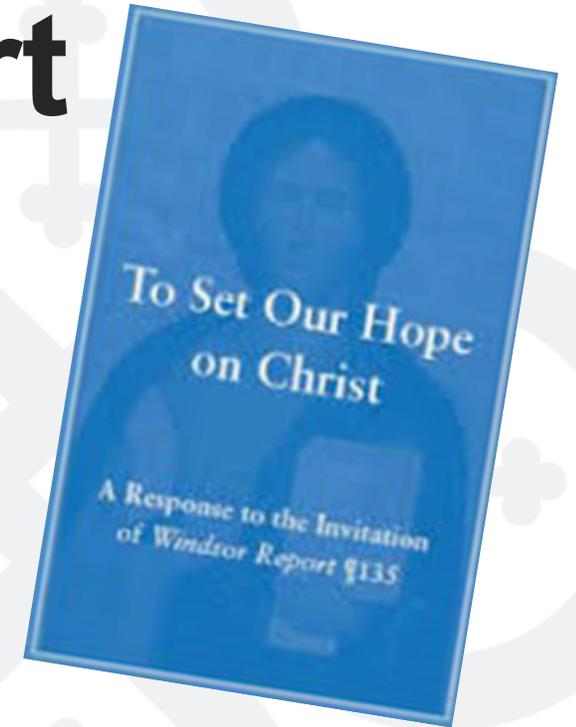


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The Windsor Report

- ▶ In 2004 "The Windsor Report" was published.
- ▶ In 2005 the Episcopal Church presented its response to the Windsor Report -- "To Set Our Hope on Christ" -- at the Nottingham meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council.





2006

The 2006 General Convention was consumed by responding to the Windsor Report and by the question of whether or not American bishops would be invited to the 2008 Lambeth Conference.



2006

After nine days of legislation, a series of "response to Windsor" resolutions were passed. Resolutions submitted calling for "compliance" with aspects of the Windsor Report that recommended a moratorium on the blessing of unions or discrimination against partnered gay or lesbian candidates for bishop were rejected.



2006

ADOPTED

- (A159) Affirm Commitment to the Anglican Communion**
- (A160) Express Regret for Straining the Bonds of the Church**
- (A165) Commend the Windsor Report
and Commit to the "Windsor Process"**
- (A166) Support Development of an Anglican Covenant**

Columbus, 2006



2006

ADOPTED

**(A167) Reaffirm Church Membership of Gay and
Lesbian Persons**

**(A095) Reaffirm Support of Gay and Lesbian Persons
including language opposing "any state or federal constitutional
amendment that prohibits same-sex civil marriage or civil unions"**

(D005) Oppose Criminalization of Homosexuality

Columbus, 2006



2006

On the 10th and last legislative day, an unprecedented joint session of the Houses of Bishops & Deputies was presented with Resolution B033 by then Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold.



2006

“Exercise Restraint in Consecrating Candidates”

***Resolved,* That this Convention therefore call upon Standing Committees and bishops with jurisdiction to exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.**

Columbus, 2006: Resolution B033



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2008: Lambeth Conference

In 2008 the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops was again held in Canterbury. The Bishop of New Hampshire was not invited.





2009

“Liturgies for Blessings ”

(C056) Liturgies for Blessings (calling for the collection and development of liturgical and theological resources for the blessing of same-sex relationships)

(D025) Commitment and Witness to Anglican Communion (ending the defacto moratoria on election of gay or lesbian bishops)

Anaheim, 2009

The Blessings Task Force

- ▶ **The Blessings Task Force was convened in response to Resolution C056.**
- ▶ **Their process included reports from four working groups: theology, liturgy, pastoral care and teaching resources and a church-wide consultation held in Atlanta in 2011.**





2012

“Liturgies for Blessings”

The Blessings Task Force generated two resolutions – both adopted-as-amended at General Convention 2012:

(A049) Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships

(A050) Create Task Force on the Study of Marriage

Indianapolis, 2012



2012

Also adopted in Indianapolis in 2012

**(D018) End Discrimination Against Same-Sex Marriages
(supporting civil marriage equality)**

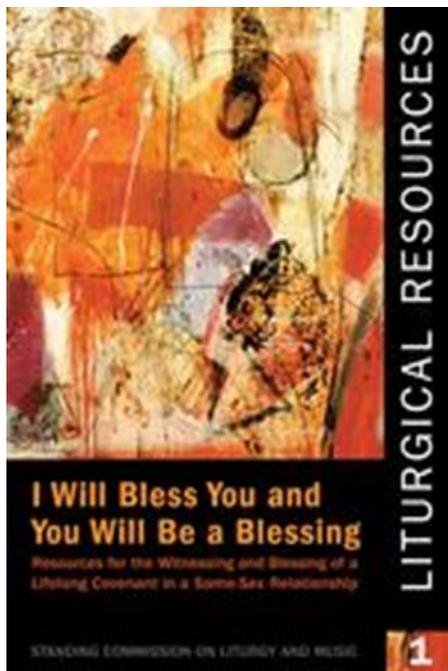
**D002 Affirming Access to the Ordination Process (ending
discrimination against transgender ordination)**

**(D019) Adding Gender Identity and Gender Expression to
Non-Discrimination Canons**

Indianapolis, 2012

2012

“I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing”



The resources approved by General Convention in 2012 – including a liturgy for the blessing of same-gender relationships – were made available for use throughout the Episcopal Church (subject to the approval of the bishop diocesan.)

Indianapolis, 2012: Resolution A049



2012

“Task Force on the Study of Marriage”

The Task Force on the Study of Marriage was given the charge to “identify and explore biblical, theological, historical, liturgical, and canonical dimensions of marriage” and to “address the pastoral need for priests to officiate at a civil marriage of a same- sex couple in states that authorize such.”

Indianapolis, 2012: Resolution A050



2015

In 2015, the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church met in Salt Lake City — where there was extraordinary progress toward the goal of ending marriage discrimination with the adoption of resolutions that amended Episcopal Church canons on marriage to be inclusive of same-gender spouses and approved liturgies for equal use by same and opposite sex couples.

Salt Lake City, 2015



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2015: U.S. Supreme Court

Just days before the Episcopal Church was scheduled to take action on Marriage Equality, the Supreme Court of the United States issued its ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, declaring same-sex marriage a legal right nationwide.





2015

“Authorize Trial Use of Marriage/Blessing Rites”

Authorization of the rites for marriage were placed under the authority of the bishop with jurisdiction with the caveat:

"Bishops exercising ecclesiastical authority or, where appropriate, ecclesiastical supervision, will make provision for all couples asking to be married in this Church to have access to these liturgies."

Salt Lake City, 2015: Resolution A054



2015

Salt Lake City, additional resolutions

**A036 - Amend Canon I.18 [Of the Solemnization of Holy
Matrimony].**

**A037 - Appoint Expanded Task Force on the Study of
Marriage**

D051 - Support LGBTI Advocacy in Africa

C037 - Support and Sponsor Boy Scout Units

D037 - Amend Church Records to Reflect Name Changes



2018

“Marriage Rites for the Whole Church”

This resolution gave rectors or clergy in charge the ability to provide access to the trial rites for marriage. Changes to the prayer book on marriage were deferred along with other prayer book revisions. Additionally, a resolution calling for a Task Force on Communion Across Difference -- to "seek a pathway toward mutual flourishing" -- was adopted.

Austin, 2018: Resolution B012



2018

Austin, Additional Resolutions

A088 - Proposed Guidelines For Amending Church Records

A086 - Authorize Rites to Bless Relationships

**C022 - Support End of Discrimination Against Transgender
and Non-Binary People**

**C054 - Adopt Guiding Principles for Inclusion of
Transgender and Non-Binary People**



2021

A ‘first’ in Baltimore

In a first for the Episcopal Church, President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings appointed the Reverend Charles Graves IV and Deputy Joe Rania as convenors of an official LGBTQ+ Caucus. The purpose was “simple”: to mobilize and advocate for the full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the work and witness of the Episcopal Church.



2021

Resolutions in Baltimore

A063 - Establish Director of LBGTQI and Women's Ministries

D045 - Support protection of persons forced to seek refugee or asylee status because of persecution as LGBTIQ+

D060 - Lament the harm done to LGBTQ persons throughout the world during COVID-19 restrictions

D066 - Support gender affirming care at local, state and national levels

D026 - Create a Task Force on LGBTQ+ Inclusion



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2024: Pride Logo

The Office of Communication unveiled a new "Pride shield" logo in May 2024 to represent intersectional progress and celebrate LGBTQ+ members.





2024

“Support Access to Material Affirming Marginalized Experiences”

The 81st General Convention condemns book bans and directs the Office of Government Relations to advocate for access to material affirming LGBTQIA+, racial minority, and other marginalized experiences in schools and libraries. The Convention further encourages dioceses and parishes to support the reading of and access to these affirming materials through various initiatives

Louisville, 2024: Resolution D039



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2025: Pride Service from 815

The Presiding Bishop was the celebrant at the first churchwide Pride month service, broadcast from the chapel at the church headquarters in New York City. The preacher, etc., were located around the country.



