

English SCLM Same-Gender Blessing - Anglican Communion Survey

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music of The Episcopal Church is inviting theological reflection on its work from lay and ordained members of other churches of the Anglican Communion.

The 2009 General Convention of The Episcopal Church acknowledged 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. In light of these circumstances, the General Convention directed the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to collect and develop theological and liturgical resources for blessing same-gender relationships. At the same time, we were asked to invite theological reflection from throughout the Anglican communion.

The commission has begun its work by articulating theological and liturgical principles to guide the development of resources. These two documents FOLLOW THIS INTRODUCTION and are available at <http://liturgyandmusic.wordpress.com/>

We invite you to consider these principles in light of your understanding of Scripture and Anglican Christian tradition.

What follows is a survey so that we can gather feedback and information from throughout the Anglican Communion. We understand that using an electronic format may hamper some responses. However, we hope that this process and the availability of paper copies of the survey will allow a fair response.

Please read the Theological Principles and the Liturgical Principles documents. They follow on page two and three. You may download them at <http://liturgyandmusic.wordpress.com/> or request an electronic (.pdf file) or paper copy by emailing the SCLM at sclm@episcopalchurch.org If you need a paper copy of the survey email the SCLM at sclm@episcopalchurch.org to request one.

FINALLY, thank you for your feedback and interest in this important ministry of the Church.

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Outline of Theological Principles

I. Baptismal Grounding

The Christian life is rooted in the sacrament of baptism, an effective sign of our participation in God's mission in the world and a reminder of our hope for the fulfillment of all things in God-in-Christ. Every covenant and commitment we make as Christians offers an opportunity to live out our baptismal covenant in new ways.

II. Theological Retrieval

Rooting the blessing of covenantal relationships in baptism suggests a fruitful retrieval of three key touchstones from Christian history concerning the significance of those covenants, including same-gender relationships:

1. The sacramental character of covenantal relationships (committed relationships make God's presence and divine grace visible);
2. The Trinitarian imprint of covenantal life (the perpetual and mutual self-giving and other-receiving of the Holy Trinity);
3. The eschatological vision inspired and evoked by covenantal relationship (the desire that leads us to commit ourselves to another person reflects the human desire and hope for union with God-in-Christ).

III. Renewing the Church's Theological Reflection

Retrieving the sacramental character, Trinitarian imprint, and eschatological vision in committed relationships can renew the church's theological reflection on covenantal relationships, including same-gender unions, with these five key principles:

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- Vocation: People are called into long-term committed relationships, as a vocation;
- Covenant-making: Loving faithfulness can participate in and reflect God's own covenantal commitment to God's creation;
- Households: Covenants create households as "schools of virtue" for life-long formation in spiritual discipline nurtured by divine grace;
- Fruitfulness: Faithful love in relationship enables the offering of countless gifts to the wider community that would not be possible in the same way apart from that relationship, including: lives of service, compassion, generosity, and hospitality;
- Mutual Blessing: The liturgical blessing of a covenantal relationship acknowledges the fruits of the Spirit in that relationship and in turn becomes a blessing to the faith community, strengthening the community for its mission and ministry in the world.

IV. Summary of Theological Principles

Covenantal relationships are one way for Christians to live out their baptismal calling in the world. As the Church discerns the fruits of the Spirit in faithful commitments – such as households marked by compassion, generosity, and hospitality – these commitments become a blessing to the wider community. Blessing covenantal relationships, including same-gender unions, thus belongs to the mission of the Church in its ongoing witness to the good news of God-in-Christ and the Christian hope of union with God.

LITURGICAL PRINCIPLES

Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials

Materials proposed for blessing same-gender relationships must above all be consistent with the implicit theology and ecclesiology of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. This would suggest, for example, that they must reflect the Prayer Book's underlying assumption that the entire life of the Church finds its origin in the baptismal font.

Nearly as important is that the proposed liturgical materials embody a classically Anglican liturgical ethos and style. Recognizing the varying notions of what makes public prayer recognizably Anglican, the task group identified these qualities:

- It resonates with Scripture.
- It has high literary value; is it beautiful according to accepted and respected standards.
- It uses the recurring structures, linguistic patterns, and metaphors of the 1979 BCP.
- It is formal, not casual, conversational, or colloquial.
- It has a ritual or sacral register.
- It is dense enough to "carry the freight" of the sacred purpose for which it is intended.
- It is metaphoric without being obtuse.
- It is performative.

At the same time, these rites must resonate as natural speech in contemporary ears. A sacral register must be achieved without the use of arcane or antiquated words or patterns of speech.

The rites should provide explanatory notes and rubrics. The material must be considered as the script for an event, not a mere collection of texts.

The proposed rites must be an expression primarily of the entire Church, not the couple seeking a blessing. These rites must allow for robust communal participation, reflecting the Baptismal ecclesiology of the Prayer Book. Related to this, since the Eucharist is the symbol of the unity of the Church through unity with Christ, these services of blessing should normatively be celebrated within the Eucharist.

These rites must enact the notion of sacramental reciprocity put forth by the C056 Theological Resources Task Group, suggesting that, even as the Church blesses the relationship of the couple, the relationship of the couple is a blessing to the Church.

★ **4. Theological Retrieval:**

Rooting the blessing of covenantal relationships in baptism suggests a fruitful retrieval of three key touchstones from Christian history concerning the significance of those covenants, including same-gender relationships:

3. The eschatological vision inspired and evoked by covenantal relationship (the desire that leads us to commit ourselves to another person reflects the human desire and hope for union with God-in-Christ).

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Statement is in accordance with Scripture.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Statement reflects my understanding of Anglican theological principles.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Comments (approx. 250 words)

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★ **5. Renewing the Church’s Theological Reflection: Retrieving the sacramental character, Trinitarian imprint, and eschatological vision in committed relationships can renew the church’s theological reflection on those covenantal relationships, including same-gender unions, with these five key principles:**

I. Vocation: People are called into long-term committed relationships, as a vocation.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Statement is in accordance with Scripture.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Statement reflects my understanding of Anglican theological principles.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Comments (approx. 250 words)

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* **6. Renewing the Church’s Theological Reflection: Retrieving the sacramental character, Trinitarian imprint, and eschatological vision in committed relationships can renew the church’s theological reflection on those covenantal relationships, including same-gender unions, with these five key principles:**

II. Covenant-making: Loving faithfulness can participate in and reflect God’s own covenantal commitment to God’s creation.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Statement is in accordance with Scripture.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Statement reflects my understanding of Anglican theological principles.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Comments (approx. 250 words)

* **7. Renewing the Church’s Theological Reflection: Retrieving the sacramental character, Trinitarian imprint, and eschatological vision in committed relationships can renew the church’s theological reflection on those covenantal relationships, including same-gender unions, with these five key principles:**

III. Households: Covenants create households as “schools of virtue” for life-long formation in spiritual discipline nurtured by divine grace.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Statement is in accordance with Scripture.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Statement reflects my understanding of Anglican theological principles.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Comments (approx. 250 words)

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* **8. Renewing the Church’s Theological Reflection: Retrieving the sacramental character, Trinitarian imprint, and eschatological vision in committed relationships can renew the church’s theological reflection on those covenantal relationships, including same-gender unions, with these five key principles:**

IV. Fruitfulness: Faithful love in relationship enables the offering of countless gifts to the wider community that would not be possible in the same way apart from that relationship, including: lives of service, compassion, generosity, and hospitality.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Statement is in accordance with Scripture.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Statement reflects my understanding of Anglican theological principles.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Comments (approx. 250 words)

* **9. Renewing the Church’s Theological Reflection: Retrieving the sacramental character, Trinitarian imprint, and eschatological vision in committed relationships can renew the church’s theological reflection on those covenantal relationships, including same-gender unions, with these five key principles:**

V. Mutual Blessing: The liturgical blessing of a covenantal relationship acknowledges the fruits of the Spirit in that relationship and in turn becomes a blessing to the faith community, strengthening the community for its mission and ministry in the world.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Statement is in accordance with Scripture.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Statement reflects my understanding of Anglican theological principles.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Comments (approx. 250 words)

SURVEY - Summary of Theological Principles

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- * **10. Covenantal relationships are one way for Christians to live out their baptismal calling in the world. As the Church discerns the fruits of the Spirit in faithful commitments – such as households marked by compassion, generosity, and hospitality – these commitments become a blessing to the wider community. Blessing covenantal relationships, including same-gender unions, thus belongs to the mission of the Church in its ongoing witness to the good news of God-in-Christ and the Christian hope of union with God.**

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Summary is in accordance with Scripture.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Summary reflects my understanding of Anglican theological principles.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Summary could apply to my own cultural context.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Comments (approx. 250 words)

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SURVEY - Liturgical Principles

- * **11. The proposed rites must be an expression primarily of the entire Church, not the couple seeking a blessing. These rites must allow for robust communal participation, reflecting the Baptismal ecclesiology of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Related to this, since the Eucharist is the symbol of the unity of the Church though unity with Christ, these services of blessing should normatively be celebrated within the Eucharist.**

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Statement is in accordance with Scripture.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ
The Statement reflects my understanding of Anglican theological and liturgical principles.	jñ	jñ	jñ	jñ

Comments (approx. 250 words)

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6

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* 12. The proposed liturgical materials must exhibit these qualities:

- It resonates with Scripture.
- It has high literary value; is it beautiful according to accepted and respected standards.
- It uses the recurring structures, linguistic patterns, and metaphors of the 1979 BCP.
- It is formal, not casual, conversational, or colloquial.
- It has a ritual or sacral register.
- It is dense enough to “carry the freight” of the sacred purpose for which it is intended.
- It is metaphoric without being obtuse.
- It is performative.

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The Statement is in accordance with Scripture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Statement reflects my understanding of Anglican theological and liturgical principles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments (approx. 250 words)

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Please complete the following information so that we can keep track of who has been able to give us feedback. This section is required in order to complete the survey. Thank you.

* 13. Please tell us something about yourself below. If you have additional comments please email them to sclm@episcopalchurch.org

THANK YOU!

City/Town (Optional)

Country (Required)

Email Address (Optional)

* 14. Please tell us what Anglican Province you are from. (Required)

* 15. Please tell us what Anglican Diocese you are from. (Required)

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* 16. Please let us know if you are a lay person or an ordained person. This is a "Required" question. Thank you!

Lay Person

Deacon

Priest

Bishop

Archbishop