

Appendix B

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. **If a same-gender couple has already had their relationship blessed in another diocese, will the Diocese of Texas recognize their relationship?** Yes. Currently same-gender couples and their children attend and are members of churches in the diocese. The congregations of the diocese welcome all people and recognize each as a beloved child of God.
2. **What is the biblical warrant for the Church’s decision to bless same-gender relationships?** The Standing Commission for Liturgy and Music has prepared a report that may be found in the *Liturgical Resources 1* text. It includes further resources. You may also read their opinion in the paper liberal theologians delivered to the House of Bishops in 2010.
2. **Why are we doing this now?** We feel that faithfulness to the Good News of Salvation and the unique Gospel proclamation of God in Jesus Christ demands unity and peace for the sake of mission. We believe that a proactive response to emerging issues that may divide us against one another safeguards the mission and life of the Church.
4. **What is the specific role of the vestry in implementing the Bishop’s plan?** Depending on your rector, and your congregation, the vestry may have a role in guiding one of two different processes. An explanation of this role may be found beginning on page 113.
5. **Why does the Bishop’s plan support the blessing of same-gender covenants and not same-gender marriages?** The Texas law prohibits a clergy person from performing the “marriage” for a same-gender couple. The law is footnoted on page 116. The Episcopal Church is not expected to approve a rite for same-gender marriage.
6. **Does this plan diminish the Church’s theological understanding of marriage?** No. *The Book of Common Prayer’s* definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman is not affected by this development within The Episcopal Church.
7. **Why are some Episcopal dioceses allowing clergy to perform same-gender “marriages”?** Some dioceses within The Episcopal Church are allowed to “marry” same-gender people because their mission context is one that exists within a state where same-gender marriages are legal and recognized by the state.

8. **Will any priest or congregation be forced to bless a same-gender relationship?** No. The Constitution of The Episcopal Church protects the right of every individual clergy person to choose which rites they will perform, and for whom they will perform them.
9. **Are we going to be required to hold such services?** No, a parish may not be required to do any service authorized by The Episcopal Church. Each Episcopal priest alone chooses (in relationship to the people of their congregation) what services are offered: Eucharist, Morning Prayer, marriage, etc.
10. **What authority does the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church have to prevent, alter or enforce this plan within the Diocese of Texas?** None whatsoever.
11. **Will there be blessings of same-gender couples at my church?** Your rector will have the opportunity to decide in accordance with the pastoral guidance of the bishop diocesan and in conversation with the congregation.
12. **What is the difference between a blessing ceremony and a wedding?** The liturgy will be different. Marriage has legal standing in the State of Texas. To date, a blessing of a same-gender partnership does not.
13. **What are options for same-gender couples in a parish that does not allow such blessings?** The rector may refer them to clergy licensed to serve in the Diocese of Texas who are willing to do such blessings.
14. **What preparation does a same-gender couple have to receive?** It is the bishop's expectation that like premarital guidance offered by our clergy the same expectation of guidance will be offered to those same-gender couples seeking a blessing.
15. **What guidance will be provided to parishes about how to opt out or opt in?** The Bishop's plan provides specific direction for each clergy person and parish.
16. **Will gay and lesbian clergy in the Diocese of Texas be permitted to have their same-gender relationships blessed?** No, in the Diocese of Texas we have Canon 43, which keeps the diocese from allowing clergy in same-gender partnerships to be deployed as priests-in-charge in the diocese.
17. **What happens if the clergy and vestry in a parish are not on the same page?** Nothing happens within the parish and sanctuary. The Bishop's plan is one that seeks consensus and pastoral harmony between the priest, vestry leadership, and the congregation.
18. **Can the bylaws be changed so that the deed of a church's property is transferred from the diocese to the parish?** No

19. **What is the legal status of a same-gender couple whose relationship has been blessed in this new rite?** It depends on state law. In Texas, this couple's relationship would currently have no legal status.
20. **Will the Bishop have to approve each blessing?** Yes, as he currently approves all remarriages.
21. **Does each parish have to declare itself?** No, parishes may decide to do nothing at this time, or ever.
22. **Can a rector conduct such services off-site of his/her parish?** Yes, but only with permission of the Bishop in accordance with his plan.