

**A054 Adopt Resources and Rites from “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015”**

**A Commentary  
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for  
Province IV Bishops and Chancellors Conference 2015**

1. Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 78th General Convention commend “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” as found in the Blue Book, Liturgy Supplemental Materials: Appendices of the Report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (BBLSM), pp. 2-151 with the following revisions:

BBLSM p. 84: In The Commitment, change the rubric to read “Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the right hand of the other and says”

BBLSM p.84: After “I N., give myself to you, N.” add “, and take you to myself.”

BBLSM p. 85: At the Pronouncement, change the rubric to read “The Presider joins the right hands and says”

BBLSM p. 87: In Concerning the Service, change the second paragraph to read “At least one of the couple must be a baptized Christian, and the marriage shall conform to the laws of the state and canons of this church.”

BBLSM p. 88: Under Gathering, change the rubric to read “The couple joins the assembly.”

BBLSM p. 89: Change “In marriage according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X” to “In marriage [according to the laws of the state or civil jurisdiction of X]”

BBLSM p. 89: Change “Solemnize their marriage according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X” to “are married [according to the laws of the state or civil jurisdiction of X]”

BBLSM p.94: After “I N., give myself to you, N.” add “, and take you to myself.”

BBLSM p. 95: At the Pronouncement, change the rubric to read “The Presider joins the right hands of the couple and says”

BBLSM p. 95: Replace “I pronounce that they are married according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction] of X” to “I pronounce that they are married [according to the laws of the state or civil jurisdiction of X]”

BBLSM p. 100: At The Marriage, change the rubric to read “Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the right hand of the other and says”

for study and use in congregations and dioceses of The Episcopal Church; and be it further

**Commentary:** The first resolve as amended tweaks the texts of the proposed new liturgies forming the content of “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015.”

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music submitted four proposed trial liturgies:

“The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” (revised), the 2012 “Blessing” liturgy modified in response to specific feedback from its provisional use during the previous triennium;

“The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage”, an adaptation of the “Lifelong Covenant” liturgy as marriage for any couple;

“The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage(2)”, containing gender-neutral adaptations of the three marriage rites from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer for use by any couple; and

“The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony”, adapted from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer for use by any couple.

Only the first three proposed liturgies are authorized for trial use.

2. *Resolved*, That the 78th General Convention authorize for use “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” from “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” (as found in Supplemental Materials: Appendices of the Report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, pp. 77-86, (as amended)),” beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2015; under the direction and with the permission of the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority; and be it further

**Commentary:** Note the phrase “authorize for use” applied to the “Lifelong Covenant” liturgy. When authorized in its previous edition in 2012, it was for “provisional use ... under the direction and subject to the permission of the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority”. Provisional use was the term elected by the House of Bishops as opposed to trial use which is defined in Article X of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church as intended as a possible future revision of the Book of Common Prayer.

There was some debate about continuing authorization for the Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant liturgy for same-sex couples. When introduced and authorized by General Convention 2012, it was in the context where the majority of states still banned marriage for same-sex couples.

Over the next three years, a growing majority of states found their bans overruled by court decisions, culminating in the U. S. Supreme Court decision of June 26, 2015, extending marriage to same-sex couples throughout the United States. As for the effect of this decision within The Episcopal Church, there remain several member provinces where same-sex marriage remains prohibited, such as Navajoland Area Mission and provinces in the Caribbean, Central and South America. Recognizing this situation, General Convention extended use of the Blessings liturgy with some changes suggested by the provisional use during the previous triennium. The choice of “use” instead of “trial use” may be oversight or may be an expectation that the need for a Blessing of Lifelong Covenant for same-sex couples will disappear with time and may not need to become a part of a future revised *Book of Common Prayer*.

Some clergy have suggested or asked for latitude to use the trial liturgy of Blessing a Life-long Covenant for different-sex couples in circumstances where marriage is not sought, such as couples whose financial assets would be affected negatively by marriage, or illegal immigrants who may not marry legally. Such use for different-sex couples does not appear to have official sanction following General Convention 2015. In a document presented to the House of Bishops which the House received and referred to its member bishops for their use in their respective dioceses, either in its present or as modified in the interest of the pastoral needs of their diocese.

3. *Resolved*, That the 78th General Convention authorize for trial use in accordance with Article X of the Constitution and Canon II.3.6 “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage,” and “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2,” from “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” (as found in Supplemental Materials: Appendices of the Report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, pp. 87-105) beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2015. 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. Trial use is only to be available under the direction and with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop; and be it further

**Commentary:** Two of the three new liturgies proposed by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music received approval for trial use during the next triennium for marriage of all couples. Trial use is governed by Article X of the Constitution:

“But notwithstanding anything herein above contained, the General Convention may at any one meeting, by a majority of the whole number of the Bishops entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, and by a majority of the Clerical and Lay Deputies of all the Dioceses entitled to representation in the House of Deputies, voting by orders as previously set forth in this Article:

...

(b) Authorize for trial use throughout this Church, as an alternative at any time or times to the established Book of Common Prayer or to any section or Office thereof, a proposed revision of the whole Book or of any portion thereof, duly undertaken by the General Convention.” (Article X of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church, 2012)

Canon II.3.6 gives further instructions and directions for the implementation of trial use liturgies, including that “the enabling Resolution shall specify the period of such trial use, the precise text thereof, and any special terms or conditions under which such trial use shall be carried out.” The Canon gives further instructions to the Custodian of the Book of Common Prayer for the implementation of trial use. (Canons of The Episcopal Church, 2012)

“Bishops exercising ecclesiastical supervision” was added at the request of the Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Forces, to clarify his authority to authorize trial use along with Bishops with ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

4. *Resolved*, That bishops may continue to provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church; and be it further

**Commentary:** The same provision appeared in Resolution 2012-A049 with a specific limitation to “dioceses in civil jurisdictions where same-sex marriage is legal”. As modified, the resolve restates and reinforces a bishop’s perceived broad inherent authority over liturgical matters in their diocese.

5. *Resolved*, That the provision of Canon I.18.4 applies by extension to “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” namely, “It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to” preside at any rite contained herein; and be it further

**Commentary:** Resolution 2012-A049 contained a similar resolve intended to extend Canon I.18.4 to implementation of the Blessing Liturgy for provisional use. With the passage of Resolution 2015-A036 amending Canon I.18, this resolve now refers to Canon I.18.7 which now reads: “~~Sec. 4~~ Sec. 7. It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to solemnize *or bless* any marriage.” This resolve remains necessary because a blessing of a same-sex relationship may occur where same-sex marriage is not legal.

6. *Resolved*, That the provisions of Canon I.19.3 regarding marriage after divorce apply equally to all the rites of “Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015,” in accordance with guidelines established by each diocese; and be it further

**Commentary:** Canon I.19.3 sets out requirements for clergy when solemnizing a marriage where one of the parties has been married previously. This resolve makes clear that clergy are expected similarly to follow Canon I.19.3 when performing any of the rites contained in Liturgical Rites I, Revised and Expanded 2015.

7. *Resolved*, That this convention honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality; and that no bishop, priest, deacon or lay person should be coerced or penalized in any manner, nor suffer any canonical disabilities, as a result of his or her theological objection to or support for the 78th General Convention’s action contained in this resolution; and be it further

**Commentary:** This paragraph is carried forward from Resolution 2012-A049 to assure that, whatever the position of an individual bishop with regard to same-sex blessing or marriage, he or she may act in accordance with her or his own conscience without fear of penalty. While the resolve does not make a specific reference to Title IV action, the phrase “nor suffer any canonical disabilities” is intended to include Title IV ecclesiastical discipline. Apprehension from clergy about Title IV consequences was a particular concern in response to Resolution 2012-A049. With the revised Canon I.18 this should be a lesser concern. Clergy continue to be subject to Title IV consequences if he or she acts contrary to the direction and permission of her or his bishop with regard to use of Liturgical Resources I.

8. *Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music continue to monitor the use of this material and report to the 79th General Convention; and be it further

**Commentary:** It has become standard practice for the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to study and report on the implementation of trial or supplemental liturgies with specific direction by General Convention, as SCLM’s mandate in Canon I.1.2(n)(6) does not otherwise address its role in such implementation.

9. Resolved, That the 78th General Convention direct the Secretary of General Convention, and the Custodian of the Standard Book of Common Prayer in consultation with the outgoing Chair of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music and the Chairs of the Legislative Committees to whom this legislation is referred, to finalize and arrange for the publication with Church Publishing of the material (in English and Spanish) contained in “Liturgical Resources 1: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing, Revised and Expanded 2015” as approved by the 78th General Convention, no later than the first Sunday of Advent 2015, these materials to be available electronically at no cost.

**Commentary:** In response to challenges in producing Liturgical Resources I 2012 in time for implementation on the first Sunday of Advent 2012, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music included specific direction for publication of Liturgical Resources I, Revised and Expanded 2015 in time for implementation on the first Sunday of Advent 2015.