

NOTE: This resolution, adopted by the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church on February 24, 2019, has not yet been certified by the Secretary but is believed to be correct.

TO: The Executive Council
FROM: The Joint Standing Committee on Governance and Operations
DATE: February 23, 2019
SUBJECT: EXCLUSION OF SPOUSES AT LAMBETH CONFERENCE:
WHEN DOES ALL MEAN ALL?

Whereas, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church gives thanks for the Bishops of this Church and for all Bishops of the Anglican Communion; and

Whereas, the Executive Council recognizes the value of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion gathering at the Lambeth Conference for prayer, study, reflection and fellowship at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury; and

Whereas, the announced theme of the Lambeth Conference scheduled for July in 2020 is “God’s Church for God’s World: walking, listening and witnessing together;” and

Whereas, it has been reported that several Bishops whose spouses are the same sex as the Bishops have been informed by the Archbishop of Canterbury that their spouse is not invited to the 2020 Lambeth Conference; and

Whereas, The Episcopal Church, acting through its governing body the General Convention, has taken a variety of actions over a period of more than forty years in support of homosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, their partners, spouses and families, both in secular society and in the Church (*Please see key resolutions below.*); and

Whereas, several statements and resolutions have been issued by Anglican Communion entities relating to human sexuality:

Lambeth Conference 1998, Resolution 1.10 (c), in part:

We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;

Lambeth Conference 2008, Lambeth Indaba Reflection

Section A Introduction

7. We give thanks for the Conference in which our spouses have participated over the last three weeks, as they have lived and prayed alongside our own conference, studies and deliberations.

**Anglican Consultative Council 15 in 2012 Resolution 15.33:
Rites Relating to Marriage**

ACC-15 welcomed the Canterbury Statement of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation 'Rites Relating to Marriage' and commended it to the Provinces for study. Section 15.5 of the Statement reads:

15.5 Some in the Anglican Communion are discerning that much of what is held to be true of Christian marriage between a man and a woman is also found and given expression in faithful, committed, monogamous, lifelong relationships between two men or two women, whether it is called a marriage or something else. This provides an opportunity for continuing conversation within the Communion and listening to the experiences of gay and lesbian disciples of Christ.

and,

Whereas, the descriptions of the program and purposes of the upcoming Lambeth Conference from its official website (lambethconference.org/about) include the following:

“We will listen to God through one another. We will seek God’s wisdom to find ways to walk together build one another up as leaders and proclaim the God News of Jesus Christ to a world that needs it more than ever.”

“For the first time there will be a joint programme. Spouses of bishops will attend combined sessions at key points in the overall programme.”

“There will also be separate sessions on the specific responsibilities of the ministry for bishops and spouses.”

and,

Whereas, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion has stated:

“I need to clarify a misunderstanding that has arisen. Invitations have been sent to every active bishop. That is how it should be – we are recognizing that all those consecrated into the office of bishop should be able to attend. But the invitation process has also needed to take account of the Anglican Communion’s position on marriage which is that it is the lifelong union of a man and a woman. That is the position as set out in Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference. Given this, it would be inappropriate for same sex spouses to be invited to the conference.”

Now, Therefore, the Executive Council expresses its concern, regret and disappointment in the language posted by the Secretary General, that to invite certain spouses of Bishops in the Communion to the Lambeth Conference would be “inappropriate”; and

Resolved further that the Executive Council finds the choice not to invite certain spouses to be inconsistent with the positions of The Episcopal Church as expressed by General Convention and especially in Canon I.17.5 (see below); compared to the opposite sex spouses of Bishops who will be invited to participate in the Lambeth Conference; and

Resolved further that the Executive Council finds the decision not to invite certain spouses to be inconsistent with multiple statements of the Anglican Communion: Listening to LGBTQ persons is essential and would add invaluable perspectives to the discussions, listening and work of the Bishops and spouses at the Lambeth Conference; and

Resolved further, that while the Lambeth Conference 2020 planning group has made significant new efforts to include all Bishops and their spouses, Executive Council finds the exclusion of “same sex” spouses to be particularly misguided and inconsistent with the stated purposes of the Conference; and

Resolved further, that the Executive Council expresses its love, support, concern and prayers for the spouses who have not been invited or may not be invited to the Lambeth Conference; and

Resolved further, that the Executive Council affirms and laments the hurt and pain this action causes to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons across the Anglican Communion; and

Resolved further, that Executive Council asks each Bishop, each spouse of a Bishop, and the House of Bishops collectively to prayerfully and carefully consider her/his/their response, choices and actions in the light of these troubling circumstances.

Key resolutions and Canons of The General Convention of The Episcopal Church

1976 - A071 “. . .homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection of the laws with all other citizens, and calls upon our society to see that such protection is provided in actuality.”

1994 - D006 “. . . call[s] upon municipal council, state legislatures and the United States Congress to approve measures giving gay and lesbian couples protection[s] such as: bereavement and family leave policies; health benefits, pension benefits; real-estate transfer tax benefits, and commitments to mutual support enjoyed by non-gay married couples.”

1994 - Amended Canon I.17.5 to provide protections to persons based on, among other things, their sexual orientation.

Sec. 5. No one shall be denied rights, status, or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by Canon.

1994 - Amended Canon III.4.1 to provide protections to persons based on, among other things, their sexual orientation.

Sec. 1. 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. No right to ordination is hereby established

2000 - C043 “. . . affirm and endorse the Cambridge Accord of October 1, 1999 and urge all members of the House of Bishops to affix their names to the Accord, the text of which follows.

THE CAMBRIDGE ACCORD

In the name of God, we, the bishops of the Anglican Communion who have affixed our names to this Accord, publish it as a statement of our shared opinion in regard to all persons who are homosexual. We affirm that while we may have

contrasting views on the Biblical, theological, and moral issues surrounding homosexuality, on these three points we are in one Accord:

- That no homosexual person should ever be deprived of liberty, personal property, or civil rights because of his or her sexual orientation.
- That all acts of violence, oppression, and degradation against homosexual persons are wrong and cannot be sanctioned by an appeal to the Christian faith.
- That every human being is created equal in the eyes of God and therefore deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.”

2009 - D052- “. . . That the 76th General Convention affirm the value of “listening to the experience of homosexual persons,” as called for by the Lambeth Conferences of 1978, 1988 and 1998, and acknowledge that through our own listening the General Convention has come to recognize that the baptized membership of The Episcopal Church includes same sex couples living in lifelong committed relationships “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” (2000-D039); and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention recognize that gay and lesbian persons who are part of such relationships have responded to God’s call and have exercised various ministries in and on behalf of God’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are currently doing so in our midst; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention affirm that God has called and may call such individuals to any ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church, and that God’s call to the ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church is a mystery which the Church attempts to discern for all people through our discernment processes acting in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church;

2012 - A049 “That the 77th General Convention commend "Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing" for study and use in congregations and dioceses of The Episcopal Church” for the blessing of same sex relationships.

2012 - D011 “. . . That the 77th General Convention urge enactment of legislation to permit same-gender legal domestic partners and spouses of United States citizens and lawful permanent residents to seek lawful permanent resident status in the same manner as different-gender spouses of citizens and lawful permanent residents;”

2012 - D018 “. . . That the 77th General Convention urge members of the U.S. Congress to repeal federal laws that have a discriminatory effect on same-gender civilly married couples, and to pass legislation to allow the U.S. federal government to provide benefits to those couples;”

2015 - A036 amended Canon I.18 on the solemnization of Holy Matrimony to permit same sex marriage if permitted by civil law;

2015 - D047 “. . . That the 78th General Convention direct the Trustees of the Church Pension Fund to continue to review and revise the pension plan rules so that participants in the plan with same-gender spouses and their spouses are treated the same as participants with opposite-gender spouses in all respects;

“. . . That, so as not to discriminate against same-gender couples who in the past were not able to marry under civil law, there be a transition period to provide equal benefits to married couples, including special provisions for surviving partners of deceased participants in the plan.”