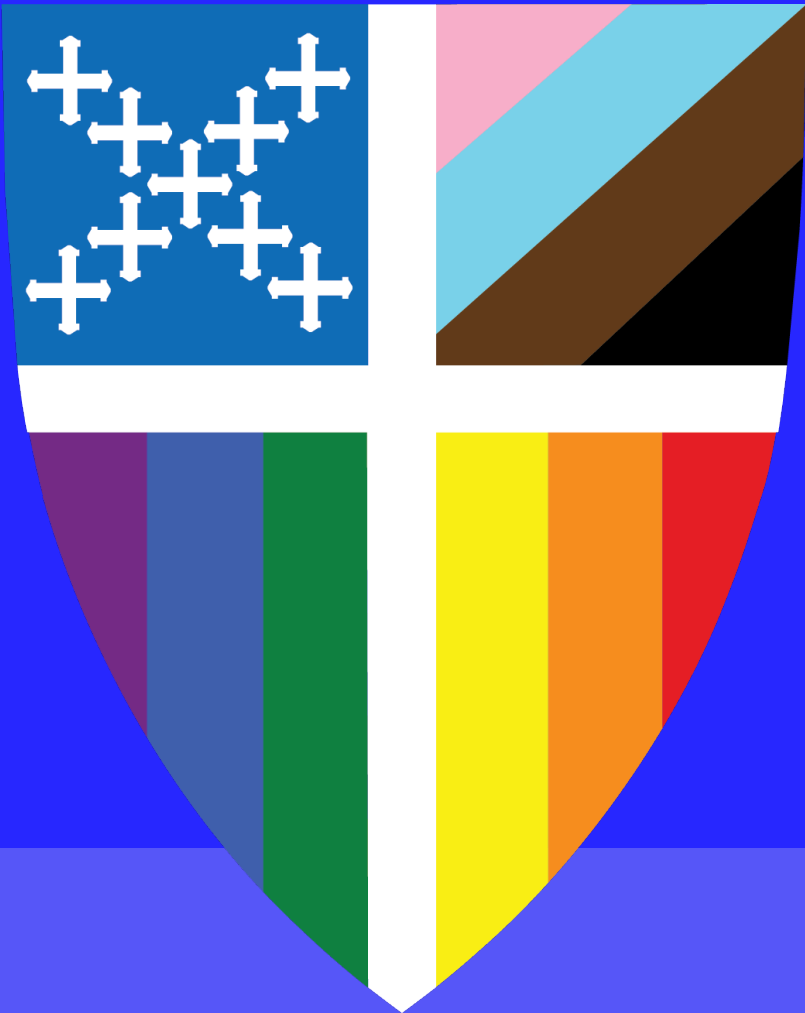


# The 2024 Blue Book Report of the Task Force on LGBTQ+ Inclusion



81st General Convention of the Episcopal Church  
Louisville | 2024

# Task Force on LGBTQ+ Inclusion

## **Mandate**

The Task Force on LGBTQ+ Inclusion was charged by Resolution 2022-D016 to “initiate a church-wide audit of how The Episcopal Church has lived into its 1976 commitment to provide full and equal claim to the love, acceptance and pastoral concern and care of the Church to its LGBTQ+ members” and “begin the process of creating an archive of the history of the work for LGBTQ+ inclusion in The Episcopal Church.”

## **Introduction and summary**

The Task Force held two in person meetings in March and October 2023 and met periodically over Zoom as a committee of the whole and in two working subcommittees: Archives and Audit. The scope of our work for this shortened triennium was to create initial plans to implement the two-fold directive to audit how the Episcopal Church has lived up to its commitment to full inclusion for its LGBTQ+ members and to archive the history of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the Episcopal Church.

## **Summary of the Legislative History of LGBTQ+ Inclusion in the Episcopal Church**

The Episcopal Church has been officially debating the issue of human sexuality in general and how it applies to LGBTQ people in specific since the General Convention of 1976 when resolutions adopted by the Bishops and Deputies began to frame the parameters of the debate. In the intervening years resolutions have been passed and then amended as the church's position has evolved in response to the dialogue.

In 1976, the 65th General Convention of the Episcopal Church asserted in Resolution 1976-A069 that *"homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance and pastoral concern and care of the Church"* and faithful witnesses to God's inclusive love have been working ever since to make that resolution a reality for all members of the human family.

It further declared in resolution 1976-A071 *"That the General Convention expresses its conviction that 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."*

## **70th General Convention | Phoenix 1991**

In 1991 the General Convention held in Phoenix acknowledged its inability to resolve the complex issues surrounding human sexuality by means of the normal legislative process. The Convention opted instead for a process of continued study and dialogue across the whole church, with a report to be issued from the House of Bishops.

## **71st General Convention | Indianapolis 1994**

Resolution 1994-B012- Authorize Appointment of a Committee on Dialogue on Human Sexuality - was adopted, calling for the study of "Continuing the Dialogue" and "commit to dialogue in faith with no expectation of uniformity." Additionally, the canons on ordination were amended to add sexual orientation to Title III, Canon 4, Section 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." --*Title III, Canon 4, Section 1 of the Constitution and Canons for the Government of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, p. 60*

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

## **72nd General Convention | Philadelphia 1997**

Resolutions adopted in Philadelphia included 1997-C024 -- approving the option of extension of healthcare benefits to the partners of clergy and lay employees in dioceses and 1997-D011-- apologizing on behalf of the Episcopal Church to its members who are gay and lesbian and to the lesbians and gay men outside the Church for years of rejection and maltreatment by the Church and affirming that this Church seeks amendment of our life together as we ask God's help in sharing the Good News with all people.

## **1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops**

In 1998, the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, meeting in July at their every ten-year gathering in Canterbury, adopted Lambeth Resolution 1:10 -- which was entitled "Human Sexuality" and included the majority opinion of the bishops gathered at that conference that "homosexual practice is incompatible with Scripture" and "cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions." Much energy has been spent over the intervening years debating whether that language was descriptive of the bishops gathered at Lambeth '98 or prescriptive for the wider communion.

## **73rd General Convention | Denver 2000**

A number of LGBTQ+ affirming resolutions were adopted in Denver, including 2000-A009 - Identification of Safe Spaces: establishing a formal process for congregations to identify themselves as safe spaces for GLBT people; 2000-A046 - Urge Conversation with Youth and Young Adults About Sexuality; 2000-A080 - Commend Dialogue on Fidelity in Human Relationships; 2000-C031- Recommend Engaging the Boy Scouts on Issues of Sexuality Orientation and 2000-D039 - Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage and Existence of Disagreement

2000-D039 was adopted overwhelmingly by a voice vote in the House of Deputies and by a 119 -19 margin in the House of Bishops. An "8th Resolve" which called for the preparation of rites for inclusion in the Book of Occasional Services failed to pass by a narrow margin in both houses. However, this important resolution broke new ground by moving the Episcopal Church into conversations about relationship that transcend sexual orientation ... and set the stage for the 2003 General Convention in Minneapolis.

## **74th General Convention | Minneapolis 2003**

In addition to consenting to the election of V. Gene Robinson as the 9th Bishop of New Hampshire, the 2003 General Convention in Minneapolis adopted 2003-C051- Blessing of Committed Same-Gender Relationships -- a landmark resolution moving the church forward on the blessing of same-sex unions. Key resolves included of this important resolution included:

*Resolved*, That we reaffirm Resolution D039 of the 73rd General Convention (2000), 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 that such relationships exist throughout the church, and be it further

*Resolved*, That 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.

## **2003 – 2006**

Following the gains made in Minneapolis in 2003, pressure was put on the wider Anglican Communion to censure the American Episcopal Church. In 2004 "The Windsor Report"-- calling for moratoria on further consecrations of LGBTQ bishops and blessing of same-sex unions – was published. In response, The Episcopal Church presented "To Set Our Hope on Christ" at the 2005 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council – a response to the Windsor Report making the biblical and theological case for the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the Body of Christ.

## **75th General Convention | Columbus 2006**

The 2006 General Convention was consumed by responding to the Windsor Report and whether or not American bishops would be invited to the 2008 Lambeth Conference. After nine days of legislation, resolutions insisting on "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 and a series of "response to Windsor" resolutions were adopted.

Those resolutions included:

- 2006-A159- Affirm Commitment to the Anglican Communion;
- 2006-A160- Express Regret for Straining the Bonds of the Church;
- 2006-A165- Commend the Windsor Report and Commit to the "Windsor Process";
- 2006-A166- Support Development of an Anglican Covenant

In addition, General Convention adopted 2006-A167- Reaffirm Church Membership of Gay and Lesbian Persons; 2006-A095 - Reaffirm Support of Gay and Lesbian Persons; 2006-D005 - Oppose Criminalization of Homosexuality

On the 10th and last legislative day, an unprecedented joint session of the Houses of Bishops & Deputies was presented with 2006-Resolution B033 by then Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold. The resolution that was adopted by both houses was entitled "Exercise Restraint in Consecrating Candidates" and read:

*Resolved*, That the 75th General Convention receive and embrace The Windsor Report's invitation to engage in a process of healing and reconciliation; and be it further

*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.

## **2008 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops**

In 2008 the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops was held in Canterbury. The Bishop of New Hampshire was not invited to attend. However, dire predictions of actions to censure or marginalize bishops from The Episcopal Church failed to materialize and a large contingent of LGBTQ+ Episcopalians and allies were part of the Inclusive Communion Witness in Canterbury.

## **76th General Convention | Anaheim 2009**

Two primary goals were set out for this General Convention by LGBTQ activists: moving beyond B033 and forward on the blessing of same sex unions. Both were accomplished with the adoption of 2009-C056 and 2009-D025 ... calling on the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to collect and develop theological and liturgical resources for the blessing of unions of same-sex couples and ending the de facto moratorium on the election of LGBTQ+ people to the episcopate. The 76th General Convention also adopted the Episcopal Church's first-ever resolution addressing gender identity: 2009-D012- Support Laws that Prohibit Discrimination Based on Gender Identity

## **77th General Convention | Indianapolis 2012**

A significant number of LGBTQ+ related resolutions were adopted by the 77th General Convention meeting in Indianapolis in July of 2012. They included authorizing liturgies for blessing same-sex relationships, creating a task force to study marriage in general and the marriage of same-sex couples in specific, standing in support of civil marriage for same-sex couples and opposing transgender discrimination.

- 2009-A049 - Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships
- 2009-A050 - Create Task Force on the Study of Marriage
- 2009-D018 - End Discrimination Against Same-Sex Marriages
- 2009-D002 - Affirming Access to the Ordination Process (ending discrimination against transgender ordination)
- 2009-D019 - Adding Gender Identity and Gender Expression to Non-Discrimination Canons
- 2009-D061- Adopt Statement on Threats to Sexual Minorities

## **78th General Convention | Salt Lake City 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.

- 2012-A036 - Amend Canon I.18 [Of the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony]
- 2012-A037 - Appoint Expanded Task Force on the Study of Marriage
- 2012-A054 - 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.*"

The 78th General Convention also adopted the following resolutions: 2015-D051- Support LGBTI Advocacy in Africa; 2015-C037 - Support and Sponsor Boy Scout Units --*supporting the move to inclusive scouting*; 2015-D037 - Amend Church Records to Reflect Name Changes

### **2015 - 2018**

It bears noting that during this triennium the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the Episcopal Church received unwavering and explicit support from our Presiding Officers: Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and President of the House of Deputies Gay Clark Jennings.

### **79th General Convention | Austin 2018**

Resolution 2018-B012 Marriage Rites for the Whole Church 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.

The 79th General Convention also adopted

- 2018-A088 - Proposed Guidelines For Amending Church Records;
- 2018-A086 - Authorize Rites to Bless Relationships;
- 2018-C022 - Support End of Discrimination Against Transgender and Non-Binary People and
- 2018-C054 - Adopt Guiding Principles for Inclusion of Transgender and Non-Binary People

### **80th General Convention | Baltimore 2022**

In 2021 -- leading up to the 80th General Convention -- an official LGBTQ Caucus was convened: 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 to be the recipients and coordinators of the list of LGBTQ+ deputies and alternates interested in caucusing together.

An inaugural meeting of the Caucus was called on November 20, 2021 and the opening remarks included this summary of its the scope of work: "Our purpose is simple: to mobilize and advocate for the full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the work and witness of the Episcopal Church."

"We are the new wine skin for the new wine of an LGBTQ Caucus made up of Deputies to General Convention in collaboration with grassroots LGBTQ leaders around the church focused on advancing a legislative agenda supporting the fuller inclusion of LGBTQ people in the Episcopal Church, the witness of TEC to oppose discrimination and oppression of LGBTQ people in the wider church and the world and supporting the election of LGBTQ people and allies to leadership positions in TEC."

The 80th General Convention met in Baltimore July 8-12, 2022 with a shortened format due to COVID-19 restrictions with only Deputies and First Alternates in person for four days of legislative sessions. In spite of the shortened format the movement for LGBTQ+ Inclusion & Equity made significant legislative gains, including:

- 2022-A063 - Directing TEC to establish a staff position, of Director of LBGTQI and Women's Ministries;
- 2022-D045 - Calling on the Episcopal Church to support protection of persons forced to seek refugee or asylee status because of persecution because they are LGBTIQ+;
- 2022-D060 - Lamenting the harm done to LGBTQ persons throughout the world during COVID -19 restrictions; and
- 2022-D066 - Supporting gender affirming care at local, state and national levels and asserts that the protection of religious liberty extends to all Episcopalians who may need or who offer gender affirming care.

Also adopted was resolution 2022-D026 - Creating a Task Force on LGBTQ+ Inclusion, charged with initiating a church-wide audit of how TEC has lived into its 1976 commitment to provide full and equal claim to the love, acceptance and pastoral concern and care of the Church to its LGBTQ+ members and beginning the process of creating an archive of the history of the work for LGBTQ+ inclusion in TEC.

The Task Force was funded through 2027 and began its work in January 2023.



## **Archiving Our History:** Telling Our Stories

The summary of the legislative history offered above is a timeline of benchmarks in the ongoing journey toward making the 1976 promise of full and equal claim to LGBTQ+ Episcopalians not just a resolution but a reality. The work of the Archive team is to dig deeper – and to begin the process of preserving for The Episcopal Church the rich history of the stories behind the movement for full inclusion for LGBTQ+ people over the decades – including first-person narrative histories, photographs, videos, and historical documents.

First steps toward initiating that process have included researching existing Episcopal Church and LGBTQ Archives and beginning to build a container to both receive and make available archival resources to the wider church.

The Archives subcommittee is beginning that work with a narrative history project launching in January 2024 reaching out to a crowd-sourced list of nearly 100 Episcopal LGBTQ elders and allies -- inviting them to share stories of both celebration and struggle.

## **Auditing Our Present:** Toward an LGBTQ+ Audit

The scope of work of this audit is creating a snapshot of how the Episcopal Church is measuring up to the General Convention's statements over the years regarding LGBTQ+ people and whether it complies with Canons mandating full inclusion. As with any audit or study regarding real people, both quantitative and qualitative metrics will be necessary to provide the fullest possible picture. And since this study focuses on those who have been historically marginalized – and in some places continue to experience marginalization -- we are developing a multi-staged mixed method study to find and capture stories and experiences – along with hard data -- which will equip us to monitor the church's progression toward full inclusion and justice for LGBTQ+ people.

In the first stage of our audit, we plan to gather both quantitative data and qualitative input – recognizing that the nature of our charge is to gain a better understanding of how we as a Church are living into the promises we have made. We will start with what we know by getting out into the weeds to thrush out the stories from the margins from those serving or having previously served and worked throughout the echelons of our Church: from the Presiding Officers, Deputies, and Bishops of the General Convention, to Diocesan Standing Committees and Parish Vestries.

We will also explore networks of cooperation over the decades including both official caucuses of General Convention Deputies and ancillary organizations such as Integrity, Oasis Ministries, TransEpiscopal, Claiming the Blessing, the Chicago Consultation and others who have operated from the margins.

From there, the next stage of audit is to identify, collect, and present stories from the ground level that we hope will give insight to both our Church's strengths and successes in the efforts toward fuller inclusion of LGBTQ+ people, but also our shortcomings and areas of needed growth.

It is also our expectation that this Task Force, based on its findings, will have recommendations for moving forward a better understanding and better equipping of God's people in the work of love and justice within our Church and in the world.

## Membership

The Rev. Canon Susan Russell, Chair

The Rt. Rev. Thomas Brown

Mx. Samantha Christopher

Mr. Jay Elmquist

The Very Rev. Shug Goodlow

Mr. Dennis Kirchoff

The Rev. Tory Moir

The Rev. RJ Powell

Mr. Paul Ricketts

Mx. Emily Rowcliffe

The Rt. Rev. Kathryn Ryan

The Rev. J. Gregory Stark

The Rev. Bryan Velez-Garcia

## Changes in Membership

The Reverend Iain Stanford – a valued member of this Task Force and a trailblazer in LGBTQ+ inclusion as one of the first transgender priests in the Episcopal Church died on July 10, 2023. May he rest in peace and rise in glory – and may his memory be a blessing and inspiration.