

# Blessing Same Gender Relationships

History, The Rite, Bishop's Response, Going Forward

# Introduction

- St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin, TX

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLWelEn\\_XgI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLWelEn_XgI)



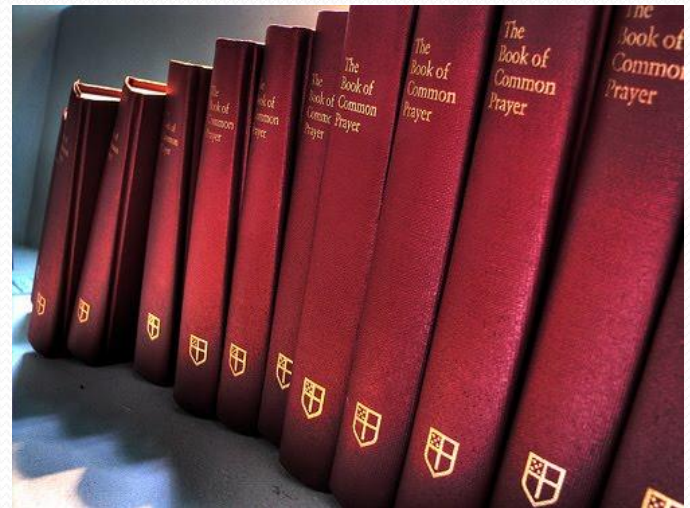
# Controversy in the Church

## Power of Liturgy

*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*

*“The law of praying, shapes the law of believing.”*

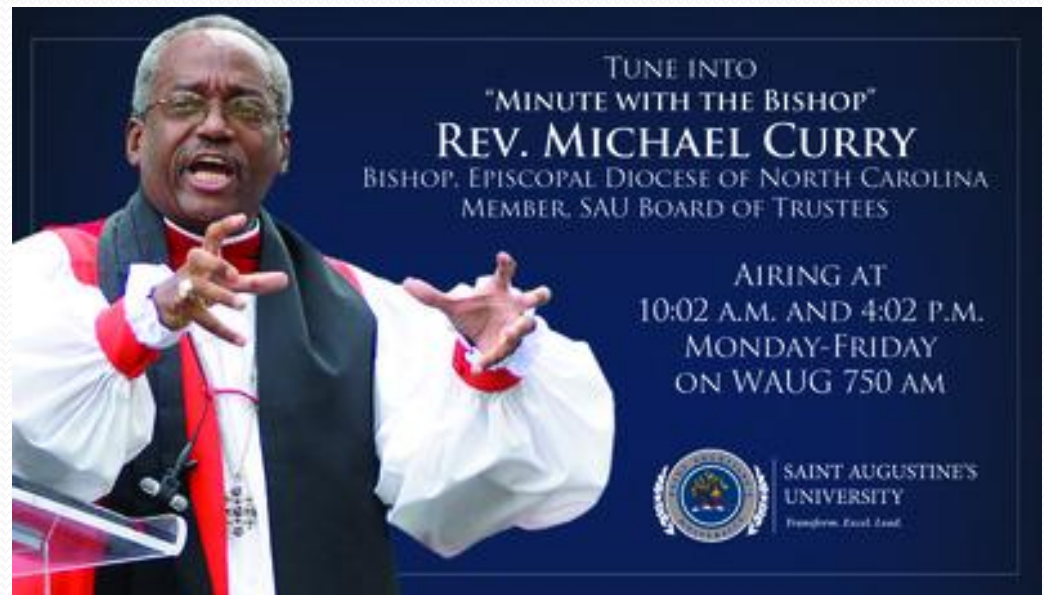
*We work out our theology  
in our liturgy.*



# History of Same Gender Blessings

- Blessing of Same Sex Relationships has been done in various places for a long time as a pastoral response.

A variety of local liturgical experiments



# History of Same Gender Episcopal Legislation

General Convention 2003

Bishop Gene Robinson

General Convention 2006

All orders of ministry, bishops, priests, deacons

General Convention 2009

Develop a Rite for Blessing

General Convention 2012

The blessing rite passes; each bishop has authority over its use

# The Blessing Rite – Theological Themes

A look at the introduction of the Rite:  
The Concept of Covenant

Vocation

Households

Fruitfulness

Mutual Blessing



# The Blessing Rite – The Rite Itself

A look at the introduction of the Rite:  
The Concept of Covenant

Similar Pattern to the Marriage

- Introduction
- Consent
- Scripture
- Vow
- Blessings

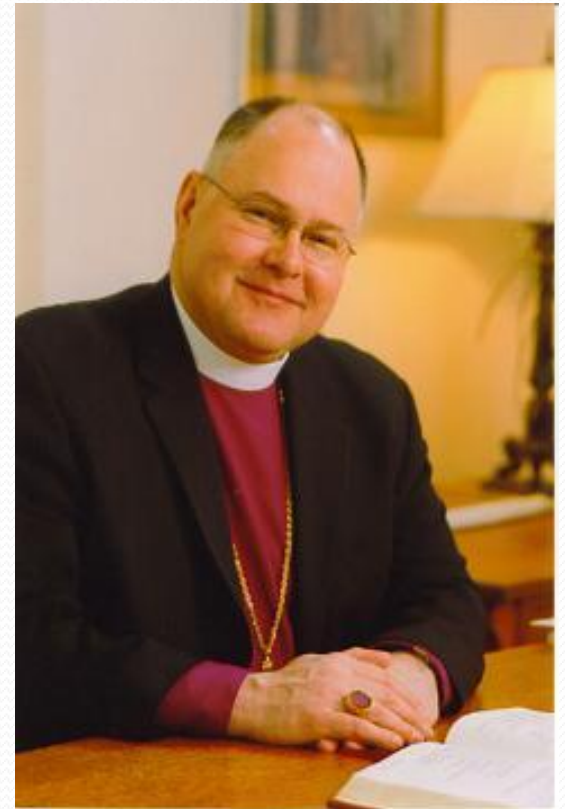


# Bishop's response

- Our bishop, the Rt. Rev. Steven Miller, served on the commission that designed the liturgy.
- He tries to use theological and Biblical lenses to make decisions.

Complicated in his views.

- Concealed carry, public-sector unions.





# Bishop's response

- Bishop's response letter. His position paper before the letter.
- Bishop said **no** to the blessing rite. “As much as I want in my heart to be in favor of this proposed step, I can not come to a place where I can agree that this rite is a theologically sound development.”
- Bishop said **yes**:
  - To civil marriage regardless of sexual orientation.
  - Clergy taking couples to the diocese of Chicago
  - Partnered gay and lesbian clergy being able to exercise their ministry in the diocese

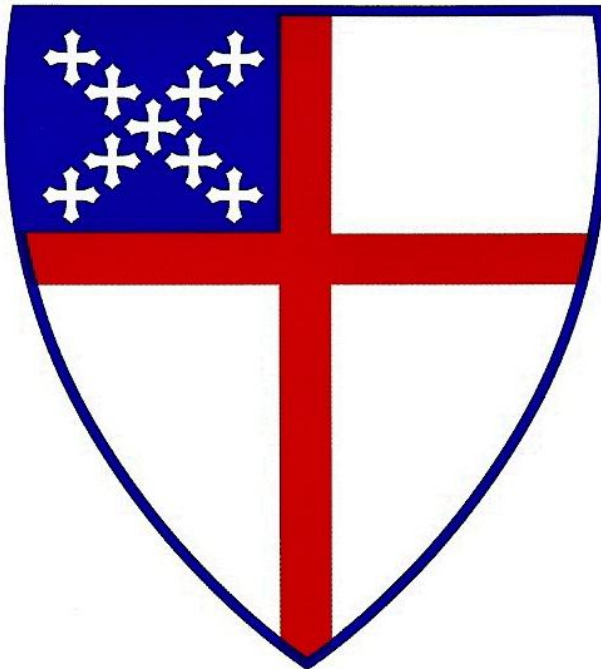
# Bishop's response – next steps

- Continue the process of listening, particularly from gay and lesbian people.
- The bishop would like to offer some kind of pastoral response, even if he can not currently endorse the blessing rite as it now stands.
- The Sanding Committee of the Diocese has been asked to gather feedback from the diocese and to make a report to the bishop on how to proceed

# Context

A view of the Episcopal Church

<http://www.integrityusa.org/blessings-policies>



# Context

- Same Gender Blessings in the Anglican Communion
- Very few



# Context

Same gender blessings in other Christian traditions

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Christian\\_denominational\\_positions\\_on\\_homosexuality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominational_positions_on_homosexuality)



# My own story (in brief)

## **Growing up**

## **Seminary experience**

- Personal relationships
- New ways to reflect on Biblical passages and the theological tradition

## **Look forward to using the Rite**

# Resources (many more available)

- <http://rachelheldevans.com/blog/matthew-vines-video>
- One hour video and transcript of a committed, gay Christian, wrestling honestly with the Bible and Christian tradition.
- [Reasonable and Holy: Same Sexuality](#)  
Anglican priest examines same sex relationships in light of the Bible and Christian tradition
- [Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views](#)  
Moral and Interpretive issues approached from different perspectives
- ["To Set Our Hope On Christ" -- .pdf version](#)
- Theological and Biblical reflections from Episcopal theologians.
- ["Without Form and Void" - by Kendall Harmon](#)  
*A theological essay arguing against same-gender blessings*
- ["True Union in the Body?" by Archbishop Drexel Gomez](#)  
*A short book opposing same-gender blessings. We don't know of availability for sale in book form.*
- ["This Far by Grace" by Bishop Neil Alexander - Amazon page](#)  
*A short book favoring same-gender blessings*
- ["Letter to Louise" by Bruce Lowe](#)  
*By a Baptist pastor from Arkansas - an affirming biblical study of homosexuality*
- ["The Covenanting and Blessing of a Lifelong Union"](#)  
*The rite we studied and approved in 2005-06; we used this rite until 2008*
- ["The Covenanting and Blessing of a Lifelong Union" \(o8\)](#)  
*The adapted rite following Bishop Benfield's policies, 2008 -*

# Christ Church going forward

- Make room for different perspectives.
- Would like to hear your stories.
- Questions?

