

Institutional Inclusion

By the Rev. Ed Bacon, Rector of [*All Saints Church, Pasadena*](#)

A significant change took place on the institutional level of the national Episcopal Church during its legislative convention (“[General Convention](#)”) in Anaheim, July 6-17, 2009.

In addition to varied legislation dealing with peace and justice issues and a wide range of other items related to the liturgical and legal life of Episcopalians, General Convention passed two breakthrough resolutions concerning inclusion of all baptized persons into all of the church’s sacraments. The two most controversial resolutions unequivocally opened the bishop discernment process to openly gay and lesbian priests and called for liturgical resources for same-gender blessings and marriages. What is remarkable is that not only did these resolutions pass, but that they did so with over 2 to 1 margins. Full reporting and texts of the resolutions can be found at <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ens/>.

Resolution D025 addressed the situation caused by the passing of Resolution B033 at the 2006 General Convention, urging restraint from ordaining openly gay bishops. I found B033 to be discriminatory against a particular classification of our membership, effectively creating a class system in the church. D025 both emphasized the Episcopal Church's supportive participation in the global Anglican Communion and also took an important stride in inclusion. It acknowledged that “membership of The Episcopal Church includes same-gender 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.” It also affirmed that God has called and may call such individuals, to *any* ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church (emphasis added).

The second inclusion resolution, Resolution C056, authorized the church to devise a process for collecting and developing theological resources and liturgies for the blessing of same-gender relationships. Furthermore, C056 resolved that “bishops, particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriages, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church.”

The Episcopal Church has officially been debating inclusion since the General Convention of 1976 - a 33-year journey. In 1976, General Convention stated that homosexual persons are “children of God and have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church.” This year, the church turned an important corner in that debate. The conclusions were not mere squeakers. Rather, there is

no doubt that we believe that when we baptize someone, that person can have access to all the church's sacraments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Bacon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E" and "B".

Ed Bacon
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