

Seeking Input on the Marriage of Same Sex Couples – Resources for Parishes

In “A Pastoral Letter With Respect to Same Sex Marriage” Archbishop Ron has indicated that same sex couples are now permitted to be married in our diocese. Parishes and clergy have been asked to notify Archbishop Ron if they wish to offer same sex marriages in their parishes. In the letter he states: “I will require a letter from the parish council and clergy of any parish which wishes to provide same sex marriages, indicating that the parish is supportive and the priest wishes to offer this rite. Many parishes have already completed a time of education, prayer, consultation and discernment following the creation of Policy 1.1.24 in 2011. Those who have not done so and wish to offer marriage for same sex couples are required to do this consultation and discernment before proceeding.”

For those parishes which have not already completed a time of education, prayer, consultation and discernment, the following resources are offered to assist you in beginning that process. Additional resources will be made available on the diocesan website by mid-September.

Appendix 1 – Norms for our Conversations on Same Sex Marriage

Appendix 2 – Draft Survey

This survey is designed to assist parishes in determining the collective “mind of the parish.” It is recommended that this survey be made available to regular worshipping members of the parish (i.e. those entitled to vote under Canon 35) at worship services or other gatherings of the parish. A deadline for receiving the surveys should be chosen and results collated after that date. It will be helpful to note the average Sunday attendance to determine the approximate percentage of parishioners who have replied. The point of this survey is to provide guidance to parish council on further processes or steps that might be necessary to assist their parishioners in responding to the question of same sex marriage in their parishes.

Appendix 3 – Triad Conversations (from the Diocese of Toronto)

This approach has been used in the Diocese of Toronto to enable people to have difficult conversations about same sex marriage in a more personal way where the focus is on listening to one another and respecting a diversity of views.

Appendix 1 - Norms for our Conversations on Same Sex Marriage
from the Anglican Church of Canada General Synod

The purpose of our time together is to invite a deeper understanding of what you and others feel and think about the possibility of offering same sex marriage in our parish and how we can value and sustain relationships in a time of disagreement.

To help us listen across our differences with respect:

1. We will grant that as people of faith we are all sincere our beliefs, including our reverence for Holy Scripture.
2. We will know that people of diverse sexuality and gender identities are present.
3. We will value inclusion and strive for greater understanding of each other.
4. We will speak in the first person.
5. We will not use language known to be offensive to others.
6. We will respect the right of people to speak of their own experiences.
7. We will respect the privacy of others.
8. We will ask no questions that we are not prepared to answer ourselves.

Appendix 2 – Parishioner Survey

Parishioner Survey – Seeking Input on the Marriage of Same Sex Couples in this Parish **Please complete only one survey per parishioner**

Our Diocesan Archbishop Ron Cutler has just issued “A Pastoral Letter With Respect to Same Sex Marriage” in which he notes that same sex marriages are now permitted in our diocese. Parishes and clergy have been asked to notify Archbishop Ron if they wish to offer same sex marriages in their parishes, after a time of education, prayer, consultation and discernment. Please indicate your response to the following questions to help parish council determine next steps.

1) Offering Same Sex Marriage in our Parish

I would like our parish to offer marriage for same sex couples at this time

I would not like our parish to offer marriage for same sex couples at this time

I’m not sure whether I would like our parish to offer marriage for same sex couples at this time or not

2) Our parish has not yet had an opportunity for study or discussion on this topic.

I would like an opportunity for further discussion and study

If you check this, please indicate which of the possibilities noted below are of interest

a listening process where we hear the views of other parishioners

the church’s teaching and practice about human sexuality and marriage

interpreting the Bible

human sexuality and current science

other (please describe)

Appendix 3 - Triad Conversations on Same Sex Marriage *from the Diocese of Toronto*

SAMPLE AGENDA

- 7:00 Gathering & prayer
Introductory remarks, overview of the process
Setting our norms
- 7:30 First conversation (question one) in triads
- 8:10 Second conversation (question two) in triads
- 8:45 Plenary, collecting our prayers
- 9:00 Farewell

TRIAD CONVERSATIONS (30 minutes)

In your group of 3:

- Introduce yourselves
- Choose a time keeper to help people stay to their 7-minute time limit
- *There is no need to take notes*

Take turns to respond to the following two questions.

- Each speaker has up to 7 minutes to share without interruption.
- Listeners can ask questions of clarification if necessary at the end of the person's allotted time. (*i.e. I don't think I understood you when you said....*)

QUESTIONS (7 minutes for each speaker)

1. What would you like to say to the group about how you feel about the marriage of same sex couples in our church(es)? What are your hopes and fears?
2. No matter the results of our decision here in our parish and across the Diocese, it will be met by both joy and hurt. How can we face this? What does it mean to be a diverse people of God?

After all 3 people have spoken, together briefly summarize what you've heard (5 minutes).

In silence, write down your prayer on the sheet provided. These prayers will be collected. (3 minutes)

Return to plenary.

Conversation on Same Sex Marriage in our Church

My prayers....