

Talking points  
Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania  
Sunday, June 10, 2012

- Yesterday, as part of his address to the Diocesan Convention, Bishop Baxter announced that this Diocese will plan to move ahead with use of the proposed blessing of same-gender unions. This decision is based on the probability that the upcoming General Convention will approve a trial liturgy for those blessings. That trial use will take place over the next three years.
- He said it was important that we all remember that this is not a marriage and that it has no standing under civil law in Pennsylvania. Rather, it is recognition by a local church community of the love, commitment and Christian faith witnessed in two persons known to that congregation and priest. And that's an important point – this liturgy is meant to celebrate the relationships of those same gender couples who are a part of our community of faith.
- He reminded us all that the Diocese has been in a careful process of discernment for a number of months and that he considered the issue carefully and prayerfully.
- As always, the Episcopal Church has always defined faithfulness to God as living in the tension between the biblical record, the progression of historic understandings of the faith and the radical edges of God's unfolding revelation.
- The Bishop and the entire Diocese understands that some priests and congregation will welcome the new liturgy and that others will be uncomfortable. He wanted to make it very clear that no one will be required to use the new liturgy. However, he did urge all members of the diocese to encourage an atmosphere of respectful listening.

- The Bishop encouraged all of us to create a spiritual environment that minimizes polarization, helps us develop consensus and allows for a genuine spirit of respect.
- The Bishop closed by saying that: “In the end, we want to keep an open dialogue about this issue as we move into this trial period. In the end, I’m hopeful that this will bring us all closer in Christ and help foster an open and welcoming atmosphere for all of God’s children.