THE RT. REV. STEVEN ANDREW MILLER, D.D.
BISHOP OF MILWAUKEE

July 28, 2015

Dear Friends is Christ,

I write as promised regarding the use of the trial rites for same sex marriage authorized by the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church.

In my report from the General Convention I stated, "While I have yet to work out the details, I anticipate I will authorize the use of the trial rites under guidelines similar to those set forth when I authorized clergy to bless civil marriages. As the new rites are marriage rites, clergy will be able to act as agents of the state should they so choose." Those guidelines have now been created and are attached.

Please remember that the trial use period for these liturgies does not begin until the First Sunday of Advent. It is my hope that providing the guidelines for the use of these liturgies will allow sufficient time for clergy and congregations that wish to use these trial rites to do so as soon as it is canonically permissible. Until that time, the guidelines for the blessing of same sex civil marriages remain in place.

I hope every congregation will make use of the study materials created by the Marriage Task Force whether or not they are considering us of the trial rites.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Steven A. Miller
Bishop of Milwaukee

SAM/bjk

Attachment: Guidelines for the Celebration and Blessing of Same-Sex Marriages

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BISHOP OF MILWAUKEE

GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING OF SAME SEX MARRIAGES

No priest may be compelled to bless a same sex marriage in violation of his/her convictions.

The rector of a congregation wishing to offer celebration and blessings of same-sex marriages in that congregation must bring the matter before the vestry of the congregation for a vote. Prior to the vote the vestry is to review the supporting materials in A049 from the 77th General Convention and the Report of the Marriage Task Force to the 78th General Convention. The Vestry and clergy are also to review "Section VII" of the 2004 Report of the Diocese on Human Sexuality ("Section VII" will be posted at www.diomil.org) Persons wishing to review the entire Report from 2004 may obtain printed copies from the Diocesan Office at 804 East Juneau Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53202. A two-thirds (2/3) affirmative majority vote of the vestry is required if same sex blessings are to be offered within a parish church.

Any congregation that offers same-sex marriage must also engage the congregational study set forth by Resolution A049, and outline in writing to the bishop how it will care for all members of the congregation regardless of their opinion on this matter.

At least one member of the couple must be an active member of the congregation.

Both members of the couple must participate in pre-marital counseling. The guidelines set forth in Resolution A049 of the 77th General Convention may be helpful to clergy who have not worked extensively with gay and lesbian couples.

Clergy desiring to bless the same-sex marriages of persons who have been previously married must apply to the bishop for permission under the diocesan guidelines for Marriage after Divorce.

All uses of the trial marriage liturgy are to be reported to the bishop within two weeks of the proposed marriage.

The marriage rite of the Book of Common Prayer 1979 shall continue to be the norm for opposite sex marriage.