

Bishop's Policy on The Blessing of Same Sex Couples Effective Advent 2012



**The Right Reverend Scott B. Hayashi
Eleventh Bishop of Utah**

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PURPOSE

This policy is intended to provide clear pastoral guidelines for the Diocese of Utah to establish the conditions under which clergy may choose to bless same sex couples making a life-long commitment to one another.

In the context of extending pastoral care, clergy may choose to bless same sex couples (partnerships, relationships, friendships, covenants, unions) according to the norms of purpose, dedication, and readiness followed in marriages, provided that:

- Clergy have secured permission from the Bishop to perform the blessings of same-sex couple following the process set forth in the Bishop's Pastoral Letter to the Diocese of Utah August 2012:

“I will require of the clergy who request permission to utilize the liturgy that they undertake a study, with the Vestry or Bishop's Committee and invite the entire congregation as well, of the document prepared by the SCLM “I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing.” After a period of prayerful study and reflection of the information presented in this report, if the Vestry or Bishop's Committee of the congregation agrees with the Rector or Vicar to proceed with offering blessings for same same-sex couples, then a letter signed by the Rector/Vicar and the Wardens requesting my permission to proceed should be sent to me. In addition, an announcement to the congregation of the decision of the Rector/Vicar and Vestry/Bishop's Committee shall also be made before the first service utilizing the liturgy.”

- The Liturgy for the service will be the one authorized for provisional use by the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church.
- Clergy require meeting for pastoral counseling to those involved.

- Clergy speak with the Bishop, prior to the occasion, raising then any further questions they may have.
- At least one of the partners to be blessed is a member of the Episcopal Church in Utah.
- The solemnity of the service is honored without undue publicity.
- If either party has been married prior to such a blessing, documents attesting to the dissolution of the marriage are given to the clergy. A copy of the divorce decree shall be retained on file at the church.
- Clergy keep a separate record of such blessing and also of known dissolutions of unions between same sex couples