

Diocese of Arkansas Policy Regarding Officiating at Marriage Services

*** Updated August 2018 ***

The Episcopal Church at the 79th General Convention approved the continued use of trial rites for the marriage of same-sex couples until such time as there is a revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*. These liturgies are “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage”; “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage 2”; “The Blessing of a Civil Marriage 2”; and “An Order for Marriage 2.”

A member of the clergy is not required to officiate at any marriage service, either of an opposite-sex or same-sex couple. The ability to decline to officiate at marriage services has long been a part of the polity of The Episcopal Church.

The requirements are the same for both opposite-sex and same-sex couples that at least one of the parties is baptized, that the couple have a valid marriage license, that there be pre-marital counseling, that the minimum time elapsed before a wedding is thirty days, and that there be the signing of a Declaration of Intent by the couple. The requirements for permission of the bishop for a remarriage after divorce remain in effect for all marriages.

Because the General Convention authorized the liturgies for official trial use, in addition to using the 1979 Book of Common Prayer liturgies, priests are able to use the trial liturgies without the need to receive permission from the bishop.

Note:

The report of the Task Force on the Study of Marriage to General Convention, along with the trial liturgies, can be found online at <https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/21189>.