

Bishop McConnell's Summary of
Highlights from the 79th General Convention
July 4-13, 2018 – Austin, Texas

What we did. [The corresponding resolutions are noted in brackets]:

1. Preserved the Book of Common Prayer (1979) for an indefinite period into the future, while creating a gradual and flexible process for liturgical revision [A068].

Background: One resolution [A085] had called for incrementally revising the prayer book at the earliest possible date, adding rites for same-sex marriage, and amending related rubrics and catechism with gender-neutral language. A068 as originally drafted would have put full-scale revision on a track leading to a new proposed book within nine years.

The 2018 General Convention:

- “Memorialized” the BCP (1979) for indefinite continued use
- Set no timetable or target date for the next revision
- Specified that the revision will be in “faithful adherence to the historic rites of the Church Universal” as this Church has received them
- Established a Task Force (of ten bishops, ten priests or deacons, and ten laity, all with expertise in relevant disciplines) to oversee the work “in consultation with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music”
- Encouraged the establishment of local diocesan liturgical commissions to foster innovation and experimentation to yield liturgies that may eventually be authorized for the whole Church. (Here in Pittsburgh, I will seek counsel as to the best way to move forward with this suggestion, beginning with the advice of the Standing Committee)
- Commended “inclusive and expansive language” in the development of the revision
- Authorized for trial use “expansive language” versions of the BCP 1979 Eucharistic liturgies, Rite II, prayers A, B, and D, [D078], at the discretion of the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority. (Note: all of these optional versions retain the traditional language of the Creeds, the Lord’s Prayer, and classical Trinitarian formulas)

2. Extended trial use of same-sex marriage rites until the next comprehensive revision of the BCP [B012].

Background: This resolution bridges the gap between those who wanted an immediate inclusion of these rites into the Book of Common Prayer, along with changing the BCP’s definition of Christian marriage, and those who feared such moves would deepen divisions, even causing further schism, within our Church.

The 2018 General Convention:

- Authorized rites for all congregations who wish to use them, with the specific intention that couples have “reasonable and convenient” local access, in or near their home congregations
- Preserved canonical right of clergy, particularly rectors and priests-in-charge, to decline to preside or refuse their use in their parishes
- Specified that, where diocesan canons or the conscience of the local bishop do not allow for these rites, the bishop “shall arrange, as necessary” for the pastoral assistance of another bishop
- Commended to the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music for “serious consideration” during the process of prayer book revision, proposed gender-neutral changes to the “Concerning the Service” instructions, proper prefaces, and catechism relevant to the BCP marriage liturgies.

3. Established a Task Force on Communion Across Difference [A227].

Background: The language of this resolution was drawn in its entirety from Resolution B012 as originally offered. The commission establishes an on-going channel of communication to explore a way forward together, and to avoid future conflicts.

The 2018 General Convention:

- Set membership at no more than 14 clergy and laity, half who believe marriage is a covenant “between two people” and half who believe marriage to be exclusively “between a man and a woman”
- Stipulated the commission is to seek a path forward “for mutual flourishing,” and to report and “make recommendations” to the 80th General Convention in 2021
- Instructed the commission to consult widely, particularly with international leaders representing “the diversity of views across the Anglican Communion”

The text of all resolutions considered by General Convention can be found at www.vbinder.net/resolutions?house=hd&lang=en