

**An Open Conversation Sponsored by the Task Force on the Response to LGBTQ Members
of the Diocese of Tennessee
Christ Church Cathedral in Nashville
October 8, 2017**

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1. What was your initial response, and how has it affected you, to the Bishop's decision to not allow the same-sex liturgy in the Diocese of Tennessee?

- "When we found out it wouldn't happen here in Middle Tennessee after feeling like we are finally equal and finally have a place [after the national resolution] it was kind of a slap in the face."
- "I came back to church at St. Augustine's because I felt like I was treated like a human being finally... and I feel that the bishop would not stand for someone trying to not marry an interracial couple. And I feel like people aren't standing up for us as human beings, and it's very hurtful because I try to stand up for everyone." "If a baker doesn't want to bake my cake, fine. But he shouldn't be able to decide that the other bakers aren't allowed to bake my cake."
- "I was angry, frustrated, heartbroken, as a priest. The pastoral dimension and that the LGBTQ people are hurt and hurting by this. Pastorally it was extremely difficult."
- "I've seen colleagues and friends have to uproot their lives and move to other diocese to answer God's call to ordination. We've lost some really good people." "Bearing witness to the pain and hurt and disruption to the lives of Episcopalians who are LGBTQ in our diocese hurt my heart." "As a priest I felt personally as a straight cis woman my hurt is different from LGBTQ persons, but it felt like my conscience was really being - damaged might be too strong a word - but harmed. And the Episcopal Church has always put a deep importance on the individual conscience and relationship with God through Christ. Delegates are told to vote their conscience. So the conscience is important. And I felt like because of one person's objection, I couldn't participate in the life of our full national church or fully in liturgical practices of our national church, and I was in this position of excluding LGBTQ people who our national church says are included. So I felt like as a priest my conscience was being harmed." "It was a very authoritarian dynamic, and that's never how I was taught to understand Episcopal hierarchy... and I don't think the gospel teaches us to exercise authority in an authoritarian way... that's now how we wield power in our church as I understand Episcopal tradition. It made me really frustrated and angry."
- I was shocked that the bishop had that ability. We were trying to decide whether to move to Nashville at the time and that went on our 'con' list."
- "It was very disappointing. [The Episcopal Church] was the perfect fit for me and my husband but then to say that you can do everything here but you can't get married her was very disappointing. It would have been so much more special to have been able to get married in the church we go to. We had to get married by a priest that we met for 2 hours."
- "I was very excited when I heard the national decision then I realized they would also allow the bishops to decide by diocese. The general convention made a big mistake doing that and should have been left up to the priests." "My daughter married the love of her life but not in a church. She grew up in the church and had all her sacraments but she could not be married in the church and she feels like the church turned its back on her."
- "I was devastated. It was enormously disappointing that it would be left in the hands of our bishop... we didn't have to wait [to find out if we would be able to use the liturgies]." "My daughter got married not in a church in a heterosexual marriage because she gave up on the Episcopal Church because of Gene Robinson. That whole issue took her and my son away from the church." "The idea that one person could make this decision... an individual priest can always

decide to marry or not marry somebody. But the idea that the one person can make the decision [for everyone], I think when they put that in there I wouldn't support it. Cause he can make the decision and you can't change that." "i don't understand how the church supports the baptism of a child of LGBTQ couples but not the marriage."

- "When I saw the language that the bishop would be able to control [the resolution that was passed] I was very disappointed. We are still second class citizens in the church because of that. You can't call it anything else. Priests can't marry. Couples that have been together 30 years can't get married in the church. It's hurtful. The church is still doing it to us. Because of this, we've lost members and friends. Because of the bishop's decision, they will not come back to the Episcopal church."
- "I'm heterosexual and I was disappointed as well. "I lost my best friend. She was my best friend who came to church, our daughters were babies together, and she was even more faithful to God than I, and she left the church because of this decision. I'm still her best friend but it breaks my heart because her daughter is lesbian and came out just before the announcement, and I was heartbroken for her because she was basically rejected by our church. We rejected her as a church." "My heart breaks for all of you [LGBTQ persons]. You are being slapped in the face and rejected."
- "I won't get married any place other than the Episcopal Church so I'm gonna sit around and wait for as long as it takes." "Our biggest issue is that our attorney has told us that my wife can't legally adopt our daughter until we're officially married, and I carried her, and since we're not able to get married in the Episcopal Church in middle Tennessee, our daughter isn't adopted."

Initial Responses:

- Shocked- Episcopalian entire life, love openness and inclusiveness of the church
- Chose to be Episcopalian, felt at home and included, heard this and felt feelings of exclusion and it caused second guessing in choosing Episcopal Church as an adult; broke trust.
- Involved with LGBTQ in Diocese since 1970s; was aghast
- Not shocked, but very disappointed. Bishop did not listen or acknowledge those who were trying to speak for inclusion.
- Shocked, fear that our Diocese would not be seen as national church, would be seen as really far off from national church.
- Did not surprise me because this is the Bible belt.
- Sadness, feelings of exclusion, disappointment, hurt pride
- Deeply disappointed, not surprised, had held hope he would extend grace to each priest for their own decisions; perpetuating injustice against people I love; very angry.
- Pissed, mad, not surprised- made a decision to leave the institution and join the compassionate side of church that cares about social action
- Not surprised; discouraged that the Cathedral did not elect to take a leadership role on this issue
- UnChristian in which people are being treated- "How can we be Christian and do hurtful things?"
- Came from VA, felt a little rocked back, but knew this church has been in the desert before
- Anger, how dare this happen
- Death-dealing response; young lives are on the line; not human flourishing
- Not surprised, used to it; disappointed

Affected you...

- Thought about leaving the church, chose to stay and fight
- Could not understand how the grace extended to Bishop from House of Bishops would not be given to others
- Painful to watch pain of congregants who are excluded
- Born Episcopalian, wanted to stay in it, but will not invite others into it because it is not welcoming, but will keep working for change in it
- Sorry that so many people feel bad that they are not included, feels outdated to me, don't want people to feel divided
- Kept me busy, reading canon law, asking what we can do, distracting me from feeding the hungry
- Some people refused communion until all people could have all sacraments, led to belief that no one is an outcast
- Discouragement, children have walked away because of this issue
- Time to say we as a church are messing up, acting like Christians means we love all people; painful
- Knows that the journey counts, wants to speak up for next generation- hurting people in ways we can't know
- Complete inconsistency and exclusion. Will no longer invite people to our denomination, let alone Christianity. Painful. De-humanizing.
- Weighs heavily, holding pain and hurt for those excluded- church has done the hurting.
- Tend to not commit or get involved in congregation because of this exclusion.

- Disgusted - doesn't affect me personally, but many of my friends - hurt - not Christ's way - will bless animals, but not same-sex couples - shocked - ashamed to be an Episcopalian - not Christian
- Biased - discriminatory - rage - will not stay - very personal - I don't think I belong (asked about Bishop's serving on national church Anglo-Catholic commission. And that his brother is a Catholic priest. Pamela explained that his brother is a Catholic deacon and the national church appointed him to be on that commission.)
- Disappointed - heartbroken - wrote letter to Bishop - affects people I know - our church does not support its gay children - Hope Bishop with change his mind -a lot of people change when friends and family come out - we need to show up for them
- Directly opposed to why we go to church - glad there is a strong feeling that this isn't right
- Taken aback - Bishop didn't give much pastoral care - he was blunt and unconcerned - my daughter is gay and she's keeping track of what states are in favor
- Priest who is licensed to officiate in DoTN - not pastoral at all - not listening to parishioners
- Angry, then sad - Likes Bishop a lot, but feels like he is flat wrong - not in keeping with Bible unless literal - not in keeping with Baptismal Covenant - wrong on several theological levels
- Respect Bishop,, but disagree - don't need others to validate - love is love

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- I'm 17 and it does not directly impact me, but it is his decision.
 - Hard for me. I have lots of friends that I would like to see get married. Trying to stay open minded.
 - Viscerally very disappointed, found the statement during convention, and felt very disconnected with my values.
 - It affects me personally. I lost an important member to a Kentucky parish. Hurts me that my bishop is that way, but I respect him. I pray his mind be changed.
 - Out of the state when it was issued, but moved back and was very disappointed.
 - Beginning of a relationship that is talking marriage I was a receiver in 1975 of a letter as a same sex couple was denied in August 1976 by the rector and bishop. Here I am in another relationship at 68 and having the same fight. I knew who I was since 2 ½ or so, and I hope if I live another 20 years people will quit putting me down.
 - When I heard the statement I want the church to be a place of rest for me, and it still is not. It is sad that they are not. Recovering Church of Christ concerned for clergy who might have to risk their license versus telling people no. I really think the discernment should rest on individual clergy.
 - I was very disappointed, but not surprised. I have a partner of 12 years. Very important to my partner that we get married in the church. Our parish was having conversations prior to the announcement, so we were not surprised and well-prepared, we think it is a matter of time.
 - Very disappointed. Church is supposed to be about love period. This is hateful and discriminatory. It upsets me that the bishop has that kind of power.
 - As a Vandy Ph.D. in religion, religion ethics I found it heartbreaking and angry, though I'm married to a man. I switched from ELCA to TEC. I don't understand why we are tightening ritual, ecclesial, and spiritual laws about love and intimacy. Real life should trump Bible in theory.
 - Married with a husband, two sons married in the church. Daughter could not be married by Rick. She did everything, but was denied her turn. The bishop has the right to do what he thinks is best, but his response has not been pastoral. How do I get my 12 year old grandson to come knowing we don't allow everything, no matter the time and work we put in. I don't know how to reconcile it.

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- Not surprised but knew there was tension in the diocese; antithetical to the way the diocese operates; saddened
 - Disappointed but not surprised; it's effected collegiality within the diocese
 - Disappointed; raised in a bishop's family' know the power of a bishop; power is supposed to be reciprocal to the church: to take account of the voice of the people; can't marry my friends; it's heartbreaking
 - Extremely saddened; daughter has many gay friends; very emotional; always told the Episcopal Church was welcoming that's not the case ;the church wants my money but not me as I am
 - Enormous injustice; devastating injustice to our brothers and sisters I know and love; want them to feel welcomed; it's antithetical to welcome; disappointed; devastating; problem: not welcoming to them
 - Not a surprise, but was a factor in making my decision for discernment: Diocese of TN or Diocese of East TN; I chose Diocese of East TN; the decision is theologically inconsistent and pastorally short sighted
 - Heartbroken and pissed; I couldn't be there for my friends; real struggle; took a vow of obedience to the Bishop; dilemma: resist or comply with obedience; first time I had to do discernment around obedience, wanted to marry people I loved, who were faithful members; couldn't be there for them; we are supposed to be growing the church, yet they are shamed; embarrassed; we said something we didn't mean
 - Hasn't affected me at all; waiting until it happens

- Heartbroken; grew up in the church; drawn away from the church; told not good enough and can't be loved by the church; the priest at St. Augustine's told me I am God's beloved; told God is calling us to more; then, again I get the message I am not good enough;;it does matter that being dismissed is my greatest heartbreak; it's a political decision about the most personal aspect of my life- my spiritual life
- Clearly political to allow different bishops to veto;101 dioceses: is legal;93 dioceses: allow same sex marriages;8 dioceses: not allowed; 2 dioceses canonically resident priests are not allowed to perform these marriages in their dioceses or other dioceses; we're 1 of those two dioceses: we are the alt right in the Episcopal Church; affected me: I ran as deputy to General Convention; trial liturgies become non-trial liturgies in 2021; mission: go to Austin (Gen. Convention 2018) & raise hell the rest of the church is over it
- Devastating; joy at General Convention's decision; then. joy taken away; so sad that it is not to be; so sad not to be able to celebrate their union; good faithful people are choosing God & then walking out because they can't get married
- So sad; I love the Episcopal church; love the liturgy; hard to be here where we can't be like others; some are good enough and some aren't; theologically inconsistent;' welcomed to the sacraments, but not all; pastorally,very cruel to people
- I was very disappointed; thought this was a no-brainer; theologically inconsistent; grew up as a Presbyterian; joined the Episcopal church as an adult; this decision has diminished my respect for the authority of the Bishop; I'm disappointed; it's plain wrong
- Journey: more of a problem in this diocese than in other dioceses; I was at St. George's for the past 20 years; my child came out to me; I'm involved in P-Flag; there are those who get it; we are now at Christ Church ; my son is a child of God; it is not a choice; I feel pity; should get it, but he didn't ; hope to bring the Bishop forward; I get his fear; learning journey; both embarrassed & reaching out to understand; giving the Bishop a chance

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- Crushing disappointment. disillusionment with church. Had to change plans for her wedding in 2016. Couldn't have her own priest do wedding. If it was approved at the Supreme Court and the last General Convention—what's wrong with our Bishop?
 - (Youth) Confusion with General convention message sent by church
 - (Youth) Contradiction to church confirmation teachings. Mixed messages. Unsure of intentional message.
 - Saddened and disappointed
 - Didn't realize the Bishop had that kind of power. She comes from Colorado. Angry that he could do this. Hurt and anger.
 - New to church at this point. Confusing. Seemed to go against what brought her to the church in the first place. Mixed messages.
 - Disappointment with the diocese
 - Returned to the Episcopal Church. Understood Episcopal Church to be a place that welcomed all. Confusion. That one person (Bishop) could make this decision for all?
 - Newbie to Nashville. Didn't realize one person (Bishop) had that much power. It's an abuse of power. She wasn't allowed to get married in the church. Hurtful.
 - Affected my work on the Vestry. Also outreach opportunities. Was discourages by older Vestry members about participating in more "liberal" events (Pride week, etc.) It's a conflicting message—or NO message at all.
 - Sorrow, anger. Purpose of the church validated scripture, reason and tradition—and that was important. However—there is much sorrow for friends. Affected her because she has done much research and gaining knowledge about human sexuality. The times and knowledge bases have changed and expanded. The human experience has also expanded. Different world today.
 - Sadness---anger—fatigue—that we are still dealing with this. It sets aside friends and family saying that they are not worthy or they are not good enough.
 - Wasn't surprised. She live-streamed the convention and watched. She sent messages to her priest (a delegate) "can we get married now"? answer—"No." She and her (now wife—courtesy of Mayor Megan Berry) wife are listed together as a couple financially at church and the diocese—but not recognized as a husband and wife together. Her conservative grandmother supported her but died before the marriage happened. The Bishop's position took the joy and the memory of her grandmother attending, away. Very sad.
 - Surprise...sadness...anger. Too many times sitting across the table from people watching the tears and sadness. All he could do was say, "I'm sorry". Lost faith in the convention that allowed this to happen.
 - Had to explain to kids in 7th to 9th grade Sunday School what this meant. Uncomfortable.
 - Lost a lot of good talent to KY. Good friends moved there.
 - I am a witness for good friends and family---including my ex-wife. Now declines to take the Eucharist until ALL can take the Eucharist.

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- "As a priest, I felt disenfranchised." - a 2nd Priest agreed.
 - Layperson: "Angry-due to my daughter's feeling as if she didn't belong. I quit the Episcopal Church. This was the "last straw"
 - "As a conservative layman on the traditional scale, I voted against Gene Robinson. The Bishop's decision to not allow same-sex liturgies in our Diocese thus hasn't affected me personally. I think Bishop John is a thoughtful person."
 - Female layperson: "The decision was troubling. I felt disappointed & angry. Our diocese has been painted into a corner. We've become marginalized."
 - Male layperson: "People who exercise arbitrary power create a lot of collateral damage."
 - Female layperson: "I wasn't surprised. My son, who has grown up in the church, has been very faithful & involved. He gave me permission to share that he is gay, that he believes marriage is a Sacrament and thus will be married only in the church."
 - Male layperson: - tearfully ... "I believe strongly that Bishop John's decision lowers the self-esteem of gays like myself."
 - Male layperson: "My husband & I were married in Honolulu - referred by Christ Cathedral clergy to Episcopal Church in Hawaii. I felt slighted by Bishop's decision. I'm NOT a 2nd class citizen. I realize Bishop John has financial concerns that the wealthy in the Diocese might leave if he were to allow same-sex liturgies in our TN Diocese."
 - Female layperson: "I was surprised. The decision really affected my brother who's gay, as well as dear friends who're glad they live outside our Diocese. They asked me, "Why aren't you standing up for us?!?"

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- Angry/No compassion toward LGBT members of the Diocese. Impact on faith and caused questioning of faith.
 - Sad to hear that clergy couldn't perform these rights for members of their congregations.
 - Baffled that no theological discussion or reasoning was given to support decision.
 - Embarrassed at the unjust denial of the sacrament. Violation of the Baptismal Covenant. Impact-risk of leaving diocese/parish
 - Saddened. Correlation to the ordination of women priests (could be denied by diocese). Personally, seen as unwelcoming to those looking to the Episcopal Church and families desiring the sacrament.
 - Heartbroken/Devastated that parish members no longer felt welcome in the church because this aspect of their lives was rejected. Contradiction to mission of church.
 - Disbelief because "big" church says yes but the Bishop says no. If priests are willing to perform the liturgy then why is the answer no? LGBT members seen as "second class". Personal struggle with not being accepted for this aspect but everything else is ok (financial support, serving in ministries, etc.) Impact-Faith issues explaining to their children. Personal sacrifices because family members passed before the marriage could be done in the church.
 - Surprised, deeply hurt. National church vs/ local church. Political implications/feels like segregation. "Not welcome here". Impact-no longer attends due to decision. Belief on openness of Episcopal but only to a point.

2. If you were talking to Bishop Bauerschmidt one-on-one, what would you want him to hear?

- "I would say that I've served the church for 30+ years as a music person and been HIV+ for 28 years. I feel like I've fought my whole life for my rights, for my health, and when I found the Episcopal church I felt more accepted. And then I kept seeing the changes and felt better and better. So when we got to this national decision and it's still not happening here, I just want to tell him I'm tired. I'm tired of fighting. It would just be nice to just be accepted."
- "I don't care what he thinks. I don't seek to change his mind. I'm just sick and tired of being sick and tired. Just let our congregations go. It doesn't have to be a split. Why do we have to agree on absolutely everything? Why do we have to have someone controlling all the different congregations on one issue? This is his choice to see this as either/or." "I feel like the Episcopalian church is on the wrong side of history, again... I feel like we're back in the 70s with racial discrimination." "It's politically correct to discriminate against LGBTQ people in the Episcopal Church."
- "I would say, allowing LGBTQ people to get married in the church and ordaining them doesn't mean anything goes in all other ways and it doesn't mean that all of our convictions and dedications to tradition and scripture are going away."

- "I would ask him why typically the arguments used against gay marriage are that the couple cannot have children, but there are heterosexual couples whose marriages are blessed who can't have children because of age or a physical issue. I would just want to know what the distinction would be when neither can have children."
- "This is the first time in my life I've ever felt any type of discrimination, and it was from the church. He's the first person I've ever felt that from."
- "I couldn't get an answer out of him... I wanted him to reciprocate and talk to me and answer me some way and tell me what he's all about this. Instead of responding to what I said to him, he moved on to another subject and that was very disappointing."
- "I would reiterate all of the hurt and the unChristlike mission that we are now a part of—of not supporting same sex couples and families and children. I respect his opinion and know he is a great scholar of the 15th century and don't expect him to change but the church today is becoming more irrelevant to the youth, it's a fact, and I think that what he could do would be to have it be known to the general convention that he as a bishop will follow what the general convention says if they vote that this will be part of the prayer book. I know he didn't want to have to make the decision." "I want him to try to be an active participant in healing the church." "His actions are making people have to live their lives without Christ [through the Episcopal Church] being a part of their lives."
- "I understand the bishop's position as trying to keep the diocese together... I was at St. George's years ago at a meeting that I have still not gotten over, that's how hurtful it was [about LGBTQ issues]. I'd been in some of THOSE breakout groups and I almost walked out today because of that experience. Still being treated as a second class citizen of the church I don't think the bishop has any clue of what he did and how many people have left the church and will not be back." "To find a welcoming community and then to have the bishop do this, even to try to keep the diocese from splitting, I think he should have left it up to the churches."
- "I think he's doing a good job trying to heal the church, but I don't think he has enough courage." "I fear for my friend's daughter's life because she will be bullied and others like her. Love needs courage, and it needs his courage to stand up and say no, identity should not be discriminated against. A marriage is a declaration of love. How can we say no to that?" "I worry if he pushes it down to just the priests it might divide our congregation. I think he needs to have courage and step out in support of our LGBTQ members."
- Re: legal situations: "Before marriage equality, people through their health insurance could get plans for their domestic partner but now that we have marriage equality you can't get that anymore, cause you have to be married. So we could go to the courthouse but a lot of people don't want to do that - we don't want to do that. My partner could have adopted a child before marriage equality but now she can't because we have to be married." "I would tell him there are people leaving the church, congregation and clergy. I think we need to focus on our youth and the youth is more progressive and they're gonna be the future of our church. I think kids need a lot of love and we're sending up a big red flag that says 'being gay is not okay' which empowers other kids to bully and discriminate and there are kids that are committing suicide because they see that it's not okay to be gay." "I have a lot of faith in the Episcopal Church and am so proud of it for so many things... I think we are heading in the right direction but it takes a lot of time and there's a lot of hurdles. We have to be patient BUT we have to be proactive."

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- What a struggle this may be for him because he disappears when this comes up. I want to ask him: "Why do you disappear?"
 - Dear Bishop, you are not shepherding your priests to be instruments of peace and demonstrate the compassion of Christ. You are misusing your power to disenfranchise God's people.
 - Help me understand, because I do not, your reasoning and rationale? Where are you coming from?
 - I have read what you've written and your arguments, and I get those arguments. It's all great as an intellectual exercise- but people are dying. This is a life or death issue.
 - How do I answer the questions of LGBTQ students who, at Vanderbilt, come to me as a faculty member, if there is equality for them? They feel excluded in society and want a church where they will be given equality.
 - Please extend grace to allow priests and congregations to make their decision, even if you will not change your mind.
 - Is this the right job for you?
 - Are you the type of Bishop or shepherd that will go out to find the sheep that are in pain?
 - What in your life has brought you to this point?
 - Love is love. What is it you're scared of?
 - Do you understand that you are single-handedly sending people into exile? In marriage and ordination because you will not permit LGBTQ people access to either?
 - Whatever it is in yourself that you have a wall against, face it.
 - What's the worst thing you can imagine happening? Live into it and face the good in your fear.
 - God/Jesus never turned anyone away. Were you somewhere in the LGBTQ community before you married your wife?

- Do you know that you are loved?
- How much of this is your decision vs. trying to keep the Diocese together?
- How much of this is political for you?

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- It is personal - Bishop is not talking to us so how can we talk to him
 - Difficult to approach Bishop - but he is approachable
 - Wish laity would feel more free to talk to Bishop
 - Would like to know how he would feel if his child was gay
 - Neutrality of facilitators and scribes favors oppressor - this process favors the Bishop
 - Don't feel free to comment
 - Why is this process necessary - Bishop doesn't seem to hear how it's hurting people - Bishop seems to be shocked that we don't feel like he gave a pastoral response
 - Don't know the Bishop well, but he seems fine. He's just not listening
 - My perception is that there is a sense of not caring
 - We don't need to be timid about our feelings
 - Bishop wrote article that gays should be celebrate - he has intellectual reasons why marriage doesn't apply to gay couples
 - Bishop is very intellectual (someone responded that was an astute comment)
 - One priest said she grew up with gay aunts - she struggles with the intellectual side of theology - have seen people change through the years
 - VU benefits only apply to married couples
 - There is a good deal of hurt
 - I grew up in Church of Christ and they even figured this out 30 years ago - this is mind boggling

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- I think he should listen especially to older LGBTQ people. I will likely be elsewhere, so it may or may not directly impact me, but older folks speak to this in a pressing fashion.
 - I have a lot I would like to say to him. People of LGBTQ have left other churches and it would be great to make them feel part of the community. This decision makes us sad, like we are the communities that failed them.
 - Thanks to everyone for sharing. This is powerful. I understand he was trying to be a conciliator/mediator within the House of Bishops. Why not now? The time has come. Let me also add, I have reached out to him and was told to go talk to my priest. That was disappointing.
 - If I sat down with him I would say you are dead wrong. That's not the Gospel I hear or read in church. Why don't you get to know gays or lesbians? Rake leaves, cut trees, eat a meal, share a drink? Once you do that the fears go away. Why can't the church be a part of their lives?
 - I have nothing to add to the eloquence I am hearing. If he heard this, the issue would be over.
 - I'm glad to be alive to be able to come to this meeting. I would enjoy seeing you be humanly educated, rather than superstition. Hate is a sad think in a position of power. If he fails to abandon this paycheck, I'd love to see him in movement before he vacates his power. I grew up 17 miles from the birthplace of the KKK. I watched blacks get discriminated all my life. I don't tolerate discrimination. His stance is not constitutional. If he was a CEO he'd find his ass sued to quote a good friend of mine Dick Cheney. Praying for me, but not giving me the sacrament is bullshit. I have sung in the choir. I have given beauty to the church and he has only expressed hatred to me. I am quite comfortable saying that all who oppose this hate LGBTQ people. The Search Committee meant to choose its first bishop according to human principles, but Herlong lied and to see another bishop act in the same way is revolting.
 - Everything said comes from our experiences. As long as people are willing to engage, I'm willing to converse. I would like to know what his real opinion is and why. What makes him willing to jeopardize their lives and marriages? I would also like to share my position and who I am with him. Thank everyone for this, for being willing to have conversations. It made it on my calendar the very day I heard about that.
 - What are you trying to accomplish in this decision. When we are talking about having our daughter baptized, Rick and others had the Bishop over. It just did not seem to go anywhere. Why don't we vote? Were all in favor here, so he should approve it. If it was 50-50 that would be different but clearly it is not.
 - Several points. There are black people and white people and everything in between. Why is there only one sexual attraction and not anything in between? I don't know the Bible well, but a seminarian explained to me that the word for homosexual is the same word used for "out of the ordinary" which is the same word for God. Does the bishop know that?
 - I read his dissertation on Augustine. As one scholar to another, I wish he would be more pastoral. I wish he would engage rather than standoff particularly on this. Everyone should feel they are a child of God, and that's his job.

- I have read part of his dissertation. It stresses me that he sticks to Augustine. The way I look at it, if you hate me because I'm a fat old lady, you are attacking the person. We are supposed to support and care for each other. We should be working toward common expressions rather than dividing. We are Episcopalians. We don't have to like everyone, but we do have to love them. He needs to be more present.
- I was excited he was going to be here and so sad to hear he was missing it in the hospital. There is so much hatred in this world, when will our LGBTQ brothers and sisters find peace and safety? He needs to be among them. They play our organs and do our flowers. We need them.

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- I want him to hear the pain his decision has caused members of this diocese; many have left this diocese because of this decision; bishop wants this diocese to grow; antithetical to the message of the church; decision has demonized the scope of God's work in Tennessee; his own children disagree with him; we are children of God; allowed to be different; not ok to not allow all to participate in the sacraments is damaging
 - Want him to meet with several couples to hear it's effect on them & their relationship to the Church
 - Pass- doesn't sound like he's listening
 - Throughout life as a member of an oppressed community (Black); women couldn't acolyte or be ordained; always we were the one's who were told to wait; absolutely wrong; how can the church buy into a such a systemely; always told to wait; you who suffer-keep suffering, so the church can stay together; responsible how & to who
 - Hear pain inflicted on those I know; marginalized & rejected; fear; knew his decision might give permission to reject those affected; depths of sadness brought to many 'have you had the opportunities to speak with those oppressed & unwelcomed
 - Isn't it his job to open eyes & heart; how do you know what it is like not to be welcomed; have you had the opportunity to speak with those oppressed & unwelcomed ;what will you do to make them feel welcomed
 - Hear: when you get power, sounds like giving it away yourself; doesn't have to be ashamed; part of our polity; not a weakness but a strength; waiting is no longer a luxury but part of the oppression; as a church we have to be attuned to that & take responsibility to that
 - I'm 67 years old: I will not be marginalized; found the Episcopal Church & it saved my life; I've been gay longer than anyone here; where in the world does your reasoning come from in your statements
 - I pray for the Bishop that he will open his heart & his mind; afraid he will dig in; I refuse to be 2nd class citizen or put in a corner;;we are showing up to sit at the table; either we are accepted like everyone else or we won't be a part of the church
 - He's not going to listen; been to St. Ann's; " Not the way I was raised. "It's your task force; I recommend we pass a resolution to let every parish decide on their own; recommend he St. Paul's resolution be brought up again & passes in convention
 - Praying for the Bishop that his heart will be filled with love; that he will have the mindset of how beautiful the legacy of the church could be; why not ,when it is now legal; will anyone want to come to the Church if all the baptized are not welcomed
 - Would seek to understand who he might understand; experience who he knows who is LGBT; want to understand his journey of why he still thinks in terms of sin/outcast

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- When the bishop visits---he blames the convention for giving him this choice. Why didn't he say, "NO"? We would really like a simple and short explanation as to WHY? What was he thinking?
 - Please explain why you said, "NO". What about everything else anti-gay?? What about ordination? Don't avoid the topic. Don't hide. Deal with it pastorally.
 - (10 year old girl) How does it hurt you that my 2 moms can't get married?
 - Why are you not willing to give each priest/ rector the same freedom of conscience that the convention gave you?
 - My understanding is that most of the Bishops that DON'T allow SS marriage have been more proactive in helping couples find an accommodation to get married in KY or West TN. He hasn't made it easy. Needs to be more sensitive and pastoral.
 - Why don't you set an example of conversation and understanding? Sharing of stories and history. You also do not encourage clergy to share stories or backgrounds. Be more of an example for exchange of different points of view.
 - Why does he feel his interpretation of scripture is so right and others are not?
 - How does it serve our relationship with God to keep kicking this can around?
 - Where does he see this ending? Does he think he is avoiding the inevitable? Why prolong that pain and suffering?
 - Why don't you order your Rectors to have this conversation at their churches? I hear they don't want to do it. I feel this process is valuable and helpful. We don't have anyone in this group who supports the Bishop's position and I think that to not have that---to deny some the opportunity to share their story is wrong.

- Why are you skirting the issue? Trying to avoid conflict?
- What would Jesus do?
- What does he want from me (a gay man) in my congregation?
- Why haven't you given your priests discretion to follow their conscience?
- What do you expect from me (a gay woman) and what do you think I will do? Leave?
- Am I wanted here (a gay woman)? Am I "almost equal"? I am equal in the eyes of God!
- Can it get worse? No baptism? No confirmation?
- Where is the bishop in modeling this discourse model?

- Lay Female: "You, the Bishop, are losing people. Who the hell are you? Why are you doing this? Why is this a sin?!"
- Lay Male: "I support your decision."
- Female Clergy: "Is it a written policy that if you're an abstinent gay clergy, you can't marry others?!"
- Female Lay: "Why can't individual clergy have discretion?"
- Female Clergy: "You've never once truly explained your decision to the Diocese."
 - *Side opinion*: "I've encouraged him to be more pastoral. He's held the Diocese together, but I want him to put more chairs around the table. The decision has been a disservice to the Diocese. I've also written him letters of support in being more open."
 - *2nd added opinion*: "Personally, I don't think the church should be in the marriage business. I'm not going to bless animals if I can't bless love"
- Female Lay: "You, the Bishop know my son & who he is & that your decision is shutting him down/excluding him from the full life of the church."
- Male clergy: "I'm an Eternal Optimist ... Bishop, your doctrinal arguments can't withstand critical analysis...maybe politically your decision makes sense, but not theologically."
- Male Lay: "I need a decision that ranks more worthy of critical thinking skills."
- Female Lay: "Let's think about the suicide rate of our teenagers. Who are we turning away-**excluding**? Making it more likely for them to feel suicidal?"

- Hear more from Bishop on his thought process. Also that respect for his position is there and support by prayer is being offered.
- Hear the pain that it has caused within the Diocese.
- That it is a violation of the Baptismal Covenant and that the clergy are being put in a difficult position with their parish members. This decision will push people from the church.
- That love/prayers are there but also that many are hurting and want a pastoral response. Does he care or does he just want the issue to go away?
- That he has done an amazing job pulling the Diocese through similar conflict. Let's move forward and open to all diversity. Introduce scriptural study and ask what Jesus direct us to do.
- Not only are people hurting but that by allowing the trial liturgies joy can come to the couples. They are no different than the those allowed to be married. What is the criteria? Where do we stand on each side? How does it hurt you (The Bishop) if you allow this?
- Our Church is inclusive, why isn't everyone treated the same?

3. Given varied opinions on this, how do you imagine remaining in community with those who disagree?

- "If there is love, you stay together."
- "I'm not going to leave this community, but some days you feel more a part of the community than others." "I don't want anyone to feel less because we've felt less. We have to love our neighbors as ourself on this issue and many issues."
- "If we can find Christ in the Eucharist we can keep coming back to that table and breaking bread together and trying to see the face of God in each other. Not a lowest common denominator, but how can we strive for the highest ideals of the kingdom of God together." "I would focus on how are we called to grow as Christians? I would double down on the Episcopal tradition of Scripture and reason... and ask how has the church and its life dealt with these differences? And

what is the essence of the gospel - who you marry or sleep with? I imagine part of the fear is that the liberal wing is tossing out scripture and tradition. But I want to read Scripture together and double down on the best parts of our Episcopal tradition that we have fought for over the years and encourage that everyone has something to grow and learn and to discern together what is the essence of the gospel."

- "I wish we could just move on with this. It seems like an unnecessary distraction when we could be focusing on issues like homelessness. The fact that I married my husband shouldn't bother you at all. Why does this effect people so much? I will never understand it. The best explanation I've ever gotten was 'the bible says.' But there's a lot of things the bible says. I want us to get past this so we can continue to do the work on the more important issues in the world rather than worrying about who people are marrying."
- "It gives me encouragement people still ask me about my daughter even though they are against same sex marriage."
- "There's a long history of the episcopal church having many ideas under one tent. We know there are people who aren't comfortable with same sex marriage. But we worship together and allow people to have their own ideas and we've done that for a long time... I just think we could very easily live through this [becoming fully inclusive]." "The bishop has helped the Episcopal Church heal once. He can do it again." "I'm quite concerned that the 2018 convention won't change and that Bauerschmidt will be allowed to continue this because there are so few Episcopalians who are effected [nationally] and Curry is doing everything possible to keep us in the Anglican communion and this would be one more thing the global church wouldn't be in favor of, so it will be too easy to kick the can down the road."
- "I've done so for 20 years. I will hang in there." "I love [the people at my church] even though their views are hurtful. Sooner or later I think they're going to come around, and some have already. I have hope." "We lost the conservatives with Gene Robinson and lost the liberals now so now we're down to the most stubborn people left." "Christians are shaming LGBTQ persons... shame causes depression. People who are shamed have higher likelihood of depression and suicide. Christian shaming of the gay community is causing depression and suicide."

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- Put myself in proximity to people who have a different opinion and have the courage to listen.
 - It is abusive to ask for the community to stay together when people are being oppressed without reconciliation and repentance of the oppressor.
 - Stay together and fully embrace everyone.
 - We value peace and justice- at what point do I say that I'm a leader in an institution that is institutionally unjust? Where and how do I draw the line- there's no room.
 - Go through a process of finding common ground.
 - Kept in the church because I'm on church committees
 - Kept in the church because of the work of ancestors for justice and hope to continue the work of liberation in Christ for the next generation
 - Been in this community of disagreement for about 50 years... will the other side (those saying "no") choose to stay when this issue moves along?
 - Feels like this is a separatist question. Question: why is our bishop forcing us to be divided when our national church and communities want this inclusion?
 - Meet in love.
 - Abusive to ask people who are being abused to stay in community with abusers.
 - Stay in communion together by encouraging each other to listen to each other's stories. Hopeful we can engage each other in a loving way.
 - Continue to make meaning together.
 - Operative word is hope. Relating to one another as much as possible.
 - I don't. I can't stay if it continues to hurt people. I need to be part of an institution that doesn't correct injustices.
 - Only if there is reconciliation to heal the religious/spiritual abuse of LGBTQ persons by the church.
 - As clergy, I can't stay long-term because I have not felt the same grace extended by others who don't want this.
 - Before you ask for our tolerance, we need confession and reconciliation for the hurt caused by the church to LGBTQ persons. "There is no peace without justice." –MLK Jr. The church is sinning by excluding people.

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- Deeply hurt people - find it harder to reconcile than just a difference of opinion
 - Young people say why do we need church when this is how you act
 - There is a need for community, even when upset by decision
 - Divisions happen when the appearance is that you don't care
 - Church evolves and changes - we need to be open

- Church and this decision is inflicting pain
We need to be willing to be uncomfortable to have these conversations - we still have to love those with whom we disagree
- Some people disturbed by it being in public arena
- Gay suicides are a real issue - highest group of teen suicides are teens
- You want my money but now me - you don't recognize my life
- Bishop is not inclusive
- I don't understand his decision
- I don't think he cares how it impacts any individuals
- Why does he dissent when national church has made a decision
(Group didn't understand what trial liturgy means)
- I will continue to pray
- This diocese and this church is the only one not doing it
- In 1960's Bishop Hines brought up the same-sex issue at GC and was applauded by crowd
- Threats to leave the church if we have same-sex liturgy shouldn't matter - Do we want them to walk, no. But maybe they need to walk
- Most of us here disagree with Bishop but we're still here to try to make change
- Our leader not giving enough reasons why he made the decision
- Generational issue - if Episcopal Church can't get it right, how will we hold on to our young people - I'm worried about the church

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- I was thinking I need to go to St. Anne's. I guess my real answer was prayerfully and joyfully and a little bit of pushing.
 - Conversations like we are doing now need to continue and be more widespread. I think experience will cause the other minds and hurts to change and be progress.
 - I tried to remarry under Herlong and he would not sign off on us getting married. So I hate rigidity. How do I remain with people that rigid? Be willing to listen on both sides.
 - Conversations like these really help. Maybe there will be a schism and he will have to deal with it, but SC succeeded. Others joined Rwanda. We may learn to accept there are losses along the way to reach the greater good. That's what I say. We should stay, but shit happens.
 - Be patient. Practice love and generosity and tolerance but not in the same sense of accepting it. Set a good example. Realize things don't happen overnight.
 - By not going anywhere I'm here cried in the parking lot a long time ago. Old Testament was tweaked to discriminate against gays, but there's nothing in Jesus' words about gays. Had to be added by the early church.
 - Always going to be a problem in the church. We are called to be in community no matter the disagreement. So long as it is peaceful disagreement, I should be peaceable too. I would love to be in on these kinds of conversations on a variety of subjects. Conversations mean there is at least a welcoming attitude. This is the first I have ever attended.
 - This isn't a question I feel I should speak to. We are 45% gay and no one really talks about this as a litmus test. We choose our church. We would not go to a church that is not teaching this. I am in a bubble. I grew. I surprises me you would congregate with people whom you disagree with on this.
 - Conversation is one of my Sunday school. Seniors. Education is the answer, but get to know gay people better. Share.
 - Improvement around the language. The task force treats this like a headache. This is important. Education is required. It takes training for language for people to be safe. It takes training for transparency. This is the work of the church. And we have to be careful not to turn the tables.
 - I am all about respect. Whenever you meet someone new, we try to find commonalities. We have that in the church. The bishop needs to be respectful to the LGBTQ community. We deserve that. Can't be confrontational. Need to be builders. Diversity makes us better.

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- Easy for me to say we'll remain in community; may not speak for those who disagree; easy to remain in community with those who disagree if we trust that we are all children of God; I struggle to see how God is Love & The Episcopal Church Welcomes You signs, yet how can we not welcome; it's the very nature of who we are
 - To be a person who is willing to agree to disagree; we've kicked that can down the road for a long time; going to have to decide; Church was a big part of my coming out process; couldn't leave; hard call; will try my best
 - Living in community with those who disagree as long as they treat others well; family left to go "Anglican"; mom & I are on opposite sides; have to love & respect her

- Church has always community that disagrees; Paul's writings; often those who are powerful & disagree use it as a threat to the community; held over us: people & churches will leave; churches vs. human conditions; pray that God's love let's us see God in others
- We have been offered grace & it behooves us to offer grace to others; won't use as a weapon to use against others by threatening them with loss of money or attendance; refuse to be cowed by that
- Parallels our political situation; make choice to what we have in common when we use views in threatening ways, loose my respect; set an example to be open & accepting of others; very trying & unnecessary having to lives under these views
- At work dinner this topic came up; only 1 of 4 were in favor of same-sex marriage; had to be respectful of each other & love each other; tried to discuss as openly as possible; not going to be not authentic & neither should they; agree to disagree; we can't change each other & that's ok
- Not a problem on any level, except he's my boss; makes me stronger, kinder ,more loving; live in a divided. difficult community; power dynamic; power relationship; have to defer if I want to keep my job; haven't been invited into conversation
- Gay woman; most of my life I was told I was going to be damned & burn in hell; we live our lives quietly; we set examples with our lives; we keep showing up; not receiving information or relationships on how to heal at such a time; lack of understanding or leadership on the issue of healing;
- Easy issue: answer: let each parish decide, that's fine; let each parish decide with their feet; all stay in community & be happy; works for Layman's Conference. East TN & West TN allow, TN does not, yet we all get along
- Baptized as an infant; not sure I'll continue to be a part of this church; not welcoming; I'm growing in faith but; this has been handled very poorly; won't wait forever; have been patient, but it's a power dynamic and abuse; why was ; it's all about who's in & who's out; to leave my church would be a huge sacrifice; maybe I'll move to another state or diocese
- Church of the people; been in this parish for over 30 years & have seen 5 rectors come & go; don't see the point of leaving; don't have a problem getting along; only God can make the decision of who's in & who's out; I've been on the vestry 3 times; that's 15 different opinions; decades ago it was African-Americans or Women's Ordination; when we look back, this will look like those controversies
- How serious is this; will it rip us apart; key= respect; learning how to remain is the challenge; i get it; if want to grow the church, need voices like ours;;learning & growing; parent of a gay son; take a stand; look for opportunities where I can in this diocese & church

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- What community? We are sitting here making assumptions without the full information or education
 - Let people work it out among themselves. Allow people to share stories. Allow one another to live into each other with love.
 - ***(youth) Trying to understand and think through the other persons' point of view. If the bible says, THIS...."marriage is between 1 man and 1 woman".... And If you say "the bible didn't really mean that—it's okay"---what else in the Bible is wrong? Are you picking and choosing what is convenient for what you want to do?? Try to hear why the opposition is opposed to your point of view.
 - How did other dioceses deal with this?
 - People are more likely to stay in community if they believe that people like them are welcomed in that community.

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- Female Lay: I have big emotions on this issue, but we do need to keep talking."
 - Male Lay: " In my congregation, we're divided ... we have a married gay couple who were married outside our parish; there's tension in this couple's family . If I disagree w/the one partner's Mother, am I not still supporting both her and the couple? We're a pretty loosey-goosey congregation; we just kind of work it on out."
 - Female clergy: "When there is a New Prayer Book - and there will be one - there will be same-gender liturgies for Blessings of Marriages in it. We're going to have to keep getting along anyway. I'm going to continue to break bread w/ those with whom I disagree."
 - Female Lay: "It's going to be very difficult to keep disagreeing."
 - Male lay: "This question is the wrong question - I've spent my entire life getting along w/ those with whom I disagree. It doesn't bother me to be an outsider. Why does there need to be perpetual divisiveness when there could be compromise?"
 - Female Lay: My clergy-brother/priest voted against Gene Robinson, but agreed w/the new Prayer Book Liturgies on Same-Sex Marriage Blessings. He said to me,, 'I might be wrong in this decision, but I keep seeking God's discernment since no one has all the answers. '"
 - Male Clergy: "We can't live without community. The church has been disagreeing for a long time."

- Male Lay: " Who' s going to speak for me, if I'm notthere?"
- Female Lay: "A lot of my friends disagree about a lot of things - I'm not good @ living w/ disagreement ... I think we just need to keep communicating. At some point, when will we stand up & challenge authority and call for a change? This is how we move forward. "One of the most divisive things you can do is ask people questions - and then ignore their answers. Sometimes you have to have it get worse before anything gets better."

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- See Christ in each other
 - Community-That's who we are as Episcopalians. We hold together in the middle of the road. Community isn't in shared opinion but in Jesus Christ.
 - Because of the sacraments/Body of Christ. Partaking in Eucharist together.
 - We have differences but we pray together and find ways to love one another. Sharing the table.
 - Walking in humility with one another. Stop throwing stones.
 - Don't break communication. Talk with one another and ask questions.
 - "I love you regardless of where you stand on issues"
 - The Holy Spirit moves the church through greater inclusion. It can happen, it did happen at the general convention and will happen here in the Diocese.
 - Huge spectrum in the church on Diocese. This issue should not define people's lives
 - Pastoral response is needed as well as the theological underpinning of the decision.
 - Get to know each other as people and not political positions. Sometimes an issue is so big that every aspect of one's life is filtered through that.
 - Time to stop throwing stones, get to know each other and turn to love.
 - This isn't about opinion, it's about the church. Are we living up to our calling? It goes way beyondopinions.
 - Communication through the scripture
 - Community without with all the members isn't a community worth being part of. Large sacrifices are being made in the name of community.
 - What are we doing to help those in crisis over this issue? If the church is it's people then those resources are available through community.

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Additional Comments

Question #1

- I approved it because of scripture. Did not affect me at all. If you're going to follow scripture--follow scripture. You cannot rewrite history. And you cannot re-write ancient writings. You can't pick and choose what parts of the Bible you believe.

Question #2

- Don't back down. Everybody wants to change history and biblical beliefs—and change things to reflect what they believe.

Question #3

- I'm not going anywhere. They are the ones who have to decide what they will do. I have lived around the homosexual population since college. Don't necessarily approve of it. It's not their place to dictate my life. And it's not my place to dictate their life. I don't approve of it--but I don't condemn it either. Live and let live.
- Marriage equality is legal in the US. Why is this even an issue in our Diocese.
- Conversation seems one sided in this forum. Work needs to be done to get both sides communicating.
- Change vs. the status Quo
- When we want to change something, we have a louder voice. If we are speaking loudest make sure we are also listening with the same energy