



THE RT. REV. STEVEN ANDREW MILLER, D.D.

BISHOP OF MILWAUKEE

June 7, 2013

Dear Friends in Christ.

Yesterday, I met with about forty priests and deacons from across our diocese to reengage the conversation about the implementation of the 2012 General Convention Resolution A049--Authorize Liturgical Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships, which sets forth a provisional rite for the blessing of same-gender relationships, subject to the direction of the diocesan bishop. I am deeply grateful for the presence of all those who participated yesterday, and, while the conversation was not easy, the spirit of vulnerability and respect on the part of so many was a gift.

This is a conversation that began soon after last July's General Convention, but which I had not been able to continue in as timely a manner as I had wished, because I found myself unable to discern the best way forward in these conversations. For that delay, I can only apologize. My silence, however, does not reflect the interior dialogue in which I have been engaged given my conflicted feelings about this matter. Much as I want in my heart to be in favor of this proposed step, I simply cannot come to a place where I can agree that A049 is a theologically sound development.

Therefore, I am not authorizing the rite from A049 for use in the Diocese of Milwaukee at this time. However, I have arranged with Bishop Jeffrey Lee of the Diocese of Chicago, for clergy and couples from congregations within the Diocese of Milwaukee to go to the Diocese of Chicago to celebrate the rite, as long as they obtain Bishop Lee's consent to such an action to take place within the bounds of that diocese. Doing so will result in no punitive or negative response whatsoever from me.

Furthermore, I stated my belief that the right to a civil marriage should be available to all people, regardless of sexual orientation and that I would support those seeking to overturn the ban on same-gender marriage in Wisconsin. I also shared that I have begun to permit partnered gay clergy to preside within the diocese, and that I am open to the potential call of any Episcopal cleric in good standing to a position here.

I am also aware that many of our clergy feel the need to offer a generous pastoral liturgical response to gay and lesbian couples. I have agreed to the formation of a task force within this diocese, comprised of people from across the spectrum on this issue, including openly gay and lesbian people living in monogamous relationships, to consider, and propose the same. At the end of the process, however, as the one given canonical authority to order the liturgical life of the diocese, the decision about the authorization of such a rite rests with me. In our polity, there can be no other way.

I realize that my decision in this matter will be seen as going too far by some, not nearly enough by others, and about right for some. I understand the depth of the pain experienced by people on all sides of this issue, especially those in the gay and lesbian community, who may see this a further 'not yet', or an outright rejection of them.

I cannot say strongly enough that I in no way intend the latter. The presence and witness of gay and lesbian people in my life and faith journey has been integral to making me the person I am—as a Christian, as a bishop, and as a human being. It is the integral nature of this issue that raises its consideration to the highest level of consideration from a theological and pastoral level.

Let me conclude by saying that I do not see this letter, this decision, or this moment, as the end of this conversation, and I am committed to continuing it whenever and wherever it can be held in a spirit of community which honors our baptismal vow to 'respect the dignity of every human being.'

As in all things, I know that I may be wrong, and if am I will ask God's forgiveness and yours.

Please know of my prayers for all of God's people who seek to faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all things.

As your servant, and fellow disciple, I humbly ask for yours.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Steven A. Miller". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

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