

**TEC Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music**  
**Addressing General Convention Resolution C056, *Liturgies for Blessing***

**Principles for Evaluating Liturgical Materials**  
**December 31, 2010**

Materials proposed for blessing same-gender relationships must above all be consistent with the implicit theology and ecclesiology of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. This would suggest, for example, that they must reflect the Prayer Book's underlying assumption that the entire life of the Church finds its origin in the baptismal font.

Nearly as important is that the proposed liturgical materials embody a classically Anglican liturgical ethos and style. Recognizing the varying notions of what makes public prayer recognizably Anglican, the task group identified these qualities:

- It resonates with Scripture.
- It has high literary value; is it beautiful according to accepted and respected standards.
- It uses the recurring structures, linguistic patterns, and metaphors of the 1979 BCP.
- It is formal, not casual, conversational, or colloquial.
- It has a ritual or sacral register.
- It is dense enough to “carry the freight” of the sacred purpose for which it is intended.
- It is metaphoric without being obtuse.
- It is performative.

At the same time, these rites must resonate as natural speech in contemporary ears. A sacral register must be achieved without the use of arcane or antiquated words or patterns of speech.

The rites should provide explanatory notes and rubrics. The material must be considered as the script for an event, not a mere collection of texts.

The proposed rites must be an expression primarily of the entire Church, not the couple seeking a blessing. These rites must allow for robust communal participation, reflecting the Baptismal ecclesiology of the Prayer Book. Related to this, since the Eucharist is the symbol of the unity of the Church through unity with Christ, these services of blessing should normatively be celebrated within the Eucharist.

These rites must enact the notion of sacramental reciprocity put forth by the C056 Theological Resources Task Group, suggesting that, even as the Church blesses the relationship of the couple, the relationship of the couple is a blessing to the Church.

Options must be provided so that this action of the entire Church—this common prayer—does not degenerate into a generic rite. The Prayers of the People will be important in this regard, as will other texts. There must be a provision of numerous options.

The rites must hold up the two people making the covenant as the primary ministers within this action of God and of the entire Church. The rites should give expression to the Church's understanding that the couple is freely assuming a vocation, which can be expected to yield the fruits of mutual fidelity for the couple, itself, for the Church, and for the entire world, pointing ultimately toward the fulfillment of all human relationships and unity in the eschatological Reign of God, when God will be all-in-all.

They must be what they purport to be—liturgical prayer—not didactic or polemical statements in the guise of liturgy.