



The Episcopal Church
Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music
Addressing General Convention Resolution 2009-C056, *Liturgies for Blessing*

**Theological Reflection on Covenantal Relationships:
A Summary of “Faith, Hope, and Love”**

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Baptism, Eucharist, and the Paschal Mystery

All Christians are called to bear witness to the good news of God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are empowered for such witness by our covenantal relationship with God. Baptism initiates us into that covenant, making us Christ’s own forever and members of Christ’s Body, the Church. The eucharist sustains us in that covenantal life and strengthens us to be Christ’s witnesses in the world.

Our covenantal life with God can shape and be expressed in our relationships of commitment and faithfulness with others. Our committed relationships can thus reflect a sacramental character (making divine grace visible) and evoke eschatological hope (our ultimate union with God). These relationships thus invite further reflection on the mission of the Church, what it means “to bless,” and the distinguishing marks of a covenantal relationship.

Themes for Theological Reflection

A sacramental framework for covenantal relationships suggests several other key theological themes for reflection and shared discernment, including the following:

- **Vocation:** God calls people into various kinds of relationship, whether as single people, in monastic communities, or as intimate couples. These vocational callings can empower our witness to the gospel. The decision to enter into a covenantal union is likewise a vocation marked by these characteristics: “fidelity; monogamy; mutual affection and respect; careful, honest communication; and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God.”
- **Households:** Covenantal relationships are often lived in households in which we practice daily the giving of ourselves for the good of another. While households take many different forms, they create a space of mutual trust and accountability. The joy, intimacy, and shared vulnerability of households can thus help us learn the spiritual disciplines of compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation in lives of committed monogamy and fidelity.
- **Fruitfulness:** The divine grace that sustains a covenantal relationship bears fruit in countless ways, not only for the couple but for the wider community as well. Covenanted couples manifest this grace in their shared gifts for ministry and in lives of service, generosity, and hospitality.
- **Mutual Blessing:** A blessed relationship is set apart for a divine purpose: to bear witness to the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying love of God in the world. As the Spirit empowers the couple for this witness, the Church is likewise blessed and strengthened for its mission and ministry.

In all of these ways and more, the blessing of a same-gender relationship invites the couple and the whole Church to renew our commitment to the Baptismal Covenant. That commitment is expressed by faith in the good news of Jesus Christ, in the hope for union with God that Christ promised, and with the love that knits us together as the Body of Christ. As the apostle Paul says, we live our life together as God’s people with faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).