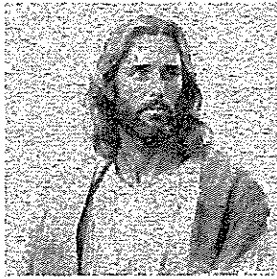


CELEBRATE:



One Body, Many Parts

CTK Believe Out Loud Education Series

Session 2: Church Teaching on LGBTQIA2+: Spirit-led dialogue and transformation over the past 50+ years

“For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from πορνεία (prostitution/adultery/incest). If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” (Council of Jerusalem: on admitting Gentiles, Acts 15:28-29)

The Evolution of the Teachings and Positions of the Episcopal Church on Our LGBTQIA2+ Siblings in Christ:

- Prior to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1961, studies of human sexuality in the Episcopal Church were limited to questions relating to marital procreation.
- Following a 1961 General Convention resolution regarding population control, the issue of human sexuality was more broadly questioned beginning in 1964, when a study was commissioned to address cultural challenges to family life.
- Specific discussions of same-sex sexual relationships began in the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1967.
- In 1972, at the Episcopal Church’s House of Bishops meeting, the affirmation of gay and lesbian ordination was proposed and tabled.
- At the 1976 General Convention which approved the ordination of woman, the following three resolutions from the Commission on Human Affairs were adopted: (1) that diocese and the Church in general engage in a study of human sexuality as it relates to various aspects of life; (2) that the Church acknowledge homosexual persons to be children of God who have as much a claim as other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral care of the Church; and (3) that the Church call upon society at large to provide equal protection under the law in regard to homosexual persons. At this time, the Church also agreed to study the issue of the ordination of homosexual persons.
- In 1979, the General Convention resolved to admit the ordination of *celibate* gay and lesbian clergy, recognizing “homosexuals” as children of God.
- In 1989, Rt. Rev. John Spong of the Diocese of New York, reignited the debate on the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy by the ordination of Robert Williams to the priesthood, an openly gay man who was living in a committed relationship.
- Tensions mounted in the 1990s when LGB rights become the topic of heightened interest in the Episcopal Church, resulting in a study regarding “homosexuality in the Church,” which involved an estimated 30,000 voices. As a result of this study, a resolution was passed at the General Convention in 2000, which affirmed the ultimate decision of whom to ordain was to be determined by each diocese.
- In 2003, Gene Robinson, an openly gay man, was consecrated as a Bishop in the Episcopal Church. This sparked outrage in the global Anglican Communion which resulted in the establishment of the Lambeth Commission by the Archbishop of Canterbury and ultimately the publication of the Windsor

Report condemning this ordination and calling for a moratorium on the subsequent ordination of gay and lesbian bishops and on the blessing of same-sex unions.

- The 2003 General Convention of the Episcopal Church upheld Robinson's election and ordination as Bishop.
- While the Episcopal Church was discouraged by the Windsor Report, the Episcopal Church published *To Set Our Hope on Christ* in 2004 in answer to the Anglican Communion's demand for a theological reckoning of its position on the fitness of homosexuals for ordination.
- In the General Convention of 2006, the Episcopal Church agreed to continue the study of human sexuality while honoring the request of the Anglican Communion to maintain a moratorium on the ordination of gay and lesbian bishops until the completion of the study.
- Upon completion of the study, the 2009 General Convention affirmed 48 years of discernment surrounding human sexuality by voting to affirm the full inclusion of gay and lesbian people in the Episcopal Church, affirming an end to the moratorium on the blessing of same-sex unions, and ending the moratorium on the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy and bishops.
- Over the course of 50 years of discernment by the Episcopal Church on the stance of our LGBTQIA2+ siblings in our faith community, the Episcopal Church determined that it was a moral imperative to no longer withhold God's blessing from those clearly called into relationship and into ministry in God's church. As a result, the 2012 General Convention also approved liturgical resources for the blessing of same-sex unions, which was confirmed and expanded at the 78th General Convention in 2015, to include approved liturgical rites for blessing Same-Sex Marriages as well.

Study Questions:

How do you feel about the progress the church is making as we return to some of the original values of Christ's followers? What does it mean to you that The Episcopal Church has been talking about this subject for over fifty years as we have sought the direction of the Spirit on whether or not to affirm and welcome LGBTQIA2+ people?

Additional Resources:

To Set Our Hope on Christ (See Appendix for full history of church process): <https://allsaints-pas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/sethope.pdf>