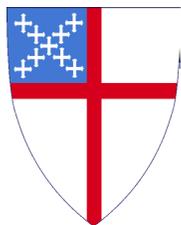




The Daily Opinion Journal of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia Friday, June 26, 2015 Issue Three



# Marriage Equality

## Two Bishops, Two Approaches

As the debate over marriage equality continues to build at this General Convention, Center Aisle set out to find two people who could offer compelling but different viewpoints on how to address this issue. Though we have stated our preference for a constitutional route to marriage equality, rather than a canonical one, we are committed to offering diverse opinions on key issues. That's why Center Aisle is pleased to share with you today the views of two respected leaders of our Church on an issue that will help define the work of this convention.



by The Rt. Rev. Andrew Doyle,  
Bishop of Texas

A proposal has been made to change the canon on marriage. This is the latest in a long line of attempts to bring resolution to inclusion of GLBT members of our Episcopal family. It will not ultimately bring resolution and will only prolong the debate on this issue, cause continued anxiety, and give no end in sight to a debate we have engaged for over 30 years. The problem is that it would put the canon in conflict with the Book of Common Prayer, which the Constitution mandates for use in all dioceses and which cannot be altered or amended except pursuant to a constitutional process.

The issue lies in the relationship between the Constitution and the Canons. It is essential that we uphold our Constitution and our Canons in all things. It is essential because everything from court cases regarding property, our ordinal, to Title IV cases are dependent upon the synchronicity between the Constitution and the Canons and the hierarchy these undergird

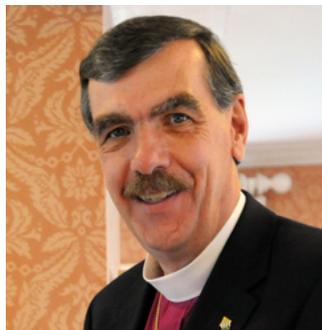
throughout the Church. The Constitution itself sets forth the basic articles for the governance of this Church. This is clearly stated in the preamble.

We are an ordered Church. We have a hierarchy. The Constitution establishes the basic polity of our Church. It reminds us that our General Convention itself is bound by this Constitution. The Constitution establishes the basic polity of our Church: General Convention (its two houses), the election of bishops, the dioceses, the provinces, and the use of the Book of Common Prayer are all duly authorized. It is here that resides our liturgy and the nature of marriage as found in the Book of Common Prayer.

This probably sounds really hierarchical and maybe even Roman. The reality is that in our particular dispersed mission at the local level; our mutual discernment between lay, clergy, and bishops at Convention; our dependence upon dioceses to oversee a great deal of our ministry – this is what we hang our hierarchy upon. It is in this Constitution and our canonical dependence upon it, our General Convention's work in governance, and our ministry as a wider Church that we are ultimately dependent. To undo our canonical dependence upon the Constitution is to become unmoored at the very core of what orders this Church.

Yes, under the Constitution the Book of Common Prayer can be

**-continued on page 2-**



by The Rt. Rev. Thomas Ely,  
Bishop of Vermont

It has been my privilege during this triennium to serve on the Task Force on the Study of Marriage and for a second term on the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM). I am grateful that the presiding bishop appointed me to these positions and to the Special Legislative Committee on Marriage at this General Convention.

I am now serving in my 15th year as bishop of Vermont, where for all those years the state of Vermont has made legal provision for the union of same-sex couples, first by way of civil unions and now by way of marriage. My context as bishop of Vermont and my relationships with the people of Vermont have significantly shaped my understanding and convictions related to the matters before this General Convention with regard to our marriage canons and marriage liturgies.

While the principal focus of the work of the Task Force was on marriage in general, the response to our work has been

largely focused on same-sex marriage specifically. Perhaps that is because the work of the SCLM in this triennium included liturgies for blessing covenanted same-sex relationships and marriage liturgies that could be used by all couples seeking to be married in the Episcopal Church. Or, perhaps it is because that is where our greatest hopes and fears reside.

My hope going forward is that the fuller scope of the work in which the Task Force engaged will not go unnoticed. There is much to be considered in this work regarding changing marriage trends and norms, as well as the teaching and pastoral work of the Church amidst these changes.

Since so much of the Church's response to the work of the Task Force has focused on same-sex marriage, I think it is important to place this dimension of our work in the context of the long (40-plus-year) journey in the Episcopal Church, in which we are seeking to affirm and celebrate the lives, ministries, contributions and participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in this church. In this regard, both the Task Force and SCLM have done the work this Church asked us to do.

Some have found this work to be an important and even exceptional contribution to our discernment, while others have offered various degrees of criticism regarding theology, history, **-continued on page 2-**



## Doyle, Continued

revised, but as you know it requires a very serious consideration and process, including 1) the passing of an amendment at one General Convention, 2) publishing it to every diocesan convention, and 3) adopting it at the next succeeding General Convention by the vote of both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies, voting by orders. This is how important and core the Book of Common Prayer and the Constitution are to the Episcopal Church. By definition, they cannot be effectively amended, repealed or suspended by the clergy or by a canon.

It is so important that according to Title IV.3.1(2), a clergy person can be disciplined for knowingly violating the Constitution. Here is the kicker: If the General Convention is not willing to respect the Constitution, we might well ask what standing does the Constitution then have? It is always and everywhere in the Constitution and Canons understood that the two shall always be in sync; furthermore, that the Constitution shall be

amended first.

Over the last six years, I have worked to bring about reconciliation in the Diocese of Texas. I have worked to create an expansion of our commons to allow for same-sex blessings - which we now do. I am working with clergy in the Diocese to move us into a place of reconciliation where we heal our history and are welcoming and including to all people. We must live with difference theologically, and celebrate our diversity. I have hoped to create a peaceful commons for all people and feel this is my faithful mission. I will continue this work no matter what happens at General Convention.

As a bishop and on behalf of all the people I shepherd, what does it matter to have gained this canonical change if in the end the Church's order is lost in its doing? For the conservative and for the liberal, for the heterosexual and our GLBT family members of my Diocese, what happens if in the end we undo the very Church we love for the sake of expediency?

We arrive at this constitutional

## Ely, Continued

the question of adequate consultation, as well as canonical and constitutional matters. Some of these critiques have added considerably to the conversation, to our discernment and to our mutual understanding. Others are, I believe, misinformed and sadly some strike me as attempts to slow, stop or reverse the trajectory of our journey

There are important pastoral and missional dimensions to all of this. How we give expression to the full inclusion of all God's people in the pastoral, liturgical and sacramental life of our Church is what I believe the vast majority of our people and those looking at us from beyond are waiting to see. How we navigate the legislative, canonical and parliamentary

process and procedures of our polity are of far less concern to many "out there" than the witness we will make by our action "in here."

As I said in Wednesday morning's session of Committee #20, my commitment at this General Convention is to find the best way forward to offer full canonical and liturgical status to all couples who desire to be married in the Episcopal Church. Whatever steps we take at this General Convention need to be toward that goal and we need to send a clear signal that this is where we are going as a Church. If we can fully arrive at that destination during this 78th General Convention - GREAT! If not, we must let our "Yes" be our "Yes," even if not fully now.

crisis not because of some idea I have had, but because the committee has not fully undertaken its charge. It has not done the work it needed to do. It admits it has not consulted and communicated with our Anglican brothers and sisters, and here it is clear that it

has not undertaken the work in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the very Church we all love and which has taught us to love one another.

## Should Retired Bishops Be Allowed to Vote?

by The Rt. Rev. Edward F. "Ted" Gulick Jr., Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Virginia



On day one of my eighth General Convention, I found myself quite surprised to be near tears as my four colleagues, nominees for presiding bishop, articulated their vision for our Church and its future. My emotion resulted from both content and context. All four nominees were articulate and passionate about mission, the Gospel and disciple-making. Their content was inspiring.

I was equally inspired and moved by context. Deputies and bishops heard these missional testimonies together, with both houses discerning together. We were the "missionary society." The Episcopal Church was in a profound solidarity of discernment.

The joy of the moment did raise a concern - a concern addressed at five of the eight conventions I have attended. The concern is this: Should

retired bishops, who are no longer actively engaged in supervising the mission life of the Church, exercise the significant power of a vote?

Several conventions ago, the bishops voted to relinquish the vote of their retired members, only to have the House of Deputies take a different path because the deputies felt that removing the vote from retired clergy smacked of "age discrimination."

Several conventions later, after an emotional plea from a retired bishop, my house reversed itself and restored the vote to the retired bishops. That decision will have an impact on Saturday morning's election of a new presiding bishop, so it was a consequential decision.

As Saturday's vote approaches, I continue to reflect on Wednesday's session with the PB nominees, which was stunning - bishops and deputies discerning together. I find myself pondering again whether bishop electors, entrusted with such power to elect our chief "missionary," should be those electors who are themselves shaping mission in their own context.

This question is being addressed by the Task Force for Re-Imagining the Episcopal Church. Pay attention!

## A Few Terms You Will Hear Only in Utah

by Jeffrey Stevenson, staff writer, postulant in the Diocese of Virginia and native Utahan

**Sluff:** Not attending an event or class where you are expected. In Utah, high school students have "senior sluff day," rather than "senior skip day." If my parents are reading this, I never sluffed a day in my life.

**Biff:** Falling down, tripping, otherwise making a fool of yourself. "I'm giving my first sermon next Sunday. I hope I don't biff it."

**Ornery (pronounced "awnery"):** No one in Utah is grumpy; they are just awnery - a temporary state. "Why are you being so awnery? Do you need a Diet Coke?"

**Jell-O Drawer:** Unfortunately, it is exactly what it sounds like. Love it, like it or hate it, Utahans make a lot of Jell-O! Jell-O salad, Jell-O salad

molds, Jell-O salad with carrots, Jell-O salad with cottage cheese, Jell-O with marshmallows. Only Utahans truly know the versatility of Jell-O.

**Funeral potatoes:** Funeral potatoes are basically potatoes au gratin, but they are always served as a side dish during traditional after-funeral dinners. They are delicious. It wasn't until I left Utah that I realized you could have cheese and creamy potatoes without someone dying.

**Surepreciate:** A term of thanks. "Thank you for bringing over the Jell-O Salad, we surepreciate it!"

**For definitions of "ignurant," scones, and a list of Utah swears, visit [centeraisle.net](http://centeraisle.net)**

