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## *The Development of Rites Which Would Bless Same-Sex Unions*

### A Foreword of Explanation

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church usually receives somewhere between 300 and 700 resolutions to act upon. While some of these are courtesy resolutions, many of them are quite complicated. They concern medical and science issues, international justice and peace issues, labor and economic issues, in addition to ministerial and liturgical and ecclesiastical policies.

Each of these resolutions is directed to one of the 22 legislative committees of General Convention. Many, but not all, deputies are assigned to sit on one of those committees. The committees conduct open hearings on the resolutions, they discuss and reformulate and sometimes substitute resolutions, and then they return the resolution to the floor of General Convention for vote.

At almost every General Convention of the Episcopal Church in recent years, resolutions asking the church to develop rites (liturgies) for same-sex unions have been directed to the Prayer Book and Liturgy Committee. This is the committee that I have sat on for several conventions. I love the liturgy of the Episcopal Church and the world of that committee. We have helped provide on occasion to remember Philip the Deacon, for instance,, and I was honored this year to help grant permission for use of the Revised Common Lectionary.

However, also this year, the Prayer Book Committee received word that we would be hearing, as usual, the resolutions asking for liturgies that would bless same-sex unions. Sometime in June of 2003, the Reverend Frank Wade, Chair of the Prayer Book Committee, telephoned me with a new idea of how to manage our upcoming open hearing. He wanted members of the Prayer Book Committee to model civil discourse on a controversial issue. Thus, he had asked one person on the committee to present an argument opposed to the resolution, and he was asking me to present an argument in favor of the resolution. He would not ask anyone not on the Prayer Book Committee (about 35 people). After these two opening statements, the committee would hear other views, as we usually do.

The hearing that night, August 1, 2003, was, indeed, noted for its grace and civility. It helped that I knew, and respected, the person presenting the other side; and I believe he respected me. Those in the room, over 600 or so, prayed and sang together. It was really an occasion of "church," though the issue was -and still is""very difficult. Attached are my remarks. I have stated there, and I reiterate here, that I do not require others to agree with my position. I believe that the Episcopal Church is in a place where faithful members hold legitimate disagreement on this issue. I refuse to believe that this disagreement should divide us.

Thank you,

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler

28 August 2003

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