

Marriage Equality in the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester FAQs

Will churches in the Diocese of Rochester treat all couples that come to us seeking a wedding with equity?
All churches in the EDR are encouraged to treat all couples with equity subject to their own guidelines.

Will the Episcopal Dioceses of Rochester permit clergy to sign the marriage licenses of same sex couples?
Yes.

May the clergy in this diocese bless civil marriages of same sex couples?
Clergy may bless the civil marriage of any couple.

May all couples use *The Book of Common Prayer* liturgy for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage?
Because the Bishop is not able to permit the use of the BCP for same sex marriages clergy are encouraged to treat all couples equally and use alternative resources as may be authorized by the Bishop's office.

Does the Bishop encourage all congregations to discuss this issue openly and to come to a common and public understanding about their marriage practices?
Yes.

Should same sex couples be provided with special counseling prior to their marriage?
Every couple should receive pre-marital counseling appropriate to that couple's circumstances.

May clergy in our diocese marry couples from outside our diocese and from out of the state that request to be married in our diocese?
Yes, so long as the couple satisfy all of the requirements of NYS civil law and meet the requirements established by the local congregation.

May clergy who are not canonically resident in the diocese of Rochester celebrate and bless marriages in this diocese?
Clergy from outside the diocese wishing to preside at weddings here have always required by courtesy to gain the permission of the Bishop of Rochester, and that continues to be the case.

Will the bishop now require all cohabitating same sex clergy couples to marry?
The bishop encourages all cohabitating clergy couples to have their relationships celebrated and blessed by the church.

How should clergy who do not wish to marry same-sex couples respond if those couples should approach them asking for a church wedding?
As in counseling all persons we respect the dignity of all human beings and compassionately refer them to a priest who is willing to perform marriages for same sex couples.

How do we reconcile marriage equality with the Episcopal Church canon which states that both parties understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with intent that it be lifelong? [I:18:2 (b)]
We take it that the core of this canon is the encouragement of couples to enter into relationships of mutuality and fidelity within the context of the Church. Over the past forty years or so, experience and practice of marriage, in our wider society as expressed in civil law, has grown to include same sex marriages, preceding, as experience and practice often do, the canonical changes required by the church to recognize and regularize that change. (See for instance the canonical changes required (in the '70's) to regularize the ordination of women, the option to remarry after divorce, and the as yet unchanged canon on who may take communion when open communion is practiced in many churches today.) We trust that the canons will again catch up with our practice and experience in marriage. In the meantime, we act on the side of equity and justice for all.