

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Fayetteville, Arkansas**

Our Congregational Process of Conversation about Same-Gender Blessings

An Outline of our Process

2003 – Congregational Survey

We found a majority was willing to engage a conversation about the possibility of offering blessings to our members who were in committed same-gender loving relationships; but almost 22% said they strongly disagreed with initiating such a conversation. Out of respect for that minority, we postponed a process and engaged in a period of education and information.

2003-2004 – Educational offerings from varying theological perspectives

late 2003 – A Small Group engaged the *Good News* reconciliation process

Participants were evenly divided, for and against blessings. Minds weren't changed, but people listened with respect and affection. The group recommended that the Vestry experience the Good News process.

2004 – The Vestry engaged in the *Good News* reconciliation process.

2005 – The Rector charged the Vestry to decide whether or not to lead the congregation in engaging in a process of conversation about same-gender blessings.

After hearing from parishioners from all sides of the issues, the Vestry decided to lead a congregational discernment process.

2005 – The Congregational Conversation

*We supplied resources from a variety of positions.
The congregation participated in **four parish meetings** following the Good News model.*

September, 2005 – A Vestry consensus endorsed offering of a rite of blessing.

Respecting the House of Bishop's moratorium, we postponed any blessing until after the 2006 General Convention. We communicated the text of our resolution to the House of Bishops and House of Deputies in anticipation of the 2006 General Convention.

2006 – After the General Convention, the Bishop gave St. Paul's permission to act on what we had discerned. In October, 2006 we celebrated our first rites of union for same-gender couples.