

## **Message to the Parish**

September 20, 2005

At last night's monthly meeting the Vestry passed by consensus the following resolution:

*The Vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church expresses its support for our church's offering of a rite of blessing as a resource for pastoral care for our gay and lesbian members who wish to make a lifelong, loving commitment of mutual fidelity as a couple. By this resolution we communicate our position to our clergy, our Bishop and the upcoming General Convention of the Episcopal Church.*

All twelve members of the Vestry expressed their support of the resolution.

Two members expressed reservations -- one because the resolution did not specifically address support for a pastoral rite of blessing for heterosexual couples who for good reason may not wish to be married, and another did not want the resolution to be interpreted as a movement in the direction of amending the church's sacrament of marriage to allow same gender marriage.

There will be no blessings performed in the immediate future. The House of Bishops authorized a moratorium on new rites of blessings until after the 2006 General Convention as a response to the Windsor Report. Any same-gender blessing would have to conform to the decisions of the General Convention. The Vestry resolution is part of our contribution to the whole church's discussion of pastoral care for all our members.

The Vestry expressed particular concern for our parishioners who will find this decision disappointing and painful. The Vestry intends to continue the spirit of our parish conversations to promote our willingness to honor one another in our disagreements and to remain in communion with each other, seeking reconciliation through Christ's peace which transcends all our divisions.