

# Episcopal priests in D.C. may conduct gay nuptials: Priests may preside at civil marriages

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Shortly after same-sex marriage became legal in the District of Columbia, Bishop John Chane of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington said that its priests may preside at such civil marriages in the nation's capital.

Under guidelines released March 4, which stipulate that no priest is required to preside at such ceremonies, Chane thus joined Episcopal bishops in Vermont and Massachusetts in allowing same-gender marriages.

Chane noted that the denomination's General Convention last July adopted a resolution that said bishops in dioceses where civil jurisdictions have legalized civil unions, domestic partnerships or same-gender marriage "may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs" of such church members.

Episcopal News Service said that Chane's guidelines do not spell out what rites clergy may use when officiating at a civil marriage. "I would prefer to work that out in consultation with the clergy who will be performing these services," the bishop said in a news release.

"Through the grace of Holy Baptism, there are no second-class members of the Body of Christ," Chanes said in making the announcement. Some clergy in Washington vigorously objected to the district's new law, but on March 3, U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts declined to delay implementation of the law.

Priests from outside the diocese are prohibited by Chane's guidelines from presiding at same-gender civil marriage ceremonies inside the diocese unless they are from a state and diocese that allows such marriages.