

Episcopal Church allows all priests to perform same-sex marriage rites

Under a new rule, priests will be able to marry same-sex couples despite their diocesan bishops' objection—but no priest is required to preside at any wedding.

by [Religion News Service staff](#) and Episcopal News Service staff in the [August 15, 2018](#) issue

Same-sex couples will now be able to marry in their home parish even if their local bishop has moral objections to gay marriage, Episcopal Church leaders decided at their General Convention in Austin, Texas.

Under the new rule, couples can request gender-neutral marriage rites, which were approved for trial use at the church's 2015 convention, in the church where they worship. Even if the local bishop opposes same-sex weddings, the priest of the parish can still conduct the ceremony, requesting pastoral support from a bishop in another diocese if necessary.

The approved resolution also makes it clear that “no clergy member can be forced to preside over any marriage ceremony,” the Episcopal News Service reported.

Currently, eight of the United States' 101 Episcopal dioceses—Albany, New York; Dallas; two in Florida; North Dakota; Springfield, Illinois; Tennessee; and the Virgin Islands—do not authorize the gender-neutral liturgies.

Bishop Lawrence Provenzano of Long Island, New York, who helped craft the resolution, hoped it would provide greater inclusion for LGBT couples without alienating traditionalists. Provenzano said he was “joyfully surprised” by what he described as a “spirit of reconciliation” at the convention even in the midst of heated debate.

The new provision for a local option doesn't take effect until December 2, the first Sunday of Advent.

Also at the convention, the Episcopal Church adopted a resolution directing the Executive Council's Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility "to develop criteria for Israel and Palestine based on a human rights investment screen" similar to the one passed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 2016. The resolution also encouraged shareholder advocacy for human rights in Israel-Palestine as well as "positive investment in Palestine and other under-resourced areas where human rights abuses materially impact the well-being of all people."

Other mainline denominations have taken similar action, including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Church of Christ. —Religion News Service and Episcopal news sources