

# THE LIVING CHURCH

## Bishops: A Provisional Yes

By Joe Thoma

The House of Bishops authorized a provisional rite July 9 for blessing same-sex relationships. The vote was 111 to 41, with three bishops abstaining. Resolution A049 asks General Convention to authorize the liturgy for *provisional* use, which replaces the word *trial*.

The resolution, which proceeds to the House of Deputies July 10 for debate and voting, also calls for a review of provisional use before the next General Convention in 2015.

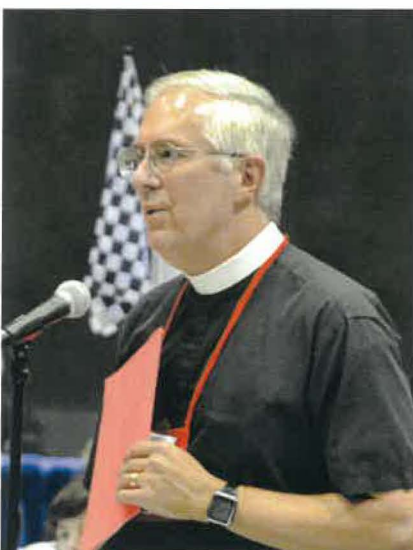
But most people who have spoken publicly about the resolution consider it more than provisional, and say it plainly authorizes same-sex blessings in the Episcopal Church.

The Rt. Rev. Gregory Brewer, Bishop of Central Florida, spoke against the measure, noting that he has heard from close friends, Anglicans who live in totalitarian countries, who say that they fear retaliation for being associated with the Episcopal Church's policies on marriage and sexuality.

"These decisions could be catastrophic for them, and I have to oppose the resolution," he said.

One member of the Committee on Prayer Book, Liturgy and Church Music, the Very Rev. David Thurlow of the Diocese of South Carolina, submitted a minority report recommending rejection of the resolution.

The resolution would authorize using "'The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant' from 'Liturgical Resources I: I Will Bless You and You Will Be a Blessing' beginning the First Sunday of Advent 2012, under the direction



Matt Townsend photos

The Rev. Canon James Lewis of South Carolina speaks against a transgender-related resolution in the House of Deputies July 9.

and subject to the permission of the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority."

The Rt. Rev. Thomas Ely, Bishop of Vermont and episcopal co-chairman of the cognate committee, introduced the resolution and said it allows for wide local interpretations. The resolution does not make the rites mandatory, but leaves it up to each diocesan bishop to implement them, adapt them for local use or not use them at all.

"That will mean different things in different locales," Bishop Ely said. "There is a place in this process for every Episcopalian regardless of

their level of support for the material.

The Rt. Rev. John Bauerschmidt, Bishop of Tennessee, asked that the vote on A049 be taken by roll call, then spoke against the resolution.

"When Jesus commends this lifelong fidelity to one person, in Mark 10, he appeals to the story of creation, the creation of our first parents. In other words, the basis for monogamous relationship itself is sexual difference — one husband espouses one wife; one wife espouses one husband. I think that this liturgy that is being proposed does not have that basis in Scripture, tradition or reason, for us to authorize its use."

The Rt. Rev. Duncan Gray III, Bishop of Mississippi, said he would not authorize the provisional rite in his diocese, but that it probably will be adopted by General Convention.

"I know I see through a glass darkly," he said, asking that people who are for the rites "walk beyond this vote with a sense of humility and less of a triumphant note."

### 'You' Includes Transgender

By Lauren Anderson

The House of Deputies passed resolutions protecting church members from discrimination based on "gender identity and expression" in amendments to two non-dis-

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Matt Townsend photo

An improvisational drum circle in the Youth Hospitality Suite at the convention center in Indianapolis. Young people from the Young Adult Festival, the Official Youth Presence, the Philippine Independent Church and local parishes played drums, bongos, tambourines and other percussive instruments.

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crimination canons July 9.

The house spent considerable time discussing Resolution D019, affirming all people's access to "the life, worship, and governance" of the church, hearing mostly from deputies testifying in support of the resolution.

Proponents of the resolution said it helps define the phrase "the Episcopal Church Welcomes You."

The Rev. Carla Robinson, a transgender priest in the Diocese of Olympia, spoke of the importance of recognizing transgendered people in the canon.

"By including gender identity and gender expression in this canon, you will rightly name us," Robinson said. "You will show respect for our humanity."

Sam Gould of Massachusetts said this is an important issue for young adults, adding that it will help dispel the idea that Christians are hypocritical.

"This is a statement that I think is very important for my generation," Gould said. "We need to not be a hypocritical church. We need to live by that statement that the Episcopal Church welcomes you."

The Rev. Eric Turner of Central Florida proposed an amendment that would eliminate the list in the non-

discrimination canon, which includes "race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age."

"We need to stop this process of adding a new minority every time one becomes vogue or politically correct," Turner said.

The Rev. Canon James Lewis of South Carolina also opposed the resolution, saying he needed more clarity on the definition of "gender identity and expression."

"Is there in fact anything that is out of bounds? Nowhere have I seen the explanation of these terms or a theological justification for this expansion of category."

Turner's proposed amendment was ultimately defeated, allowing for the passage of the main resolution.

Discussion on Resolution D002, which adds gender identity and expression to the categories of non-discrimination in "access to the discernment process for any ministry, lay or ordained," was significantly shorter than on D019. The resolution passed in a vote by orders.

The house also passed Resolution A050, which would assemble a task force to study "biblical, theological, historical, liturgical, and canonical dimensions of marriage" during the next triennium.

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