



DIOCESE OF MAINE

THE RT. REV. STEPHEN T. LANE

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8 November 2012

To: The Clergy and People of the Diocese of Maine
A Pastoral Letter Regarding the Referendum on Same Sex Marriage*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus:

On Tuesday, November 6, 2012, citizens of the State of Maine took the momentous step of voting to include same sex couples among those who may apply for civil marriage licenses. For many this decision was the achievement of long delayed justice for an oppressed minority and an appropriate extension of the rights and responsibilities of marriage to all citizens. For others the vote represented a fundamental change in long held beliefs brought about by the profound cultural shifts taking place in our country. As your Bishop, I rejoice in the greater inclusion of all our members in the full life of our communities. I also recognize and grieve the deep pain which significant change can cause. To each one of you, I offer my continuing affection and support.

Whenever an event produces strong feelings in us, it may be difficult to remember that that same event produces very different feelings in others. I ask those who rejoice in last Tuesday's decision to be gracious towards those who mourn. I ask those who mourn to refrain from bitterness and recrimination. Each of us is a child of God seeking to do what is right and a sinner for whom Christ died; and we are all brothers and sisters of one another.

A vote for change is not, by itself, sufficient to accomplish that change. For each of us now comes the hard work of getting used to a new situation and considering how we will respond. Vestries and lay leaders may need time to consider what it might mean to offer their church as a place where same sex marriage can take place. Clergy may need to decide whether or not they will preside at such services and under what circumstances. As Bishop, I will need to revisit the guidelines first developed for the possibility same sex marriage in 2009 and to consider carefully what adjustments may need to be made in light of our changed circumstances. I believe the pastoral generosity extended by the 2012 General Convention of The Episcopal Church to dioceses in states where same sex marriage is legal applies to the Diocese of Maine, and I will consider changes to our guidelines in that light.

I imagine that every generation believes it is living in a time of profound change. Whether or not history ultimately concurs with this assessment, I know the change of our time feels profound to us. The good news is that such change is among the means by which God works his purposes out. I firmly believe that God will use what we offer for good and that as we struggle to do what is right the Spirit of God is in our midst.

May we all trust that God is with us and may we treat one another with the love and compassion that are the marks of God's reign.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen T. Lane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Stephen T. Lane
Bishop of Maine

* This letter may be read or distributed as you determine is best.