



## **Policies and Procedures for the Blessing of Same-Gender Marriages in the Diocese of Oklahoma**

1. Prior to any request for the blessing of a Same-Gender Marriage (hereafter referred to as “Marriage”), a consultation of the congregation will have been completed as outlined in the Consultation Policy and reported to the Bishop.
2. The blessing of a Marriage requires prior notice to the Bishop (or Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in the absence of the Ordinary, together the “Bishop”).
  - (a) Permission must be sought in writing by a priest canonically resident in the Diocese of Oklahoma, or licensed to officiate in the Diocese of Oklahoma, of where the Marriage is to be blessed. If permission is sought by an Assisting or Associate Priest; or Curate, the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge must also sign the petition.
  - (b) Notice of the Marriage must be delivered to the Diocesan Office for the Bishop’s attention at least 30 days before the proposed date for a blessing.
  - (c) Both persons seeking the Marriage will have signed the Declaration of Intent and submitted the Notice of Same-Gender Marriage.
3. For every proposed blessing, at least one of the two persons requesting the blessing must be a baptized person.
4. For a Marriage to be blessed in the Diocese of Oklahoma, the couple must have either (a) obtained a marriage license prior to the blessing and have the marriage solemnized by the officiating priest in compliance with the laws of the State of Oklahoma and using the form provided in the approved liturgy for the declaration; or (b) have provided evidence of an existing civil marriage or union in any jurisdiction where permitted by law.
5. Prior to a priest’s officiating at a blessing, the couple must receive adequate counseling as determined by the priest and according to the policies of the Diocese. (Priests are encouraged to take advantage of the educational resources available on the diocesan website.) If, based upon his or her observations of a couple, interactions with them, or knowledge of the outcome of the couple’s prescribed regimen of counseling, the priest becomes aware of significant factors that could materially undermine the ability of the couple to enter freely and intelligently into the life-long, loving union contemplated by the vows and promises set forth in the liturgy, then the priest should consider whether he or she should delay blessing the Marriage until the couple can take steps (under the priest’s guidance and direction) to ameliorate or minimize such factors, or whether the priest should decline under all circumstances to bless the Marriage. In all cases the priest should continue to offer guidance, support, and pastoral care to the couple.

6. The priest-in-charge retains the right and responsibility to determine whether any Marriage shall be blessed on church property or under the auspices of the congregation.
7. Blessings of Marriages shall be recorded in the Church Register of the congregation in which, or under whose auspices, the blessing takes place, and no blessing shall be performed without such record.
8. No priest of this Diocese shall bless the Marriage of any person, except as hereinafter provided:
  - (a) The priest shall consult with and give notice to the Bishop prior to officiating, and shall report the blessing to the Bishop when conferred; and
  - (b) If the proposed blessing is to be given in a jurisdiction other than the one in which the consent has been given, the consent shall be affirmed by the Bishop of that jurisdiction.
  - (c) If previously married or in a civil union, the priest shall be satisfied by appropriate evidence that any prior marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction, and that the same is true for any Marriage that was evidenced by a formal civil proceeding.
  - (d) In the event of the above and if appropriate, the priest shall have instructed the parties that continuing concern must be shown for the well-being of the former spouse or partner, and of any children of the prior marriage or union;
9. It shall be within the discretion of any priest to decline to bless any Marriage.
10. The Blessing shall follow the guidelines and rubrics as provided in the Liturgy approved for use in the Diocese of Oklahoma.