

**Claiming the Blessing: An Occasional Newsletter – Vol. 1, No. 1  
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Grace to you and peace, and best wishes for a most joyful Season of Epiphany!

I write to you today, on the Feast of the Epiphany, to bring you up-to-date on the work of Claiming the Blessing, as we continue the good work begun at our Conference 2002 in St. Louis. Much has been begun, but there are miles left to go ... and with the holidays behind us and the calendar turned to “2003” the march toward Minneapolis is indeed gathering momentum ... and we have our work cut out for us.

We will gather this week with 20 members of our Steering Committee to continue the work begun in St. Louis and to create a schedule for the months ahead. Our work includes finalizing the Theology Statement introduced in November, creating a curriculum companion for distribution at the parish and diocesan level, and scheduling Regional CTB Gatherings to continue to spread our vision of a way forward in the spirit of Anglican comprehensiveness.

I truly believe that the work of Claiming the Blessing ... gaining General Convention approval for the inclusion of liturgies for the blessing of unions other than marriage in the Book of Occasional Services ... is a vision whose time has come, is a goal that will move the church forward in mission and ministry and is an opportunity for evangelism which will breathe new life into our work and our witness for the Gospel. Indicative of how near we are to achieving that vision are the tactics already being employed by those in opposition.

Claiming the Blessing has answered the questions and concerns that have been raised through the years in our comprehensive Theology Statement. In response to “We don’t even know what it is you are asking for” we have provided a Theology of Blessing. In response to the timeworn biblical arguments, Walter Brueggemann has offered a brilliant and incisive apologetic for inclusion. In response to the “Frequently Asked Questions” from the church at large, we have provided answers set firmly in the context of our Anglican heritage.

Having offered this prophetic vision of a church ready to embrace all of the baptized fully into the Body of Christ, our opposition has turned its attention from the issues in front of us to the very authority of General Convention ... and presuming to speak from the “traditionalist” perspective has concluded that “decisions about same-sex partnerships ... affects the very foundations of the common life of the Episcopal Church and its claim to status as a church in the catholic tradition.” (“The Authority of General Convention” as found online at [www.seadinternational.com](http://www.seadinternational.com))

I write today to reiterate the claims we made together in St. Louis ... that we who advocate for the approval of rites for blessings are speaking from the traditional perspective of those whose Christian faith has the DNA of the English Mother Church of the Elizabethan Settlement coursing in our veins, who claim the clarity of Cranmer, the sageness of Seabury and the heroism of Hines as our heritage and who dare to vision a community of faith where unity and unison are not confused.

We advocate with the history of ECUSA under our belts, with our homework done and our argument ready to sway the "Moveable Middle" ... who know as well as we do that those who cry schism do not speak for the historic Anglican faith ... who yearn for a way to move beyond a "chicken little" approach to diversity and who may very well be looking to us in the weeks and months ahead as the center of traditional Anglican comprehensiveness ... the bearers of the tradition that brought them to or kept them in the church as we have known and been embraced by it.

I am more and more convinced that the Blessing We Claim has less to do with liturgical rites for a tiny of percentage of God's already blessed community of faith than it does with the blessing of an Anglican heritage which is in serious danger of being hijacked by a fundamentalist, misogynist, heterosexist agenda which has nothing at all to do with the Gospel as the Spirit is continuing to reveal to us ... but everything to do with power, control and oppressive authority.

Trust with us that the heritage we inherit is stronger than that. Join with us in praying for strength and wisdom and perseverance as we move forward to Minneapolis. And work with us to offer to those in this church we love who are "tossed and turned" by the divisive rhetoric and sky-is-falling theology being offered by these our "opposition" an alternative vision of a non-anxious presence, a heavenly banquet set for all who come seeking to live in mutuality with God and each other and a sense of the possibilities we, as American Anglicans, can offer a world desperately seeking a way to live together in peace and find unity in our diversity.