**“What God has joined together…” Bishop’s remarks for the Convocation**

Images:

Wedding rings in the Seattle airport

Catholic Bishop advocating for Divorce

Ban in same-gender marriage challenged in Montana and Wyoming

Context:

For 30 years we have been talking about sexuality, and in particular, homosexuality

2009 opened things up—positively and negatively

2014—challenge to bans in Wyoming and Montana

Intent:

Be prepared as leaders to lead our congregations through next steps

Have civil and engaged conversation among ourselves and listen deeply

Leave as respectful colleagues and friends, not antagonists.

Model this for our congregations

Background:

Church and Marriage:

We bless and encourage it.

We act as agents of the state

We do not have a required rite. We have a “commended” rite

Church and Sexuality:

We affirm it as gift and as trust.

We are getting increasingly accustomed to discussing it in greater depth and variety.

We are not of one mind.

Church and homosexuality:

We have gone from abhorrence and denial, to DADT, to discussions, to acceptance

Changes in our lifetimes:

Church: condemnation, civil rights , welcome, ordination, marriage

Culture: Even faster

Iowa

Dick Cheney

Westboro Baptist Church

Law: Every state has gay marriage or challenges to bans

Why we need to deal with this now:

Myths:

First Amendment repealed

ELCA will force us

We’ll get sued

Synod is making us

Reality:

It is coming and it is already here.

It behooves us to be prepared.

Informed decisions are always better than reactive ones.

We can learn from one another.