**“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 First Amendment repealed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.