

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2009
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2009-C085
TITLE: Lesser Feasts and Fasts: Add the Rt. Rev. E. Thomas Demby to LFF
PROPOSER: Diocese of Arkansas
COMMITTEE: Prayer Book, Liturgy and Church Music

Directly Related: (attached)

None

Indirectly Related:

1991-D149 Endorse Bicentennial Celebration of the Black Presence in the Episcopal Church

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions of General Convention for the period 1976 through 2006, selecting "direct" resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. Committee members who are interested in obtaining copies of "indirectly related" resolutions, legislative history before 1976, or who require other research assistance should contact the Archives at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.

TOPIC/TITLE: Lesser Feasts and Fasts: Add The Rt. Rev. E. Thomas Demby to LFF
 PROPOSER: Diocese of Arkansas
 C&C PAGE:
 BB PAGE:

1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That this 76th General Convention authorize
 2 the addition of the Rt. Rev. E. Thomas Demby to the Calendar of Lesser Feasts and Fasts:
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 4 WHEREAS,
 5 In 1918, The Diocese of Arkansas elected and consecrated the African-American priest,
 6 Edward Thomas Demby, as Suffragan Bishop for Colored Work in Arkansas. Bishop
 7 Demby exercised authority not only over the five African-American parishes in
 8 Arkansas, but also in 15 other parishes spread throughout the (then) eight dioceses;
 9 WHEREAS,
 10 His service with the Joint Commission on Negro Work spearheaded the campaign to
 11 select a black priest as the national church officer in charge of evangelism among African
 12 Americans in the United States; and
 13 WHEREAS,
 14 His struggle against white apathy, lack of funds, and jurisdictional ambiguity was
 15 essential in the rebuilding of the African-American component of the Episcopal Church
 16 in the context of a segregated church.
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EXPLANATION:

In 1918, the Right Reverend Edward Thomas Demby (c. 1869 - 1957) became Suffragan (assistant) Bishop for Colored Work in Arkansas and the Province of the Southwest, encompassing Arkansas, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and New Mexico. His episcopate was part of a series of experiments in black leadership conducted by the Diocese of Arkansas in the early twentieth century. Demby's tenure in this segregated ministry addresses the larger American experience of segregation disguised as a social good. Yet Demby accomplished much: He was demonstrated the industry and self-reliance of black Episcopalians to the church at large; he secured black priests for the diocese, baptized and confirmed communicants, and he built schools and other institutions of community service. A gifted leader and a committed Episcopalian, Demby recognized that black service institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and orphanages, would be the means to draw African Americans back to the Episcopal Church, which they had abandoned in droves after emancipation as the church of their former masters. For more than twenty years, he confronted white apathy, lack of funds, jurisdictional ambiguity, and the Great Depression. Demby persevered in establishing the credibility of a ministry that was as questionably-conceived as it was well-intended. Demby's steadfastness and nonconfrontational manner gathered allies on both sides of the color line and, ultimately, his judgment and the weight of his experience carried the church past its segregationist experiment. Collect O God, the Creator of all, we thank you and praise you for Thomas Demby who triumphed even through the blindness of segregation: Grant us the courage to persevere through prejudice and respond gloriously,

creatively and faithfully to all obstacles; so that we may lead all persons to worship you, one God, in the glorious company of many races; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Possible Commemoration dates: October 14th, 1957 d. (date already taken on Church Calendar) Suggest May 16th - when his grave was given a marker

SOURCES

Black Bishop, by Michael Jay Beary

History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church, by George F. Bragg

The Episcopalians, by David Hein, Gardiner H. Shattuck, Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr.

Episcopalians and Race, by Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr. http://www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/GC2009_Resolution_Guidlines.pdf

BALLOT RESULTS: