

**General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022
Archives' Research Report**

Resolution No.: 2022-A029
Title: Support for Military Chaplains
Proposer: Standing Commission on World Mission
Topic: Chaplains

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A047 Address Moral and Spiritual Healing from Traumatic Stress Injuries

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2018-A175 Amend Constitution Article II.7 [Bishop Suffragan for Armed Forces--Second Reading]

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2018, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#) or call 800-525-9329.

A029 - Support for Military Chaplains

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Standing Commission on World Mission

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

HiA: HB

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 15 - Ministry

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention commends the ministry of The Episcopal Church's military chaplains, who bravely tend to the spiritual and religious needs of United States Armed Forces service members as pastors, priests and preachers; and be it further

Resolved, That the Bishop Suffragan for Armed Forces and Federal Ministries, in addition to tending to chaplains serving in federal prisons and hospitals, continue to uphold The Episcopal Church's leadership role in forming and supporting military chaplains to respond to the challenges facing today's military personnel, including extended exposure to violence, injustice, hatred and hardship; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention affirms the 2001 "Declaration of the Episcopal Church's Understanding of Ministry to the Armed Forces", including Episcopal military chaplains' commitment to love and serve members of all faith groups, and to ensure access to the free exercise of religion within the constraints of military service; and be it further

Resolved, That Congregations engage with military chaplains so as to learn from their experience with global mission and interreligious dialogue, and from their example as an embedded servant ministry proclaiming and portraying the Gospel beyond the church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on World Mission collaborate with the the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to choose an appropriate day for observance of the Church's military chaplains, and consider developing a collect and suggested lectionary for observance of Military Chaplains Day for authorization by the 81st General Convention.

Explanation

Approximately 150 ordained Episcopal ministers currently serve as military chaplains and commissioned officers in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, both active duty and reserves, as well as with the National Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary, Civil Air Patrol, State Defense Forces (Georgia) and Veterans Administration hospitals. The Bishop Suffragan for Armed Forces and Federal Ministries tends to these military chaplains, as well as to chaplains serving in federal penitentiaries.

Many Episcopalians may not be aware of this important ministry of the church, which dates to the Revolutionary War when General George Washington appointed Episcopal priest John Hurt as the nation's first Army chaplain. Rev. Hurt was ordained on December 21, 1774; this date, signifying the Episcopal Church's unique longstanding leadership role within the U.S. military chaplain corps, is one option the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music may consider in responding to the final Resolved of this Resolution calling for a day of observance.

In January 2001, the Bishop Suffragan for Armed Forces and Federal Ministries and twelve serving chaplains composed a statement of understanding of Episcopal Church ministry within the military context. This "Declaration of the Episcopal Church's Understanding of Ministry to the Armed Forces" is referenced and affirmed in this Resolution, and is copied in full below. The purpose of the statement was to clarify the parameters of the role of Episcopal Church chaplains; chaplains are currently urged to utilize it when interpreting to new commanders and supervisory chaplains their role as priests serving in the uniformed service.

In bringing forward the ministry of military chaplains and the Bishop Suffragan, the Standing Commission on World Mission intends to highlight in particular their contribution to the church's global mission, including enhancing interreligious understanding and ministering to service members deployed overseas.

Declaration of the Episcopal Church's Understanding of Ministry to the Armed Forces:

Clergy of the Episcopal Church are ordained to fill the roles of pastor, teacher and priest. The Episcopal Church expects its chaplains to fulfill those roles in as broad and inclusive a manner as possible while remaining faithful to the church's historical, theological and liturgical roots in both Roman Catholicism and the English Reformation.

As pastors, Episcopal military chaplains love and serve all of the people among whom we work. We preach and teach the faith of the church in Protestant and other services as opportunity permits, remaining flexible in form yet consistent in upholding the traditions of the Episcopal Church. Caring for all and committed to the free exercise of religion by all we cooperate with chaplains of all faith groups to ensure access for the free exercise of religion and religious accommodation within the constraints of military service. In this way, we try to feed those of God's people whose spirituality, theology, or liturgical practice diverges from ours.

For Episcopalians, the Eucharist is the central act of worship. All baptized persons are welcome to join us in this sacred mystery. We gather in community to be nourished in Word and Sacrament. The Bible, reason, and tradition inform and shape the Eucharist through which we have communion with our Lord and by which we are invigorated for mission.

Present divisions in the body of Christ cause us much pain. We look for the day when all are one in Christ. Until then, we live with those divisions and the unavoidable, resulting constraints. Sacramentally, Episcopal chaplains can only function in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer, the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the guidance of the Episcopal Bishop. Only clergy from churches in communion with the Church of England can conduct Episcopal services.

We, the undersigned Priests and Bishop of the Episcopal Church who minister to the Armed Forces, are thankful for the ministry entrusted to us and ever mindful of our need for God's grace and mercy for ourselves and with those to whom we minister in this challenging, pluralistic environment.

Washington National Cathedral, Feast of the Confession of St. Peter the Apostle, In the Year of our Lord 2001

Composed and signed by Bishop George E. Packard, Chaplains Carl M. Andrews, Gerald J. Blackburn, Dedre Ann Bell, S. Michael Bell, George M. Clifford III, Robert W. Eldridge, Reese M. Hutcheson, Roger D. Kappel, James B. Magness, Richard D. Oberheide, Gary L. Parker, and Malcolm Roberts III.



Resolution Number: 2015-A047
Title: Address Moral and Spiritual Healing from Traumatic Stress Injuries
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church call the Church to a triennium of pastoral care and Christian formation that is focused upon those whose lives have been directly and indirectly impacted by exposure to traumatic events related to global and domestic terrorism, the violence of warfare, and displacement through natural and man-made disasters, to address the effects of massive and chronic exposure to these particular expressions of violence and global chaos; and be it further

Resolved, That a consortium be formed among the of the Office of Global Partnerships; the Office of the Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Forces and Federal Ministries; the Office of Diversity, Social, and Environmental Ministries; and Episcopal Migration Ministries, along with representatives of the Church appointed by the Executive Council, to consult with relevant experts in the field, to collect and make available relevant resources, and to coordinate communication among a wide network of ministries focused upon healing from traumatic stress injuries related to warfare, terrorism, and population displacement; and be it further

Resolved, That the same consortium make available to military chaplains, parish clergy, and lay ministers resources and training specific to helping them address the needs of uniformed men and women of the armed forces and of veterans who either continue to be directly or virtually involved in global combat engagements or who are returning from service with “spiritual and moral injuries;” and be it further

Resolved, That the same consortium work with Anglican Communion partners and with migration and refugee organizations to develop or disseminate resources for the relief of traumatic stress and to promote spiritual healing for women, men, and children who are affected by terrorist organizations that continue to be intent on harming innocent, non-combatant populations through intimidation, recruitment, physical violence, and geographic displacement; who are the non-combatant victims of military engagements; or who are the subjects of population displacements due to terrorism, military combat, or large scale environmental disasters.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), p. 836.