

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-A078
Title: Imagining a Church Grounded in Social Justice as Christian Ministry
Proposer: Task Force on Theology of Social Justice Advocacy
Topic: Justice

Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-A056 Create a Task Force on the Theology of Social Justice Advocacy as Christian Ministry
2015-A096 Affirm Relationships in Approaches to Social Justice Ministry
2015-A182 Address Systemic Racial Injustice

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

2018-A057 Strengthen Grassroots Social Justice Advocacy and Multicultural Ministries
2012-A135 Commit to Alleviating Poverty and Injustice
2012-D050 Encourage Clergy Response to Poverty and Justice
1997-A051 Remind Convention Bodies to Be Attentive to Inclusion and Discrimination
1994-A081 Develop Liturgical Resources That Recognize Racial and Cultural Diversity
1988-A110 Adopt Statement on the Leadership of the Nation
1979-B052 Implement an Institutional Program of Racial Justice in the Church

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.

A078 - Imagining a Church Grounded in Social Justice as Christian Ministry

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Task Force on Theology of Social Justice Advocacy

Requests New Interim Body: Yes

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$55,000.00

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 14 - Christian Formation & Discipleship

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: Yes

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention affirm:

- 1) That social justice advocacy is a primary ministry of the Church; it is our corporate, public witness to the Mission of God “to restore all people to the unity of God and each other in Christ.” [BCP Catechism, page 855];
- 2) That social justice is about right relationships among and between all of us, centering the voice and experience of the marginalized (as we read in Matthew 25), and these are the relationships that have been, and continue to be, harmed by the systemic, unjust distribution of wealth, opportunity, and privilege;
- 3) That social justice ministry includes acts of mercy or charity but also must include dismantling institutions, structures, and policies that cause harm and divide us from each other; and it includes repairing the breach by rebuilding systems of justice, fairness, and equity (Isaiah 58);
- 4) Over this past triennium, (2018-2021) the global pandemic, racial justice uprisings, and escalation of the climate crisis including extreme wildfires and storms, as well as the societal fissures and institutional failures that these events have revealed, demand we understand this to be a revolutionary moment of accountability, repentance and renewed commitments to the mission of God. We are called to account for our failures to live the words we preach and pray. We acknowledge that

historical practices, policies, and structures of the institutional church have played a role in the persistence of the systemic inequality and call out for out for immediate, urgent and enduring redress;

And be it further

Resolved, That all dioceses and congregations be called upon to ground every planning or business meeting or convention with prayers inviting an examination of conscience regarding the specific impact of the decisions of such meetings upon those who are poor, dispossessed, disadvantaged, or marginalized, and to provide and model forms for such examination of conscience; and be it further

Resolved, That all dioceses be called upon to offer, at least once a year, a diocesan-wide event or program and liturgy to engage our congregations and members in listening to and understanding the history and current context of our diverse local communities, with attention to those who have historically been dispossessed or disadvantaged; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention direct the creation of a Task Force on Imagining a Church Grounded in Social Justice as Christian Ministry be formed as a diverse group to include 2 bishops, 2 priests, 2 deacons, and 10 laypersons, in order to a) consider what the church must look like if we put our vocation to love our neighbor and to be repairers of the breach at the center of our work; b) to reach out to local and diocesan groups that are doing social justice and racial reconciliation work focused on systemic change, in order to understand what resources and gifts we already have in this work and where the gaps are; c) to liaise with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music and the Standing Commission on Governance, Structure, Constitution and Canons, the Presiding Officers' Advisory Group on Beloved Community Implementation (if it is extended in the next triennium), and other relevant interim bodies on consideration of these questions and how to address the institutional barriers to change in the church; and d) be charged with making recommendations to the 81st General Convention for institutional change to support social justice as Christian ministry in the areas of governance and structure, prayer and liturgy, catechesis and lifelong formation for discipleship, especially with laypeople and consistent with an equitable and inclusive polity; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$55,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Explanation

The 2021 Blue Book report of the Task Force on Theology of Social Justice Advocacy to the 80th General Convention provides the background for this resolution; please read the report in full. As we say in the report, this resolution is not a conclusion, but only a beginning.

\$55,000 is requested to fund this resolution:

One in-person meeting (\$27,200, estimated at \$1,700 x 16 members) of the Task Force on Imagining a Church Grounded in Social Justice as Christian Ministry;

Additional funds for task force members, in smaller teams, to carry out local site visits to congregations and dioceses doing exemplary work in training, formation, and implementation of social justice ministry; and to liaise with other interim bodies as described in the mandate (\$27,800 total: estimated at \$1,390 per meeting (assuming that the task force strive for efficiencies with local travel) x 2 members per team, x 10 meetings).



Resolution Number: 2018-A056
Title: Create a Task Force on the Theology of Social Justice Advocacy as Christian Ministry
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention direct the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies of The Episcopal Church to appoint a Task Force on the Theology of Social Justice Advocacy as Christian Ministry, consisting of three (3) bishops, three (3) presbyters or deacons, to include both orders, and six (6) lay persons, who represent the diversity of the Church, to be tasked in this triennium to consider scripture, approved liturgical resources, other theological texts and previous actions of General Convention to summarize the ways in which The Episcopal Church understands the work for social justice as essential mission and ministry of the Christian Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force study how The Episcopal Church currently fosters theological understanding and leadership for social justice, and recommend ways to foster theological and practical conversation across the Church on this topic; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force be directed to report its findings and recommendations to the 80th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$15,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), pp. 680-681.



Resolution Number: 2015-A096
Title: Affirm Relationships in Approaches to Social Justice Ministry
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention affirm the many justice ministries of service and advocacy throughout The Episcopal Church, ministries that are grounded in the Baptismal Covenant and that were initiated by General Conventions, dioceses, congregations, and other Episcopal organizations; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention affirm and encourage the use of various methods to discern, develop, and sustain justice ministries, such as Asset-Based Community Development, needs surveys, and community organizing; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention affirm and encourage the formation of partnerships between congregations and well-established community organizing groups in their local contexts in order to be trained in the practice of community organizing and sustained by those partnerships that they may do justice ministry more effectively and efficiently; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention acknowledge that one of the greatest challenges of our time and culture is the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the sin of economic injustice that pervades our society; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention challenge all Episcopalians to hear in a bold way the call of both Jesus and St. Francis of Assisi to befriend and be with the poor, and that we come to know that the future vitality of The Episcopal Church is grounded in our mutually affirming relationships with our brothers and sisters who are poor; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention encourage all Episcopal congregations to establish relationship-based, social-justice ministries through which relationships are developed between those who serve and those who are served, resulting in shared and transformational experiences and in a greater commitment to work for justice on all sides of the socio-economic divide; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention encourage churches and dioceses to discover and partner with local experts such as Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), Direct Action and Research Training (DART), Gamaliel Foundation, Asset Based Community Development, People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO), and other local formulations of interfaith or cross cultural organizations that use relationships to structure their transformative work; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention ask Episcopal groups that are participating in relationship-based social justice to share their experiences with the broader Church through social media, the internet, and official communication channels, so that other groups can learn from their successes, challenges, and insights.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 368-369.



Resolution Number: 2015-A182
Title: Address Systemic Racial Injustice
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recognize that many Episcopalians find it challenging to understand or know how to respond to 21st century systemic racial injustices that still occur in multiple contexts including but not limited to education; employment; housing; health care; banking; voting rights; immigration; policing, courts, and prisons, etc.; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention affirms that the Gospel, our Baptismal Covenant, and our Marks of Mission call individuals, churches, dioceses, provinces, and the wider Church to find more effective and productive ways to respond to racial injustice as we love our neighbors as ourselves, respect the dignity of every human being, and transform unjust structures of society; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention declare that “not knowing” and “not having the eyes to see and ears to hear” are serious obstacles to transforming unjust structures and therefore direct the Church at every level for this triennium to commit to increase the use of study, education, research, anti-racism training, liturgies, and Christian formation instruction that specifically address systemic racial injustice; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention urge the Church at every level to increase the number of dialogues about systemic racial injustice it has with local, state and national bodies within the public and private spheres and that these dialogues be used to identify, examine, and offer correctives to policies and practices within and among these bodies that result in systemic racial disparities and injustices; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention urge dioceses and congregations to create vehicles for listening to diverse neighbors and developing reconciling relationships; such options might include (a) listening campaigns in local communities, (b) partnerships with churches and organizations comprised predominately of a different race or culture (especially those targeted by oppression), (c) neighborhood prayer walks, (d) storytelling and speak-out events designed to facilitate truth-telling, healing and action, (e) and others with which leaders throughout the Church are familiar; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention encourage Justice and Advocacy Ministries to partner with other church offices and organizations as appropriate to host, resource, and moderate an ongoing online forum for Episcopalians dedicated to the ministry of racial justice and reconciliation, with spaces dedicated to sharing about local and diocesan efforts and resources; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention encourage Justice and Advocacy Ministries to partner with Youth Ministries to commission a gospel-centered, Internet-integrated, action-oriented, anti-racism youth ministry curriculum for congregations throughout The Episcopal Church, including those not in the United States, to be provided in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music produce and post online a set of prayers for racial reconciliation and justice, suitable for inclusion in the Prayers of the People; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention urge the Executive Council to conduct its own internal audit to assess to what extent, if at all, racial disparities and systemic racial injustices exist within the Church (including but not limited to clergy salaries and deployment); and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention request that the Executive Council report back to the 79th General Convention on the results of the internal audit; what concrete steps it and the wider Church took to address systemic racial injustice in the wider culture; and how effective those steps were.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 438-439.