

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-A107
Title: Ministry with People with Mental Illness and Their Families
Proposer: Task Force on Ministry with Individuals with Mental Illness
Topic: Health

Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-C034 Create a Task Force on Mental Illness
2015-C020 Increase Ministry and Mission to the Mentally Ill
1991-D088 Encourage Understanding of Mental Illness and the Needs of the Mentally Ill

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

2000-C032 Urge Congregations to Commend and Support Mental Health Support Groups
1991-D100 On the Topic of Mental Illness (Rejected)

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.

A107 - Ministry with People with Mental Illness and Their Families

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Task Force on Ministry with Individuals with Mental Illness

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 14 - Christian Formation & Discipleship

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church recognize the worldwide prevalence of mental illness and the need for effective ministry with people facing mental health challenges, and the need to continue the work begun with the General Convention resolutions 2015-C020 and 2018-C034; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church now equip all its people, both clergy and laity, to interact in compassionate, competent ways with those experiencing mental health challenges; and be it further

Resolved, That the provinces and dioceses of The Episcopal Church utilize resources to strengthen care, inclusion, support, and advocacy for all people (both laity and clergy) who struggle with mental health challenges; and be it further

Resolved, That the provinces and dioceses of The Episcopal Church develop and strengthen resources to support the mental health of their clergy by advocating for clergy to be intentional about their self-care, and realizing that clergy, like anyone else, may also struggle with challenges to mental health.

Explanation

Even prior to the current pandemic, mental health challenges as well as mental illness have constituted significant health problems both in the US and globally. In the US, at least 1 in 4

people struggle with anxiety and 1 in 5 with depression. Globally, anxiety and depression are among the primary causes of disability. Mental health is a public health matter which impacts quality of life for people with mental health problems and their families and friends. And yet, stigmatization of mental illness has persisted, leading to shame-based and fear-based avoidance of admission and discussion of the mental health challenges that people experience.

In our baptismal vows, we promise to respect the dignity of every human person and to seek and serve Christ in all people. Through our work since the General Convention in Austin, TX, we have become convinced that it is time for The Episcopal Church to encourage its members to live more deeply into their baptismal vows. Our country is torn by divisiveness and recent FBI statistics indicate a 3% surge in hate crimes from last year. However, the hate crimes have become more violent. As mental health professionals, we know that where there is hate, there is fear, fear born from misinformation, stereotypes, and myopic interpersonal constellations. When it comes to mental health, there remains an unfortunate stigma rooted in narratives of individual strength and persistence with an insistence on 'pulling one's self up by her bootstraps' as well as 'snapping out of' mental distress.

Individuals and families, within our communion, continue to suffer silently with the fall-out of mental illness. The existence of mental illness may not become known to pastoral care ministries in a congregation until a terrible crisis occurs involving law enforcement and or suicide. By remaining silent about mental health issues in our congregations, we enjoin a kind of violence which harms the creatures of God, a violence of silence and separation by which clergy and congregants often distance themselves from those who suffer, out of fear, ignorance, or even apathy.

The resolutions which we are putting forth emphasize the necessity of education and training for lay leaders and clergy. Such endeavors include integrating and requiring information regarding the intersection of pastoral care and mental health into the formation process for persons discerning a call to ordained ministry, much the way Safe-church practices are required. These endeavors also call for mental health first aid training to be provided by dioceses or by provinces for lay leaders and clergy with eventual progress toward train the trainer curricula throughout the TEC.

But Jesus brings relief and release from all shame and stigma. Jesus proclaimed "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). As Emmanuel, God-with-us, Jesus communicated that God wants all humans to thrive. Jesus' ministry was summarized in the words he read from Isaiah in the synagogue: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (from Luke 4:18-19).

We are calling for methodical approaches in our denomination for preparing laity and clergy to recognize and respond effectively to community members' mental health matters. We imagine a church wide commitment in which nurturing mental health and addressing mental illness is a well-integrated component of congregational life and pastoral care. We envision programmatic education for the ministry of the baptized of all orders so that ministry

embodies attention to and care for all peoples' mental health right along with their spiritual and interpersonal well-being. We want to encourage the wider Church to endorse the importance of clergy well-being by endorsing the necessity that congregations and their lay leadership support clergy wellness via respecting boundaries, encouraging adherence to time off, and realizing that clergy also struggle with mental health issues. Now, with the additional complexities and uncertainties precipitated by the COVID pandemic, mental health matters have intensified. Anxiety and depression and substance use, common, prevalent mental health issues, are exacerbated. Tending to mental health issues will be essential to learning how to be and 'do' church differently.



Resolution Number: 2018-C034
Title: Create a Task Force on Mental Illness
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention authorize the establishment of a Task Force on Mental Illness to further the Episcopal Church's commitment to, with and for persons with mental illness and their families as reflected in the General Convention resolution 2015-C020, as adopted and which reads:

(2015-C020)

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church calls upon diocese, congregations, schools and other entities of The Episcopal Church to explore and adopt best practices for the vitality and increased capacity of their mission and ministry in the inclusion, support and spiritual care for persons with mental illness and their families; and be it further

Resolved, That dioceses, congregations, schools and other entities of The Episcopal Church increase understanding about mental illness by providing educational material and training; utilizing existing programs such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness, veterans groups, government departments on mental health, local organizations and other programs; and sharing the information so it is readily accessible.

And be it further;

Resolved, That this task force be appointed jointly by the Presiding Officers, with between 10 and 12 members, two or three of whom shall be bishops, two or three of whom shall be clergy, and not more than six lay persons, and all of the members shall have some professional, family or personal background with mental illness, and that this task force report back to the 80th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance consider a budget allocation of \$30,000 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), p. 894.



Resolution Number: 2015-C020
Title: Increase Ministry and Mission to the Mentally Ill
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church calls upon dioceses, congregations, schools and other entities of the Episcopal Church to explore and adopt best practices for the vitality and increased capacity of their mission and ministry in the inclusion, support, and spiritual care for persons with mental illness and their families; and be it further
Resolved, That dioceses, congregations, schools and other entities of the Episcopal Church increase understanding about mental illness by providing educational material and training; utilizing existing programs such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness, veterans groups, governmental departments of mental health, local organizations, and other programs and organizations; and sharing the information so that it is readily accessible.

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



Resolution Number: 1991-D088

Title: Encourage Understanding of Mental Illness and the Needs of the Mentally Ill

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That members of the Episcopal Church are encouraged to become knowledgeable about mental illness in order to reduce stigma and stereotypes which are prevalent within the Church body and the Community-at-large; and be it further

Resolved, That the Episcopal Church and all its units and organizations, be encouraged to reach out, welcome, include and support persons with a mental illness, particularly those who have a prolonged, serious mental illness, and the families of those persons, and recognize the abilities and celebrate the gifts of those who have a mental illness; and be it further

Resolved, That the church encourage the development of specific programs to equip the clergy and laity for ministry to the mentally ill and their families and that clergy and lay ministers seek out training and opportunities to minister to the spiritual needs of those who are affected by a mental illness; and be it further

Resolved, That dioceses and congregations work with existing agencies and organizations to assist with and initiate programs, such as support groups, drop-in centers, housing and employment opportunities, which lead to an improved quality of life for people who have a mental illness, with specific attention to those who have become homeless; and be it further

Resolved, That dioceses, congregations and individual parishioners become advocates for public policy and adequate funding to provide comprehensive community-based services, hospital care and research into the causes and treatment of mental illness; and be it further

Resolved, That dioceses, congregations and individuals utilize the resources and support services offered by the Episcopal Mental Illness Network (EMIN) of the Presiding Bishop's Task Force on Accessibility.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 822.