

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-132
Title: Task Force to Study Congregational Vitality Indicators
Proposer: House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church
Topic: Congregations

Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-A053 Simplify and Improve Usability of Parochial Report
2018-A144 Urge Jurisdictions to Engage in Regular Missional Review
2015-A084 Modify the Parochial Report
2015-A100 On the Topic of Assessing Diocesan Viability and Vitality (Rejected)
2015-C031 Request Study of the Number and Size of Dioceses
2012-A010 Document Changes in the Church, Its Outreach Ministries, and Those Served
2006-A098 Promote Vitality of Mission and Ministry in Small Congregations

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

None

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.

A132 - Task Force to Study Congregational Vitality Indicators

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church

Requests New Interim Body: Yes

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$25,000.00

HiA: HB

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 10 - Congregational & Diocesan Vitality

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention authorizes the creation of a task force to study indicators of 21st century congregational vitality and how The Episcopal Church can collect data that measures those indicators; and be it further

Resolved, that the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies appoint the members of this task force, to include at least 2 bishops, 5 clergy, one of which must be a deacon, and 5 laypeople with appropriate representation from urban and rural congregations, congregations in which people of color are a majority, and congregations that represent the full geographic and economic diversity of the Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, that the task force coordinate with the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church to ensure that the parochial report form is revised to collect data from congregations that will measure vitality in the 21st century; and be it further

Resolved, that the task force issue a report to the 81st General Convention that includes proposed canonical changes to codify the proposed measurements,; 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 \$25,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Explanation

During this triennium, the House of Deputies State of the Church Committee has worked to revise the parochial report so that it collects data about congregational vitality that is meaningful in today's church. That work has been hampered in two ways:

- The Episcopal Church does not have an agreed-upon understanding of what mission vitality means or how we should recognize it at the congregational level.
- The canons of the church frequently rely on outdated measurements including Communicants in Good Standing, Average Sunday Attendance, and other data that fails to capture the ways that many Episcopalians worship, serve and gather in the 21st As a result, we continue to collect and disseminate data that fails to provide leaders with useful information about the state of the church or how to foster vitality.

By establishing a task force to study indicators of vitality and recommend measurements of them, the General Convention can ensure that the data collected each year from congregations will help leaders at the churchwide, provincial and diocesan level understand the current realities of congregations and invest in mission vitality in new and innovative ways.



Resolution Number: 2018-A053

Title: Simplify and Improve Usability of Parochial Report

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention charge the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church to work with the Office of the General Convention and Executive Council to design a simplified parochial report relevant to the diversity of The Episcopal Church's participation in God's mission in the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church solicit input from critical parochial report stakeholders including: (1) data providers to ensure that the data is easily collected and compiled and (2) data users to ensure that the data collected is relevant to their work; and be it further

Resolved, That the user interface be improved both for entering data and downloading data and to provide an application programming interface to allow data to be integrated into other networked tools for broader sharing and analysis.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 362.



Resolution Number: 2018-A144
Title: Urge Jurisdictions to Engage in Regular Missional Review
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention finds it to be in the best interests of The Episcopal Church that all dioceses and other jurisdictions of the Church engage in the process of a missional review periodically but no less often than prior to engaging in an episcopal search process; and be it further

Resolved, That the missional review will seek to look thoroughly into the vitality and viability of the congregations and ministries of the diocese, seeking at all times to ask the deep discernment question “what is God calling us to be and do at this time and in this place.”

Topics for the missional review include but are not limited to

- *Worship and spiritual life;*
- *Formation for all ages;*
- *Engagement with the wider community, concern for neighbors and stranger, care for creation;*
- *Stewardship of financial resources, property, and people;*
- *Care for clergy and lay staff, policies and practices which seek equality and justice, recognizing the dignity and inherent worth of every human being;*
- *Fellowship and collegiality among and between congregations, clergy, and ministries;*
- *Areas of, and possibilities for, collaboration and networking, including with other dioceses and communion partners;*
- *Opportunities for new communities of faith and redevelopment work;*
- *Hopes, fears, and dreams.*

A thorough review will seek examples of robust engagement and creative expressions in the various foci of review as well those places where increased time and attention must be paid in order to be become more vital, dynamic and sustainable; and be it further

Resolved, That the diocese undertaking the missional review shall seek assistance from the Office of Pastoral Development for the process of review and possibilities for consultants.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 363.



Resolution Number: 2015-A084
Title: Modify the Parochial Report
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the Parochial Report be modified to include congregational activity in any of the five Marks of Mission; and be it further

Resolved, That each diocese be encouraged to establish a category for associated worshipping communities, which may not pay diocesan assessment according to rules established by the diocese, and which could include new church plants and worshipping communities whose design broadens the Church's mission perspective; and be it further

Resolved, That such associated worshipping communities be encouraged to file a parochial report with their diocese; and be it further

Resolved, That the Parochial Report ask if the congregation has a primary weekly service other than Saturday/Sunday; and be it further

Resolved, That the Parochial Report be modified on page 2 to gather the average primary/Sunday worship; and be it further

Resolved, That a page be added to the Parochial Report to report areas of outreach ministry in which the congregation is involved with individual/group volunteer activity rather than merely reporting monetary support currently reported on page 3.

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



Resolution Number: 2015-A100
Title: On the Topic of Assessing Diocesan Viability and Vitality
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 78th General Convention encourages Bishops and Dioceses to prayerfully engage in a candid assessment of the viability and vitality of their Dioceses and to seek creative possibilities for enhancing the viability and vitality of their Dioceses, and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission of the Structure of the Church support these efforts by developing and making available tools and processes for such processes and by facilitating conversations and communications about processes for increasing the viability and vitality of Dioceses.



Resolution Number: 2015-C031
Title: Request Study of the Number and Size of Dioceses
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention ask that the bishops and dioceses of The Episcopal Church create, nurture, and develop a culture of collaboration that results in new structures, partnerships, and practices on the interpersonal, group, and organizational levels; measurable outcomes of performance; standards of accountability, reporting and mutual ministry reviews at all levels (bishops, clergy, diocesan bodies); and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention encourages Dioceses to explore opportunities for collaboration, and possibly merging, with contiguous Dioceses, to better carry out their common mission; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention urge the bishops and diocesan leadership of The Episcopal Church to engage in frank discussion about the number and size of our dioceses across the church, diocesan collaboration, vitality, and shared ministry, and what change is needed; and be it further

Resolved, That the Planning Committee of the House of Bishops is requested to set aside time this Triennium to discuss issues of diocesan vitality; and be it further

Resolved, That The Standing Commission on the Structure of the Church is directed to seek input from the above conversations and to study opportunities and challenges of diocesan collaboration, vitality, shared ministry, and the number and size of dioceses, and to report back to the 79th General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 462-463.



Resolution Number: 2012-A010
Title: Document Changes in the Church, Its Outreach Ministries, and Those Served
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the Executive Council, in collaboration with the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church, identify information to be included in the Parochial Report form based upon current changes and new realities in the Episcopal Church; and be it further Resolved, That pursuant to Canon I.6.1, the Executive Council authorize such changes in the Parochial Report form and the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church consider approval and implementation of such changes by January 1, 2014; and be it further Resolved, That the Executive Council, in collaboration with the Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism and the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church, develop a reliable method for documenting mission and outreach activity of The Episcopal Church by counting or estimating the number of people served by ministries such as schools, soup kitchens, food pantries and campus ministries.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), p. 140.



Resolution Number: 2006-A098

Title: Promote Vitality of Mission and Ministry in Small Congregations

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention direct the Office of Congregational Development to compile available resources which promote vitality of mission and ministry in small congregations and communicate, disseminate, and provide access to the larger Church in a variety of possible formats; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention direct the Offices of Congregational Development and Communication to develop and implement innovative ways of collecting and telling stories of vitality in mission and ministry occurring in small congregations in such ways that those stories offer opportunity, encouragement, challenge, and hope to other congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That in celebrating the vitality of small congregations within the Church, the 75th General Convention acknowledge with thanksgiving the life and ministry of the Rt. Rev. William Davidson who helped lay the cornerstone and shape the building of support for small congregation and rural ministry within The Episcopal Church and that we dedicate ourselves to the continuation of that work.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 437.