

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

**Resolution No.:** 2022-C020  
**Title:** Petition to the 80th General Convention to add Howard W. Thurman to the Episcopal Church Calendar  
**Proposer:** Northern California  
**Topic:** Church Calendar

---

---

**Directly Related:** (Attached)

2018-A066 Commemorate Thurgood Marshall, Pauli Murray, and Florence Li Timi-Oi in the Church Calendar

**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.*

# C020 - Petition to the 80th General Convention to add Howard W. Thurman to the Episcopal Church calendar

---

**Final Status:** Not Yet Finalized

**Proposed by:** Northern California

**Requests New Interim Body:** No

**Amends C&C or Rules of Order:** No

**Has Budget Implications:** No

**Cost:**

**HiA:** HB

**Legislative Committee Currently Assigned:** 12 - Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music

**Completion Status:** Incomplete

**Latest House Action:** N/A

**Supporting Documents:** No

---

## Resolution Text

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention to designate April 10 in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, or the supplement *A Great Cloud of Witnesses: A Calendar of Commemorations* as the annual celebration of the life and work of Howard W. Thurman, pastor, educator, theologian, and civil rights leader.

## Explanation

This resolution petitions General Convention to add Howard Thurman to the calendar of commemorations on the date of his death (April 10) in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* or its supplement, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses: A Calendar of Commemorations* with appropriate readings and collects.

Howard Washington Thurman (Nov. 18, 1899 – April 10, 1981), had an enormous influence on the civil rights movement and its leaders. Born in Florida, Thurman was educated at Morehouse College and ordained a Baptist pastor. He was appointed as the first Black chaplain of Marsh Chapel at Boston University which today has a center bearing his name.

In the 1930s Thurman led a six-month pilgrimage of African Americans to India where he met Mohandas Gandhi who had an enormous influence on his work. Incorporating Gandhi's theories of non-violence, Thurman wrote a ground-breaking book in 1949, *Jesus and the*

*Disinherited*, which had a major impact on a young ministry student, Martin Luther King, Jr. In later years, Dr. King carried Thurman's book in his suitcase in his travels as a leader in the civil rights movement. Thurman also mentored Pauli Murray, who became the first Black woman ordained an Episcopal priest and is on the Episcopal Church calendar. After leaving Boston, Thurman founded a racially integrated church in San Francisco. He was named an honorary Canon of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City in 1974. Thurman died in San Francisco in 1981.

*Ebony* magazine once called Thurman one of the fifty most important figures in African American history. In the 1950s, *Life* magazine ranked Thurman among the twelve most important religious leaders in the United States.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in Thurman's life and work. Thurman's book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, is used in the Episcopal Church Sacred Ground program and as a supplemental text in our Education for Ministry program. Thurman's speeches, articles and books have been the topic of recent seminars, webinars and retreats in a wide spectrum of church and secular settings. And the non-denominational Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples that he founded in San Francisco remains a vibrant worshipping community, which sponsors the annual Howard Thurman Convocation.

It should be noted that this resolution was passed overwhelmingly by the Convention of the Diocese of Northern California on a vote of 279-3, indicating broad and enthusiastic local support. While there have been no formal local liturgical celebrations on his death date that we know of, Thurman was mentioned in sermons and prayers for All Saints Sunday here in our diocese, including at St. Michael's Church, Carmichael. One of his most popular and widely reprinted prayers ("Open Unto Me") was used at Trinity Cathedral, Sacramento, to commemorate his birthday, Nov. 18. Thurman (and John Lewis) were the topic of a Rector's Forum at Christ Church, Eureka, in the fall of 2021. Thurman (and John Lewis) have been studied in our "Pathways" pilgrimage program for teens.

Our Lesser Feasts and Fasts calendar commemorates those who in the past still speak to us in our own time. The calendar includes more than 300 individuals, but only ten are African American, and only a handful are from the twentieth century (King, Murray, W.E.B. Du Bois and Thurgood Marshall). Our calendar honors numerous educators and theologians from a broad array of denominations and religious traditions (Evelyn Underhill, Karl Barth, F.D. Maurice to name three). But the calendar dimly reflects the rich contributions of African American theologians, educators and religious leaders who played an enormous role in shaping the civil rights movement and, more broadly, how we engage with the difficult issues of race and justice in our world today.

The introduction to *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* states this about why people are included on the calendar: "They illuminate different facets of Christian maturity to spur us on to an adult faith in the Risen Christ and the life of the Spirit. As illustrations, they mirror the myriad virtues of Christ in order that, in their examples, we might recognize those same virtues and features of holiness in people closer to our own times and contexts. And, seeing them in those around us, we may be better able to cultivate these virtues and forms of holiness in the life of the Church—through grace—as we strive to imitate Christ as well." Thurman certainly meets this description and his addition to our calendar is long overdue.



**Resolution Number:** 2018-A066  
**Title:** Commemorate Thurgood Marshall, Pauli Murray, and Florence Li Timi-Oi in the Church Calendar  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred  
**Final Text:**

***Resolved, That the 79th General Convention include Thurgood Marshall, Pauli Murray, and Florence Li Tim-Oi in Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2018.***

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 1166.