

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-C029
Title: A Resolution to Include the name Bishop Barbara Clementine Harris in the Lesser Feasts & Fasts Calendar
Proposer: Chicago
Topic: Church Calendar

Directly Related: (Attached)

None

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.

C029 - A Resolution to Include the name Bishop Barbara Clementine Harris in the Lesser Feasts & Fasts Calendar

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Chicago

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 this 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church hereby directs the inclusion the name Bishop Barbara Clementine Harris in the Lesser Feasts & Fasts Calendar of The Episcopal Church, and authorize trial use of the proper for the triennial 2023-2024 to be celebrated on March 13; and be it further

Resolved, that this 80th General Convention approve the appropriate proper to be prepared by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.

Explanation

The Episcopal Church publishes Lesser Feasts & Fasts, which contains feast days for the various men and women the Church wishes to honor. While the typical process calls for such a resolution, seeking to add a name to the Calendar, be presented at two successive General Conventions, there have been exceptions to this rule.

The life of Barbara Clementine Harris is no less worthy to warrant her the honor of inclusion on the Church's Calendar. Barbara C. Harris (1930 – 2020) became the first woman to be ordained a bishop in the worldwide Anglican Communion on February 11, 1989. Her years of episcopal leadership were filled with traveling and witnessing, preaching, and teaching and administering the sacraments. A gifted storyteller known for her quick wit and raspy-

voiced delivery, she was also a spirited and sought-after preacher of hymn-laced, Gospel-grounded sermons, and an outspoken advocate for, in her words, "the least, the lost and the left out." With great grace, she worked tirelessly serving the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts as their suffragan bishop for 13 years, until her retirement in 2002. Barbara Clementine Harris was born on June 12, 1930, in Philadelphia to Walter and Beatrice (Price) Harris. She grew up in Philadelphia's historic Germantown. She was the middle child of three, between her older sister, Josephine, and her younger brother, Thomas. Harris was active in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, through the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU), and the National Council of Churches' Delta ministry, traveling in 1965 to Greenville, Miss., to help register black voters and taking part in the Selma to Montgomery march. She had been hired in 1949 by Joseph V. Baker Associates Inc., a black-owned national public relations firm headquartered in Philadelphia. She was president of the firm in 1968 when she joined the Sun Company (formerly Sun Oil) as a community relations consultant. She later was named manager of community and urban affairs and headed Sun's public relations department from 1973 until becoming a senior staff consultant at Sun's corporate headquarters in 1977.

The Episcopal Church was an important part of Bishop Harris' family life—starting at St. Barnabas Church in Germantown (later merged with St. Luke's Church)—and Harris had an active lay ministry in Christian education, prison chaplaincy and leadership at parish, diocesan and churchwide levels before discerning a call to ordained ministry. Her formation for ordination included coursework at Villanova University, the Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield, England, and the Pennsylvania Foundation for Pastoral Counseling. She was ordained in the Diocese of Pennsylvania by Bishop Lyman Ogilby, as a deacon in 1979 and as a priest, at age 50, in 1980, when the ordination of women had been officially recognized in the Episcopal Church for only four years. She was fortunate, she said, to have begun her ordained ministry from her home parish, the Church of the Advocate, host in 1974 to the "irregular" ordinations of the Philadelphia 11—the first women to be ordained priests in the Episcopal Church. Harris was the crucifer at that service. Harris was priest-in-charge of St. Augustine of Hippo Church in Norristown, Penn., from 1980 to 1984. She also served as chaplain to the Philadelphia County prisons, and as counsel to industrial corporations on public policy issues and social concerns. In 1984, she was named executive director of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company and publisher of the social justice magazine *The Witness*. In 1988, she took on additional duties as interim rector of the Church of the Advocate. Harris was a music lover, with the graceful hands of a pianist. She knew by heart nearly every hymn in the row of hymnals shelved next her piano. She loved to tell and retell colorful stories about her life experiences, and she had an arsenal of good and not-so-good jokes always at the ready. Harris made people laugh. She made them think. Sometimes she made them mad. She preached and worked continually for the eradication of racism, sexism, and homophobia, and to help bring about the full inclusion of all people in the life and sacraments of the church.

Harris was a faithful member of the Union of Black Episcopalians and a founding member and president of the Episcopal Urban Caucus. She represented the Episcopal Church on the board of the Prisoner Visitation and Support Committee and was a member of the church's Standing Commission on Anglican and International Peace with Justice Concerns. She also served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Episcopal Divinity School. She was the recipient of at least 17 honorary degrees from colleges, universities, and theological

schools. In 2007 she received a Wisdom Award from the National Visionary Leadership Project. Still, despite all the honors and the high-profile events of her ministry, Harris would always say that the best moments of her years as bishop were those spent baptizing, confirming, and receiving people into the church. After her retirement, she served from 2003 until early 2007 as an assisting bishop in the Diocese of Washington (D.C.). She continued to volunteer and preach at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston during her retirement, even while continuing to be in demand worldwide as a preacher. In 2003 the Diocese of Massachusetts dedicated its newly built Barbara C. Harris Camp and Conference Center in Greenfield, N.H., in her honor, and in November of 2019, the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing in the Diocese of Atlanta launched the Bishop Barbara C. Harris Justice Project, aimed at strengthening the church's efforts to address social injustice. Harris published two books, *Hallelujah, Anyhow!*, a memoir written with Kelly Brown Douglas (2018, Church Publishing, Inc.), and the sermon collection *Parting Words: A Farewell Discourse* (2003, Cowley Publications). She is also featured in *In Conversation: Michael Curry and Barbara Harris*, edited by Frederica Harris Thompsett (2017, Church Publishing, Inc.). Harris died on March 13, 2020, at Care Dimensions Hospice House in Lincoln following a hospitalization in Boston, faithfully attended throughout by close friends, and upheld by the prayers of many. She was 89.