

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-C030
Title: Addressing Antisemitic, Anti-Jewish, and/or Supersessionist Interpretations of our Lectionaries
Proposer: New York
Topic: Liturgy

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A062 Address Christian Anti-Judaism in Liturgical Texts
2012-A058 Address Christian Anti-Judaism
2009-A089 Direct Completion of Tasks Assigned to the Commission on Liturgy and Music
2006-C001 Develop Materials to Address Anti-Jewish Prejudice
1991-D181 Consult Christian-Jewish Relations Committee Before Adopting Liturgies

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

1997-D055 Reaffirm Interfaith Dialogue and Acknowledge Prejudice Against Jews
1979-A044 Initiate a Study on Episcopal-Jewish Relations

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.

C030 - Addressing Antisemitic, Anti-Jewish, and/or Supersessionist Interpretations of our Lectionaries

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: New York

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 direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to identify lections in the Revised Common Lectionary and all other lectionaries authorized for use in The Episcopal Church that contain language that has been interpreted as antisemitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist and report its findings to the 81st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, that the report of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to the 81st General Convention:

1. Provide one or more optional, alternate lection or lections for any lection containing language that has been interpreted as antisemitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist and/or
2. Recommend a specific authorized Biblical Translation for any lection that has been interpreted as antisemitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist so that the lection is less likely to be heard and interpreted as antisemitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist, and/or
3. Provide pastoral guidance and commentary on the lection that can be made available whenever the lection is read publicly in worship, and/or

4. Approach the Consultation on Common Texts for a report on the current status of any planned revisions they are considering, and to advocate for the above considerations to inform closely those revisions to the lectionary; and be it further

Resolved, that The Episcopal Church advocate that other denominations using the Revised Common Lectionary consider taking similar action.

Explanation

The Episcopal Church recognizes that the lections from Holy Scripture for certain Sundays or Holy Days contain language that has been interpreted as antisemitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist (2006-C001, 2009-A089, 2012-A058, 2015-A062, etc.). This resolution builds on those acts of Convention in practical ways and avoids suppressing difficult passages of Holy Scripture, selectively (re)translating the authorized versions of the Bible, or undermining our commitment to use an ecumenical lectionary. This resolution also recognizes that antisemitism is a modern concept that would not have been present in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. The focus here is on subsequent interpretations and the misuse of these texts for defamatory purposes.

The resolution directs the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to study all lectionaries authorized for use in the Episcopal Church, including the Revised Common Lectionary, and identify and report any lections that have been interpreted as antisemitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist.

The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music is also directed to accompany each lection determined to have been interpreted as antisemitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist with at least one of three pastoral and practical recommendations:

1. There are numerous examples in our lectionary where two or more options are provided for a given Lesson or Gospel. In addition to the original lection, the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music could provide an alternate passage of Scripture and/or could offer the option of skipping certain verses or parts of verses. Especially on Holy Days that center on a certain event, it is essential that the event is recounted (i.e. some text of the Passion needs to be read on Good Friday). It is likewise essential that the meaning and intent of the passage is not changed. The Flood narrative at the Easter Vigil is both an example of how this second approach can be successful, but also illustrative that it is an impractical option for congregations reading directly from the Bible and current liturgical books. The intent here is to avoid suppressing any text that may be difficult but is also foundational (i.e. suppressing any portion of any of the Passion Narratives is not realistic). Adding an option allows for individual worshipping communities to choose which passage makes the most sense in their own context.

2. The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music could also direct that a certain translation of the Bible that is authorized for use in the Episcopal Church should be used when possible. The example of the Tobit lection at Marriage shows how this method of avoiding certain translations in certain contexts can be successful. The intent here is to avoid at all costs any "in-house" editing of any existing, scholarly translations.

3. Whether or not the above options are possible, it is important the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music provide some pastoral commentary on any lection that has been interpreted as antisemitic, anti-Jewish, or supersessionist, as well as any pairing of sections that create a dynamic of supersessionism simply by their juxtaposition in the same service. This commentary could be published in the worship leaflet, read from the pulpit, or provided in some other way to the worshipping community so that, when the text is read in public worship, it can be understood and heard in a pastorally sensitive way.

Once this important work has been done, the Episcopal Church should recommend it to other denominations using the Revised Common Lectionary and advocate that they consider taking similar action. Adding options or recommending specific Bible Translations, maintains the ecumenical goals of adopting and using the Revised Common Lectionary, but also recognizes that the Revised Common Lectionary, like the Common Lectionary before it, could use some revision.

Other dioceses, including the Diocese of Washington (https://www.edow.org/files/4216/1203/5827/APPROVED_4_Addressing_Antisemitic_Impact_of_Readings.pdf), have already approved similar resolutions going to General Convention. We think this resolution addresses these issues in a more comprehensive and practical way.

Definitions:

Antisemitic — A) A certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.” - from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. B) The belief or behavior hostile to Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews, for instance, or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews.” — from the Anti-Defamation League. C) A persistent latent structure of hostile beliefs towards Jews as a collectivity manifested in individuals as attitudes, and in culture as myth, ideology, folklore, and imagery, and in actions — social or legal discrimination, political mobilization against Jews, and collective or state violence — which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace, or destroy Jews as Jews.” From sociologist Helen Fein (*italics in the original*), *Dimensions of Antisemitism: Attitudes, Collective Accusations, and Actions*,” in Helen Fein, ed., *The Persisting: Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Antisemitism* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1987), p.67.

Anti-Jewish — “Opposition to or hostility to Judaism.” from Merriam-Webster dictionary.

supersessionist — A) “implying that Christians (the people of the new covenant”) have replaced Jews (the people of the old covenant”) as the people of God.” — from <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=9168>. B) What, then, is supersessionism? The word designates the traditional Christian belief that the covenant between God and the People of Israel, established through the mediation of Moses at Mount Sinai, has been replaced or superseded by the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. This implies that the Mosaic covenant, with its ritual and dietary requirements, Sabbath

observance, etc., is no longer valid for the Jewish people, since God's revealed will is for Jews, as well as all Gentiles, to enter into the New Covenant by means of baptism and faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah." From: "The Liturgy and Supersessionism" by Rev. Brian W. Harrison, O.S., M.A., S.T.D. in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Ignatius Press, June 2009."



Resolution Number: 2015-A062
Title: Address Christian Anti-Judaism in Liturgical Texts
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue to collect, review, and disseminate materials to address Christian anti-Judaism expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian scriptures and liturgical texts.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), p. 727.



Resolution Number: 2012-A058
Title: Address Christian Anti-Judaism
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue to collect, review, and disseminate materials to address Christian anti-Judaism expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian scriptures and liturgical texts.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 2012* (New York: General Convention, 2012), p. 501.



Resolution Number: 2009-A089
Title: Direct Completion of Tasks Assigned to the Commission on Liturgy and Music
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to complete the work on Daily Prayer and report back to the 77th General Convention; and be it further

*Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue the work of developing liturgical materials for inclusion in the *Enriching Our Worship* series for the pastoral issues in the context of adoption of children; and be it further*

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue to collect, develop and disseminate materials that assist members of the Church to address Christian anti-Judaism expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian scriptures and liturgical texts, including the preparation of a pamphlet explaining Christian anti-Judaism and ways to address it in teaching, evangelism and congregational life; the development of age-appropriate educational materials for children; the identification and evaluation of available resources pertaining to liturgy and music, giving special attention to Holy Week and Easter liturgies and to the diverse traditions of song in The Episcopal Church; and to report the results of its efforts to the 77th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention request that the Standing Commissions on Liturgy and Music and on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations develop a statement defining Christian anti-Judaism and why it demands our attention, and to report to the 77th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue the work begun in the World Music project; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to collect comprehensive data from across The Episcopal Church to determine congregational music needs and wants; and be it further

*Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to undertake a substantial revision of the *Book of Occasional Services* and report its progress to the 77th General Convention; and be it further*

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention request that liturgical and musical resources be made widely available not only in print but also in electronic format on the internet; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$136,500 for implementation of the projects requested in this resolution, and for any other projects that the 76th General Convention directs the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to undertake in the 2010-2012 triennium, and any other projects required by the SCLM's canonical mandates.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 525.



Resolution Number: 2006-C001
Title: Develop Materials to Address Anti-Jewish Prejudice
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to collect and develop materials to assist members of the Church to address anti-Jewish prejudice expressed in and stirred by portions of Christian scriptures and liturgical texts, with suggestions for preaching, congregational education, and lectionary use, and to report to the 76th General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 417-418.



Resolution Number: 1991-D181
Title: Consult Christian-Jewish Relations Committee Before Adopting Liturgies
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That whenever liturgical materials are developed for or adopted for use by the Episcopal Church on the national level, a member of the Presiding Bishop's Committee on Christian-Jewish relations, or a person recommended by that body, be consulted so that the Church may honor its Jewish heritage and Jewish sisters and brothers in utilizing materials appropriately sensitive.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 799.