

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-D047
Title: Addressing Our Models for Mission and Ministry
Proposer: Ms. Laura Russell
Topic: Mission Strategy, Small Churches

Directly Related: (Attached)

2009-A184 Continue Study of Effective Levels for Deploying Church Resources

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

1991-D196 Recognize the Needs of Mission and Ministry in Small Communities
1988-A154 Establish and Fund a Field Office for Rural and Small Town Ministry
1988-D149 Request a Format for Evaluating and Networking Small Congregations

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.

D047 - Addressing Our Models for Mission and Ministry

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Ms. Laura Russell

Endorsed by: Ms. Sarah Lawton, The Rev. Cynthia Black, Mr. Joe McDaniel

Requests New Interim Body: No

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

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 this 80th General Convention direct the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church to assess our church's current models across the church for funding and supporting mission, ministry, and leadership deployment; understanding that we have several levels of governance including congregational, diocesan, provincial and churchwide, and that current ideals of congregations being self-supporting are not sustainable for all, and that funding and ministry deployment decisions are usually made at the congregational and diocesan levels; and be it further

Resolved, that the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church report to the 81st General Convention with recommendations for how the church can address our own church's structural barriers and beliefs in funding ministries that are crucially important for the church's mission and future life, but which have been historically underfunded and underendowed, such as new church ministries in growing immigrant communities, ministries and social justice programs in rural and urban areas, and college chaplaincies.

Explanation

We have a legacy of wealth in our church, and even in this time of decline in church participation across denominations, we remain a church with substantive pledge income and generous giving. We are also a church that (despite our "Episcopal" name and focus on the diocese as our smallest unit, centered on the person of our diocesan bishop) still

functions congregationally, or at least in a hybrid way – we pay our assessments, and most assessment models are designed to collect more funds from wealthier churches; but we also know that a lot of that wealth stays in the wealthier communities and funds capital campaigns and multi-program staffing—all for good purposes, certainly! But which often leaves other ministries to limp along with part-time staffing and falling-down facilities.

Our legacy of wealth in our church also goes deeper than just wealth staying in wealthy communities. Urban churches often face large, structurally declining buildings, which are a legacy of congregations who have left. Endowments have dwindled to pay for repairs, and the current communities have no funds for these buildings. Segregated neighborhoods have caused much of the burden of these structures to be placed on low income communities and communities of color, often with limited assistance from dioceses. Meanwhile, wealthy communities, many of which are white, amass large endowments allowing for multiple staff and programming.

Many of these underfunded ministries are crucially important for the work of the church: Campus and youth and adult ministries that are lifting up present and future leaders of our church. New ministries with growing immigrant communities. Rural ministries, often yoked together with several congregations and other denominations, which are often the only mainline presence for miles around. Urban ministries with people who are unhoused, using drugs, mentally ill—the church can be both balm and witness to their humanity. Yes, there are grants from the Episcopal Church, but they tend to be small and time-limited, which means that deployment of staff, both clergy and lay, is difficult to sustain. Many of these ministries could generate growth and income over the long-term, and some may never be able to fully fund themselves, if they are serving very poor populations, but they are part of the collective mission and ministry of the church, to feed the hungry, shelter the unhoused, clothe the naked, and welcome the stranger. If understood as part of the collective mission and ministry of the church, these ministries can also be transformational for all of us—they contain a part of the Good News of God in Christ.

We are under no illusions that that congregations would suddenly be willing to give up all their funds to some central pot for redistribution. And this is not only about money! But surely there is a way to call the whole church into transformational thinking about how we can deploy our resources and wealth. Perhaps we should be yoking churches together across lines of wealth and poverty, suburban and urban and rural, race and class. Perhaps we should be sharing clergy teams that way. This resolution asks that the State of the Church committee assess how our assessments and ministry decisions are made, and that it make recommendations for how we can push the church to think and act as if we are one body in Christ, working together in mission and ministry.



Resolution Number: 2009-A184
Title: Continue Study of Effective Levels for Deploying Church Resources
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church direct the Budgetary Funding Task Force to continue its study as to how and at what level(s) of the church's structures our resources may be most efficiently deployed to communicate, foster and support our common mission.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 391.