

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2022 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2022-D095
Title: Call for a Task Force for Review and Support of the Presiding Bishop's Office of Pastoral Development
Proposer: The Rev. Jennifer Adams
Topic: Pastoral Care, Presiding Bishop

Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-A098 Amend Canon III.12.10 [Pastoral Relation]
2009-B014 Refer a Resolution to Study the Dissolution of the Episcopal Pastoral Relation (Referred)

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

1997-A180 Amend Joint Rules IX [Task Forces of the General Convention]
1997-D094 Urge Dioceses to Make Use of the Pastoral Development Office

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.

D095 - Call for a Task Force for Review and Support of the Presiding Bishop's Office of Pastoral Development

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: The Rev. Jennifer Adams

Endorsed by: The Rev. Nurya Parish, The Very Rev. Brian Coleman, The Rev. Anne Schnaare, Ms. Laurie Atwater, Ms. Anne Davidson, Mr. William Fleener, Jr, Mr. Matthew Roney, The Rev. Pam Lenartowicz, The Rev. Tom Manney, The Rev. Curt Norman, Dr. Elizabeth Jordan, Ms. Ellen McVey, Ms. Sara Philo

Supported by: Mary Simpson, Linda Rathburn

Requests New Interim Body: Yes

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: 50.000,00 €

HiA: HB

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 03 - Title IV Disciplinary Canons

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 80th General Convention, pursuant to the House of Deputies and House of Bishops Joint Rule IX, create a Task Force for Review of the Presiding Bishop's Office of Pastoral Development and Title IV Process, whose mandate includes, but is not limited to, (1) implementation of Title IV cases in which a bishop is the Respondent, (2) consistency of Title IV processes for Priests, Deacons, clergy and Bishops, (3) the process of Episcopal transition, especially the placement of Interim or Bishops Provisional, and (4) other pastoral care offered and authority exercised by the office; and be it further

Resolved, The Task Force's mandate will also include recommendations for canonical change, policy or process change, and funding requirements for the same; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force begin its work no later than January 1, 2023, with the task force reporting to the 81st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the membership of this task force be appointed by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies and include up to three Bishops appointed by the Presiding Bishop; up to three Clergy and up to three Lay Persons appointed by the President of the House of Deputies, and be it further

Resolved, That the Executive Officer of General Convention appoint a member of the staff from the General Convention Office and the Presiding Bishop appoint a member of staff from the Language Services Department of the Office of Communications to serve as consultants to the task force; and be it further

Resolved, That \$50,000 be budgeted for the implementation of this resolution.

Explanation

Our catechism articulates the church's purpose: "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ" (BCP p.855). Our liturgical corporate confession of sin and assurance of forgiveness reflects the triumph of life over death and grace over sin revealed most fully in the resurrection of Christ. The Title IV process, building on this theological foundation, intends to "resolve conflicts by promoting healing, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, justice, amendment of life and reconciliation among all involved or affected."

Our recent experience in the Dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan raised serious concerns regarding the implementation of Title IV when the Respondent in the case is a bishop. We respect and honor what such a process intends to accomplish. Our experience is that the process nearly entirely missed those marks.

We are left with a sense that Title IV has significant gaps and that its implementation (in this case) does too. Our dioceses have begun to heal, not only from losing a bishop and the violation that led to his leave, but from the experience of the process itself which did its own damage here. We offer this resolution in order to prevent other dioceses (and Respondents) from experiencing Title IV the way we did and to encourage more support for the Office of Pastoral Development. We speak now to offer our truth to the church as a next step in faith, trusting in Christ's ongoing work of reconciliation within and among us. We believe that our church can and must do better for the sake of "all involved and affected."

The Office of Pastoral Development (OPD) carries a great deal of responsibility, authority and control when the Respondent in a Title IV case is a bishop. Our experience was severely lacking in clarity, consistency, timely communication, and tracking of our process by the OPD. It is our belief that the OPD is underresourced for the weight of responsibility it carries in our common life. We also believe there is a lack of clarity about what is expected from this office given the multiple parties involved in the discipline of a bishop and the lack of a public, documented process for this disciplinary situation.

Among other concerns, we note that there appeared to be very little accountability to the Title IV process within the Office of the Presiding Bishop and OPD itself. Examples include:

- The Disciplinary Board was not brought into the process at the point required by Title IV. The Accord was presented to the Standing Committees as complete before the Disciplinary Board was informed.
- Following the Respondents' admission of guilt to the complaint filed, there was very little further investigation into whether there was only one offense. Nor was time given to determine if the matter should have been considered a case of sexual misconduct due to the identity of the other party involved in the bishop's affair.
- There was inconsistent monitoring of the implementation of the terms of the Accord. The Respondent was simply left responsible to fulfill its requirements.
- The requirements for reporting to our Standing Committees at the end of the Respondent's suspension were dropped without explanation.
- Questions of his own health and fitness for this ministry were expressed by the Respondent in facilitated conversations with diocesan clergy towards the end of his suspension and yet the OPD supported his return.
- The Bishop of the OPD appeared obligated to serve in conflicting roles in this case. He was Intake Officer, responsible for the provision of pastoral support, the previous diocesan bishop of one of the dioceses affected, and responsible for providing candidates for provisional episcopal oversight.

Unfortunately, due to lack of consistency in communication and clarity of process, the Standing Committees of our Dioceses became aware of these gaps at points too far along in the process to be able to challenge or help correct them.

It was also our perception that while the Respondent and The Presiding Bishop agreed to the content of the Accord, the dioceses were then obligated to fund it. In order for the Standing Committees to reduce the expense and time frame included in the Accord, they would have had to challenge that which the Presiding Bishop had concluded was the appropriate approach. Our Standing Committees were given very limited time both to learn of the complaint and the admission of guilt by the Respondent and then agree to the financial detail supporting the Accord.

While our dioceses were reeling from the initial revelation of the affair and suspension, the OPD was pushing for a financial settlement regarding the year-long separation named in the Accord. The Respondent was given a forty percent cut in salary with full benefits continued. Nowhere was it acknowledged that only a few months before this, he had received a forty percent increase at his insistence upon assuming responsibility for both dioceses. There were layers to this situation that the process did not allow room to acknowledge or discuss in this initial phase of exploration and decision making.

Under the terms of the Accord, during the one-year suspension and the settlement which followed, the dioceses paid out hundreds of thousands of dollars *toward the Respondent and his household alone*. During this time the dioceses were informed that our role was to wait for final discernment about whether our bishop might return, but there was no process suggested or provided to help heal and support two dioceses whose elected leadership was suddenly and unexpectedly absent. We had to call and fund an Assisting Bishop and in the end search for and fund a Bishop Provisional for both dioceses. While we were hopeful for and supportive of our former bishop experiencing healing, it became very apparent as the process continued that the healing our church was proposing and actively supporting, was

entirely centered on him. We eventually came to recognize that we had been wounded, not only by the initial betrayal, but also by the process itself.

This Title IV process actually reflects a deep systemic problem: when our former bishop had an affair, the system not only took care of *him*, it did so in extremely expensive ways, to the financial and emotional cost of those whom he had vowed to pastor, in the name of “healing” and “reconciliation.” The dioceses were hurt by the affair itself. Relationships and trust were damaged. The financial support expected from us for the one who had violated these relationships was not only surprising, it was unjust.

The model the church has chosen for bishops in this situation is one that is accessible to almost no one else. Through holding this model up as church we are essentially saying that health and reconciliation can be achieved by giving the person who “needs it the most,” a year off, including full healthcare, no work responsibilities, a lot of money, lots of space and top-notch professional support. In the midst of MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and a worldwide pandemic, an already privileged, white male in a position of power who had betrayed his vows was given a copious amount of support. Our dioceses, by contrast, received almost none.

Title IV in its current form has addressed some of the abuses in our church. The systemic cycle of privilege by virtue of position (and perhaps gender and race) however, still has a firm hold on us. The way in which Title IV was implemented in our situation only served to reinforce some of our worst, collective failings.

In an article published by ENS, The Bishop of the OPD celebrated the return of our former bishop to the House of Bishops. “The Rt. Rev. Todd Ousley, bishop for pastoral development, praised this moment of reconciliation as an example of “living into the highest ideals of our Title IV process.”” We hope that our ideals in The Episcopal Church as expressed in Title IV are actually much higher than what we in our dioceses have just experienced. The heavy weight placed on restoration and the view that that is what a successful Title IV process produces serves to perpetuate systemic, white male, episcopal privilege in a way that is costly to the church in terms of money, members, and institutional integrity.

We can do better than this. We have to do better than this.



Resolution Number: 2018-A098
Title: Amend Canon III.12.10 [Pastoral Relation]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon III.12.10 is hereby amended to read as follows:

Sec. 10. Reconciliation of Disagreements Affecting the Pastoral Relation between a Bishop and Diocese

When the pastoral relationship between a Bishop Diocesan, Bishop Coadjutor or Bishop Suffragan and the Diocese is imperiled by disagreement or dissension, and the issues are deemed serious by a Bishop of that Diocese or a two-thirds majority vote of all of the members of the Standing Committee or a two-thirds majority vote of all the members of the Diocesan Convention, any party may petition the Presiding Bishop, in writing, to intervene and assist the parties in their efforts to resolve the disagreement or dissension. The written petition shall include sufficient information to inform the Presiding Bishop and the parties involved of the nature, causes, and specifics of the disagreements or dissension imperiling the pastoral relationship. The Presiding Bishop shall initiate such proceedings as are deemed appropriate under the circumstances to attempt to reconcile the parties, which may include the appointment of a consultant or licensed mediator, *and shall include appropriate pastoral care for all affected parties and individuals.* The parties to the disagreement, following the recommendations of the Presiding Bishop, shall labor in good faith toward that reconciliation. If such proceedings lead to reconciliation, said reconciliation shall contain definitions of responsibility and accountability for the Bishop and the Diocese. *In the event reconciliation has not been achieved within nine (9) months from the date of the Presiding Bishop's initial receipt of communication from the Diocese, the parties to the disagreement shall meet and decide whether or not to continue attempting to reconcile under this Section or to end proceedings under this Section. If the parties do not agree, proceedings under this Section shall end. The parties shall notify the Presiding Bishop of their decision in writing. If the parties agree to continue attempting to reconcile, either party may end the further proceedings at any time by written notification to the Presiding Bishop and the other party.*

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), pp. 394-395.



Resolution Number: 2009-B014
Title: Refer a Resolution to Study the Dissolution of the Episcopal Pastoral Relation
Legislative Action Taken: Referred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the formation of a Special Task Force for the study of reconciliation or dissolution of Pastoral Relations between dioceses and their bishops, including the constitutional, canonical and theological implications thereof, and to report its findings and any recommended amendments to the Constitution and/or Canons to the 77th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the members of the Special Task Force include two members appointed by the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons, two members appointed by the Standing Commission on Ministry Development and two members appointed by the House of Bishops Committee on Pastoral Development with the Bishop for the Office of Pastoral Development serving as the Consultant; 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 not less than fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) for the necessary expenses incurred during the work of the Special Task Force.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), pp. 322-323.