

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-A018
Title: Task Force on Pacifism and Just War
Proposer: Secretary of General Convention
Topic: Structure, Warfare

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A048 Study the Application of Just War Principles to the Current Practice of Warfare
2003-A033 Urge Church Members to Study Just War Theory and Criteria
2003-A132 Urge Dioceses and Congregations to Study Just War Theory and Pacifism
2003-D068 Prepare a Study on New Warfare Situations

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 2022, 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](#).

A018 - Task Force on Pacifism and Just War

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Secretary of General Convention

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$5,000.00

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: Yes

Changes Mandate Of Existing Ib: No

Directs Dfms Staff: No

Directs Dioceses: No

Directs Executive Council: No

HiA: HD

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 07 - Social Justice & United States Policy

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention authorize the establishment of a Task Force on Pacifism and Just War to deepen understanding of the Church's pacifist and just war traditions, including the Anglican Communion's distinctive contributions to these traditions, among military chaplains, missionaries, seminarians, clergy, congregations, and others engaged in the Church's global mission, for application to contemporary war, peace and human rights issues; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force draw upon the experience and expertise garnered from the Military Chaplains Just War Education Project funded through the 2020-21 Constable Grant program to prepare a report recommending educational programs, public policy positions, and outreach initiatives consistent with the Task Force's mandate for consideration by the 81st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That this Task Force be appointed jointly by the President of the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Standing Commission on World Mission, and consist of three bishops, three priests or deacons, and six laypersons from a diverse representation of the Church, and include military chaplains and those living in jurisdictions outside the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That \$5,000 be budgeted for work of the Task Force over the next triennium.

Explanation

This resolution was referred from the 80th General Convention. It was originally proposed by the Standing Commission on World Mission, listed as 2022-A030, and referred to Legislative Committee 13 - Committees & Commissions

Despite several Resolutions adopted by General Convention over time, awareness and understanding of The Episcopal Church's approach to the morality and ethics of warfare, informed by both historic pacifist and just war traditions, remains incomplete. Enhancing educational opportunities and training for the Church's military chaplains on these matters was the intent of the Military Chaplains Just War Education Project proposed by the Standing Commission on World Mission and awarded a Constable Grant by Executive Council in June 2020. This Resolution anticipates the completion of this project in 2021 and seeks to establish a Task Force that can build upon its work to potentially broaden its practical application to the wider Church, respecting the diversity of perspectives on war and peace among Episcopalians while also appreciating the continued calling of the Church to find its prophetic voice on these perennial issues.

Monies budgeted for the Task Force in the Resolution are intended to defray any modest expenses for translation, travel or meeting arrangements to facilitate completion of the Task Force's work. It is envisioned that the Task Force would rely primarily on virtual meeting technological solutions where possible to minimize these expenses.



Resolution Number: 2015-A048
Title: Study the Application of Just War Principles to the Current Practice of Warfare
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention recognize that there are practical, military, and theological difficulties in applying Just War principles to the current problems of combating global and domestic terrorism, of responding to undeclared warfare, of responding to stateless combatants, of using evolving capabilities for cyberwarfare and robotics and of the use of social media in support of warfare and/or terrorism; and be it further

Resolved, That the Presiding Bishop appoint a committee of theologians and other scholars in the field of the application and interpretation of Just War principles, military chaplains, active and/or retired military personnel, and such other ecumenical specialists as are required, to study the application of Just War principles to these issues and report to The 79th General Convention; 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 \$20,000.00 for the implementation of this resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 717-718.



Resolution Number: 2003-A033
Title: Urge Church Members to Study Just War Theory and Criteria
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention call upon all members of The Episcopal Church, in discussions about war and especially the strategy of preemptive strikes, to seriously consider and utilize the Just War criteria developed over the centuries and generally expressed as follows. First, whether lethal force may be used is governed by the following criteria:

- **Just cause:** Force may be used only to correct a grave, public evil, i.e., aggression or massive violation of the basic rights of whole populations.
- **Comparative justice:** While there may be rights and wrongs on all sides of a conflict, to override the presumption against the use of force, the injustice suffered by one part must significantly outweigh that suffered by the other.
- **Legitimate authority:** Only duly constituted public authorities may use deadly force or wage war.
- **Right intention:** Force may be used only in a truly just cause and solely for that purpose.
- **Probability of success:** Arms may not be used in a futile cause or in a case where disproportionate measures are required to achieve success.
- **Proportionality:** The overall destruction expected from the use of force must be outweighed by the good to be achieved.
- **Last resort:** Force may be used only after all peaceful alternatives have been seriously tried and exhausted.

These criteria taken as a whole must be satisfied in order to override the strong presumption against the use of force. Second, the Just War tradition seeks also to curb the violence of war through restraint on armed combat between the contending parties by imposing the following moral standards for the conduct of armed conflict:

- **Noncombatant immunity:** Civilians may not be the objects of direct attack, and military personnel must take due care to avoid and minimize indirect harm to civilians.
- **Proportionality:** In the conduct of hostilities, efforts must be made to attain military objectives with no more force than is militarily necessary and to avoid disproportionate collateral damage to civilian life and property.
- **Right intention:** Even in the midst of conflict, the aim of political and military leaders must be peace with justice, so that acts of vengeance and indiscriminate violence, whether by individuals, military units or governments, are forbidden; and be it further

Resolved, That when legitimate civilian authority determines that war is justified, members of The Episcopal Church recall our Lord's teaching to love our enemies, counsel that participation in or refusal to participate in any war is a discernment process requiring deep reflection and prayer with humility, and acknowledge that one participates in war with great reluctance, always seeking God's mercy and forgiveness; and be it further

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention, recalling the longstanding Episcopal Church view, originally adopted by the 1930 Lambeth Conference and by the 1931 General Convention, that "war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ," urge dioceses and congregations to

study and better understand Just War theory and pacifism as they apply to the situation of the United States in responding to contemporary international conflicts.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 317f.



Resolution Number: 2003-A132
Title: Urge Dioceses and Congregations to Study Just War Theory and Pacifism
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention urge dioceses and congregations to study and better understand Just War theory and pacifism as they apply to the situation of the United States in responding to contemporary international conflicts; and be it further
Resolved, That we commend "Just Peace Readings" from the Office of the Bishop Suffragan for Chaplaincies of the Episcopal Church Center, and the website, www.episcopalchurch.org/chaplain, as an important resource in the continuing study of Just War.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 320.



Resolution Number: 2003-D068
Title: Prepare a Study on New Warfare Situations
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops be urged to prepare a study on new warfare situations which may not be adequately addressed by the Just War Theory, such as non-declared wars, asymmetric warfare, pre-emptive strikes, invitations to intervene by legitimate foreign authorities, international terrorism without boundaries, and other forms of military intervention not imagined in past centuries.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 329.