

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-A067
Title: Rebranding the Parochial Report
Proposer: Task Force to Study Congregational Vitality Indicators
Topic: Parochial Reports

Directly Related: (Attached)

2022-A061 Amend Canon I.4.6.j [Of the Executive Council]
2022-A099 Refer a Resolution to Fund Research on the Work of the General Convention (Referred)
2018-A053 Simplify and Improve Usability of Parochial Report
2009-A054 Add Canon I.4.6(j) [Diocesan Report on Congregations]
2009-C060 Direct Inclusion of Overseas Congregations in Statistical Reports
1997-A027 Request Changes to Parochial Reports and an Annual Report on Attendance
1997-A131 Amend Canon I.6 [Of Annual Parochial and Diocesan Reports]
1988-A084 Study Funding and Reporting Practices of the Church at All Levels
1985-A015 Amend Canon I.5.1 [Information in Annual Reports to the Bishop]

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

2022-A155 Create a Task Force to Revise Parochial Report Finance Page
2015-A084 Modify the Parochial Report
2012-A010 Document Changes in the Church, Its Outreach Ministries, and Those Served
2000-A104 Amend Canon I.6 [On Securing an Accurate View of the State of the Church]

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](#).

A067 - Rebranding the Parochial Report

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Task Force to Study Congregational Vitality Indicators

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: No

Changes Mandate Of Existing Ib: No

Directs Dfms Staff: Yes

Directs Dioceses: Yes

Directs Executive Council: Yes

HiA: HB

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 08 - Congregational Vitality & Data-Driven Initiatives

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention commends the rebranding of the Parochial Report to the Executive Council; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention Office continue to work with the Executive Council and other partners to refine the parochial report form by asking better, more precise, and fewer questions; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention commend Bishops, Diocesan structures, lay leaders, clergy, outside organizations, and experts in the field to commence this work outside of the parochial report process, including use of Page 5 of the parochial report form to ask questions specific to the Diocesan context; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention commend the open sharing and collaboration of information, data, research, and findings on congregational vitality across the church.

Explanation

The Episcopal Church website describes the parochial report as a “rite of passage.” There is in the church a terror of filling out the parochial report. Some even have names for it that

do not lift it up as a tool for knowing ourselves, congregations, and mission. Some make jokes about where the 3,000 in Acts were recorded.

We often begin the discourse about the parochial report with disparaging comments about numbers and their lack of importance to the Gospel mission. Yet, the goal is to make each of us aware of the good work we share in across the Episcopal Church revealing the impact we have upon the lives of our parishioners and those in the wider communities in which we find our diverse missionary efforts.

We can even envision using the process of preparing the report as a tool for enhancing a congregation's vitality.

The Task Force to Study Congregational Vitality Indicators does not believe that we can continue to make changes without considering the message that is sent with those changes. A new concern for narrative vitality, how the church and its interdependent agencies, and our collective mission we must rethink and communicate differently about our reasons for the parochial report.

Canonically this does not require a change, but an action by the office of General Convention with the wider communications office to communicate the hope that is within us as we share with joy the good news of mission at every outpost within the church.

We recognize as a Task Force that the wider church has added to the parochial report without removing questions. One interviewee pointed out that we have been very good at asking newer more relevant questions. Rebranding will not be enough to show the wider church that structures are listening to them. We will need to address fewer, more concise, and particular questions. We understand that the State of the Church Committee is working on the next parochial report, however, the trend towards better care of time is essential. As of the writing of this report the following are required by churches and dioceses: parochial report with its new outreach section and 5th page, the racial justice audit, safe church audit, and a host of committee and task force surveys inviting church opinion. We must decrease our gathered information to those things which help us get an accurate view of the "state of the church" being mindful that the church wide, diocesan, and local congregations experience different needs for information gathering and dissemination.



Resolution Number: 2022-A061
Title: Amend Canon I.4.6.j [Of the Executive Council]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention direct Executive Council to create a mechanism for gathering self-identified demographic data to help address disparities regarding gender, gender identity and expression, age, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability status. Possible mechanisms for this include:

Proposing an amendment to Canon I.4.6 to the 81st General Convention by the addition of a second sentence, as follows:

Canon 1.4.6.j

j. Each Diocese shall annually report to the Executive Council such financial *data* and other information pertaining to the state of the Church in the Diocese as may be required in a form authorized by Executive Council. *By gathering data through parochial reports and surveys each Diocesan report will invite the inclusion of voluntary self-identified demographic information* ~~Such Diocesan report shall include demographic information,~~ such as gender, gender identity and expression, age, ~~and~~ race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability status for the following positions in the Diocese including but not limited to: Diocesan Convention Officers, Diocesan Convention Delegates, Standing Committee, Diocesan/Executive Council, Board of Trustees, Bishop Search Committee (if any), Treasurer, Staff of the Office of the Bishop, Chancellor and Vice-Chancellors, Commissions on Ministry, Bishop's Committees, ~~Trustees,~~ all Wardens and Vestries, and congregational staffs.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022* (New York: General Convention, 2023), pp. 838-839.



Resolution Number: 2022-A099
Title: Refer a Resolution to Fund Research on the Work of the General Convention
Legislative Action Taken: Referred
Final Text:

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church establish and fund significant professional research expertise and capacity to collect, aggregate, analyze, and publish data to support and bring insight, facts and understanding to the work of the General Convention, the Executive Council and all commissions, committees, boards and task forces of the church; and be it further
Resolved, That The Episcopal Church prioritize developing data expertise and capacity to advance adaptive change processes, including experimentation and evaluation, that can invigorate the church's participation in God's mission in the 21st century; 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 \$450,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022* (New York: General Convention, 2023), p. 892.



Resolution Number: 2018-A053

Title: Simplify and Improve Usability of Parochial Report

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention charge the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church to work with the Office of the General Convention and Executive Council to design a simplified parochial report relevant to the diversity of The Episcopal Church's participation in God's mission in the world; and be it further

Resolved, That the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church solicit input from critical parochial report stakeholders including: (1) data providers to ensure that the data is easily collected and compiled and (2) data users to ensure that the data collected is relevant to their work; and be it further

Resolved, That the user interface be improved both for entering data and downloading data and to provide an application programming interface to allow data to be integrated into other networked tools for broader sharing and analysis.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 362.



Resolution Number: 2009-A054
Title: Add Canon I.4.6(j) [Diocesan Report on Congregations]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon I.4.6(j) is hereby added to read as follows:

(j) Each Diocese shall report annually to the Executive Council the name and address of each new congregation, and of each congregation closed or removed by reason of any of the following:

- a. dissolution of the congregation;**
- b. removal of the congregation to another Diocese due to cession or retrocession of geographic territory in which the congregation is located, pursuant to Articles V.6 or VI.2 of the Constitution;**
- c. removal of the congregation to a new physical location or address, identifying both the location or address from which the congregation has removed, and the successor location or address; and**
- d. merger of the congregation into one or more other congregations, in which case the Diocese shall include in its report the names of all congregations involved in the merger, and the physical location and address at which the merged congregations shall be located.**

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 288.



Resolution Number: 2009-C060
Title: Direct Inclusion of Overseas Congregations in Statistical Reports
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church be directed to include in their report to the 77th General Convention, and all subsequent General Conventions, all statistics pertaining to the life of the congregations in all oversea Dioceses and the Convocation of American Churches in Europe.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 148.



Resolution Number: 1997-A027
Title: Request Changes to Parochial Reports and an Annual Report on Attendance
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the office of General Convention be directed to request in annual parochial reports the total number of all services held each year and the total attendance figure for all services; and be it further
Resolved, That the Episcopal Church Center be directed to provide annually to the Standing Commission on Evangelism a list of Churches which report a year-to-year increase in total attendance of more than 10%.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1997* (New York: General Convention, 1998), p. 108.



Resolution Number: 1997-A131
Title: Amend Canon I.6 [Of Annual Parochial and Diocesan Reports]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon I.6, "Of the Mode of Securing an Accurate View of the State of This Church" be amended as follows:

Sec. 1. A report of every Parish and other Congregation of this Church shall be prepared annually for the year ending December 31 preceding, upon the blank form prepared by the Executive Council and approved by the Committee on the State of the Church, and shall be sent ~~in duplicate~~ not later than ~~February 1~~ *March 1* to the Bishop of the Diocese, or, where there is no Bishop, to the Secretary of the Diocese. The Bishop or the Secretary, as the case may be, shall ~~send the duplicate~~ *keep a photo copy and send the original* to the Executive Council not later than ~~March 1~~ *May 1*. In every Parish the preparation and delivery of this report shall be the joint duty of the Rector and the Vestry; and in every other Congregation the duty of the Minister in charge thereof. This report shall include the following information: *(1) the number of baptisms, confirmations, marriages and burials during the year; the total number of adult baptized members; baptized members under 16 years of age, and total number of baptized members, the total number of confirmed adult communicants in good standing, the total number of confirmed communicants in good standing under 16 years of age, and the total number of confirmed communicants in good standing ; and the total number of confirmed ; adult communicants.* [Remainder of sec. 1 is unchanged]; and be it further

Resolved, That Canon I.6.2 be amended to read as follows:

Sec. 2. Likewise, a report of every Diocese shall be prepared annually for the year ending December 31st preceding, upon the blank form prepared by the Executive Council and approved by the Committee on the State of the Church, and shall be sent, not later than ~~February 1st~~ *April 1*, to the Executive Council. [Remainder of sec. 2 is *unchanged* .]

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1997* (New York: General Convention, 1998), pp. 103-104.



Resolution Number: 1988-A084
Title: Study Funding and Reporting Practices of the Church at All Levels
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That this 69th General Convention direct the Committee on the State of the Church, the Standing Commission on Stewardship and Development, and the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to study the funding of the church at all levels and the accuracy and importance of parochial and diocesan reports, and to make recommendation to the next General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Detroit, 1988* (New York: General Convention, 1989), p. 315.



Resolution Number: 1985-A015
Title: Amend Canon I.5.1 [Information in Annual Reports to the Bishop]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the fourth sentence of Title I, Canon 5, Sec. 1 be amended as follows:

Sec. 1. ... This report shall include the following information: (1) the number of baptisms, confirmations, marriages and burials during the year; ~~the total number of baptized persons and communicants in good standing at the time of the report, and for all purposes the number of members of this Church shall be deemed to be the number of baptized persons;~~ *the total number of adult baptized members, baptized members under 16 years of age, and total number of baptized members; the total number of confirmed adult communicants in good standing, the total number of confirmed communicants in good standing under 16 years of age, and the total number of confirmed communicants in good standing; ...*

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 1985* (New York: General Convention, 1986), p. 276.