

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-A091
Title: Definition of Doctrine
Proposer: Task Force on Communion Across Difference
Topic: Canons

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A124 Amend Canon IV.2 [Of Terminology Used in This Title]
1997-A014 Amend Canon IV.15 [Of Terminology: Doctrine]

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

2022-A077 Amend Canon IV.15.3 [Of Review]

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](#).

A091 - Definition of doctrine

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Task Force on Communion Across Difference

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: Yes

Requests New Interim Body: No

Changes Mandate Of Existing Ib: No

Directs Dfms Staff: No

Directs Dioceses: No

Directs Executive Council: No

HiA: No House Assigned

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: No Committee Assigned

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention amend the definition of "Doctrine" in Canon IV.2 to read as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

IV.2.

Doctrine shall mean the basic and essential teachings of the Church and is to be found in the Canon of Holy Scripture as understood in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds and in the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer. For the purposes of this canon, the Book of Common Prayer and any Book of Common Prayer memorialized by General Convention are understood as sufficient statements of the doctrine of this Church.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

IV.2.

Doctrine shall mean the basic and essential teachings of the Church and is to be found in the Canon of Holy Scripture as understood in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds and in the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer. *For the purposes of this canon, the Book of Common Prayer and any Book of Common Prayer memorialized by General Convention are understood as sufficient statements of the doctrine of this Church.*

Explanation

Canon IV.4.1.h.2 specifies that all members of the clergy shall refrain from “holding and teaching publicly or privately, and advisedly, any Doctrine contrary to that held by the Church.” Therefore, any addition to or amendment of “the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer” has potential disciplinary implications for members of the clergy whose beliefs would no longer be reflected in the Book of Common Prayer as defined in Article X of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church. This addition would ensure that neither the emendation of the Book of Common Prayer to include a marriage service for use by opposite-sex or same-sex couples nor the alteration of the understanding of marriage presented in the Catechism to remove reference to gender would place members of the clergy who believe that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman in violation of Title IV or their ordination vows.



Resolution Number: 2015-A124
Title: Amend Canon IV.2 [Of Terminology Used in This Title]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon IV.2, definitions of “Advisor,” “Church Attorney,” “Investigator,” “Procedural Officer,” and “Respondent” are hereby amended to read as follows:

Accord shall mean a written resolution, which is negotiated and agreed among the parties resulting from an agreement for discipline under Canon IV.9, conciliation under Canon IV.10 or a Conference Panel proceeding under Canon IV.12. All Accords shall meet the requirements of Canon IV.14.

Administrative Leave shall mean a restriction on ministry in which the exercise of the Respondent’s ministry is suspended in its entirety during the period of the Administrative Leave and may include suspension from any ecclesiastical and related secular office.

Advisor shall mean a person *familiar with the provisions and objectives of this Title who is designated to support, assist, consult with, advise and, where expressly so authorized under this Title, speak for a Complainant or Respondent in any matter of discipline under this Title, as provided in Canon IV.19.10.*

Church Attorney shall mean one or more attorneys selected pursuant to Diocesan Canons to represent the Church in proceedings as provided in this Title. The Diocesan Canons may provide a process for the removal of a Church Attorney for cause. A Church Attorney shall perform all functions on behalf of the Church necessary to advance proceedings under this Title and shall have the following powers, in addition to the powers and duties otherwise provided in this Title: (a) to receive and review the Intake Officer’s report; (b) to conduct investigations and oversee the Investigator and, in connection with such investigations; to have access to the personnel, books and records of the Diocese and its constituent parts; and to receive and review the reports of the Investigator; (c) to determine, in the exercise of the Church Attorney’s discretion, whether the reported information, if true, would be grounds for discipline; and (d) to exercise discretion consistent with this Title and the interests of the Church by declining to advance proceedings or by referring any matter back to the Intake Officer or the Bishop Diocesan for pastoral response in lieu of disciplinary action. In representing the Church, a Church Attorney may consult with ~~the Conference Panel~~*the President of the Disciplinary Board at any time after the matter has been referred out of the Reference Panel, and, when the prosecution of the case may impact the mission, life, or ministry of the Church, with the Bishop Diocesan.*

Clear and Convincing shall mean proof sufficient to convince ordinarily prudent people that there is a high probability that what is claimed actually happened. More than a preponderance of the evidence is required but not proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

Community shall mean that part of the Church in which a Member of the Clergy performs his or her ministry, such as a Diocese, Parish, Mission, school, seminary, hospital, camp or any similar institution.

Complainant shall mean (a) any person or persons from whom the Intake Officer receives information concerning an alleged Offense and who, upon consent of that person(s), is designated a Complainant by the Intake Officer or (b) any Injured Person designated by the Bishop who, in the Bishop Diocesan’s discretion, should be afforded the status of a

Complainant; provided, however, that any Injured Person so designated may decline such designation.

Conciliator shall mean a person appointed to seek the resolution of a matter under Canon IV.10

Conduct Unbecoming a Member of the Clergy shall mean any disorder or neglect that prejudices the reputation, good order and discipline of the Church, or any conduct of a nature to bring material discredit upon the Church or the Holy Orders conferred by the Church.

Conference Panel shall mean a panel of one or more members of the Disciplinary Board selected by the president of the board, unless some other manner of selection is provided by Diocesan Canon, to serve as the body before which an informal conference is held as provided in Canon IV.12, provided, however that no such member of the Conference Panel may serve as a member of the Hearing Panel in the same case. The president of the Disciplinary Board shall be ineligible to serve on the Conference Panel. If the Conference Panel consists of more than one member, it shall include both clergy and lay members.

Disciplinary Board shall mean the body provided for in Canon IV.5.1.

Discipline of the Church shall be found in the Constitution, the Canons and the Rubrics and the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer.

Doctrine shall mean the basic and essential teachings of the Church and is to be found in the Canon of Holy Scripture as understood in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds and in the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer.

Hearing Panel shall mean a panel of three or more members of the Disciplinary Board and shall include both clergy and lay members selected by the president of the Board, unless some other manner of selection is provided by Diocesan Canon, to serve as the body before which a hearing is held as provided in Canon IV.13, provided, however, that no such member of the Hearing Panel may serve as a member of the Conference Panel in the same case. The president of the Disciplinary Board shall be ineligible to serve on the Hearing Panel.

Injured Person shall mean a person, group or Community who has been, is or may be affected by an Offense.

Intake Officer shall mean one or more persons designated by the Bishop Diocesan after consultation with the Disciplinary Board, unless otherwise selected pursuant to diocesan canons, to whom information regarding Offenses is reported.

Investigator shall mean a person having (a) sufficient knowledge, skill, experience and training to conduct investigations under this Title and (b) familiarity with the provisions and objectives of this Title. Investigators shall be appointed by the Bishop Diocesan in consultation with the president of the Disciplinary Board. *The Investigator acts under the direction of the Reference Panel until a referral is made pursuant to Canon IV.11.3; after such referral, the Investigator shall be overseen by and report to the Church Attorney.*

Member of the Clergy shall mean Bishops, Priests and Deacons of the Church.

Offense shall mean any act or omission for which a Member of the Clergy may be held accountable under Canons IV.3 or IV.4.

Order shall mean a written decision of a Conference Panel or a Hearing panel which is issued with or without the Respondent's consent. All orders shall meet the requirements of Canon IV.14.

Pastoral Direction shall mean a written direction given by a Bishop to a Member of the Clergy which meets the requirements of Canon IV.7.

Pastoral Relationship shall mean any relationship between a Member of the Clergy and any person to whom the Member of the Clergy provides or has provided counseling, pastoral

care, spiritual direction or spiritual guidance, or from whom such member of the Clergy has received information within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent.

Privileged Communication shall mean any communication or disclosure made in confidence and with an expectation of privacy (a) within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent; (b) between a client and the client's attorney; (c) between a Respondent and an Advisor or a Complainant and an Advisor; (d) between persons in a relationship in which communications are protected by secular law or Diocesan Canons; or (e) between and among a Conciliator and participants in a conciliation under Canon IV.10.

Procedural Officer shall mean a person learned in the law, experienced in litigation and having familiarity with the provisions and objectives of this Title. No Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor of a Diocese shall serve as Procedural Officer in the same Diocese. Every Diocese shall have a Procedural Officer, who shall be appointed for a term of not less than one year by the Bishop Diocesan in consultation with the President of the Disciplinary Board to aid in the prompt and proper disposition of procedural motions and challenges in Title IV proceedings.

Provincial Court of Review shall mean a court organized and existing as provided in Canon IV.5.4 to serve as the body which performs the duties prescribed in Canon IV.15.

Reference Panel shall mean a panel composed of the Intake Officer, the Bishop Diocesan and the president of the Disciplinary Board to serve as the body which performs the duties prescribed in Canons IV.6 and IV.11.

Respondent shall mean any Member of the Clergy (a) who is the subject of a matter referred for conciliation or to the Conference Panel or to the Hearing Panel; (b) whose ministry has been restricted; (c) who has been placed on Administrative Leave; (d) who is the subject of an investigation and is asked by an investigator or by the Bishop Diocesan to provide information or to make a statement; ~~or~~ (e) who agreed with the Bishop Diocesan regarding terms of discipline pursuant to Canon IV.9; or (f) any Member of the Clergy who requests a review pursuant to Canon IV.19.31.

Sentence shall mean the pronouncement of discipline of a Member of the Clergy pursuant to an Accord or Order in the form of (a) admonition, in which the conduct of such Member of the Clergy is publicly and formally censured or reprimanded, or (b) suspension, in which such Member of the Clergy is required to refrain temporarily from the exercise of the gifts of ministry conferred by ordination, or (c) deposition, in which such Member of the Clergy is deprived of the right to exercise the gifts and spiritual authority of God's word and sacraments conferred at ordination.

Sexual Abuse shall mean any Sexual Behavior at the request of, acquiesced to or by a person eighteen years of age or older and a person under eighteen years of age, in high school or legally incompetent.

Sexual Behavior shall mean any physical contact, bodily movement, speech, communication or other activity sexual in nature or that is intended to arouse or gratify erotic interest or sexual desires.

Sexual Misconduct shall mean (a) Sexual Abuse or (b) Sexual Behavior at the request of, acquiesced to or by a Member of the Clergy with an employee, volunteer, student or counselee of that Member of the Clergy or in the same congregation as the Member of the Clergy, or a person with whom the Member of the Clergy has a Pastoral Relationship.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 883-886.



Resolution Number: 1997-A014
Title: Amend Canon IV.15 [Of Terminology: Doctrine]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon IV.15 is hereby amended by adding thereto a definition reading as follows: "Doctrine": As used in this Title, the term "Doctrine" shall mean the basic and essential teachings of the church. The Doctrine of the Church is to be found in the Canon of Holy Scripture as understood in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and in the sacramental rites, the Ordinal and Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1997* (New York: General Convention, 1998), p. 784.