

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-C010
Title: Access to Prison Ministries
Proposer: California
Topic: Prisons

Directly Related: (Attached)

2018-A284 Amend Canons I.17.5 and III.1.2 [Rights of Laity, Access to Discernment Process]
2009-C048 Support Employment Non-discrimination Laws
2009-D012 Support Laws that Prohibit Discrimination Based on Gender Identity
2009-D032 Commit to Non-Discrimination in Lay Employment
2009-D095 Encourage Prison Ministries
2006-A167 Reaffirm Church Membership of Gay and Lesbian Persons
2003-A125 Establish Ministries to Assist Prisoners and Their Families
1994-D035 Support Ministry to the Incarcerated

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

2018-C022 Support End of Discrimination Against Transgender and Non-Binary People
2018-D016 Create a Task Force for Women, Truth, and Reconciliation
2012-A035 Reaffirm Commitment to Interreligious Engagement
2012-A077 Develop a Model Prisoner Ministry
1994-D087 Encourage Parishes to Minister to Newly Discharged Inmates

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](#).

C010 - Access to Prison Ministries

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: California

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: 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 Episcopal Church affirm its commitment to prison ministries consistent with the current theological and spiritual values of The Episcopal Church and provide all of God's children with opportunities to minister to and with this marginalized and oppressed population, in accordance with the following principles and policies:

- The Episcopal Church supports inter- and multi-faith ministries that contribute to our mission to follow Jesus, loving our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40) and demonstrating particular care for those who are marginalized and oppressed (Matthew 25:31-46);
- Episcopalians find common cause and minister with organizations and individuals with whom we have theological differences, without proselytizing or demanding that our ministry partners adhere to the tenets we espouse;
- The over one million incarcerated individuals in this country are among the most marginalized and oppressed members of our society;
- Episcopalians faithfully engage in ministry with incarcerated individuals, seeking to provide support, encouragement, and hope to these persons;
- Among the many members of the incarcerated population as well as those who minister to and with them, are individuals who are LGBTQIA+, a community that also experiences marginalization in this country;

- Following the Way of Jesus, Episcopalians minister to and with all God's children, with special focus on the support and liberation of those who are oppressed;
- Our canons prohibit the denial of access to any ministry of this Church "because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital or family status (including pregnancy and child care plans), sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disabilities or age" (Canon III.1.2);

and be it further

Resolved, that Episcopalians may not be forced to overtly or tacitly endorse theological statements or practices that conflict with our stated policies and beliefs in order to participate in shared prison ministry programs; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention urge any prison ministry program in which members of The Episcopal Church volunteer hold policies consistent with our spiritual teachings and stated policies, asking such programs to change their policies if they conflict with our nondiscrimination canons; and be it further

Resolved, That if such ministries refuse to change such policies, that this Convention encourage dioceses to develop and share programs for their members to minister with incarcerated individuals, those newly released from prison, and families and loved ones of incarcerated individuals in ways that are consistent with our Church's current spiritual teachings, principles, and policies.

Explanation

Members of The Episcopal Church have long-supported Prison Ministry, and many Episcopalians have faithfully ministered to incarcerated individuals under the auspices of Kairos Prison Ministries International, Inc. over its 48-year history without awareness of conflicts that have developed between its ethics policies and The Episcopal Church's nondiscrimination canons. Multiple Episcopal dioceses have congregations listing Kairos as one of their ministries. In addition, Episcopal congregations have also offered meeting spaces to Kairos, whose representatives have signed agreements with these congregations without disclosing these discriminatory ethics policies. The Episcopal Church previously provided Kairos Prison Ministries International as a resource for Episcopalians seeking opportunities to minister to incarcerated individuals, including the National Cathedral.

In August of 2023, it came to the attention of the Diocese of California [and then the wider Church](#) that the Code of Conduct developed by Kairos International, which describes itself as "a lay-led, interdenominational Christian ministry in which men and women volunteers bring Christ's love and forgiveness to prisoners and their families," espouses an anti-LGBTQIA+ stance. Specifically, it precludes transgender individuals from this ministry, as evidenced in the following passage from the code: "Kairos uses sex assigned at birth for volunteers and for Kairos Outside Guests. Kairos believes in the Bible as God's authoritative and inspired Word for our faith and our lives as set forth in the Statement of Faith. Scripture is the authoritative and inspired Word upon which decisions are made. ('But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female.')" In addition, the ethics code of Kairos clearly espouses a view of marriage as occurring only between men and women

and describes our LGBTQIA+ siblings as sinful, declaring that they “do not condone any volunteer or staff to openly represent their sins and behaviors to others as appropriate. (‘You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness’ (Ephesians 4:22-24).”

This Kairos policy is incompatible with the non-discrimination canons of The Episcopal Church (Canon III.1.2). It also violates our baptismal vows “to seek and serve Christ in all persons” and to “strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being” as well as the mission of the Church as described in our catechism: “to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 855). Scripture reminds us that “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28) and that we are to “love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:12-13). Jesus asks us to do as he did and “Bring good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19).

Prison ministry and supporting the ministry of our LGBTQIA+ siblings are both consistent with Jesus’ command and the church’s commitment to bring help and hope to those who are particularly marginalized and oppressed in our society. It is, therefore, appropriate to seek opportunities to minister to individuals who are members of both of these marginalized groups, many of whom suffer from heinous treatment at the hands of the criminal justice system. The exclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals from participating in a ministry that describes a desire “to share the transforming love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to impact the hearts and lives of incarcerated men, women and youth, as well as their families, to become loving and productive citizens of their communities,” is contradictory.

This resolution affirms The Episcopal Church's commitment to participating in prison ministry that is respectful and loving to both marginalized groups of people, and developing new and more just ministries as necessary so that we may conduct ourselves as members of God’s household, “which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Note: this resolution and/or its explanation contains external references, such as URLs of websites, that may not be in the required languages of General Convention. Because of copyright restrictions, the General Convention cannot provide translations. However, your web browser may be able to provide a machine translation into another language. If you need assistance with this, please contact gc.support@episcopalchurch.org.



Resolution Number: 2018-A284
Title: Amend Canons I.17.5 and III.1.2 [Rights of Laity, Access to Discernment Process]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canon I.17.5 be amended to read as follows:

Sec. 5. No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance, or *employment* of this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital or family status (*including pregnancy or child care plans*), sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by Canons.

And be it further

Resolved, That Canon III.1.2 be amended to read as follows:

Sec. 2. No person shall be denied access to the discernment process or to any process for the employment, licensing, calling, or deployment for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital or family status (*including pregnancy and child care plans*), sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons. No right to *employment, licensing, ordination, call, deployment, or election* is hereby established.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 674.



Resolution Number: 2009-C048
Title: Support Employment Non-discrimination Laws
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church support the extension of existing federal laws that prohibit employment discrimination to include discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression along with those prohibitions based on race, gender, religion, national origin, age and disability; and be it further Resolved, That the Secretary of General Convention convey this resolution to appropriate congressional leaders and to the President of the United States.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 395.



Resolution Number: 2009-D012
Title: Support Laws that Prohibit Discrimination Based on Gender Identity
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church supports the enactment of laws at the local, state and federal level that a) prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or the expression of one's gender identity, and b) treat physical violence inflicted on the basis of a victim's gender identity or expression as a hate crime; and be it further
Resolved, That the Secretary of Convention convey this resolution to appropriate congressional leadership, to the Chair of the National Governors Association, the President of the National Conference of State Legislatures and to the President of the U. S. Conference of Mayors.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 356.



Resolution Number: 2009-D032
Title: Commit to Non-Discrimination in Lay Employment
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention commit The Episcopal Church not to discriminate in employment of lay employees based on race, color, sex, national origin, age, familial status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 712.



Resolution Number: 2009-D095
Title: Encourage Prison Ministries
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention urge all dioceses and congregations to focus on ways to minister to God's children behind bars, those returning to the community and their families and victims.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 712.



Resolution Number: 2006-A167
Title: Reaffirm Church Membership of Gay and Lesbian Persons
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church reaffirm that gay and lesbian persons are by Baptism full members of the Body of Christ and of The Episcopal Church as “children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church” (GC1976–A069); and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reiterate its apology “on behalf of The Episcopal Church to its members who are gay or lesbian, and to lesbians and gay men outside the Church, for years of rejection and maltreatment by the Church,” and recommit to “seek amendment of our life together as we ask God’s help in sharing the Good News with all people” (GC1997–D011); and be it further

Resolved, That, in evidence of that apology, The Episcopal Church pledge to include openly gay and lesbian persons on every committee, commission or task force developed for the specific purpose of discussing issues about sexuality and request the same of our sister churches in the Anglican Communion and Anglican Communion bodies; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reiterate that “our baptism into Jesus Christ is inseparable from our communion with one another, and we commit ourselves to that communion despite our diversity of opinion and, among dioceses, a diversity of pastoral practice with the gay men and lesbians among us” (GC2003–C051).

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 669-670.



Resolution Number: 2003-A125
Title: Establish Ministries to Assist Prisoners and Their Families
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, through the Executive Council, urge dioceses and congregations to become familiar with the criminal justice system and establish ministries which assist prisoners and their families during sentencing, while in prison, and during their readjustment period; and be it further

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention support the establishment and/or expansion of occupational, therapeutic treatment, and academic programs in prisons where prisoners may be prepared for re-entry into society; and be it further

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention ask the Office of Peace and Justice to identify training programs for volunteers who work both inside prisons and with post-release programs and to assist dioceses and congregations with this work; and be it further

Resolved, That the 74th General Convention ask the Office of Peace and Justice to identify religious education programs that can be, or have been, adapted for the cultures of particular prison populations and when appropriate, to provide training in such programs for dioceses and congregations.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 2003* (New York: General Convention, 2004), p. 253f.



Resolution Number: 1994-D035
Title: Support Ministry to the Incarcerated
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church declare its support of ministry to the incarcerated as a ministry priority, offering support and encouragement to those who minister to the incarcerated on the federal, state, county, and local levels, and quality ministry to inmates, prison staff, and families; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention declare its appreciation to the Most Reverend Edmond L. Browning, Presiding Bishop, for sponsoring the first Episcopal Church Conference for those who minister to the incarcerated, entitled, "The Episcopal Church Goes to Prison," in April of 1994; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention request that the Presiding Bishop set forth a means of coordinating ministry to the incarcerated at the national church level by designating the Bishop Suffragan for the Armed Forces, whose jurisdiction presently includes the Federal Bureau of Prisons, as Episcopal Church Center Liaison for all ministry to the incarcerated; and be it further

Resolved, That \$6,000 be appropriated to support this additional responsibility; and be it further

Resolved, That this 71st General Convention encourage the Episcopal Church on all levels to provide funding for quality prison ministry, subject to funding in the budget.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), p. 290.