

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-C012
Title: Add Howard W. Thurman to the Episcopal Church Calendar
Proposer: Northern California
Topic: Church Calendar

Directly Related: (Attached)

2022-C020 Refer a Resolution to Add Howard W. Thurman to the Church Calendar (Referred)

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](#).

C012 - Add Howard W. Thurman to the Episcopal Church Calendar

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Northern California

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: No

Changes Mandate Of Existing Ib: Yes

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 designate April 10, or other appropriate date, on the Church Calendar as the annual celebration of the life and work of Howard W. Thurman, pastor, educator, theologian, and civil rights leader; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to prepare appropriate biblical lessons, collects and other liturgical resources commemorating the life and work of Howard W. Thurman; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention commends to our congregations the celebration of Howard W. Thurman's life and work.

Explanation

This resolution follows-up on the petition our diocese submitted to General Convention in July 2022 to add Howard Thurman to the Church Calendar. That General Convention directed the Standing Commission on Music and Liturgy to examine whether Thurman should be added to the Calendar.

This resolution provides a legislative vehicle for the next General Convention, to be held in June 2024, to add Thurman to the calendar. This resolution also shows that our diocese remains in support of adding Thurman to the calendar and invites our congregations and other dioceses to join us in this celebration.

Background:

Howard Washington Thurman (Nov. 18, 1899 – April 10, 1981), had an enormous influence on the civil rights movement and its leaders. Born in Florida, Thurman was educated at Morehouse College and ordained a Baptist pastor. He was appointed as the first Black chaplain of Marsh Chapel at Boston University which today has a center bearing his name.

In the 1930s Thurman led a six-month pilgrimage of African Americans to India where he met Mohandas Gandhi, who had a critical impact on his work. Incorporating Gandhi's theories of non-violence, Thurman wrote a ground-breaking book in 1949, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, which had a major impact on a young ministry student, Martin Luther King, Jr.

In later years, Dr. King carried Thurman's book in his suitcase in his travels as a leader in the civil rights movement. Thurman also mentored Pauli Murray, who became the first Black woman ordained an Episcopal priest and is on the Episcopal Church Calendar. After leaving Boston, Thurman founded a racially integrated church in San Francisco. He was named an honorary Canon of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City in 1974. Thurman died in San Francisco in 1981.

Ebony magazine once called Thurman one of the fifty most important figures in African American history. In the 1950s, *Life* magazine ranked Thurman among the twelve most important religious leaders in the United States.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in Thurman's life and work. Thurman's book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, is used in the Episcopal Church Sacred Ground program and as a supplemental text in the Education for Ministry program. Thurman's speeches, articles and books have been the topic of recent seminars, webinars and retreats in a wide spectrum of church and secular settings. And the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples that he founded in San Francisco remains a vibrant worshipping community.

Our diocese convention in 2021 passed this resolution overwhelmingly on a vote of 279-3, indicating broad and enthusiastic local support. Since then, several of our congregations, including our cathedral, have held liturgical celebrations, seminars and forums focused on Thurman's life.



Resolution Number: 2022-C020

Title: Refer a Resolution to Add Howard W. Thurman to the Church Calendar

Legislative Action Taken: Referred

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention to designate April 10 in Lesser Feasts and Fasts, or the supplement A Great Cloud of Witnesses: A Calendar of Commemorations as the annual celebration of the life and work of Howard W. Thurman, pastor, educator, theologian, and civil rights leader.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022* (New York: General Convention, 2023), p. 662.