

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-D020
Title: A Task Force on AI in The Episcopal Church
Proposer: Miller, Mr. Kevin
Topic: Technology

Directly Related: (Attached)

None

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

2022-D020 Address the Ethical Implications of the Digital Age

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](#).

D020 - A Task Force on AI in The Episcopal Church

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Miller, Mr. Kevin

Endorsed by: Curlin, Ms. Laura, Coulston, Mr Rob

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$50,000.00

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: 03 - Governance & Structure

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention authorize and create a Task Force on AI in The Episcopal Church, composed of 15 members as follows: 3 Bishops, 6 Priests or Deacons, and 6 Lay Persons, including members with expertise in a variety of disciplines especially artificial intelligence (AI), liturgy, and ethics; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force be mandated with considering the relationship of The Episcopal Church with generative AI, including but not limited to:

- The use of generative AI in writing and preparing sermons and liturgies, especially with regard to plagiarism and preserving the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the Church's liturgies;
- The use of generative AI in hiring, particularly in writing job descriptions and preparing Office for Transition Ministry (OTM) profiles;
- The use of generative AI in writing theological and academic works, e.g. The Church's Teaching Series, and official statements of The Episcopal Church, including drafting resolutions to the General Convention;

- The use and potential misuse of The Episcopal Church’s copyrighted materials, such as *Enriching our Worship* and the Hymnal, in training generative AI; and
- Investigation of best practices with regard to generative AI from various sources, including other Christian denominations and nonprofit organizations.

And be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force include guidelines for The Episcopal Church for the use of generative AI, including beneficial and detrimental uses, in its report; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force begin its work no later than January 1, 2025, with the Task Force concluding its work at the conclusion of the 82nd General Convention, unless its mandate is extended by the 82nd 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 \$50,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Explanation

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is technology that enables computers to create original content, such as images or text, resembling human-produced output. AI uses models or algorithms trained on large sets of existing data, text, and images to understand and mimic patterns in that data. While there are many algorithms that are already integrated into our daily lives (such as autocorrect, email spam filters, and recommendation engines), generative AI is a significant step forward in the capability and reach of technology.

Generative AI has particularly become more widespread over the past few years with the release of new tools like ChatGPT, Midjourney, DALL-E, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot. This is a rapidly changing part of the technology landscape, the impacts of which we are just beginning to see.

Within The Episcopal Church, we need to consider how this technology affects our life and work together as a community of faith. There are benefits that various forms of AI, including generative AI, can bring to our lives and the work of running church institutions, such as helping with administrative tasks and taking notes during meetings. However, generative AI is still very new, and the benefits and the risks of this technology have not yet been systematically considered by The Episcopal Church or society at large. We need to look very carefully into the implications of AI, as it stands to challenge many of our deeply-held assumptions about the church, particularly in areas of liturgy and theology.

It has been long understood that the liturgies of The Episcopal Church are both the work of the people, and the people’s offering to God. According to *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, liturgy is “The Church’s public worship of God. The term is derived from Greek words for ‘people’ and ‘work’.” (1) The Church has assumed that its liturgies are human created but the development of generative AI calls this assumption into question, as it is now possible for someone to prompt a machine to create a liturgical text, sermon, or other work out of whole cloth with little to no human involvement. In addition, with computers increasingly able to write papers with just the prompting of a few words, we could face new

challenges including an potential increase of plagiarism, misuse and misstatement of our official stances on important issues of doctrine and morality, and the possibility of AI inventing fictional sources, for example, claiming the existence of a Book in the Bible that does not actually exist.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed now. A Task Force provides the opportunity to gather input from a variety of perspectives churchwide, and thoughtfully discuss the practical and theological implications of generative AI. Although this technology is still relatively new, generative AI is rapidly developing and becoming more widely accessible. If we as a church do not study the implications of what this new technology could bring, we will find ourselves farther and farther behind.

(1)Don S. Armentrout, and Robert Boak Slocum, eds., *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: a user-friendly reference for Episcopalians*. (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated), 307.