

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-D036
Title: Sacrament of Healing within the Context of Worship Services
Proposer: Pendergast, The Rev. Dr. Margaret
Topic: Health, Liturgy

Directly Related: (Attached)

None

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](#).

D036 - Sacrament of healing within the context of worship services

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Pendergast, The Rev. Dr. Margaret

Endorsed by: Bailey, Ms. Cathy, Bender, The Rev. Jane Arrington, Dickerson, Mrs. Judith, Alleman, The Rev. Timothy L., Nortey, Mrs. Cynthia, Miller, Ms. Jay, Maconaughey, The Rev. Debra

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$15,000.00

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: Yes

HiA: HB

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 10 - Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention direct the Presiding Officers to an Interim Body of their choice to conduct research to determine the number of Public Services of Healing which take place in the church.

And be it further

Resolved, That this data is used to explore the various forms, frequency, and practices of Healing in the Episcopal Church. This includes but is not limited to:

- the annual frequency of Public Services of Healing (BOS)
- whether bishops bless Oils for the Sick at a Chrism Mass, or other service
- whether contemplative practices are available in parishes

And be it further

Resolved, That guidance, and materials, for best practices when instituting the Sacramental Oils be explored; and be it further

Resolved, That a summary report of healing practices is submitted to the 82nd General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Assigned Body explore worship services making available Healing and the Sacrament of Anointing; these services may be Care for Creation, Celtic, "Blue Christmas", and 'themed' services (a Saint, perhaps Patrick, a crisis such as opioid) using the structure for liturgy from Book of Common Prayer pages 400-401; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Executive Council Standing Committee on Finance allocate \$15,000 to work on the resolution during the triennium; and be it further

Resolved, That a report is submitted to the 82nd Convention.

Explanation

Jesus said 'they would do even greater things than these.' John 14:12-14.

Previous General Convention Resolutions regarding Healing:

2018 & 2022 - NONE

2015 - A047 - Address Moral and Spiritual Healing for Traumatic Stress Injustice

2015 - A159 - Promote a Healing Ministry to those Affect by Addiction

2015 - A166 - Commend the Institute for Healing of Memories

2000 - D083 - Support Ministry for those Suffering from Post-Abortion Stress

1991 - A062 - Affirmation and Promote Knowledge of Christian Healing

CRITIQUE/CONCERNS/BACKGROUND:

-The Canons and Constitution do not list Anointing or Healing as a Topic.

-The 'Topics' for Search of past legislation do not list Anointing or Healing as a primary topic.

-Parochial Report does not ask whether or not healing was part of a service nor does it track healing services as a separate category.

-Formation programs for prayer teams, witness, and safety are not available for developing clergy and lay healing teams.

-An ecumenical organization addressing Christian Healing is the Order of St. Luke (OSL); a training program using and analyzing biblical passages of Jesus' healing is part of associate and full membership in OSL. OSL periodical entitled Sharing reports extensively on spontaneous healing with charismatic overlay. Supervision/teamwork is not part of an ongoing process with OSL.

-Historically, training through a McNutt program, philosophically provides a base for healing, but is not concurrent with the philosophy of the Episcopal church regarding human sexuality.

-A healing ministry can be a clerical function which does not include lay involvement. Some priests do not use Oils for the Sick, which is their prerogative, but then 'Healing', a term people understand, is not acknowledged as part of a specific offering in that particular church. This is not to say 'healing' is not happening, or Pastoral care not provided, but the Sacrament is not available.

-Some priests report receiving little training/exposure to healing as a ministry.

-The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) addresses priests/bishops blessing Oils for the Sick. BCP, page 456, states "In cases of necessity, a deacon or lay person may perform the anointing, using oil blessed by a bishop or priest."

-The 2003 Book of Occasional Services gives specific instructions for Anointing, optional prayers, and invitation for lay persons, on pages 169-171.

-A benefit of a bishop blessing oils is that healing is acknowledged for the entire diocese along with Chrism for baptism. A benefit of priests blessing oils is convenience as well as dedication to healing within a parish (which would also include, for instance, prayers for enemies and the world).

-Architecture/design/layout needs to be considered in order for a public healing liturgy to take place. It can be difficult to 'arrange' for a 'public' healing liturgy to take place in some church settings. Ideas on 'flow' and visibility to clergy, or designee, need to be addressed.

TRAINING:

-The use of the word 'Public' for Services of Healing is significant; persons should be visible when healing and prayers are offered. Leaving the sanctuary for prayers is not

advisable but side chapels can work well. Symbolically, the baptismal font is a beautiful area to use for healing prayers, and/or anointing.

-Active listening skills need to be developed and are beneficial when hearing prayer requests.

-The role of 'witness' to prayer teams is significant and respects the guidelines of Safeguarding.

-There are 'do's' and don'ts' to be listed in the development and practice of a healing ministry

-Training programs/meetings should include prayerful preparation, practical skills, instruction, supervision, and review. The appropriateness of follow-up care/questions should also be discussed/explored within the training process and in an ongoing (or consultative) manner with a clergy, mental health professional and/or physician and the team.

-Permission to touch a person when 'laying on of hands' accompanies prayers, or follows administration of sacramental oils needs to be established and shared within healing teams, particularly when lay people are offering this ministry. For instance, a person receiving prayers should have hands free; both hands should not be held by the person praying for them.

-'Triad prayers' are a useful technique to practice and build confidence praying for others. (Source: Unbinding the Gospel series includes a print out description on Praying with Others)

-An article on the Development of a Healing Ministry was written for the Diocese of Bethlehem in (approximate date) 2016.

-Availability of support personnel, ushers, and emergency plans should be in order at healing services.

EVANGELISM:

-Public Services of Healing offer opportunities for Evangelism, and help by sharing resources within the community. Healing services might have a theme such as dealing with the Opioid crisis, suicide, violence, creation care, loss at the holidays.

-The opportunity for the church to reach beyond its congregation to the larger community is provided through Public Services of Healing (BOS and online). Social injustices, substance abuse, mental health, and societal 'woes' including immigration, wars, crime, discrimination, can be addressed directly or indirectly during these services. Visual meditation stations might be arranged.

-Music, in many genres, is a gift for everyone when offered during the time of anointing/prayers.

-Public Service of Healing might use a secondary name, for example, 'Healing, Hope, and Remembrance' during Advent.

POSSIBLE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES:

05 - Racial Truth Telling, Reckoning and Healing

08 - Congregational Vitality and Data-Driven Initiatives

09 - Evangelism and the Future Church

10 - Prayer Book, Liturgy and Music

11 - Formation and Discipleship

16 - Safety, Wellness and Mental Health