

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-D055
Title: 50th Anniversary Triennium of the Ordination of Women
Proposer: Wong, Mr. Warren
Topic: Courtesy, Women

Directly Related: (Attached)

2006-A139 Celebrate Women in Ministry
1976-B005 Amend Canon III.9 [Add Sec. 1: Of General Provisions Respecting Ordination]
1976-B300 Express Mind of the House of Bishops on Irregularly Ordained Women

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](#).

D055 - 50th Anniversary Triennium of the Ordination of Women

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Wong, Mr. Warren

Endorsed by: Pollard, Ms. Diane, Sherrod, Ms. Katie

Has Budget Implications: Yes

Cost: \$18,000.00

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: Yes

Directs an Interim Body: No

Directs Dfms Staff: Yes

Directs Dioceses: Yes

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:

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention of The Episcopal Church affirms Resolution 1976-B005 that amended Canon III.9.1 (now Canon III.1.3) to apply provisions regarding the three ordained Orders equally to men and women, and Resolution 1976-B300 that regularized the ordinations of those women ordained to the priesthood prior to this action; and be it further

Resolved, That the 50th anniversaries of women ordained to the priesthood in 1974 and 1975, and women ordained in early 1977 following the actions of the 1976 General Convention occurred within a three-year span that roughly parallels the span of the 2024 to 2027 triennium; and be it further

Resolved, That this General Convention encourages and supports churchwide events and programs commemorating the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood. In doing so the Church celebrates both the historical and contemporary significance of increased gender diversity in the three ordained Orders, more closely reflecting that of the church overall; and be it further

Resolved, That commemorations occur across the 2024-2027 triennium utilizing liturgy, formation, reconciliation, and theological education, as we continue to transform unjust structures in the church and society; and be it further

Resolved, , That \$18,000 be made available for support programs, events, and materials and implementation of diocesan and churchwide commemorative efforts, to be administered by the Director of LGBTQI and Women's Ministries in consultation with an advisory group appointed by the Presiding Officers, consisting of five members who represent diverse constituencies of the Church.

Explanation

1. The wartime ordination of Rev. Florence Li Tim-Oi to the priesthood in 1944 as the first female priest in Anglicanism and her post-World War II speaking engagements in New York and the San Francisco area awakened some Episcopal women to the possibility of ordination to the priesthood.
2. Following the 1966 House of Bishops report supporting the ordination of women, the 10th Lambeth Conference's (1968) Resolutions 34-38 collectively titled "The Ministry—Ordination of Women to the Priesthood" requested that provinces carefully study the question of the ordination of women and report their findings to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and to consult with the ACC prior to ordaining women to the priesthood.
3. In 1970, the 63rd General Convention (1970) approved women's ordination to the diaconate in both Houses but fell short of the required majority in the House of Deputies clergy vote to open all ordained orders to women.
4. Following the 1971 Anglican Consultative Council's statement that provinces allowing the ordination of women to the priesthood would be acceptable (ACC-1 Resolution 28b), two women were ordained in the jurisdiction of Hong Kong and Macao, adding further momentum for the ordination of women to the priesthood to be voted upon at the 64th General Convention (1973).
5. Resolution 1973-D008 at the 64th General Convention in Louisville KY was defeated, precipitating the irregular ordinations of eleven female deacons to the priesthood at Philadelphia's Church of the Advocate on July 29, 1974, and four female deacons to the priesthood at Washington D.C.'s St. Stephen and the Incarnation parish on September 7, 1975.
6. The 65th General Convention in Minneapolis MN amended Canon Title III.9.1 to open the ordination of women to all orders (1976-B300) and adopted the House of Bishops resolution (1976-B300) to regularize women irregularly ordained to the priesthood; further ordinations of women to the priesthood began in January, 1977.
7. With the January 8, 1977, ordination to the priesthood of the Rev. Pauli Murray as the first African American female priest, women's ordination initiated a demographic diversity yet further within the priesthood. (Murray also had been part of the six-

member Joint Commission on Ordained and Licensed Ministries that put forth the 63rd General Convention's (1970) resolution on the ordination of women.)

8. The opening of the priesthood to women made possible the ordination of the Rt. Rev. Barbara Clementine Harris as bishop suffragan in the Diocese of Massachusetts and the first female bishop in the Anglican Communion on February 11, 1989, the 35th anniversary of which was commemorated in 2024.
9. The opening of ordination to the priesthood and episcopate to women made possible the election of the first female Presiding Bishop in the Episcopal Church and the first female Primate in the Anglican Communion, the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, in 2006, the 20th anniversary of which is to be commemorated in the upcoming triennium.
10. The 75th General Convention in Columbus OH passed Resolution 2006-A139 Celebrate Women in Ministry, expressing thanksgiving for all women in lay and ordained ministry and encouraging dioceses to celebrate women's ministries according to local context, including the recognition of pioneers in the ordination of women, their witness, and courage, creates a precedent for the 50th anniversary triennium.
11. A commemorative triennium of the ordination of women to the priesthood provides a means to communicate and celebrate these significant events as well as to acknowledge the history of mutually supportive efforts by both women and men, ordained and lay, to create a more just and demographically representative structure of ministry in the church; taken together it seeks to inspire new generations to continue efforts toward ministerial formation that more closely responds to the demographic diversity of the Episcopal Church.
12. A commemorative triennium of the ordination of women to the priesthood offers ample opportunity for the planning and development of liturgy and worship, various events, programs, and materials involving discernment, formation, and education. It also offers opportunities to celebrate ways that women from diverse social locations have sought to transform unjust or inequitable structures in the church and society, both in varying diocesan contexts and churchwide.
13. Just as the ordination of women has involved collaboration, commemorative efforts should value and reflect principles and practices of mutuality and inclusivity in mission, ministries, and outreach; local and diocesan collaboration is especially encouraged where feasible; funding can help support such efforts where assistance is most needed.



Resolution Number: 2006-A139
Title: Celebrate Women in Ministry
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church offer thanksgiving for the gift of all women in ministry, and especially those enabled by General Convention action including the seating of lay women deputies in 1970, the canons enabling the ordination of women to the diaconate in 1970, the priesthood in 1976, the consecration of a woman as bishop in 1989, and the election of a woman as Presiding Bishop in 2006; and be it further
Resolved, That all dioceses be encouraged to celebrate these ministries in ways that are appropriate to their locale; and be it further
Resolved, That pioneers in the ordination of women in all orders be part of this celebration and that their witness and courage be recognized; and be it further
Resolved, That dioceses that as yet have not ordained women to the priesthood continue to be encouraged to provide for the ordination and exercise of priestly ministry by women in their dioceses.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 343.



Resolution Number: 1976-B005
Title: Amend Canon III.9 [Add Sec. 1: Of General Provisions Respecting Ordination]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That a new Section 1 of Title III, Canon 9 be adopted, with renumbering of the present Section 1 and following, the said Section 1 to read as follows:

Section 1. The provisions of these canons for the admission of Candidates, and for the Ordination to the three Orders: Bishops, Priests and Deacons shall be equally applicable to men and women.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 1976* (New York: General Convention, 1977), p. C-52.



Resolution Number: 1976-B300
Title: Express Mind of the House of Bishops on Irregularly Ordained Women
Legislative Action Taken: Adopted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the Theology Report be adopted as the mind of the House.

Since the 1976 General Convention has, by legislative action, made clear that it is now the intent of the Episcopal Church as an ecclesial community to authorize the ordination of women to the priesthood and to episcopal orders, we believe that a completion of the ritual acts performed in Philadelphia/Washington becomes possible.

Prerequisite to any act of completion, however, would be a faithful carrying-out of those canonical procedures required for ordination within the respective dioceses.

Thereafter either of two courses become possible.

Each of them seeks to celebrate the intent of what was done in Philadelphia/ Washington. Each involves a liturgical incorporation of what was done on those two occasions into the ongoing life of the Episcopal Church by supplying the intention of the ecclesial community to the ritual acts already performed.

One course would involve a public event, conducted by the appropriate Diocesan Bishop, which recognizes the sacramental elements found in the Philadelphia/Washington services and incorporates those elements into the now-stated intention of the Church to ordain women to the presbyterate. The proper context of the Philadelphia/Washington service now provided by the newly legislated ecclesial intention, that earlier rite could be sacramentally completed and the person canonically commissioned to function as a priest in the Episcopal Church without the necessity for an additional laying on of hands.

Such a public act of "completion" should, we believe, be eucharistic and done in the presence of a representative diocesan assembly. It should also include an opportunity for the ordinand to declare her loyalty to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Church afresh.

An alternative course, and one which commends itself as decidedly preferable to a majority on our Committee for pastoral reasons and for its reconciling power is "conditional ordination."

Conditional ordination would recognize that something of extraordinary significance did indeed occur at Philadelphia/Washington. But it would also affirm that a fundamental reason for our Church's concern about ordinations is the desire to assure both the ordinand and the people of the Church that the ordained person is an authorized channel for divine grace. Conditional ordination would demonstrate both the ordinand's and the diocese's concern for those in the Church who have honest doubts about the validity or regularity of the Philadelphia/Washington "ordinations." Whether those doubts be justified or not, the matter of assurance is vital and is a proper

pastoral concern of the whole Church. Holy Scripture bids every Christian to care about the qualms of the weaker brethren, and the example of St. Paul indicates that such care is a special responsibility for anyone in a pastoral office. Since the matter under consideration is the validity of the priestly office, such pastoral sensitivity seems particularly appropriate.

Since the Minnesota Convention has approved women's ordination to the priesthood, "reconciliation" will be desperately needed, a reconciliation effected both by the Church and the individuals involved. Through conditional ordination, the Church would be seeking reconciliation by the decision to ordain women. In addition, the Church-at-large would be officially sharing as an ecclesial community in an act from which she was excluded in Philadelphia/ Washington. The participation of the individual ordinands in conditional ordination would be an impressive and healing contribution to the needed reconciliation.

The willingness of all parties to take this conditional ordination route might also significantly assist the role of the Episcopal Church in the ecumenical movement. It will prevent unnecessary complications in future ecumenical conversations, since it would leave no room for doubt that these women ordinands are indeed ordained priests. Conditional ordination would also respect the integrity of Christians holding divergent views of the Philadelphia/Washington actions; refrain from passing judgment on diverse convictions honestly and strongly held; and allow the Lord to determine matters beyond our capacity or desire to judge.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Minneapolis, 1976* (New York: General Convention, 1983), p. B-148.