

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2018
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

RESOLUTION NO.: 2018-A063
TITLE: Amend Article X of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church (First Reading)
PROPOSER: Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music
TOPIC: Constitution

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A066 On the Topic of Constitution Article X [The Book of Common Prayer] (Rejected)
2003-A108 On the Topic of Amending Constitution Article X [Second Reading] (Rejected)
2000-A132 Amend Constitution Article X [The Book of Common Prayer--First Reading]
1997-C021 Plan Constitutional and Liturgical Changes to Enrich Common Worship
1994-A016 On the Topic of the Constitutional Article on Forms of Worship (Rejected)
1991-A121 Amend Constitution Article X: [First Reading] and Authorize Liturgical Trial Use

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

None

Supplemental Documents: (Linked)

(*Blue Book*) Report to General Convention, [Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music](#), see pages 148-151.

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1976 through 2015, 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 at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.

A063 Amend Article X of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church (First Reading)

Proposer	Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music
Topic	Constitution
Endorsed by	
Sponsored by	
Page numbers	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. 9
HiA / Leg. Cttee	/
Current Status	Resolution Filed
Version	Original (as filed)
Review Status	Not yet reviewed

RESOLUTION TEXT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church amend Article X of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church as follows

 - 2 ARTICLE X

 - 3 The Book of Common Prayer, as now established or hereafter amended by the authority of this Church, shall be in use in all the Dioceses of this Church. No alteration thereof or addition thereto shall be made unless the same shall be first proposed in one regular meeting of the General Convention and by a resolve thereof be sent within six months to the Secretary of the Convention of every Diocese, to be made known to the Diocesan Convention at its next meeting, and be adopted by the General Convention at its next succeeding regular meeting by a majority of all Bishops, excluding retired Bishops not present, of the whole number of Bishops entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, and by a vote by orders in the House of Deputies in accordance with Article I, Sec. 5, except that concurrence by the orders shall require the affirmative vote in each order by a majority of the Dioceses entitled to representation in the House of Deputies. But notwithstanding anything herein above contained, the General Convention may at any one meeting, by a majority of the whole number of the Bishops entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, and by a majority of the Clerical and Lay Deputies of all the Dioceses entitled to representation in the House of Deputies, voting by orders as previously set forth in this Article:
 - 4 (a) Amend the Table of Lessons and all Tables and Rubrics relating to the Psalms.
 - 5 (b) Authorize for trial use throughout this Church, as an alternative at any time or times to the established Book of Common Prayer or to any section or Office thereof, a proposed revision of the whole Book or of any portion thereof, duly undertaken by the General Convention.
 - 6 (c) *Authorize for use throughout this Church, as provided by Canon, alternative and additional liturgies to supplement those provided in the Book of Common Prayer.*
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7 And Provided that nothing in this Article shall be construed as restricting the authority of the Bishops of this Church to take such order as may be permitted by the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer or by the Canons of the General Convention for the use of special forms of worship.

EXPLANATION

Currently, the Constitution sets out the process for amending or making additions to the Book of Common Prayer, a process that requires adoption by two succeeding General Conventions. An exception is provided allowing one Convention to “[a]mend the Table of Lessons and all Tables and Rubrics relating to the Psalms” and another allows one Convention to “[a]uthorize for trial use ... an alternative ... to the established Book of Common Prayer or to any section or Officer thereof . . .”

Other than authorizing liturgies and rites “for trial use” under Article X(b) of the Constitution, there is no other constitutional or canonical provision explicitly authorizing General Convention to approve alternate forms/language for any of the liturgies or rites in the Book of Common Prayer or to authorize liturgies or rites not contained in the Book of Common Prayer. However, the language in “Concerning the Services of the Church” on p. 13 of the BCP which states, in part, “... In addition to these services and the other rites contained in this Book, other forms set forth by authority within this Church may be used” may provide such authorization, although it is not entirely clear if that is the intended meaning of that instruction.

The Constitution and Canons are ambiguous on whether General Convention has the authority to authorize liturgies or rites and subjects not included in the Book of Common Prayer (short of amending Article X) and the process for doing so if it is authorized. Nevertheless, since 1979 the General Convention has authorized collections of liturgies, prayers, and rites in The Book of Occasional Services, Lesser Feasts and Fasts, Holy Women, Holy Men, Enriching Our Worship and A Great Cloud of Witnesses. The history of some of these rites in the Church may help in understanding the ambiguous state of the texts’ authorization.

In 1883 the General Convention began the process of revising the 1789 Book of Common Prayer that was to receive a second reading in 1886. However, by the time the General Convention considered this revision the second time in 1886, many changes had been made to the “Book Annexed,” the name given to the proposed revised Book of Common Prayer in 1883. In 1889 a separate volume; the “Book of Offices,” was proposed but a version was not authorized until the General Convention of 1916. This “Book of Offices” was the precursor of the “Book of Occasional Services” and “Lesser Feasts and Fasts” the two supplemental volumes first authorized by the General Convention in 1979. At no time have changes been made to Article X of the Constitution that would explicitly give General Convention power to authorize these well-loved supplemental texts. The only category mentioned in Article X is for allowing trial use liturgies intended for use in a revision of the Book of Common Prayer. However, nothing in the Constitution or Canons explicitly prohibits the General Convention from doing so either.

The process of Prayer Book revision has been ongoing since the publication of the first English Prayer

Book. The 1789 Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church was a revision of the Church of England Book of Common Prayer. In 1811 General Convention made explicit provision in the Constitution for revision of the Book of Common Prayer. The current language in Article X of the Constitution providing for “trial use” was added in 1964 and proposed revisions of the Prayer Book were used on a trial basis before final approval of the current Book of Common Prayer in 1979. Instead of presenting a final text of a revised Book of Common Prayer to the General Convention, the category of trial use liturgies provides the Church opportunity to “pray through” proposed texts before their inclusion in the Prayer Book.

Since the revision of the Prayer Book in 1979, the General Convention has authorized a wide variety of liturgical texts for the Church. Not all of these texts are intended for eventual inclusion in a revision of the Prayer Book. Nevertheless, they have helped to form the mind of the Church and have expanded our worship without being intended for a new Prayer Book. Trial use seems to be an inappropriate name for what are effectively additional texts, such as the Book of Occasional Services and Lesser Feasts and Fasts, or other texts authorized from time to time by the General Convention. Yet, there is no express provision of the Constitution under which such authorization can be undertaken.

The Constitutional changes proposed would address this anomaly. We propose a system to authorize additional and alternative texts to supplement the Book of Common Prayer. We recognize that some of these texts may be useful in the preparation of a new revision of the Prayer Book, while others will continue to supplement the Prayer Book, allowing for additional forms of prayer to be available to the Church. This use is not intended to preempt or stop Prayer Book revision; instead, it is to give the Church more flexibility in their approach to worship, and the General Convention a more transparent criterion for authorizing such worship.

While this amendment is intended primarily as a way of rectifying a long-standing anomalous situation in the Constitution, we also see it as an exciting opportunity to engage in a discussion of how we are formed by the way in which we worship.



Resolution Number: 2015-A066
Title: On the Topic of Constitution Article X [The Book of
Common Prayer]
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That Article X of the Constitution is hereby amended to read as follows:

The Book of Common Prayer, as now established or hereafter amended by the authority of this Church, shall be in use in all the Dioceses of this Church. No alteration thereof or addition thereto shall be made unless the same shall be first proposed in one regular meeting of the General Convention and by a resolve thereof be sent within six months to the Secretary of the Convention of every Diocese, to be made known to the Diocesan Convention at its next meeting, and be adopted by the General Convention at its next succeeding regular meeting by a majority of all Bishops, excluding retired Bishops not present, of the whole number of Bishops entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, and by a vote by orders in the House of Deputies in accordance with Article I, Sec. 5, except that concurrence by the orders shall require the affirmative vote in each order by a majority of the Dioceses entitled to representation in the House of Deputies.

But notwithstanding anything herein above contained, the General Convention may at any one meeting, by a majority of the whole number of the Bishops entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, and by a majority of the Clerical and Lay Deputies of all the Dioceses entitled to representation in the House of Deputies, voting by orders as previously set forth in this Article:

- (a) Amend the Table of Lessons and all Tables and Rubrics relating to the Psalms.
- (b) Authorize for trial use throughout this Church, as an alternative at any time or times to the established Book of Common Prayer or to any section or Office thereof, a proposed revision of the whole Book or of any portion thereof, duly undertaken by the General Convention.
- (c) *Provide for use of other forms for the renewal and enrichment of the common worship of this Church, as an alternative at any time or times to any section or Office of the established Book of Common Prayer for such periods of time and upon such terms and conditions as the General Convention may provide, under the direction and subject to the permission of the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority.*

And Provided, that nothing in this Article shall be construed as restricting the authority of the Bishops of this Church to take such order as may be permitted by the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer or by the Canons of the General Convention for the use of special forms of worship.



Resolution Number: 2003-A108
Title: On the Topic of Amending Constitution Article X [Second Reading]
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That Article X of the Constitution be amended to include the following sentence at the end of the second paragraph:

Provide for use of other forms for the renewal and enrichment of the common worship of this church for such periods of time and upon such terms and conditions as the General Convention may provide; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution be sent within six months to the Secretary of the Convention of every Diocese to be made known to the Diocesan Convention at its next meeting.



Resolution Number: 2000-A132
Title: Amend Constitution Article X [The Book of Common Prayer--First Reading]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Article X of the Constitution be amended to include the following sentence at the end of the second paragraph:

Provide for use of other forms for the renewal and enrichment of the common worship of this church for such periods of time and upon such terms and conditions as the General Convention may provide; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution be sent within six months to the Secretary of the Convention of every Diocese to be made known to the Diocesan Convention at its next meeting.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 624.



Resolution Number: 1997-C021
Title: Plan Constitutional and Liturgical Changes to Enrich Common Worship
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 72nd General Convention direct the Standing Liturgical Commission and the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons to submit to the 73rd General Convention for first reading an amendment to the Constitution of this Church to add to Article X an authorization for preparation and use of additional liturgical materials; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Liturgical Commission be directed to prepare a plan for liturgical revision and enrichment of the common worship of this Church to be presented to the 73rd General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That this plan include forms of worship reflective of our multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual and multigenerational Church while providing rites and structures that ensure the unity of Common Prayer; and be it further

Resolved, That any new or revised rites when authorized be available for distribution in a variety of forms, including multimedia and electronic options; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Liturgical Commission be directed to prepare for publication and use alternative liturgical materials to be presented to the 74th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Liturgical Commission present the necessary budget request for this process of liturgical revision and enrichment to the 73rd General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1997* (New York: General Convention, 1998), p. 739.



Resolution Number: 1994-A016
Title: On the Topic of the Constitutional Article on Forms of Worship
Legislative Action Taken: Rejected
Text of Resolution:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the second paragraph of Article X of the Constitution be amended by adding the following sub-paragraph (c):

c. Provide for limited use for other forms of worship on an experimental basis for such periods of time and upon such terms and conditions as the General Convention may provide.



Resolution Number: 1991-A121
Title: Amend Constitution Article I.7 [Time and Place of General Convention—Second Reading]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That this 70th General Convention direct the Standing Liturgical Commission to continue to study, develop and evaluate supplemental inclusive language texts as previously directed by the 68th and 69th General Conventions, in consultation with the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops, among other consultants, and in consultation with the bishops, clergy and laity of this Church through a process which solicits their reactions and suggestion to report back to the 71st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That for the sake of perfecting such draft texts as the Standing Liturgical Commission shall develop, using this consultative process, this Convention authorize Supplemental Liturgical Materials for use during the next triennium omitting Sections 4 and 34: such use shall always be under the direction of the diocesan bishop or ecclesiastical authority. Paragraph 34 to be referred back to the Standing Liturgical Commission in consultation with the House of Bishops Committee on Theology for evaluation, study and refinement, but not for use at this time; and be it further

Resolved, That the second paragraph of Article X of the Constitution be amended by adding the following sub-paragraph (c):

(c) Provide for limited use for other forms of worship on an experimental basis for such periods of time and upon such terms and conditions as the General Convention may provide.

And that this amendment be sent to the Secretary of the Convention of every Diocese and be made known to the Diocesan Convention at its next meeting.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 405.