

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

RESOLUTION NO.: 2018-A087
TITLE: Develop Relationship Pastoral Resources
PROPOSER: Task Force on the Study of Marriage
TOPIC: Pastoral Care

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A037 Appoint an Expanded Task Force on the Study of Marriage
2000-A080 Commend Dialogue on Fidelity in Human Relationships
2000-D039 Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage and Existence of Disagreement

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

2012-A050 Create a Task Force on the Study of Marriage

Supplemental Documents: (Linked)

(*Blue Book*) Report to General Convention, [Task Force on the Study of Marriage](#), see pages 811-812.

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.

A087 Develop Relationship Pastoral Resources

Proposer	Task Force on the Study of Marriage
Topic	Pastoral Care
Endorsed by	
Sponsored by	
Page numbers	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A
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 acknowledge and minister to the growing number of persons entering into sexually intimate relationships other than marriage by calling for the development of resources that provide pastoral guidance and teaching on relationships that involve sexual expression; and be it further
- 2 *Resolved*, That the following statement guide the development of these resources: “Qualities of relationship that ground in faithfulness the expression of sexual intimacy include: fidelity, monogamy, commitment, mutual affection, mutual respect, careful and honest communication, physical maturity, emotional maturity, mutual consent, and the holy love which enables those in intimate relationships to see in each other the image of God”; and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention provide guidance to persons seeking to honor God’s call in all aspects of their lives by calling for the development of resources, including but not limited to spiritual practices, to aid individuals and couples in discerning their vocation to relationship, be it to singleness, celibacy, marriage and/or parenting; and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, That the Presiding Officers of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies appoint jointly a task force to develop these resources; and be it further
- 5 *Resolved*, That the task force report and offer these resources to the 80th General Convention for their consideration; and be it further
- 6 *Resolved*, That the General Convention request that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance consider a budget allocation of \$30,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

EXPLANATION

In 2016, the number of U.S. adults in cohabiting relationships was eighteen (18) million persons. This represents an increase in cohabiters of twenty-nine (29) percent over a nine (9) year period. In 2016, persons aged fifty (50) and older accounted for twenty-three (23) percent of cohabiters, or roughly 4.1 million persons. This represents a seventy-five (75) percent increase in older cohabiters over a nine (9) year period.* Over the past fifty (50) years cohabitation in the U.S. has increased nearly nine

hundred (900) percent.** Clearly the number of persons in sexually intimate relationships outside of marriage is increasing rapidly. Yet when it comes to nuanced and sensitive guidance and teaching regarding sexual intimacy, many people feel largely alone, having found the Church's counsel to remain sexually abstinent outside of marriage, insufficient and unreflective of their experience of the holy in relationship. This resolution calls on the church to develop resources that provide pastoral guidance and teaching on relationships that involve sexual expression. These resources may be used by individuals or couples, they may be used by Church small groups or in college chaplaincies, they may be used by middle-aged or mature Christians who are seeking guidance and direction as they seek to live in a way that is both faithful to God and expressive of the love and commitment they deeply feel.

In the work of the Task Force on the Study of Marriage in this triennium, a number of qualities have come to the fore that ground the expression of sexual intimacy in faithfulness. This resolution directs a task force to use these qualities as a foundation to guide the development of pastoral guidance and teaching on relationships that involve sexual expression.

God's call pervades all aspects of our lives, including our relationships. We may have a vocation to a state of relationship, be it singleness, celibacy or marriage; we may be called to form particular relationships with specific people, as God called Joseph, Guardian of Our Lord, to be Mary's husband (Matthew 1:18-25). Parenthood was once taken for granted as an inseparable part of marriage, but is now a choice—one that can sometimes involve the physically, emotionally, and financially costly processes of adoption or assisted reproduction. As with any vocation, God's call to relationship requires careful, ongoing discernment. Also, God's call to us can change over the course of our lives. A person called to singleness as a young adult may be called to marriage in middle age, or a person called to marriage may be called to singleness after the death of a spouse. This resolution would lead to the creation of resources, including spiritual practices of listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit, that can be used by individuals and couples, with the help of their faith communities, to discern their vocation to relationship.

* Pew Research Center: "Number of U.S. adults cohabiting with a partner continues to rise, especially among those 50 and older. Renee Stepler. April 6, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/06/number-of-u-s-adults-cohabiting-with-a-partner-continues-to-rise-especially-among-those-50-and-older/> last accessed November 11, 2017.

** Reports to the 79th General Convention, otherwise known as the 2015 Blue Book Reports. Report of the Task Force on the Study of Marriage: Essay 7, Section 5. Page 575.



Resolution Number: 2015-A037
Title: Appoint an Expanded Task Force on the Study of Marriage
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention requests dioceses and parishes use the study materials on marriage provided in the last triennium by the Task Force on the Study of Marriage, namely the “Dearly Beloved” toolkit and the appended essays in their Blue Book report to this Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention directs the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies to appoint jointly an expanded Task Force on the Study of Marriage to continue this work, consisting of not more than 15 people, including theologians, ethicists, pastors, liturgists, and educators, who represent the cultural and theological diversity in the Church; membership should include some of the Task Force on the Study of Marriage appointed in 2012, some from dioceses outside the United States, and young adults; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force explore further those contemporary trends and norms identified by the Task Force on the Study of Marriage in the previous triennium, specifically regarding those who choose to remain single; unmarried persons in intimate relationships; couples who cohabitate either in preparation for, or as an alternative to, marriage; couples who desire a blessing from the Church but not marriage; parenting by single or and/or unmarried persons; differing forms of family and household such as those including same-sex parenting, adoption, and racial diversity; and differences in marriage patterns between ethnic and racial groups; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force consult with (i) individuals and couples within these groups about their experience of faith and church life; and (ii) the results of diocesan and parochial study of “Dearly Beloved” toolkit; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force explore biblical, theological, moral, liturgical, cultural, and pastoral perspectives on these matters, and develop written materials about them which represent the spectrum of understanding in our Church and which include responses from theologians, ethicists, pastors, liturgists, social scientists, and educators who are not members of the expanded Task Force, and whose perspectives represent the spectrum of understandings on these matters in our Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force study and monitor, in consultation with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, the impact of same-sex marriage and rites of blessing on our Church; the continuing debate about clergy acting as agents of the state in officiating at marriages; and any other matters related to marriage by action of or referral by this Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force report and make recommendations to the 79th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force provide educational and pastoral resources for congregational use on these matters that represents the spectrum of understandings on these matters in our Church; 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 \$90,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 702-704.



Resolution Number: 2000-A080
Title: Commend Dialogue on Fidelity in Human Relationships
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention commend dialogue on fidelity in human relationships, as well as conversation and study of related issues, such as promise-keeping, truth-telling, trust, forgiveness, the nature of friendship, intimacy, loyalty, and integrity, as a way to open new windows on the nature of human relationships in a way that will transcend present polarities and build up community within society and our church.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 267.



Resolution Number: 2000-D039
Title: Acknowledge Relationships Other Than Marriage and Existence of Disagreement
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the members of the 73rd General Convention intend for this Church to provide a safe and just structure in which all can utilize their gifts and creative energies for mission; and be it further

Resolved, That we acknowledge that while the issues of human sexuality are not yet resolved, there are currently couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in marriage and couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in other life-long committed relationships; and be it further

Resolved, That we expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God; and be it further

Resolved, That we denounce promiscuity, exploitation, and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members; and be it further

Resolved, That this Church intends to hold all its members accountable to these values, and will provide for them the prayerful support, encouragement, and pastoral care necessary to live faithfully by them; and be it further

Resolved, That we acknowledge that some, acting in good conscience, who disagree with the traditional teaching of the Church on human sexuality, will act in contradiction to that position; and be it further

Resolved, That in continuity with previous actions of the General Convention of this Church, and in response to the call for dialogue by the Lambeth Conference, we affirm that those on various sides of controversial issues have a place in the Church, and we reaffirm the imperative to promote conversation between persons of differing experiences and perspectives, while acknowledging the Church's teaching on the sanctity of marriage.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 287f.