

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

RESOLUTION NO.: 2018-C012
TITLE: Add Origen of Alexandria to the Church Calendar
PROPOSER: Maryland
TOPIC: Church Calendar

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 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.

C012 Add Origen of Alexandria to the Church Calendar

Proposer	Diocese of Maryland
Topic	Church Calendar
Endorsed by	
Sponsored by	
Page numbers	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A
HiA / Leg. Cttee	HB / 12 - Prayer Book, Liturgy and Music
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 recommend inclusion of Origen of Alexandria in the Episcopal Church sanctoral calendar.

EXPLANATION

Over 1700 year later, we have the chance to right the wrong of the exclusion of Origen of Alexandria from the calendar of “saints.” Origen was an influential Christian theologian whose creative and fertile mind led him to certain speculations that some in the later church condemned. Origen had a rare combination of scholarly genius and a saintly life dedicated to Christ that make him deserving of a place in the Episcopal Church’s calendar.

A More Detailed Explanation

Origen d. 254
Theologian

Saint Jerome is quoted as calling the early church theologian Origen the greatest “teacher of wisdom and knowledge after the apostles.” Erasmus said that there was more Christian philosophy in one page of Origen than in ten of Saint Augustine. Yet Origen has never been canonized as a saint.

Born to Christian parents, Origen spent the first part of his career as a teacher in Alexandria, Egypt. Origen was not just a prolific scholar; he was also a person of genuine holiness. During the persecution in Alexandria in 202 in which his father was killed, teenage Origen desired martyrdom but his mother prevented him from leaving the house by hiding his clothes. He led a strict ascetical life of fasting, prayer and voluntary poverty. According to the historian Eusebius, Origen castrated himself because of a misinterpretation of Matthew 19:12. Recent scholars have questioned the truth of this story, speculating that this may have been just a rumor circulated by his detractors. In 250 during another persecution of Christians, Origen was imprisoned and cruelly tortured, after which he survived only a few years. Refusing to deny his beliefs, Origen’s willingness to undergo personal suffering gives witness to his dedication to Christ.

Origen is known for his breadth and depth of scholarship, writing influential works of theology, textual criticism, biblical commentary, preaching and spirituality. He wrote the colossal Hexapla (“Sixfold”) that laid out the Old Testament in six columns: Hebrew and five other Greek versions to enable word-for-word comparisons. Origen’s opinions influenced the formation of the New Testament Canon. His numerous commentaries encouraged an approach to Holy Scripture on not just the literal level but also on the moral and allegorical levels. Origen’s spiritual purpose for his allegorical approach was for a person reading the Bible to encounter the living Word in the text and that this Word might have a new message for their heart. Origen’s teachings brought respectability to Christian theology and influenced generations of thinkers.

Many of Origen’s works do not survive due to his condemnation several centuries after his death. Some of this later criticism comes from Origen’s wide ranging philosophical speculation at a time when Christian orthodoxy was still forming. Labeling as heresy Origen’s theories about the pre-existence of souls or the Son being inferior to the Father is problematic since the church at that time did not yet have official teachings on these matters. Unfortunately some of the accusations against Origen were actually due to misunderstandings of his writings or attributing later speculations of his followers to him. Another point of controversy is Origen’s concept of apokatastasis that all creatures (even the Devil) could ultimately be reconciled with God. While scholars today debate whether Origen truly taught a version of Universal Salvation, he certainly proclaimed a good and powerful deity whose love conquers all. Origen scholar The Rev. Dr. Rebecca Lyman states, “If anyone represented ‘Anglican’ rationality, love of scripture and holiness of life, it is Origen.”

Misinformation and misunderstanding throughout the centuries have unfairly denied Origen the honor he deserves. Many Christians today, including many scholars are reclaiming his life and teachings for the good of the church. The 232nd Convention of the Diocese of Maryland overwhelmingly voted to include him in the Episcopal Church’s calendar. Origen is deserving of a feast day with his rare combination of scholarly genius and a saintly life dedicated to Christ.

Endorsed by:

The Rev. Mark Stanley

The Rev. Dr. Tim Vivian

The Rev. Dr. Joseph Trigg, author of "Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third Century Church

The Rev. Dr. Bill Stafford, Dean Emeritus of the School of Theology at Sewanee