

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

**RESOLUTION NO.:** 2018-C037  
**TITLE:** Call to Respond to Opioid Epidemic  
**PROPOSER:** Province I  
**TOPIC:** Health Care

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**Directly Related:** (Attached)

2015-A159 Promote a Healing Ministry to Those Affected by Addiction  
2009-A078 Urge Congregations to Raise Awareness of Recovery Issues  
2009-A079 Request Education in Addiction Issues for Ordained Ministry  
1991-D171 Support Educational Programs on Alcohol and Drug Abuse  
1991-D172 Make the Problem of Alcohol and Drug Addiction a Program Priority  
1988-C037 Request Federal Funding of Substance Abuse Programs  
1985-A083 Adopt Church Policy on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

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

2009-A186 Refer a Resolution on Substance Abuse and Clergy Impairment (Referred)  
2003-A123 Call on Dioceses to Establish Committees on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency  
1991-A098 Remind Members to Care for Their Body As the Temple of God  
1991-A100 Give Spiritual Direction and Care for Those Addicted  
1991-D172 Make the Problem of Alcohol and Drug Addiction a Program Priority  
1988-C035 Commend Employee Assistance Programs to Church Institutions

*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.*

# C037 Call to Respond to Opioid Epidemic

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<b>Proposer</b>	Province I
<b>Endorsed by</b>	
<b>Sponsored by</b>	
<b>Page numbers</b>	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A
<b>HiA / Leg. Cttee</b>	HB / 08 - Social Justice and United States Policy
<b>Current Status</b>	Resolution Filed
<b>Version</b>	Original (as filed)
<b>Review Status</b>	Not yet reviewed

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## RESOLUTION TEXT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 79th General Convention call all dioceses and parishes in The Episcopal Church to respond to the opioid epidemic with training, pastoral care, advocacy, and liturgy; and be it further
- 2 *Resolved*, That dioceses and parishes be encouraged to: partner with First Responders and others in the medical community to host trainings on how to administer Narcan in the event of an overdose; partner with other faith communities and recovery programs in their local contexts to offer pastoral care to those affected by this epidemic; partner with other faith leaders to advocate with local and state government regarding policies and laws to promote healing and wholeness for those affected by this epidemic; and to lift up the needs of those affected by the epidemic in the Prayers of the People; and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention direct the Office of Government Relations of The Episcopal Church to advocate for the federal government of the United States to address this as public health crisis, affirming that opioid addiction is a disease, which needs adequate resources for treatment options; and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to develop additional liturgical resources to address the needs and concerns of those whose lives have been profoundly affected by this epidemic.

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## EXPLANATION

"Chronic pain was probably best treated not by one pill but holistically. In the same way, the antidote to heroin wasn't so much naloxone; it was community..." "Nobody can do it on their own," [Paul Schoonover, of Columbus, Ohio, whose son Matt overdosed in 2012] said. "But no drug dealer, nor cartel, can stand against families, schools, churches, and communities united together." Dreamland by Sam Quinones, p.330

Given the widespread nature of this crisis and the millions of lives which are affected by this, it is incumbent upon The Episcopal Church to respond. Our baptismal covenant calls us to respect the dignity of every human being and to renounce the realities of sin and evil in the world. The Five Marks of Mission call us to respond to human need and suffering through loving service. This resolution

invites the people and institutions of The Episcopal Church live into those callings by offering concrete ways to address this public health crisis.

Key points from a report issued by the Center for Disease Control on March 9, 2018:

“Vital Signs: Trends in Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Opioid Overdoses -- United States, July 2016 - September 2017” <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6709e1.htm>

- During July 2016–September 2017, emergency department (ED) visits among those aged  $\geq 11$  years for opioid overdoses in the United States increased 29.7% overall and 34.5% in 16 states with high prevalence of overdose mortality. Significant rate increases were found in five Midwest region states (largest in Wisconsin [109%]) and in three Northeast region states (largest in Delaware [105%]); nonsignificant decreases ( $< 10\%$ ) were found in three Northeast states. In the Southeast, rates increased in North Carolina (31%) and decreased in Kentucky (15.0%).
- Every demographic group reported substantial rate increases, including males (30%) and females (24%) and persons in all age groups (25–34 [31%]; 35–54 [36%], and  $\geq 55$  [32%] years).
- The highest opioid overdose rate increases occurred in large central metropolitan areas (a population of  $\geq 1$  million and covering a principal city).
- ED syndromic data can serve as an early warning system to alert communities of changes in opioid overdoses because of the rapid availability of this data (i.e., can be viewed within 24–48 hours of an ED visit).
- Treatment in EDs for drug overdose provides opportunities for intervention and prevention, which require coordination among all involved health care providers, allied health professionals, and agencies.
- Additional information is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/>.

Guidelines from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help broaden healthcare professionals’ understanding of medications that can be used to treat Americans with opioid use disorder (OUD).

“We know that people can and do recover from opioid use disorders when they receive appropriate treatment, and medication-assisted treatment’s success in treating opioid use disorders is well documented,” said Dr. Elinore F. McCance-Katz, Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use. “TIP 63 emphasizes that increasing access to medications to treat opioid use disorder will help more people recover, enabling them to improve their health, living full and productive lives.”

The Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) 63, “Medications for Opioid Use Disorder,” reviews the use of the three Food and Drug Administration-approved medications to treat opioid use disorders: methadone, naltrexone, and buprenorphine. Mandated by Section 303 of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (P.L. 114-198), this TIP provides guidance for healthcare professionals and addiction treatment providers on appropriate prescribing practices for these medications and effective strategies for supporting the patients utilizing medication for the treatment of OUD. TIP 63 also educates patients, families, and the general public about how OUD medications work and the benefits they offer.

As part of SAMHSA’s response to the opioid crisis, TIP 63 is a resource for health professionals throughout the country to employ in addressing crucial facets of the epidemic. Expanding access to OUD medications is an important public health strategy. The gap between the number of people who

need opioid addiction treatment and the capacity to treat them with OUD medication is substantial. Improving access to treatment with OUD medications is crucial to closing the wide gap between treatment need and treatment availability – especially considering the strong evidence of effectiveness for such treatments. Data indicate that medications for OUD are both cost-effective and cost-beneficial.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.



**Resolution Number:** 2015-A159  
**Title:** Promote a Healing Ministry to Those Affected by Addiction  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Substituted and Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the 78th General Convention recognize that the field of substance use disorders and addiction has advanced substantially since 1985 when the 68th General Convention passed the current policy, acknowledging that alcohol use, addiction and recovery all involve biological, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions; and be it further*

*Resolved, That, as Holy Baptism is the entrance to the life of wholeness and holiness and addiction disrupts relationships with God, others, and ourselves, impairing body, mind, and spirit, the Church, respecting the dignity of every human being, has a moral and ethical responsibility to:*

1. **Confront and repent of the Episcopal Church's complicity in a culture of alcohol, denial, and enabling,**
2. **Speak to cultural norms that promote addiction,**
3. **Promote spiritual practices as a means of prevention and healing,**
4. **Advocate for public funding and health insurance coverage for prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery, and collaborate with qualified community resources offering these services, and to respond with pastoral care and accountability.;** and be it further

*Resolved, That The Episcopal Church affirms the need for exercising a healing ministry to all whose lives are affected by addiction and encourages all members of The Episcopal Church to pursue healing in their personal, professional, relational and vocational lives, and to seek help at the first sign of the disease of addiction; and be it further*

*Resolved, That The Episcopal Church acknowledge that the epidemic of addiction has a severely adverse social, economic, environmental, and spiritual impact on all communities, and presents particular challenges to communities of marginalized people at home and abroad; and be it further*

*Resolved, The Episcopal Church directs dioceses to work in partnership with The Episcopal Church Medical Trust, Recovery Ministries of The Episcopal Church, and community-based organizations in order to address most effectively prevention, intervention/diversion, education, advocacy, treatment, and recovery, including developing a list of trained therapists and consultants who are available to assist clergy and laity in this education process.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), p. 320.



**Resolution Number:** 2009-A078  
**Title:** Urge Congregations to Raise Awareness of Recovery Issues  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That every congregation in The Episcopal Church be encouraged to raise awareness of recovery issues in a way suited to the particular congregation.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), p. 769.



**Resolution Number:** 2009-A079  
**Title:** Request Education in Addiction Issues for Ordained Ministry  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That every course of study for the ordained ministry of the Church include education in the nature of addiction, in the identification, practices of intervention and treatment of addiction, and in Twelve-Step programs for recovery from addiction; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Ministry Development to consider changes to the ordination canons to further promote such study; and be it further*

*Resolved, That each diocese commit to continue to address the issues of education, prevention, intervention and treatment in support of its congregations, clergy, laity and employees.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), pp. 802-803.



**Resolution Number:** 1991-D171  
**Title:** Support Educational Programs on Alcohol and Drug Abuse  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred As Amended  
**Final Text:**

***Resolved, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church call on every congregation to support programs for prevention and education about alcohol and other drug abuse and addiction; and be it further***

***Resolved, That this 70th General Convention encourage the efforts of the National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol and Drugs to provide comprehensive resources to the Church through the development and publication of a church school curriculum on alcohol and other drugs.***

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 826.



**Resolution Number:** 1988-C037  
**Title:** Request Federal Funding of Substance Abuse Programs  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred As Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That this 69th General Convention (1988) call on the Congress of the United States to increase federal funding for alcohol and other drug abuse programs in the area of treatment and prevention; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the Presiding Bishop be requested to communicate this resolution to members of Congress, the President and other appropriate administration officials; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the Commission on Social and Specialized Ministries be requested to monitor and to advocate for increased congressional appropriations for federal alcohol and drug abuse programs and bring to the attention of the Executive Council and General Convention any needs for further action on this issue.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Detroit, 1988* (New York: General Convention, 1989), p. 176.



**Resolution Number:** 1985-A083  
**Title:** Adopt Church Policy on Alcohol and Drug Abuse  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred As Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That this 68th General Convention adopt the following policy statement:*

#### **AN EPISCOPAL NATIONAL POLICY ON ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE**

**The Episcopal Church acknowledges the need for exercising a healing ministry and for offering guidance to problem drinkers or chemically dependent persons and to members of their families.**

**Alcoholism and other drug abuse are recognized as treatable human disorders which are manifested by a three-fold impairment of the body, mind and spirit. The Church concurs with health authorities that alcohol and other substance abuse is a major health concern of our society. It affects not only the alcoholic or abuser's health and self-concept, but also interpersonal relationships with family, co-workers, friends and counselors. It may affect any individual, regardless of financial situation, education, employment, race or creed.**

**The Church calls on all clergy and lay people to take to heart the seriousness of the illness of alcohol and drug abuse and its manifestations as a disrupter of family, economic and social life; and urges all churchpeople to do everything in their power to offer forth the love of Christ in his healing ministry to those afflicted persons and families.**

#### **Diocesan Committees on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency**

**The General Convention of 1979 encouraged each diocese to appoint a Diocesan Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency to implement a program on alcohol and drug abuse. Such committees are responsible for developing a diocesan policy and planning a diocesan resource center for education, information, counseling and training. Clergy and lay counselors are encouraged to pursue continuing education in these fields. Congregations are encouraged to provide members with educational opportunities to learn more about the nature, prevention, techniques of treatment and pastoral care of alcoholics and drug abusers and their families. Trained consultants should be made available to interested clergy and congregations to facilitate this education process. Through education and usage of appropriate resources, intervention is made possible to stop the progress of the disorder before it runs its full destructive course.**

**The Church commends and encourages the many programs offering treatment and support to persons suffering from the illnesses of alcoholism and drug addiction. Clergy and vestries are encouraged to further their assistance to the National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol (NECA), Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, AlaTeen Groups, Adult Children of Alcoholics Groups, Narcotics Anonymous and to chemical dependency programs and halfway houses as well as becoming knowledgeable concerning all local resources offering intervention, treatment and continuing care for these persons.**

#### **Employees of the Church**

Alcoholic or drug dependent employees of the Church should be treated with pastoral love and concern. Church health insurance policies should include provision for the treatment and care of persons afflicted with these illnesses. Treatment intervention for the person and family along with counseling and continuing support during recovery should be coordinated by the clergy and other support groups in the parish. Every effort should be made to offer job protection and re-employment, with salaried sick leave during hospitalization, to alcoholics and drug abusers accepting treatment. Those refusing treatment will not be offered this protection.

#### **Alcoholic Beverages in the Local Parish**

The Episcopal Church has never endorsed prohibiting the use of beverages containing alcohol among adult members. Scripture offers Jesus' example of the use and serving of wine in his first miracle at Cana and in the institution of the Holy Eucharist. If an adult member elects to use alcohol, however, moderate usage is expected. Church members should be educated regarding those conditions that might consequently compromise the health and safety of oneself or others. The Church also supports and has a responsibility to those people who abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages for whatever reason. Many churches do not serve alcoholic beverages at social functions, but, for those which do, the following guidelines are given:

- All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
- Alcoholic beverages and food containing alcohol must be clearly labeled as such.
- Whenever alcohol is served, non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal attractiveness and accessibility.
- The service of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event.
- The group or organization sponsoring the activity or event at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the parish for this plan. Such groups or organizations must also assume responsibility for those persons who might become intoxicated and must provide alternative transportation for anyone whose capacity to drive may thus be impaired.
- Recognizing the effect of alcohol as a mood-altering drug, it would be advisable to consider the nature of the function at which alcoholic beverages are proposed to be served.
- Chemical usage other than alcohol is clearly controlled under federal, state and local laws and, as such, should be forbidden at any function.

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 1985* (New York: General Convention, 1986), p. 135.