

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

RESOLUTION NO.: 2018-D036
TITLE: BCP Revision: Inclusive & Expansive Language
PROPOSER: The Rev. Deon Johnson
TOPIC: Book of Common Prayer

Directly Related: (Attached)

2015-A169 Prepare a Plan for Revising the 1979 Book of Common Prayer
1988-A103 Authorize the *Supplemental Liturgical Texts*
1985-A095 Prepare Inclusive Language Texts for the Regular Services of the Church

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

2003-A026 Direct Executive Council to Appoint a Task Force on Baptismal Parity
2003-A027 Use Preferred Forms of Address for Men, Women, and Groups
1997-D039 Direct Use of Gender Inclusive Language in all Rules of Order
1994-A068 Authorize Development of Supplemental Liturgical Materials
1991-A088 Prepare a Paper on the Evolution of the Lectionary
1988-A073 Direct Episcopal Church Staff to Use Inclusive Language in All Communications
1985-A115 Review the Constitution and Canons for Sexually Inclusive Language

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.

D036 BCP Revision: Inclusive & Expansive Language

Proposer	The Rev. Deon Johnson
Endorsed by	Kitch-Peck, Ms. Sophie; Varghese, The Rev. Winnie
Sponsored by	
Page numbers	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A
HiA / Leg. Cttee	HD / 13 - Committee to Receive the Report of Resolution A169
Current Status	Pre-Filed Resolution
Version	Original (as filed)
Review Status	Not yet reviewed

RESOLUTION TEXT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of _____ concurring, That the 79th General Convention recognize the urgent pastoral and evangelical need for revision of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, particularly in regard to the use of inclusive and expansive language for humanity and divinity, continuing work which began even as the 1979 BCP was being developed; and be it further
- 2 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to undertake a thorough revision of the Book of Common Prayer 1979, leading to a proposed revision of the Book of Common Prayer for trial use no later than the 81st General Convention in accordance with the Constitution Article X(b) and a proposed revision of the Book of Common Prayer in accordance with the Constitution Article X no later than the 82nd General Convention, to meet the contemporary needs of The Episcopal Church, including employing inclusive and expansive language for humanity and divinity; and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music report its progress to the 80th General Convention; and be it further
- 4 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$ \$1,917,025 for the implementation of this resolution, as requested in Resolution A068.

EXPLANATION

The Book of Common Prayer is in need of a breadth of diverse language reflecting the diversity of human identities and expressions of those identities and to demonstrate in the language and liturgies of the church that all persons are reflected in the divine image. The biblical text provides a wealth of imagery describing the divine that has yet to be plumbed. The Church has neglected feminine imagery in particular, and has not as yet begun to explore language that transcends binary understandings of the human person. The need is urgent and pastoral and ultimately evangelical.

The use of inclusive language was a consideration in the development of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, and further development began almost immediately after the 1979 BCP was adopted.

Toward the end of the process of developing the 1979 BCP, the Standing Liturgical Commission formed a subcommittee on linguistic sensitivity relating to women. Meeting in 1974, the committee

identified broad areas of concern:

1. In the 1928 BCP and Hymnal 1940, the generic use of masculine nouns and pronouns to encompass all human beings established a concept of maleness as normative and femaleness as the exception or “other.” Decisions at the 1970 and 1973 General Conventions made clear that such generic use was not actually inclusive: the masculine-gender nouns in the canons were interpreted to exclude women from ordination to the priesthood.

2. The use of exclusively masculine symbols for God – Father, King, Lord – evoke the image of God as male, leaving the Church “without models of ministry and worship that affirm the female.”

The committee made general recommendations for using inclusive language in liturgical texts and reviewed drafts of proposed rites to recommend specific changes in wording. As a result, the 1979 BCP uses inclusive language regarding humanity in many places.

In 1981, the Standing Liturgical Commission formed a committee on language in worship, which identified five tasks:

1. The publication of an occasional paper on the rationale and guidelines for the use of inclusive language in worship;
2. The development of a calendar of female saints, with biographies, collects and lections;
3. Development of a lectionary for preaching about women and God, and for expanding awareness about non-sexist interpretations of God;
4. An audit of inclusive-language issues in the seminary training of clerics;
5. An audit of both exclusive and inclusive terms in the present Book of Common Prayer.

An occasional paper, “The Power and the Promise of Language in Worship: Inclusive Language Guidelines for the Church,” written by Robert Bennett, professor at EDS and a member of the commission, and issued in October 1984, discussed language both about humanity and about God. The paper recommended drawing upon the “rich reservoir of divine names from Scripture, tradition, and hymnody” and revising texts to eliminate the use of masculine pronouns for God. It concluded by stating that its suggestions “recognize that there is a problem in our religious language which increasing numbers of worshipers feel excludes, demeans, and casts persons into stereotypic roles.”

Upon the recommendation of Standing Liturgical Commission, the 1985 General Convention called for the development of inclusive language texts for Morning and Evening Prayer and the Eucharist (Resolution 1985-A095). The Commission directed a committee on supplemental liturgical texts “to look at our liturgies through the prism of biblical metaphor and, from these metaphors, search out inclusiveness in terms of God, humanity in all its cultural diversity, and creation, mindful of the traditional integrity of the Eucharistic Prayer and the shape of the Eucharist and the Office.” The first drafts included adaptation of texts in the 1979 BCP as well as newly written material, all presented as full rites that would be alternative to Rite I or Rite II. Minor changes to existing texts proved to be unsatisfying; replacing masculine nouns and pronouns with “God” resulted in prayers that suggested an abstract rather than a personal God.

The work during the 1985-1988 triennium resulted in “Prayer Book Studies 30: Supplemental Liturgical Texts,” alternative rites for Morning and Evening Prayer and the Eucharist, which the 1988 General Convention authorized for use “for the sake of perfecting draft rites” (Resolution 1988-A103).

An extensive evaluation of these texts resulted in a different approach: a collection of “Supplemental Liturgical Materials,” a collection of resources that could be used in place of texts in Rite II (Resolution 1991-A121). After the 1994 General Convention reauthorized the texts (Resolution 1994-A067), the Commission developed additional liturgical materials, and these were added to the supplemental liturgical materials in a new volume entitled “Enriching Our Worship.” No additional texts have been developed for daily offices and the eucharist, although the Commission has developed additional volumes in the “Enriching Our Worship” series for other Prayer Book rites.

From 1985 until 1994, the Standing Liturgical Commission engaged in extensive consultation about the texts they were developing and the principles underlying them. Two congregations from Provinces I-VIII, along with Episcopal seminaries and two religious orders, prayed with the earliest draft texts in 1987 and provided extensive feedback. After the 1988 Convention, the Commission consulted with the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops, leading to the publication of Prayer Book Studies 30. Individuals and congregations that used this material were invited to submit responses; over 5000 participants offered suggestions for perfecting the rites. In 1993, the Commission hosted a consultation of theologians, biblical scholars, and liturgists, along with laity and clergy who had prayed with the texts, to explore issues in liturgical language about God. The Commission noted in its 1994 report to the General Convention that public discussion of the texts had diminished during the previous triennium, perhaps because initial fears had diminished as people experienced the texts.

In its 1994 report to the General Convention, the Commission used the term “expansive liturgical language” for the first time, and its 1997 report explained that this language “uses a diversity of images to convey the inexpressible mystery of God.” Drawing upon some of the riches of scripture and Christian tradition, the Commission’s goal was “to employ evocative language which would lead worshipers deeper into the mystery of God.”



Resolution Number: 2015-A169
Title: Prepare a Plan for Revising the 1979 Book of Common Prayer
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) to prepare a plan for the comprehensive revision of the current Book of Common Prayer and present that plan to the 79th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That such a plan for revision utilize the riches of our Church's liturgical, cultural, racial, generational, linguistic, gender and ethnic diversity in order to share common worship; and be it further

Resolved, That the plan for revision take into consideration the use of current technologies which provide access to a broad range of liturgical resources; 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 \$30,000 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. 886-887.



Resolution Number: 1988-A103
Title: Authorize the Supplemental Liturgical Texts
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That this 69th General Convention direct the Standing Liturgical Commission to continue to study, develop, and evaluate supplemental inclusive language liturgical texts, as previously directed by the 68th General Convention in consultation with the House of Bishop's Theology Committee, among other consultants; and be it further
Resolved, That for the sake of perfecting draft rites, this Convention authorize for use, under the direction of the ecclesiastical authority, for a period of two years, beginning not later than Advent 1989, the Supplemental Liturgical Texts, as said texts are revised by the Standing Liturgical Commission in consultation with the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops; such use always to be limited by the direction of the ecclesiastical authority; and be it further
Resolved, That this 69th General Convention appropriate in the budget of the Convention for the triennium 1989-1991, the sum of \$30,607.00 for the continuing study, development and evaluation of supplemental liturgical texts.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Detroit, 1988* (New York: General Convention, 1989), p. 327.



Resolution Number: 1985-A095
Title: Prepare Inclusive Language Texts for the Regular Services of the Church
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the Standing Liturgical Commission be directed to prepare inclusive language texts for the regular services of the Church, i.e., Morning and Evening Prayer and the Holy Eucharist, to be proposed for trial use at the next meeting of the General Convention in accordance with Article X of the Constitution and Canon II.3.6(a).

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 1985* (New York: General Convention, 1986), p. 605.