

**THE TWO HUNDRED NINETEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION
of the DIOCESE OF RHODE ISLAND**

REPORT OF THE RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

To the Bishop, clergy, and lay delegates to Diocesan Convention:

Ten resolutions were duly submitted by September 24, 2009; this was the deadline 30 days prior to Diocesan Convention. Please find these resolutions attached below.

The Resolutions Committee met on September 28 to review all resolutions. Our mandate is to ensure that each resolution is in the correct form and, if necessary, to recommend changes for compliance with the canons of the Diocese of Rhode Island or of the Episcopal Church. For each resolution, we have issued a recommendation, and these are contained here with the resolutions.

Two members of the Resolutions Committee are listed as submitters of one of the resolutions. They did not vote on the Committee's recommendation for that resolution.

If you have questions about our reports, the members of the Resolutions Committee will be at Diocesan Convention and are available before then as well.

Yours faithfully,

Ms. Carol Anne Bennett
The Rev'd Chris Epperson
The Rev'd Scott Gunn, Chair
The Rev'd William Locke

Note: There are two vacancies for lay members of the Resolutions Committee.

1. Companion Relationship with the Diocese of Ezo

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of Rhode Island expresses its gratitude to our Bishop Geralyn Wolf and Bishop John Zawo of the Diocese of Ezo in the Sudan for beginning the conversations necessary to form a Companion Relationship between our two dioceses; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of Rhode Island invites the Diocese of Ezo into a Companion Relationship which will nurture our relationship to each other and to the world in Christ; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of Rhode Island pledges assistance, whether spiritual or material, to the Diocese of Ezo as may be determined by appropriate leadership in each diocese; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of Rhode Island agrees to ratify this relationship for a period of three years, beginning with the visit of Bishop Zawo to this Diocesan Convention, and that the relationship be evaluated and renewed as mutually agreed upon subsequent to that period of time; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Companion Diocese Committee oversee and nourish this relationship with the Diocese of Ezo.

Submitted by

Ms. Martha H. Ames – Grace Church, Providence

Report

The Resolutions Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

2. Companion Relationship with the Diocese of Louisiana

RESOLVED, That in recognition of the devastation from Hurricane Katrina, and its lasting effects, the Diocese of Rhode Island ratifies our Companion Relationship with the Diocese of Louisiana; and be it further

RESOLVED, That both dioceses pledge assistance and friendship to each other and to those most affected by the devastation for a period of three years beginning January 1, 2009 and renewed as mutually agreed upon subsequent to that period of time; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Companion Diocese Committee oversee and nourish this relationship with the Diocese of Louisiana.

Explanation

Bishop Geralyn Wolf and members of the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Rhode Island have been actively involved in offering prayer, monetary support and physical assistance in the rebuilding of New Orleans and to the efforts made by the Diocese of Louisiana's Case Management and Rebuilding projects completed over the past few years. In light of this commitment and the continued need in the area, a recommendation to invite the Diocese of Louisiana into a formal Companion relationship has been made.

Submitted by

Ms. Martha H. Ames – Grace Church, Providence

Report

The Resolutions Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

3. Mission Task Force

RESOLVED, That this 219th Convention of the Diocese of Rhode Island invites a review of our diocesan mission priorities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a Mission Task Force be created to facilitate this process. This Task Force shall be composed of one priest and one lay person elected by the Standing Committee from its membership; one cleric and one lay person elected by Diocesan Council from its membership; and two people appointed by the Bishop. The Bishop's appointees shall not be employees of the Diocese. This Task Force shall be constituted by November 30, 2009; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the President of the Standing Committee shall set the time and place for the first meeting of the Task Force, to be held before December 31, 2009. At this first meeting, the Task Force shall elect a chairperson from its membership; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall devise a process in which the lay and clerical members of the Diocese may express their hopes and ideas regarding the future mission of the Diocese. The Task Force may request reasonable staff support from diocesan staff (e.g. mailings, electronic communication); and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall report to the 220th Convention of the Diocese of Rhode Island with its findings, including a recommendation for mission priorities to be adopted or reaffirmed by the Diocese. The Task Force is encouraged to be in regular communication with the appropriate people and groups for the budgeting process, in the event that a revised budget is to be presented to the 220th Convention of the Diocese to match modified mission priorities.

Explanation

It has been several years since our current mission priorities (Christian formation, congregational development, Hispanic ministries, Episcopal Conference Center) were set in place. Since that time, much has changed both inside and outside our Diocese. It may be that we need to shift priorities and or redefine our mission.

The Diocese should have priorities which are engaging for congregations, with compelling ways to connect congregational and diocesan ministry. This process would allow wide participation in examining our current priorities, which might be modified, replaced, or reaffirmed. Once the priorities are defined there should be an annual review that is reported to the Convention. The diocesan budget may need to be revised in order to reflect the mission priorities, should they be modified.

The Task Force is to be purposely small, but it may involve others as needed. Though the initial meeting is to be set by the President of the Standing Committee, the President need not serve on the Task Force. Finally, the provision for some modest use of diocesan staff resources would help the Task Force to do its work, especially in publicizing, gathering and sharing findings.

The hope is to reclaim a sense of vitality and growth in our diocesan ministries, with mission priorities which are powerfully engaging.

Submitted by

The Rev'd Robert Brooks – St. Andrew's, Little Compton

The Rev'd Scott Gunn – Christ Church, Lincoln

The Rev'd Bill Locke – St. Paul's, Pawtucket

The Rev'd Peter Mayer – Emmanuel Church, Cumberland

The Rev'd Pamela Mott – St. Mary's, Portsmouth

The Rev'd Jennifer Pedrick – Church of the Epiphany, East Providence

Report

The Resolutions Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

4. Support of Formation for Children, Youth, & College Students

RESOLVED, That this 219th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island claim as among its chief mission priorities for the triennium ahead formation of and ministerial support for children, youth and young adults of college age; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this diocese, including the Standing Committee and Financial Officers, evaluate use of resources of money and personnel, to direct more resources toward this mission priority, including strengthened support for campus ministries; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this convention endorse the Charter For Lifelong Christian Formation approved at General Convention in July 2009 and disseminate it to every congregation for their study and implementation.

Explanation:

Rhode Island has approximately 358 primary and secondary public schools serving 153,122 students. The state's 8 top colleges serve 65 thousand undergraduates alone! This is a huge mission field of increasingly unchurched young people - in fact, people with little or no spiritual formation, in many cases. From these generations will come future clergy and church members - but only if we invest in offering them the kind of targeted education, formation, recruitment, and support that incarnates Christ to them where they are, and uses media they access regularly and face-to-face contact with ministers, lay and ordained, who will encourage and help them shape their leadership skills.

In ECC this diocese has a wonderful facility, program and staff to serve some young people, but it is not adequate alone to make contact with, offer the Gospel to, and serve the thousands of young seekers on many campuses and in schools -- but often not in churches -- throughout Rhode Island.

Submitted by

The Rev'd Dr Jennifer Phillips – St. Augustine's, Kingston

Report

The Resolutions Committee believes there to be a canonical problem in the second resolve. In our Diocesan canons, it is Diocesan Council which oversees program. For that that reason, we would recommend an amendment to change "Standing Committee" to "Diocesan Council". Similarly, the resolution refers to "Financial Officers." It is our belief that the appropriate body would actually be the "Commission on Finance", and so we urge an amendment to make that change.

If Resolution 3 ("Mission Task Force") is adopted by this Convention, we recommend that this resolution be referred to them in their work discerning diocesan mission priorities. Otherwise, this resolution effectively sets mission priorities, which may require further work.

The Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation is available online at www.formationcharter.com. We hope that paper copies will be available for reference at Diocesan Convention.

5. Support the ACI Prison Chaplaincy

RESOLVED, That this 219th Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island restore to the diocesan budget for the year 2010 the funding for Adult Correctional Institutions prison ministry at the same rate as the 2009 budget, to insure that this ministry maintains its momentum and the legacy of trust, support, and volunteer access within the prison system that has been developed over many years; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we recognize the ACI Episcopal prison ministry and the population it serves as a mission congregation that undertakes conversion and Baptism, Christian Formation, Reconciliation, Regular Sacramental Worship, and life-stage pastoral ministry in the context of ongoing community formation, as do other congregations of our diocese, and that funding sources be available to it on the same basis as for other mission congregations; and further be it

RESOLVED, That we acknowledge gratefully that the ACI Prison Ministry fulfills a piece of our stated four-part diocesan mission vision that includes “outreach, advocacy, and service.”

Explanation

The Gospels are clear and unequivocal about the core ministry to which Christians are called and by which, Jesus tells us, we will be recognized and judged before the throne of God which includes prison ministry: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink...I was in prison and you visited me.” (Mtt 25:35-6) and “as you did it for the least of these my brothers and sisters, so you did it for me.”

In a setting in which - as one former inmate describes - all the voices of those with power tell incarcerated people loudly and repeatedly that they are worthless, undeserving of care or respect, and destined to remain in or return to prison and fail at rehabilitation, the Chaplain and church volunteers are among the few voices that announce the good news of Divine love and the human worth of and respect due every person as a child of God. The Chaplain, further, has established trust to have security clearance to enter parts of the prison inaccessible to almost everyone else, even solitary confinement; the chaplain is the person asked to deliver bad news of an inmate’s child or other relative’s death and to offer care and prayer and support in the aftermath. Many inmates have no one else to visit them and no one waiting for them when they are released.

The ACI Prison Ministry and The Blessing Way provides a bridge for women and men leaving incarceration to rebuild their lives in the context of loving community and many former inmates have become members of Sts. Peter and Andrew Parish because of the Christian formation and care they have received in and on release from prison.

The ACI is a tightly controlled system into which volunteers only may gain access after 6-18 months of training and waiting for approval, and with supervision by a trusted staff person; the Chaplain has the authority and trust to get church volunteers into prison ministry speedily and to supervise them effectively to help run programs that would otherwise not be possible, and can also speak to inmates freely to recruit their participation.

Submitted by

The Rev'd Craig Burlington – St. Luke's, East Greenwich

The Rev'd Dr Jennifer Phillips – St. Augustine's, Kingston

Report

The Resolutions Committee believes there to be canonical problems with the second resolve, which attempts to create the ACI chaplaincy as a mission congregation. There is a defined canonical process for admitting new missions, and this would not meet the requirements of that process. At the same time, we believe that the resolution's submitters also intend that certain mission funding from the Diocese be made available to this ministry. That goal can be achieved, and the canonical problems remedied, with an amendment:

In the second resolve, in the second line, delete "mission congregation" and insert "vital ministry"; and in the second resolve, in the fourth line, remove the word "other".

If Resolution 3 ("Mission Task Force") is adopted by this Convention, we would urge that new group to consider this resolution and its intent in their discernment work. While conversation is under way about mission priorities, it makes sense to preserve funding for the ACI chaplaincy position, pending potential changes in mission priorities to be recommended to the 220th Diocesan Convention.

We recommend the adoption of this resolution, with the proposed amendments.

6. Endorse the Earth Charter and Conserve Resources

RESOLVED, That this 219th Convention of the Episcopal Church, as urged by approved resolutions C065 and A045 of the 2009 General Convention, endorse *The Earth Charter* and encourage its study and implementation by congregations, offices, and groups of this diocese; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention urges congregations, offices, groups, and all Episcopalians individually to do all they can to reduce, where possible and appropriate, the use of commercially bottled water and of non-recyclable paper and plastic goods, as a way of practicing good stewardship of creation and conservation of the earth's scarce resources.

Explanation

This resolution fulfills the mandate of General Convention to carry the resolutions for the care and just use of creation back to dioceses for their endorsement and implementation.

Submitted by

The Rev'd Dr Jennifer Phillips – St. Augustine's, Kingston
Mr. Arthur Olsen – St. Augustine's, Kingston

Report

The Resolutions Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

The Earth Charter is available online at www.earthcharter.org. We hope that paper copies will be available for reference at Diocesan Convention.

7. Affirmation of General Convention resolutions D025 & C056

RESOLVED, That this 219th Convention of the Diocese of Rhode Island encourages every congregation to welcome all people into the Church, and be it further

RESOLVED, That we affirm Resolution C056 (“Liturgies for Blessings”) and D025 (“Commitment and Witness to the Anglican Communion”), concurred in July 2009 by the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, and be it further

RESOLVED, That we join the General Convention, which in resolution D025 recognized “that the baptized membership of The Episcopal Church includes same-sex couples living in lifelong committed relationships ‘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’ (2000-D039)”, and be it further

RESOLVED, That we join the General Convention in affirming “that God has called and may call such individuals, to any ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church”, and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage, in the spirit of Resolution C056, in this Diocese, a “generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church” especially those who seek the Church’s blessing of same-sex relationships, and be it further

RESOLVED, That we join General Convention in honoring “the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality”.

Explanation

These two resolutions, passed by significant majorities in both the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops at General Convention this summer, affirm what many of us in the Diocese of Rhode Island know to be true. Our various congregations are blessed by the presence and ministry of gay and lesbian persons in all orders of ministry, who are raising families, serving on vestries, proclaiming the Gospel, serving the poor and enriching our corporate life with their time, talent and treasure. Passing this resolution adds our Diocesan voice to the voice of General Convention, and recognizes the vital contribution that gay and lesbian persons make to the life of this Diocese.

The two resolutions (2009-D025 and 2009-C056) are quoted here:

GENERAL CONVENTION RESOLUTION 2009-D025

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 76th General Convention reaffirm the continued participation of The Episcopal Church as a constituent member of the Anglican Communion; give thanks for the work of the bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 2008; reaffirm the abiding commitment of The Episcopal Church to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion and seek to live into the highest degree of communion possible; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention encourage dioceses, congregations, and members of The Episcopal Church to participate to the fullest extent possible in the many instruments, networks and relationships of the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention reaffirm its financial commitment to the Anglican Communion and pledge to participate fully in the Inter-Anglican Budget; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention affirm the value of “listening to the experience of homosexual persons,” as called for by the Lambeth Conferences of 1978, 1988, and 1998, and acknowledge that through our own listening the General Convention has come to recognize that the baptized membership of The Episcopal Church includes same-sex couples living in lifelong committed relationships “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” (2000-D039); and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention recognize that gay and lesbian persons who are part of such relationships have responded to God’s call and have exercised various ministries in and on behalf of God’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are currently doing so in our midst; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention affirm that God has called and may call such individuals, to any ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church, and that God’s call to the ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church is a mystery which the Church attempts to discern for all people through our discernment processes acting in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That the 76th General Convention acknowledge that members of The Episcopal Church as of the Anglican Communion, based on careful study of the Holy Scriptures, and in light of tradition and reason, are not of one mind, and Christians of good conscience disagree about some of these matters.

GENERAL CONVENTION RESOLUTION 2009-C056

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 76th General Convention acknowledge the changing circumstances in the United States and in other nations, as legislation authorizing or forbidding marriage, civil unions or domestic partnerships for gay and lesbian persons is passed in various civil jurisdictions that call forth a renewed pastoral response from this Church, and for an open process for the consideration of theological and liturgical resources for the blessing of same gender relationships; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in consultation with the House of Bishops, collect and develop theological and liturgical resources, and report to the 77th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, in consultation with the House of Bishops, devise an open process for the conduct of its work inviting participation from provinces, dioceses, congregations, and individuals who are engaged in such theological work, and inviting theological reflection from throughout the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That bishops, particularly those in dioceses within civil jurisdictions where same-gender marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships are legal, may provide generous pastoral response to meet the needs of members of this Church; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention honor the theological diversity of this Church in regard to matters of human sexuality; and be it further

Resolved, That the members of this Church be encouraged to engage in this effort.

Submitted by

The Rev'd Clare Fischer-Davies – St. Martin's, Providence

Report

The Resolutions Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

8. Community Gardens

RESOLVED, That each congregation is urged to take a fresh look at its property to discover if there is space that could be used for community gardens; and be it further

RESOLVED, That congregations are urged to expand their outreach by supporting those in their midst who are willing to undertake this ministry of providing fresh produce for those in need.

Explanation

Community gardens can take many forms. A single garden can produce fresh food for meal sites and food pantries. In neighborhoods where individuals do not have space for a garden, small plots can be offered. We would not be pioneers in providing community gardens; resources are available to those who wish to begin this ministry, through the Southside Community Land Trust, the URI Master Gardeners, and others. "I was hungry and you fed me."

Submitted by

Ms. Caryl S. Frink – Good Shepherd, Pawtucket

Report

The Resolutions Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

9. Prayers for the Persecuted

RESOLVED, That prayers for Christians throughout the world who are being persecuted for their faith be added to the Diocesan prayer list, so prayers will be said for them each week in each parish.

Explanation

Let us pray that God will give to all who are suffering because of their belief in Jesus Christ faith, courage, and protection.

It will also be good to remind all Christians, especially Rhode Island Episcopalians, on a weekly basis that there are still martyrs to the faith in this generation – people who live where their loyalty to Christ imperils their property and lives.

Submitted by

The Rev'd Gordon Stenning – retired

Report

The Resolutions Committee notes that not every congregation makes use of the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer. On a technical note, our diocese includes both missions and parishes. To remedy these issues, we recommend a substitution for this resolve:

“RESOLVED, That each congregation is urged to pray regularly for persecuted Christians.”

We recommend adoption of this substitute resolution.

10. Diocesan Convention Journals

RESOLVED, That the Journals, Audits, Minutes, and Appendices related to Diocesan Conventions since the year 2000 be completed and be made available on the diocesan website and at Diocesan House by December 31, 2009.

Explanation

A number of Journals and related materials from recent Diocesan Conventions are not available. This should be corrected in order to operate our diocese with the same transparency that we wish to see in congregations. Currently, only the Journals from 2002, 2004, and 2005 are available to interested members of the Diocese of Rhode Island.

This resolution asks that the omission of materials from 2003 and the recent omissions of 2006, 2007, and 2008 be corrected soon. For those who may not have Internet access, it is expected that these materials would be available for inspection at Diocesan House.

In addition to the need for transparency in local affairs, the Canon I.6.5(a) of the Episcopal Church requires the submission of Journals to the Secretary of the House of Deputies and to the Archives of the Episcopal Church.

Submitted by

The Rev'd Robert Brooks – St. Andrew's, Little Compton
The Rev'd Clare Fischer-Davies – St. Martin's, Providence

Report

The Resolutions Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.