

To the Deputies and Bishops of the Episcopal Church assembled at the 79th General Convention:

Resolution CO14 calls for suicide prevention advocacy and the training of clergy in an evidence-based suicide prevention program. It asks parishes of the Episcopal Church to advocate for suicide prevention programs in their local communities and appeal to state and federal legislators to pass suicide prevention legislation. It also requests that the Church provide funds to give clergy in every diocese the opportunity to learn the best ways to prevent suicides in their communities and parishes.

In 1999, the U.S. Surgeon General declared suicide a serious public health problem and called for increased education about it. Even with increased attention, however, suicide remains among the top ten causes of death across all age groups, with more than 45,000 people dying by suicide in 2016. In addition, for every death, there are 25 suicide attempts. According to the Center for Disease Control, more than 1.4 million adults attempt suicide each year.

Recent research has discovered that the reasons for suicide are complicated. They include biological, psychological, and social and environmental factors as well as current life events. When people who are in positions of influence know the signs of risk and the best ways to speak to someone in crisis, they can prevent suicide.

Research is providing new ways to help people identify the risk factors and effective tools that can help people in suicidal crisis. These identifiers and preventive methods would help Episcopal clergy assist their congregants in times of suicidal risk. More than 60 percent of all Americans have been affected by suicide, and the education of the clergy would make a real difference.

For these reasons, we call upon the 79th General Convention to pass Resolution CO14.

The Rev. Frank J. Alagna, Ph.D., The Rev. Susan Auchincloss, The Rev. Troy Beecham, The Rev. Dr. Debra Brewin-Wilson, The Rev Canon Dr Ellen Clark-King, Dr. Stephen L. Cook, The Rev. Mark L. Fitzhugh, The Rev. Dr. Robert D. Flanagan, The Rev. Dr. Mary Foulke, The Rev. Jack Gilpin, The Rev. Dr. David Gortner, The Rev. Curtis W. Hart, The Rev. Stephen C. Holton, The Rev. Christine A. Jones, The Rev. Dr. Joseph A. Krasinski, The Rev. Deborah A. Lee, The Rev. Claire Lofgren, The Rev. Charles Mayer, The Rev. Michelle Meech, The Rev. Dr. James L. Pahl, Jr., The Rev. Canon K. Jeanne Person, The Rev. Alison Quin, The Rev. David M. Rider, The Rev Mark K. J. Robinson, The Reverend David F. Sellery, The Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin, The Rev Dr Helen Van Koevering.