

# TASK FORCE ON IMAGINING A CHURCH GROUNDED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE AS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

## Members

The Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus, Chair	California, VIII	2024
Drew Abbott	Southern Ohio, V	2024
The Rev. Dr. Teresa Danieleley	Missouri, V	2024
Dr. Victor A. Feliberty-Ruberte	Puerto Rico, II	2024
Ms. Caitlin Frazier	Washington, III	2024
Rev. Canon Dr. Robin Hollis, Ahe	Arizona, VIII	2024
Ms. Sarah Lawton	California, VIII	2024
Chris Leung	Western Massachusetts, I	2024
Lindsey Lewis	Idaho, VIII	2024
Mr. Alan Murray	Oregon, VIII	2024
Mr. Byron Rushing	Massachusetts, I	2024
Ms. Felicity Thompson	Michigan, V	2024
The Venerable Rena Turnham	Minnesota, VI	2024

## Changes in Membership

There have been no changes in membership since this task force began meeting in January 2023. We did celebrate the successful completion of the senior seminary year of Ms. Caitlin Frazier, VTS and Ms. Felicity Thompson's 1<sup>st</sup> full year of seminary. We also celebrated the awarding of Honorary Canon for The Rev Dr Robin Hollis, Deacon, Arizona.

## Meetings

The task force met as a whole five times via Zoom: January 31, 2023, February 28, 2023, May 16, 2023, July 25, 2023, and September 27, 2023. The task force also met in person at the Maritime Center in Maryland from April 24-26, 2023 and from October 9-11, 2023. Sub-groups regarding analysis and drafts continued in November and December.

## Representation at General Convention

Bishop Marc Andrus and Deputy Sarah Lawton (California) are authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this Report at the General Convention.

## Acknowledgements

The committee is indebted to Mr. Matt Duke, Executive Assistant to Bishop Marc Andrus in the Diocese of California, for his assistance with our work. We are also very grateful to all the people across The Episcopal Church who took the time to meet with us in our focus groups and interviews (as described below). Your vision and your ministries are an inspiration to all of us.

## Mandate

### 80<sup>th</sup> General Convention resolution 2022:

A078 Imagining a Church Grounded in Social Justice as Christian Ministry

*Resolved*, That the 80th General Convention affirm:

- 1) That social justice advocacy is a primary ministry of the Church; it is our corporate, public witness to the Mission of God “to restore all people to the unity of God and each other in Christ.” [BCP Catechism, page 855].
- 2) That social justice is about right relationships among and between all of us, centering the voice and experience of the marginalized (as we read in Matthew 25), and these are the relationships that have been, and continue to be, harmed by the systemic, unjust distribution of wealth, opportunity, and privilege.
- 3) That social justice ministry includes acts of mercy or charity but also must include dismantling institutions, structures, and policies that cause harm and divide us from each other; and it includes repairing the breach by rebuilding systems of justice, fairness, and equity (Isaiah 58);
- 4) Over this past triennium, (2018-2021) the global pandemic, racial justice uprisings, and

escalation of the climate crisis including extreme wildfires and storms, as well as the societal fissures and institutional failures that these events have revealed, demand we understand this to be a revolutionary moment of accountability, repentance, and renewed commitments to the mission of God. We are called to account for our failures to live the words we preach and pray. We acknowledge that historical practices, policies, and structures of the institutional church have played a role in the persistence of systemic inequality and call out for out for immediate, urgent and enduring redress.

And be it further,

*Resolved*, That all dioceses and congregations be called upon to ground every planning or business meeting or convention with prayers inviting an examination of conscience regarding the specific

impact of the decisions of such meetings upon those who are poor, dispossessed, disadvantaged, or marginalized, and to provide and model forms for such examination of conscience. And be it further,

*Resolved*, That all dioceses be called upon to offer, at least once a year, a diocesan-wide event or program and liturgy to engage our congregations and members in listening to and understanding the history and current context of our diverse local communities, with attention to those who have historically been dispossessed or disadvantaged; And be it further,

*Resolved*, That this General Convention direct the creation of a Task Force on Imagining a Church Grounded in Social Justice as Christian Ministry be formed as a diverse group to include 2 bishops, 2 priests, 2 deacons, and 10 laypersons, in order to a) consider what the church must look like if we put our vocation to love our neighbor and to be repairers of the breach at the center of our work; b) to reach out to local and diocesan groups that are doing social justice and racial reconciliation work focused on systemic change, in order to understand what resources and gifts we already have in this work and where the gaps are; c) to liaise with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music and the Standing Commission on Governance, Structure, Constitution and Canons, the Presiding Officers' Advisory Group on Beloved Community Implementation (if it is extended in the next triennium), and other relevant interim bodies on consideration of these questions and how to address the institutional barriers to change in the church; and d) be charged with making recommendations to the 81st General Convention for institutional change to support social justice as Christian ministry in the areas of governance and structure, prayer and liturgy, catechesis and lifelong formation for discipleship, especially with laypeople and consistent with an equitable and inclusive polity." 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 \$55,000 for the implementation of this resolution."

This Resolution proceeded from 2018-A056 *Create Task Force on the Theology of Social Justice Advocacy as Christian Justice* which in turn was created by a resolution offered by the House of Deputies' Committee on the State of the Church in 2018. The current task force can be seen as the latest iteration of an inquiry that has been happening in various forms since 2015.

## Summary of Work

### Overview of Work

The Task Force on the Theology of Social Justice Advocacy as Christian Ministry (2018-2021), provided the theological grounding for our work together in 2023. Ms. Sarah Lawton, Chair of the 2021 Task Force and member of this current task force, provided additional insights into their report to the 80th General Convention as well as the reflection on the terms “Social Justice”, “Advocacy,” and “Political,” concluding with the statement “Social Justice advocacy is core to the church’s mission.” The full report can be found in “*The Episcopal Church Reports to the 80th General Convention Otherwise known as The Blue Book Volume 3 page 938*”. Below are excerpts from that report that set the foundation for this task force to move forward.

### Social Justice

The term “social” can refer to how society is organized, to companionship, or to an event at which people gather. It is about interaction with others and therefore always about relationships. In the Christian vision, the term “justice” does not only pertain to the law, but has to do with what is morally right: equity, fairness, dignity, and right relationship.

Since the Episcopal Church has devoted time and resources to deepening and living into building out our understanding of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s vision of “Becoming Beloved Community,” his view of justice is particularly relevant. Dr. King wrote to white church leaders in 1963 in his Letter from the Birmingham City Jail that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” He taught that justice could not be parceled out to individuals or groups; it is the birthright of every human being.

### Advocacy

Advocacy has been described as “a social change process affecting attitudes, social relationships and power relations, which strengthens civil society and opens up democratic spaces.”<sup>1</sup> It consists of coordination, strategic thinking, information, communication, outreach and mobilization. It can be as simple as speaking up for another.

There can be a political aspect to advocacy, but there isn’t always. In fact, from the Latin “advocare” means ‘to call out for support.’ Like social justice, advocacy is a continuum: working to change public

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<sup>1</sup> Handbook from Save the Children Fund, as quoted in the Culture and Creativity Programme of the European Union. <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/publishing/advocacy-course/what-is-advocacy>, accessed January 4, 2021.

policy for the public good,<sup>2</sup> advocacy can change public opinion and, likewise, affecting public opinion may lead to policy change.

(Please Note: framework and concepts in this section attributed to Anush Begloian.)<sup>3</sup>

## Political

In turn, the word “political” is often confused with “partisan.” “Political” comes from the Greek (“polis,” meaning “affairs of the cities”), and does not equate with partisan. Politics means the set of activities for governing an area. Our church engages in politics when we bring our ethics and moral views into public conversations and deliberations about how our cities, towns, nations, and institutions are governed. We engage in politics when we ask: Who benefits from things as they are? Who is left out? How are the marginalized and most vulnerable affected by the action we are considering or the inaction we are tolerating that perpetuates things as they are?

## Social Justice advocacy is core to the church’s mission .

The *Task Force On Theology Of Social Justice Advocacy* asserts that social justice advocacy is distinct from partisanship (though it may include supporting candidates or causes endorsed by a political party). Social justice advocacy is rooted in our moral tradition and our experience of Christ’s death with us to sin and our hope of a risen life with him. Social justice advocacy is giving a public witness—through word and deed—to our biblical imperative to demonstrate our love for our neighbors. Therefore, social justice advocacy is a central, not a peripheral or optional, manifestation of Christian discipleship.<sup>4</sup>

## Implications for the Current Task Force 2023 Workplan

As of February 2023, the starting point for this current task force is grounded in the resulting conclusion from the 2021 Task Force’s work. That conclusion is that **“Social justice advocacy is giving a public witness - through word and deed - to our biblical imperative to demonstrate our love for our neighbors. Therefore, social justice advocacy is a central, not a peripheral or optional, manifestation of Christian discipleship”**.

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<sup>2</sup> Here, as elsewhere, we hold the very concept of ‘public good’ up to the light: who defines it? Who constitutes the ‘public?’ Who decides what is ‘good?’

<sup>3</sup> Anush Begloian, International Expert on Advocacy and Communications of European Union-Eastern Partnership “Culture and Creativity” Programme in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, 2016-2017, video lecture, “What Is Advocacy and How Can It Help?,” <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/publishing/advocacy-course/what-is-advocacy> , accessed January 4, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Task Force on Theology of Social Justice Advocacy to the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, p. 938-956, <https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/30555>, accessed November 17, 2023.

Using the lens of the previous Task Force and reports, the 2023 Task Force reevaluated the Mandate understanding that the function and focus is enumerated in the plank outlining the deliverable of a Task Force. Hence the 2023 Task Force is to address four main areas:

- a) **consider what the church must look like if we put our vocation to love our neighbor and to be repairers of the breach at the center of our work,**
- b) **...reach out to local and diocesan groups that are doing social justice and racial reconciliation work focused on systemic change, in order to understand what resources and gifts we already have in this work and where the gaps are,**
- c) **...liaise with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music and the Standing Commission on Governance, Structure, Constitution and Canons, the Presiding Officers' Advisory Group on Beloved Community Implementation (if it is extended in the next triennium), and other relevant interim bodies on consideration of these questions and how to address the institutional barriers to change in the church,**
- d) **be charged with making recommendations to the 81st General Convention for institutional change to support social justice as Christian ministry in the areas of governance and structure, prayer and liturgy, catechesis, and lifelong formation for discipleship, especially with laypeople and consistent with an equitable and inclusive polity.**

In building out the workplan to support the mandate, the scope of the activities and the subsequent actions required to support those, it was identified that the time needed was determined to be greater than the time available. Due to the abbreviated time to work together (February - November 2023), the Task Force adjusted the workplan to reflect the shortened timeframe. In addition to developing a timeline, The Task Force initiated two simultaneous strategies:

1. The first, with a small sub-group under the leadership of Mr. Alan Murray (Oregon) and Dr. Victor A. Feliberty-Ruberte,(Puerto Rico) was to identify, review, and share with the full Task Force all General Convention Resolutions related to social justice. The outcome is to look for themes, trends, and actionable goals as to how to inform on social justice as ministries.
2. The second was to conduct focus groups and/or individual interviews. This strategy grew out of various meetings with various church groups as to the most effective and efficient way to learn about Justice as Christian Ministry in the Episcopal Church.

### **Strategy #1:**

#### **Review of Past Resolutions Related to the Social Justice as Christian Ministry**

The Task Force reviewed all previous General Convention resolutions dated back to 1973 calling the church to engage social justice as part of Christian ministry. Notably, as of 1985, these resolutions called for the development of models of advocacy for justice for the poor (1985-A107); authorizing

committee on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (1997-A036); to encourage broad coalition for nonviolent social change (1985-A077). In subsequent General Conventions, there was a renewal of commitment to alleviate poverty and injustice (2012-A135) and to affirm relationships in approaches to social justice ministry (2015-A096).

In 2018, the General Convention continued to call for the development of grassroots social justice advocacy and network (2018-D071 and 2018-A057), This momentum led to the call to create a Task Force on the Theology of Social Justice Advocacy as Christian Ministry in 2018-A056 and finally in 2022, the passage of A078 Imagining a Church Grounded in Social Justice as Christian Ministry that enables to create this particular 2023 task force.

Over the course of the life of this task force, the team has actively sought out meetings with various church groups to further the understanding of intersections with social justice. These meetings continued to provide the scaffolding for moving forward with more in-depth understanding via focus groups, interviews, and stories.

During the October 2023 convening session, the team continued to reference and review adjacency resolutions, commissions' work, and task forces. As per the specific actions listed in the mandate under (b) and (c), this Task Force identified and established relationships with the following:

- **The Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism (ECCAR)** including the need for collaborative activities.
- **Task Force on LGBTQ+ Inclusion** chaired by The Rev. Canon Susan Russell
- The Episcopal Church **Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM)**;
- Task Force on **the Care of Creation and Environmental Racism**

## **Strategy #2:**

### **Data Gathering and Collection from Key Ministries and Individuals Utilizing Focus Groups and Interviews**

Under the guidance and leadership of The Rev. Dr. Teresa Danieleley (Missouri), the Task Force members determined the ministries and key convenors to be interviewed. The Rev. Dr. Danieleley created not only a Google drive for the Task Force to access but also a group spreadsheet to track and monitor those ministries/groups/individuals identified to provide insights, needs, challenges, and suggestions.

#### Methodology and Qualitative Analysis

Once the target groups/individuals were identified, the team created and utilized an Interview Protocol to ensure consistency and outcome integrity. This allowed the Task Force members to have a common process for focus groups and interviewees to assist with data gathering and to also inform

on trends. These questions, developed by The Rev. Canon Dr. Deacon Robin Hollis (Arizona) and agreed to by the Task Force, guided our Focus Groups and Interviews. This protocol and the Interview Process was also to be available in Spanish. However, the need for translation was not required in this first round. The interview protocol used is shared below:

1. What are your main justice ministries?
2. How did you come to engage in these ministries?
3. How long have you been engaged in your main justice ministries?
4. Have priorities and foci for justice ministries shifted over time? If so, how did that happen?
5. How is the enthusiasm for your justice ministries maintained? How is the story of why these ministries are important carried forward through leadership changes?
6. What have you heard from other members of this focus group that surprises or inspires you? What would you like to know more about from other members of this group?
7. What role does imagination play in maintaining your engagement in justice?
8. What would you like to say to the Episcopal Church about creating a church whose life is based on and centered in justice?
9. Is there anything you'd like to share that we have not asked?

The process developed had a minimum of two Task Force members (while utilizing the common Interview Protocol) with one asking questions and facilitating conversation amongst the participants. The other Task Force member typed notes, in addition to enabling the ZOOM recording and the ZOOM transcript.

Given the abbreviated timeframe, only four Focus Groups and two interviews were conducted. The Focus Groups included were Housing, Reparations, Creation Care & a more general Congregations group along with separate interviews with the Arizona Diocese Prison Ministry Convenor. A qualitative framework developed and applied by Dr. Victor A. Feliberty-Ruberte (Puerto Rico) provided rubrics for coding, categories, and trends leading to an initial set of conclusions. Using typed notes and the Zoom transcripts from three of the four Focus Groups and one set of interviews (because of time constraints), Dr. Feliberty-Ruberte provided a software content analysis of the focus groups and interviews with an interviewee assistance from The Rev. Canon Dr. Hollis.



The resulting learnings from this analysis is further discussed in the following section. The Task Force is able to make available the detailed documentation used in gathering and analyzing the outcomes for further review by directly contacting Dr. Feliberty-Ruberte at

[vfelibertyruberte@yahoo.com](mailto:vfelibertyruberte@yahoo.com)

### **Initial Learnings from Focus Groups and Interviews - Emerging Themes**

Within the time frame of our work together, we completed four Focus Groups and several interviews. Three Task Force members led each Focus Group on ZOOM, following the prescribed procedure:

Step 1. Task Force members welcomed the participants, everyone made brief introductions to each other in the ZOOM room.

Step 2. Task Force members reviewed ground rules for the Focus Group, emphasizing confidentiality and that answers were being recorded in aggregate. No names or places would be identified.

Step 3. Task Force assured participants Focus Groups would be 90 minutes long at the most.

Step 4. Task Force members debriefed and sent notes/transcripts to Dr. Feliberty-Ruberte.

Upon completion of the data gathering, the qualitative analysis revealed the following overarching themes, or goals (as they are referred to in the qualitative analysis):

1. **Understanding Engagement in Social Justice Ministries:** This goal highlights individuals and communities engaging in social justice ministries driven by personal motivations, lived experiences, and a desire to address historical and continuing wrongs. Challenges within the institutional church, the pursuit of reparations, initiatives in historically black churches, bishop-led racial justice efforts, and diverse community engagement initiatives all contribute to a broader theme of transformation, awakening, and active involvement in social justice work. The focus is on understanding, empathy, and direct action to address systemic issues and serve marginalized communities including prison ministry and advocacy.
2. **Understanding how changes in priorities, enthusiasm, leadership, and other aspects impact social justice ministries sustainability and ongoing work:** This goal revolves around the challenges and dynamics influencing the sustainability of social justice ministries. These include attrition, leadership turnover, burnout, and the impact of institutional memory. The role of community engagement, visionary leadership, and various strategies, such as spiritual formation and equity-focused language, are crucial in addressing these challenges. Additionally, the importance of diocesan initiatives, leadership support, and the role of inspiration and support from the community play significant roles in sustaining ongoing social justice work.

3. **Understanding the role of imagination in maintaining engagement in social, environmental, gender, and racial justice work:** This goal lifts up the innovative strategies employed in maintaining engagement in social, environmental, gender, and racial justice work. These strategies include a connection to the arts and retreats, active participation through the recreation of past resolutions, and an inclusive approach to inviting people from diverse backgrounds. In addition, the focus is on inclusivity in decision-making, including policy and funding decisions, with a particular emphasis on listening to voices that are systematically excluded. The acknowledgment of the role of imagination and reimagining is crucial, along with an awareness of historical context in shaping these efforts.
4. **Understanding ideas or recommendations given to The Episcopal Church about creating a church whose life is based on and centered in Justice:** This goal emphasizes the importance of active engagement, inclusive decision-making, and acknowledging the challenges and obstacles in the pursuit of social, environmental, gender, and racial justice. It calls for listening to the marginalized, recognizing the wisdom in diverse voices, getting involved in real, messy work, and being honest about the community's priorities. The recommendations also highlight the need for spiritual formation, sustained social justice movements, and the role of leadership diversity and the bishop in creating a just church. Specific challenges in local churches, such as real estate development and membership definition, add context to the broader recommendations.

Dr. Feliberty-Ruberte's Interpretive Synthesis and Conclusion is that...

[T]he qualitative research analysis developed encompasses multiple dimensions of social justice ministries within The Episcopal Church, addressing issues of personal identity, institutional challenges, engagement strategies, and recommendations for a justice-centered church. Each goal reveals distinct facets contributing to a holistic understanding of the dynamics at play. This conclusion also points to an additional opportunity to build upon the grass-roots church-wide/nationwide community of individuals involved in prison ministry and recognize Episcopal Prison Ministry Community (EPMC)-

**Goal #1: Understanding Engagement in Social Justice Ministries** The analysis illuminates the personal motivations and identity of individuals engaged in social justice ministries. It portrays the challenges faced within the institutional church, the intricacies of reparations efforts, initiatives within historically Black churches, and the role of a bishop-led racial justice initiative. The strands of work prioritize various aspects, from scholarships to community engagement initiatives. The main idea centers on understanding, empathy, and direct action to address historical and ongoing injustices.

**Goal #2: Understanding Impact on Sustainability and Ongoing Work** This goal delves into the challenges affecting the sustainability of social justice ministries, such as attrition, leadership turnover, and burnout. The qualitative data reflects a nuanced understanding of the obstacles faced, emphasizing the importance of conversation, spiritual formation, and addressing internal and external challenges. The main idea revolves around the need for strategic leadership, sustained commitment, and overcoming obstacles to maintain ongoing social justice work.

**Goal #3: Understanding the Role of Imagination**, The analysis explores the role of imagination in maintaining engagement in justice work. It highlights innovative strategies like connecting to the arts, inclusive decision-making, and policy inclusivity. The main idea underscores the importance of creative approaches, inclusivity, and historical context in sustaining engagement in social, environmental, gender, and racial justice efforts.

**Goal #4: Recommendations for a Justice-Centered Church** The final goal reveals recommendations for creating a church centered in justice. The codes reflect a call for active listening, acknowledgment of lived experiences, involvement in real work, and an emphasis on spiritual formation. Challenges in the institutional church, including real estate decisions and struggles with reparations, are addressed. Additional focus on issues of prison equity and prison reform while identifying ministries that can support the return from incarceration to society. We are reminded that all aspects of social justice at some point will also impact the family and especially children. The main idea advocates for an inclusive, transformative approach, acknowledging diversity, and a spiritual foundation to build a just church.

**Conclusion:** The qualitative analysis done provides a comprehensive understanding of social justice ministries within The Episcopal Church. It navigates the complexities of personal identity, institutional challenges, imaginative engagement, and recommendations for justice-centered church practices. The synthesized findings underscore the importance of empathy, diversity, sustained commitment, and creative strategies in addressing social, environmental, gender, and racial injustices. There is also an opportunity to offer parishioners innovative/creative ways to be involved so that everyone, including those with challenges/disabilities can be included. The multifaceted nature of the analysis contributes to a nuanced comprehension of the intricacies involved in fostering justice within a faith-based community.

The Task Force was able to organize and conduct focus groups and interviews within a few months and gleaned extensive information. However, it is obvious to the members that more time would yield greater insights. All of us who conducted Focus Groups were inspired by the leaders we met and convinced more than ever that the Holy Spirit is powerfully calling the Church to Ground ourselves in Justice as Christian Ministry. While there is much joy there are also many challenges and impediments to this “Grounding” or Centering of Justice as Christian Ministry.

To substantiate and support the initial themes and findings, the interviewers heard a number of important stories. Eloquently stated as a summary of the observations and testimony that resonated with the majority of those interviewed is the following recommendation for the task force to consider:

*“Listen to the people around you. Lift the voices of the people who are in need. Learn how to be uncomfortable in every situation. If you do not have the lived experience, do not take the lead in trying to address the issues. Be honest about what type of community you are: if liturgy is the most important thing, do not pretend that prayer and hymns are going to address hunger and homelessness. Recognize the wisdom and intelligence of the people who speak more languages than you and who have accents they already know all the words you know, in more than one language! Get your vestments dirty, for that’s the real radiant sign that you have been doing the work. Celebrate the muddy carpet, and the stinky pew, and the missing pieces of holy bread, for that’s the sign that a person without stable housing has been fed.”*

## **Conclusion:**

### **Statement of Need for the Church and Recommended Next Steps**

The importance, scope, and change impact of this mandate requires substantive analysis and robust rationale for application throughout The Episcopal Church (TEC). Given the abbreviated timeframe to accomplish this (less than 11 months), the Task Force has focused on building a strong beginning and foundation to move the concept forward. At the outset, to focus on the concept of social justice, the Task Force built the framework for its work, by agreeing to view social justice through an integrative lens encompassing environmental and racial justice. The initial findings point to a need, a willingness, and an activism to include Social Justice as a Christian Ministry. Innovative thinking and open minds can bolster the support of identification of concrete activities, resources, and steps leading to institutional change.

For that reason, the Task Force under the guidance of the Task Force Chair Bishop Marc Andrus and Ms. Sarah Lawton, has crafted a new resolution designed to address the following:

- Establish a new task force focused on prioritizing and subsequently completing the planks of the initial mandate that the current task force was not able to complete.
- Designate the new task force with a mandate for specific and achievable recommendations for institutional change within our faith tradition supporting social justice as a christian ministry including but not limited to:

- areas of governance and structure
  - prayer and liturgy
  - catechesis and lifelong discipleship formation for all especially for the laity
  - ensure consistency with an equitable and inclusive polity
- As described above, several insights were identified through the focus groups and meetings that were conducted. We offer these preliminary learnings as a basis for the proposed new task force to begin with a focused work plan:
  - There is much good justice work happening already across our church! For which we give thanks.
  - Our local leaders, in congregations, chaplaincies, and other ministries, want to be equipped and trained to do justice work.
  - People in our local ministries want to be better networked across provinces and the whole church to improve collaboration along with shared access to resources, and to overcome siloing across different issues (such as creation care, racial justice, economic justice, LGBTQ+ justice) – understanding that siloing is itself a tool of white supremacy culture.
  - A how-to-guide to equip our local leaders and improve networking and collaboration should be an outcome of the new task force.

## Proposed Resolutions

### **A096 Task Force on Equipping a Church Grounded in Justice as Christian Ministry**

*Resolved*, That the 81st General Convention direct the appointment of a new task force be created for a term of six years or two triennia, to carry on and deepen the work begun by the Task Force on Imagining a Church Grounded in Social Justice as Ministry (Mandate A078- of the 80<sup>th</sup> general Convention) with a diverse group to include 2 bishops, 2 priests, 2 deacons, and 10 laypersons, and recommend the appointment of some members from the previous A078 Task Force in order to maintain some continuity. The new Task Force can begin immediately to address the work enumerated below and report to the 83rd General Convention; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the work of the newly created task force include the following in order to

- a) consider what the church must look like if we put our vocation to love our neighbor and to be repairers of the breach at the center of our work;
- b) continue the work of the previous task force in reaching out to local, diocesan, and churchwide groups that are doing social justice and racial reconciliation work focused on systemic change, in order to understand what resources and gifts we already have in this work and where the gaps are;
- c) work with churchwide staff to support the creation of a digital hub to connect to and provide a one-stop place for church members to reach existing justice resources;
- d) develop an experiential model for listening to and documenting the experiences of justice workers at our local levels; and
- e) liaise with relevant interim bodies on consideration of these questions and how to address the institutional barriers to change in the church;
- f) be charged with making recommendations to the 83rd General Convention for specific ways that the Church can equip and train local leaders to do justice work and coordinate networks of justice work across our provinces and churchwide;

And be it further

*Resolved*, That the General Convention requests the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation (excluding meeting expense already in GCO budget) of \$40,000 to primarily address the development of a digital hub including accessibility, training, and maintenance for the implementation of this resolution.

#### EXPLANATION

At the outset, to focus on the concept of social justice, the Task Force built the framework for its work, by agreeing to view social justice through an integrative lens encompassing environmental and racial

justice. As a result, the efforts of this Task Force led to the following Statement of Need for the Church and Recommended Next Steps.

The importance, scope, and change impact of this mandate requires substantive analysis and robust rationale for application throughout The Episcopal Church (TEC). Given the abbreviated timeframe to accomplish this (less than 11 months), the Task Force has focused on building a strong beginning and foundation to move the concept forward. The initial findings point to a need, a willingness, and an activism to include Social Justice as a Christian Ministry. Innovative thinking and open minds can bolster the support of identification of concrete activities, resources, and steps leading to institutional change.

For that reason, the Task Force under the guidance of the Task Force Chair Bishop Marc Andrus and Ms. Sarah Lawton, crafted this new resolution designed to address the following:

- Establish a new task force focused on prioritizing and subsequently completing the planks of the initial mandate that the current task force was not able to complete.
- Designate the new task force with a mandate for specific and achievable recommendations for institutional change within our faith tradition supporting social justice as a christian ministry including but not limited to: (a) areas of governance and structure, (b) prayer and liturgy, (c) catechesis and lifelong discipleship formation for all especially for the laity, (d) ensure consistency with an equitable and inclusive polity

As described above, several insights were identified through the focus groups and meetings that were conducted. Preliminary learnings as a basis for the proposed new task force recommends that the task force begin with a focused work plan and include the following:

- There is much good justice work happening already across our church! For which we give thanks.
- Our local leaders, in congregations, chaplaincies, and other ministries, want to be equipped and trained to do justice work.
- People in our local ministries want to be better networked across provinces and the whole church to improve collaboration along with shared access to resources, and to overcome siloing across different issues (such as creation care, racial justice, economic justice, LGBTQ+ justice) – understanding that siloing is itself a tool of white supremacy culture.
- A how-to-guide to equip our local leaders and improve networking and collaboration should be an outcome of the new task force.

## **A097 Developing a Common Framework for Anti-Racism Training**

*Resolved*, That the 81st General Convention, recognize that widely different criteria have been used across the Church to determine if the completion of anti-racism training defined by Canon Article III.6.5.g Training and General Convention Resolution has been satisfied; and that this work has been inspired by the collaborative efforts with the Executive Committee on Anti-Racism (ECCAR); and be it further

*Resolved*, That The Episcopal Church (TEC) recognize that in order to maintain a common theological framework and pastorally congruent response regarding our commitment to dismantle the sin of racism, specific components must be included in any Anti-racism or Racial Reconciliation training designed to fulfill the canonical requirement for all persons seeking ordination and all persons specified in General Convention Resolution 2000-B049; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the specific components that must be included in any Anti-racism or Racial Reconciliation training to be interactive, offer opportunity for reflection and include as follows:

- 1) A Historical Component - to include Canonical Requirements, Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society's Historical Commitment found in General Convention resolutions, "The Church's Contemporary Response to Racism", and "Becoming Beloved Community",
- 2) An Information OR Didactic Component - to include learning about the Baptismal Covenant, the Hebrew & New Testament Prophetic traditions, and the History of White Supremacy. Systemic Power, Classism, Sexism and other Intersectional Oppressions, The Doctrine of Discovery, Racism, Internalized Racial Superiority & Microaggressions and Internalized Racial Oppression must be interrogated and challenged. A guide for analyzing and dismantling unintentional institutional racism is an important component if we are to fulfill the intentions of the racial reconciliation resolutions. The hope will be that participants become co-conspirators and agents of Racial Reconciliation and healing in the Episcopal Church and beyond.
- 3) Activities will include Prayer, Respectful Communication Guidelines, Power Analysis and other activities as indicated to accomplish learning objectives for historical and informational components.
- 4) The training will reflect common learning objectives and appropriate adult pedagogy including a process/method for reinforcing the training so that it is not a standalone "one and done" course such as the creation and nurturing of an antiracist identity for individuals and institutions;

And be it further

*Resolved*, That Executive Council's Committee on Anti-Racism (ECCAR) create an Anti-racism Certification Framework include a master tracking database/mechanism to ensure consistency even as clergy and lay leaders transition across dioceses and TEC-level ministries and to more completely define the above components; and be it further

*Resolved*, That TEC staff be directed to work with the Executive Committee on Anti-Racism (ECCAR) to implement a certification process that would allow for on-line testing of clergy, laity,



and trainers to ensure the consistent fulfillment of the spirit of the requirement for anti-racism training across the Church according to the Anti-racism Certification Framework defined by the Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism; and be it further

*Resolved*, That TEC staff provide an annual report to ECCAR on the status of use and effectiveness of the certification process; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the General Convention requests the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation (excluding meeting expense) of \$55,000 for the curriculum planning, scope of the effort, and development of the RFP for the tracking module of this resolution.

#### EXPLANATION

Currently Canon Article III.6.5.g Training requires the Church's Anti-racism training for ordination. Additionally, the General Convention of The Episcopal Church has passed resolutions concerning anti-Racism and Racial Reconciliation at every General Convention since at least 1988. They include 1988-A112, 1991-D113, 2009-A142, 2012-A127, 2015-D040, and have called upon the church to participate through anti-racism training and other activities to dismantle and eradicate structures of racism and integrate the practices of anti-racism into our life as a church. Specifically, Resolution 2000-B049, which was reaffirmed by 2018-A045, mandates that *“lay and ordained leadership of the Episcopal Church, including all ordained persons, professional staff, and those elected or appointed to positions of leadership... be required to take anti-racism training and receive certification of such training... And that each diocese determines those lay and clergy leaders who are to take the training.”*

Stories and information obtained through the focus groups and interviews led the Task Force members to include the focus on racial justice and discussions regarding anti-racism training. Creating this resolution was identified by recognizing the need for a consistent method to ensure that church-wide leadership and laity experienced the various issues as well as building knowledge about the sin of racism, the reasons behind reparations, and the vision of the beloved community. Reviewing the previous resolutions and actions taken or not taken, informed this resolution.

The Task Force also determined that the concerns and issues of language are important. As a result, the Task Force added the word 'systemic' to the word power to particularize the type of power being addressed. Additionally, when analyzing and dismantling unintentional institutional racism this concept is an important part of shifting the focus from merely addressing the motives of individuals to the built-in advantages for whites that are part of the structure of our institutions. Institutional practice, policy, culture, etc., is the source of the racial social disparities.

The need for the creation and nurturing of an antiracist identity for individuals and institutions will be necessary if we accept that both white people and people of color are coopted by racism in the form of Internalized Racial Superiority and Internalized Racial Oppression as part of our identity, then the resistance to that is to explore an identity that is counter to this.

Additionally, consistent monitoring of training completion and effectiveness is needed as more members transition to different geographic locations, led the team to include the need to have a

church-wide learning management system or some electronic version and not maintaining excel spreadsheets or other manual/paper-based methods.

“Our Baptismal Covenant calls us to speak in concrete terms about today’s sins of racial injustice and inequality. We should all be advocates for the eradication of racism in all aspects of life, especially our religious life. The effects of racism escape no institution, not even the Church. We know that institutional racism can be conscious or unconscious. While the motivation of the institution and its members is important, it is the disparate racial outcomes of policy and/or practice that reflect an institution’s racism. The elimination of racism in the Church cannot be equated with assimilation, but rather with unity-in-diversity. No one group may demand the unilateral surrender of another’s culturally determined values as the price for full participation in the church community. In celebrating diversity, we manifest our oneness in Christ”.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) *Language attributed to The Episcopal Diocese of Arizona: An Anti-Racism Theological Statement.*

### **A098 Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation**

*Resolved,* That the 81<sup>st</sup> General Convention authorize Provinces, Dioceses, Congregations, and all other institutions of The Episcopal Church to recognize the efforts of the COP 28 [Conference of the Parties (COP)] regarding fossil fuel non-proliferation and to begin the process of planning in support of this work as reiterated by The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church in October 2023; and be it further

*Resolved,* That this General Convention reiterate its engagement in the work of The Episcopal Church, and international organizations to which it is connected, to turn back the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, recognizing the urgent, concentrated action in this present moment that is needed to prevent the suffering of life on this planet, in the near term and the future; and be it further

*Resolved,* That this General Convention acknowledge the work of the nations of Vanuatu and Tuvalu, along with other Pacific Island nations, to forge the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, which has been endorsed by the World Health Organization and the European Parliament, along with thousands of civil society organizations and individuals committed to the mitigation of climate change and the factors that contribute to it; and be it further

*Resolved,* That this General Convention recognize that the Treaty is calling the people of the world not just to make technical adjustments to negative impacts on the planet, but to transform lives by phasing out fossil fuel production and the reliance on fossil fuels by the parties to the Paris Accords; and be it further

*Resolved,* That this General Convention endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty as it is set before the United Nations Climate Summit, held in Dubai in December, 2023; and be it further

*Resolved*, That Provinces, Dioceses, Congregations, and all other institutions of The Episcopal Church be strongly encouraged to create a plan for phasing out fossil fuels over the next 10 years, post the plan on its websites, present an annual update report at the annual meeting of the diocese and/or ministry, and provide plan and annual updates to the Office of Creation Care; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the General Convention requests the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation (excluding meeting expense already in GCO budget) of \$40,000 to primarily address the development of website updates, forms development, and identify staff support the implementation of this resolution.

#### EXPLANATION

The Episcopal Church has consistently, through past General Convention resolutions, stayed abreast, even taken leadership positions, with respect to advocacy in climate change and environment. The Episcopal Church, in keeping with our following a living Christ, rather than calling to mind a Jesus who visited us once in the past, is a learning, evolving body. Thus, as the latest climate change science and the results of the 2023 Global Stock take have demonstrated, it is no longer sufficient to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we must phase out the use of fossil fuels.

The call to phase out fossil fuels originated in 2023 with seven Pacific island nations, nations who are already experiencing the leading edge of climate change. The call took the form of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Executive Council of the Episcopal Church passed a resolution in November of 2023 that endorsed the aims of the treaty, allowing the Presiding Bishop's delegation to COP 28 [Conference of the Parties (COP)] to use the treaty in its policy platform.

By way of background, the meeting purpose of COP is authorized through the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The United Nations Climate Change Conferences serve as the formal meeting of the UNFCCC parties – the Conference of the Parties (COP) – to assess progress in dealing with climate change, and beginning in the mid-1990s, to negotiate the Kyoto Protocol to establish legally binding obligations for developed countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. These annual meetings serve to further negotiations and obligations of the various treaties and protocols which create a general path towards climate action. Any final text of a COP must be agreed by consensus. <sup>(1)</sup>

The embrace of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and its core goal - the phase out of fossil fuels - by the 81st General Convention will provide an even stronger basis for our Church's advocacy around this essential goal.

(1) Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Climate\\_Change\\_conference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Climate_Change_conference)

## **A099 Task Force for Indigenous Justice To Increase Advocacy Groups Reflecting Creation Care and Environmental Justice Ministries**

*Resolved*, That the 81<sup>st</sup> General Convention authorize a task force for Indigenous Justice to be formed for the following triennium. Membership in the Task Force will represent the indigenous demographic with 2 Bishops, equal number of presbyters, deacons, and laity not to exceed 16 members; and be it further

*Resolved*, That an initial focus of the Indigenous Justice task force be on eco-justice; and be it further

*Resolved*, That in the next triennium the Indigenous Justice task force will work to promote the recognition of sovereignty for Indigenous People in the negotiations of the United Nations climate summits (the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the COPs); and be it further

*Resolved*, That the General Convention requests the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation (excluding meeting expense already in GCO budget) of \$30,000 to primarily identify and support the media and cultural education necessary to be effective.

### **EXPLANATION**

There has been and continues to be a consistent call for allies to the eco-justice initiatives of Indigenous Peoples to promote the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty as demonstrated from members of the Standing Rock Lakota People protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016/2017 to Indigenous voices at COP 28 in Dubai, 2023. The Task Force will work in collaboration with TEC's Department of Ethnic Ministries and the Office of Indigenous Ministries to champion the identified priorities.

It is consistent with the eco-justice stance of the Episcopal Church to follow the lead of Indigenous Peoples who define for themselves their justice priorities, and to act in concert with these self-defined goals.