

THE CONSTITUTING GROUP FOR THE EPISCOPAL COALITION ON RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE

Members

Ryan Kusumoto, Co-Convener	Hawaii, VIII
The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas, Co-Convener	Connecticut, I
The Very Rev. Miguelina Howell	Connecticut, I
The Rev. Edwin Johnson	Massachusetts, I
The Rev. Canon John Kitagawa	Arizona, VIII
Zena Link	Western Massachusetts, I
Thomas Little	Vermont, I
The Rt. Rev. Kimberly Lucas	Colorado, VI
Crystal Plummer	Chicago, V
The Rt. Rev. Samuel Rodman	North Carolina, IV
The Ven. Paul Sneve	South Dakota, VI
The Rev. Rachel Taber-Hamilton	Olympia, VIII
The Rev. Bryan Vélez-Garcia	Puerto Rico, II
The Rev. Meg Wagner	Iowa, VI
Kent Anker, ex officio	New York, II
Julia Ayala Harris, ex officio	Oklahoma, VII
The Most Rev. Michael Curry, ex officio	North Carolina, IV
Michael Glass, ex officio	San Joaquin, VIII
Mary Kostel, ex officio	Washington, III

Acknowledgements

The Constituting Group for the Episcopal Coalition on Racial Equity and Justice (Constituting Group) wants to recognize the professionalism and support given by the staff of the Domestic and Foreign Ministry Society (DFMS). The assistance helped to make sure that the work progressed smoothly. The Constituting Group also appreciates the interpreters who were present at every meeting.

The Constituting Group would like to acknowledge members of the Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth-telling, Reckoning, and Healing, the Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism and Reconciliation (ECCARR), the Deputies of Color, and the House of Bishops for engaging in conversations that helped to shape of the work of the Constituting Group.

Mandate

Resolution 2022-A125, titled "Extending and Furthering the Beloved Community," adopted by the 80th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, outlined a comprehensive approach toward achieving racial justice and equity within the church community. The mandate emphasized The Episcopal Church's commitment to becoming the Beloved Community of Jesus, a vision central to the Church's baptismal vocation. It called upon all Episcopalians to engage in a lifelong vocation focused on racial justice, equity, and the dismantling of white supremacy.

To facilitate this vision, the 80th General Convention passed resolution A125 establishing the Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice (Coalition). The Coalition is a voluntary association of Episcopal dioceses, parishes, organizations, and individuals, all dedicated to embodying the principles of the Beloved Community. The Coalition was and is tasked with a broad range of responsibilities, including facilitating, coordinating, and supporting efforts aimed at racial justice and the dismantling of white supremacy, in collaboration with The Episcopal Church Center's Executive Council and staff.

Resolution A125 empowered the Presiding Officers to appoint a board to take the organizational and legal steps necessary to advance the coalition. As a result, a Constituting Group (The Mandate) was appointed by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies. This group is responsible for the development, implementation, and oversight of the Coalition, ensuring it has the necessary organizational, canonical, and legal frameworks to operate effectively. The budget of the 80th General Convention provided \$300,000 for the work of the Constituting Group for the biennium 2022-2024.

Summary of Work

In February 2023, The Episcopal Church announced the appointments by the Presiding Officers to the Constituting Group as part of its efforts toward racial justice and reconciliation. This move followed the 2022 Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth-Telling, Reckoning, and Healing's recommendation, which led to the adoption of Resolution A125 at the 80th General Convention. This resolution calls for Episcopalians to work actively against racial injustice and white supremacy, aligning with their baptismal vow.

The Constituting Group was tasked to develop the structure for the newly formed Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice. The Coalition aims to unite dioceses, groups, parishes, and individuals in this cause. Per Resolution A125, funding for the Coalition, in part, is provided from the income of 10% of the The Episcopal Church's unrestricted trusts and endowment funds available for general use.

Feedback from multiple listening sessions with the wider Church and constituents shaped The Constituting Group's focus. The Constituting Group held the following conversations with constituents:

- Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth-Telling, Reckoning, and Healing (June 3, 2023)
- Deputies of Color (June 17, 2023)
- It's All About Love (July 10, 2023)
- Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism – ECCAR (October 28, 2023)
- House of Bishops (February 28, 2024)

During those discussions, several key themes emerged:

First, there is a consensus that a "Lighter is Better" approach, focusing more on mission and less on structures, will foster the Coalition's growth and vitality. The Coalition should also uphold accountability and collaboration with the larger church community and staff of The Episcopal Church Center, serving both as a partner and a moral compass, particularly in support of marginalized groups.

Second, it is essential for interested individuals to engage with the Coalition as participants rather than as traditional subscribing members. Participation is voluntary and inclusive, and not bound by annual financial fees or contributions. This reflects a broader, more inclusive understanding of community beyond more traditional understandings of organizational membership identity and ensures that anyone can contribute, from individuals to dioceses to other groups. Language matters here, and the Coalition, as a network, will stress the role of "participants" rather than "members" in its bylaws and incorporating documents.

Transparency is another crucial factor. There's a unanimous desire for open communication with stakeholders, utilizing tools such as this Blue Book Report and other consistent communication methods, underlining the principle that more transparency leads to better relationships and deeper trust.

Regarding fundraising, beyond the resources provided from the endowment income of The Episcopal Church there is a desire to work toward a model that allows all to contribute meaningfully, fostering a sense of ownership and equality among participants.

Finally, the structure of governance was discussed, suggesting the establishment of an initial board followed by an ongoing one, with staggered terms and some members appointed by the Presiding Officers, ensuring continuity and fresh perspectives. All agreed that a supermajority of the Coalition's Board would be individuals from historically marginalized and underrepresented communities in The Episcopal Church.

The Constituting Group has met approximately monthly via zoom beginning in April 2023. An in-person meeting was held at The Episcopal Church Center from October 31 – November 2, 2023. The work of the Constituting Group was divided among three subcommittees: Structure and Governance, Communications, and Kick-off/Inaugural Event, each focusing on different aspects of the Coalition's ongoing formation and outreach.

Structure and Governance Subcommittee: The Structure and Governance Subcommittee reviewed the conversations from the listening sessions and set about establishing the legal framework for the Coalition to move forward. Excellent contributions from the Chancellors for the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies, and the Chief Legal Officer of The Episcopal Church, with assistance from outside legal counsel specializing in not-for-profit law, led to a draft Certificate of Incorporation, and Bylaws for the Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice.

Communications Subcommittee: The Communications Subcommittee developed a communication strategy for the initial and ongoing efforts of the Coalition. They also took on the task of writing press releases and organizing discussions with Executive Council, in addition to providing updates to the Episcopal News Service. Furthermore, they set up a website (www.episcopalcoalition.org), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/episcopalcoalition/about>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/episcopalcoalition/?igsh=MW1yeml3N2phNXE4Yw%3D%3D>) accounts, and an email address dedicated to the coalition's activities.

Kick-off/Inaugural Event Subcommittee: The Kick-off Subcommittee brainstormed the best ways to successfully launch the Episcopal Coalition. After considering several ideas and discussing the timing, they decided to plan a significant event for early 2025, avoiding an additional church-wide meeting in 2024 when there is a General Convention and the seating of a new Presiding Bishop.

Following thorough discussion and evaluation, in February 2024 (?) the Constituting Group adopted the draft Certificate of Incorporation, and Bylaws for the Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice providing official legal status for the Coalition. The Bylaws detail the organizational structure, purpose, and procedural rules of the Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice. This is to ensure that the coalition operates in accordance with both legal standards and church guidelines. The legal documents were signed by Presiding Bishop Curry and President of the House of Deputies Ayala Harris on April 17, 2024 thus incorporating the Coalition as a nonprofit corporation. See “Supplemental Materials” below. The nonprofit corporation, legally based in New York City, adheres to the laws of New York State. It will have a Board of Directors consisting of up to 17 members, with at least 70% coming from historically marginalized and underrepresented communities in The Episcopal Church. The initial Board will be made up of members from the Constituting Group, plus an additional four members chosen by Presiding Officers, with each Officer appointing two additional members. Board Directors are assigned staggered terms of two years, subject to term limits.

Additionally, the Constituting Group has recommended an addition to the Canons of The Episcopal Church that would further clarify the funding for the Coalition provided by income from 10% of the The Episcopal Church's unrestricted trusts and endowment funds available for general use. This proposed canonical addition will be jointly submitted to the 81st General Convention by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies.

The Constituting Group thanks God and all involved in the development of the Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice for creating this new and imaginative way to help all Episcopalians extend and further our commitment to become the Beloved Community. We have felt the leading of the Holy Spirit in all our work together and we are bolstered by this fresh wind blowing through our church.

Supplementary Materials

The Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth-Telling, Reckoning, and Healing Blue Book Report:
<https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/31499>