

Resolution 1

A Resolution on Support for Those Studying for Ordained Ministry

RESOLVED, That the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont at its 176th Convention meeting on November 5 and 6, 2008, memorialize the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church and its Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to provide funding in the coming triennium in the amount of \$100,000 in year one, \$150,000 in year two and \$200,000 in year three for the purpose of providing needs-based scholarships for Episcopal Seminarians; and be it further

RESOLVED, That said funds be administered and distributed to needy seminarians through the existing Scholarship Program of the Society for the Increase of the Ministry (SIM), said Society having an established record of 151 years of experience in administering scholarship grants to Episcopal seminarians; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the General Convention direct SIM to report annually to the Executive Council on this work and its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the future ordained leaders of this Church and that the Executive Council, in turn, provide a full report to 77th General Convention.

Proposers:

The Reverends Lee Alison Crawford, John C. Morris and Scott B. Neal

Explanation:

This funding schedule is intended to bring the support from the General Convention budget to a level matching the annual grants committed by the Society for the Increase of the Ministry (\$225,000.00 for the academic year 2008-09).

Enrollment of full-time Master of Divinity students in the residential seminaries of the Episcopal Church has declined 25% over the last three academic years due largely to the dramatic increases in cost of seminary education, training and formation. The cost of three years of seminary can range from \$51,000 to over \$100,000, depending upon family circumstances and one's choice of seminaries.

About half of our seminarians struggle under the burden of debt, most of which is educational debt. The average debt of those with debt in the Class of 2009 only halfway through seminary is \$44,772. Projecting these figures to graduation and ordination, the average indebtedness of new ordinands will approach or exceed \$60,000.

The high cost of seminary education and the threat of debilitating debt limits diversity among our seminary student bodies and limits the placement opportunities for ordinands to those congregations which pay better than others.

It was at the 62nd General Convention (1970) that the seminary deans and the Board for Theological Education first called for direct financial support from General Convention. This action later led to the passing of a resolution calling on parishes to commit 1% of their net budget income to the support of the seminaries of the Episcopal Church. In 1979 the Convention reaffirmed the principle but raised the amount to 1.50%. The 1% principle was reaffirmed at several Conventions that followed. The last reported Parochial Report figures from 1999 demonstrate that such support amounted to only .0027% (barely one quarter of one percent) of

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the called for support. Had support been sustained at 1.00% of net budget parish income, scholarship funds would have increased substantially and the cost of such education, training and formation would have been reduced very significantly and the situation with our seminaries might be quite different.

Meanwhile, the Episcopal Church remains the only major denomination in the United States that does not have a central funding source to support seminarians in their education, training and formation.

While both the General Conventions of 2006 and 2003 called upon various stake-holding agencies of the Episcopal Church to study this issue and to make recommendations, the General Convention has yet to become part of the solution by providing any funding to support seminarians in need. Since 1789 we have consistently acted as if funding of seminaries and seminarians is someone else's problem, not our own. It is now time for the General Convention and its budget to become an active participant in the solution.

Resolution 2

A Resolution to repeal Canons 10A and 10B and replace with new Canon 10

I. *RESOLVED*, that Canons 10A and 10B are repealed and replaced with the following new Canon 10.

CANON 10. of PROPERTY, INSURANCE, AUDIT and FINANCE

1. Diocesan Property

The Diocese is an ecclesiastical district of The Episcopal Church (the Church).

(a) *All Property for the Benefit of the Church.* All real and personal property held by or for the benefit of the Diocese or any Parish, Mission, Academic Institution or the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont is held in trust for the Church and the Diocese. Subject to these Canons and the authority of the Diocese, this trust does not limit the authority of a Parish, Mission or Academic Institution to utilize property so long as the particular Parish, Mission, or Academic Institution remains a part of, and subject to, the Church and its Constitution and Canons and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese.

(b) *Acquisitions of Property; Title.* A Parish, Mission, Academic Institution or the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont must obtain the advice and consent of the Bishop and the Standing Committee before acquiring real property, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or otherwise. Title to real property shall be held by the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont, except as otherwise directed by the Bishop and the Standing Committee. Where title is to be in the name of the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont, its consent is also required.

(c) *Encumbering or Alienating Property Prohibited.* No Parish, Mission, Academic Institution or the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont may encumber or alienate its real property without the written consent of the Bishop and the Standing Committee, which may establish procedures and other requirements for granting consent.

(d) *Insurance.* All buildings and their contents held by any Parish, Mission, Academic Institution, the Rock Point Board or the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont shall be adequately insured for their replacement cost by the Parish, Mission, Academic Institution or other organization occupying the property. All treasurers and financial custodians, other than financial institutions described in Section 2.1(a) of this Canon, shall be adequately bonded. The Diocese and each Parish, Mission, Academic Institution, the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont and the Rock Point Board, at a minimum, shall also maintain coverages for the following risks:

- (i) comprehensive general liability;
- (ii) employment practices liability;
- (iii) sexual misconduct liability;
- (iv) workers compensation;
- (v) directors and officers liability; and
- (vi) fidelity.

All insurance policies shall name the Bishop and the Diocese as additional insureds, as their respective interests may appear. All insurance policies and coverages must satisfy the

requirements for coverage and limits established by the Diocesan Council from time to time. The Diocesan Council shall take such action as may be necessary and appropriate to encourage compliance with this Subsection.

2. Diocesan Finances.

The Diocese and its Parishes, Missions, Academic Institutions, the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont and the Rock Point Board shall manage their finances as follows:

2.1 Funds and Securities Management.

(a) *Operating Funds.* All operating funds shall be deposited only with financial institutions whose accounts are federally insured or otherwise selected according to guidelines established by the Financial Oversight and Audit Committee.

(b) *Investment, Trust and Permanent Funds.* Unless otherwise directed by the terms of a trust instrument, all funds other than operating funds shall be invested in the Unit Fund of the Diocese, or otherwise as directed by the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, however, such funds under the control of a Parish, Mission or Academic Institution may be invested as directed by its governing body, subject to the requirements of Canon I.1.7(b) of the Church Canons. Records are to be made and kept of all trust and permanent funds showing at least the following: (i) source and date, (ii) terms governing the use of principal and income, (iii) to whom and how often reports of conditions are to be made, (iv) how the funds are invested, and (v) the most recent annual or special accounting filed with a court or other person where such accounting is required to be made and filed. Two signatures shall be required on any withdrawal or transfer of investment, trust and permanent funds over a *de minimis* amount to be determined by Diocesan Council from time to time.

(c) *Diocesan Funds.* The Diocesan Council may authorize any officer or officers, or agent or agents, to enter into contracts or to execute and deliver instruments in the name and on behalf of the Diocese. The Diocesan Council may make such authorization general or limited. The Treasurer and such other persons as the Diocesan Council may determine may issue all checks, drafts and other orders for the payment of money, notes and other evidences of indebtedness issued in the name of or payable by the Diocese. The Diocesan Council shall authorize the opening and keeping of general and special bank and investment accounts and shall approve all signatories thereto.

(d) *Discretionary Funds.* Each Parish and Mission may maintain a discretionary fund established by resolution of its Vestry or Executive Committee, giving the Rector, Priest-in-Charge or an Almoner discretion to make disbursements from the fund for pious and charitable purposes. Rectors, Priests-in-Charge and Almoners shall not make any disbursements from such funds to themselves or for the personal benefit of themselves or their families. (e) *Securities.* All securities shall be held in book entry form with a financial institution that satisfies the requirements of Canon I.7.1(b) of the Church Canons.

2.2. Financial Statements. The Diocese, each Parish and Mission, and the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont shall operate on a calendar year basis. The Diocese's two Academic Institutions, Rock Point School and Brookhaven School for Boys, may operate on a fiscal year basis. Financial

statements shall be maintained either in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles or in accordance with the Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs as promulgated by the Church. Financial statements shall include a statement of financial position (balance sheet) and a statement of activities (income and expenses statement), and shall include a statement of sources and applications of funds.

2.3 Audits

(a) *Academic Institutions.* The financial statements of each Diocesan Academic Institution shall be audited annually by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with each Institution's Bylaws.

(b) The Diocese, the Rock Point Board and the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont. The financial statements of the Diocese, the Rock Point Board and the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont shall be audited annually by an independent certified public accounting firm chosen by the Financial Oversight and Audit Committee with the concurrence of the Diocesan Council. All audit reports, reviews, complete financial statements, management letters and responses to management letters shall be delivered by the Financial Oversight and Audit Committee to the Bishop, the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont, the Rock Point Board, the Diocesan Council and the Secretary of Convention. All fees for auditing the financial statements of the Diocese and the Rock Point Board shall be paid from Diocesan funds on order of the Financial Oversight and Audit Committee. All fees for auditing the financial statements of the Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont shall be paid from its funds.

(c) *Parishes and Missions.* The financial statements of each Parish and Mission shall be audited annually by an independent certified public accountant or independent licensed public accountant, or by such audit committee as the Financial Oversight and Audit Committee may authorize. Audits shall be conducted and reported in accordance with the Manual for Audit Committees of the Diocese of Vermont.

(d) *Timing and Filing of Audit Reports.* All audit reports, reviews, complete financial statements, management letters and responses to management letters shall be filed with the Diocese within 30 days following the date of the report, and for Parishes and Missions, in no event later than September 1 of the year following the year covered by the audit report. The Financial Oversight and Audit Committee shall report annually to Diocesan Council listing Parishes, Missions and Academic Institutions and, where appropriate, the Diocese and the Rock Point Board, not in compliance with the requirements of this subsection 2.3. The Council shall take such action as may be necessary and appropriate to encourage compliance.

2.4 Reports

Annual Parochial Reports. Each Parish and Mission shall annually prepare a parochial report in the form required by the Church. In every Parish, the preparation and delivery of this Annual Parochial Report shall be the joint duty of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, and the Vestry; in every Mission, the preparation and delivery of the Parochial Report shall be the joint duty of the Priest-in-charge and the Executive Committee of the Mission. The Annual Parochial Report shall include the membership, attendance, service, stewardship and financial information defined in the forms and workbooks titled "Report of Episcopal Congregations and Missions" provided to each Parish and Mission, with instructions, by The General Convention of the Church. The Parish or Mission shall submit its Annual Parochial Report to the Bishop, or, if there is no

Bishop, to the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese, by March 1 of the following year. The Diocesan Treasurer shall report annually to Diocesan Council listing Parishes or Missions not in compliance with this requirement. The Council shall take such action as may be necessary and appropriate to encourage compliance.

Annual Diocesan Reports. Under the direction of the Bishop, the annual report of the Diocese shall be prepared in the form required by the Church. The report shall include statistical information concerning the Parishes and Missions of the Diocese, the Clergy and other ministries, and such other ministries and organizations of the Diocese as may be appropriate; together with the financial information required by Church Canon I.4.6(i). It shall also include information concerning implementation by the Diocese of resolutions of the previous General Convention which have been specifically identified as calling for Diocesan action.

2.5 Assessments and Offerings

Parish and Mission Assessments. Each Parish and Mission shall pay an annual assessment to support the Diocesan budget. The assessment shall be determined by the Convention upon the recommendation of the Diocesan Council and shall be paid in twelve equal monthly installments throughout the year, unless otherwise scheduled by the Diocesan Council. The Diocesan Treasurer shall report at least annually to Diocesan Council listing Parishes and Missions not in compliance with this requirement. The Council shall take such action as may be necessary and appropriate to encourage compliance.

Episcopal Visitation Offering. The undesignated plate offering at the official visitation of the Bishop to each Parish and Mission shall be remitted to the Diocesan office to be disbursed for such needs as the Bishop may determine. No distribution from such offerings shall be made to the Bishop or for the personal benefit of the Bishop or the Bishop's family.

2.6 Tax Exempt Status. No organization or entity subject to this Canon shall take any action which may impair its tax exempt status or the tax exempt status of the Diocese or the Church.

2.7 Application of this Canon. This Canon shall apply to any parochial organization within or affiliated with a Parish, Mission or other organization connected with the Diocese.

3. Financial Oversight and Audit Committee. There shall be a Financial Oversight and Audit Committee consisting of the following persons: the Bishop and the Treasurer, each *ex officio*, and three Lay and three Clergy members elected by Convention to terms of three years.

The Financial Oversight and Audit Committee shall:

- (a) Implement and enforce the audit, financial reporting, funds management and the other requirements of Canon 10, consistent with Canon I.7 of the Church Canons;
- (b) Develop and maintain financial management and audit resources, to provide advice and consulting services to the Diocese and its Parishes and Missions;
- (c) Develop written rules and policies to implement this Canon, and to establish the guidelines required by Section 2.1(a) of this Canon;
- (d) Review a congregation's appeal of its Diocesan Assessment and forward a recommendation on the appeal to Diocesan Council for its review and action; and

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(e) Report in writing on the administration of this Canon to the Bishop and the Convention, at least ninety days prior to each annual Convention.

II. *FURTHER RESOLVED*, that Canon 3.5 is amended by striking the second sentence thereof and replacing it with the following sentence: The Treasurer, ex officio, shall be a member of the Financial Oversight and Audit Committee of the Diocese and shall also serve as Treasurer of the Convention.

III. *FURTHER RESOLVED*, that Canon 11.5 is amended by striking the words “through the Finance Committee” in the first sentence.

IV. *FURTHER RESOLVED*, that the caption of Title II of the Canons is amended by striking it and replacing it with “Finances, Insurance, Real Property and Business Methods.”

Proposer: Canons Committee

Resolution 3

A Resolution to Establish the First Sunday of Lent as Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of Vermont dedicate the first Sunday in Lent as Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday and that congregations and individuals be encouraged to support Episcopal Relief & Development's life-saving work through prayer and a special offering that will help heal a hurting world; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Diocese of Vermont submit the following resolution for consideration and adoption by Province One and by the 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Anaheim, California, July 2009:

RESOLVED, the House of _____ concurring, That this 76th General Convention of The Episcopal Church dedicate the first Sunday in Lent as Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday and that congregations and individuals be encouraged to support Episcopal Relief & Development's life-saving work through prayer and a special offering that will help heal a hurting world.

Proposer: Kristin Wood, co-cordinator, Episcopal Relief & Development

Explanation:

In 2008, the Presiding Bishop designated the first Sunday in Lent as Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday and as an annual celebration of Episcopal Relief & Development's role in our collective mission to seek and serve Christ in all persons.

The Episcopal Church's ongoing commitment to fight poverty and disease around the world is lived out in a variety of ways. Advocacy with our government for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is one vital way. Another is through the ministry of Episcopal Relief & Development, which, as the relief and development arm of the Episcopal Church, works globally to alleviate hunger, fight disease, and strengthen communities.

Resolution 4

A Resolution Establishing Minimum Clergy Compensation

RESOLVED, That the 176th Convention of the Diocese of Vermont approve the recommendation of the Diocesan Council that the minimum full time stipend for clergy in the Diocese of Vermont be increased by 5% for the year of 2009 to \$36,950 and be applied to the diocesan schedule of mandatory minimum cash salaries, and that travel allowance be reimbursed at the current IRS standard.

Proposer: Diocesan Council

Explanation:

Canon 6.7 of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont requires that Diocesan Council review the minimum stipend for full-time equivalent clergy and the travel allowance and make recommendations to the Convention. Such a minimum shall be binding on all parishes and missions upon ratification of the Convention. A 5% increase reflects the average of the current Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of the Northeast Urban Index and the United States All Cities index.

According to the Church Pension Fund (“The 2006 Church Compensation Report,” reflecting 2006 data), the national average median compensation for full-time Episcopal clergy was \$62,793, up from \$61,379 in 2005. This figure includes cash stipend, fair-rental value of housing, utilities and payment of one-half of the Social Security/Medicare (SECA) tax.

Approval of this resolution will change the Beginning Level 1 minimum cash stipend from \$35,190 to \$36,950, thus raising the minimum full-time compensation package to approximately \$51,710 [\$36,950 cash stipend, plus housing and utilities of \$11,085* (at 30% of cash), plus SECA of \$3,675 (at 15.3%/2 of cash, housing, and utilities.)]

*This figure is based solely upon the Church Pension Fund formula for calculating housing. It may in fact not reflect an accurate amount based on the actual expenses for housing and utilities in Vermont.

Schedule of Mandatory Minimum Cash Salaries for 2009

Years of Service	Level 1*	Level 2*	Years of Service	Level 1*	Level 2*
1	\$36,950	\$41,594	11	\$43,306	\$48,749
2	\$37,541	\$42,260	12	\$43,999	\$49,529
3	\$38,142	\$42,936	13	\$44,703	\$50,322
4	\$38,752	\$43,623	14	\$45,418	\$51,127
5	\$39,372	\$44,321	15	\$46,145	\$51,945
6	\$40,002	\$45,030	16	\$46,884	\$52,776
7	\$40,642	\$45,750	17	\$47,634	\$53,620
8	\$41,292	\$46,482	18	\$48,396	\$54,478
9	\$41,953	\$47,226	19	\$49,170	\$55,350
10	\$42,624	\$47,982	20	\$49,957	\$56,236

* Level 1 represents parishes with annual budgets below \$143,000.

** Level 2 represents parishes with annual budgets of \$143,000 and above.

The minimum cash salary is increased by 1.6% for each additional year of service beyond 20.

Resolution 5

A Resolution on Racial Profiling in Vermont

RESOLVED, That the 176th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont affirms that racial profiling by law enforcement agencies contradicts our baptismal covenant's call to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being;" and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont commends the Vermont Advisory Committee of the United States Civil Rights Commission for investigating the extent to which Vermont law enforcement personnel engage in racial profiling; hearing from police personnel and individuals who feel they were the recipients of such profiling; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the diocese specifically commends law enforcement agencies in Chittenden County who have started listened to community concerns and have voluntarily agreed to begin collecting data about police stops and the ethnicity of the person involved in order to gain empirical data on whether there is any racial profiling; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this convention urge all Vermont law enforcement agencies to voluntarily collect this data in order to see the extent to which their agencies may be engaging in racial profiling; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Convention urge all law enforcement departments to provide training for all personnel around racial profiling and the larger issues of racism and diversity, particularly in light of Vermont's increasingly diverse population; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention communicate this resolution to the Vermont Advisory Committee of the United States Civil Rights Commission; the Attorney General for the State of Vermont; Vermont Public Safety Commissioner; the Director of the Vermont State Police; and the Police Chiefs of Burlington, South Burlington, Winooski, and University of Vermont.

Proposers:

Laura Chase, Blanche Cooper, Tinka McArdle, Constance Quinby, Nancy Vogege, Stewart Wood, and Margy Zabriskie (All are members of the Dismantling Racism Commission)

Explanation:

- 1) Numerous anecdotal accounts on racial profiling in Vermont have been reported in recent media stories, for example: an African-American graduate student was stopped by police 13 times during his one year in Vermont, twice on his first day in the state.
- 2) In July 2008, the Vermont Advisory Committee for the United States Civil Rights Commission held hearings at the State House in Montpelier to determine the scope of the problem of racial profiling in Vermont—if indeed racial profiling is a problem. The Rt. Rev. Stewart Wood, a member of the Dismantling Racism Commission, is a member of this Advisory Committee.
- 3) Vermont is one of only two states in the United States (the other being Mississippi) that do not collect data correlating police stops and race.
- 4) While there is no plan in place, at this time, for statewide data collection, there is a new program in Chittenden County, where police from four agencies will soon begin collecting statistics on traffic stops to determine if race is a factor.

Resolution 6

A Resolution to Help Prevent Phosphorous Pollution in Water Bodies

RESOLVED, That the 176th Convention of the Diocese of Vermont agree with Resolution D046 of the 2003 General Convention urging dioceses, parishes and communicants to regard water resources as precious, to encourage all to become active stewards of water resources, and to promote the education of congregants in faithful stewardship of Earth's resources; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the 176th Convention instruct the Diocese of Vermont, parishes and communicants to seek alternatives to phosphorous-laden fertilizers for use on diocesan, parish and communicants' properties, and to use phosphorous only when soil tests indicate that it is needed for proper soil-plant health.

Proposers:

Alan Carpenter, Sylvia Knight, Mary Tuthill, Robert Wright
Earth Care Circle, Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Burlington

Explanation:

General Convention actions promoting Earth stewardship are important to us at the local level, as we are continually growing in our awareness of our relationship with and responsibility for God's Creation. Our resolution extends stewardship of water resources to a particular issue in the Vermont region.

Lake Champlain suffers from algae blooms which make parts of the lake unhealthy for aquatic life as well as for humans and domestic animals. Algae blooms are caused by excess phosphorous from fertilizers, manure, and animal waste in water running off the land, and in effluent from municipal sewage systems.

Vermont Water Quality Division tells us that approximately 37% of phosphorous in Lake Champlain comes from neighborhoods and cities. Shelburne Pond, Lake Carmi in Franklin, Tickle Naked Pond in Ryegate and Lake Memphramagog on the Canadian border are also affected by phosphorous runoff. Most Northeast lawns tested by UVM need no added phosphorous. (Source: www.anr.state.vt.us/doc/waterq/lakes/docs/lpseries/lp_lps-dontp.pdf)

Lake Champlain's watershed includes nearly 2/3 of Vermont, extending as far south as the East Dorset headwaters of Otter Creek, as far west as Poultney River on the border with New York State, as far east as Cabot's source of Winooski River and Orleans County sources of the Lamoille River, as far north as East Richford where Missisquoi River runs through Canada on its way to Lake Champlain.

Since we as humans have made a significant contribution to the problem, we believe that with very little effort (using little or no fertilizers containing phosphorus on lawns and gardens), we can contribute significantly to the solution. Information will be provided on available products and methods to avoid adding phosphorous pollution to Lake Champlain and other water bodies.

D046 Stewardship of Water Resources 2003

RESOLVED, That the 74th General Convention urge dioceses, congregations, and communicants to regard water resources as precious, and to recognize that the right use of water is an explicit means to show love for one's neighbor, since water connects people and all creatures throughout the global community; and be it further

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RESOLVED, That the 74th General Convention encourage dioceses, congregations, and communicants to become active stewards of their water resources through conservation efforts including reduction of consumption; through examination of water discharge such that contaminated water does not improperly leave church grounds; and through the creation of environmental programs for stewardship of water and the whole of creation and for the education of congregants in regard to good and faithful stewardship of the earth's resources; and be it further Resolved, That the General Convention encourage dioceses, congregations, and communicants to undertake one or more of the following four stewardship steps:

When and where possible, install water-saving devices, such as low-flow commodes and aspirators on sink faucets.

Replant church grounds and home gardens with plants and trees that are drought-tolerant and have low needs for water, and that are native to the region and therefore able to survive local climatic conditions.

Devise drainage systems that allow rainwater to flow from gutters and drain pipes to spread onto the lawn and landscaped areas of church grounds and home gardens, thereby reducing water lost to sewer systems.

Pave new or repave existing parking lots with materials that are pervious, so that water penetrates into soil beneath parking areas, thereby reducing the flow of oil and other auto fluids into streams.

Resolution 7

A resolution to ask the General Convention to authorize preparation of rites of holy union for same-gender couples

RESOLVED, That the 176th Convention of the Diocese of Vermont ask the 76th General Convention to direct the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to prepare rites of holy union for same-gender couples for consideration by the 77th General Convention; and be it further

RESOLVED, That such rites should reflect the legal contexts in which such holy unions might take place; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music devise an open and transparent process for the conduct of its work, inviting participation from dioceses and individuals who have already engaged in such liturgical and theological work and inviting theological reflection from all interested parties in The Episcopal Church and the provinces of the Anglican Communion.

Proposers:

Anne Clarke Brown

Lay Deputy to General Convention, 2006 & 2009

Thomas J. Brown

Clergy Deputy to General Convention, 2006 & 2009

Lee Alison Crawford

Clergy Deputy to General Convention, 2006 & 2009

Thomas A. Little

Lay Deputy to General Convention, 2006 & 2009

John C. Morris

Clergy Deputy to General Convention 2009 (First Alternate 2006)

Jennifer Ogelby

Lay Deputy to General Convention, 2009 (Alternate 2006)

Tanya R. Wallace

Clergy Deputy to General Convention, 2009

Explanation:

Anglican theology has traditionally had its deepest roots not in abstract theory but in practice, the practice of prayer and sacramental worship. In other words, Anglican theology is incarnational; its truths are both found in and expressed by forms of prayer and worship adopted for use in particular contexts by particular church communities.

To some extent, Anglican prayer is “common prayer,” but since new churches began to form outside the Church of England, many of those churches have adapted the mother church’s forms to meet the developing traditions of theology and worship practice in their own cultural contexts.

Today, the Anglican Communion is experiencing conflict over the role of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons in its various churches and particularly over whether some churches of the Communion should celebrate in a formal way the relationships of gay and lesbian couples. Many who are critical of The Episcopal Church claim that the theology has not been done that could support such rites of blessing. Many who support such rites claim that the theology has been—and continues to be—done by those engaged in the creation and use of rites of blessing.

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The Diocese of Vermont engaged in an extensive scriptural, historical and theological study as its Task Force on the Blessing of Persons Living in Same-Gender Relationships developed liturgical rites for trial pastoral use in Vermont. The group's report, stimulated by a pastoral need for prayer and worship resources for a context in which civil unions had become a legal reality, was issued in June 2004. It is available at www.dioceseofvermont.org.

This resolution acknowledges the incarnational and liturgical foundations of Anglican theological reflection by proposing that The Episcopal Church continue the work and conversation begun at the 65th General Convention meeting in Minneapolis in 1976, placing that work in the context of the preparation of resources for worship. It is based on the assumption that this practical approach is the best way for The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion to move beyond stalemate on the question of a theology that may support the blessing of same gender couples.

The resolution does not represent a rejection of the concerns expressed by The Episcopal Church's partners in the Anglican Communion. Rather, it is a response to calls for continued conversation, and it proposes that such conversation be placed in the context of an open and transparent process that invites participation by all interested parties, including those from other provinces in the Anglican Communion. Given the diversity of cultural contexts in the Anglican Communion, there is little likelihood of Communion-wide consensus in the foreseeable future. However, in the context of many parts of The Episcopal Church, there is a pastoral need to move forward, while not expecting that other parts of the Communion will choose to follow.

Approval of this proposal by the 2009 General Convention will not mean approval of rites of blessing. It will mean that The Episcopal Church can continue a process begun over 30 years ago in a manner consistent with the Anglican tradition of discerning a theological position in the context of exploring liturgical responses to practical needs. Should this proposal be approved, any rites developed would be presented to the 2012 General Convention for a first vote and not receive final approval until 2015.