

TASK FORCE TO STUDY HOUSEHOLD AND RELATIONSHIP DIVERSITY

Members

Connor Crafton-Tempel, Co-Chair	Virginia, III	2027
The Rev. Sarah Dunn, Co-Chair	Nevada, VIII	2027
The Rt. Rev. Matthew Cowden	West Virginia, III	2027
Dr. Bryan Dougan	North Carolina, IV	2027
Mr. Fred Ellis	Dallas, VII	2027
The Rev. Charles Graves	Texas, VII	2027
Mr. Scott Haight	West Tennessee, IV	2027
Dr. Adam Hamilton-Ferguson	Central New York, II	2027
Ryan Hawthorne	Texas, VII	2027
The Rt. Rev. Chilton Knudsen	Maryland, III	2027
The Rev. Beckett Leclair	Eastern Michigan, V	2027
The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Reddall	Arizona, VIII	2027
Dr. Melissa Shirley	Southern Ohio, V	2027
Ms. April Thomson	Olympia, VIII	2027
Ms. Julia Ayala Harris, Ex Officio	Oklahoma, VII	2027
The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Ex Officio	North Carolina, IV	2024

Representation at General Convention

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Cowden	The Rt. Rev. Chilton Knudsen
The Rev. Charles Graves	The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Reddall
Mr. Scott Haight	

Mandate

2022 - D073 Task Force to Study Household & Relationship Diversity

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention acknowledge that by our Baptism Episcopalians and all Christians are “[received] into the household of God”(BCP 308) and that all are called to reflect that household in the patterning of our own families; and that all clergy are called to “pattern [their] life [and...household...] in accordance with the teachings of Christ so that [they] may be a wholesome example to all people” (BCP 544), and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention acknowledge that many diverse types of families and households exist among members across the Episcopal Church, both laity and clergy; and be it further

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention authorize a Task Force on Relationship Diversity to create opportunities for discussion, reflection and deepening of understanding about existing diversity of family relationships & households among congregations, dioceses and throughout the Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That this Task Force shall engage in prayer, review, and theological study around the diverse types of families, households, and relationships represented among members of this Church, paying particular attention to areas of significant and continuing change in recent years; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop, appoint 15 persons to include 3 bishops, 4 priests or deacons, and 8 laypersons, with members to include a geographically diverse representation from the Church mindful to include younger generations, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, native persons, and persons with experience in a variety of household structures; and be it further

Resolved, That this Task Force submit an interim report to the 81st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force shall recommend to the 82nd General Convention and to the Episcopal Church resources for engaging in conversation, in recognition of the recent and emerging changes in household, family and relationship structures among members of this Church, around the ways in which diverse configurations of families and households may pattern themselves in accordance with the teachings of Christ as members of the Household of God, and the ways in which churches, congregations and dioceses may support such families and households in their Christian lives.

Resolved, That this Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$50,000.00 for the implementation of this resolution, with \$20,000.00 allocated for the first triennium of the task force's existence and \$30,000.00 for the second triennium.

Summary of Work

The Task Force to Study Household and Relationship Diversity has met together since February 2023. From the onset we have recognized the large task at hand and the many areas of consideration that might fall under this group’s purview—including, but not limited to:

- intergenerational households
- marriage equality
- cohabitation prior to marriage
- blended families
- relationship transitions for clergy
- diverse relationship structures
- intentional communities
- heteronormative structures within the church institution

After several meetings, we have determined it is of utmost importance for the Body of Christ to engage in a broader conversation around sexual ethics, from which the Task Force hopes to gain direction and clarity.

Since our work began, we have further subdivided ourselves into five small groups, to begin to organize and tackle these multiple areas of focus. Our small group on “Transitions and Church Employees”, is considering how we might create healthy norms for supporting church employees during major identity and relationship transitions. They have crafted questions to be compiled into a churchwide survey. Another small group is listening to stories of individuals who represent diverse relationship structures, in hopes of these stories becoming testimonials that will inform a broader sexual ethics conversation.

Our next steps include, in early 2024, crafting a second church wide survey that will gather a larger swath of information to assist the Task Force in its next steps. We recognize that we are lacking in data for many of the questions that we have asked one another. We also will gather a group of leading church theologians in sexual ethics to offer wisdom and direction for how to tackle some more controversial conversations and begin to formulate resolutions that we hope to bring before the 82nd General Convention of the Episcopal Church.