

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-D072
Title: Amend Canon I.6.5 to Provide for Mission-Driven Data Strategies Regarding the Vitality of the Church
Proposer: Warren, Ms. Evangeline
Topic: Canons, Congregations, Membership

Directly Related: (Attached)

2022-A132 Create a Task Force to Study 21st Century Congregational Vitality Indicators

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2018-A053 Simplify and Improve Usability of Parochial Report
2015-A084 Modify the Parochial Report
2015-A100 On the Topic of Assessing Diocesan Viability and Vitality (Rejected)
2015-C031 Request Study of the Number and Size of Dioceses
2000-A104 Amend Canon I.6 [On Securing an Accurate View of the State of the Church]
1991-A179 Provide Parochial Report Data to the Committee on the State of the Church

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2022, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#).

D072 - Amend Canon I.6.5 to Provide for Mission-Driven Data Strategies Regarding the Vitality of the Church

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Warren, Ms. Evangeline

Endorsed by: Hardegree, Dr. Lindsey, Curlin, Ms. Laura, Rousseau, Ms. Elizabeth, Brown, Deputy Nathan, Lawton, Ms. Sarah

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: Yes

Requests New Interim Body: No

Directs an Interim Body: No

Directs Dfms Staff: No

Directs Dioceses: Yes

Directs Executive Council: No

HiA: HB

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: 02 - Constitution & Canons

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: [ELCA Reference \(EN ES\)](#)

Resolution Text

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring,

That the 81st General Convention amend Canon I.6.5 to add item c as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

c. The collection, analysis, and dissemination of these and other data regarding the membership, composition, activities, health, or vitality of the Church shall be undertaken in consultation with a professional researcher familiar with best practices in survey design, analysis, reporting and dissemination.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

c. The collection, analysis, and dissemination of these and other data regarding the membership, composition, activities, health, or vitality of the Church shall be undertaken in consultation with a professional researcher familiar with best practices in survey design, analysis, reporting and dissemination.

And be it further

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention direct the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society to establish a staff position of Officer for Mission-Driven Data Strategy, to implement the work of canon I.6.5.c, including to:

- Collaborate with the Office of the General Convention to manage research and data required by Church canons (e.g. Parochial Report) and other research and data needs identified by the General Convention;
- Equip The Episcopal Church, including the Executive Council, the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, Standing Commissions, and Interim Bodies, to make data-informed decisions by conducting relevant research, data collection, projection, analysis, and evaluation;
- Provide, manage, and design experiments and processes (including related goals, metrics, and measurement) to develop and evaluate new and existing programs and initiatives;
- Disseminate Church research and data widely through a centralized data repository managed by this Officer;
- Support use of Church data by providing trainings, such as webinars, to inform and equip members of the Church in their ministries;
- Employ professional best practices in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of Church data through the use of software and consultants as needed; and be it further

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention request that the Executive Council consider a 2025-2027 budget allocation of \$150,000 annually for the implementation of this resolution, covering salary, benefits, and operations for this role.

Explanation

Our catechism states (1979 BCP 855) that “the mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ,” a mission which is carried out “through the ministry of all its members.” In order for The Episcopal Church to continue pursuing its mission in a technologically-advanced modern society, we must utilize data in professional, efficient ways to understand and evaluate our past, current, and future ministry endeavors.

The ministry of our Church’s members spans geographic, cultural, socioeconomic, racial, and numerous other differences. The wide-ranging nature of our ministry (not to mention our mission field: “restore *all* people . . .”) requires information. Technological advances in our contemporary world provide us with endless new ways to gather, analyze, and

disseminate this information, and our peer denominations have responded to this with increasingly robust data offices (see, for example, [Chapter 16, Section 12.B20.c](#) of the “Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America”). It is past time for The Episcopal Church to rise to the current data demands of our congregations, dioceses, synods, and partner organizations.

The ability to access timely and accurate data about our ministries can bring insight and understanding to a wide range of needs across the Church. One such example is the efforts of the Interim Bodies of General Convention; these commissions, committees, task forces, etc., provide robust ways for specific ministry challenges to be addressed between convenings of the General Convention and are the backbone for future legislative action across the entirety of The Episcopal Church. However, interim bodies are severely limited in their ability to collect, analyze, and evaluate essential data necessary for making mission-critical recommendations and decisions.

The Episcopal Church’s data efforts are largely conducted by volunteers rather than professional data analysts. When professional expertise is utilized, it is through an ad hoc mix of contractors and consultants which create increasing inefficiencies for both financial and information management. When one considers the data disparities across our different dioceses, it is easy to see how the opportunity exists for inequitable deployment of resources, misunderstanding and miscommunication in cross-denominational discernment processes, and duplication of efforts due to missed collaborative efforts.

Creating a centralized, funded effort with an Officer for Mission-Driven Data Strategy will allow The Episcopal Church to support its ministries through the appropriate and accurate use of data. The efficiencies that this Officer would support would reduce overall spending by centralizing data collection efforts. For example, resolutions currently being considered by the 81st General Convention alone include over \$800,000 in allocation requests for data collection and analysis. In-house collection and analysis will save us money and provide for continuity of knowledge, both necessary to preserve and improve the health and vitality of our Church. Professional information management will allow us to move beyond reactively gathering data in an effort to confirm pre-existing suspicions. An Officer for Mission-Driven Data Strategy will be able to monitor and track data in real time, identifying trends as they develop so that we support the ministry of our members with data-driven decisions, not data-reactive responses.

Support Document:

[ELCA Reference \(EN ES\)](#)

Note: this resolution and/or its explanation contains external references, such as URLs of websites, that may not be in the required languages of General Convention. Because of copyright restrictions, the General Convention cannot provide translations. However, your

web browser may be able to provide a machine translation into another language. If you need assistance with this, please contact gc.support@episcopalchurch.org.



Resolution Number: 2022-A132
Title: Create a Task Force to Study 21st Century Congregational Vitality Indicators
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention authorizes the creation of a task force to study indicators of 21st century congregational vitality and how The Episcopal Church can collect data that measures those indicators; and be it further

Resolved, That the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies appoint the members of this task force, to include at least 2 bishops, 5 clergy, one of which must be a deacon, and 5 laypeople with appropriate representation from urban and rural congregations, congregations in which people of color are a majority, and congregations that represent the full geographic and economic diversity of the Episcopal Church, including at least one member from outside the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That the President of House Deputies is encouraged to include as an additional member one who has served on the most recent House of Deputies State of the Church Committee; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force work closely with the Task Force on the State of Membership in The Episcopal Church (A156) and the House of Deputies State of the Church Committee; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force coordinate with the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church to ensure that the parochial report form is revised to collect data from congregations that will measure vitality in the 21st century; and be it further

Resolved, That the task force issue a report to the 81st General Convention that includes proposed canonical changes to codify the proposed measurements; 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 \$25,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022* (New York: General Convention, 2023), pp. 903-904.