



## General Convention wrap-up: Following the Way of Jesus

[Episcopal News Service] Responding to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s call to “Follow the Way of Jesus,” deputies and bishops at the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting July 5-13 in Austin, Texas, acted on a record number of resolutions on key issues such as [immigration](#), prayer book [revision](#), [Israel-Palestine](#), and readmitting the Episcopal Church of Cuba as a [diocese](#). Convention also passed a \$134 million [budget](#) that reflects for a further three years the presiding bishop’s priorities of [evangelism](#), racial [reconciliation](#) and [creation care](#). Meanwhile, the legislative processes were overseen by a resident roost of avian [observers](#), one of which adopted a social media presence to bring a steady flow of light-feathered moments to convention amid the often-intense and passionate debates on the key issues before the church. Outside the legislative chambers, several events brought together bishops, deputies and visitors to mingle, socialize, pray, worship and advocate, with a public witness against [gun violence](#) and another outside an immigrant [detention center](#) challenging the actions of the U.S. government in its enforcement of immigration policies. A revival [service](#) at Austin’s Palmer Events Center on July 7 drew a crowd of more than 2,500 people who listened to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s rousing sermon about how “God is love and gives life.” In his opening sermon on July 5, Curry challenged every Episcopalian to embrace the “[Way of Love](#): Practices for a Jesus-centered life” as a way to help the church enter into a new era of spiritual growth.

### **\$134 million budget adopted**

Convention adopted a \$133.8 million 2019-2021 [budget](#) that reflects the presiding bishop’s

priorities of [evangelism](#), racial reconciliation and [justice](#), and [creation care](#). The priorities have been referred to as the “three pillars” of the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement.

It also continues to be built on what Maine Bishop Stephen Lane, vice chair of the Joint Committee on Program, Budget and Finance, told the joint session is “the foundation of our continuing ministries as a church and our commitments to others both within and beyond our church.” In addition, it includes the foundation of the church’s “ongoing commitment to conciliar governance, and the legal, financial and other services of the Church Center [the denominational offices in New York].”

### **Full access to trial-use marriage rites**

Convention agreed in passing [Resolution B012](#) on July 13 to give all Episcopalians the ability to be married by their priests in their home churches.

Resolution B012 had gone from the House of Deputies to the bishops and back to the deputies on its road to approval. Deputies overwhelmingly [approved](#) a heavily amended version of the resolution on July 9, and the House of Bishops added a technical amendment two days later that does not change B012’s goal of giving full access to two trial-use marriage rites for same-sex and opposite-sex couples approved by the 2015 meeting of General Convention (via [Resolution A054](#)).

### **Resolution B012 provides for:**

- Giving rectors or clergy in charge of a congregation the ability to provide access to the trial use of the marriage rites for same-sex and opposite-sex couples. Resolution A054-2015 and the original version of B012 said that clergy could only use the rites under the direction of their bishop.
- Requiring that, if a bishop “holds a theological position that does not embrace marriage for same-sex couples,” he or she may invite another bishop, if necessary, to provide “pastoral support” to any couple desiring to use the rites, as well as to the clergy member and congregation involved. In any case, an outside bishop must be asked to take requests for remarriage if either member of the couple is divorced to fulfill a canonical requirement that applies to opposite-sex couples.
- Continuing trial use of the rites until the completion of the next comprehensive revision of the Book of Common Prayer.

### **New plan for liturgical and prayer book revision**

Convention adopted a plan for liturgical and prayer book revision that sets the stage for the creation of new liturgical texts to respond to the needs of Episcopalians across the church while continuing to use the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

[Resolution A068](#) originally called for the start of a process that would lead to a fully revised prayer book in 2030. The bishops instead adopted a plan for “liturgical and prayer book revision for the future of God’s mission through the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement.”

The bishops’ amended resolution calls for bishops to engage worshipping communities in their dioceses in experimentation and creation of alternative liturgical texts that they will submit to a

new Task Force on Liturgical and Prayer Book Revision to be appointed by the presiding bishop and the president of the House of Deputies.

It also says that liturgical revision will utilize inclusive and expansive language and imagery for humanity and divinity, and will incorporate understanding, appreciation and care of God's creation.

Meanwhile, General Convention also adopted a resolution that allows all congregations in the Episcopal Church to use optional, expansive-language versions of three Rite II Eucharistic prayers in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

[Resolution D078](#) provides alternative language for Prayer A, Prayer B and Prayer D. The changes are available for trial use until the completion of the next comprehensive revision of the Book of Common Prayer.

### **Responding to the voices and stories of women**

The voices and stories of women played a significant role in the workings of the 79th General Convention, from a [liturgy](#) where bishops offered laments and confession for the church's role in sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse to [Resolution D087](#) that allows deputies to bring infant children on the floor of the House of Deputies to feed them.

### **Acting on immigration**

If there was one issue that defied any expectation of controversy at the 79th General Convention, it was immigration.

Bishops and deputies arrived in Austin last week on the heels of a national uproar over the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy toward immigration, particularly the decision to separate children from parents in detention. And despite the administration's reversal on family separations, immigration policies continued to be a hot-button issue, including in the border state that hosted the Episcopal Church's triennial gathering.

But if the country remains divided over what to do about immigration, the thousands of Episcopalians gathered at convention presented a unified front in support of families who have been separated, those facing deportation and immigrants in general – through prayer, testimony, action and the unobstructed passage of legislation. Convention passed three resolutions on immigration issues.

[Resolution C033](#) puts the church on record as respecting the dignity of immigrants and outlines how public policy should reflect that belief; [A178](#) takes a forceful stand against family separations and treatment of immigrant parents and children; and [C009](#), titled "Becoming a Sanctuary Church," encourages Episcopalians and congregations to reach out to and support immigrants facing deportation, including by providing physical sanctuary if they choose.

One of the defining moments of this General Convention was the prayer vigil held July 8 [outside](#) the T. Don Hutto Residential Center, an immigrant detention facility little more than a half-hour outside of Austin. A massive gathering of more than a thousand Episcopalians prayed and sang in support of immigrant parents and children who had been separated.

### **Challenging injustices in Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

General Convention wrapped up its consideration of resolutions relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with mixed results due largely to the House of Bishops' unwillingness to take many of the bolder steps urged by the House of Deputies.

Of the 15 resolutions submitted on Israel-Palestine going into General Convention, only six passed both houses, though the successful resolutions still touch on the plight of Palestinian children, the status of Jerusalem, the disproportionate use of lethal force on both sides and ways the Episcopal Church can press for peace through its investment decisions.

Bishops and deputies, even those arguing for a tougher stance against the conditions of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, took pains to affirm Israel's right to exist and to defend itself, citing longstanding church policy toward the [region](#). And while the bishops rejected the most controversial resolution, [D019](#), saying it amounted to a dangerous "divestment" from Israel, they did join the deputies in passing [Resolution B016](#), which echoes D019 in its use of the phrase "human rights investment screen." Unlike D019 however, Resolution B016 includes no timeline for action by Executive Council or any reference to church complicity in the occupation, though it ultimately could result in the church pulling money out of companies that do business there.

### **Welcome back, Cuba**

Convention voted to admit, or readmit, the Episcopal Church of Cuba as a diocese by passing [Resolution A238](#). The Diocese of Cuba is set to join Province II, which includes dioceses from New York and New Jersey in the United States, Haiti and the Virgin Islands.

### **Compensation for deputies' president**

Convention agreed to a plan to pay the president of the House of Deputies for the work of the office. [Resolution B014](#) passed with no dollar figure attached but agreed to pay the House of Deputies president director's and officer's fees "for specific services rendered in order to fulfill duties required by the church's Constitution and Canons."

### **Impeccable pigeon captivates 79th General Convention with real, digital presence**



[Episcopal News Service –Austin, Texas] It arrived early to the 79th General Convention and soon was swooping through the House of Deputies and strutting through the neighboring Exhibit Hall.