

A Guide to the Ecumenical and Interreligious Resolutions in the Blue Book for General Convention 2018



*Approved by the board of
Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers, June 2018*



Dear members of the General Convention of 2018,

For those of you who are unfamiliar with [Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers](#) (EDEIO - Yes, it does sound like a certain song), we are the network of Ecumenical and Interreligious officers appointed by diocesan bishops that serve to further the work of the Episcopal Church in these areas of our life. Our formation was commended by General Convention in 1976 and we are sustained largely by dues from each diocese in an annual appeal by the Presiding Bishop.

Since the dissolution of the Standing Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (SCEIR) along with most CCABs at General Convention 2015, we are the largest, most representative and most technically experienced body within our denomination that is dedicated to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. Our officers work at the grassroots level inside dioceses fostering cooperation within our respective Christian and interreligious settings.

There has never been a time where ecumenical and interreligious work has been as important as it is now. Growing diversity in even the smallest of our towns and cities means that we now encounter other Christians and people of different faiths on a daily basis in ways that would have been unthinkable a few decades ago. The ongoing work of advocacy and building relationships through dialogue support Jesus' command that we love our neighbor.

In light of this important work, the board of EDEIO (yes, sing it again and get it out of your system) has created the attached document with explanation of the ecumenical and interreligious resolutions as they stand at the time of the publication of the Blue Book. We hope that it can be of help as you consider your voting at convention.

Thank you for the time and energy you will be dedicating to the Episcopal Church in Austin this Summer!

Yours In Christ,

The Rev. David Simmons, President

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[A012 On the Importance of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships for the Stewardship of Creation](#)

Resolved, the House of concurring, That the 79th General Convention commend the importance of ecumenism in addressing issues of climate change and environmental racism; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention acknowledge and commend the work of the diverse ecumenical and interfaith groups seeking to steward Creation; and be it further

Resolved, That as disciples of Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made and in whom all things cohere, commends our communion partners to recognize our unique opportunity to speak and act on behalf of God's Creation together; and be it further

Resolved, That the Office of Ecumenical Relations shall include the Stewardship of Creation as a priority item for dialogue and action in the Church's ecumenical relationships; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church seek to continue our robust heritage of interfaith partnership as an essential aspect of our gospel witness; and be it further

Resolved, That the Church commend provinces, Regional Consultative Groups, dioceses, individual parishes, clergy and lay people to steward creation as neighbors and partners with ecumenical and interfaith organizations.

The action part of this resolution directs that the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations include Stewardship of Creation as a priority item for dialogue and action in ecumenical relationships. Stewardship of Creation is certainly an important issue, and much of our advocacy work in partnership with other denominations is already in this area.

Generally, the direction of Ecumenical dialogues reflects the agreed priorities

between our dialogue partners and ourselves that are worked out in mutual discussion. An editorial comment is that the third Resolve should read “Full Communion Partners” rather than “Communion Partners.”

[A035 Commend "The Church Towards A Common Vision"](#)

Resolved, the House of X concurring, That the 79th General Convention commend to every Episcopalian for study the 2013 convergence statement published by the World Council of Churches, The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV).

“[The Church Towards a Common Vision](#)” (2013) is the successor document to the better-known “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” (1982) from the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission. This document “Addresses first the Church’s mission, unity, and its being in the Trinitarian life of God. It then addresses our growth in communion – in apostolic faith, sacramental life, and ministry – as churches called to live in and for the world.”

After an ecumenical document is published, a technical process called “reception” begins, where the document is sent to constituent bodies for discussion and response. While the Episcopal Church has already made a formal, draft response to the document (see A040), the process of reception also extends to all members of those constituent churches. This resolution simply commends the document to our membership for reading.

[A036 Affirm Ongoing Work and Dialogue with Ecumenical Bodies](#)

1. *Resolved, the House of X concurring, That the 79th General Convention affirms the continuation of the ecumenical dialogues in which the Episcopal Church is engaged: the Presbyterian-Episcopal Dialogue; the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue (ARCUSA), noting particularly a renewed round of conversations; and the work toward full communion with the United Methodist Church. This Convention also affirms the continued coordinating committee work with our full communion partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Moravian Church (Northern Province and Southern Province); and be it further*
2. *Resolved, That this Convention celebrates with joy and gratitude the deepening*

relationship among the leaders of the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and commends the members of all four churches for the work they have done together and the statements and study documents they have jointly issued.

This resolution does not change the status of any of our ongoing Ecumenical dialogues or full-communion agreements. It reauthorizes and recommits ourselves to that work and those relationships. While these dialogues are already authorized and therefore don't technically need to be re-acknowledged, this resolution allows the Presiding Bishop's Deputy for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations and Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers to convey to those we are in dialogue or full communion with, "We still value this relationship NOW."

[A037 Encourage Interfaith Engagement](#)

Resolved, the House of X concurring, That the 79th General Convention affirms the work being done on behalf of interfaith engagement by the Episcopal Church at all levels in the life of the Church. We particularly cite the deepening of the Christian Jewish and Christian Muslim engagement as well as the broadening engagement with other religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and others.

This is another resolution similar to A036 that allows our representatives to carry our greetings and commitment to dialogue partners - In this case to interreligious dialogues.

[A040 Formal Response to "The Church: Towards a Common Vision"](#)

Resolved, the House of X concurring, That the 79th General Convention encourage the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies to refer the issue of a formal response from the Episcopal Church to the 2013 World Council of Churches statement The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV) to the Joint Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations for the purpose of proposing a definitive response from the 79th General Convention.

Related to A035. After the World Council of Churches releases a Faith and Order document, they ask each of their member churches (which includes ourselves) to

send a formal response document. These responses are not intended to become authoritative doctrine for the member churches. In the past, such as with Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, the response was crafted by a team assembled by the presiding officers, quite often drawn from the Standing Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (SCEIR).

In this triennium, the tasks handled by SCEIR have fallen to the Executive Council Joint Standing Committee on World Mission, which has quite a bit else on its plate. A [draft response](#) was created in 2017 by a committee appointed by the office of the Presiding Bishop's Deputy on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, but the path to approving the document was unclear. We would suggest that a process for the future would be to vest such drafting tasks in the advisory council that A174 seeks to create, acknowledging that the Executive Council holds the authority to authorize the finished response.

To that end, we suggest this resolution might be revised as such:

Resolved, the House of X concurring, that the issue of a formal response from the Episcopal Church to the 2013 World Council of Churches statement The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV) be referred to the Executive Council. And be it further:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention acknowledge that formal responses to ecumenical and interreligious documents from outside bodies (such as the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity Faith and Order, the World Council of Churches or the National Council of Churches) that do not require changes to our discipline generally fall within the purview of the Executive Council.

[A041 Episcopal Church-United Methodist Dialogue](#)

Resolved, the House of X concurring, That this 79th General Convention receives with gratitude the proposal "A Gift to the World, Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness," which was prepared and distributed by The Episcopal Church-United Methodist Dialogue; and be it further

Resolved, That this Convention encourages and supports prayerful consideration by all Episcopalians during the coming triennium of this significant step forward in response to our Lord's fervent wish "that all may be one."

Our dialogue with the United Methodists began over 40 years ago with its predecessor bodies, and "A Gift to the World" is the result of that long process of formal discussion. This resolution asks the Episcopal Church to "consider" this document. Consideration could take many forms, such as clergy days focused around the dialogue, the invitation of your local UMC bishop to diocesan convention, joint studies between Episcopal and UMC Congregations, etc.

If this resolution passes, it does not commit the Episcopal Church to anything at this point - it simply accepts the document as the result of this stage of the dialogue and commends it for study. The United Methodist Church is expected to vote on the full communion proposal at their General Conference in 2020. The proposal will then be in front of our General Convention in 2021.

EDEIO has spent the last several years in our meetings and at the [National Workshop on Christian Unity](#) discussing "A Gift to the World" with our Methodist brothers and sisters. We have created a web site which contains documents, articles, resource guides, etc. that support the building of our relationship with the UMC. It can be found at: <http://umc-tec.org>. An example of these resources, the "Thumbnail Guide to 'A Gift To The World'" is attached at the end of this PDF.

[A174 Create Advisory Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations](#)

Resolved, the House of X concurring, That the 79th General Convention create an Advisory Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations to be appointed by the Presiding Officers. It shall be the duty of the Committee to work with the Office of Ecumenical Relations and to make recommendations to the Executive Council Joint Standing Committee on World Mission (or its equivalent.)

Per the previous discussion on A040, The EDEIO board believes this would be an excellent idea. In the absence of re-forming SCEIR (which EDEIO would support), it would create a team of technical experts to advise Executive Council on matters in between and in the run up to General Convention. The Episcopal Church has had

a committee or task force like this in existence in some form since 1862 until the dissolution of SCEIR in 2015.

C026 Amend Canon I.20.1 - Building Full communion with Church of Sweden

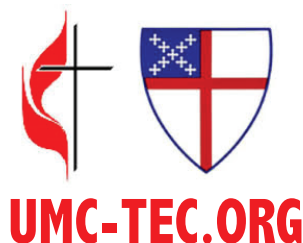
Resolved, the House of X concurring, That the 79th General Convention proclaim that both Churches have acted as if they have always been in full communion, and therefore are so; and be it further

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention direct the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons amend Canon I.20.1 to read:

CANON 20: Of Churches in Full Communion

Sec. 1. The Episcopal Church, a member of the Anglican Communion, has a relationship of full communion with those Churches in the historic episcopal succession and with whom it has entered into covenant agreements including:(a) the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht,(b) la Iglesia Filipina Independiente/the Philippine Independent Church,(c) the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, and (d) the Church of Sweden.

Our Dialogue with the Church of Sweden has been a fruitful one. The Church of Sweden is a Lutheran church with bishops who remained in the Historic Episcopate at the time of the Reformation. They ordain women to all orders of ministry and have a similar stance to our own on issues around human sexuality. At the end of their colonial experiment in Southern Delaware, the Swedish church commended their parishes to the Episcopal Church, and some of our parishes still bear the titles from that history. The basis of our dialogue was simply to acknowledge these similarities and historic ties, which we did formally at the General Convention of 2015 (B004). Therefore, since we have acted as if we were in full communion in the past, this simply changes the canon to acknowledge it as fact.



A Thumbnail Guide to:

A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness The Proposed Full-Communion Agreement between The United Methodist and Episcopal Churches

WHAT DOES IT DO?

- Recognizes that each church is a valid part of the one, holy catholic and apostolic church
- Allows for clergy from one denomination to serve in the other (with the approval of local bishops)
- Requires United Methodist bishops be present at Episcopal consecrations and Episcopal bishops at United Methodist consecrations.

WHAT DOES IT NOT DO?

- Merge church government or congregations.
- Change worship and liturgy in either denomination's churches.
- Change the way wine and/or grape juice is used in either denomination.
- Require either denomination to adopt the discipline or moral teaching of the other.

WHY DO IT?

- Because on the night before he died, Jesus prayed that we as Christians might be one (John 17:22). This agreement is yet another step in following our Lord's command.
- Exchangability of ordained ministry allows for greater flexibility in shared ministry in contexts such as rural areas, medical institutions, and college chaplaincies.
- This agreement "Closes the loop." Methodists and Episcopalians are already both in Full Communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Episcopal Church is in Full Communion with the Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces), which the United Methodist Church is close to entering an agreement with.

WHAT IS OUR SHARED HISTORY?

- In Colonial America, the spiritual ancestors of both Episcopalians and Methodists were members of the Church of England.
- Methodists attended church in Anglican parishes, but held their own small-group meetings for study and encouragement in Christian life, which was the "method" in Methodist.
- After the Revolution, the future of Anglicanism in America was uncertain. At least half of the Church of England's clergy fled to Canada and half of its parishes were closed.
- The post-colonial leaders of the Episcopal and Methodist churches came to different solutions for the crisis.
- "Following the American Revolution, The Episcopal Church adapted the office of bishop to its new missional context: bishops were elected by representative bodies (Diocesan Conventions) and exercised oversight in conjunction with clergy and laypersons. After the American Revolution, Methodists also adapted the episcopal office to the missional needs of their ministerial circumstances and settings." (From *A Gift To the World*, 2017)

WHAT DO METHODISTS AND EPISCOPALIANS SHARE?

- A belief in Jesus Christ as Savior
- A belief in the Holy Trinity as formulated in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds.
- A belief in Scripture as "containing all things necessary for salvation," and as the primary rule for the life of the church.
- The practice of Baptism as the initiation into the life of Christ through the Church.
- The sacrament of the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion) as a means of divine grace that sustains and deepens our faith and that contains the "Real, personal, living presence of Jesus Christ." (from *This Holy Mystery*, 2004)
- The historic pattern of a three-fold ordained ministry in Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, open to both women and men.
- That prayer and holiness of heart and life are ways of growth in the Christian faith.
- That pursuit of social action and justice is an inherent practice of Christian discipleship.

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