

A Resolution Affirming Human Rights for All People in U.S. Prisons and Detention Centers DRAFT

Submitted by:

The Rev. Amy Whitcomb Slemmer (Canonically Resident Clergy) St. Andrew's, Hanover

THE RESOLUTION

Resolved, that the 240th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts affirm the dignity of every human being, including our siblings in Christ who are incarcerated or detained in jails, prisons, or detention centers within the United States; and be it further

Resolved, that this Convention call upon federal, state, and local authorities to ensure that conditions of confinement meet international human rights standards, including access to adequate medical care, clean water, proper nutrition, legal counsel, meaningful human contact, and protection from abuse or torture; and be it further

Resolved, that this Convention encourage Episcopalians across the Diocese to engage in ministries of prison visitation, reentry support, policy advocacy, and restorative justice, grounded in the Gospel mandate to "visit the prisoner" and to see Christ in those whom the world has cast aside; and be it further

Resolved, that the Diocese of Massachusetts submit this resolution to the 81st General Convention of The Episcopal Church, calling upon the wider Church to redouble its efforts in support of incarcerated people and to advocate for a justice system rooted in human dignity, rehabilitation, and mercy.

EXPLANATION

In Matthew 25:36, Jesus says, "I was in prison and you visited me." As Episcopalians, our Baptismal Covenant commits us to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being. This includes those who are incarcerated—many of whom are imprisoned due to situations that disproportionately affect people of color, the poor, immigrants, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with over 2 million people in its prisons and jails, roughly 20% of the world's incarcerated population, despite comprising only about 4-5% of the global population. Consequently, the country's policies have outsized global impact.

The Episcopal Church has a long tradition of ministry to and advocacy for people in prison. This resolution recommits the Diocese of Massachusetts to that tradition by calling for humane conditions, systemic reform, and compassionate engagement.

STATEMENT AGAINST

Please add as is helpful

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

There are no direct budgetary considerations for this resolution. Costs incurred will be the incorporation of the restatement of our beliefs, and the highlighting of these moral positions as members of this Diocese.

There may be a political cost if these views are found counter to some of our Episcopal siblings.

The expectation is that if this resolution is adopted it would be incorporated in our formation for ministry as among the priorities that we place on living out our baptismal covenant.