

June 2014

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts Resolutions Committee Guidelines

Developing a Resolution

Phase One: Draft Your Resolution

The Resolutions Committee recommends for consideration by the Convention only resolutions that express sentiments or views that are *not* subject to the Convention's control. Any proposal that would have significant implications for the diocesan budget or falls under the purview of an existing diocesan committee should be submitted directly to that committee. Please use the following form when submitting resolutions to the Resolutions Committee. A sample resolution is appended to the end of these instructions.

- (1) **The Title:** A brief description of what the resolution is about.
- (2) **The Name(s) of the Submitter(s):** A resolution may be submitted by any member of the Convention (i.e., canonically resident clergy or lay delegate to the Convention). *If there is more than one submitter, please indicate the name of the contact person and supply the Resolutions Committee with that person's e-mail address and telephone number to facilitate correspondence between the submitters and the Resolutions Committee.*
- (3) **The Resolution** (the "Resolved" clause(s)):
 - The substance of the resolution appears in the "resolved" clause(s).
 - All clauses in the resolution should begin with the word "Resolved."
 - If there is more than one clause, "and be it further" or "and therefore be it" should appear at the end of the previous clause, not at the beginning of a new clause.
 - In keeping with the practice at the Episcopal Church's General Convention, preliminary "whereas" clauses should not be used. Many good resolutions have failed because of overuse of the "whereas" clause, which can detract from the focus and intent of the resolution. Information of the kind provided in "whereas" clauses is more appropriate and effective in the succeeding explanation (see Section 4 below).
- (4) **The Explanation:** A brief explanation providing the rationale for the resolution. The explanation portion also provides a space for providing background, clarification or reasons for supporting the resolution. The explanation should be as short and concise as possible.

(5) **The Statement Against the Resolution:**

The Diocesan Convention in 1997 mandated that the Resolutions Committee provide statements “against” each resolution as well as the explanation “for” the motion in order to give Convention members opposing positions on each resolution to consider in advance of presentation on the Convention floor and to encourage open and balanced conversation about its ramifications. The Resolutions Committee asks the submitters of resolutions to seek conversation with real critics of the substance of your resolution in order to supply a brief and effective “against” statement for each resolution.

(6) **The Statement of Requirements to Implement the Resolution:**

Once they are approved by the Convention, resolutions often require additional procedures and staff resources to carry them out. The Diocesan Council, the Convention Steering Committee and the bishops have asked submitters of resolutions to include a summary of these requirements for each resolution. This statement must include estimated time, cost and materials required of the Diocese to fulfill all clauses of the resolution. It must also include a designated person or persons who will oversee the implementation phase of the resolution.

Phase Two: “Interrogate” Your Resolution

Now, before submitting your resolution, revisit it and ask yourself the following four questions. Your answers will help you refine your resolution and make effective use of diocesan structures that are already in place to address issues of interest to members of the Diocese of Massachusetts. *The Resolutions Committee will not consider any resolution that would have significant implications for the diocesan budget or falls under the purview of an existing diocesan committee. Any such resolution submitted to the Resolutions Committee will be referred to the appropriate committee.*

1. Does your proposed resolution ask Convention to **create, endorse or support a diocesan program or a program endorsed by a diocesan committee or organization?**

In that case, you must submit your proposal to the appropriate diocesan committee or organization for support and action. These committees and organizations are encouraged to review such proposals in light of diocesan mission and goals and, if supported, to seek appropriate diocesan communications venues for publicizing and promoting these efforts.

2. Does your proposed resolution ask Convention to **express its view or take a stand on any issue that is under the control of Diocesan Convention or its committees?**

Examples would be stances on clergy compensation, the budgeting process, amendments to the diocesan Constitution or Canons, or the work of any of the organizations of the diocese. In that case, you must submit your proposal to the appropriate diocesan committee or organization for support and action. These committees can take more informed and effective action relative to your resolution, and share this work appropriately with Convention through their annual reports.

3. Does your proposed resolution ask Convention for **financial support of any kind, directly or indirectly, through the development or expansion of a diocesan program or goal?** In that case, you must submit your proposal to the appropriate committee or program. If your proposal is approved, the committee will have the opportunity to submit it through the appropriate channels in the budgeting process. If you need assistance determining where to direct your proposal, please email Laura Simons at lsimons@diomass.org for help.

4. Does your proposed resolution ask Convention to **express its view or take a stand on any issue that is not under Diocesan Convention's control?** Examples would be statements in favor of world peace or a sustainable global economic order. In that case, the subject matter of the proposed resolution is appropriate for presentation directly to Diocesan Convention. However, before submitting the proposed resolution, please begin by researching Convention resolutions for the past 3-5 years to be certain you are not repeating stances taken by recent Diocesan Conventions. If your search finds no similar resolutions, please submit your resolution to the Convention Office by the close of business on Friday, September 12, 2014, using the **Phase One guidelines**, above. Please note that proposed resolutions which have even minimal financial and/or staffing impact (mailings, publicity) must include confirmation of the availability of diocesan staff support and allocation of funds under an existing diocesan budget line.

Should you have any questions or need clarification regarding these options, a member of the Resolutions Committee will be pleased to call or meet with you to discuss them. Please contact the Convention Office at (617) 482-4826, extension 406.

Phase Three: Submit Your Resolution

1. Resolutions must be submitted by the stated deadline either in written or electronic form. The Resolutions Committee prefers electronic submissions whenever possible because this facilitates the editing process. Submissions should be made to lsimons@diomass.org. Submitters of resolutions must designate the name, e-mail address and telephone number of a contact person who is authorized to review the recommendations of the Resolutions Committee. *The contact information will be used only by members of the Resolutions Committee and will not be included in the text of the resolution as it is printed in the Delegates' Handbook.*

2. Resolutions must be submitted in the form outlined in Phase One, above.

Phase Four: Respond to Resolutions Committee

After the deadline for submitting resolutions, the Resolutions Committee of the Diocesan Convention will meet and consider all properly submitted resolutions in depth. The committee may contact you with questions about form, content, budgeting or implementation. Please be open to their questions and ready to respond promptly. It is the goal of the Resolutions Committee not to critique the validity of your resolution's

intent but to assist you in presenting your resolution to Convention in good order. To that end, the Committee may suggest formal or substantive changes to your resolution.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Examining the Practice of Communion of the Unbaptized

Name of the Submitter

The Rev. Matthew Stewart, 508-XXX-XXXX; XX@XXX.com

Resolved, that the 221st Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts direct our bishops to appoint a task force to study the practice of Communion of the Unbaptized at the parish level and to report its theological and pastoral findings to the 222nd Convention.

Explanation

The 75th General Convention passed a resolution (D084) reaffirming the Episcopal Church's canonical stance that communion is only to be administered to the baptized, and directing the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops and the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music "to provide to the 76th General Convention a pastoral and theological understanding of the relationship between Holy Baptism and Eucharistic practice."

In the Diocese of Massachusetts, many parishes practice Communion of the Unbaptized in conscientious defiance of the Constitution and Canons. It is, therefore, theologically responsible to enter into a disciplined discussion and analysis of the experience of those parishes which practice Communion of the Unbaptized.

The debate over this issue is occurring across the Episcopal Church, in the National Church, academic circles, diocesan committees, and local communities. Given the prevalence of this practice here, the Diocese of Massachusetts is poised to offer insight; whether this practice is a liturgical accretion that robs our sacramental practice of its meaning and efficacy, or a new direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading us as the Church.

Statement Against

Even if the debate over Communion of the Unbaptized is an important one, there are enough voices elsewhere debating it. One more committee's work would not significantly impact the Church's discernment. Furthermore, the amount of time that it would demand of a task force makes it prohibitive.

Statement of Requirement to Implement the Resolution

This resolution would require a significant investment of time by the task force to gather, compile and analyze the data on local practice and theology of Communion of the Unbaptized.