

POLICY FOR ACTION II

The
Social
Policies
of the
Episcopal
Church



As
Adopted at
General
Convention
1982 and 1985
and
Executive
Council
1982-1985

During the 20th century we have seen an increasing awareness by the Church of its role in the making of social policy. Today the Episcopal Church accepts its responsibility for witnessing to the Gospel through an active concern for the life of the world around us. The active social ministry of the Church is based upon those policies which are enacted by the General Convention of the Church. These policies originate from resolutions which are presented by individuals and groups throughout the Episcopal Church to the General Convention at its triennial gathering. Once approved by both Houses of the Convention—the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies—these resolutions become the “policy” of the Church. Such church policies represent specific positions on various social issues, and on these positions the Church bases its programs of ministry and action.

This system for the development of social policy originates with individuals and groups in the Church. Therefore, stated social policies tend to reflect the interests and concerns of those Episcopalians acting either corporately or, in a few instances, individually, who have formulated their views and presented them through the legislative process. Where there is much interest in specific subjects, we have many statements on those issues. Where there is little interest or concern, however, there are few policy statements.

It is also well to remember that both Houses of Convention must approve any resolution in order for it to become a policy. Therefore, these policies reflect the views of a majority of the bishops and duly elected deputies (delegates) to the Convention. Since the election of Convention deputies is linked through the diocesan convention to the parish, the deputies represent Episcopalians throughout the Church. Each parish elects delegates to diocesan convention. These delegates are then responsible for electing the deputies from the diocese to General Convention.

In order to become active parts of the Church's ministry in the world, social policies must be im-

plemented. Many resolutions state ways in which this is to be done. Often the General Convention and the Executive Council of the Church charge the Episcopal Church Center staff in specific ways with the implementation of these policies. The programs, action, and ministry of the Church Center are based entirely on those policies approved by the Church meeting in General Convention or, in the interim, by Executive Council.

The social policies of the Church are active forces in carrying out our Christian mission. It is through the enactment of these resolutions that we speak together, and it is through our individual actions that we implement these policies. The Church lives in the world through the actions of its people. We minister in Christ's name, and as it is written in the Old Testament: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

THE RESOLUTIONS

The social policies approved by the General Convention in 1985 are listed below. Also included are pertinent resolutions from the 1982 General Convention and subsequent meetings of the Executive Council, 1982-1985. It is important to remember that in some cases policies established at previous conventions are still in effect. This is usually true unless they have been superseded by more recent resolutions. (For example, see the policies on energy and ecology which were last considered at General Convention, 1979.)

The policies listed are grouped by those issue areas which have been established for use in the Public Policy Network. Each issue area has staff at the Episcopal Church Center whom you can contact for more information about a specific policy or policy area. In all cases the complete resolution, as passed by General Convention or Executive Council, is available by writing to the Public Issues Office at the Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, New York 10017 (telephone 212-867-8400).

Food Policy/Hunger

- Development aid for famine areas.
- Support for World Food Day.
- Support for federal food and nutrition programs.
- Commitment to alleviation of hunger.
- Judicious use of land resources.

For further information contact the Hunger Office, Episcopal Church Center.

Peace and Disarmament

- Establish a Standing Commission on Peace.
- Adopt Peace Commission report as official Church statement.
- Encourage study of Episcopal and ecumenical peace reports.
- Recommend 1988 Lambeth Conference address issues of war.
- Encourage seminary courses on peace.
- Develop educational materials on U.S.S.R.
- Work for bilateral nuclear freeze and SALT II.
- Support nuclear freeze and halt to testing.
- Endorse no first use of nuclear weapons.
- Oppose "Star Wars."
- Oppose chemical weapons.
- Support Helsinki accords.
- Encourage study of Central America Task Force Reports.
- Work for peace in Nicaragua and all Central America.
- Cease all covert and overt military activity in Central America.
- Request end of military aid to El Salvador.
- Encourage contact with Episcopal Churches in Central America.
- Support Contadora process.
- Affirm safe haven in U.S. for Central Americans.
- Support a Sanctuary Ministry.
- Support extended voluntary departure for Haitians and Guatemalans.
- Condemn South African actions in Namibia.
- Call for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- Reject increased military aid to the Philippines.
- Call for peace in the Middle East.
- Support ministry of reconciliation in Ireland.
- Oppose moving U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv.

- Support government action to provide relief for Cambodian refugees.
- Condemn terrorism.
- Support redress for wartime relocation of civilians.
- Support nonviolent war resistance.
- Support refusal to participate in war.
- Support ministry to conscientious objectors.
- Work for reconciliation of divisions caused by Vietnam War.
- Urge U.S. government to work for abolition of torture worldwide.

For further information contact the Public Issues Office, Episcopal Church Center.

Health and Welfare

- Support equitable health care.
- Support programs aiding older persons.
- Encourage genetic engineering research.
- Uphold the family as the basis of society.
- Affirm human sexuality as a gift from God.
- Combat sexual exploitation.
- Reaffirm right to use birth control.
- Approve "in vitro" fertilization.
- Oppose government legislation prohibiting abortion.
- Condemn abortion to select sex of children.
- Study implications of abortion.
- Support improved adoption laws.
- Approve organ, blood and tissue donations.
- Affirm a living will as a beneficial document.
- Study Uniform Determination of Death Act.
- Support programs for violence awareness.
- Support training to recognize child abuse.
- Stop violence at reproductive health centers.
- Support ministry to homosexual persons.
- Affirm ministry to persons affected by AIDS.
- Support increased research of AIDS.
- Encourage local courses on chemical dependency.
- Encourage seminary courses on chemical dependency.
- Support therapeutic use of marijuana.
- Recognize problems of drug abuse.
- Adopt Episcopal policy on alcohol and drug abuse.

- Work for accessibility for disabled persons.
- Support closed captioned videos.
- Fund interpreters for deaf at church functions.
- Reject "creationist" movement.

For further information contact the Social Ministries Office, Episcopal Church Center.

Energy and Ecology

- Urge careful examination of proposals for use of undeveloped land (GC'79).

For further information contact the Public Issues Office or the Housing Office, Episcopal Church Center.

Economic and Social Justice

- Encourage coalitions for social change.
- Support ministry with poor and oppressed people.
- Encourage involvement in public education.
- Support ministry in the criminal justice system.
- Support federal programs aiding poor women.
- Recognize farm economic crisis.
- Support homeless people.
- Call for reordering of federal budget priorities.
- Recognize adverse effect of "flat tax."
- Affirm importance of moral criteria for economic decisions.
- Affirm outreach to meet social needs.
- Support ministry with migrant workers.
- Develop programs to advocate for justice.
- Approve the Jubilee Ministry program.
- Renew commitment to Jubilee program.
- Appoint diocesan Jubilee officers.
- Approve Jubilee intern program.
- Approve Jubilee Volunteers for Mission.

For further information contact the Coalition for Human Needs, the Jubilee Ministries Office or the Public Issues Office, Episcopal Church Center.

Racism and Discrimination

- Support Native American treaty rights.
- Increase employment opportunities for American Indians.
- Oppose apartheid in South Africa.

- Develop educational support for black South Africans.
- Affirm witness of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Church in Africa.
- Commend Bishop Tutu.
- Support work of Bishop Tutu.
- Call for release of South African political prisoners.
- Divest Church funds from South Africa and Namibia.
- Support socially responsible investments.
- Study needs of minorities in the Church.
- Approve federal affirmative action programs.
- Support affirmative action in Church organizations.
- Establish diocesan affirmative action policies.
- Eradicate institutional sexism.
- Support Equal Rights Amendment.
- Encourage immigration of Amerasian children.
- Encourage acceptance of refugees by U.S.
- Call for positive legislation on immigration.
- Call for Soviet Union to allow freedom to emigrate.
- Affirm religious freedom.
- Oppose anti-Semitism.
- Affirm civil rights of homosexuals.

For further information contact the Coalition for Human Needs, the Public Issues Office or the Offices of Black, Hispanic, Native American or Asiamerican Ministries.

THE SOCIAL POLICIES OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH—A SUMMARY

Who makes policy for the Episcopal Church?

The General Convention and the Executive Council of the Church vote on resolutions which, when passed, become church policy.

When is such policy made?

The General Convention of the Church meets every three years. The Executive Council meets three times a year during the interim.

Who comprises the General Convention?

The General Convention is composed of two legislative houses, the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. The House of Deputies is made up of lay and clerical deputies who have been elected by the respective diocesan conventions. You, in your parish, elect delegates to your diocesan conventions and these delegates in turn elect your deputies.

How are subjects selected for the resolutions?

All members of the Church or any church group can present their concerns for consideration to the General Convention. These concerns take the form of resolutions. The subjects of the resolutions considered are therefore determined by the members of the Church.

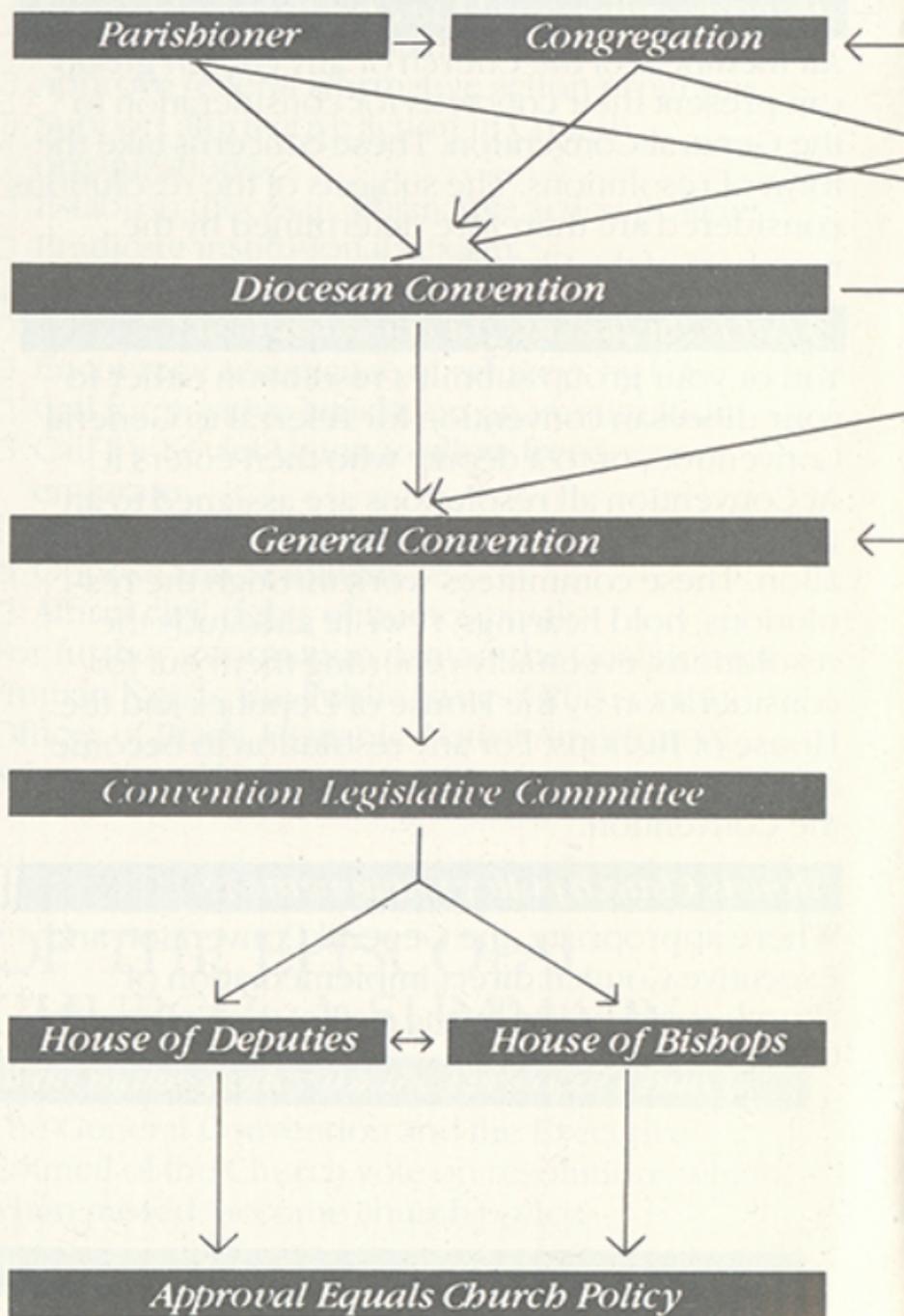
What is the process for consideration?

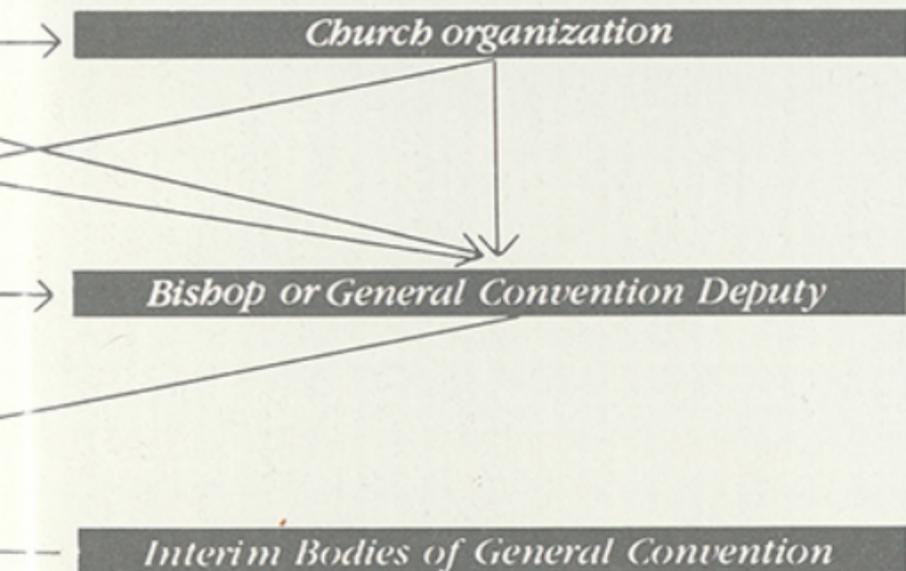
You or your group submit a resolution either to your diocesan convention for referral to General Convention, or to a deputy who then enters it. At Convention all resolutions are assigned to an appropriate Convention committee for consideration. These committees work through the resolutions, hold hearings, rewrite and study the resolutions, eventually reporting them out for consideration by the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops. For any resolution to become a policy it has to be approved by both Houses of the Convention.

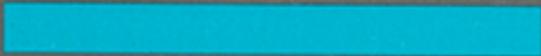
How is Church policy implemented?

Where appropriate, the General Convention and Executive Council direct implementation of church social policy by the staff of the Episcopal Church Center.

How a Resolution Becomes Church Policy







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