A037

TOPIC: ECUMENISM

Approve and Commend Guidelines for Ecumenical Shared Ministries

PROPOSER

Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations

ENDORSED BY

SPONSORED BY

PAGE NUMBER(S) FOR REFERENCE

Blue Book: p. 139–142; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A

HOUSE OF INITIAL ACTION / LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

HB / Ecumenical Relations

CURRENT FILING STATUS

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REVIEW STATUS (PB&F, CONSTITUTION, CANONS)

None required

RESOLUTION TEXT

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 77th General Convention commend the following guidelines to the Dioceses of this Church in which there is a need to establish or participate in ecumenical shared ministries in particular locations.

Guidelines for Ecumenical Shared Ministries Outside of Full Communion or Interim Sharing Agreements

I. Introduction

The fundamental principle is that the Church must always be able to proclaim the Gospel afresh in each generation and place, baptizing and celebrating the Eucharist in response to the Lord's command, by which the reconciling love of Christ is lived and proclaimed, and the baptized are equipped for ministry in God's world. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (BCP 876-878) is for Episcopalians the theological foundation for this work.

These guidelines are by intention permissive rather than prescriptive, while requiring intentional participation in the particular context by the Ecclesiastical Authority, the judicatories of other cooperating Churches, clergy, and congregational leadership.

These guidelines do not preclude the adoption of diocesan Canons to govern particular circumstances, provided always that any diocesan Canons do not conflict with the Canons and Constitution of The Episcopal Church.

Nothing in these guidelines is to be interpreted as abrogating the responsibilities of the Ecclesiastical Authority with respect to the discipline of particular clergy of this Church under the Canons.

II. Guidelines

We recommend a period of discernment, involving, but not limited to, questions of mission strategy and/or the needs of Episcopalians and/or other Christians in

a particular place, which will be conducted with leadership of the Church or Churches with which it is desired to share a specific ecumenical ministry. Discernment in such cases follows a process that is collaborative, transparent, and respectful of the decision-making cultures of both The Episcopal Church and the other Church(es) concerned.

• Resources include, but are not limited to, the official reports of the ecumenical agreements between The Episcopal Church and other Churches, as well as documents from other ecumenical dialogues, including documents from the World Council of Churches.

• Where the mission strategy of the Church, or the needs of Episcopalians or other Christians warrant the establishment of an ecumenical shared ministry, we recommend that the Ecclesiastical Authority set up a joint task force for the establishment of a covenant along the lines of such covenants as have been common between judicatories of The Episcopal Church and other Churches. Such covenants may be specific to a particular shared ministry, or may be more general. We suggest a body, responsible to the Ecclesiastical Authority, to advise the Ecclesiastical Authority and support those who are involved in such shared ministries as necessary.

• We encourage Ecclesiastical Authorities to be as permissive as possible within the boundaries of our polity for the sake of mission and ministry.

• These ecumenical shared ministries may well raise unique questions and open new possibilities, which it must be within the potential of dioceses to explore. A clear, reasoned, and transparent process in making such decisions and provisions empowers the church's life. Questions of liturgical practice in these shared ecumenical ministries must be carefully and sensitively negotiated.

• The appointment of a person in Holy Orders to be the pastor of a congregation of a Church not in full communion with this Church may or may not constitute part of an arrangement for an ecumenical shared ministry. In any case, such an appointment must be carefully negotiated beforehand with the judicatories so that various questions and issues (such as responsibility for oversight and eligibility for pensionable service) may be satisfactorily decided before commitments are made.

• Each ecumenical shared ministry should be subject to regular review by the leadership of the congregation and the respective judicatories.

• The Office of the Presiding Bishop and the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations should continue to be resources for assisting Ecclesiastical Authorities in exploring and establishing ecumenical shared ministries falling under the purview of these guidelines.

• Dioceses should inform the Ecumenical and Interreligious Office and the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations of their use and experience of these guidelines.

EXPLANATION

In response to Resolution 2009-D016 of the 76th General Convention, the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations suggests these guidelines for Ecclesiastical Authorities, clergy, and congregations where there is a need for local ecumenical shared ministries. Because such ministries are by

definition local, the Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations proposes guidelines rather than new Canons. The Standing Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations recognizes that circumstances, histories, and cultures will differ in each local ecumenical shared ministry, and the ability of the Church to respond to mission is best served by a policy that permits the widest range of responses.