Resolutions Committee Report

By: The Rev. Elizabeth Keeler, Chair

October 29, 2026

This report is made on behalf of the Resolutions Committee. It addresses membership, hearings, courtesy resolutions, and substantive resolutions, with appropriate recommendations for action by Convention.

Membership

The Resolutions Committee consists of:

- Ms. Olivia Andres, Virginia Commonwealth University
- The Rev. Jo Belser, St. Martin de Porres, Alexandria
- The Rev. Charles Cowherd, St. Timothy's, Herndon
- The Very Rev. Janettarose Greene, St. Mary's, Arlington
- Ms. Judy Hall, Church of the Good Shepherd, Bluemont
- Mr. Jabriel Hasan, St. Peter's, Richmond
- The Rev. Elizabeth Keeler, Trinity, Washington, Committee Chair
- Mr. Russ Randle, St. Mary's, Arlington

Virtual Hearing

On Saturday, October 24, at 10 a.m., the Committee held a virtual hearing concerning the seven resolutions received by the deadline and heard from the sponsors of these resolutions and others who wished to comment on the substance and wording of the resolutions.

Courtesy Resolutions

Three of these seven resolutions are courtesy resolutions honoring the outstanding service of these members of our Diocese:

- The Rev. Oran Warder, on the occasion of his retirement later this month for exemplary service the past 26 years as Rector of St. Paul's in Alexandria;
- The Venerable Holly Hanback, who has completed a six-year term as an Archdeacon of this Diocese offering guidance, encouragement, pastoral care, and witness by example to the Community of Deacons; and

- The late Mrs. Mareea Wilson, who served two congregations and this diocese long and exceptionally well, modeling Christian service and racial justice and reconciliation.

The Resolutions Committee will bring these three Courtesy Resolutions to the floor of Convention with the recommendation that they be collectively approved by voice acclamation showing our gratitude for the service of these outstanding disciples and their faithful, fruitful ministries.

Substantive Resolutions and Recommendations for Convention Action

The Committee considered four substantive resolutions, two of which – R1 and R4 - we recommend be placed on the Consent Calendar. The Committee is recommending adoption of all four resolutions, one of which - R3a – the Committee has amended, primarily to address matters of form.

R1, entitled **Celebration and Reporting of Global Mission Efforts by Virginia Congregations,** commends the recent covenant by St. Francis, Great Falls, with the Diocese of Ezo in South Sudan, as well as the three decades of partnership by St. Francis and several other Virginia congregations with dioceses in South Sudan, as well such partnerships elsewhere in the Anglican Communion.

The resolution asks congregations to make an updated report to the our Global Mission Advocates in this Diocese – the Rev. Nancy Searby and Ms. Diane Wright – about the congregations' foreign mission efforts for compilation and posting on the Diocesan website. This shared information will allow greater collaboration among our churches and elevate the splendid work so many of our congregations are doing around the world to spread the Gospel.

The Committee recommends placing this Resolution on the Consent Calendar and recommends adoption

R2, entitled **Celebrating Completion of the Dinka Cam Bible and Urging Similar Efforts in Other Languages**, commends the Episcopal Church of the Sudan and Wycliffe Bible Translators, with help from Virginia congregations, for completion of the long awaited Dinka Cam Bible, a language spoken by over a million people there as well as in some congregations here in Virginia.

The resolution urges our congregations to support similar efforts in order to help evangelize over half a billion people who still lack any Scripture in their native language, and hundreds of millions more where the Bible has only been partly translated. Unlike many forms of mission, which require foreign travel, this form of evangelism – supporting Bible translation

through consistent prayer, donations, and study – is open to everyone. It recognizes that Bible translation is an essential step to evangelism and one that will enable the spread of the Gospel to occur for decades to come among native speakers of these languages.

The Committee recommends adoption.

R3a, entitled **Repudiating Christian Nationalism,** has been amended by the Committee based on consultations with the sponsors and the office of the Bishop. The change moves responsibility for its implementation to the Regional Deans and Congregations, rather than the Executive Board. The Committee recognizes that the appropriate responses are likely to differ based on local circumstances. In our view a "one-size fits all" approach from the top will not advance this work as effectively as a tailored local response.

The Committee heartily endorses the resolution as amended. We note in particular that the Diocese of Virginia has hard experience with Christian nationalism, experience demonstrating that Christian nationalism is very bad for the church and for the integrity of our witness to the Gospel.

The Church of England, the mother church of our Episcopal Church, arrived in Virginia with the first colonists in 1607. In 1619, the colonial Virginia government formally and legally designated it the established, or official church of the colony, an arm of its government, supported by taxes paid by all colonists who were required to regularly attend its services and to be married only by its clergy. Gradually other religious bodies were allowed some legal existence in Virginia but were strictly regulated by its government. Their clergy were frequently prosecuted at law and all inhabitants were still required to attend Church of England services and pay taxes for its support regardless of their own religious beliefs.

Independence from England brought Virginia independence from the established church through successive acts culminating in the 1786 Statute for Religious Freedom which prohibited mandatory financial support of or attendance at any church, clearly separating church and state and guaranteeing religious liberty and personal belief. Although Virginia legislation also recognized the newly established Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States as the legal successor to the property of the Church of England in Virginia, deep rooted resentment of the established church resulted in a series of laws to end perceived remnants of that legacy.

The Glebe Act of 1802 transferred the Church of England glebe lands from the Episcopal Church to local Virginia governments, ending a major source of Episcopal church compensation for Virginia Episcopal clergy. This law was spearheaded by Christian denominations who had suffered under the established church. During much of the first half of the 19th Century, the Diocese of Virginia deposited its funds in banks in Alexandria,

then a part of the District of Columbia, for protection from Virginia legislative interference or possible seizure of Diocesan funds. Prohibition of perceived privileged church status was written into the Virginia state constitution in 1851, prohibiting the incorporation of any church body, and not repealed until January 1, 2007 after a decade of legal action by some of the very Christian denominations who had advocated it in 1851. All of these measures, and others undertaken in response to unfair treatment by our predecessors as the established church in Virginia, demonstrate how our established church legacy impaired Christian unity.

Even more important, this church's identification for most of the 17th and 18th Centuries with the secular government gravely impaired the integrity of our Gospel witness. Thus, our predecessors in this church, instead of denouncing slavery, the dehumanization of the people enslaved as somehow inferior, and the brutal treatment of Native American people here, participated in these wrongs and sought to justify these terribly sinful practices. Our sad experience demonstrates that Christian Nationalism is very bad for the church and for our witness to the Gospel.

In repudiating Christian nationalism, we affirm that the Church's calling is not to exercise dominion through the power of the state, but to proclaim the love, justice, mercy, and reconciling grace of Jesus Christ for all people, without exception.

The Committee recommends adoption of the amended resolution.

R4, entitled **Participation in Good Friday Offering,** urges our congregations to do three things to help in the Holy Land:

1. Participate in the annual Good Friday offering for the Diocese of Jerusalem
2. Become members of the American Friends of the Diocese of Jerusalem
3. Consider pilgrimages to the Holy Land through St. George's College in Jerusalem.

The Committee notes that General Convention has passed many resolutions over past decades exhorting the combatants in the Middle East to make peace and treat all people as made in the image of God. Judging by their behavior, none of the combatants have paid the slightest attention to these resolutions and similar ones by many churches.

The sponsors of this resolution, like so many of us in this Diocese, are greatly distressed by the brutal warfare that has occurred around Israel and the Middle East, especially since the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel and Israel's subsequent invasion of Gaza. This resolution recommends constructive steps for each of our congregations to take to help support Anglicans in the Holy Land, most of whom are Palestinians, subject to very harsh treatment

by the Government of Israel as well as harassment and worse by some elements in the Muslim community.

The Committee recommends placement on the Consent Calendar and recommends adoption.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Elizabeth Keeler, Chair, Resolutions Committee