

# TASK FORCE ON DIALOGUE WITH SOUTH SUDANESE ANGLICAN DIASPORA

## Membership

The Rev. Ranjit Mathews, <i>Chair</i>	Connecticut, I	2021
The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Iowa, VI	2021
Mr. Buck Blanchard	Colorado, VI	2021
The Rt. Rev. Martin Field	West Missouri, VII	2021
Ms. Jackie Kraus	Chicago, V	2021
The Rev. Michael Paul	North Dakota, VI	2021
The Most Rev. Michael Curry, <i>Ex Officio</i>	North Carolina, IV	
The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, <i>Ex Officio</i>	Ohio, V	

## Changes in Membership

Mr. Russell Randle left in 2019. Mr. Buck Blanchard replaced him.

## Acknowledgements

The Rev. Canon Ronald C. Byrd, Sr., Office of Black Ministries

## Mandate

### 2018-Do88 Dialogue with South Sudanese Anglican Diaspora

*Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention call upon the Presiding Bishop to appoint a task force of two bishops, two clergy, and two lay persons to establish an official conversation for the purpose of developing a statement of understanding of the relationship with the South Sudanese American Anglican diaspora living in this country and The Episcopal Church; and be it further

*Resolved*, That this task force report to the Executive Council at least once each year during the coming triennium; and be it further

Resolved, That this task force conclude its work and expire no later than adjournment sine die of the 80th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$15,000.00 for the implementation of this resolution.

## Summary of Work

During an initial virtual meeting in November 2018, it was agreed to pursue discussions on a regional or provincial basis, given the logistical and budget obstacles to conducting gatherings of the diaspora community. It was decided to schedule an in-person meeting to begin the work of the Task Force. It was held January 28-29, 2019, at Maritime Center, Linthicum Hts., MD. A total of 22 virtual monthly meetings were held between February 2019 and November 2020.

A first step agreed upon by the Task Force was a survey conducted by Bishops Field and Scarfe at the March HOB meeting to identify S. Sudanese communities, congregations and leaders in their dioceses, resulting in 90 responses. Task force members were to do likewise. Twenty-seven South Sudanese communities were identified. The objective was to prepare and arrange for one-day regional/provincial discussions with the South Sudanese Anglican Diaspora (SSAD) at appropriate locations around the continental U.S. It was agreed that consultations should occur with key SSAD leaders as to their expectations for such consultations and how they should occur. The objective is to seek to arrive at a mutually workable path forward towards engagement, mutual learning and mutual spiritual enrichment between the SSAD community and TEC, recognizing the gifts each community brings to these conversations.

The Rev. Canon Ron Byrd offered financial support and expertise from the Office of Black Ministries. The Task Force applied for a \$52,000 grant from the Constable Fund to bring the SSAD community together for five conferences in 2020 in different regions of the U.S. The grant was approved. A Steering Committee was formed to plan an initial conference April 30-May 2, 2020 in Kansas City, MO. Bishop Field agreed to liaise with the Steering Committee for the Task Force. The Task Force recruited the Rev. Stan Runnels and the Rev. Moses Thon Chol to co-chair the Steering Committee. A virtual meeting was held January 13, 2020. Members are the Rev. Moses Thon Chol, the Rev. Zachariah Char, the Rev. John Deng, the Rev. Stan Runnels, and the Rev. Dr. Rich Jones. The Task Force asked the Steering Committee to frame their work around a “Statement of Purposes and Desired Outcomes”, consisting of seven purposes, as follows:

1. Identify SSAD Anglican/Episcopal clergy in the U.S & build a database.
2. Invite SSAD clergy to engage with TEC in a more integrated way.
3. Begin to identify a path and process to “regularize” in TEC the ordinations and standing of SSAD clergy, and to form educational pathways for additional professional education of SSAD clergy.
4. Identify worshipping communities of SSAD people and build a database of locations, leaders (lay and clergy), and investigate how they integrate with TEC churches.
5. By listening and dialogue, identify the obstacles to achieving Purposes 3 & 4.
6. Establish a path by which this dialogue can be continued and enriched during the triennium.
7. Assist the TEC-SSAD Task Force to formulate recommendations to the next General Convention.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, discussion turned toward alternative dates for this Conference and the Task Force began working with a date in September. At the virtual meeting of the Task Force, May 27, 2020, it was announced that non-essential travel was canceled by TEC, indefinitely, thus canceling plans for the SSAD Clergy Conference, sponsored by The Episcopal Church’s South Sudanese Diaspora Task Force, indefinitely.

The \$52,000.00 Constable Fund grant still applies. The Task Force was not able to hold the necessary conversations with the SSAD, thus undermining the Task Force’s ability to carry out this mandate. Even though in-person meetings have not been possible, and the planned conference has had to be delayed, the Task Force has remained active. The Task Force, with the assistance and leadership of the Steering Committee, has identified SSAD leaders and had conversations with them concerning how best to proceed under the circumstances.

The Task Force is currently planning virtual conferences and compiling dates to move forward. The Steering Committee is now tasked with setting dates for four Zoom conference “listening sessions”. Each will include 12 attendees – two Task Force members, nine or ten South Sudanese Anglican Diaspora (men and women), plus a facilitator. Those conversations are anticipated to help develop meaningful topics of conversation for the in-person conference, whenever it is safe to hold that gathering.

The Task Force believes the work remains essential and requests the Task Force be continued for the next triennium to pursue its vital work.

## Proposed resolutions

### **A004 Continue Task Force on Dialogue with South Sudanese Anglican Diaspora**

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 80th General Convention extend the work of the Task Force on Dialogue with South Sudanese Anglican Diaspora for the coming triennium; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the task force report to the Executive Council at least once each year during the coming triennium; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the task force conclude its work and expire no later than adjournment sine die of the 81st General Convention; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$25,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

#### EXPLANATION

The 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church approved Resolution 2018-Do88 which called upon the Presiding Bishop to appoint a task force named the Task Force on Dialogue with South Sudanese Anglican Diaspora (Task Force) and consisting of two bishops, two clergy, and two laypersons. The Task Force was tasked with establishing an official conversation with the South Sudanese-American Anglican Diaspora (SSAAD) living in the United States and to develop a statement of understanding regarding the relationship of SSAAD communities and members and The Episcopal Church (TEC).

The Task Force was duly formed and met once in person and on numerous occasions virtually during the triennium. To carry out its mandate, the Task Force intended to host an in-person conference in the spring of 2020 to bring together leaders of SSAAD communities and members of the Task Force. The purpose of the conference was:

1. to discuss the substance of 2018-Do88;
2. to examine the relationship of SSAAD members and communities with TEC as well as its dioceses and local churches; and
3. to ascertain the steps and actions needed more fully and appropriately to incorporate local SSAAD communities into the fabric of TEC.

Unfortunately, shortly before the in-person conference was to convene, the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic interrupted all in-person meetings. Therefore, the Task Force was not able to hold the necessary conversations with the SSAAD, thus undermining the Task Force's ability to carry out its mandate.

Even though in-person meetings have not been possible, and the planned conference has had to be delayed, the Task Force has remained active. The Task Force has held regular meetings by Zoom, typically once per month. The Task Force has liaised with the Rev. Canon Ron Byrd and the Office of Black Ministries. The Task Force, with the assistance and leadership of a Steering Committee (formed to help with the logistics and planning of the in-person conference), has identified South Sudanese Anglican Diaspora leaders and had conversations with them concerning how best to proceed under the circumstances. The Task Force is currently planning for virtual conferences and compiling potential dates to move forward. The Steering Committee is now tasked with setting dates for four to six Zoom conference "listening sessions." Each will include 12 attendees – two task force members, nine or 10 members of the South Sudanese Diaspora (men and women), plus a facilitator. The Steering Committee will guide the conversations. Those conversations are anticipated to help develop meaningful topics of conversation for the in-person conference, whenever it is safe to hold that gathering.

The Task Force believes the work remains essential and requests the Task Force be continued for the next triennium to pursue its vital work.

## Continuance recommendation

We request that the House of Deputies in consultation with the GCO, allow this Task Force to continue our mandated work past the next General Convention (80) and into the next triennium.