
RESOLUTION #1

ON ADDRESSING THE ANTISEMITIC IMPACT OF LECTIONARY READINGS

The following resolution is proposed by the following members of the Clergy and Laity of parishes within the Episcopal Diocese of Washington:

Submitted by: Mr. Peter Nye, St. Mark's, DC; The Rev. Michele Morgan, St. Mark's, DC.

RESOLUTION

1 *Resolved,*

2 The Convention of the Diocese of Washington submits to the 80th General Convention of the Episcopal
3 Church the following resolution:

4 *“Resolved,*

5 The House of _____ concurring, that the 80th General Convention direct the Standing
6 Commission on Liturgy and Music to recommend revisions to the Church's appointed Lectionary readings
7 to exclude or edit passages that use antisemitic language and that the Episcopal Church advocate that other
8 denominations using the Revised Common Lectionary consider the same changes.”

EXPLANATION:

Annually, during Holy Week, the Episcopal Church requires us to hear language denigrating Jews, as in chapters 18 & 19 of John (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antisemitism_and_the_New_Testament), that have led to antisemitism, including the slaughter of 6,000,000 Jews in the Holocaust and of 11 Jews in Pittsburgh in 2018.

The Church should go farther than providing context and education (<https://standingcommissiononliturgyandmusic.org/2013/03/19/anti-judaism-issues-in-the-scriptures-for-holy-week-by-louis-weil/>). First, “context” does not stand on the same level as the reverent reading of scripture during Holy Week. The Cathedral's decision to remove windows with confederate flags suggests that it did not think there was a way to provide context. Second, there is no practical way to ensure that every church provides the necessary context (short of requiring bulletin notes and sermon explanations whenever we read antisemitic language). And some in church – like children – may not hear or understand the educational material. Third, as Presiding Bishop Curry has called us (<https://episcopalchurch.org/library/article/presiding-bishop-joins-social-media-campaign-counter-anti-semitism-wake-attacks>), the Church must stand against the rising tide of antisemitism.

The resolution calls for altering the selection of Lectionary readings to produce a non-hateful rendition of our Christian story, as St. Mark's, Capitol Hill, has traditionally done. The Reverend Andy Barnett suggested that there are neutral translations the lectionary could use (<https://cathedral.org/lenten-meditation/the-rev-andrew-k-barnett-20190328/>). And Philip Cunningham (https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/sites/partners/cbaa_seminar/Johannine_PN.htm) has shown how minimal changes to John 18-19 can leave the power of Jesus's Passion intact without the anti-semitic language.