

Resolution: Dissolution of the Congregation of St. Cyprian's Church, New Bern

Submitted by the Trustees of the Diocese of East Carolina

Whereas the congregation of St. Cyprian's holds a very important place in the history of New Bern, and in the history of Black Episcopal Congregations in North Carolina; and

Whereas the importance and value of St. Cyprian's history notwithstanding, membership of the parish has dwindled as demographics have changed, and membership and average Sunday attendance has dwindled, and there is no longer sufficient income to cover even the minimum needs of the parish.

Therefore, be it resolved that the congregation of St. Cyprian's Church be dissolved, and that future opportunities for the use of their buildings be explored which are consistent with the vital role that the congregation has played in the history of New Bern, and of the Diocese of East Carolina.

Background

At the 141st Annual Convention of the Diocese of East Carolina, meeting in February 2024, Bishop Skirving expressed his desire that the people of the Diocese give their support to the congregation of St. Cyprian's Church, New Bern as they faced difficult challenges relative to the vitality of their congregation and the condition of their building. Shortly afterward, a committee was commissioned for this purpose, accountable to the Trustees of the Diocese. Committee members were The Rev'd Deacon John Gaskill, Mary Duane Hale, the Rev'd John Pollock (Chair), LaTonya Smith, Pat Tatum, Keith Thompson, and the Rev'd Skip Walker.

After a series of meetings with the Vestry, with the Ad Hoc Vestry Advisory Committee, with members of the African American Heritage and Cultural Center, the committee made two recommendations for consideration by the Trustees:

- 1) that the congregation be dissolved in order that future opportunities could be explored, and
- 2) that the Trustees consider maintaining the building and explore possibilities for new life for the building of St. Cyprian's.

Bishop Skirving met with the Vestry of St. Cyprian's on February 25, 2025 to share these recommendations, which had been adopted by the Trustees. With the support of

the Vestry, Bishop Skirving then met with the Vestry of Christ Church, New Bern to invite their support for the recommendations of the Trustees.

This resolution comes as a necessary next step, per Title II, Canon 6 of the Diocese of East Carolina, titled "Dissolution and Suspension of Parishes and Missions." If the resolution is adopted by this 142nd Convention then the Trustees will continue the work that they have begun, with the goal of bringing together partners who will work to support new life for St. Cyprian's historic buildings.