

120th Convention of the Episcopal Church in Utah Report of the Commission on Peace & Justice

A. Members

The 11 member commission includes (alpha order by last name):

1. Ron Barnes co-chair – St Mark’s (Salt Lake City)
2. Jinx Strout co-chair – St James (Midvale)
3. Forrest Cuch – St Elizabeth’s (Whiterock)
4. Dorothy Dobson – St Johns (Logan)
5. Tom Elder – St Paul’s (Vernal)
6. Michaelann Gardner – St Mary’s Provo)
7. Jane Myers – St Mark’s (Salt Lake City)
8. Laura Orcutt – St James (Midvale)
9. Terry Palmer – St James (Midvale)
10. Rev Dave Sakrison – St Francis (Moab)
11. Jonathan Snyder – St Luke’s (Park City)

B. Mandate

The formation of the Commission on Peace & Justice (COPAJ) occurred when Canon 18 was passed at a Diocesan Convention.

CANON 18 COMMISSION ON PEACE AND JUSTICE

Section 18.1 Appointment. The Council shall provide for the appointment of members of the Commission on Peace & Justice.

Section 18.2 Duties.

18.2.1 The Commission on Peace & Justice shall develop and implement recommendations and strategies regarding common ministry opportunities and concerns on issues of peace and justice.

18.2.2 The Commission on Peace & Justice shall make recommendations pertaining thereto the Bishop, the Standing Committee, the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Convention.

C. Goals

The goals of COPAJ are to strive for justice and peace among all people. Respect the dignity of every human being. Weave important issues of our day and with common ministry opportunities for the Episcopal Church in Utah.

D. Action items

The action items of COPAJ are to focus engagement in the following areas – the first three (1-3) are focused on the Care of Creation while the bottom three (5-7) pertain to more traditional social justice issues. Indigenous Communities (#4) fits in both groups.

1. **Great Salt Lake Depletion:** Monitoring environmental policy around the lake's preservation and water usage.
2. **Utah Wilderness Preservation:** Protecting Indigenous lands, wildlife habitat, Colorado River watershed and pristine landscapes.
3. **Climate Crisis Readiness:** Monitor growing threats to the people and property of Utah from climate change.
4. **Supporting Indigenous Communities:** Advocating for policies that respect and uplift Indigenous voices and rights.
5. **Unhoused Population:** We'll keep a close watch on initiatives like the year-round homeless services campus.
6. **LGBTQ+ Issues:** Staying vigilant on new policies, especially those impacting inclusion and equality.
7. **Healthcare Inequality:** Keeping an eye on changes that affect access and equity in healthcare.

COPAJ plans to meet 11 times during the next year study and discuss these issues and find effective paths for engagement of the greater Diocese of Utah.

In the past year, COPAJ elevated two tangible actions:

1. Successful ecumenical event at the EDU for the preservation of Great Salt Lake with approximately 70 interfaith leaders – both laity and clergy – hosted by Bishop Spiegel.
2. Resolution for the establishment of a perpetual endowed scholarship fund for Native American students in partnership with the University of Utah. This resolution is a pending matter for the 2025 Diocesan Convention.

E. Analysis of action

Both of our 2025 initiatives need further action. Great Salt Lake is a serious environmental and public health issue facing the nearly 3 million people living along the Wasatch Front is fundamentally the toxic dust from the exposed lake playa which has been detected as far away as Colorado, Idaho and Nevada.

The Native American endowment will need funding through the next five years to be fully vested. All of the other initiatives are serious issues facing Utah and deserve action and attention by the Episcopal Church in Utah.

F. Findings and conclusions

Most of COPAJ's work is ongoing. There are no findings or conclusions at this point.

G. Recommendations

COPAJ welcomes new members who are committed to the work of social justice and creation care. We meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month by zoom. You can come check us out and see if this ministry is a good fit for you. If you're interested, please contact us at peaceandjustice@episcopal-ut.org or you can call/text the commission's co-chairs Ron Barness 801-232-3363 or Jinx Strout 801-703-8229.

H. Statement of how the group's work fits into the mission strategy of the Diocese

COPAJ's important foundation is our final baptismal vow (page 304-5 of the *Book of Common Prayer*: "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being." This serves as a call to action for Episcopalians in Utah.