

2021 Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee General Resolution II:
Rename Otey Memorial Parish as the Episcopal Parish of St. Mark and St. Paul on the Mountain
Proposed by the Vestry of Otey Memorial Parish; amended by General Resolutions Committee

Whereas, the Parish Church in Sewanee was founded in 1870 under the name St. Paul's on-the-Mountain, and (normally at times separate from Caucasians) African Americans worshiped there at services organized by the St. Mark's Guild of the Theological Department of the University of the South, and

Whereas, in 1891 the present church building was completed and, at the initiation of Bishop Charles T. Quintard, was dedicated in memory of the Rt. Rev'd James Hervey Otey, first Bishop of Tennessee, and

Whereas, Bp. Otey was a remarkable leader for the Church, revered for his extraordinary dedication and the results of his missionary zeal in Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and the Oklahoma Territory, and as one of the principal founders and first Chancellor of the University of the South, and

Whereas, Bp. Otey opposed secession to form the Confederacy, but accepted it once Tennessee seceded, and resisted dividing the Protestant Episcopal Church, and

Whereas, Bp. Otey was a vocal supporter of slavery who held a total of at least 16 persons enslaved at some point over the course of his adult life, and

Whereas, in response to the Vestry's request to rename the Parish of S. Paul-on-the-Mountain as the Otey Memorial Parish, the 1891 Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee adopted a resolution renaming it the Otey Memorial Church, and

Whereas, what was then called the "colored congregation" did not move to the Otey Memorial Church, but at Bp. Quintard's behest remained in the St. Paul's building, coming to be known by that name until the St. Paul's building was dismantled in the 1930s, and

Whereas, building materials salvaged from St. Paul's were used to construct a church building for the Black congregation, whose name Otey Rector at the time Charles Widney determined should revert to St. Mark's, and

Whereas, in 1962, a substantial group of St. Mark's members (18) transferred to form at Otey the first fully integrated Episcopal parish in Tennessee, and six years later Bishop William Sanders concurred in the request of the remaining St. Mark's members for a merger of their congregation with Otey Parish, and

Whereas, several former St. Mark's members felt that, although they were welcomed at Otey, they were less fully engaged in leadership there, and the identity of their previous church was effaced, and

Whereas, in 1971 the Otey Parish Centennial Committee recommended adopting a name that would include St. Paul and St. Mark in conjunction with Otey Memorial, and

Whereas, during much of the 1970s and into the 1980s, versions of the name "Otey Memorial Church of the Parish of St. Paul's-on-the-Mountain" were used, and

Whereas, it is unusual for Episcopal parishes to be named as memorials to a person of relatively recent history, but more commonly are named for a patron saint or saints, a Biblical event, or a doctrine or other theological concept, and

Whereas, in recent years, recognition and concern about patterns of historic and systemic racism have grown in Sewanee and elsewhere, and new steps have been taken to distance ourselves from memorials that could be seen as honoring positions or values that are no longer acceptable, and

Whereas, a number of members of Otey Memorial Parish have requested that its name be changed because of Bp. Otey's connections to slavery, and

Whereas, in conjunction with the sesquicentennial of the parish, an advisory committee engaged in a course of prayerful discernment, consulting the Bible, three historians, a survey offered to the congregation, and two descendants of persons held in slavery by the Otey family, as well as inviting feedback at the Annual Parish Meeting, and

Whereas, this resolution does not condemn Bp. Otey as a person or hold him to the standards of a later time, but seeks a parish name that would not act as a barrier to welcome and inclusion of persons of color now and in the future, and

Whereas, it is the parish's intention to install a well-crafted plaque in a prominent place on the church building noting its completion in 1891 and dedication in memory of Bp. Otey, and a second marker on the campus recalling Otey's remarkable leadership and service, his holding of slaves, the history of the parish's having been named for him for the 130 years from 1891 to 2021, and its reversion to the names of St. Mark and St. Paul to affirm the shared history of Black and White Episcopalians in Sewanee; and

Whereas, this request to the Annual Convention has been approved by the Bishop and does not appear to be in conflict with the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese, and

Whereas the Vestry of the Otey Memorial Parish herewith petitions the 189th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee to approve the change of the name of the parish from "The Otey Memorial Parish" to "The Episcopal Parish of St. Mark and St. Paul on the Mountain," therefore be it

Resolved, that the petition be granted and the 189th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee approve the name change from "The Otey Memorial Parish" to "The Episcopal Parish of St. Mark and St. Paul on the Mountain", and said name change to be made effective by the Parish on or about the date of the next Bishop's Visitation; and be it further

Resolved that upon the change of the name of the Parish, the Rector, Wardens and Vestry take all necessary steps to effect compliance with all ecclesiastical, legal, and pragmatic requirements resulting from said name change.

Adopted by diocesan convention on January 23, 2021, with 95% in favor and 5% opposed.