

A Brief History of The Episcopal Church in the Dominican Republic



The Early Days: The first Anglicans arrived in the Dominican Republic in the 1880's. They were lay people who came from the British West Indies to work in the booming sugar industry, and settled mostly in San Pedro de Macorís. These first Anglicans were not accompanied by any ordained clergy. One of the immigrants was Benjamin Isaac Wilson from St. Croix in the Virgin Islands, who was recommended by the local Anglican congregation for training for ordination. On February 27, 1898, Wilson was ordained to the priesthood by the Rt. Rev. James Theodore Holly, a member of the Episcopal clergy from Connecticut who had moved to Haiti with his family and friends in 1861 and who was subsequently elected Bishop of Haiti by the 1874 General Convention of The Episcopal Church. Holly thus became the first bishop of the Anglican Church in the Dominican Republic.

Adoption by The Episcopal Church: After the death of Bishop Holly in 1911, the Anglicans in Haiti and the Dominican Republic came under the pastoral jurisdiction of the Bishop of Puerto Rico. In 1913, the leadership of the Anglican Church in the Dominican Republic asked to become a missionary district of The Episcopal Church. The request was approved by General Convention in 1913, but the island remained under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Puerto Rico.

Autonomy: From the beginning in the late eighteen hundreds until 1960, all pastoral jurisdiction was accomplished by either the Bishop of Haiti or the Bishop of Puerto Rico. When the Rt. Rev. Paul Kellogg was consecrated in 1960, he became the first resident bishop of the Dominican Episcopal Church. From the beginning, Bishop Kellogg set out to establish a structure for the Diocese of the Dominican Republic. He led the successful effort to write and adopt the Diocesan Constitution and Canons and the construction of a number of churches and schools.

Indigenous Church Leadership: After the retirement of Bishop Kellogg in 1972, the diocese began to chart its own course by consecrating Bishop Telésforo Alexander Isaac as its first indigenous Bishop. Bishop Isaac began to expand the church, adding numerous churches, schools, and a camp facility. Particularly important was Bishop Isaac's inauguration of the Center for Theological Studies in 1978. Since its inception, this seminary has trained men and women for Christian vocation in Panama, Venezuela, El Salvador, Peru, Costa Rica, Uruguay, as well as in the Dominican Republic.

Growth of the Diocese: In August 1991, Bishop Julio César Holguín was consecrated as the second Dominican bishop of the Diocese of the Dominican Republic. Under his 26 year leadership, the diocese experienced continued growth - in churches, schools, conference and retreat centers, and an eldercare facility. In addition to expanding the church to its present 70 churches and 24 schools, he supervised the development of a robust mission team program. During his episcopate Bishop Holguin also increased the number of companion dioceses in the United States, and worked among them to establish the Dominican Development Group (DDG). The DDG has promoted and supported the work of the Dominican church and is serving as a model for other diocese in the Caribbean and Latin America.

New Leadership: On November 4, 2017, Moisés Quezada Mota became the third Dominican bishop of the Dominican Episcopal Church. He is the first bishop who was educated and theologically trained in the schools and seminary of the Dominican Church. As he took his place as the new leader of the Dominican church and with a lifelong commitment to education he said, "I love this church and I have dedicated my life to it." "I have a spiritual vision to encourage the talents of the people, to ground the church as a church committed to Christ".