

**DIOCESE OF OLYMPIA
COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND CANONS**

REPORT TO 2024 ANNUAL DIOCESAN CONVENTION:

At its two (virtual online) meetings this year, our Committee considered clarifications to several canons and provided input to others with respect to resolutions that would require amendments to the Diocesan Constitution or Canons. The following are changes that the Committee recommends for passage at Convention.

AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

First Vote on Changes to Constitution

Our diocesan Constitution provides (in Article XXI) that it may be amended by a majority vote of the two orders voting separately at two successive annual meetings of Convention. The following amendments are proposed for their first vote.

Article IX (Transaction of Business)

Due to the relatively large percentage of retired Clergy eligible to attend Convention under Article IX, Section 1, it has sometimes been difficult to be assured of a quorum for transacting business. We therefore propose basing the quorum on active Clergy members, borrowing language from the standard for a quorum under Article XIX, Section 3, as follows:

One-third of the clergy having regularly assigned congregations, with or without stipend, as determined by the Ecclesiastical Authority~~entitled to seats in the Convention, together with at least one and~~ delegates from one-third of the congregations at any time duly assembled, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, except that a smaller number may adjourn from time to time.

And the Committee proposes a parallel rewording of Article XIX:

Article XIX (Election of a Bishop):

Two-thirds of the Clergy having regularly assigned congregations, with or without stipend, as determined by the Ecclesiastical Authority Bishop, ~~(or in his absence the Bishop Coadjutor, Suffragan Bishop or in the absence of any Bishop the President of the Standing Committee), together with at least one and~~ lay ~~D~~delegates from two-thirds of the congregations ~~Parishes and Missions~~ in the Convention, at any time assembled, shall constitute a quorum.

Article XV (Admission of New Parishes and Missions):

A Parish may be admitted into union with Convention on motion, by a majority of votes, provided that the Parish shall have delivered...

(b) Satisfactory evidence that Articles of Incorporation have been adopted by which the Parish irrevocably accedes to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church ~~in the United States of America~~, and to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Olympia.

(c) A written statement, subscribed by the wardens, by which the Parish accedes to the doctrine and discipline and worship of the Episcopal eChurch;

Article XVI (Loss of Privilege):

Whenever, in the opinion of the Bishop, any Parish or Mission shall ~~incur liability for~~ loss of privilege based upon (i) material departures from the Constitution, Canons, doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church, or (ii) being an essentially dormant Parish as described in Canon 14, the Bishop shall signify the same to the Convention.

The right of such a Parish or Mission to representation in the Convention, and/or its connection with the Diocese may thereupon be wholly dissolved, by a two-thirds vote of each order at Convention. Upon such a motion passing, the properties of such Parish or Mission shall immediately revert to the Diocese, and such other action may be taken as allowed under the Constitution and Canons. Persons with authority in such a congregation shall cooperate in facilitating the required transfers.

Second Vote on Changes to Constitution

The following amendments are proposed for a second vote:

Article IV (The Bishop):

Change title from "The Bishop" to "The Bishop and the Ecclesiastical Authority" (as being more descriptive)

Article VIII (Officers of Convention):

Section 1: [amend as follows]

The person holding the Ecclesiastical Authority as defined in Article IV ~~Bishop of the Diocese~~ shall be ex-officio President of the Convention. ~~In the absence of the Bishop, the Bishop Coadjutor or Bishop Suffragan (if there by one) shall preside.~~ The President of the Standing Committee shall be next in order to preside. In the absence or incapacity of these, a president pro-tempore shall be elected by the Convention from among the members thereof.

Article IX (Transaction of Business):

Section 1 [amend as follows]

One-third of the clergy entitled to seats in the Convention, and delegates from one-third of the ~~congregations Parishes and Missions~~ at any time duly assembled, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, except that a smaller number may adjourn from time to time.

Section 2 [amend as follows]

Unless otherwise provided, in all matters which shall come before the Convention the clergy and lay members shall deliberate in one body and vote as individuals on all matters coming before Convention, and a majority of the votes shall be decisive. ~~Each delegate present shall be entitled to only one vote, and unless otherwise provided, a majority of the voters shall be decisive.~~

Section 3 [amend as follows]

On the call of any five members or as otherwise required by the Constitution or Canons, the two orders shall vote separately, and a concurrence of a majority of each order shall be necessary to constitute a decision.

Article X (Standing Committee of the Diocese):

Section 2 [delete this section as duplicative of Article IV, and renumber Sections 3-5]

~~If there be no Diocesan Bishop, Bishop Coadjutor, Bishop Provisional, or Suffragan Bishop, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall pass temporarily to the Standing Committee, to the extent that such authority arises under the Constitution and Canons of this Diocese.~~

Section 3: [amend as follows]

...The secretary shall keep a record of all the proceedings of the Standing Committee, which shall be subject at all times to ~~review by the inspection of~~ the Bishop of the Diocese, and a full report of their acts shall be made to each Annual Meeting of Convention.

Section 5 [amend as follows to avoid confusion with officers of Convention;
see Art. VIII, sec. 4]

During the interim between the meetings of Convention, the Standing Committee shall have the power of Convention to ratify or elect ~~officers and~~ Standing Committee members to fill vacancies until the next Annual Convention.

Article XII (Deputies and Alternate Deputies to General Convention):

Section 1 [amend as follows]

At an Annual Meeting of the Diocesan Convention held at least twelve months before the regular meeting not later than the year preceding the year of the General Convention for which they are chosen, a concurrent majority vote of the clerical and lay orders, voting separately, shall elect four clerical Deputies who are canonically resident in the Diocese, and four lay Deputies, who are confirmed adult Communicants in Good Standing, and those Deputies shall represent this Diocese in the General Convention of the Episcopal Church ~~of the United States of America~~. Deputies and Alternate Deputies shall serve until their successors are elected.

Section 3(e) [amend as follows to comply with General Convention rule]:

Unless otherwise provided by the rules of General Convention, ~~on the first ballot from which a Deputy is elected, the candidate receiving the highest number of votes in both orders combined shall serve as chair of~~ the diocesan deputation shall elect its own chair by majority vote.

Section 4 [amend as follows]

If at the time of the Annual Meeting of the Convention in the year preceding the regular meeting of the General Convention, a vacancy shall have occurred among the Deputies ~~or and~~ Alternates elected at a previous meeting of Convention, nominations and an election of the required number of Alternates shall be conducted by a combined ballot as described above. fill the vacancy shall be made an order of business.

Section 5 [amend as follows to comply with General Convention age rule]

Adult Communicants in Good Standing who are elected as Deputies or Alternate Deputies to General Convention must be at least ~~16~~8 years old at the start of General Convention. If they are under the age of 18 years, they ~~or~~ must be accompanied by a parent or guardian in compliance with applicable Diocesan procedures for those who work with children or youth.

Votes on Changes to Canons:

Pursuant to Canons 28 and 29, canons can be enacted or amended by a "vote of a majority of each Order." These amendments "take effect upon the adjournment of the meeting of Convention at which they are enacted," unless the Convention votes unanimously for the changes to take immediate effect.

Canon 2 (Lay Members of Convention):

Modern computer technology allows the Diocese to process lists of proposed Delegates and Alternates in a shorter time than before. However, it seems useful to clarify which Delegates and Alternates have voting rights, particularly at special convention meetings (like episcopal elections) that occur between the normal Annual Meetings of Convention. The following edits will confirm the current practice, i.e. that lay delegates at special convention meetings are the ones whose terms began at the last Annual Meeting, and newly elected Delegates and Alternates begin to vote at the next Annual Meeting after their election. Part of the proposed clarification is to separate current Section 4(b) into three parts, each on a distinct point.

Section 2 [election of lay delegates to Diocesan Convention]

... ~~To the extent practical, Commencing in 1972,~~ one-half of the required number of delegates and alternates shall be elected each year for a ~~one year term and the other half shall be elected for a two-~~ year term. Additional delegates and alternates may be elected for one-year terms to fill vacancies and preserve the principle of alternating terms. Regardless of when elections occur, terms of delegates shall begin and end at the next Annual Convention of the Diocese, which may include non-voting pre-convention preparation meetings. and thereafter, at each annual election, the delegates and alternates shall be elected to a two-year term. Delegates and alternatives shall serve as such at each voting meeting of the Diocesan Convention, both annual and special, occurring during the term for which they are elected. ...

Section 4(a) [certifying selection and substitution of delegates and alternates]

For the Annual Convention of the Diocese, certificates of selection and substitution of lay delegates and alternates shall be in the forms determined by the Secretary of the Convention with the approval of the Council. Forms shall be distributed to Parishes and Missions, not ~~later~~ less than three months prior to the Convention. As a condition to voting in the Annual Convention, a Congregation shall complete and return its form to the Secretary at least ~~two weeks~~ one month prior to the Convention. At any special meeting of Convention, delegates and alternates shall be the persons qualified for the last regular Annual Convention.

Section 4(b) [certifying Congregations in Good Standing to vote at Convention]

The Secretary of Convention shall certify as eligible to vote only those lay delegates from Congregations in Good Standing and Congregations in Provisional Good Standing, as certified to the Secretary by the ~~Office of the Bishop~~ or the Bishop's designee not ~~later~~ less than forty-five (45) days before the scheduled convening of Convention.

c. A Congregation in Good Standing ~~is~~ shall be one which is current in all of its diocesan financial and reporting responsibilities, e.g., Parochial Report including Net Disposable Income, Audit, Aassessment, and loan responsibilities, if any.

d. A Congregation in Provisional Good Standing is ~~one a congregation~~ which has fallen into arrears in one or more of the ~~above-listed~~ separate responsibilities, but has negotiated with the ~~Office of the Bishop~~ or the Bishop's designee a mutually acceptable plan of remediation, and is current in its implementation of the agreed plan.

Canon 12 (Business Methods in Church Affairs):

Recent loss experience has prompted the Joint Finance Panel (which functions as Finance Committee in our Diocese) to implement some minimum standards for insurance. Congregations would remain free to shop for competitive coverage if it meets the minimum standards.

Section 1(f):

Insurance on church buildings shall ~~be adequate if it covers~~ reasonable replacement value of the structures and protects against perils of fire and physical loss or damage including theft, vandalism, collapse, flood, and windstorm. The Finance Committee may establish minimum standards for such property insurance and for liability insurance and other customary insurance in the Diocese. It shall also have discretion to allow reasonable exceptions to those standards upon a showing of good cause by a Parish, Mission or other diocesan institution.

Canon 14 (Dormant Parishes and Parishes Needing Assistance):

Section 2:

The Bishop shall take reasonable steps to preserve the property of such Parish for the benefit of the Episcopal Church.

Faithfully submitted,
COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION & CANONS

Douglas Oles, chair
Judith L. Andrews, chancellor
Rev. Jedediah Fox
Bryan Krislock, vice chancellor
Sarah S. Mack

Donna R. McNamara
Canon Dede Moore, Diocesan Staff
Rev. Stephen Moore
Rev. Marda Steedman Sanborn