



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH in
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA



The Episcopal
Diocese of Bethlehem

Merging Cultures

INTRODUCTION

Constitution and Canons DRAFT Recommendations

In reviewing the Constitution and Canons of both the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania and the Diocese of Bethlehem, there was much we shared in common. Where we diverged, in true Anglican fashion, we sought the middle way. Recognizing that some might find reading what is essentially a legal document a tedious assignment, this document is an overview and summary of what is contained in the Constitution and Canons. We recognize that perfect is the enemy of the good. We hope we have achieved “good enough” and that those who choose to comment will make the proposal even better. These proposals are the first step in our journey as the Diocese of the Susquehanna. We anticipate that over time, these canons will be adapted as we lean into our common life and discern together where God is calling us. Comments are solicited prior to presentation at Convention. [Insert how one can comment here.]

Outline of Constitution

The Constitution contains what is required by The Episcopal Church. That which is optional, have been placed in the canons since those can be more easily amended. This will be especially important as our new diocese grows into its way of functioning and needs to be able to integrate learnings.

ARTICLE I: ACCESSION TO PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

ARTICLE II: TERRITORY OF THE DIOCESE

ARTICLE III: ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

ARTICLE IV: CONVENTIONS

ARTICLE V: ELECTION OF A BISHOP

ARTICLE VI: AUTHENTICATION AND PRESERVATION OF CONSTITUTION AND CANONS.

ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION

Specific areas of note in the draft Canons

The Committee wished to highlight a few of the Canons that have generated some conversation throughout the process and provide some additional information for these areas.

Title 1. Canon 1 Conventions. They specify how often Convention must meet (annually), how a special convention can be called, how the officers of the Diocese function at convention, how the members of Convention are comprised, and the committees of Convention to name a few. The structure of these canons reflects the more robust version from the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania (hereafter CPA) and are generally consistent with that of the Diocese of Bethlehem (hereafter DioBeth). The most significant change is how lay members of Convention are apportioned. Originally, both dioceses based lay members based upon membership as reflected in the parochial report. The Constitution and Canons Committee (hereafter “the Committee”) finds that the historic membership number is not reflective of the actual size of the parish and that average Sunday attendance (ASA) is more indicative of actual size.

Additionally, delegates in DioBeth were apportioned by groups of two hundred, with four delegates being the maximum delegation per parish. CPA apportioned delegates in groups of one hundred.

The recommendation is that each parish or mission have one delegate regardless of size. Additional delegates shall be elected based upon *Average Weekly Attendance (AWA)* as reported in the most current Parochial Report. These figures will be drawn from most current Parochial report and will include both in-person and online attendance.

There are two ways of determining online attendance – both noted in the Parochial Report. 1) To base the number on livestream attendance – that is the number of people who watched the worship service live (lines 2 and 4 on page 2 of the 2024 Parochial report (for example). 2) To base the number on non-live, unique views – (line 5 on page 2 of the 2024 Parochial Report (for example). Depending on the platform a parish or

mission uses for virtual worship will influence which number is used. If a parish or mission is able to track both livestream attendance and non-live, unique views, then the livestream number shall be used.

Title 1, Canon 2 Constitutional Committees deals with the Constitution Committees: Standing Committee and Diocesan Council, and (Sub)Committees of Council. On the surface, the immediate noticeable change for CPA is the name of Council – it has been shortened from “Council of Trustees for the Mission of the Diocese” to simply “Diocesan Council,” which is the name it goes by in DioBeth. Responsibilities for Council members are very similar across the two dioceses. Membership on the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council is larger in CPA than in DioBeth. Currently the Standing Committee is made up of 12 members in CPA and 8 members in DioBeth. Council has 24 +members in CPA. DioBeth has 12 members and two ex officio members, the Bishop(s) and treasurer.

Recommendation:

The Committee recommends the following:

- Standing Committee be composed of twelve members, of which six are clergy [not more than two are deacons] and six are lay members; with bishop(s), secretary and treasurer as ex officio members. Each year Convention shall elect four persons, two clergy, two lay to serve a three-year term. Members may serve two consecutive terms.
- Diocesan Council be composed of twelve members, of which six are clergy and six are laity. The Bishop(s), Secretary and Treasurer are ex officio members. Each convention elects two members from each order. Members may serve two consecutive terms. Of note is that there is not automatic membership, as is the case in CPA, for the President of the Standing Committee, the Canon for Finance, the presiding officer of the Episcopal Churchwomen, a representative of the Youth Advisory Program, and each convocation’s convenor and assistant convenor.

Rationale:

The Committee finds that membership of twelve people is a reasonable size to fulfill the functions of the respective working groups. Council always has the ability to invite representatives of various groups to express their opinions or concerns. Given that, and in the spirit of finding the middle way, the size of Council remains the same in DioBeth and reduced in CPA.

Title 1. Canon 5. Convocations addresses the Convocations. Currently, the convocations function very differently in CPA and DioBeth. This canon simply allows for the creation of convocations and four regions within the reunified diocese.

Title 2. Canon 4. Governance of Parishes

This section generated the most conversation – specifically “Parish Bylaws”. The Canons for the Diocese of Bethlehem provide a Canon that serves as “bylaws” for all parishes. The Diocese of Central Pennsylvania permits individual parishes to draft their own bylaws with the understanding that they follow, and do not violate, the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, the Diocese, and applicable Commonwealth Laws.

For the purposes of these feedback sessions, two versions of a Canon for Parish Governance is included:

Version A seeks to present a Canon that has definite requirements for parishes to include in their bylaws, is more detailed at a Diocesan Canons level, and permits parishes to add details.

Version B seeks to present a Canon that allows the parish to add more details to a core set of Canonical stipulations.

Either version remains anchored on the understanding that parish bylaws may not violate The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, the Diocese, or applicable Commonwealth Laws.

Rationale:

The Committee really wishes to hear from a larger audience with regards to this Canon. Having these two versions will hopefully encourage feedback as to what is more desirable: a more structured canon at the diocesan level, or core requirements at the diocesan level with more flexibility at the parish level.