

# The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem Canons

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# The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem Canons

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## Title I: Of the Diocesan Convention

### Canon 1: Of Membership in Convention

#### Section 1. Clergy Entitled to Seats

Not less than one week before the meeting of every Convention of this Diocese, the Bishop shall deliver to the Secretary a list of all the clergy canonically resident in the Diocese, entitled to seats in the Convention, with the names of their respective cures, parishes, stations, or places of residence. This list shall determine the right of any member of the Clergy to a seat, subject, however, to correction by the Convention in accordance with the Constitution and Canons.

#### Section 2. Lay Delegates

**A.** Each Parish and each Mission shall elect one or more Lay Delegates based on the number of lay members as reported in the annual Parochial Report for the year ending December 31 preceding to represent said Parish and Mission in Convention; and may also elect Alternates, equal in number to the Delegates to which the Parish or Mission is entitled, to take the place of the regular Delegates in case of absence:

Number of Lay Members Reported in Parochial Report	
Less than 100	1 (one) Lay Delegate
100-299	2 (two) Lay Delegates
300-499	3 (three) Lay Delegates
500-699	4 (four) Lay Delegates

Parishes or Missions reporting 700 or more lay members in the Parochial Report shall have an additional delegate for each additional 199 lay members reported above 700.

**B.** Each Parish or Mission may elect its Lay Delegates at its annual congregational meeting, a special congregational meeting or by its Vestry or Executive Committee.

**C.** Lay Delegates to the Convention shall be certified in writing by the Secretary or Clerk of the Vestry or Executive Committee of the proper Parish or Mission; and the certificate shall state that the Delegates therein named were chosen from the number of those who have been, for not less than six months before the election, lay members in the Parish or Mission to be represented.

**D.** The certificate shall be forwarded to the Secretary of the Convention not later than four months prior to Convention.

**E.** If during the year, and prior to Convention, there shall be any change in elected Lay Delegates, prompt notification shall be given.

**F.** The Lay Delegation shall report to the Vestry or Executive Committee the actions of each Convention and discuss how those actions will be implemented in the Parish or Mission. The report of the lay delegation may be presented in writing, or orally, and shall be presented at a meeting of the Vestry or Executive Committee not more than sixty (60) days following the adjournment of the annual Diocesan Convention.

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## **Canon 2: The Call of the Convention**

Not fewer than forty-five days notice of each meeting of the Convention shall be given by the Secretary to every member of the Clergy of the Diocese, and to every Parish and Mission in union with the Church in this Diocese.

## **Canon 3: The Regular Committees of Convention**

**Section 1.** The Regular Committees of convention include: Claims of Clergy and Lay Delegates to Seats in the Convention, Constitutions and Canons, Resolutions, and Nominations.

- A.** Each committee shall consist of two to six persons; clergy canonically resident in the diocese and lay members in good standing in this diocese.
- B.** Each committee shall have at least one clergy member and one lay member.
- C.** Members shall continue in office until their successors are appointed. Appointments may be from one to three years with provision for annual rotation of a portion of the committee membership.

**Section 2.** The regular Committees may be appointed by the President at any time between meetings of the Convention. Their duties and responsibilities shall be as follows:

### **Section 3.** The Committee on Claims of Clergy and Lay Deputies to Seats in the Convention

- A.** The committee shall receive from the Secretary any reports of disputed or uncertain claims to seats in the Convention.
- B.** The Committee shall meet promptly and consider the matters laid before it, and shall make a recommendation to the President who shall rule on the matter.

### **Section 4.** The Committee on Constitution and Canons

- A.** The Committee on Constitution and Canons shall receive from the Secretary all proposed changes in the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese, and shall consider the same.
- B.** In every case it shall take care that the material in its report shall be in proper canonical form. It may approve or disapprove the form or substance of a resolution, or either of them, according to its own judgment. The report of this Committee in both form and substance shall take precedence over the original resolution submitted to it.
- C.** The Committee shall submit its report on the proposed changes to the Convention with approval, with disapproval, with amendments, or without comment.
- D.** The Committee shall annually review the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese in consultation with the Bishop and make any necessary recommendations to the annual Diocesan Convention.

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## **Section 5.** The Committee on Resolutions

- A.** The Committee on Resolutions shall receive from the Secretary resolutions not referred by the President of the Convention to any other Committee, including any reports or resolutions regarding admission of new Parishes or Missions.
- B.** Such resolutions must always be presented in writing at least 60 days before the meeting of the Convention unless a majority consent is given by the Convention to a later presentation.
- C.** The Committee shall consider resolutions as to form, substance, and language, and shall report its recommendations to the Convention.

## **Section 6.** The Committee on Nominations

- A.** Not later than four months before each annual Convention the Committee on Nominations shall notify all clergy canonically resident in the Diocese, and every Parish and Mission, of the offices to be filled by election at the Convention and request that names and addresses of candidates to be nominated for such offices be submitted to the Committee.
- B.** Each name shall be accompanied by a brief biography and a statement that the individual so submitted to the Committee has consented, and is willing to serve if elected.
- C.** Not later than two months before the date set for Convention, the Committee shall prepare a list of nominees who are in the consideration of the Committee well qualified for such offices.
- D.** In determining nominees for Diocesan Council, the Committee shall nominate persons who represent diverse geographical areas of the Diocese, taking into consideration the existing membership of Diocesan Council.
- E.** The list of nominees presented by the Committee to the Convention shall include the names of the Parishes or Missions to which the respective nominees belong, and the number of terms, if any, during which each of them has held the office for which nominated.
- F.** The Committee shall not later than 21 days in advance of the date set for Convention send a copy of the list of nominees to all clergy canonically resident in the Diocese and to every Parish and Mission.
- G.** Nominations from the floor of the Convention shall be accepted, provided that the person nominated has given prior approval and has agreed to serve if elected and provided further that a biography of the person is available at the time of nomination for distribution by the Secretary of the Convention.

## **Canon 4: The Officers of Convention**

**Section 1.** The Officers of the Convention shall consist of a President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chancellor.

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## Section 2. President

- A. The Bishop Diocesan, if there is one, will be President and preside at meetings of the Diocesan Convention.
- B. If there is no Bishop Diocesan then the person to preside at the Convention is chosen in accordance with the provisions in the Diocesan Constitution.

## Section 3. Secretary

- A. Upon nomination by the Ecclesiastical Authority, each annual convention shall elect a member of the clergy or a lay person to be Secretary of the Convention and to serve until a successor is elected. Upon assuming office, the Secretary is granted seat, voice, and vote in the Convention.
- B. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to take minutes of the proceedings of all Conventions, to preserve the Journals and Records, to attest the public acts of the body, and faithfully to deliver into the hands of the successor all books and papers relative to the concerns of the Diocese, which may be in his or her possession.
- C. The Secretary shall cause one copy of every printed Journal to be certified, which shall be deposited as the official record of such Convention, and shall be preserved as such.
- D. In the event of a mid-term vacancy in this office, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall appoint a successor with the advice and consent of the Diocesan Council.

## Section 4. Treasurer

- A. Upon nomination by the Ecclesiastical Authority, each annual convention shall elect a member of the clergy or a lay person to be Treasurer of the Diocese and to serve until a successor is elected. Upon assuming office, the Treasurer is granted seat, voice, and vote in the Convention.
- B. The Treasurer shall be the treasurer of the Diocese, reporting to the Diocesan Council and shall perform such duties as may be directed by the Bishop, Council and the Convention.
- C. He or she shall keep such accounts, as may be required, which shall be audited annually, and make such periodic reports as may be deemed necessary by the Bishop, Council and the Convention.
- D. The Treasurer shall be required to give such security as may from time to time be required and prescribed.
- E. In the event of a mid-term vacancy in this office, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall appoint a successor with the advice and consent of the Diocesan Council.

## Section 5. Chancellor

- A. The Bishop, with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee, may appoint a person licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as Chancellor of the Diocese.

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**B.** The Chancellor shall be the legal adviser to the Bishop, the Diocese, the Diocesan Council, the Standing Committee, and all special committees appointed by the Convention, whenever they may require legal advice in questions affecting the interest of the Diocese.

**C.** The Chancellor, if a member of the clergy, must be canonically resident in the Diocese and, if a member of the laity, must be an adult communicant in good standing in the Diocese.

## **Canon 5: Elections**

### **Section 1. Voting**

**A.** Elections shall be by a majority vote of the valid votes cast for each office. A person shall be considered to have obtained majority vote when they have received more than 50% of the valid ballots cast for that office. For any election, when requested by any five members of convention, a vote by orders will be held. Elections shall be determined by a majority vote, as defined by this canon, in each order.

**B.** Each delegate shall have one vote on each ballot for each office or position to be filled.

**C.** All delegates must vote for the number of persons to be elected to the various offices.

**Section 2.** When elections are for different terms of office, the nominee first elected shall be the one elected for the longest term; or if two or more are elected on the same ballot, the candidate receiving the highest number of votes shall be the one or ones elected.

**Section 3.** Every person appointed or elected to office shall assume office upon the close of Convention.

## **Title II: Of Parish Vestries and the Governance of Parishes**

### **Canon 1: General Vestry Matters**

#### **Section 1. Responsibilities of Parish Vestry**

**A.** The Vestry in every parish shall cooperate with the Rector in promoting the spiritual welfare of the parish and shall aid the Rector in the initiation, conduct and development of the mission of the Church both within and outside the parish.

**B.** The Vestry shall supervise the care and maintenance of the buildings, furnishings and other properties of the parish, providing adequate insurance thereon.

**C.** The Vestry shall be responsible for the proper care of the finances of the parish, including any trust funds, subject to the General Canons of the Church and the appropriate laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**D.** Each Vestry meeting shall be open to members of the congregation, except with respect to confidential personnel, legal or pastoral matters. The Vestry may, upon majority vote of the

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members where a quorum is present, designate the relevant portion of the meeting as confidential and closed.

## **Canon 2: Call of a Priest**

A call to a priest in the event of a vacancy in a clerical position shall be made in the form of a written Letter of Agreement, which shall include all items required by the Bishop, including a clause that the Letter of Agreement may be revised by mutual agreement. The Letter of Agreement and any subsequent revisions shall be submitted to the Bishop for approval.

## **Canon 3: Of the Governance of Parishes**

**Section 1.** This section of the Canon takes the place of and supersedes the Bylaws of all Parishes in the Diocese.

### **A. Annual Parish Meeting**

1. In every Parish, the Annual Parish Meeting shall be held in January at a time and place designated by the Vestry. Public notice of the Annual Meeting shall be given to all members of the congregation at least two weeks prior to the Meeting. With the consent of the Ecclesiastical Authority, the Annual Meeting may be held during a different month.

2. The purpose of this Annual Meeting shall be to elect members to the Vestry; receive reports from the Vestry, parish officers, and organizations; including any reports about the budget approved by the Vestry for the new year; and to transact such other business as may properly come before it.

3. At the Annual Meeting, a report of the Parish finances shall be given. This report shall include, but not be limited to: 1) a report of the finances of the preceding year; 2) reports of all assets and liabilities and all income and expenditures of any subsidiary or related organization or entity, including (but not limited to) all trusts, endowments or other accounts, and 3) a budget for the year in which the Annual Meeting is held.

4. The Annual Parish Meeting shall be presided over by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or if the office be vacant, or if the Rector or Priest-in-Charge be absent, by the Senior Warden.

5. Lay Members in good standing of the Parish who are physically present, who are at least 18 years of age, who are regular attendants at the services of the parish, and who are regular contributors for the six months preceding the meeting to the support of the Parish, shall be entitled to vote at all Parish Meetings. A quorum for the transaction of business in the Annual Parish Meeting shall consist of 25% of the persons entitled to vote if they were present or 25 persons entitled to vote, whichever is less. The Vestry may by resolution permit one or more members to participate in a Parish Meeting by means of conference telephone or other electronic technology by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other in a manner that is substantially simultaneous and continuous. Participation in a meeting by conference telephone or other electronic technology shall constitute presence.



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6. Each Parish shall have a Vestry consisting of not fewer than five nor more than twelve Lay Members at least 18 years of age in good standing elected at the annual Parish Meeting. The number of persons to serve on the Vestry of the Parish shall be set by resolution of the Annual Parish Meeting. A change in number may be effected by the same procedure.

7. The qualifications of persons to serve on the Vestry shall be the same as the qualifications to vote at the Annual Parish Meeting as set out above except that the person to be elected need not be present at the Meeting.

8. No cleric or member of a cleric's family shall be eligible for election as a member of the Vestry. No employee of the Parish or member of the employee's family shall be eligible for election to Vestry. No more than one member of a family may serve on Vestry at the same time. A Parish may apply by letter to the Bishop for a waiver of the provisions of this subsection, stating the specific provision for which it wishes a waiver and the reasons for the waiver. The Bishop shall provide a written response to the Parish. If the Bishop approves the waiver, the provisions of this subsection shall be considered waived to the extent and for the period that the Bishop has approved the waiver as of the date of the written response.

9. In each Parish the Vestry may by resolution designate a Nominating Committee, otherwise the Rector or Priest-in-Charge together with the Senior Warden and the Junior Warden shall be the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall publish to the parish two weeks prior to the Annual Parish Meeting a ballot with sufficient qualified nominees to fill the vacancies on the Vestry for the upcoming year.

10. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of the Annual Parish Meeting. The nominator shall first obtain the consent of the nominee. Any question of the nominee's qualification to serve shall be resolved by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge prior to the election of Vestry members. In the absence of a Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the Senior Warden shall have the responsibility for determining the qualifications of any person nominated from the floor.

11. Each Annual Parish Meeting shall elect persons to serve on the Vestry replacing those members whose term in office has ended.

12. The length of one term of office for members of the Vestry shall be three years with one third of the members, or as near as may be, elected each year at the Annual Parish Meeting. A vestry member shall not be eligible for re-election until after one year after his or her second term has ended.

## **B. Special Parish Meetings**

1. A Special Parish Meeting may be held at any time on the written order of the Ecclesiastical Authority or of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or by resolution of the Vestry, or on a petition to the Ecclesiastical Authority if such petition be signed by not less than one-quarter (25%) of the number entitled to vote at the last Annual Parish Meeting.

2. All such orders, resolutions, or petitions shall specify the time and place of such meeting and the business to be considered.

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3. At such meeting, no business shall be considered other than that specified in the call.
4. Notice of such meeting shall be given to all members of the congregation at least two calendar weeks prior to the meeting. This notice shall specify the time and place of the meeting, the business to be considered, and by whose order the meeting is called.
5. Such meeting may be presided over by the Bishop. If the Bishop does not preside, the Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall preside. If there is no Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the Ecclesiastical Authority may request the Senior Warden to preside.

## C. Vestries

### 1. Duties of the Vestry

- a. In accordance with the Constitutions and Canons of The Episcopal Church and of this Diocese the Vestry shall govern the Parish and shall manage and be responsible for its property and material affairs; shall further the temporal and spiritual welfare of the Parish; provide a suitable place of worship and see that it is provided with all things necessary to the worship of Almighty God; shall select and call a Rector and provide for the remuneration of the Rector; and shall comply with all other requirements of this Canon.
- b. As to civil matters, the Vestry shall be the corporate Board of Directors. The Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall be a member of and preside over the Vestry and is the President of the corporation. If there is no Rector or Priest-in-Charge then the Senior Warden shall be the President of the Corporation.
- c. In consultation with the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, all staff positions are created and funded by the Vestry. Personnel filling those positions are hired by and serve at the discretion of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and are accountable to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge. The Rector or Priest-in-Charge may work collaboratively with a nominating or personnel committee in the selection of personnel.
- d. A financial report shall be given at each regular meeting of the Vestry, which shall include current income and expenditures. Following approval, the report shall be made available to members of the congregation by publicly posting or otherwise.

### 2. Officers of the Vestry and of the Parish

- a. The Lay Officers of a Parish shall consist of the Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Clerk and Treasurer who shall all be adult Lay Members in good standing of the Parish and at least 18 years of age. No cleric or family member of a cleric may serve as an Officer of the Parish. No employee of the Parish or member of such employee's family may serve as an Officer of the Parish. No family member of a Vestry member may serve as an Officer of the Parish. A Parish may apply by letter to the Bishop for a waiver of the provisions of this subsection, stating the specific provision for which it seeks a waiver and the reasons for the waiver. The Bishop shall provide a written response to the Parish. If the Bishop approves the waiver, the provisions of this subsection shall be considered waived to the extent and for the period that the Bishop has approved the amendment as of the date of the written response.

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b. The Senior Warden shall be elected annually by the Vestry, upon nomination by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, from among the members of the Vestry. If there be no Rector or Priest-in-Charge of the Parish, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall nominate a Senior Warden from among the members of the Vestry. The Vestry may, by majority vote, decide to call the Senior Warden the “Rector’s Warden” or the “Vestry Warden”, but in all cases the Senior Warden shall be elected by the Vestry and perform the duties of the Senior Warden.

c. It is the duty of the Senior Warden to work closely with the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, to advise the Rector or Priest-in-Charge on all matters pertaining to the parish upon which the Rector or Priest-in-Charge may wish to consult the Senior Warden, and to inform the Rector or Priest-in-Charge of all matters which the Senior Warden feels the Rector needs to know. If there is no Rector or Priest-in-Charge, it shall be the duty of the Senior Warden to assume all the temporal duties of the Rector including, but not limited to, presiding at Vestry meetings, signing documents, filing reports, and maintaining the Parish Register. In addition, it shall be the duty of the Senior Warden to provide for the continuation of Divine Worship.

d. The Junior Warden shall either be elected annually from among their number by the Vestry or shall be appointed by the Rector. In the absence of the Senior Warden, the Junior Warden is to assume the duties of the Senior Warden. The Vestry may, by majority vote, decide to call the Junior Warden the “Vestry Warden” or the “Rector’s Warden”, but in all cases the Junior Warden will perform the duties of the Junior Warden.

e. The Wardens shall see that the financial obligations of the Parish are met and that the buildings belonging to the Parish are kept in good repair and are adequately insured. Under the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, they shall see that all things needed for the orderly worship of God and for the proper administration of the sacraments are provided. They shall prevent or repress all disturbance of divine worship. In the absence of a Rector or Priest-in-Charge, they shall, with the advice of the Ecclesiastical Authority, procure suitable supply for the continuance of the services.

f. A Clerk shall be elected annually by the Vestry. The Clerk shall be responsible to see that minutes are taken of all Annual and Special Parish Meetings and of all meetings of the Vestry and shall attest to the same in the Book of Minutes of the Vestry, shall maintain in the said book the annual accounts of the temporal condition of the Parish, shall keep all original documents, and the list of voters provided for by these Canons. The Clerk shall turn over to his or her successor all books and documents in his possession that belong to the Parish.

g. A Treasurer shall be elected annually by the Vestry. Under the authority of the Vestry, the Treasurer is responsible to collect, receive, disburse, and account for the funds of the Parish. Prior to the Annual Parish Meeting, the Treasurer shall present to the Vestry a full and accurate statement of the financial condition of the Parish. At every meeting of the Vestry the Treasurer shall report the total assets and liabilities of the Parish and the income and expenses of the general operating funds. As directed the Treasurer shall report the income and expenses of any other funds. The Treasurer shall furnish a bond, but the cost of such bond shall be borne by the Parish. The Treasurer shall turn over to his or her successor all books, documents, and funds in his or her possession that belong to the Parish.

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h. The Vestry shall fill any mid-term vacancies in their number or among the officers of the Parish by majority vote.

## 3. Meetings of the Vestry

a. Regular meetings of the Vestry shall be held at least quarterly. All Vestry members are expected to be present at Vestry meetings. If any member of the Vestry is absent from three consecutive meetings without due cause, as determined by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and the Wardens, that seat shall be declared vacant. The Vestry may by resolution permit one or more Vestry members to participate in a Vestry meeting by telephone or other electronic technology under the conditions described in Canon 3.1.A.5 of this Title II.

b. The Vestry shall not transact any business without the presence of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge of the Parish, or in the event that the office of Rector or Priest-in-Charge be vacant, without the presence of one of the Wardens. A quorum consisting of a majority of the elected members of the Vestry must be present for the Vestry to transact business. No action affecting the rights of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall be taken at any meeting at which the Rector or Priest-in-Charge has not been given the opportunity to attend.

c. Special Meetings of the Vestry may be called at any time at the request of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, or of any two Vestry members. Notice of such meeting shall be given to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the Wardens, and the members of the Vestry. This notice shall specify the time and place of the meeting and the business to be considered. No other business shall come before such special meeting except with the unanimous consent of the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and all members of the Vestry.

## 4. Indemnification

a. No member of the Vestry shall be personally liable for monetary damages for any action taken, or any failure to take any action, unless said person has breached or failed to perform the duties of the office prescribed by these Canons, and the breach or failure to perform constitutes self-dealing, willful misconduct or recklessness. The provisions of this section shall not apply to the responsibility or liability of said person pursuant to any criminal statute, or for the payment of taxes pursuant to local, state, or federal law.

b. The Parish shall indemnify any Vestry member who was or is a party to, or is threatened to be made a party to or who is called as a witness in connection with any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative, including any action by or on behalf of the Parish by reason of the fact that he is or was a member of Vestry against expenses, including attorney's fees, judgments, fines and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred in connection with such action, suit, or proceeding unless the act or failure to act giving rise to the claim for indemnification is determined by a court of competent jurisdiction to have constituted willful misconduct or recklessness. With respect to any such action, the Parish may participate therein at its own expense; and the Parish shall be entitled to assume the defense thereof, with Counsel selected by the Parish to the reasonable satisfaction of the party being indemnified. After notice from the Parish to such person of its election to assume the defense thereof, the Parish shall not be liable to such person for any legal or other expenses subsequently incurred by such person in connection with the

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defense thereof. Such person shall have the right to employ separate Counsel in such action, but the fees and expenses of such Counsel incurred after a notice from the Parish of its assumption of the defense thereof, shall be at the expense of such person.

## **Section 2. Subordinate Entities**

**A.** If a Parish wholly owns any subordinate entity, whether or not that entity is separately incorporated, and the Parish pays staff to perform work for that entity, that subordinate entity shall have its own bylaws.

**B.** All such bylaws and any amendments thereto shall first be submitted to the Bishop and Standing Committee for approval prior to submission to the Vestry for approval.

**C.** Any existing bylaws for such entities which have not already been approved by the Bishop and the Standing Committee shall be submitted to the Bishop and to the Chancellor for review.

## **Canon 4: Of Business Methods in Church Affairs**

**Section 1.** In every parish, mission, congregation or institution connected with the Diocese of Bethlehem, the Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs, as issued from time to time by the Church, shall be used as a guide for the conduct of business.

**Section 2.** All property, real and personal, held by or for the benefit of any Congregation of this Diocese is held in trust for the Diocese and The Episcopal Church. The existence of this trust, however, shall in no way limit the power and authority of the Congregation otherwise existing over such property so long as the Congregation remains a part of, and subject to, this Church and its General and Diocesan Constitution and Canons.

**Section 3.** No mortgage, judgment, voluntary lien, or indebtedness shall be incurred by any Congregation of this Diocese without the consent and approval of the Bishop Diocesan, if there be one, and the Standing Committee. If any Congregation learns that it is subject to an involuntary lien or judgment, the Rector and/or Senior Warden shall promptly notify the Ecclesiastical Authority.

**Section 4.** No real property titled to any Congregation or other institution of this Diocese shall be sold, given away, deliberately destroyed, or otherwise alienated or encumbered without the consent and approval of the Bishop Diocesan, if there be one, and the Standing Committee.

**Section 5.** All Congregations, institutions, and other entities belonging to this Diocese or any of the Congregations of this Diocese shall be adequately insured with property and liability insurance that shall conform to a minimum standard for insurance established by the Diocesan Council, and shall provide annually to the Diocese a certificate of insurance.

**Section 6.** No Congregation, institution or other entity belonging to this Diocese shall purchase real estate without the consent and approval of the Bishop Diocesan, if there be one, and the Standing Committee.

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**Section 7.** Real property held or administered by the Diocese of Bethlehem or by Institutions, Parishes or Congregations connected with it, shall be offered for sale, sold, or leased only on a non-discriminatory basis consistent with the applicable laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, of the United States of America, and the of the General Canons of the Church.

**Section 8.** Every Congregation shall present the Annual Parochial Report to the Ecclesiastical Authority by the date specified.

## **Canon 5: Parishes Under Review**

### **Section 1.** Definition of Sustainable Parish

It is the policy of the Diocese that all Parishes should be 'Sustainable'. A Parish (including yoked parishes or a cluster of parishes) which is 'Sustainable' is defined as a Parish or parish ministry initiative that exhibits these characteristics:

- A.** It is mission-focused and able to come into alignment with Diocesan strategic priorities.
- B.** It is outward-looking and seeks to make an impact on its surrounding community.
- C.** It has clergy (full or part-time) and active lay leadership with the skills to manage the programs and property of the parish ministry to meet its own sense of mission.
- D.** It has the energy and resources to meet the challenges of the community it serves and to provide for the future well-being of parish life.
- E.** It relies mainly on the freewill offering of its members and its own resources for its core financial support.
- F.** It does not endanger its future well-being by depleting its capital assets.

### **Section 2.** Conditions for Declaration of Review Status

A Parish may be declared to be a Parish Under Review when one or more of the following conditions exist, as determined by the Bishop with the consent of the Standing Committee:

- A.** The Vestry or Rector of a Parish request the Bishop to declare it to be a Parish Under Review
- B.** The Parish has violated the Constitution or Canons of the Diocese or the General Constitution and Canons of the Church, including employing a member of the clergy under ecclesiastical censure or process, permitting a church edifice to be used for purposes incompatible with its consecration, or engaging in any persistent course inconsistent with the doctrine, discipline, or worship of the Church;
- C.** The Parish has refused or neglected to elect a Vestry, or failed to provide representation at any Annual Convention of this Diocese, or refused or neglected to pay its Diocesan Assessment;
- D.** The Parish has failed to call a Rector after a reasonable period of time and without having made reasonable efforts;

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E. The Parish has failed to comply with the provisions of the Canons of this Diocese or the General Canons of this Church pertaining to Business Methods in Church Affairs or the Church Pension Fund;

F. The Parish has repeatedly invaded the principal portion of endowment funds for regular operating expenses, evidenced substantial financial instability, or otherwise is not ‘Sustainable’.

## **Section 3. Review Committee**

A. The Bishop shall appoint a Committee of three (3) persons who are not members of the Parish to investigate and seek to ameliorate the conditions, and to report to the Bishop.

B. The Committee, with the Parish, may enlist the advice and assistance of Diocesan resources.

C. The Bishop shall have the right to have the books and records of the congregation audited.

## **Section 4. Restoration to Regular Canonical Status**

A. When a Parish is under Review, it shall be the obligation of all parties to labor to restore the Parish to a greater degree of health, setting forth problems to be addressed in an open, honest manner, and working toward the resolution of such problems in a climate of respect and charity, and for the greater good of the Church’s witness to its Lord.

B. The Bishop, with the advice of the Standing Committee, shall develop a plan for restoring the parish to greater degree of health (“Restoration Plan”).

C. The Restoration Plan shall be delivered in writing to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and the Senior Warden of the Parish under Review within 90 days of the Parish having been placed on Review status and will take effect upon delivery.

D. The Restoration Plan shall contain in writing all matters which the Parish must resolve to be restored to health, and the guidelines that will demonstrate such return to health and such plan may be amended by the bishop at any time.

E. A parish shall be declared to be no longer a Parish under Review when the Bishop, with the advice of the Standing Committee, determines that all of the requirements of the Restoration Plan have been satisfied.

## **Canon 6: Parishes at Risk**

### **Section 1. Conditions for At Risk Status**

A. If the conditions set forth in Title II, Canon 5, Section 2, shall persist for more than one year, or if conditions warrant immediate action, the Bishop, with advice and consent of the Standing Committee, may declare the Parish to be a Parish at risk, and may require the application of one or more of the following measures to restore health to the Parish:

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1. Appointment, by the Bishop, of three (3) to five (5) persons, some or all of whom may be adult communicants of the Parish to govern the affairs of the Parish as the Vestry, replacing the current Vestry, notwithstanding any other provisions for such governance or the election of a Vestry in the Canons of this Diocese;
2. Designation of the Rector as Vicar;
3. Conveyance of title of all property to the corporation named Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese, through its Board, Diocesan Council, who shall hold the same while these conditions exist;
4. Such other measures which the Bishop, with the concurrence of the Standing Committee, determines to be appropriate. Such measures may include formally designating the Parish to be a Mission of the Diocese.

## **Section 2.** Restoration to Regular Canonical Status

- A.** At least yearly, the Bishop (together with such other persons or Committees as the Bishop may designate) and the Vestry will evaluate the progress toward correcting the conditions that led to the Parish being declared at risk, including, but not limited to, the issues and guidelines listed in the Restoration Plan.
- B.** When the conditions which have led to the decision to declare a Parish at risk have been substantially ameliorated, the Parish may petition the Bishop for restoration of the Parish to regular canonical status.
- C.** The Bishop, with the advice of the Standing Committee, shall decide whether or not to approve the petition.
- D.** If a Parish at Risk shall remain in such status for a period of more than four (4) years without extension of its Restoration Plan, then a special meeting of the Parish at Risk shall be called by either the Bishop or the Wardens of the Parish, and by majority vote thereof, it shall be determined whether such Parish at Risk shall petition to be restored to full and regular Parish status, or shall ask to be changed to the status of a Mission, merged, or closed.
- E.** The Bishop, with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee, shall then decide not less than four months after the vote on such requested action whether to restore the Parish, to change its status to Mission, to merge or to close the Parish.
- F.** Any decision as to closing of a Parish shall be taken in accordance with Title II, Canon 8.

## **Canon 7: Missions**

### **Section 1.** Definition

A Mission is a congregation of the Diocese of Bethlehem which does not meet the requirements of a Parish.



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## **Section 2.** Establishment of Missions

**A.** The power to establish a Mission in any town or district is hereby vested in the Bishop of the Diocese. A Mission is, for the purpose of this Canon, an incipient organization over which a Missionary may at any time be placed by the authority of the Bishop.

**B.** A Mission shall not be established in any town or district until an application shall have been made by not less than ten adult persons, declaring their attachment to the Protestant Episcopal Church, and their purpose to sustain the services of said Church; they shall furthermore pledge the payment of a specified sum for the maintenance of the Vicar whom the Bishop shall appoint.

## **Section 3.** Property

All property of a Mission shall be vested in The Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese through its Board, Diocesan Council, who shall hold the same for the benefit of said Mission, until such time as it shall be duly organized as a Parish, when the said property may be transferred to the Parish Corporation; provided that when a property is vested in a parent Parish it shall retain the same until the Mission be organized as a Parish and as such be admitted into union with the Convention.

## **Section 4.** Executive Committee

There shall be annually elected in every Mission not fewer than four nor more than ten adult members who, with the Vicar, shall constitute the Executive Committee of the Mission, and whose duty it shall be to promote the temporal and spiritual interests of the Mission.

## **Section 5.** Wardens

The Vicar shall appoint from the Executive Committee a Warden, and the Executive Committee shall elect a Secretary and Treasurer. The Treasurer need not be a member of the Executive Committee.

## **Section 6.** Convention Delegates

The Lay delegates from the Mission shall be chosen from among the members thereof in the manner provided in Title 1, Canon 1, Section 2.A.

## **Canon 8: Closing of a Parish**

### **Section 1.** Conditions for Voluntary Closure

A Parish may voluntarily determine to close, if such action is:

- A.** approved by two-thirds (2/3) of the Vestry; and
- B.** approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Members present at a special or regular meeting; and
- C.** approved by the Rector, if one is in place; and
- D.** approved by the Bishop.

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## **Section 2. Conditions for Closure**

- A.** Other than as set forth in Section 1 above, no Parish shall be closed except upon the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the Members of any Convention of the Diocese.
- B.** Such Convention vote shall be upon a special report of the Diocesan Council, which shall consider the issues and evidence of conditions warranting a declaration of dissolution. Such report shall contain a statement of the issues and evidence of conditions placed before the Bishop and the Diocesan Council.
- C.** Upon the affirmative vote of the Convention, such Parish shall be closed, and title to all property thereof shall vest in the Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese and its Board of Directors, the Diocesan Council.

## **Section 3. Disposition of Property**

Upon closing, title to all property thereof shall vest in the Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese and its Board of Directors, the Diocesan Council.

## **Title III: Of Constitutional Committees**

### **Canon 1: Standing Committee**

**Section 1.** The Standing Committee shall consist of eight (8) elected members; 4 clergy members and 4 lay members.

**Section 2.** Each annual Convention shall elect one Priest in Good Standing and one Lay Person in Good Standing to serve a term of four years on the Standing Committee.

**Section 3.** No one so elected shall be eligible for re-election after having served two consecutive terms until after the expiration of one year.

**Section 4.** The Standing Committee shall fulfill all duties prescribed for Standing Committees in the General Constitution and Canons and in the Constitution of this Diocese and in these Canons.

**Section 5.** Within thirty (30) days following the annual Diocesan Convention, the Standing Committee shall elect from their own body a President of the Standing Committee and shall also elect from their body a Secretary who shall serve a term of one year and may succeed themselves.

**Section 6.** The Standing Committee shall have the authority to fill, for the unexpired term, all vacancies that occur in its own body.

### **Canon 2: The Diocesan Council**

#### **Section 1. Purpose of the Diocesan Council**

- A.** The Diocesan Council shall be the executive agency of the Convention of the Diocese in between meetings of the Convention, and shall be responsible to the Convention.

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**B.** The Diocesan Council shall administer and advance the work of the Church in this Diocese, subject to the provisions of the Constitution and Canons of this Diocese.

**C.** As the executive agency of the Convention of the Diocese, the Diocesan Council may inaugurate, revise and enact policies that are not inconsistent with the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese.

**D.** The Diocesan Council shall constitute the Board of Directors of that Pennsylvania non-profit corporation known as The Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese of Bethlehem. The Diocesan Council shall also constitute the Board of the Directors of that Pennsylvania non-profit corporation known as the Diocese of Bethlehem.

**E.** The powers and duties of the aforesaid corporations shall be as set forth in their respective Articles of Incorporation. The Diocesan Council shall have power to make such bylaws and rules as may from time to time be deemed necessary or expedient for the governance of said corporations; provided, always, that the said bylaws and rules, or any of them be not repugnant to the Constitution and laws of the United States, to the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to the General Constitution and Canons of the Church, and to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Bethlehem.

## **Section 2.** Membership of the Diocesan Council

**A.** The Bishop of the Diocese shall be, ex-officio, president of the Diocesan Council.

**B.** The Bishop Coadjutor, the Bishop Suffragan, the Assistant Bishop, and the Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the Diocesan Council.

**C.** The Council shall consist of twelve elected members in addition to the ex officio members.

**D.** Convention shall elect four persons, two clerical and two lay, to the Diocesan Council annually to serve for a term of three years.

**E.** No one so elected shall be eligible for re-election after having served two consecutive terms until after the expiration of one year.

**F.** The Diocesan Council shall have the authority to fill, for the unexpired term, all vacancies in its own body related to the elected members in Section C above.

## **Section 3.** The Duties of the Diocesan Council

**A.** The Diocesan Council shall develop for consideration and approval by Convention a Diocesan mission strategy and shall develop and maintain programs to implement the mission.

1. Council shall regularly review the strategy and report the results of the review to Convention.

2. Council shall make an annual report to Convention for its consideration including an assessment of Diocesan programs and services.

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**B.** The Diocesan Council shall prepare and submit annually to the Convention for its consideration and approval, subject to sub-section (c) herein, a proposed operating budget for all programs and services included in the proposed strategy, and the assessments and acceptances of the parishes and missions necessary to effect said strategy. The Council shall propose minimum salaries and cost of living increases. This provision does not apply to positions filled by deacons, diocesan interns, or non-stipendiary clergy.

**C.** At the first meeting of the Diocesan Council in each fiscal year, the aforementioned proposed operating budget shall be finalized and approved, in accordance with the strategy and priorities adopted by the Convention, which operating budget shall not be greater than the financial resources available for these purposes.

**D.** The Diocesan Council shall have the powers and duties, either in its own name, in the name of the Diocese, or in the name of the Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese of Bethlehem, or as trustee of any of these entities, to buy and sell real estate, securities and other investments, to receive, hold, administer, and properly dispose of all property, real and personal, which may be given, granted, conveyed, devised, bequeathed, or transferred to the Diocese, including but not limited to the Episcopal Endowment Fund or the Episcopal Diocesan Fund, or to the Incorporated Trustees, either in its own name or in trust, for any religious, charitable or educational use of purpose connected with the Diocese or any portion of the Diocese, or for the aid, benefit, or advancement of any parish, congregation, or religious, charitable or educational association of Episcopalians in the Diocese.

**E.** Upon approval of the proposed operating budget by the Convention, notice shall be sent to the Rector or Vicar and Treasurer of each Parish and Mission of the assessment due and payable by the respective Parish or Mission, which shall be payable in monthly installments to the Treasurer of the Diocese commencing January of the fiscal year to which said budget is applicable.

**F.** Notice of the right of appeal from the amount of the assessment shall be printed in the notices sent to the Parishes and Missions. All requests for reduction or for exoneration shall be submitted to Diocesan Council, who shall act upon the same in a timely fashion.

**G.** At least one month before the close of the diocesan fiscal year and one month before any Special Convention, Diocesan Council shall notify all Parishes and Missions which may have failed to meet their assessments in full, stating the amount still due, and shall add to the notice the clause in Article V of the Constitution, which bars representation in the Convention for certain financial delinquency.

**H.** At the opening of each annual Convention, the Treasurer shall present a written report stating in detail the fiscal condition of the Diocese, and a list of the Parishes and Missions which may have failed to pay their assessments, stating the amount still due from each.

## **Section 4. Committees of Council**

The Diocesan Council shall have the power to initiate and appoint such as are necessary to fulfill the diocesan mission, strategy, and policies.

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## **A. Finance Committee**

Notwithstanding any other committees it may establish, the Diocesan Council shall be required to establish a Finance Committee.

### 1. Membership of the Finance Committee

- a. The Finance Committee shall consist at a minimum of the Treasurer, two members appointed by the Bishop, and two members appointed by the Diocesan Council.
- b. In order to fulfill its mandate, additional members may be appointed by nomination of the Bishop and approval of the Diocesan Council.
- c. Members of the Committee need not be members of the Diocesan Council. Members appointed shall be persons with expertise in fiscal or fiduciary affairs.
- d. Such committee members shall serve at the pleasure of the body that appointed them.

### 2. Powers and Duties of the Finance Committee

- a. The Committee shall monitor the financial affairs of the Diocese.
- b. The Committee shall provide for an annual audit of the Diocese.
- c. The Committee shall recommend to the Diocesan Council the proper and prudent administration of such real or personal property and as may have been granted to the corporations known as the Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese of Bethlehem, the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem, or any real or personal property designated for the use of the Episcopal Church in this Diocese.
- d. Such recommendations shall include recommendations for the approval of all investments or change in investments in respect of which the Diocesan Council, the Diocese, or the corporation known as the Incorporated Trustees of the Diocese of Bethlehem has any authority or responsibility, and any matters relating to loans from the Colt Sterrett and Clergy loan funds, and any other loan funds under the control and supervision of the Diocese.
- e. To carry out its purpose, the Finance Committee shall keep a record of its meetings and make a report at each meeting of the Diocesan Council.

**B.** All Committees established by Council pursuant to this Canon, including but not limited to the Finance Committee, shall report to Council in such ways as Council shall determine.

1. Any reports and recommendations of these Committees shall be subject to Council's review and approval.
2. Members of the Committees need not be members of the Diocesan Council

**C.** The Diocesan Council shall report to the Annual Convention of the Diocese.

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## Canon 3: Ecclesiastical Discipline

### Section 1. Title IV of General Canons

Those provisions of Title IV of the General Church Canons, which are applicable or may become applicable to the Diocese, are hereby incorporated as part of this Canon. To the extent, if any, that any of the provisions of this Canon are in conflict or inconsistent with the provisions of Title IV, the provisions of Title IV shall govern.

### Section 2. Discipline Structure

**A. Disciplinary Board.** The Board shall consist of seven persons, four of whom are members of the Clergy and three of whom are Laity.

**B. Clergy Members.** The clergy members of the Board from the Diocese must be canonically and geographically resident within the Diocese.

**C. Lay Members.** The lay members of the Board from the Diocese shall be Adult Communicants in Good Standing and geographically resident in the Diocese.

#### **D. Election**

1. By May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, the Bishop shall nominate and the Standing Committee shall elect persons to fill the terms of those members whose terms are expiring in July of that year. Those persons newly elected shall assume office on July 1<sup>st</sup> of the year they are elected.

2. The members of the Disciplinary Board shall serve for a term of three (3) years.

3. No member shall be eligible for reelection for a year after the end of his or her second three (3) year term.

4. There shall be no change in the composition of a Disciplinary Board as to a proceeding pending before it while that proceeding is unresolved except for just cause as determined by the Disciplinary Board.

5. Should a mid-term vacancy occur, the Bishop shall nominate a replacement to the Standing Committee for election.

6. President: By June 30 of each year the Disciplinary Board shall elect a President of the Disciplinary Board to serve for the ensuing year or until a successor is elected.

**E. Church Attorney.** The Bishop, with the consent of the Standing Committee, shall appoint an attorney to serve as Church Attorney and to serve at the pleasure of the bishop. The person so appointed must be a duly licensed attorney but need not reside within the Diocese.

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## **Title IV: Miscellaneous**

### **Canon 1: Diocesan Staff**

**Section 1.** No part-time or full-time employee or staff person of the Diocese shall be eligible for election to, or to serve as a member of a Constitutional Committee or the Commission on Ministry.

**Section 2.** Nothing in this Canon shall preclude an employee or staff person of the Diocese from election to, or serving as, a Deputy to General Convention or a committee of Diocesan Council or a committee of the Diocesan Convention.

### **Canon 2: Commission on Ministry**

#### **Section 1. Membership**

**A.** The Bishop shall ex-officio be a member of the Commission on Ministry. The Bishop Coadjutor, the Bishop Suffragan and the Assistant Bishop (if there be such) shall ex-officio be members of the Commission on Ministry.

**B.** The Commission on Ministry will consist of 12 persons in addition to the ex officio members. The Convention shall elect six of the 12 members of the Commission, three clerical and three lay: one in each order to be elected annually for a term of three years. No one so elected shall be eligible for re-election after having served two consecutive terms until after the expiration of one year.

**C.** The Bishop shall annually appoint six members for a term of one year.

**D.** As circumstances require, in consultation with Commission on Ministry, the Bishop may appoint up to two additional members to the Commission for a term of one year.

**E.** The Commission on Ministry shall have the authority to fill, for the unexpired term, all vacancies in its own body related to the elected members in Section B above.

#### **Section 2. Duties**

The duties of the Commission on Ministry shall be those prescribed in the General Canons of the Church and such other duties relating to the ministry of this diocese as shall be assigned by the Bishop.

**Section 3.** The Commission on Ministry shall have the power to devise and enact by-laws for its own governance that are not inconsistent with the Constitution and Canons of the diocese.

**Section 4.** The Commission on Ministry shall report to the annual Convention of the Diocese.

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## Canon 3: Deputies to General Convention

**Section 1.** At every annual meeting of the Convention held in the second year preceding that year in which a meeting of the General Convention is scheduled, four clergy and four lay communicants in good standing shall be elected by ballot as deputies and four of each order shall be elected as alternates of this Diocese to the General Convention of The Episcopal Church.

**Section 2.** Notwithstanding any other provision of the Constitution or these Canons, all elections for Deputies and alternates to General Convention shall be held by Orders. No person shall be declared elected unless they receive a majority of the vote of each Order voting on the same ballot. Elections shall continue until four Deputies and four alternates are elected in each order.

**Section 3.** In case any of those elected deputies shall decline such election or will be unable to attend, such individual shall forthwith inform the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese and the said Ecclesiastical Authority shall thereupon appoint one of the alternates in the order of their election; if none of the alternates elected shall accept such appointment, the Ecclesiastical Authority may appoint a deputy of the same order as the deputy who resigned.

**Section 4.** The Diocesan Council shall make a reasonable allowance for the expenses of the deputies of the General Convention by the Diocese.

**Section 5.** The Deputies shall elect a chair of their delegation from among their number by majority vote of the Deputies elected.

**Section 6.** The Deputies shall elect from within their number representatives to the Province III Synod.

## Canon 4: Failure to Perform Duties

If any officer of the Diocese shall in the judgment of the Bishop fail to perform the duties or function of the office to which elected for a period of three (3) consecutive calendar months, or if any elected member of any committee or other body of the Diocese shall be absent from three or more consecutive meetings of that committee or other body without reasonable excuse then the Standing Committee may, on the application of the Bishop or of the committee or body in question, declare, by a two-thirds vote of the entire committee, that the office is vacant.

## Canon 5: The Cathedral

**Section 1.** The Church of the Nativity in the City of Bethlehem is the Cathedral Church of the Bishop and the Diocesan Church of the Diocese of Bethlehem for the use of the clergy and laity of the Diocese, and it is also a House of Prayer for all people who may resort thereto for worship.

**Section 2.** The Cathedral is the official seat of the Bishop, and the center of Diocesan worship and work. It shall set an example of constant and well-ordered worship, of effective preaching, of missionary zeal, of religious education and Christian Social Service.

**Section 3.** The Rector of the Cathedral, when duly elected by the Parish and installed as such, shall be the Dean thereof.



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**Section 4.** The title of the property of the Cathedral shall be held by the Rector, Church Wardens and Vestry thereof who shall, subject to the Canons of the Diocese and the General Canons of the Church, administer said property, supervise and direct the activities of the Cathedral Church and exercise all the duties and functions entrusted to a parish church by those Canons.

**Section 5.** Assistant ministers on the staff of the Cathedral may, at the discretion of the Dean and with the consent of the Bishop, be designated as Canons of the Cathedral.

**Section 6.** The Cathedral shall be at the Bishop's disposal for special services, whereof due notice shall be given to the Dean.

**Section 7.** The Bishop shall take such part in religious services as is mutually agreed upon by the Bishop and the Dean, shall have the use of the pulpit of the Cathedral on giving due notice to the Dean and shall always have the privilege to celebrate the Holy Communion and to preach in the Cathedral on Easter Day and on Christmas in each year.

## **Canon 6: The Historiographer**

The Historiographer shall be appointed by the Bishop and shall be the custodian of all Journals of other dioceses and jurisdictions and of all files, papers, reports and documents that shall become the property of the Diocese and shall keep the same in some suitable, accessible place of deposit subject to the direction of the Convention.

## **Canon 7: Amendments to and Interpretation of the Canon Law**

**Section 1.** All proposals, other than proposals originating with the Committee on Constitution and Canons, to amend the Constitution or the Canons of the Diocese shall be referred without debate to the Committee on Constitution and Canons for consideration and report.

**Section 2.** Any amendment to the Canons shall be effective on the date of approval by Convention, unless otherwise stated.

**Section 3.** The Constitution and Canons shall be interpreted in their plain and literal sense except that words specific to one gender shall be read as gender inclusive. The terms used in these Canons shall be defined as follows:

- A.** Family: spouse, parent, sibling, child, stepchild, in-law or domestic partner.
- B.** General Canons or General Church Canons: Constitution and Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church.
- C.** Diocese: The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem
- D.** Lay Member: every baptized lay member of the Church.
- E.** Rector: Rector or Priest-in-Charge