

# The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem Constitution

Approved: 10.14.2023

## ARTICLE I

The Church in the Diocese of Bethlehem, being a constituent part of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, accedes to, recognizes, and adopts the Constitution and Canons of that Church, and acknowledges its authority accordingly.

## ARTICLE II

There shall be a stated Convention of the Church in this Diocese every year, convening on such day and at such place as the preceding Convention may have appointed; and if no appointment shall have been made, then the Bishop and the Standing Committee shall appoint the day and the place. The Bishop and the Standing Committee shall have the power to change the place and time of Convention.

## ARTICLE III

The Bishop may call Special Conventions when he or she shall judge it conducive to the good of the Church; and he or she shall do so when requested by a vote of three-fourths of the Standing Committee. If the Episcopate be vacant, the Standing Committee shall have power to call a Special Convention; such call to be made by a circular letter to all the Clergy and Parishes, and issued not less than thirty days previous to the day appointed for the Convention, stating the special business for which the Convention is called.

## ARTICLE IV

Every Convention shall be opened with Prayers, as directed by the Bishop, and at every Convention there may be a celebration of the Holy Communion at the direction of the Bishop

## ARTICLE V

**Section 1.** The Convention shall be composed of Clergy and Lay Deputies.

**Section 2.** Every member of the Clergy canonically resident in the Diocese shall be entitled to a seat and a vote in the Convention.

**Section 3.** The Lay members shall consist of the Secretary, Treasurer, and Chancellor of the Diocese, if they be lay members; and of at least one Lay Delegate from each Parish and Mission in union with the Convention, with additional delegates as may be set forth in the Canons.

The term "lay member," as used in this Article V, and in Article VIII below, shall in every case mean baptized lay members of the Church in good standing.

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## ARTICLE VI

The Bishop shall preside in the Convention, but in case of absence or vacancy in the Episcopate, the Convention shall elect a President from among the Clergy.

## ARTICLE VII

A Secretary, a Treasurer, a Chancellor, and a Historiographer shall be chosen as set forth in the Canons and whose duties shall be defined by Canon.

## ARTICLE VIII

There shall be a Standing Committee consisting of equal number of clergy and lay members. The duties of the Standing Committee shall conform to the General Church Constitution and Canons and the Canons of the Diocese of Bethlehem.

## ARTICLE IX

Twenty members of the Clergy together with Lay Delegates from Twenty Parishes and Missions, duly assembled in Convention, shall be a quorum, and on every question the votes of a majority of those present, or (when a vote by Orders is required) the votes of a majority of those present of the two Orders respectively shall decide.

## ARTICLE X

**Section 1.** To entitle a Parish or Congregation to admission into union with the Protestant Episcopal Church in this Diocese, it shall be required that the Vestry submit to the Convention their original Charter, or an authenticated copy thereof, if the Parish is already incorporated, or their proposed Articles of Incorporation if said Parish has not yet been incorporated; and it shall appear therein that such Parish accedes to the Constitution and Canons of this Diocese; and it shall appear further that the said Charter or said proposed Articles have been submitted to the Bishop and Standing Committee at least thirty days before the meeting of the Convention, and by them respectively approved; or if the approbation of either the Bishop or Standing Committee, or both, is withheld, he or they shall report to the Convention with the Charter or said proposed Articles, the reason of his or their disapprobation. But no deputation from any Parish shall be entitled to vote in the same Convention at which the Parish shall be admitted as a member unless such Parish was in union with the Convention as a Mission. Promptly the Parish, if already incorporated, shall file any required Articles of Amendment, and, if not yet incorporated, shall file said proposed Articles of Incorporation in the appropriate Court. Similar procedure shall be followed with respect to any amendment of Charter.

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**Section 2.** To entitle a Mission to admission into union with the Protestant Episcopal Church in this Diocese, it shall be required that the Executive Committee submit to the Convention their original Articles of Association and application for organization, or a copy thereof, duly authenticated; and it shall appear therein that such Mission accedes to the Constitution and Canons of this Diocese; and it shall appear further, that the said Articles and application have been submitted to the Bishop and Standing Committee at least thirty days before the meeting of the Convention, and by them respectively approved, but no deputation from any Mission shall be entitled to vote in the Convention at which it shall be admitted as a member. Similar procedure shall be followed with respect to any amendment to the Articles of Association of a Mission.

## **ARTICLE XI**

When a Bishop is to be elected, the election shall be at the regular Annual Convention or at a Special Convention duly called for that purpose. No person shall be declared elected unless he or she shall receive a majority of the votes cast in each Order voting separately at the same ballot; provided, that one-half of all the Clergy entitled to votes be present and two-thirds of all the Parishes entitled to votes be represented; otherwise a vote of two-thirds shall be necessary.

## **ARTICLE XII**

This Constitution or any part thereof may be altered in the following manner only: The proposed alteration or amendment shall be submitted in writing to the Annual Convention, and if approved by a majority of each Order, shall lie over to the next Annual Convention, and if then approved by a majority of each Order, the Constitution shall stand altered or amended as proposed.