

## **Report on Proposed Canonical Revision 2026**

We, the 2026 Charter and Canons Committee of the Diocese of Florida, have for a number of months undertaken a review of our diocesan canons. After many hours of proposals, discussions, and deliberations, we are ready to present to the Diocese of Florida our proposed changes to clarify, improve, modernize, and make more “user friendly” the Canons, so that they reflect the Diocese as it currently is. We now ask for input from clergy, lay leaders, and parish members across the Diocese. The final proposal will be published based on the feedback we receive from you at our upcoming public hearing. Your presence and participation are important in shaping our work for what will be considered on the convention floor.

To the best of the Committee’s knowledge, the last large-scale revision of the diocesan canons took place in the 1990s under Bishop Jecko. Those canons have served the Diocese for nearly thirty years. However, much has changed since that time. The canons of The Episcopal Church have changed. The ways dioceses, provinces, congregations, clergy, and lay leaders carry out their work have also changed. In addition, the Diocese of Florida is preparing to elect a new bishop, which makes this an especially important time to review and strengthen our governing documents.

The election of a bishop is always a turning point in the life of a diocese. It is not only about choosing a new chief pastor and leader. It is also a moment to reflect on who we are, what we have learned, and who we hope to become. These proposed canonical revisions are intended to help prepare the Diocese for that new chapter.

The Committee’s work includes correcting past oversights, bringing our canons into better alignment with current church practice, and considering more substantive changes in diocesan governance. Some proposed revisions may be administrative or clarifying in nature. Others may affect how authority, accountability, representation, and decision-making are exercised within the Diocese.

This work also comes after several years of reconciliation and reflection in the Diocese of Florida. Through that difficult season, the Diocese has learned important lessons about trust, transparency, governance, participation, and mutual responsibility. The hope is that these revisions will not only address problems from the past, but also help the Diocese offer a stronger and more faithful model for the future.

We have a number of proposals to make and there are a number of additional proposals up for your consideration at our hearing. A public hearing will provide an opportunity for clergy and lay members to ask questions, raise concerns, offer suggestions, and help shape the final form of the proposed revisions.

Your participation matters. These canons will help guide the Diocese in the years ahead and will also help our next bishop understand the hopes, expectations, and commitments of the people and congregations of the Diocese of Florida.

## **Executive Summary**

### Proposed Canons

Our proposed changes to the canons are a mix of language cleanup and governance rewrite. The majority of our work was to standardize terminology and improve consistency. Several of our proposed changes go beyond that and affect how diocesan authority, elections, property, committees, and convention participation operate.

Major proposed changes include:

- Add a new definition Canon 1 and renumber the remaining canons.
- “Bishop”, unless the context dictates otherwise, is replaced with “Ecclesiastical Authority,” which means the same provisions operate when authority is held by a bishop or held by the Standing Committee when there is no diocesan bishop.
- Electronic remote participation and voting are repealed.
- Property, finance, and investment provisions are consolidated into a broader canon on property management, disposition, encumbrance, finance, and investment.
- Regional Canons become advisory members of Diocesan Council, as they are appointed by the Ecclesiastical Authority and not elected.
- Canons on creating new parishes and new missions were combined into a single canon to eliminate duplication
- The Architectural Review Board, Diocesan School System/Board of Regents are removed as standalone canons, and can be reconstituted or continued as regular committees under Canon 12 by Diocesan Council.
- The standalone canon on Lay Readers is expanded to more licensed lay ministries and moved under the supervision of the Commission on Ministry.
- Many changes to remove archaic and confusing language, making language more consistent and add language used in the new Canon 1 definitions.

There are also several proposed items for discussion at our hearing, which may become proposals for this or later conventions. You will see these changes still proposed in the clean copy of the canons which accompany this report.

## Proposals for Discussion

- Several elected positions are changed to selection by sortition (selected by lot), including Diocesan Council at-large members, Disciplinary Board members, and General Convention deputies/alternates.
- Suspend or rescind the two-thirds majority requirement for canonical change for this convention and canonical revision

Proposal: Selection of Diocesan election by “sortition”, the technical term for “chosen by lot.”

Like it is now, a group of nominees are pre-qualified for a role, ensuring that they meet the requirements and have the necessary qualifications to perform the role. Once all qualified candidates are established by the nominating committee, then the convention will pray and select each person by lot. This can be done digitally via a random number generator, or it can be done in an analog fashion with drawing paper names from a bowl/hat.

Biblical Precedent: The selection of the apostle to replace Judas in the twelve. The choice was between Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place” and they cast lots and the lot fell on Matthias.

Both were with the apostles from the beginning. Both knew Jesus personally. Both were qualified to be one of the twelve. Both would serve long and well if chosen. Acts 1 tells us there were 120 people there, so there were presumably other options. The eleven prayed, selected two from among the people, and cast lots to ask the Holy Spirit to choose who would be added to the twelve.

This proposal does not suggest that every election in the Church should be decided by lot; rather, it asks whether the Church might faithfully use sortition in limited circumstances, after careful nomination and vetting, as a way of choosing among qualified people who have made themselves available for service. Such a practice may help reduce campaigning, avoid unnecessary contests between faithful servants, and invite the diocese to trust the Holy Spirit in the selection of those who will serve.

Rationale: For diocesan-wide elections, especially for regional representation when the electing delegates are from outside a region, often people do not know the candidates involved or only know what is available from a bio capped at approx. 100 words. This proposal seeks to avoid people feeling like they’re just “picking one” and removes any potential campaigning from the process. This proposal might also encourage people who might not otherwise subject themselves to an election process to volunteer for service. For more broad diocesan roles, especially those with presumed power, people are tempted to seek election rather than being made available or nominated for election. Such a selection process would be more palatable to a diocese in a peacemaking

process and not encourage the taking of sides or the picking of candidates, making our church processes look less like our increasingly divisive civil processes.

If this proposal is adopted, the nominating committee may take on a more active role in the nominating and vetting process for considering people and may also focus on more specific qualifications and skillsets to be specified for diocesan roles to give the committee more guidance about those who would be qualified, as this could not then be left up to “the voters.”

There are a number of churches in the diocese who already successfully use this method in the selection of their vestry members, as this avoids the “contest” between parishioners each year at the annual meeting and encourages a more broad representation of the church to participate when there isn’t name recognition or popularity factor in play.

Proposal: Suspend or rescind the two-thirds majority requirement for canonical change for this convention and canonical revision

Rationale: We wondered as a committee whether the convention would consider lowering the requirement for amendment for the sake of the substantial workload and the confusion caused during the last convention when the room expected a resolution to have passed, only to then be retroactively corrected by the parliamentarian. We offer this for consideration during the hearing, as it would require a canonical revision to accomplish this (see Canon 29). As a revision of the canons takes effect when passed, this would allow us to lower the threshold temporarily for the work of this convention, or longer if the body so desired. We wondered in the group whether this is a threshold for the Articles of Reincorporation (like a constitution) while allowing the canons to be more easily adjusted.

## **Canon-by-Canon Summary**

**Canon 1** is entirely new, and includes the definition and clarification of terms used throughout the canons. Revisions to old definitions include:

- Adult defined to 16 years and older, for consistency with TEC Canons
- Congregation introduced as an all-inclusive term used throughout the canons to avoid needless repetition of “parish, mission, college center, or chapel” and make the reference consistent
- Cure moved to definitions and with the following additions, “diocesan ministry” removed as qualifying participation, assisting priest added as a qualifying category, supply priest added as a qualifying category

- Ecclesiastical Authority used as an umbrella term as described above and in alignment with the way this is being used in TEC Canons
- The Episcopal Church (TEC) replacing all other reference to “national church”, “the church”, or DFMS throughout
- All other definitions moved up from where they were defined elsewhere in the canons

**Canon 2** is updated and includes both cleanup and governance changes:

- Added non-canonically resident clergy to section 2 with cure in keeping with the addition of such clergy in the delegates of convention previously added to section 3.
- Change in appeal process to appeal to a single body (Diocesan Council) instead of two separate bodies. Diocesan Council as the convention in recess rightly deals with determinations of who participates in convention, in keeping with parliamentary procedure.
- Special Conventions can be called with “reasonable written notice” being defined as “at least 90 days.”
- Remote participation is again proposed to be repealed after the great difficulty and expense of permitting this sort of participation has inhibited the good order and business of our conventions for two years in a row.
- Section 4 on Cure has been moved up to Canon 1, Definitions

**Canon 3** adds language concerning the selection of lay delegates and permitting the congregations to pay the expenses of lay delegates as they do already with clergy delegates.

**Canon 4** gives Diocesan Council the power and responsibility to fill vacancies in any appointments made by convention between conventions acting as Diocesan Convention out of session.

**Canon 5** moves “the purpose of regions” to “the purpose of regional canons” swapping sections 2 and 3. Compensation for Regional Canons is set by Diocesan Council, as elsewhere they are responsible for all compensation decisions of the diocese.

**Canon 6** eliminates the canonical position of “assistant secretaries” as unnecessary levels of formality and layers of authority in the canons. The secretary may always ask for assistance or assistants, but these are unnecessary levels of governance to be enshrined in the canons.

**Canon 7** directs the treasurer to keep and maintain records of diocesan property, and creates a new reporting form and reporting requirement for the parishes to assist the treasurer in doing so. Bonding the treasurer is something we were advised by diocesan staff is an outdated practice that’s now being done via insurance or other means. Also

eliminating "assistant treasurers" under the same reasoning as "assistant secretaries" in canon 6.

**Canon 8** updates the requirement of the chancellor to be a communicant of *this* diocese and updates vice chancellors to be accountable to the Ecclesiastical Authority and, through the chancellor, report to the convention.

**Canon 9** gives the Historiographer more archival responsibilities for the records of our congregations.

**Canon 10** moves "Ecclesiastical Authority" language up to definitions to apply more broadly to the canons, permits the president of the Standing Committee to be from either the clergy or the lay order, allows for the Standing Committee to call for more regular meetings, and clarifies the reporting requirement to convention (akin to a "Bishop's Report") when acting as the Ecclesiastical Authority.

**Canon 11** updates Diocesan Council to remove vote for Regional Canons. This is one option, as the Regional Canons are appointed by the Ecclesiastical Authority and not elected by convention. Should the Regional Canons be elected by convention, or by the regions themselves, they should then be given vote on Diocesan Council. Appointed members of councils who serve at the pleasure of their appointees are proxy votes of those who appointed them. This is an aspect of our governance we seek to change. As proposed, there would now be 9 voting members of council, all of whom are elected (or selected, see below) by Convention or Council itself. Diocesan Council is also made responsible for fixing the salaries of all employees of the diocese without exception. Language about the establishment of the committees of the diocese by Council is moved and combined with language in canon 12. Boards are left here in canon 11, since they would become a one-sentence canon if moved elsewhere. The existing canon allows Diocesan Council to create boards. This will be relevant later.

*Potential new language:* The current canon provides for the Regional Canons to be appointed by the EA. This circumstance creates a potential imbalance of perspective on Diocesan Council. To make the DC more representative, we propose that the Regional Canons either become advisory, or they become elected members of Diocesan Council. This is consistent with other changes in these proposals that intend to give more oversight and authority to Diocesan Council.

**Canon 12** moves language about the Common Ministry Budget Committee from canon 11 to this canon and establishes the 4 permanent committees of the diocese (all already established and operating). This canon permits the Diocesan Council to create committees as necessary. This will be relevant later.

**Canon 13** incorporates language about the Standing Committee being responsible for approving property transactions, as required by TEC canons. Responsibility for setting the bishop's compensation always belonged to Diocesan Council, this revision gives the review of the bishop's compensation back to Diocesan Council under the canon 11 change above, making section 5 unnecessary. There is a longer line of succession of

those permitted to execute documents on behalf of the diocese, considering present and future circumstances.

**Old Canons 13 and 14 deleted** The Architectural Review Board and The Diocesan School System and Board of Regents are two bodies which are not constituted and are not functioning. Establishing them in canon requires them to exist and function on a permanent basis. This revision would remove them from the canons and if Diocesan Council or our new bishop determines that they're necessary, Diocesan Council has the ability to reestablish them under canons 11 and 12 above. This is why those two provisions on the establishment of committees and boards by council were relevant earlier.

**Canon 14** updates language for consistency.

**Canon 15** creates a new subsection of Commission on Ministry for the licensure of Lay Ministries that adds the additional ministries the diocese is able to license, and makes COM the body who oversees these licenses (as required by TEC canons). This incorporates and expands the old canon 23 "Of Lay Readers" and incorporates the single-sentence canon 23 into the new expanded canon 15 section 2.

**Canon 16** updates language for consistency.

**Canon 17** combines two previous canons for the organizations of parishes and the organization of missions into a single canon to eliminate the duplication of wording around founding a worshipping community and helping missions and parishes find the criteria for both under a single canon.

**Canon 18** updates language for consistency.

**Canon 19** removes specific section 4 added to the canon a generation ago during a controversy about clerical divorce. Title IV of the canons of the Episcopal Church have been revised after this canonical addition and rather than attempt to import Title IV into the Diocese of Florida canons, we are proposing to remove this specific language contained both in the ordination rites and the canons of the church, not seeing the need to duplicate them here only in part.

**Canon 20** updates language for consistency.

**Canon 21** updates language, makes the compensation of campus chaplains a named part of the diocesan budget process, and adds the Diocesan Council as an additional destination of campus ministry annual reports.

**Canon 22** updates language for consistency.

**Old Canon 23** "Of Lay Readers" incorporated into a new section under Commission on Ministry (Canon 15) and removed.

**Canon 23** updates language for consistency and removes language for effective dates put in with the Title IV rewrite of TEC canons. These are in effect and these “effective date” clauses are no longer needed, including all of section 5 since there are no matters still pending whose dates of origin precede July 1, 2011.

**Canon 24** proposes to select General Convention Deputies by sortition.

**Canon 25** updates language for consistency.

**Canon 26** updates language for consistency.

**Canon 27** changes a “the” to a “this.”

**Canon 28** updates language for consistency.

**Canon 29** updates language for consistency.