

2025 Recommended Amendments to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Fort Worth as proposed by the Constitution and Canons Committee

Contents

Article 1: Anglican Identity	2
Article 2: Members of Convention (for Canon 1)	3
Canon 10.4 and 10.6 (Executive Council Meetings)	4
Additional Qualifications in the Canons	5
<i>Canon 9.1 (Standing Committee)</i>	5
<i>Canon 10 (Executive Council)</i>	5
<i>Canon 13.1 (Commission on Ministry)</i>	6
<i>Canon 17.2 (Board of Trustees)</i>	6
<i>Canon 25.1 (Vestries and Wardens)</i>	7
<i>Canon 35.4 (Lay Deanery Representatives)</i>	7
<i>Canon 38-III.1a and .2a and .13c. (Discipline)</i>	8
Statement of Terms	9
Canon 44.6 (Ministry of Baptized ... CoM)	10

In the proposed amendments, words eliminated are shown by a ~~red strikethrough~~, and words added are shown in **bold yellow-highlighted type**. Changes in capitalization are underlined.

Respectfully submitted,
(The Rev'd) Timothy Matkin, *Chair*

ARTICLE 1

ANGLICAN IDENTITY

Current Article with amendments noted:

The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, consisting of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Old and New Testaments and expressed in the Book of Common Prayer.

Proposed Amended Article:

The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a fellowship within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, consisting of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces and regional churches upholding and propagating the historic faith and order as set forth in the Old and New Testaments and expressed in the Book of Common Prayer.

Rationale:

The language of Article 1 originated with the definition of the Anglican Communion provided by Lambeth 1930, Resolution 49. The capitalization has been changed to conform to the original Lambeth resolution.

Article 1 currently requires communion with the See of Canterbury, which may no longer be possible. The complaint of GAFCon against Canterbury was with the former occupant rather than the see itself, which is currently vacant and due to be filled by the winter of 2025. The new occupant is expected to follow the same policy to which objection was made, and also may be someone whose orders we cannot recognize. Following the lead of GAFCon, the reference to the See of Canterbury has been deleted, leaving unity based on a common faith and order.

The GAFCon IV Kigali Commitment of 21 April 2023 noted: "We consider that those who refuse to repent have abdicated their right to leadership within the Anglican Communion, and we commit ourselves to working with orthodox Primates and other leaders to reset the Communion on its biblical foundations." . . . "Both GSFA and Gafcon Primates share the view that, due to the departures from orthodoxy articulated above, they can no longer recognise the Archbishop of Canterbury as an Instrument of Communion, the 'first among equals' of the Primates. The Church of England has chosen to impair her relationship with the orthodox provinces in the Communion."

Resolution 1, passed by the Convention of the Diocese of Fort Worth in 2009, noted: "AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Diocese maintains its status as a member diocese in the Province of the Southern Cone while the formal process of recognition of this new province continues in the Anglican Communion."*

**Renamed 'Anglican Church of South America' in 2014.*

ARTICLE 2

MEMBERS OF CONVENTION

Current Article with amendments noted:

The Diocese of Fort Worth entrusts its legislation to a Convention to consist as follows: First, of the Bishop, when there be one; of the Bishop Coadjutor, when there be one; of the Suffragan Bishops, Assistant Bishops, if there be any; Second, of all priests canonically resident in the Diocese, and not under Ecclesiastical discipline, and who have not in contemplation of removal from this Diocese, applied for their Letters Dimissory; and Third, of Lay Delegates chosen by and representing their Congregations. Lay Delegates and their Alternates shall be elected by the Congregations of their respective Parishes and Missions at the Annual Parish Meeting and shall hold office until their successors are elected. The Rectors of Parishes and Vicars of Missions shall have authority to fill such vacancies as may occur from the list of Alternate Lay Delegates between the time of such election and any meetings of the Convention. Lay Delegates shall be confirmed communicants in good standing, at least 18 years of age.

Every Parish and Mission in union with the Convention shall be entitled to Lay Delegates determined by the ~~number of confirmed communicants~~ **average Sunday attendance** reported in the Annual Parochial Report for the year ending December 31 next preceding the Diocesan Convention, as provided by Canon.

Rationale:

Canon 1 apportions delegates to the diocesan convention on the basis of number of "confirmed adult communicants in good standing." In 2023, we had proposed moving from an apportionment based upon active membership to an apportionment based upon average Sunday attendance. This idea was well received in principle, but ended up drastically altering the number of delegates, and the proposal was sent back to the committee. We revised the formula to come out with about the same number of delegates overall. With the new formula, 40 congregations keep the same number of delegates, while 9 congregations will see an increase in delegates and 5 will see a decrease. See the attachment for a chart comparing apportionment by membership versus attendance.

We also noted that Article 2 of the Constitution makes reference to the apportionment being based on membership. Since a change to the constitution requires approval from two consecutive conventions while canon changes require approval from only one convention, we propose amending Article 2 of the Constitution at the 2025 convention, and if approved, we propose a matching revision to Canon 1 at the following convention in 2026.

Canon 10

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Current Canon with amendments noted:

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Sec. 10.4 The Executive Council shall meet each year in ~~January, March, May, September and November~~ **at least three times during the year, as scheduled by the Bishop**, and it shall be the duty of every member of The Executive Council to attend meetings regularly. In case of the continued absence of a member from regular meetings of The Executive Council for a period of two (2) successive meetings without valid excuse, that member of The Executive Council may be removed by majority vote of The Executive Council members present and the vacancy shall be filled pursuant to Sec. 10.1.

Special meetings of the Council may be called for any purpose by the President or by the President of the Standing Committee and shall be called at the request of any five members of the Council.

...

Sec. 10.6 On or before the ~~September~~ **pre-convention** meeting of the Council in each year, the Department of Finance (as appointed by the Bishop under this Canon) shall submit to the Council the draft of an annual budget setting forth the opportunities and needs of the Diocese together with the proposed apportionment to the program of the Province with which the Diocese is affiliated for the next fiscal year. The Council shall make such amendments and revisions as it deems necessary and shall submit the proposed budget to the Annual Convention. A table setting forth the amounts to be assessed each Parish and Mission shall be presented to the Convention. As soon as possible after the ~~September Council~~ **pre-convention** meeting and not less than twenty (20) days before Convention, the budget shall be sent to every Parish and Mission for distribution to its delegates. The Convention has the right to amend the proposed budget as it deems fit. Not less than twenty (20) days following the adjournment of the Annual Convention, the budget shall be sent to the Vestry or Bishop's Committee of every Parish or Mission.

...

Rationale:

Since the Executive Council has not been meeting on the months specified by the canon (January, March, May, September, November), we removed references to specific months, instead saying that the Executive Council shall meet at least three times a year, with the bishop scheduling those meetings. Canon 10.6 about the proposed budget is reworded to reflect that change. Instead of "September meeting," it is the "pre-convention meeting."

Additional Qualifications in the Canons

Rationale:

As a part of this work on defining terms for lay ministry in Canon 44, we recommend for clarity adding the following to the basic qualifications for lay leaders in the diocese, that they “. . . shall be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and uphold the historic faith of the Church.” This would be added to the following: Canon 9.1 (Standing Committee), Canon 10 (Executive Council), Canon 13.1 (Commission on Ministry), Canon 17.2 (Board of Trustees), Canon 25.1 (Vestries and Wardens), Canon 35.4 (Lay Deanery Representatives), Canon 38-III.1a and .2a and .13c (Ecclesiastical Discipline—Courts).

Canon 9

STANDING COMMITTEE

Current Canon with amendments noted:

Sec. 9.1 The Standing Committee shall be elected, vacancies filled, and terms of office fixed, as provided in Article 10 of the Constitution of this Diocese. **In addition, members of the Standing Committee shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.**

Canon 10

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Current Canon with amendments noted:

Sec. 10.1 . . .

In the event a vacancy occurs among those elected by a Deanery, the Deanery shall elect a qualified person for the unexpired term of the seat vacated. Any person elected to an unexpired term is eligible for election for a full term if said unexpired term is for less than two years.

In addition, members of the Executive Council shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.

. . .

Canon 13
COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

Current Canon with amendments noted:

Sec. 13.1 There shall be a Commission on Ministry consisting not fewer than six (6) members of the Clergy and six (6) Lay Persons. At least two (2) Clergy and two (2) Lay Persons, shall be nominated by the Bishop at each Annual Convention and elected by Convention for a three (3) year term. Should vacancies occur in the Commission when Convention is not in session, the Bishop shall nominate to the Standing Committee, upon whose confirmation the nominee shall serve the balance of the term for which appointed. The Bishop shall appoint the Chairman from the Clergy members. **In addition, members of the Commission on Ministry shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.**

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Canon 17
CORPORATION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

Current Canon with amendments noted:

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Sec. 17.2 The management of its affairs shall be conducted and administered by a Board of Trustees of five (5) elected members, all of whom are either Lay Communicants in good standing of a Parish or Mission in the Diocese or members of the Clergy canonically resident in the Diocese, in addition to the Bishop of the Diocese, who shall serve as Chairman of the Board or may designate the President or other officer of the Corporation to serve as such. The Board of Trustees shall have the power and authority to conduct the affairs of said Corporation in accordance with its charter and by-laws and in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese from time-to-time adopted. **In addition, members of the Board of Trustees shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.**

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Canon 25
WARDENS AND VESTRIES OF PARISHES

Current Canon with amendments noted:

Sec. 25.1 Vestries shall consist of not less than six (6) and not more than fifteen (15) members who shall be Confirmed Communicants in Good Standing of at least eighteen (18) years of age, canonically resident in the Parish, and who were financial contributors to the Parish in the preceding year as shown on the records of the Treasurer. **In addition, members of the Vestry shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.**

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Canon 35
DEANERIES

Current Canon with amendments noted:

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Sec. 35.4 The Council of each Deanery shall meet annually prior to the Convention of the Diocese to elect on a rotating basis for three (3) years one (1) member of the Clergy or one (1) of the two Lay Representatives to the Executive Council by a concurrent vote of a majority of each order from the following:

- a. The Clerical Representative must be a member of the Clergy entitled to a vote in the Convention and residing in the Deanery; and
- b. Each Lay Representative must be a Confirmed adult Communicant in good standing in one of the Parishes or Missions of the Deanery,
but not of the same Parish or Mission as the other.

In addition to the Pre-Convention meeting the Deanery Council shall meet at least one other time in the course of the year for the purpose of disseminating information from the Executive Council Meetings and as seems necessary for the furtherance of the Mission of the Church in the Deanery or as the Bishop or Executive Council of the Diocese may require. **In addition, members of the Deanery shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.**

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Canon 38
ECCLESIASTICAL DISCIPLINE

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III. Courts, Their Membership and Procedures

A. Diocesan Courts for the Trial of a Presbyter or Deacon

Sec. 1. In this Diocese there shall be an Ecclesiastical Trial Court (hereafter "Trial Court") for the trial of any Presbyter or Deacon accused of any offense set forth in Part I Section 1.

a. The Trial Court shall consist of three (3) Presbyters or Deacons canonically resident in this Diocese and two (2) Members of the Laity who shall be Confirmed Communicants in good standing in this Diocese at least eighteen (18) years of age. **In addition, members of the Trial Court shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.**

...

Sec. 2-a. There shall be a Court of Review of the Trial of a Presbyter or Deacon [hereafter "Court of Review"], which shall be comprised of the Bishop, three Presbyters or Deacons canonically resident in this Diocese, and three Lay Persons who are confirmed adult communicants in this Diocese in good standing, having domicile in this Diocese. At least two of said Lay Persons shall be learned in the law. **In addition, members of the Court of Review shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.**

...

Sec. 13 . . .

c. The several Courts each may appoint not less than two nor more than three Lay Persons who are confirmed adult communicants of this Church in good standing, learned in the law, as Assessors. They shall have no vote. It shall be their duty to give the Court an opinion on any question, not theological, upon which the Court or any Judge thereof, or either party, shall desire an opinion. If a question shall arise as to whether any question is theological, it shall be decided by the Clerical Judges serving on the Court by a majority vote. **In addition, the Assessors shall (a) be in conformity with the moral and theological teachings of the Church as codified in the Constitution and Canons and set forth in the Book of Common Prayer, and (b) uphold the historic faith of the Church.**

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Canon 44
OF THE MINISTRY OF BAPTIZED & CONFIRMED PERSONS

Current Canon with amendments noted:

Definition of Terms

Baptized Person: A “Baptized Person” (or “baptized person”) is one who has received the Sacrament of Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Communicant: A "Communicant" is a Baptized Person who (i) receives Holy Communion regularly at a Parish or Mission in this Diocese; (ii) has not been suspended from the right of partaking of the Holy Communion; and (iii) has not abandoned the Communion of this Church by an open renunciation of its doctrine, discipline and worship, or by a formal admission into a religious body not in communion with the Church." [from Canon 28.4) An "Adult Communicant" is a Communicant who is eighteen (18) years of age or older."

Confirmed: A Communicant is "Confirmed" if the Communicant is a Baptized Person who has received a laying on of hands by a Bishop in the Apostolic Succession.

In Good Standing: A Communicant is in “Good Standing” if (i) Confirmed; (ii) named and duly recorded in the Parish Register where attending, (iii) has for the previous year been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and (iv) has been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the kingdom of God.

Qualified Voter: “Qualified Voters” at Parish Meetings are persons 16 years of age or older who are Confirmed Communicants in Good Standing and registered at the Parish or Mission holding the meeting.

Sec. 44.1 – *Concerning the Ministry of all Baptized Persons*

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Canon 44
OF THE MINISTRY OF BAPTIZED & CONFIRMED PERSONS

Current Canon with amendments noted:

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Sec. 44.6 – *Commission on Ministry*

The Bishop shall ~~appoint~~ **nominate** confirmed communicants in good standing within the Diocese to serve on the Commission on Ministry. The commission shall be an advisory body to assist the Bishop in establishing and implementing the guidelines and procedures contained in the Customary for Orders.

Rationale:

We have proposed a list of defined terms in Canon 44 (e.g., “in good standing”), using and standardizing the terms employed throughout the canons. These are placed before section 1.

Also, there is an inconsistency in the canons related to how the Commission on Ministry is populated, so we need to harmonize them. Canon 44.6 says that the Bishop “appoints” members, while Canon 13.1 says that the Bishop “nominates” new CoM members to be elected by the Convention (or to the Standing Committee for vacancies between conventions). We propose to harmonize them by amending Canon 44.6 to read that the Bishop “nominates.”