

ON BEING A CONVENTION DELEGATE

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Convention Delegate. The job of a Convention Delegate is to provide a link between the congregation and the Diocese by representing the congregation both at regional and diocesan levels, and by reporting back to the congregation on events, actions and decisions that occur.

SELECTION OF CONVENTION DELEGATES

Lay delegates and alternate delegates generally are elected either at the congregation's annual meeting or by the vestry/mission committee. The term of office is generally one to three years. Both of these factors are determined by the parish bylaws. All congregations have at least one delegate, larger congregations have more as determined by a procedure set out in the canons (the maximum number of lay delegates is five). The lay delegates and alternates are certified as such to the Secretary of the Convention and then listed on the official voting and mailing lists.

A lay delegate should be someone who can represent the congregation and vote on its behalf on a variety of subjects. A member of the vestry or a retiring warden often makes a good delegate because of intimate knowledge of the workings of that congregation.

All congregational clergy also serve as delegates and should be considered as part of the congregation's delegation.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A CONVENTION DELEGATE

Delegates and wardens represent their congregation at the annual Regional Assembly, and at any other meetings of the region.

Delegates represent their congregation at the annual Diocesan Convention and any specially convened conventions.

Delegates advise their vestry/mission committee and congregation of issues pending before the region or the Diocese, seek their opinions, and report back to them when actions are taken.

All delegates and alternate delegates should reserve the date of their Regional Assembly and the Annual Convention on their calendars, as well as the dates of any other meetings (such as regional steering committee meetings or special hearings).

All delegates should report back to the congregation as a whole as well as the vestry/mission committee after Regional Assembly and after Convention. This can take place in a forum, annual meeting, vestry meeting, or through a column in the newsletter, etc.

COMMUNICATIONS TO EXPECT FROM THE DIOCESE

Diocesan Bulletin - the weekly e-news communication from the Diocese. This provides information on a variety of subjects, and also contains notices relating to Regional Assemblies and Convention.

Pre-Regional Assembly mailing - a notice sent out approximately two weeks before each Regional Assembly will direct clergy, delegates and wardens to the Regional Assembly website, which contains an agenda, nomination, directions and any other necessary materials.

Pre-Convention mailing - a notice sent out around Christmas will direct you to the convention website, which contains an agenda, budget, nominations, resolutions and any other item requiring action at the Convention. It also has a lot of useful information on the "how-to's" of Convention.

Convention website - All information and legislation is posted on the convention website, and will be printed in the booklet at registration.

Convention listserv - clergy, delegates and ex officio members are put on a listserv for the month of January. There are weekly notices that remind attendees of various things, and also releases any new or changed information.

Journal and Directory – contains lists of clergy, layleaders, membership on diocesan bodies, congregations; proceedings of that year's Convention, including all written reports of committees, elections results, attendees; all the statistics for the Diocese; Diocesan Policies; and the Diocesan Canons. The Journal and Directory is available on-line.

HOW TO BE PREPARED FOR THE CONVENTION

Preparing Delegates – The outgoing delegates should assist the rector/vicar in training the new delegates. This includes ensuring that the paperwork is filed with the Diocese by the rector/vicar for the new delegates so that they may receive official communications; passing on pertinent materials (including the Journal and Directory);

explaining structure, unfamiliar terms and current issues; and introducing the new delegates at larger gatherings.

Delegation Meeting – The delegation from the congregation (including all alternate delegates) should meet together and/or with the vestry for discussion of issues at hand. Retiring lay delegates should pass on information to the new lay delegates and alternates. All information should be shared with alternate delegates, as they may be called upon unexpectedly to act on behalf of the lay delegates.

Review of Materials – Every delegate should review the contents of the Convention materials since these items will all come to a vote at the Convention. It is also helpful to review the Rules of Order and tips on parliamentary procedure.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

A Regional Assembly is an annual meeting of the Bishop and clergy and delegates from the congregations of the six geographic regions of the Diocese. There may be a separate Regional Assembly for each region, or two or more regions may be combined for one Assembly. This takes place in October or early November. (See Diocesan Canon 10 for full explanation.)

Regional elections are held to fill one of three offices – Regional Convener, Lay Regional Representative to Diocesan Council, Clergy Regional Representative to Diocesan Council. Each term is for three years, and the election schedule is set up on a rotation so that only one office has a vacancy each year.

Each Region also nominates people for various Diocesan offices, that will be pared down and sent on from the Region for final voting at the Diocesan Convention (Lay and Clerical Members of the Standing Committee, and depending on the year, Lay and Clergy Deputies [and alternates] to General Convention, Lay and Clergy Deputies to Provincial Synod, Lay and Clergy At-Large Members of Diocesan Council.)

There may be resolutions sponsored by a delegate on either regional business or to be forwarded to the Diocesan Convention.

There is normally a presentation on the current draft of the Diocesan Budget, which will later be finalized and sent back to Diocesan Council for recommendations, and then to the Diocesan Convention for final approval.

There may be other business as determined by the Region or by the Bishop.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A DIOCESAN CONVENTION

This is the annual business meeting of the Diocese and is presently held the last weekend in January. Convention conducts elections, votes on the budget, resolutions, any other actions presented, hears reports, etc. It includes the clergy of the Diocese and elected lay representatives from each of the 90 congregations in the Diocese, as well as ex-officio members of Convention (who are entitled to seat and voice, but not vote) and many visitors (who may observe only). Approximately 500 people attend the Convention.

Business Sessions of the Convention. These are presided over by the Bishop, and subject to the Rules of Order contained in the Diocesan Canons (and Robert's Rules of Order where not otherwise specified). A write-up of all Convention actions is contained in the annual Diocesan Journal . The business portion of Convention always contains:

1. Bishop's Address. This is the Bishop's one opportunity to talk to both clergy and lay representatives from every congregation. There is generally a summary of the past year and words of inspiration and a charge for the coming year.

2. Appointments. The Bishop makes several appointments, some of which need the consent of the Convention. Those requiring consent are: the Secretary, the Chancellor, the Treasurer, the Commission on Ministry (oversees the process leading to ordination), and the Disciplinary Board (involved in the clerical discipline process).

3. Elections. There are elections for several offices. The elections are done by written ballot, with clergy and lay delegates voting separately. The nominations come from the elections held at the Regional Assemblies.

The offices are:

- a. Standing Committee. The Standing Committee serves as an advisory group to the Bishop, recommends candidates for Ordination, makes recommendations on requests from congregations concerning alienation of property, and consents to the elections of all bishops in this country. Two clergy and two lay members (half of the Committee) are elected each year for a two-year term.

- b. Diocesan Council. The Council is like a governing board for the Diocese, which is empowered to act on behalf of the Convention while the Convention is not in session (the other 363 days of the year). It is composed of the Bishops, one clerical and one lay member elected from each of the six regions, two clerical and two lay at-large members elected by Convention, three members appointed by the Bishop, and several ex officio members. In two out of every three years, the Convention elects one clergy and one lay

as At-Large Members of Council (half of the At-Large members) for a three-year term. See Diocesan Canon 10 for a full explanation of the Council.

c. Deputies and Alternate Deputies to Provincial Synod. Just as our Diocese is divided into regions, the National Church is divided into Provinces. Once every three years, 1 clerical and 2 lay deputies are elected, with the runners-up becoming alternates.

d. Deputies and Alternate Deputies to General Convention. Just as the Diocese has a regularly scheduled Convention to conduct business, the National Church holds the General Convention every three years to conduct business. The bishops form the House of Bishops, and the elected deputies (both clergy and lay) form the House of Deputies. The year before General Convention, four clerical and four lay deputies are elected. An equal number of alternates are elected the next year.

4. Resolutions. These must be sponsored by a member of Convention (a clergy or lay delegate, or ex-officio member) and are screened by the Resolutions Committee. Some resolutions first go to the Regional Assemblies and are then recommended to the Resolutions Committee. After Committee review, resolutions are usually forwarded to Convention with a background explanation and an action recommendation from the Resolutions Committee. There is generally some debate on the floor of Convention about each resolution, and the resolutions may be amended at that time. Voting is done initially by voice vote. If there is no clear majority, there is a counted standing vote.

5. Budget. The Diocesan Budget is recommended by the Diocesan Council on the advice of the Finance Committee (appointed by the Bishop). Generally, a first draft is sent to all delegates in the fall and is discussed at the Regional Assemblies. It is then reworked by the Finance Committee and submitted to Council, which then recommends it to the Convention for final approval. At Convention, there is an open hearing on the budget, as well as a formal presentation by the chair of the Finance Committee during the legislative session. Voting is done initially by voice vote. If there is no clear majority, there is a counted standing vote.

6. Reports. There are annual reports made by various diocesan committees. A few reports are presented orally, but most of them are written and all are later contained in the Journal.

7. Other Business. There may be some courtesy resolutions, other special presentations, and often a guest speaker.

Exhibits. Exhibits are set up by various diocesan committees and Episcopal organizations. They are designed to provide information and resources.

Worship. There are several opportunities to come together and worship, including opening prayers, noonday prayers, and the Convention Eucharist.

rev. 12/2015