

CONSTITUTION FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

PREFACE

The United Episcopal Church of North America, which is a branch of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, united by faith to Him who is the divine head over all things to the Church, which is His body, and recognizing the essential unity of all who accept this faith, and standing in succession to the Church of England, and its descendants the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America, and the Anglican Church of Canada, declares:

I.

That the United Episcopal Church of North America, holding the faith once delivered to the saints, accepts and unfeignedly believes all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, and to be the ultimate rule of Faith and Practice, in the Church.

This Church accepts the Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol, and the Nicene Creed as sufficient statement of the Christian Faith. Furthermore, it accepts the witness of the ancient Fathers, and the undisputed Councils of the Church to this faith, and shall endeavor, by the Grace of God, to pass the same to succeeding generations.

This Church maintains that the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are of Divine Institution, and will continue to administer the same with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and with the elements instituted by Christ Himself.

This Church will maintain inviolate the three orders of bishop, priest (presbyter), and deacon, which are, by Scripture, confined to qualified males.

This Church hereby maintains its constant witness against all those innovations in doctrine and worship whereby the Primitive Faith has been overlaid, and which at the Reformation the Church of England did disown and reject.

II.

The United Episcopal Church of North America receives and approves the Book of Common Prayer, and the Administration of the Sacraments, etc., approved by Convocation held in the year 1662, as subsequently amended for used in the United States and the Dominion of Canada. This Church will continue to use the same, subject to such amendment as shall be made by lawful authority of this Church. Furthermore, it receives and approves the Articles of Religion approved by the Convocation held in London in 1562, as amended by the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America held in 1801, as a witness to the historic teaching of the Anglican Communion.

III.

The United Episcopal Church of North America will maintain communion with all Churches agreeing to the principles of this declaration, and will set forth, as far as in it lies, quietness, peace, and love, among all Christian People.

IV.

The United Episcopal Church of North America, deriving its authority from Christ, who is the head of all things to the Church, declares that a General Convention, or Synod, consisting of the bishops of this Church and representatives of the clergy and laity shall exercise such administrative power as may be necessary for the Church, and consistent with its episcopal constitution. Such General Convention, or Synod, shall have no competency to alter doctrine.

(Approved by the General Convention held at Grand Rapids, MI, 2017)

ARTICLE I

Section 1. There shall be a General Convention of this Church, consisting of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies, which Houses shall sit and deliberate separately; and in all deliberations freedom of debate shall be allowed. Either House may originate and propose legislation, and all acts of the Convention shall be adopted and be authenticated by both Houses.

Section 2. Every Bishop of this Church having jurisdiction, every Bishop Coadjutor, every Suffragan Bishop and every Bishop who by reason of advanced age or bodily infirmity, or who under an election to an office created by the General Convention has resigned his jurisdiction, shall have a seat and a vote in the House of Bishops. A majority of all Bishops entitled to vote exclusive of Foreign Missionary Bishops and of Bishops, who have resigned their jurisdictions, shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 3. At the General Convention, next before the expiration of the term of office of the Presiding Bishop, it shall elect the Presiding Bishop of the Church. The House of Bishops shall choose one of the Bishops of this Church to be the Presiding Bishop of the Church by a vote of a majority of all Bishops, excluding retired Bishops not present. except that whensoever two-thirds of the House of Bishops are present a majority vote shall suffice, such choice to be subject to confirmation by the House of Deputies. His term and tenure of office and duties and particulars of his election not inconsistent with the preceding provisions shall be prescribed by the Canons of the General Convention.

But if the Presiding Bishop of the Church shall resign his office as such, or if by reason of infirmity he shall become disabled, or in case of his death, the senior Bishop of this Church in the order of consecration, having jurisdiction within the United States, shall (unless the date of the next General Convention is within three months) immediately call a special meeting of the House of Bishops to be held within two months to elect a Bishop having jurisdiction in North America to be the Presiding Bishop. The Bishop so elected shall serve until the next General Convention.

Section 4. Unless the Church comprises four or more Dioceses which have been admitted to union with the general convention, each such Diocese and each Missionary District which shall have been established in accordance with the Constitution and Canons for the government of this Church shall be entitled to representation in the House of Deputies by its Presbyters canonically resident therein and by four Laymen of each Parish or congregation situated therein, which Laymen shall be communicants of this Church and shall have domicile in such Diocese or such Missionary District: but the General Convention by Canon may reduce the representation to not fewer than two Lay Deputies. Notwithstanding the provision of the Constitution or Canons of any Diocese or Missionary District to the contrary, each Parish or Congregation shall prescribe the manner in which Lay Deputies there from shall be chosen. To constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, the Clerical order shall be represented by at least one Clerical Deputy in each of a majority of the parishes and Congregations entitled to representation. and the Lay order shall be represented by at least one lay Deputy in each of a majority of the Parishes and Congregations entitled to representation.

When the Church comprises four or more Dioceses, each Diocese which has been admitted to union with the General Convention and each Missionary District which shall have been established in accordance with the Constitution and Canons for the government of this Church shall be entitled to representation in the House of Deputies by not more than four presbyters, canonically resident therein, and by not more than four Laymen, communicants of this Church, having domicile in such Diocese or such Missionary District; but the General Convention by Canon may reduce the representation to not fewer than two Deputies in each order. Each Diocese and each Missionary District shall prescribe the manner in which its Deputies shall be chosen. To constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, the Clerical order shall be represented by at least one Clerical Deputy in each of a majority of the Dioceses and Missionary Districts, taken together, entitled to representation. And the Lay order shall be represented by at least one Lay Deputy in each of a majority of the Diocese and Missionary Districts, taken together, entitled to representation.

On any question the vote of a majority of the Deputies present and voting, excluding blanks and abstentions, shall suffice, unless otherwise ordered by this constitution, or, in cases not specifically provided for by the Constitution, by Canons requiring more than a majority, or unless the Clerical or the Lay representation from any Diocese or Missionary District require that the vote be taken by orders.

In all cases of a vote by orders, the two orders shall vote separately. Unless the Church comprises four or more Dioceses which have been admitted to union with the General Convention, each parish or Congregation having Clerical Representation present shall have one vote in the Clerical order and each Parish or Congregation having Lay representation shall have one vote in the Lay order. When the Church comprises four or more Dioceses, each Diocese and each Missionary District having Clerical representation present shall have one vote in the Clerical order and each Diocese and each Missionary District having Lay representation present shall have one vote in the Lay order. In all cases of a vote by orders, the concurrence of the votes of the two orders shall be necessary to constitute a vote of the house. No action of either order shall pass in the affirmative unless it receives a majority of all votes cast, excluding blanks and abstentions.

Section 5. In either House, any number less than a quorum may adjourn from day to day. Neither House without the consent of the other shall adjourn for more than three days, or to any

place other than that in which the Convention shall be sitting.

Section 6. One Clerical and one Lay Deputy chosen by each Missionary District of the Church established by the House of Bishops, beyond the territory of North America, shall have seats in the House of Deputies, subject to all the qualifications and with all the rights of Deputies, except as otherwise provided in this Constitution.

Section 7. The General Convention shall meet in every third year on the Saturday after the first Sunday in May, unless a different day be appointed by the preceding Convention, and at the place designated by such Convention: but if there shall appear to the Presiding Bishop, acting with the advice and consent of the National Council of the Church or of a successor canonical body having substantially the powers now vested in the National Council, sufficient cause for changing the place or date so appointed, he, with the advice and consent of such body, shall appoint another place or date, or both, for such meeting. Special meetings may be provided for by the Canon.

Section 8. The House of Bishops may meet from time to time when the General Convention is not in session.

ARTICLE II

Section 1. In every Diocese, the Bishop or the Bishop Coadjutor shall be chosen agreeably to rules prescribed by the Convention of that Diocese. Provided, however, that when a Diocese shall be formed out of a Missionary District, the Missionary Bishop in charge of said district shall become the Bishop of said Diocese, if he shall so elect. Missionary Bishops shall be chosen in accordance with the Canons of the General Convention.

Section 2. No one shall be ordained and consecrated Bishop until he shall be forty years of age, and shall have been in priest's orders for less than six years; nor without the consent of a majority of the Standing Committees of the Dioceses, and the consent of a majority of the Bishops of this Church exercising jurisdiction within the North America. But if the election shall have taken place within three months next before the meeting of the General Convention, the consent of the House of Deputies shall be required in place of that of a majority of the Standing Committees.

Section 3. A Bishop shall confine the exercise of his office to his own Diocese or Missionary District, unless he shall have been requested to perform episcopal acts in another Diocese or Missionary District by the Ecclesiastical Authority thereof, or unless he shall have been authorized and appointed by the House of Bishops, or by the Presiding Bishop by its direction to act temporarily in case of need within any territory not yet organized into Dioceses or Missionary Districts in this Church.

Section 4. It shall be lawful for a Diocese, with the consent of the Bishop of that Diocese, to elect one or more Suffragan Bishops, without right of succession, and with seat and vote in the House of Bishops. A Suffragan Bishop shall be consecrated and hold office under such conditions and

limitation other than those provided in this Article as may be provided by Canons of the General Convention. He shall be eligible as Bishop or Bishop Coadjutor of a Diocese, or as a Suffragan to another Diocese, or he may be elected by the House of Bishops as a Missionary Bishop.

Section 5. It shall be lawful for a Diocese to prescribe by the Constitution and Canons of such Diocese that upon the death of the Bishop, a Suffragan Bishop of that Diocese may be placed in charge of such Diocese and become temporarily the Ecclesiastical Authority thereof until such time as a new Bishop shall be chosen and consecrated; or that during the disability or absence of the Bishop a Suffragan Bishop of that Diocese may be placed in charge of such Diocese and become temporarily the Ecclesiastical Authority thereof.

Section 6. A bishop may resign his jurisdiction without the consent of the House of Bishops.

Section 7. It shall be lawful for the House of Bishops to elect a Suffragan Bishop who, under the direction of the Presiding Bishop, shall be in charge of the work of those chaplains in the Armed Forces of the United States who are ordained ministers of this Church. The Suffragan Bishop so elected shall be consecrated and hold office under such conditions and limitation other than those provided in this article as may be provided by Canons of the General Convention. He shall be eligible as Bishop or Bishop Coadjutor or Suffragan Bishop of a Diocese or he may be elected by the House of Bishops as a Missionary Bishop.

Section 8. Upon Attained the age of seventy-two years a Bishop shall tender his resignation from his jurisdiction.

ARTICLE III

Bishops may be consecrated for foreign lands upon due application there from with the approbation of a majority of the Bishops of the Church entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, certified to the Presiding Bishop; under such conditions as may be prescribed by Canons of the General Convention. Bishops so consecrated shall not be eligible to the office of Diocesan or of Bishop Coadjutor of any Diocese in the United States or be entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, nor shall they perform any act of the episcopal office in any Diocese or Missionary District of this Church, unless requested so to do by the Ecclesiastical Authority thereof. If a Bishop so consecrated shall be subsequently duly elected as a Missionary Bishop of this Church lie shall then enjoy all the rights and privileges given in the Canons to Missionary Bishops.

ARTICLE IV

In every Diocese, a Standing Committee shall be appointed by the Convention thereof. When there is a Bishop in charge of the Diocese, the Standing Committee shall be his Council

of Advice. If there be no Bishop or Bishop Coadjutor or Suffragan Bishop canonically authorized to act, the Standing Committee shall be the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese for all purposes declared by the General Convention. The rights and duties of the Standing committee, except as provided in the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention, may be prescribed by the Canons of the respective Dioceses.

ARTICLE V

Section 1. A new Diocese may be formed, with the consent of the General Convention and under such conditions as the General Convention shall prescribe by general Canon or Canons, (1) by the erection into a Diocese of the whole or of any part of one or more Missionary districts; (2) by the division of an existing Diocese; (3) by the junction of two or more Dioceses or of parts of two or more Dioceses; or (4) by the junction of the whole or part of a Missionary district with a Diocese, or with any part of one or more Dioceses. The proceedings shall originate in a Convocation of the Clergy and Laity of the Missionary district called by the bishop for that purpose; or, with the approval of the Bishop, in the Convention of the Diocese to be divided; or (when it is proposed to form a new Diocese by the junction of two or more Dioceses or of parts of two or more Dioceses), by mutual agreement of the Conventions of the dioceses concerned, with the approval of the Bishop of each Diocese. In case the Episcopate of a Diocese be vacant, no proceedings toward its division shall be taken until the vacancy is filled. During a vacancy in a Missionary District, the consent of the Presiding Bishop must be had before proceedings to erect it into a Diocese are taken. When it shall appear to the satisfaction of the General Convention, by a certified copy of the proceedings and other documents and papers laid before it, that all the conditions for the formation of the Diocese have been complied with and that it has acceded to the Constitution and Canons of this Church, such new Diocese shall thereupon be admitted to union with the General Convention.

Section 2. In case one Diocese shall be divided into two or more Dioceses. the Bishop of the Diocese divided may elect the one to which he will be attached, and he shall thereupon become the Bishop thereof; and the Bishop Coadjutor, if there be one, may elect the one to which he shall be attached, and (if it be not the one elected by the Bishop) he shall be the Bishop thereof.

Section 3. In case a diocese shall be formed out of parts of two or more dioceses, each of the bishops and Bishops Coadjutor of the several Dioceses out of which the new Diocese has been formed shall be entitled, in order of seniority of consecration, to the choice between his own Diocese and the new Diocese so formed. In case the new Diocese shall not be so chosen, it shall have the right to choose its own Bishop.

Section 4. Whenever a new Diocese is formed and erected out of an existing Diocese, it shall be subject to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese out of which it was formed, except as local circumstances may prevent, until the same be altered in accordance with such Constitution and Canons by the Convention of the new Diocese. Whenever a Diocese is formed out of two or

more existing Dioceses, it shall be subject to the Constitution and Canons of the one of the said existing Dioceses to which the greater number of clergymen shall have belonged prior to the erection of such new Diocese, except as local circumstances may prevent, until the same be altered in accordance with such Constitution and Canons by the Convention of the new Diocese.

Section 5. A Diocese formed out of a Missionary District shall be subject to the Constitution and Canons to which such Missionary District was subject, until the same be altered in accordance with such Constitution and Canons by the Convention of the new Diocese.

Section 6. No new Diocese shall be formed which shall contain fewer than six Parishes, or fewer than six Presbyters who have been for at least one year canonically resident within the bounds of such new Diocese, regularly settled in a Parish or Congregation and qualified to vote for a Bishop. Nor shall such new Diocese be formed if thereby any existing Diocese shall be so reduced as to contain fewer than twelve Parishes and twelve Presbyters who have been residing therein and settled and qualified as above provided.

ARTICLE VI

Section 1. The House of Bishops may establish Missionary Districts in States and Territories or parts thereof not organized into Dioceses. It may also from time to time change, increase, or diminish the territory included in such Missionary Districts in such manner as may be prescribed by Canon.

Section 2. The General Convention may accept a cession of the territorial jurisdiction of a part of a Diocese when such cession shall have been proposed by the Bishop and the Convention of such Diocese, and consent thereto shall have been given by three-fourths of the Parishes in the ceded territory, and also by the same ratio of the Parishes within the remaining territory.

Any territorial jurisdiction or any part of the same which may have been accepted from a Diocese by the General Convention under the foregoing provision, may be retroceded to the said Diocese by such joint action of all the several parties as is herein required for its cession, save that in the case of retrocession of territory the consent of parishes with the territory retroceded shall not be necessary; provided that such action of the General Convention, whether of cession or retrocession, shall be by a vote of two-thirds of all the Bishops present and voting and by a vote of two-thirds of the House of Deputies voting by orders.

Section 3. Missionary Districts shall be organized as may be prescribed by Canon of the General Convention.

ARTICLE VII

Diocese and Missionary Districts may be united into Provinces in such manner, under such conditions, and with such powers, as shall be provided by Canon of the General

Convention; *Provided, however,* that no Diocese shall be included in a Province without its own consent.

ARTICLE VIII

No person shall be ordered Priest or Deacon to minister in this Church until he shall have been examined by the Bishop and two Priests and shall have exhibited such testimonials and other requisites as the Canons in that case provided may direct. No persons shall be ordained and consecrated Bishop, or ordered Priest or Deacon to minister in this Church, unless at the time, in the presence of the ordaining Bishop or Bishops, he shall subscribe and make the following declaration:

"I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation.

I do believe the teachings of the United Episcopal Church of North America to be agreeable to the Word of God; and I do solemnly engage to conform to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the United Episcopal Church of North America.

I do assent to the Book of Common Prayer, 1928 U. S. Edition, and authorized revision thereto. and to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion set forth therein; and in Public Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, I will use the Form in said Book prescribed, and none other, except so far as shall be order by lawful authority.

Provided, however, that any person consecrated a Bishop to minister in any Diocese or Missionary District of an autonomous Church or Province of a Church in Communion with this Church may, instead of the foregoing declaration, make the promises of Conformity required by the Church in which he is to minister.

If any Bishop ordains a Priest or Deacon to minister elsewhere than in this Church, or confers ordination as priest or deacon upon a Christian minister who has not received Episcopal ordination, lie shall do so only in accordance with such provisions as shall be set forth in the Canons of this Church.

No person ordained by a foreign Bishop, or by a Bishop not in communion with this Church, shall be permitted to officiate as a Minister of this Church until he shall have complied with the Canon or Canons in that case provided and also shall have subscribed the aforesaid declaration.

ARTICLE IX

The General Convention may, by Canon, establish a Court for the trial of Bishops, which shall be composed of Bishops only.

Presbyters and Deacons canonically resident in a Diocese shall be tried by a Court instituted by the Convention thereof; Presbyters and Deacons canonically resident in a Missionary District shall be tried according to canons adopted by the Bishop and Convocation thereof, with the approval of the House of Bishops; *Provided* that the general Convention in each case may prescribe by Canon for a change of venue.

The general convention, in like manner, may establish or may provide for the establishment of Courts of Review of the determination of Diocesan or other trial Courts.

The Court for the review of the determination of the trial Court, on the trial of a Bishop, shall be composed of Bishops only.

The General Convention, in like manner may establish an ultimate Court of Appeal, solely for the review of the determination of any Court of Review on questions of Doctrine, Faith or Worship.

None but a Bishop shall pronounce sentence of admonition, or of suspension, deposition, or degradation from the Ministry, on any Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon.

A sentence of suspension shall specify on what terms or conditions and at what time the suspension shall cease.

ARTICLE X

The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, the Form of Consecration of a Church or Chapel, the Office of Institution of Ministers, and Articles of Religion, as now established or hereafter amended by the authority of this Church, shall be in use in all the Dioceses and Missionary Districts of this Church. No alteration thereof or addition thereto shall be made unless the same shall be first proposed in one triennial meeting of the General Convention and by a resolve thereof be sent within six months to the Secretary of the Convention of every Diocese and of the Convocation of every Missionary District, to be made known to the Diocesan Convention or Missionary District Convocation at its next meeting, and be adopted by the General Convention at its next succeeding triennial meeting by a majority of all Bishops, excluding retired Bishops not present, of the whole number of Bishops entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, and by a majority of the Clerical and Lay Deputies of all the Diocese entitled to representation in the House of Deputies and all the Missionary Districts, voting by orders, each to have the vote provided for in Article I, Sec. 4. *Provided, however,* that the General Convention at any meeting shall have power to amend the Table of Lessons and all Tables and Rubrics relating to the use of the Psalms by a majority of the whole number of Bishops entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, and by a majority of the Clerical and Lay Deputies of all the Diocese entitled to representation in the House of Deputies, and all the Missionary Districts voting by orders as previously laid down in the Article.

And *provided, further,* that nothing in this Article shall be construed as restricting the authority of the Bishops of the Church to take such order as may be permitted by the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer or by the Canons of the General Convention for the use of special forms of worship.

ARTICLE XI

The Church, each Diocese, each Missionary District, each parish, each congregation, and each Mission shall respectively hold its own property, be the same real or personal, in its own name, and shall do so without any temporal claim or jurisdiction of any other ecclesiastical body or person thereof.

ARTICLE XII

No alteration or amendment of this Constitution shall be made unless the same shall be first proposed at one triennial meeting of the General Convention and by a resolve thereof be sent to the Secretary of the Convention of every Diocese and of the Convocation of every Missionary District to be made known to the Diocesan Convention or the Missionary District Convocations at its next meeting, and be adopted by the General Convention at its next succeeding triennial meeting by a three-fourths majority of all Bishops excluding retired Bishops not present, of the whole number of Bishops entitled to vote in the House of Bishops, and by a majority of the Clerical and Lay Deputies of all the Diocese and of all the Missionary Districts entitled to representation in the House of Deputies voting by orders, each having the vote provided for in Sec. 4 of Article I.