

CONSTITUTION AND CANONS OF THE ECUMENICAL CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MID-AMERICA

ARTICLE I

Understanding of the Local Church and Its Relationship to the ECC

- Section 1.** The Diocese constitutes a local church, the people of God reconciled in Jesus Christ and by the outpouring and continuous work of the Holy Spirit, gathered around their bishop, the presbyterium, and the diaconate, with the Eucharist at the center of their common life. This Eucharistic life is by no means understood in a narrow sense as limited to a particular liturgical act. Rather, in the Eucharist the church is most fully itself, reconstituted at every Mass as the body of Christ united with its Head and empowered for incarnational ministry in the world.
- Section 2.** The local church is complete and catholic in the fullest sense, which means, on the one hand, that it participates in the whole reality of salvation and truth that comprises God and human beings and finds therein its unity, and on the other hand, that it also recognizes that the community of faith is larger than the diocesan bounds. This second aspect of its catholic nature impels the Diocese to be connected with other local churches in which it recognizes this same catholic character.
- Section 3.** The Diocese finds its connection to other local churches as a member of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion and recognizes and accedes to the Constitution and Canons of the same. Diocesan canons and decisions shall not be in conflict with or lower any requirements or expectations set forth by the Communion, including financial expectations.

ARTICLE II

Title and Bounds of the Diocese

- Section 1.** That part of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (Hereafter "ECC" or "Communion") that lies within the bounds described below shall be known as the Ecumenical Catholic Diocese of Mid-America (Hereafter "Diocese").
- Section 2.** The jurisdiction of the Diocese shall include the states of Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

ARTICLE III

Fundamental Principles

Section 1. The Diocese affirms subsidiarity, that organizing principle which states that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest, or least centralized competent authority. Collaboration between equal local churches in the Communion should be the rule.

Section 2. The Synod shall establish canons regarding a process for separation from the Communion. Such canons must provide for a process which:

- (1) involves dialogue between diocesan representatives and representatives of the Communion, seeking reconciliation,
- (2) takes at least one year to accomplish,
- (3) allows those parishes and ministries that wish to stay with the Communion to do so,
- (4) describes the terms of the separation, e.g., the disposition of any jointly-held records or assets, etc.

ARTICLE IV

Members of the Diocese

Section 1. Faith communities within the geographic boundaries of the Diocese that wish to join the ECC and meet the requirements for membership as described in the ECC Constitution will apply for membership with the Diocese.

Section 2. Special ministries of the Diocese must be attached to a member community; they do not constitute separate communities.

Section 3. The Synod may establish procedures regarding the admission of faith communities to membership, to be administered by the diocesan bishop.

Section 4. Faith communities shall make a financial commitment to the Diocese.

ARTICLE V

The Diocesan Synod and Its Members

Section 1. The Diocese is both episcopal and synodal, gathering around its bishop whose jurisdictional authority is given from election by the clergy and laity of the Diocese, who have equal voice and vote on all matters of local church life.

Section 2. The lay members of the Synod are those delegates selected by the parishes of the diocese. Each parish is entitled to send one (1) voting lay delegate to the Synod, plus one (1) additional delegate for every twenty-five

(25) registered parish members or fraction thereof. Ordained persons may not serve as lay delegates.

Section 3. Every ordained person in good standing, holding faculties, and canonically resident in the Diocese shall be a member of the Synod.

Section 4. The Bishop is a member and the chair of the Synod, with the right to voice in the Synod's deliberations.

Section 5. The Synod shall meet at the time fixed by canon and at the place selected by the preceding Synod; the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese for good cause may change the time or place of meeting. Special or called meetings of the Synod may be provided for by canon.

Section 6. A quorum of the Synod shall consist of one or more of the duly selected delegates from one-half of the parishes entitled to representation in the synod, and one-half of the clerical members. A smaller number may adjourn from day to day until the third day when, if no quorum is then present, the Synod shall stand adjourned *sine die*. Ordinarily, the Diocesan bishop or their designee is necessary for the establishment of the quorum.

ARTICLE VI

Voting in the Synod

Section 1. Except as otherwise provided, in all matters that may come before the Synod the laity and clergy shall deliberate as one body, and the adoption or rejection of any matter submitted for their consideration shall be determined by a majority of those voting thereon. But if any five (5) members request it, there shall be a vote by Orders. Lay delegates, shall constitute the lay Order; all clerical members shall constitute the clerical Order. A majority of the votes in each Order on the same ballot shall be necessary for passage of a measure.

Section 2. A request for a vote by Orders can be made as to any motion, amendment, substitute motion or motion as amended by any five members of the Synod and will be binding if the request is made at any time prior to the vote thereon.

Section 3. In a vote by Orders an unfavorable vote by either Order shall defeat the matter. There shall be no vote by Orders in any election except the election of a bishop.

Section 4. The Bishop of the Diocese has the right to veto any decision taken by the Synod. A two-thirds majority vote by Orders is required to override an episcopal veto.

ARTICLE VII

Election of Bishops and Ecclesiastical Authority

- Section 1.** The election of any Bishop takes place through a vote of all the members in good standing of every parish in the Diocese. After nomination of a candidate or candidates, each parish shall provide for such a vote and direct its delegates to reflect the results of that vote in their actions at Synod. The election shall be confirmed at the Synod, where the lay delegates and clerical members shall vote by Orders by written ballot, and the required majority in each Order on the same ballot shall be necessary to confirm. If two-thirds of the members of an Order entitled to vote are present at Synod, a majority vote shall determine the choice of that Order; if less than two-thirds of the members of an Order entitled to vote are present at Synod, the vote of two-thirds of those present in that Order shall be necessary for that purpose. If it is deemed necessary to confirm an episcopal election prior to the regular Synod, the Ecclesiastical Authority may call a special Synod.
- Section 2.** The Bishop is the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese and exercises ordinary jurisdiction within the Diocese. The Bishop is also the Chief Pastor and Liturgical Officer of the Diocese and, as such, has the right to officiate within any congregation or elsewhere in the Diocese.
- Section 3.** The Diocese may elect a new diocesan Bishop no more than one year prior to the end of the current Bishop's term. In such a case, the new Bishop serves as Bishop Coadjutor until the time that he or she takes the role of Bishop Ordinary. The Diocese shall not elect bishops for any purpose other than to succeed the Ordinary.
- Section 4.** If the Bishop becomes disabled, the Bishop Coadjutor, if there is one, shall assume all the powers and perform all the duties of the Bishop of the Diocese and shall be the Ecclesiastical Authority.
- Section 5.** If the Bishop is absent, a Bishop Coadjutor or the Executive Council, if authorized in writing by the Bishop, shall act as the Ecclesiastical Authority until that authority is revoked by the Bishop.
- Section 6.** If there is no Bishop or Bishop Coadjutor able to act, the Executive Council shall be the Ecclesiastical Authority. In the case of an Episcopal vacancy, the Executive Council shall arrange for the election and installation of a new bishop to be completed within one year.
- Section 7.** The Synod shall provide by canon a process for removal of a bishop for cause.

ARTICLE VIII

The President of the Synod

The Bishop of the Diocese shall be the President of the Synod. However, in case of a vacancy or disability, then the presidency shall devolve on the Bishop Coadjutor, if there is one. In the event of the absence or disability of said persons, then the Synod shall elect a president *pro tempore* from its lay or clerical membership.

ARTICLE IX

The Secretary of the Synod

Section 1. The Secretary of the Executive Council ("Secretary") shall also serve as Secretary of the Synod. The Secretary shall make minutes of the Synod proceedings, preserve its journal and records, attest its official acts, and faithfully deliver to the next Secretary all books and papers held by virtue of the office. The Secretary shall, as soon as possible, after the adjournment of any regular or special Synod, publish the journal of its proceedings. The Secretary shall give at least thirty days' prior notice of the time and place of meeting of each Synod to the parish council or vestry of each parish and to every member of the clergy entitled to a seat in the Synod.

Section 2. If a vacancy shall occur in the office of the Secretary of the Executive Council/Synod, the Executive Council shall elect a successor Secretary at its next meeting, who shall assume immediately the duties of the Secretary of the Synod.

ARTICLE X

Diocesan Committees and Officers

Section 1. The Synod shall provide by canon for the election of an Executive Council, comprised of an equal number of lay and clerical members. The Bishop of the Diocese shall be the President of the Executive Council. The Executive Council shall elect a Vice President. The Executive Council shall exercise the powers of the Synod between the meetings thereof; shall supervise the temporal affairs of the Diocese; shall be responsible for the program and budget of the Diocese; and shall perform such other duties as may be committed to it by the Synod. It shall also have the power to initiate and develop such new work, between meetings of the Synod, as it may deem necessary or in the best interests of the Diocese, subject, however, to the provisions of the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese and other directions of the Synod.

Section 2. The Executive Council may appoint other committees, as needed, and a Treasurer, and shall regulate by canon their authority, terms of office, manner of selection, compensation, and duties.

ARTICLE XI

The Mission of the Church

The Diocese may, from time to time, establish various commissions or task forces to aid in the fulfillment its mission, foster collegiality between the parishes, and facilitate the ongoing education and formation of both clergy and laity in areas such as Christian spirituality, service for compassion and justice, and the development of leaders in local parishes.

ARTICLE XII

Leadership Support and Accountability

Section 1. The Diocese shall be committed to the support of clergy and other Church personnel as they exercise their ministry, serve the Diocese and Communion, and care for their own families, by developing or identifying appropriate resources and methods to assist with such things as continuing education, coverage for liturgies when clergy are absent, retreat opportunities, resources for conflict resolution, etc.

Section 2. The Diocese shall adopt a conduct policy for clergy, religious, lay employees and volunteers of the Diocese.

Section 3. The Diocese shall develop a canonical process for resolution of complaints about clergy and other personnel.

ARTICLE XIII

Diocesan Property

Section 1. The Diocese shall not hold title to lands, real estate, or any other property of the member parishes of the Diocese.

Section 2. The Bishop, shall not purchase, lease, encumber, alienate, or convey any lands or real estate without the consent of the Synod.

Section 3. The Synod shall provide by canon for the disposition of any diocesan property, in accord with any applicable laws, in the event of the dissolution of the Diocese.

ARTICLE XIV

Amendments to the Constitution

Section 1. Any proposed amendment to this Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Synod. If approved by a majority of those voting, the Secretary shall, within three months after the adjournment of the Synod, transmit to each parish and mission in the Diocese a copy of said amendment. If at the next Synod such amendment is again approved by a majority of both Orders voting separately and by the Bishop, it shall then become a part of this Constitution.

Section 2. Approval by a majority vote at only one Synod shall be required for an amendment to an Article, approved by the Bishop and the Executive Council, which corrects typographical, punctuation, or grammatical errors; or which is a clarification that does not change the meaning or substance of such provision. However, should the Bishop disapprove of any such proposed amendment, the Synod may, by a two-thirds vote of each Order, voting separately and concurrently, override such disapproval and the amendment shall become effective.