

The Constitution for the ECC Diocese of the Pacific Northwest

ARTICLE I

The Local Church

The Diocese constitutes a local Ecumenical Catholic Church. It consists of the people of God baptized in Christ, professing our faith in a living Catholic tradition, and gathered around our bishop. It is composed of faith communities that gather for mutual support and encouragement, shared marketing activities and events, to create a visible presence of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC), and to build collaborative relationships with leaders of other faith communities and secular organizations promoting social justice in the PNW. The Diocese is connected to other ECC Dioceses and communities as a member of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion and recognizes and assents to the Constitution and Canons of that body. Our diocesan canons and decisions shall not conflict with or lower any requirements or expectations set forth by the Communion.

ARTICLE II

Title and Bounds of the Diocese

That part of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (Hereafter “ECC” or “Communion”) that lies within the bounds described below shall be known and incorporated as the Ecumenical Catholic Diocese of the Pacific Northwest. It may also be represented as the ECC Diocese of the Pacific Northwest.

The Jurisdiction of the Diocese shall include the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

ARTICLE III

Fundamental Principles

- 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 dioceses in the Communion should be the rule.
- The Diocese is both episcopal and synodal, gathering around its bishop to whom jurisdictional authority is given from the election by the people of the diocese. The people shall have equal voice and vote on all matters of local church life at their Synod gatherings.
- The Diocesan constitution is a developing document and shall be reviewed whenever a Synod is held.
- The Diocese shall not hold title to lands, real estate, or any other property of the member parishes. The bishop shall not purchase, lease, encumber, alienate, or convey any lands or real estate without consent of the Synod.
- The Diocese consists of four orders of ministry – bishop, presbyters, deacons, and laity. Chaplains may be either ordained or lay.
- Gatherings and meetings may occur in multiple formats, including online.

ARTICLE IV

Members of the Diocese

Faith communities, parishes, special ministries, and chaplaincies within the boundaries of the Diocese that wish to join with the ECC and meet the requirements as described in the

ECC Constitution shall apply for membership with the Diocese through the bishop. Individuals join the Diocese and the ECC through the above entities. Parishes may develop and oversee their own special ministries. Standalone special ministries will be subject to the oversight of the bishop. There is no membership in the ECC without membership in the Diocese.

Pastors of parishes will ordinarily be ordained presbyters, but parishes in our Diocese have the right to choose their own leadership model. In other words, a parish may have a priest pastor, a lay pastor and a sacramental priest minister, or a leadership team. Faith communities may join the Diocese even in the absence of ordained members. They will choose lay pastoral leader(s) but are expected to be open to ordained ministry in their future, and in the interim will consider the bishop as their pastor. Their liturgies shall be approved by the bishop.

The benefits of membership are:

- Participation in a new and joyful way to be Catholic and in the development of a new kind of Catholic Diocese.
- Shared marketing events and activities.
- Mutual support and encouragement.
- Membership in the ECC.
- Being part of something larger than your small community.
- Having a larger voice when speaking to others.
- A local bishop for the celebration of ordinations.

The responsibilities of membership are:

- Select delegates for the Diocesan Synod.
- Select at least one member to attend the Diocesan Council meetings.
- Contribute financial support to the Diocese as defined by the diocesan synod.
- Follow the Diocesan Constitution.
- Calling forth the gifts of community members, including those called to ordained ministry.
- Sending delegates to the ECC Synod and contributing to the ECC.
- Participating in the life of the Diocese.

ARTICLE V

The Diocesan Council

The Council for the Diocese shall ordinarily meet once a month between Synods as a means for the communities to stay in relationship with each other, and with the bishop. With the bishop, the council is empowered to make executive and administrative decisions for the diocese. Decisions shall be made by consensus. (Consensus Decision Making Model shall be added to the bylaws)

The Council is charged with the formation of the Diocese. This includes preparing items for the Synod to consider and with organizing and planning the Synods. The Council may appoint committees, whether standing or *ad hoc* as needed.

Communities within the Diocese shall select at least one member to attend the Council. (The Council shall select a secretary and treasurer when members discern this has become necessary). Members of the Diocese who are interested in helping to form the diocese are welcome to attend meetings and have a voice at the meetings. The council, by consensus, may limit the number of members and may exclude persons who become disruptive.

ARTICLE VI

The Diocesan Synod

Lay members of the Synod are those delegates selected by the communities of the diocese. Each community is entitled to 2 lay delegates. Communities with over 50 members may add 1 additional lay delegate. Missions are permitted one delegate. Every ordained person in good standing, active in ministry, holding faculties, and canonically resident in the Diocese shall be a clergy delegate of the Synod. The bishop is a member and the chair of the Synod, with the right to a voice in the Synod deliberations.

The Synod shall meet at a time, place and manner determined by the Diocesan Council. A quorum shall exist when 75% of communities are represented at the Synod by at least one delegate. The consent of the Synod delegates for matters brought up outside of the Synod gatherings may be made by use of online forums, surveys or by phone.

ARTICLE VII

Voting at the Synod

The Synod is the discernment body of the Church seeking to be led by the Holy Spirit. Except as otherwise provided, in all matters that may come before the Synod, the laity and clergy shall deliberate as one body. The adoption or rejection of any matter submitted for their consideration shall be determined by a majority of those present using a consensus model. While complete consensus may not always be possible, it remains the ideal to which the people and clergy should aspire, and to which they should resolutely commit themselves. 5 (five) lay members or 5 (five) clergy members, or the bishop, may request separate deliberations and decision making on matters prior to coming together for a final decision.

For the sake of unity, participants of the Synod agree to support a decision as an acceptable resolution, and one that can be supported even if not exactly what an individual wanted.

The chair of the Synod is the bishop. In the absence of a bishop in the Diocese the Synod shall elect a chair *pro tempore* from its membership. The secretary of the Diocesan Council shall serve as secretary of the Synod.

ARTICLE VIII

Election of a Bishop and Ecclesiastical Authority

The election of a bishop shall follow the guidelines of the ECC constitution and the Council of Bishops. In addition, the candidates shall be persons who are familiar with the ECC and have participated in Diocesan business.

The bishop is the Ecclesiastical and Administrative Authority of the Diocese and exercises ordinary jurisdiction and may appoint specific persons to offices, as needed, to provide for the exercise of this jurisdiction. The bishop is the chief pastor and liturgical officer of the Diocese and as such will be welcomed to officiate within any parish or elsewhere in the Diocese.

The bishop serves as a servant leader and advocate, giving voice to our common needs and values within the PNW and with the Council of Bishops in the ECC. The bishop is the spiritual leader and shepherd for clergy and laity of the diocese and responds to matters of importance and urgency impacting the communities and diocese, coordinates the evaluation and formation of new presbyter and deacon candidates, as well as the evaluation and reception of clergy for incardination. The bishop will build relationships with each faith community as well as cultivate interdependence among faith communities. The faith communities in turn will support the work of the diocese as it develops its identity.

Concerns about a bishop regarding moral, ethical, or legal issues, or competency or disability, shall be referred to the ECC Council of Bishops.

ARTICLE IX

Clergy

The Diocesan Council will define what it means for clergy to be in good standing in our Diocese, and help the bishop develop a process of formation for clergy. Concerns about clergy regarding moral, ethical, or legal issues, or competency or disability shall be referred to the bishop.

ARTICLE X

Commissions and/or Committees

Liturgy, finances, education, social justice, other – shall be appointed by the bishop and/or the Diocesan Council.

ARTICLE XI

Accountability

The Diocesan Council shall develop a process for conflict resolution and develop a Code of Ethics for our Diocese.

ARTICLE XII

Amendments

Proposed amendments to this constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Diocesan Council for review prior to being submitted to the Synod. Proposed amendments must be approved by a majority of Synod delegates, both lay and clergy. The bishop may veto a proposed amendment, but the Synod may override the veto by two-thirds vote of each order, lay and clergy.

A glossary shall be created for this document by the Diocesan Council and links to relevant information shall be provided.