



February 12, 2026

## **GOVERNANCE GUIDANCE: Why Accurate Communicant Lists Matter More Than Ever**

It's Parochial Report Season! Each year, every congregation in the Diocese submits its Parochial Report—a document that is far more than a statistical exercise. It is the Church's official record of who we are, how we are growing or changing, and how faithfully we are stewarding the people entrusted to our care. At the heart of that report is a number that shapes nearly every aspect of our common life: **the count of “communicants in good standing.”**

The Standing Committee has observed a growing concern: **some congregations are carrying communicant lists that have not been reviewed or culled for accuracy.** While this may seem like a small administrative oversight, the consequences ripple outward in significant ways.

### **1. Accurate Communicant Lists Ensure Proper Representation**

The number of communicants in good standing directly determines:

- **How many lay delegates a congregation may elect to the Annual Diocesan Convention**
- **How many delegates it may send to a Special Convention, including the election of a bishop**
- **Whether the congregation meets quorum at its own annual meeting**

When communicant lists are inaccurate or outdated, a congregation may believe it is entitled to more delegates than it truly is—or may fail to meet quorum because the “official” membership bears little resemblance to the people who actually participate in the life of the church. Conversely, an outdated/understated list may provide less delegates than a church should have.

Accurate lists protect the integrity of our governance and ensure that representation across the Diocese remains fair, proportional, and faithful to our constitutional structure.

### **2. The Parochial Report Depends on Truthful, Verified Data**

The Parochial Report is certified each year by:

- **The clerk**
- **The Treasurer**
- **The clergy in charge, or the senior warden, when the congregation is without clergy**

The report is then approved by the Wardens and Vestry/Bishop's Committee.

These signatures are not ceremonial. It is an attestation that the information submitted is **true, accurate, and complete to the best of the signer's knowledge.**

When communicant lists are not reviewed, updated, or corrected, the signer is placed in the untenable position of certifying data that may not be reliable. This undermines the credibility of the report and compromises the Diocese's ability to plan, support, and resource congregations appropriately.

### **3. Culling the List Is Pastoral, Not Punitive**

Removing someone from the list of communicants in good standing is not a judgment about their worth, their faith, or their relationship with God. It is simply an acknowledgment of the canonical definition:

- A communicant in good standing is someone who **has received Holy Communion at least three times in the previous year** and
- **Is known to the clergy or wardens as part of the worshiping community.**

Life changes. People move, drift away, or affiliate elsewhere. Updating the list honors the reality of their journey and the integrity of the congregation's record.

### **4. A Wider Implication than Local Accounting**

The Parochial Report is not merely a diocesan requirement—it becomes part of the wider Episcopal Church's statistical record. Every congregation's data is aggregated to determine the size, health, and demographic trends of the Episcopal Church as a whole. These numbers influence everything from churchwide budgeting and mission priorities to how the wider Church understands the presence of Episcopalians in each diocese. When our local reporting is inaccurate, the wider Episcopal Church picture becomes distorted. Ensuring truthful, carefully reviewed data is therefore an act of stewardship not only to our Diocese, but to the entire Episcopal Church.

### **5. The Standing Committee's Request**

The Standing Committee strongly encourages every congregation to:

- Review its communicant list annually, ideally before completing the Parochial Report
- Remove individuals who no longer meet the canonical definition
- Document the process so that clergy and wardens can sign the report with confidence
- Communicate pastorally with members when appropriate, especially those who may be reconnecting or returning

This work is not glamorous, but it is essential. It strengthens our governance, clarifies our mission, and ensures that every congregation participates in diocesan life with integrity and transparency.

### **A Shared Commitment to Truth**

Our Church's governance depends on trust—trust that our numbers reflect reality, trust that our delegates represent actual congregational life, and trust that our leaders sign reports grounded in truth.

By maintaining accurate communicant lists, each congregation helps uphold that trust and strengthens the fabric of our diocesan community.

Respectfully,

The Standing Committee  
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i