



Introduction to
DIOCESAN CONVENTION

The Episcopal Church in Arkansas

Introduction to Diocesan Convention
The Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas
Updated February 2014

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For many of the delegates, Diocesan Convention is a new and uncertain experience. Perhaps they have never been to a church function outside of their congregation, and the only thing they know about the diocese is that the bishop comes and visits each congregation once a year. There are also many delegates who have been to Diocesan Convention several times, or are at least familiar with the basics of diocesan governance.

Regardless, this document is designed to be a foundation for those who will be delegates to the Diocesan Convention. In the following pages, important terms are defined, clarifications are made, and processes are outlined, with the hope that all delegates will not only enter convention as an informed member, but a worriless one as well.

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WELCOME TO DIOCESAN CONVENTION

According to the constitution, the Episcopal Church in Arkansas gathers once a year to govern the church. We worship, we celebrate, we listen, we speak, we debate, and we vote. It is a large event with important work to be done if the church is to be governed by both members of the clergy and the laity.

The first part of the convention is our gathering, which happens on Friday evening. We celebrate the Eucharist. All of the clergy vest and process, the bishop preaches and presides, and afterwards, we continue to enjoy being the church in community at a reception.

The second part of the convention is our business session, which happens Saturday morning and afternoon. We elect people who will oversee the work of the church for the next year. We present resolutions, voice our opinions, and listen to the opinions of others. The bishop also establishes a vision for the work of the church in the state.

Diocesan Convention is a balance between being the church and dreaming of what the church can be, and there is a time and place for both. We can maintain this balance through prayer:

For a Church Convention or Meeting

Almighty and ever living God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel in the Convention of the Diocese of Arkansas for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GATHERING THE CHURCH

Friday night is like a family reunion. If this is not your first convention, it is like greeting your own family whom you have missed dearly. If this is your first convention, it is like entering an unfamiliar family. There are Episcopalians from El Dorado to Fayetteville and from Mena to West Memphis, all gathering together.

It can be quite intimidating. One of the best things you can do on Friday night is meet as many people as possible. The diversity of our Diocese is impressive and the hospitality is incredible. The quality networks made during the convention are some of the strongest possible.

Registration begins at the church site for the opening service. The dress for Friday night is business casual.

After the Eucharist, the attendees gather for a reception for more conversation. Take every advantage to meet new people and reconnect with old friends. Talk about your congregation. Ask questions about other congregations. Convention is a wonderful opportunity to learn from other Episcopalians around the state.

GOVERNING THE CHURCH

Saturday is when business begins. Delegates gather at the convention site for the business portion. The attire for Saturday is the same as Friday evening: business casual.

Diocesan documents that will be discussed will be provided to each delegate upon their arrival. It would be best to bring writing materials for note taking.

Each delegation has a table to sit together. The congregations have their clergy and delegates sit together, and the youth delegation sits together.

When there is a topic in debate during the convention, every delegate or alternate is entitled to speak on the floor of the convention by using one of the microphones that surround the room. Likewise, if a delegate would like to make a presentation, the same rules apply: every delegate or alternate is entitled to make a presentation on the floor, but must have the permission of the chair, as is the case in other organizations' business meetings. The convention follows *Robert's Rules for Order*.

DIOCESAN LEADERSHIP

The **Diocesan Convention** is the primary governing body of the Diocese of Arkansas, with Executive Council serving as the governing body between conventions. It is made up delegates from each congregation, and various leaders throughout the diocese. The convention occurs annually, and also meets when it is necessary to elect a new bishop.

The **Bishop's Staff** includes the Bishop and all employees in the diocesan office who run the day-to-day operations for the diocese.

The **Executive Council** is the governing board for the Diocese between diocesan convention. It consists of Dean of the Cathedral; the President of the Standing Committee; the Chancellor of the Diocese; the President of the Episcopal Churchwomen of the Diocese; the President of the Episcopal Churchmen's Association of the Diocese; the Chair of the Camp Mitchell Board of Trustees, the elected representative of the Episcopal Youth Community of the Diocese; one college student; one member of the clergy and one lay person resident in and elected by each of the convocation assemblies of the Diocese; one member of the clergy and one lay person elected at large by the Annual Convention; and a maximum of three appointed members.

There are several commissions and committees that operate at the will of the Executive Council. Some of these are the **Commission on Ministry**, the **Commission Church Architecture and Allied Arts**, and the **Commission on Church Music**.

The **Standing Committee** serves as an advisory committee to the Bishop. No one may be ordained without the committee's approval. In the event that there is not a bishop, the Standing Committee is the diocesan ecclesiastical authority.

The **Board of Trustees** is a committee that oversees the financial assets of the diocese.

CONVENTION LEADERSHIP

The **President of the Convention** is the Bishop of Arkansas. The bishop presides over the convention. The bishop also presides over Executive Council meetings during the year.

The **Secretary of the Convention and Diocese**, who is the Secretary of Executive Council, documents the entire Convention and presents a report in the form of a journal to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

The **Treasurer of the Diocese**, who is the Treasurer of Executive Council, oversees the financial activities of the diocesan office and reports on the diocese's financial condition to the annual convention.

The **Chancellor of the Diocese** is the legal advisor to the diocese.

NOTES

The **Registrar of the Diocese** keeps official records of the bishop, such as episcopal acts and documents for ordination.

The **Historiographer of the Diocese** collects, preserves, retains, and edits historical matters of the Diocese.

To learn more about Diocesan Convention, visit episcopalarkansas.org/convention