

DIOCESE OF GEORGIA



The Diocesan Priest's Handbook

Revised Michaelmas 2018

Expectations for All Priests in the Diocese

1. Be competent in preaching, teaching, and presiding at the Church's rites.
2. Modify their leadership style to fit the current needs of the church; to match their leadership style to a group's competence for a task, its maturity in faith and practice, and its level of commitment.
3. Nurture the church's life and ministry through an orthodox theology and a commitment to the church's core mission, which is renewing people in their baptismal identity and purpose and then equipping them for their apostolate in the world.
4. Demonstrate congruence between their belief and behavior, and between the public and private dimensions of life, while coping with the typical stages of a relationship between Priest and lay leaders.
5. Understand, and be comfortable with, being both symbol and person.
6. Have a disciplined spiritual life that includes: daily prayer & Bible study, regular continuing education, and the stewardship of personal health.

Letters of Agreement

In every situation in which a Priest serves a congregation, the Vestry, the Priest, & the Bishop complete a Letter of Agreement (LOA). All three parties must sign for the Bishop to permit the Priest to serve.

Priest Compensation Guidelines

The Diocesan Council sets the minimum annual compensation for priests each September, which includes stipend, housing, and (recommended) an offset of the self-employment tax (SECA). These minimum expectations are posted in the Reference Library at the diocesan website. Unless authorized by the Bishop, every priest and transitional deacon will be paid at least the minimum specified. If housing is furnished, a reasonable amount of housing allowance (usually 30%) should be determined by the vestry and subtracted from the diocesan annual compensation target.

Supplementary Compensation

Priests do not charge fees for performing the rites of the Church (e.g. baptisms, marriages, funerals) for members of the congregation where they serve. They may, however, receive income from other sources such as honoraria for professional services performed on personal time for groups unrelated to the congregation, or for sermons, books, or articles published outside the congregation.

Clergy Taxes

The IRS and the Social Security Administration treat clergy differently. For income tax purposes, clergy are considered church "employees;" for Social Security

purposes, they are considered “self-employed.” Clergy therefore pay income tax on their stipend only, and not on any housing allowance. But they pay self-employment tax (SECA) on total compensation: stipend, housing allowances, and any other allowances. To offset the self-employment tax, the Diocese recommends parishes pay one-half of this tax (7.65%) to the priest as a part of the total compensation package to make the priest’s tax burden like others.

Travel

All *non-commuting* automobile expenses and other travel expenses incurred on church business should be directly reimbursed to the Priest by the congregation. The Diocese recommends that a fixed travel allowance *not* be paid to the Priest, as it is considered income by the IRS and Social Security and subject to tax. In planning the parish budget, the vestry should specify a maximum yearly limit for a directly reimbursed travel allowance.

Pension

The Church Pension Fund and Social Security are the main sources of retirement income for clergy. Detailed information on benefits, assessments, and operating procedures are found at www.cpg.org. The congregation must pay the Church Pension Fund an assessment for all stipendiary clergy below retirement age, as defined by the Fund. This includes any clergy making more than \$200 per month for three consecutive months. Parish treasurers should know that payments to the Pension Fund must be made on time and in the proper amount. Clergy may also elect to set up a 403b account to augment their savings for retirement. This comes out of the clergy stipend (not in addition to) and is not subject to income tax.

Health and Life Insurance

Each active Priest who serves the church or a church institution for at least half time must be covered by health and life insurance according to the Church’s canons through the Episcopal Church Medical Trust. This requirement is waived if the Priest is covered through a spouse’s policy or by a retirement medical plan.

Clergy Wellness

Priests are expected to attend to their physical, emotional, and spiritual health, and to their personal relationships. They should seek appropriate professional help for their personal problems and conflicts, especially those that might impair their pastoral ability and judgment. They should never work in isolation, but rather maintain strong collegial relationships. Such relationships help priests develop their skills, gain theological and spiritual insights, and get current knowledge of ministry resources. The Bishop encourages all diocesan clergy to form support groups as well as for every priest to meet regularly with a Spiritual Director.

Rule of Life

All clergy of the Diocese of Georgia are to have a rule of life that includes regular worship, weekly service, and daily prayer from the Daily Office. A Rule of Life should be reasonable, definable, and manageable, while also being sacrificial and responsive to the claims of Christ. It should be reviewed regularly, and modified as needed, with the aid of a Spiritual Director.

Continuing Education

All active Priests are required to engage in continuing education, in accordance with the Canons. Letters of Agreement for full time priests must include two weeks per year, including one Sunday, for continuing education.

Diocesan Participation

Priests have a canonical responsibility to participate in the Diocese, to serve on diocesan boards and committees, and to attend the semi-annual clergy conferences and the Diocesan Convention. Active Priests not able to attend Diocesan Convention or the two semi-annual clergy conferences must notify the Bishop. The Priest's participation is also expected on the convocation level. The Dean of each convocation regularly calls together convocation Clericus meetings. These are important to strengthen the collegiality of the Diocese and all parochial clergy are expected to attend. Bi-vocational, non-parochial and retired clergy are encouraged to attend when they are able.

Relationships Among Priests & Their Respective Congregations

A priest (active or retired) should never intrude uninvited into the congregation of another priest. Only the priests serving a congregation are expected to exercise the pastoral oversight and care of that congregation.

Professional and Continuing Education Expenses

The Vestry should reimburse the Priest for all reasonable, job-related expenses upon submittal of evidence of the expense. The Vestry should also reimburse expenses for conferences, classes, seminars, etc. that improve the Priest's skills and knowledge. The Vestry should set a maximum amount it will reimburse each year.

Time Off from Parish Duties

Priests should attend responsibly to their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. The effectiveness of Priests depends upon their wellness, which is influenced greatly by opportunities for time away from the congregation's demands. Each full-time parochial Priest is entitled to at least the following time off from parish duties:

- a. Recognizing the irregular hours of church life, a priest serving full-time in a church will have a scheduled week consisting of 5-6 days. Priests are expected to preserve one continuous 24-hour period each week solely for personal and family time. Compensatory time is appropriate when a pastoral crisis takes away a scheduled day off. Priests must make the congregation aware of their scheduled Sabbath time.
- b. At least four weeks of vacation each year (including four Sundays), which can be prorated based on the time spent in the parish during the initial year. There are no restrictions on how this time is spent. No vacation days may be carried forward to succeeding years.
- c. Priests have National Holidays as additional days off except when they interfere with worship for major occasions.
- d. Priests should devote two weeks each year to continuing education.
- e. Every Letter of Agreement provides for sabbaticals. Sabbatical time accrues at two weeks per year of service, available after the third year, and a cumulative total of 12 weeks through the sixth year. Such arrangements shall be made in full consultation with the Vestry to insure benefits for both the parish and priest. Compensation during a Sabbatical remains unchanged.
- f. Time spent in prayer, study, retreat, and reflection is not considered time off. Rather, such activities are essential to the exercise of a priestly vocation.
- g. Sick leave and other health related leave are to be negotiated between Priest and Vestry. The Church Pension Group provides for short-term disability if a Priest's health issues extend beyond original expectations.

Discretionary Funds

Maintaining a discretionary fund is a common practice for parochial Priests, but it brings with it a serious fiduciary responsibility and opens one up to problems if the funds are not administered properly. The Canons of The Episcopal Church regarding discretionary funds state: *The Alms and Contributions, not otherwise specifically designated, at the Administration of the Holy Communion on one Sunday in each calendar month, and other offerings for the poor, shall be deposited with the Rector or Priest-in-Charge or with such Church officer as the Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall appoint to be applied to such pious and charitable uses as the Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall determine.*

Discretionary funds are church accounts and must be audited with all other funds. Priests should take reasonable precautions to protect the confidentiality of people who have benefited from the funds before they are audited. Discretionary funds are not the property of the Priest. While Priests have discretion for how the funds are used, the funds are not to be used for personal, family, or entertainment needs.

Canons

It is important that Priests have in their personal library (electronic or otherwise) the latest edition of The Constitution and Canons of the Diocese and the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church. Both documents are available in the Reference Library at the Diocesan website.

Priests of the Diocese

Priests are not members of congregations. Through ordination, they are on the Roll of Clergy of the Diocese and thus under the authority of the Bishop. They are not eligible for election to lay offices in a congregation. The Bishop prohibits family members to serve on vestries of congregations where the priest is actively serving.

Rectors

Rectors are duly elected and appointed priests in charge of a parish with all the rights and responsibilities as outlined in the Canons. The Rector is appointed after the Vestry and Bishop have certified that he or she is duly qualified and elected, and has accepted election. See the Transition Handbook in the Reference Library at the diocesan website for more information. All Assisting Priests on a parish staff are ineligible for consideration as rector when there is a vacancy.

Priests-in-Charge

In certain circumstances, the Bishop may, with the approval of the vestry, appoint a Priest to be Priest-in-Charge of a congregation. A Letter of Agreement (LOA) is negotiated between the Priest and the Vestry of the congregation. The Bishop must approve the LOA before it is valid. The Priest-in-Charge has all the duties, responsibilities, and authority of a called rector. The tenure of the Priest-in-Charge is at the discretion of the Bishop, in consultation with the Vestry, and in accordance with the LOA. A Priest-in-Charge is eligible to be called as the Rector.

Interim Priests

In times of transition, the Bishop, consulting with the Vestry, may appoint an Interim Priest. This Priest temporarily serves during the calling process for a new Priest. The Vestry is responsible for calling the Interim Priest, but the Bishop must approve the call. While the Interim Priest performs the normal duties of the Rector, the Bishop is the parish's canonical Rector during the interim period. Interim Priests are not normally eligible to be called as the Rector of the parish.

Parish Administration

There are a variety of administrative matters that fall to Rectors, Interims, and Priests in Charge, including oversight of parish records, personnel matters, abuse prevention programs, requests to the Bishop to license lay ministries, and

completion of the annual Parochial Report. These are all canonically mandated oversight responsibilities for Priests.

Finances

While the Vestry is canonically responsible for financial matters. Rectors, Interims, and Priests in Charge have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that adequate insurance coverage, financial reporting, and financial internal controls are in place. These must comply with the Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs issued by The Episcopal Church and available in the Reference Library at the Diocesan website. This includes procedures for collecting offerings, paying bills, issuing financial reports, conducting annual audits and more. The Priest's canonical role is to make sure that these policies are in place and are followed in the congregation. If a Priest has a concern that they are not in place or being followed, then the Priest should report such concerns to the Bishop without delay.

Property Changes

Rectors, Interims, and Priests in Charge must consult with the Bishop and the Standing Committee before a congregation undertakes facilities renovation or expansion or the purchase of new property. The Diocese holds legal and/or beneficial title to all church property and by canon must approve all such proposals including the sale of property and any loans that use church property as collateral for the loan. Rectors, Interims, and Priests in Charge should notify the Bishop's Office at the time a property change is first being considered. The Bishop and Standing Committee must approve all final plans for property changes.

The Parochial Report

The Episcopal Church measures the statistical and financial status of every congregation and diocese. Rectors, Interims, and Priests in Charge must assure that the Parochial Report is completed accurately, in the required format, and by the specified deadline. The Bishop's Office can assist as needed. The Parochial Report is filed on-line at <https://pr.dfms.org/> using the parish's UEID and password. If the login information is lost, then contact the Canon to the Ordinary to retrieve it. A hard copy of the final report must be filed with the Diocesan Office.

Staff Oversight

Rectors, Interims, and Priests in Charge are charged with the supervision of clergy or lay staff. They are to assure that each employee has a personnel file that contains appropriate background checks and IRS forms. They should provide a Ministry Review of all staff and document this in the personnel files, which are to be kept locked in the church offices. A Mutual Ministry Review is also undertaken periodically among Rectors, Interims, and Priests in Charge and their Vestries. The

Diocesan website has information on this process in the Reference Library. The Bishop maintains personnel files for all clergy canonically resident in the Diocese.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Reporting

If Rectors, Interims, and Priests in Charge receive allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse, they must immediately inform the bishop and receive instructions before acting. The only exception to this is when an allegation of child abuse occurs. In these cases, Priests should report the alleged activity to the local authorities and remove the alleged person from any contact with children.

Use of the Buildings

The Episcopal Church Canons state that “the Rector or Priest-in-Charge shall, at all times, be entitled to the use and control of the Church and Parish buildings.” Priests should collaborate with their vestries on a local policy for the use of church facilities by church members and/or outside groups.

Celebration of a New Ministry

Near the beginning of the ministry of a new Rector, a Celebration of a New Ministry commemorates the new collaborative relationship of the priest and the parish. The Bishop will preside at this liturgy. Clergy from nearby congregations should be invited to participate. The selection of the preacher should be discussed with the Bishop prior to extending an invitation. The text of the liturgy is found in the Reference Library at the diocesan website.

Guidelines for Priest Transitions

Saying goodbye and letting go can be difficult. Doing both well insures a healthy transition in the interim period and later to the leadership of the new priest. The following guidelines, though often difficult for both priest and congregation, provide a context for healthy transitioning.

The priest must:

1. Remove all personal belongings from the church, including books & vestments.
2. Give to the Wardens all parish keys, usernames, passwords, lock combinations, and congregational belongings in his or her control.
3. Give the discretionary fund and any other funds in his or her control to the Wardens.

The priest will inform the vestry and congregation that he or she will:

1. Not serve members of the congregation pastorally, and he/she will be clear with them that his/her pastoral relationship with them has ended.

2. Not be available to officiate at weddings, baptisms, funerals or other services at the former congregation except by specific invitation of the interim priest or the new priest, and then only for a weighty cause. Participation, even attendance, at such services is at the discretion of the interim priest or the new priest.
3. Not attend any social activities of the congregation unless invited by the interim priest or the new priest. After the new priest has been in place for a full year, the priest who had departed should still extend the courtesy of requesting permission from the current priest.
4. Not have discussions of concerns about the congregation with its members. He/she must refer such discussions to the interim or new priest.
5. Not attend regular worship during the interim period and for at least one year after the new priest has arrived. Should the departing priest wish to attend his/her former congregation after that one year, the priest should contact the Bishop for permission.
6. Disengage from participation in/control of all parish social media platforms.

These guidelines recognize that during the tenure of a pastoral relationship genuine and lifelong relationships are often formed and that the departing priest can and should maintain those friendships. Departing priests, however, must make a clear distinction between their pastoral identity and their identity as a friend. Priests must establish appropriate boundaries around pastoral identity. Departing priests must recognize that their continued participation in the congregation's life may cause pain rather than help the congregation develop further vitality.

Guidelines for Departing Priest's Family

The family of the departing priest who may have engaged in ministry in the congregation now must deal with this new reality. It can be painful for them to let go because of their ministry and friendships in the congregation. The best practices of the church inform us that family members need to withdraw from all congregational ministries, paid or volunteer. Family members must also refrain from criticism of the vestry, staff, interim or new priest and avoid being drawn into any triangulation with congregants.

Assistant or Associate Rectors

1. Assistant or Associate Rectors are called at the discretion of the Rector when the position is approved by the vestry. In calling such Priests from outside the Diocese, the Bishop's Office should be involved from the beginning of the process since they become the canonical responsibility of the Bishop. Rectors may not call such Priests without the Bishop's permission.

2. Such Priests serve at the pleasure of the Rector. In their ministry, they support the ministry, programs, and administration of the Rector and must have a Letter of Agreement.
3. In the event of serious disagreements, the Priest and Rector will make every effort resolve the issues privately, without inappropriately involving members of the congregation. If Assisting Priests determine that they cannot offer appropriate support to the Rector, they are to contact the Bishop's Office for advice and consultation.

As all staff work at the pleasure of the Rector, an Assisting Priest cannot assume he or she will have a position once a new Rector begins a call. The Bishop and the Canon to the Ordinary will assist the Rector and any Assisting Priest during the transition on steps appropriate to the specific situation.

Clergy 72 and Older

The Episcopal Church canons require that clergy who reach the age of 72 must resign their position and no longer serve in that position. The Canons do permit Clergy older than 72 to serve in other positions under a one-year Letter of Agreement, which is renewable each year.

Pastoral Dissolutions

Rectors or Priests in Charge may not resign from their position without consulting the Bishop nor may their vestries terminate them arbitrarily. If it appears that the pastoral relationship is imperiled, either the Priest or the Vestry may notify the Bishop. If differences appear irreconcilable, the Vestry should notify the Bishop in writing, asking for intervention. After his due diligence, the Bishop may appoint a person to mediate the disagreements. All parties concerned should approach mediation cooperatively. The procedures are outlined in The Episcopal Church Canons "Of the Reconciliation of Disagreement Affecting the Pastoral Relation" and "On the Dissolution of the Pastoral Relation." If the relationship is dissolved, then there is a period of financial and pastoral support for the Priest. The Bishop and Vestry negotiate the timing and amount of financial support.

Supply Priests

The Diocesan Office maintains on its website a list of all Priests who are canonically resident (active and non-active) and/or Licensed to Officiate (LTO) in the Diocese. Honoraria for Supply Priests for presiding at the rites of the Church, for preaching, and for travel should be paid at the time of service based on the current guidelines found on the Supply Priest page at the diocesan website.

Non-Parochial Priests

Priests who are not serving a congregation or an institution of the Diocese are called Non-Parochial Priests. They are encouraged to participate in the Diocese and must make an annual report to the Bishop required by the Canons.

Retired Priests

Regardless of their ministry, retired Priests are expected to continue to maintain a relationship with the Bishop. They should keep the Bishop informed of any address change or any other major change in their circumstances. Retired Priests should be especially mindful of their responsibility to support the ministries of the active Priests in whose cures they reside or from whose cures they have retired. If retired Priests are deployed by the Bishop, the Church Pension Group limits the salary they may earn through age 72. This amount is set by CPG and adjusted annually.

Priests Licensed to Officiate (LTO)

Priests Licensed to Officiate are welcome in the Diocese and are encouraged to participate fully in its life. Licensed Priests are subject to the same expectations for all Priests. If they wish to serve, they must comply with all the policies of the Diocese. In addition, licensed Priests are required to make an annual report to the Bishop and to request licensing for the next calendar year. If no report and request for a license is received, they will be removed from the list of licensed Priests and must reapply to be reinstated. Licensed Priests serving as Interims, Priests in Charge, or as Assisting Priests must register for Diocesan Convention. Although Diocesan Canons do not allow such licensed Priests to vote at Convention, they have seat and voice. Licensed Priests not serving as Interims, Priests in Charge, or Assisting Priests are encouraged to register for Diocesan Convention as visitors.

ELCA Clergy

In addition to what is outlined in the previous section, ELCA Pastors must present a letter from their bishop approving the license application for an LTO. If they are not residing in their home synod, they must also have approval from the Lutheran bishop in whose synod they reside.

Letters Dimissory

New Priests serving full-time cures should request Letters Dimissory for canonical transfer between dioceses. The canons specify that Letters Dimissory must be accompanied by a certification that the Church Pension Fund assessment has been paid in full. The Diocese does not accept requests for Letters Dimissory for retired Priests from other dioceses or for Priests who are serving in interim positions unless they are engaged in full-time stipendiary ministry, have expressed a desire to

remain in the Diocese, and have shown excellence in their ministry while in the Diocese. The Bishop makes this determination in each case.

Semi-Annual Clergy Conferences

The Diocese has two Clergy Conferences annually. The conferences are mandatory for all diocesan stipendiary priests (non-stipendiary priests, retired priests, and deacons are welcome to participate as well). Congregations will provide adequate financial support for all stipendiary priests to participate. Bi-vocational priests are expected to attend when possible and to be in contact with the Bishop in advance when secular employment limits their participation.

Mandatory Training

The Bishop requires that all new priests coming into the Diocese either through ordination or canonical transfer participate in three ongoing training programs: The Church Development Institute, an eight-weekend over two years church leadership training program; The Conflict Management Workshop, a four-day laboratory training focusing on the use of self in conflict situations; and, The Emotional Intelligence Workshop, a four/five-day laboratory training that helps participants develop this needed skill. The dates for these are published in advance and the Diocese covers much of the cost. The remaining cost should be covered by congregational continuing education allowances. The Bishop expects priests to either have completed or matriculated in these within the first two years of arriving in the Diocese. This training is in addition to the Safeguarding God's Children and Anti-Racism training mandated by the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

Clergy Peer Coaching

The Diocese offers peer coaching to all clergy and to some lay leaders who have responsibility in congregations where there is no regular priestly oversight. The International Coach Federation (ICF) has certified all our Clergy Coaches. Newly ordained clergy, Diocesan clergy in new assignments, and clergy who are new to the Diocese are required by the Bishop as part of their Letter of Agreement to have a peer coach assigned to them for a designated time-period.

Types of Priestly Service

There are a variety of priests serving in the Diocese. Some priests have had three years of residential training at a seminary and have received Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) degrees. Other priests have had some seminary training by taking an "Anglican" year at a seminary or through a Masters (not M.Div.) program completed primarily online. Still others have been alternatively prepared for the priesthood through a combination of guided reading, residential work at a seminary, training workshops, and parish internships. The norm for Bi-vocational

Priests is a non-seminary tract for formation and for them to derive their income primarily from secular employment or secular retirement income. The norm is that they will not serve in full-time, paid stipendiary positions in the Diocese unless it is an interim situation. They may serve as part-time assistants, part-time priests-in-charge, or as supply priests. While this is the norm, special circumstances may occur and the Bishop will treat these special circumstances individually.

Electronic Communication & Social Media

Electronic communications should be professional and respectful to the recipient and others who might read them. Clergy and Lay employees in the Diocese are prohibited from sending any communication from electronic devices owned by the Diocese or a congregation of the Diocese that contain obscene, profane, sexist, or racist language or images. Clergy and lay employees, using church email addresses or church-sponsored social media, may not post opinions or statements that are contrary to the Doctrine, Discipline, or Worship of The Episcopal Church.

Specific recommendations for use of email, texting, Twitter, etc.:

1. Since these can be misinterpreted in tone and nuance, they are best used for basic information, such as meeting times, agendas, sharing documents, etc.
2. These communication forms are not appropriate for pastorally sensitive or emotionally charged issues, which are best reserved for face-to-face communication.
3. Users should consider the ramifications of their message before sending or replying to a message.

Specific recommendations for Social Media and Networking:

1. Congregations should set strong privacy settings on any social media to shield both adult and youth members from viewing inappropriate content.
2. Clergy's individual social media should be used to interact with friends, families, and peers. While they may accept such requests, clergy should not submit "friend" requests to those to whom they minister. The power disparity may not give the person the ability to decline such a request. Likewise, clergy should consider the impact of declining a "friend" request from one to whom they minister, because this could create confusion and tension in the pastoral relationship.
3. Clergy who wish to connect with parishioners through social media should set up a group account that all parishioners may join.
4. Clergy who work directly with youth should establish church-sponsored online groups as a way of communicating with youth members.

Specific recommendations for interacting with children and youth:

1. Closed groups, but not hidden groups, should be used for church youth groups.
2. These groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators.
3. Adult leaders and their youth should together create behavioral covenants for what is appropriate/inappropriate for their online youth group.
4. Any material on an online group that raises suspicion that a child or youth has been or will be abused, neglected, or exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or DFCS. If this material is on a church-related site, it should be hard copied for church records and then removed after consulting with DFCS or the police. Other inappropriate material that does not rise to the level above still should be removed from the site.
5. Any content shared on church-related sites or within church-related online groups that details inappropriate behavior (outside the boundaries of established group behavioral norms) should be addressed directly by adult leaders and parents.
6. All church-related youth online groups must be open to parents of current youth members to join.
7. Former adult leaders and youth members, who due to departure, removal from a position, or because they are no longer eligible having “aged-out” of the youth group, should be removed from the online group.

Deployment

1. Priests of the Diocese who are canonically resident or licensed, and in good standing, may submit their names and relevant information for consideration by any congregation receiving names for an open position. Any Priest moving from one congregation to another must be current on all required trainings, such as: Safeguarding God’s Children and Anti-Racism training mandated by the Canons of the Episcopal Church.
2. Three documents are part of the canonical appointment of a Priest: The Letter of Call to the Priest from the Vestry, the Letter of Agreement between Vestry, Priest, & Bishop and the Letter of Institution by the Bishop. Priests-in-Charge and Interim Priests also shall have a Letter of Call and a Letter of Agreement.
3. Priests may accept calls to congregations only with the consent of the Bishop. Questions about deployment are properly directed to the Canon to the Ordinary (CTO) who coordinates deployment and guides Priests through the process, which includes Office of Transition Ministry Portfolio, resume, and finding possible calls which may fit with the Priest’s skills, experience, and interest.

4. The Bishop expects Priests to notify the CTO when they intend to be involved in a search process outside the Diocese. The CTO assists with calls both inside and outside the Diocese.

Retirement

Before advising the Vestry of retirement plans, Priests must discuss those plans with the Bishop before any public announcement is made. As Priests approach retirement should contact the Church Pension Fund (800-223-6602) and utilize fully their Retirement Handbook. The Church Pension Fund is a great source of support and information as Priests make that transition.

Priest Divorce & Remarriage

1. Remarriage of any divorced priest (active or retired) requires the canonical consent of the Bishop. As each case must stand on its own merits, diocesan guidelines have not been prepared, but Priests desiring to remarry after divorce must confer with the Bishop in person to discuss these matters and to formally request permission to remarry.
2. Priests serving a congregation who wish to remarry after they have divorced their previous spouse, must consult with the Bishop about whether resignation may be appropriate. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis and may take into consideration any of the following: (i) causes and conditions of the divorce, (ii) the length of time the couple was in the parish prior to the divorce, (iii) the involvement of the former spouse in the parish, (iv) the attitude and feelings of the congregation, (v) the Priest's relationship with the proposed spouse, or (vi) consultation by the Bishop with Marriage & Family Relations professionals.

Policies & Procedures on Sexual Misconduct

1. The Diocese will not tolerate sexual misconduct by Priests involving parishioners, employees, or colleagues. The Diocese has a Policy and Procedure Manual that outlines the process that will be used for all allegations of sexual misconduct that come before the Bishop. Congregations must follow this policy as well.
2. Priests who work with children and youth are required to complete the Safeguarding God's Children training and supply proof of training to the diocesan office.
3. The Policy and Procedure Manual is available at the diocesan website. Specific questions regarding Safeguarding God's Children training should be directed to the Missioner for Youth.

Episcopal Visitations

1. Before the Bishop's Visitation to a congregation, the Diocesan Office will request from the Rector, Interim Priest, Priest in Charge, or Senior Warden information regarding the proposed schedule for the Visitation, and those to be Baptized, Confirmed, Received, or Reaffirmed (as applicable).
2. The Bishop will seek to comply with all requests, but no publicized plans can be announced until the Bishop approves the proposed schedule.
3. The Bishop requests, that if all possible, there be only one liturgy on the day of his visitation.
4. In addition to the liturgy, his Visitation normally includes two meetings, one with the Rector, Interim Priest, or Priest in Charge and one with the Vestry. The meeting times will be set when the Visitation schedule is reviewed and approved by the Bishop.
5. On the Visitation Form sent from the Bishop's Office, the Rector, Interim Priest, or Priest in Charge should propose the liturgy schedule and the times for the required meetings. This form should be returned to the Bishop's office 30 days prior to his Visitation.
6. Despite the traditional term used, the Bishop is not a visitor in any church in the Diocese. He is the Chief Pastor, so when publicly addressing the congregation in his presence, please do not "welcome" him to the church.
7. A copy of the Order of Service should be sent to the Bishop at least one week prior to the Visitation.

Special Offerings

The Canons of the Diocese call for three special offerings during the year:

1. At the Bishop's Visitation, the undesignated offering goes to the Bishop to assist in furthering God's mission in the Diocese through his office;
2. On the Sunday before or after Thanksgiving Day an offering is taken for Episcopal Youth and Children Services; and,
3. On a Sunday in April or May an offering is taken for the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.
4. Provision is made in the Canons for the EYCS and Sewanee offerings to be made through budget line items rather than a special offering. All such offerings are sent to the Diocesan Office.

Congregational Records

The Diocesan Canons place the responsibility for preserving parish records with the Rector, Interim Priest, or Priest in Charge and the Wardens. This includes all official records of the church together with any other documents of historic interest. The Priest and Wardens of a congregation should institute and then follow a plan to preserve and retain such items as the Parish Register and vestry minutes.

Non-Episcopal Clergy Serving in Weddings and Funerals

The pastoral issues surrounding weddings and funerals make it appropriate at times to have clergy from other denominations involved in the liturgy. Priests may use their discretion and invite other clergy to participate in these liturgies as the Priest sees appropriate. Priests are never required to issue such invitations. Non-Episcopal clergy participating in such services may wear the vestments customary to their tradition and may participate in the service, but not preside or bless. (ELCA clergy are excepted since they share Full Communion with us).

“Anglican” Groups not part of The Episcopal Church.

1. As these groups are not in communion with The Episcopal Church and their clergy are not licensed in this Diocese, no priests from these groups may preside at any service of worship in any congregation of the Diocese. They may, however, be treated equally to clergy described in the previous section on “Non-Episcopal Clergy.” In all cases, because of the tensions present, the Bishop requires his prior consent before any invitations can be made.
2. Priests of this Diocese may not liturgically participate in any service held in or by these congregations without written permission from the Bishop.
3. Attendance in the congregation during a liturgy, but not vesting and functioning as clergy, requires no such permission.
4. Priests of this Diocese may participate in ecumenical services in a community where there is broad participation from other denominations, including an Anglican congregation.

Pastoral Care Ethics

1. Priests should not claim directly, or by implication, any pastoral or professional qualifications that exceed their actual qualifications or abilities. They should make appropriate referrals for matters that go beyond moral, spiritual, or religious guidance or whenever the needs of parishioners exceed those that can be competently handled by the Priest.
2. When hearing the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, the Priest Confessor must not disclose the content of what is confessed by the Penitent. This is a moral absolute. If the Penitent, however, confesses to child sexual abuse, the Priest Confessor should withhold absolution until the Penitent notifies the authorities.
3. Priests should treat all pastoral conversations as confidential. If, however, persons disclose intentions to harm themselves or others, Priests should report such disclosures as appropriate.

4. Priests must comply with the Canons and with Diocesan Policy regarding sexual misconduct including the requirement to report alleged misconduct to the Diocese and, if it involves minors, to the authorities.

Worship

1. The 1979 Book of Common Prayer is the standard for worship in The Episcopal Church. A Rector, Interim Priest, or Priest in Charge must receive the Bishop's permission before using other worship resources.
2. A Rector, Interim Priest, or Priest in Charge may use rites from prayer books of other churches in the Anglican Communion provided those rites are not used at principal Sunday services.
3. Congregations seeking to use the 1928 Prayer Book for a principal Sunday service may request permission from the Bishop explaining how use of the 1928 Prayer Book fits with the goals of the congregation in spreading the Gospel in their community.
4. Congregations seeking to use rites found in *Enriching Our Worship* and in the Expansive Rite 2 liturgies approved at General Convention 2018 for a principal Sunday service may request permission from the Bishop explaining how use of these rites fits with the goals of the congregation in spreading the Gospel in their community.
5. If a congregation chooses to print the liturgy from the Book of Common Prayer in booklet form each Sunday, they have permission to change pronouns for gender inclusivity (e.g., in the Sursum Corda using “it is right to give God thanks and praise” rather than “it is right to give him thanks and praise), but such changes are limited to pronouns used for God or humans.
6. A Rector, Interim Priest, or Priest in Charge may not change a Prayer Book rite substantively by adding or deleting words in the rite or by changing the rite in other ways (e.g., changing the Triune formula of “Father, Son, & Holy Spirit” to “Creator, Redeemer, & Sanctifier”).
7. General Convention in 2015 made a liturgical provision that reads: *a bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority may authorize a congregation to use “An Order for Celebrating the Holy Eucharist” (BCP pp. 400-405) at a principal Sunday or weekly celebration of the Holy Eucharist, if the Eucharistic Prayer is written and submitted in advance of its use to the Bishop.* If Rectors, Interim Priests, or Priests in Charge wish to seek such permission, then they must submit to the Bishop a copy of the proposed liturgy, an *apologia* for why deviating from the Eucharistic Prayers found in the Book of Common Prayer is a faithful mission strategy for their context, and a statement from the Vestry endorsing the proposed change. After reviewing the submitted materials, the Bishop will consult with the Rector, Interim Priest, or Priest in Charge in question, and then decide for or against the proposal’s use in the congregation.