



The Episcopal Diocese of Georgia Policy Manual

Revised October 2020

*The policies supplement the policies established in the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church,
the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia, and its Diocesan Convention and Council.*

These other policy manuals are also available on the Diocesan website:

- Bishop's Customaries (Ordinations & Visitations)
- Clergy Handbook (for all matters related to clergy serving in the Diocese)
- Discernment Handbook (the process of discerning Ordination in the Church)
- Transition Handbook (for congregations during clergy transitions)
- Diocesan Constitution & Canons
- Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church

Diocesan Lay Employees

The Diocesan Convention adopts an annual budget that sets salaries for all diocesan lay employees based on the recommendation of the Bishop, Diocesan Council, and the Finance Committee. Benefits provided lay employees are:

- *Group Medical Insurance* – The Diocese pays the premiums for lay full-time employees at the same rate as for clergy full-time employees.
- *Life Insurance* – The Diocese pays the premium for a \$30,000 term life policy for all full-time lay employees.
- *Pension* - The Diocese provides a 10% contribution annually to the defined contribution lay pension plan in compliance with 403(b) of the IRS.
- *Vacation* – Full time employees are entitled to paid vacation as follows: Two weeks during the first four years; three weeks through the ninth year; four weeks beginning in the tenth year. The Bishop may increase vacation benefits as part of his annual Letter of Agreement with each staff person.
- *Parental Leave* - See below.
- *Other Paid Absences* – The Diocese permits an employee up to ten days paid absence for illness or a family death or crisis.

Licensed Lay Ministers

The Bishop authorizes the following Lay Minister licenses. All licensees are authorized to serve under the direction of a member of the Clergy:

- *Pastoral Leader* – exercises pastoral or administrative responsibility in a congregation under special circumstances defined by the Bishop.
- *Worship Leader* – regularly leads public worship.
- *Preacher* – preaches in congregations.
- *Eucharistic Minister* – administers the sacrament at the Holy Eucharist.
- *Eucharistic Visitor* – takes the sacrament following the Holy Eucharist to those who for reason of illness or infirmity were unable to attend the Celebration.
- *Evangelist* – proclaims the Gospel in a ministry under the direction of the Bishop.
- *Catechist* – prepares candidates for Baptism, Confirmation, or Reception.

Remarriage in the Church after divorce

The Bishop's policy is on the Diocesan website and is congruent with the Church's Canons.

Convocations

The Diocese is divided into six convocations. The Bishop appoints a Dean in each convocation and they have no term limit. Diocesan canons specify that Convocation Councils meet at least annually. Each Convocation has three representatives on the Diocesan Council: One clergy and two laity. One member is elected at Convocation Council annually for a three-year term.

Parish Register

It is the responsibility of the Rector/Priest in Charge (or absent one, the Senior Warden) to maintain it accurately. All entries must be in ink.

Parochial Reports

Parochial reports are canonically required to be submitted no later than March 1 following the close of the calendar year. Instructions and further information on the parochial report may be found at

<https://reports.dfms.org/>

Clergy Compensation Reports

Before the first day of the calendar year, vestries must submit a report to the Diocese the compensation for their clergy and lay employees for the coming year.

List of Congregational Officers

The Diocesan office maintains a list of parish elected and appointed officers. Congregations are required to send to the Diocese the names and contact information of all their elected and appointed officers as they change each year.

Delegates to Diocesan Convention

Diocesan Canons specify that lay delegates and alternates to Diocesan Convention shall be elected no later than September 15 following the adjournment of the previous convention and the Secretary of Convention notified of the election no later than October 1 following adjournment of the previous convention. Those elected comprise part of the local Convocation Council and assume this responsibility as well.

Episcopal Visitations

The Bishop's visitation schedule provides for his pastoral visitation to each congregation. About three weeks prior to his visitation the Rector/Priest in Charge (when none, then the Senior Warden) will receive a letter outlining the schedule. The form enclosed should be completed and returned to the diocesan office promptly so that the Bishop may complete his plans. His visitation liturgy will conform to his Customary found on the Diocesan website.

Calls and Vacancies

The Bishop must be advised when a priest is being considered for a call to a parish. A priest leaving a parish should give at least 30 days' notice. The priest should advise the Vestry of canonical procedures and should not attempt to influence the selection of a successor. No Vestry will issue a call without the Bishop's approval of the candidate.

Special Offerings

Diocesan Canon II.10 specifies that special offerings shall be taken at certain times of the year for the following:

- *Bishop's Visitation* – The undesignated offerings shall go to the Bishop's Fund. The clergy should announce this during the Visitation.
- *Episcopal Youth and Children's Services* (EYCS) – A special offering on the Sunday immediately preceding or following Thanksgiving Day.
- *The University of the South* – A special offering shall be taken on a Sunday in April or May for the University of the South.
- *Episcopal Relief and Development* (ERD) – One Sunday/year is designated as "ERD Sunday" and a special offering is taken on that designated Sunday.

Diocesan Canons allow congregations to budget support for EYCS and the University of the South in lieu of special offerings.

Audit Procedures

Diocesan Canons specify that all receipts, expenditures or investments by all congregations, including guilds and groups within the congregation, and church organizations be audited and certified by a CPA or an audit committee authorized by the vestry in accordance with Diocesan Canons. A report of the completion of a parish audit must be submitted annually to the diocesan office by September 1.

Fidelity Bond

The Diocese pays for and maintains a master fidelity bond through the Church Insurance Corporation that covers all parishes and diocesan organizations. All persons in an organization with gross receipts of more than \$25,000 are bonded in the amount of \$25,000. Additional coverage is available at the congregation's expense through Church Insurance.

Denominational Health Plan

The Diocese through the Episcopal Church Medical Trust maintains a group medical insurance program for stipendiary clergy, their families, full-time lay employees, and some retired clergy. Congregations pay for this medical insurance. The Diocese pays the premiums for diocesan staff. Congregations with priests or lay employees serving at least 30 hours/week are required to offer 100% insurance coverage of the plan approved by Diocesan Council unless the priest or lay employee has coverage through a spouse or an existing retirement plan. If a higher cost plan is desired, then the Vestry and the Priest may negotiate that.

Family Leave Policy

A member of the clergy or full-time lay employee who has been employed by the church for at least one full year and is the designated "primary child-care parent" is entitled to leave for the birth or adoption of a child for a minimum of eight weeks with pay. Up to eight additional weeks may be taken without pay. The member of the clergy or full-time lay employee may elect to use vacation leave or sick leave during this latter period.

Coverage under benefits will continue during Parental Leave as set by Letters of Agreement, such as, but not limited to health insurance.

A member of the clergy or full-time lay employee who has been employed by the church for at least one full year and is the "non-primary-care parent" is entitled to leave for the birth or adoption of a child for a minimum of two weeks with pay and up to ten additional weeks without pay.

A member of the clergy or full-time lay employee employed by the church for less than one full year is entitled to the same number of weeks leave. Pay during this period is negotiated between the church and the member of the clergy or full-time lay employee.

Upon return from Parental Leave, an employee will be restored to his or her prior position, or to a position with equivalent pay, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment, provided that an employee has no greater right to reinstatement or to other benefits and conditions of employment than if the employee had been continuously employed during Leave period, such as, but not limited to lay-off, restructuring or conduct subject to disciplinary action.

Worker's Compensation

Each parish paying a salary or wages to three or more employees (including stipendiary clergy) must have Worker's Compensation Insurance by Georgia state law. The Diocese maintains a master Worker's Compensation Policy through the Church Insurance Corporation. Each parish is covered under this master policy as it pays its premium directly to the Church Insurance Corporation.

Travel Expenses

The Diocese reimburses travel expenses at current IRS rates for laity and non-stipendiary clergy when traveling beyond 50 miles from home to serve a diocesan ministry. When traveling for a Diocesan ministry, the Diocese reimburses individuals for their lodging, as requested, and for meals at a rate

reasonable for the context. During the triennium preceding General Convention, Diocesan Convention escrows a designated amount in the annual budget to assist our diocesan deputation with their General Convention expenses.

The Board of the Corporation

The Diocese established a corporate entity: “The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Georgia, Inc.” Its purpose is to administer funds placed in trust for the benefit of the Diocese and its congregations. The Corporation’s Officers consist of the Bishop and seven lay members elected by Diocesan Convention. The Diocesan Canons and the by-laws of the Corporation set forth the method of election and the responsibilities of the Officers. Officers report directly to the Diocesan Convention and exercise corporate power under its charter. The Diocese publishes the list of funds with a description of their purpose. All diocesan congregations and organizations can invest their funds with the Corporation.

Alienation or Encumbrance of Property

The Canons require the consent of the Bishop and Standing Committee for any congregation to alienate or encumber property owned by the Diocese or any congregation. Diocesan Canons require the approval of the Bishop and Standing Committee when a parish desires to incur indebtedness exceeding 150% of its average annual receipts of the previous three years. In the alienation of property, approval will not normally be given for a sale where any part of the sale’s proceeds is for a purpose that is a normal part of the operating budget. Prior to the Standing Committee receiving an application, the Bishop must receive a report containing:

- A map showing the exact dimensions of the property, its relation to other church- owned property; major, or satellite, business districts, together with some note of the surrounding land use (residential, industrial, commercial);
- Reasons and benefits for encumbering or alienating the property.
- Where permission to encumber is sought, the following must be submitted with the application: (1) Present communicant strength and growth trends; (2) Copy of the annual budget for the current and previous year; (3) Plan for repayment of the loan; (4) List of other encumbrances, their terms, and the total amount for which congregation is responsible.

The Standing Committee normally meets three times per year: in January, after Easter, and in the fall. It meets at other times as needed.

Alcohol use in the Diocese

1. The Church seeks to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all people, including people in recovery from substance abuse and addiction.
2. All applicable federal, state and local laws shall be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
3. Some congregations may decide not to serve alcohol at events or gatherings. Others may decide to permit the responsible use of alcoholic beverages at church-sponsored events.
4. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such. Food prepared with alcohol does not need to be labeled provided the alcohol is completely evaporated by the cooking process; however, it is recommended that even in this case the use of alcohol in cooking be noted on a label.
5. Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.
6. The serving of alcoholic beverages at church events should not be publicized as an attraction of the event, e.g. “wine and cheese reception,” “cocktail party,” and “beer and wine tasting.”
7. Ministries inside or outside of congregations will make certain that alcohol consumption is not the focus of the ministry and that drinking alcohol is not an exclusively normative activity.
8. Food must be served when alcohol is available for consumption.

9. Reasonable measures shall be taken to prevent service of alcohol to persons who are visibly intoxicated and to prevent any such persons from leaving the premises while operating a motor vehicle including such measures as providing transportation home.
10. Whenever alcohol is served, those persons having oversight of the event must appoint an adult to oversee its serving. That adult must not drink alcoholic beverages during the time of his or her execution of his or her responsibilities.
11. No distilled spirits shall be served on church property, except at non-church events for which caterers have obtained the required license to serve distilled spirits. If the church owns a rectory or vicarage, then this does not apply to that dwelling.
12. Serving alcoholic beverages at congregational events where minors are present is discouraged. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.
13. Groups or organizations sponsoring any activity or event on church property at which alcoholic beverages are served must have permission from the clergy or the vestry. Such groups or organizations are responsible for compliance with this policy.
14. Alcoholic beverages shall not be served when the business of the Church is being conducted.
15. Clergy shall consecrate an appropriate amount of wine when celebrating the Eucharist and perform ablutions in a way that does not foster or model misuse.
16. Clergy are encouraged to acknowledge the efficacy of receiving the sacrament in one kind and consider providing non-alcoholic wine when appropriate to the liturgy, such as a 12-Step Eucharist.

This policy is not intended to create any duties owed to third parties or to represent any standard of care, but reflects this diocese's concern for the spiritual health and welfare of our communities.

Honey Creek Retreat Center

The Diocese owns and operates a camp & retreat center located in Camden County. An Executive Director, who serves on the Bishop's staff, oversees operations. Facilities are available for conferences, workshops, parish or vestry weekends, retreats, and family recreation. During the summer the facilities are used for a summer camping program for diocesan youth.

Clergy Cottage

The Diocese owns a cottage in Saluda, North Carolina. Clergy have priority in reserving it, but lay employees may also use the cottage. It is available only from May through October. Linens are not furnished. Occupancy is normally on a weekly basis, beginning on Saturday afternoon and ending Saturday morning. Occupants will maintain the cleanliness of the house. Contact the Diocesan office to arrange for the rental of the cottage. An online calendar is kept so prospective renters can know when it is available.

Diocesan Office Holidays

The Diocesan Office will be closed on these holidays:

New Year's Eve & Day

Easter Monday

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Memorial Day

President's Day

Independence Day

Good Friday

Labor Day

Veteran's Day

Thanksgiving (Wednesday - Friday)

Christmas Eve & Day
St Stephen's Day
St Patrick's Day