

# Constitution of the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee (2026)

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# CONSTITUTION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WEST TENNESSEE (2026)

## PREAMBLE

*(Note: Capitalized terms in this Constitution shall have the same meanings as defined in Preamble A of the Canons of The Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee.)*

The Clergy and laity of The Episcopal Church in that portion of the State of Tennessee lying west of the Tennessee River and including all of Hardin County, for the purpose of promoting the cause of religion and piety, establishing order and securing for themselves and posterity the advantages of the ministry and ordinances of the Church, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

## ARTICLE I.

The Diocese shall be known by the name of THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WEST TENNESSEE.

## ARTICLE II.

The Diocese accedes to The Episcopal Church, its Constitution and Canons. If there is any conflict between the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese, the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church shall prevail.

## ARTICLE III.

Sec. 1. A Convention of the Diocese shall be held annually, at such time and place as the last regular preceding Convention may appoint. The Bishop, or if there be no Bishop, the Standing Committee, for any good or urgent cause moving thereto, may change the time and place appointed.

Sec. 2. Special meetings of the Convention, when necessary, may be called by the Ecclesiastical Authority. At least thirty (30) days' notice shall be given of the time and place of such meeting to all the Clergy entitled to seats and to all Faith Communities entitled to representation. No business shall be transacted other than that for which such Convention was called.

## ARTICLE IV.

The Convention shall be composed of the Clergy and Lay Delegates, constituting one deliberative body. All Clergy canonically resident of this Diocese and all Lay Delegates shall be entitled to seats and votes at each Convention. Each Faith Community in good standing with this Diocese shall be entitled to representation in the Convention by Lay Delegates in such numbers as shall be prescribed by Canon; provided, no Clergy under Sentence, Pastoral Direction, restriction of ministry or Administrative Leave as defined in the Canons of The Episcopal Church shall be entitled to a seat in any Convention.

## ARTICLE V.

One-third of all Clergy canonically resident and physically resident within this Diocese or within 30 miles of the border of this Diocese and one-third of all Lay Delegates entitled to seats and votes shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but a smaller number may adjourn.

## ARTICLE VI.

Except where otherwise required by this Constitution or unless three delegates from different Faith Communities regardless of order request a vote by orders, in all matters that shall come before the Convention, the concurrence of a majority of the Clergy and Lay Delegates shall give validity to any measure. In the event of a request for a vote by orders in accordance with the preceding sentence, a majority vote in each order is required to give validity to such measure.

## ARTICLE VII.

Sec. 1. The Bishop shall be *ex-officio* President of the Convention and may deliver sentiments on any subject after it has been discussed, and before any vote thereon.

Sec. 2. The Bishop Coadjutor, if there be one, shall be *ex-officio* Vice-President of the Convention, and, in case of the absence of the Bishop or inability to act by reason of any cause, the Vice-President shall exercise all the powers and be subject to all the limitations provided in Section 1 of this Article.

Sec. 3. The Bishop Suffragan, if there be one, shall be *ex-officio* Vice-President of the Convention (2nd Vice-President if there be a Bishop Coadjutor), and, if for any reason the Bishop and Bishop Coadjutor be unable to act, the Bishop Suffragan shall exercise all the powers subject to all the limitations set forth in Sections 1 and 2 of this Article.

Sec. 4. In case the Episcopate is vacant or no member thereof is able to act for any cause whatsoever, the Convention shall be called to order by the President of the Standing Committee, who shall appoint from the order of the Clergy an acting President, and the Convention shall be organized as provided by Canon.

## ARTICLE VIII.

A Secretary shall be nominated by the Bishop and shall be elected annually. The duties of the Secretary shall be as set forth in the Canons. A Treasurer shall be nominated by the Bishop and shall also be elected annually, whose duties shall be as set forth in the Canons.

## ARTICLE IX.

Sec. 1. The Annual Convention shall elect a Standing Committee consisting of the number of persons set forth in the Canons, with equal number of (a) Clergy, the majority of whom shall be Priests, and all of whom are active, as defined under the rules of the Church Pension Fund, and have been canonically resident in the Diocese for at least one year, and (b) lay persons who are Confirmed Communicants in Good Standing in the Diocese, eighteen years of age or older and who have been resident in the Diocese for at least one year.

Sec. 2. Not more than one Clergy and one lay person from the same Faith Community shall be eligible to serve on the Standing Committee at the same time.

Sec. 3. The terms of office of members and their duties shall be prescribed by Canon.

## ARTICLE X.

Sec. 1. Each Parish in union with The Diocese shall elect a Vestry, whose members shall be Confirmed Communicants in Good Standing of the Parish eighteen (18) years of age or older. The time and manner of such election, and the number of Vestry members shall be prescribed by Canon.

Sec. 2. The Vestry shall elect two Wardens out of their own body; and they shall elect a Clerk or Secretary, a Treasurer, and delegates to the Annual Convention, each of whom shall be Confirmed Communicants in Good Standing of the Parish and eighteen (18) years of age or older; and who shall

exercise all other powers vested in them by the usages of the Church; and they shall continue in office until a new Vestry is chosen.

#### ARTICLE XI.

The election of a Bishop of this Diocese shall be by a concurrent vote of the Clergy and laity in Convention assembled. The vote shall be taken by orders, and a majority vote in each order on the same ballot shall be necessary for the election of a Bishop. Immediately after an election the Convention shall proceed to sign the testimonials. The process for the election of a Bishop shall be prescribed by Canon.

#### ARTICLE XII.

Any proposition for the alteration and amendment of this Constitution must be made in writing and assented to by a majority of the delegates. It shall then lie over for consideration until the next Convention, and shall require for its adoption the vote of two-thirds of the delegates present. Any amendment to this Constitution shall become effective at 12:01 am on January 1 following the adjournment of the Convention at which the final vote on the amendment is taken.

*Amendments effective January 1, 2024*