

Congregational Status Proposed Legislation

Proposed Amendments to Existing Canons:

Proposed Amendment to Canon 12:

CANON 12: Special Congregations or Ministries

Add a new Section 3.

A special congregation may be formed by application to the Ecclesiastical Authority by (i) a priest designated by the Bishop to be the church planter of a new congregation, (ii) a sponsoring congregation, (iii) a Region, or (iv) a group of at least twenty adults committed to the special congregation. The application shall address (i) a strategy for evangelism and growth, (ii) the financial means to support that strategy, (iii) a mechanism for accountability and supervision, and (iv) a financial contribution to the Diocese and Region to support the ministry of the wider Church.

Rationale:

Adding this section to the diocesan canons clarifies the way in which a special congregation is formed in such a way that this canon becomes the provision under which new congregations are established. This addition to Canon 12 is recommended by the Mission Strategy Committee to establish an effective strategy for planting new congregations that is consistent with current research for congregational growth and development. Under this new provision, mission status becomes the second step in the development of a congregation's life rather than the primary canonical provision under which new congregations are established.

This addition to Canon 12 has no fiscal impact on the operating budget of The Office of the Bishop.

Proposed Amendment to Canon 13:

CANON 13: Missions

Amend Section 4.

Section 4. The Ecclesiastical Authority shall select and appoint annually the lay members of the bishop's committee in each diocesan mission, either in its own discretion or upon the request and recommendation of the members of the diocesan mission. The bishop's committee shall consist of the vicar of the mission, the bishop's warden, and no fewer than three adult communicants in good standing of the mission. The vicar shall serve as chairperson of the bishop's committee. ~~The treasurer of the mission shall provide quarterly income and expense statements for the diocesan mission to the Regional Missioners.~~ The treasurer of the mission shall provide quarterly

income and expense statements for the mission to the controller or chief financial officer of the diocese.

Rationale:

Under current diocesan canons, quarterly income and expense for mission congregations are to be sent to Regional Missioners. This function is no longer in the position description for Regional Missioners.

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Replace Section 5.

~~Section 5. Any ten adult communicants may apply to the Ecclesiastical Authority to organize a diocesan mission. The Ecclesiastical Authority may consent to such organization after consultation with the Regional Missioners and the Diocesan Standing Committee.~~

Section 5. A special congregation may apply to the Ecclesiastical Authority for mission status with a detailed mission development plan that addresses (i) a strategy for evangelism and growth, (ii) the financial means to support that strategy, (iii) ministry development and leadership goals, (iv) the provision of facilities for worship, and (v) a financial pledge to the Diocese and Region that supports the ministry of the wider Church and that reflects a commitment to meet the requirements set forth in these canons. The Ecclesiastical Authority may grant mission status to a special congregation after consultation with the Canon Missioner and the Standing Committee.

Rationale:

Under current diocesan canons, mission status is understood to be the primary canonical provision under which new congregations are planted. With the revision of Canon 12 “Special Congregations and Ministries” (see above), mission status becomes the second step in the development of a congregation’s life rather than the primary provision for establishing new churches. Additionally, the revision of this canon clarifies the criteria by which mission status is granted. These criteria reflect current research for congregational growth and development and are recommended by the Mission Strategy Committee in order to establish a clear canonical framework for building healthy and vital congregations.

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Amend Section 6.

Section 6. Any parish may apply to organize a parochial mission or to transfer a diocesan mission to parochial mission status. The Ecclesiastical Authority may consent to such organization or transfer after consultation with the ~~Regional Missioners~~ Canon Missioner and the Diocesan Standing Committee. The vestry of a parish wishing to organize a parochial mission or transfer a diocesan mission to its jurisdiction shall include in its application an agreement to underwrite any and all of the mission’s

financial obligations. The vicar of such parochial mission shall be the representative of the rector of the responsible parish.

Rationale:

The responsibilities described in Sections 6 of this canon are no longer in the position description for Regional Missioners and have become the responsibilities of the Canon Missioner.

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Amend Section 7.

Section 7. Parish status for missions shall be granted only by the Ecclesiastical Authority, acting with the advice and consent of the ~~Regional Missioners~~ Canon Missioner and the Diocesan Standing Committee.

Rationale:

The responsibilities described in Sections 6 of this canon are no longer in the position description for Regional Missioners and have become the responsibilities of the Canon Missioner.

These revisions to Canon 13 have no fiscal impact on the operating budget of The Office of the Bishop.

Proposed Amendment to Canon 14:

CANON 14: Parishes

Amend Section 1.

Section 1. Every parish in this diocese shall be organized from a mission. Every parish in this diocese shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Colorado as a non-profit corporation. The articles of incorporation of each parish shall accede to the Constitution and Canons for the Government of the Episcopal Church and to these canons and the constitution of this diocese and shall be approved by the Ecclesiastical Authority and by the chancellor or a vice-chancellor. ~~Every mission which applies for parish status must be able to demonstrate its ability to provide and maintain permanent facilities for worship and demonstrate a record of giving to this diocese which meets the requirements set forth in these canons.~~ Every mission that applies for parish status must be financially self-sustaining and be able to demonstrate (i) the ability to provide and maintain permanent facilities for worship, (ii) the ability to support a rector at the minimum level set forth in the diocesan clergy compensation guidelines, and (iii) a record of giving financial support to the Diocese and Region that meets the requirements set forth in these canons.

Rationale:

The purpose of this amendment is to more clearly delineate the distinction between parish and mission status, specifically by requiring parishes to be financially self-sustaining.

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Add a new Section 6 before current Section 6 (which would become Section 7).

Section 6. In the event a parish experiences a decline in average Sunday attendance of twenty percent or more over a three-year period, or is unable to substantially perform its fiscal responsibilities over the course of one year, including, but not limited to, (i) the ability to pay the rector's compensation, (ii) the ability to pay the rector's pension, or (iii) the ability to pay the mortgage, the rent, or any outstanding debts, then the Ecclesiastical Authority, with the advice of the Canon Missioner and the Standing Committee, may place the parish in "Imperiled Parish Status."

When a parish is placed in Imperiled Parish Status, the parish, at the direction of the Ecclesiastical Authority, shall undertake an assessment process to discern an appropriate course of action, including, but not limited to, (i) intentional redevelopment, (ii) relocation, (iii) merging or partnering, or (iv) closing. The Ecclesiastical Authority may identify a consultant to work with the congregation during the assessment process and may take whatever actions the Ecclesiastical Authority deems reasonably appropriate in response to such an assessment.

The Ecclesiastical Authority may, when agreed upon conditions are met, restore the congregation to parish status.

Rationale:

With the revision of Canon 14, Section 1 (proposed above) that defines parishes as financially self-sustaining, there is no canonical provision by which a parish in need can receive aid without dissolving as a parish and reapplying to the Ecclesiastical Authority for mission status. By adding this section to the diocesan canons, a mechanism is created by which congregations in need, or in decline, can receive the support and aid that is necessary to effectively assess their viability and to determine their ability to enter into an intentional process of redevelopment.

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Keep current Section 6 as is, but renumber it as Section 7 to follow proposed new Section 6.

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Current Section 7: Renumber per changes of sections above and amend the section.

Section 8. The Ecclesiastical Authority, with the advice and consent of the ~~Regional Missioners~~ Canon Missioner and the Diocesan Standing Committee, may merge two or more parishes into a single parish upon terms satisfactory to the vestries

of such parishes. Title to the real property of such merged parishes shall vest in the parish resulting from such merger when and only when the resulting parish is incorporated.

Rationale:

The responsibilities described in Section 7 of this canon are no longer in the position description for Regional Missioners and have become the responsibilities of the Canon Missioner.

The revisions of and addition to Canon 14 have no fiscal impact on the operating budget of The Office of the Bishop.

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