

# Guidelines for Delegates to Diocesan Convention

*with excerpts from the  
Constitution & Canons*



*Answering God's urgent call*  
**TOGETHER**

— INVITING, FORMING, SENDING, SERVING —  
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS —



## **Guidelines for Diocesan Convention Delegates**

The Diocesan Convention is the primary representative governing body of the diocese. It convenes annually in November, usually on the first weekend, to conduct diocesan business, including election of officers and members of various leadership bodies; approval of a budget for the upcoming year; setting mission strategy; and establishing diocesan policy and procedure by considering and voting on resolutions and approving changes to the diocesan constitution and canons. It is also an occasion for communication and teaching from the bishops; learning about and participating in shared mission and ministry; fellowship, community building and common prayer; and celebration of the Holy Eucharist together as a diocesan community.

A smaller representative body, the Diocesan Council, meets regularly throughout the year to oversee and conduct diocesan business in between annual Diocesan Conventions.

The bishops, all clergy who are canonically resident in the diocese and two lay persons elected as delegates from each parish and mission in union with the diocese have seat, voice and vote at Diocesan Convention. Lay members of Diocesan Council also have seat, voice and vote in our Diocesan Convention, as do Diocesan Youth Council members who are age 16 or older. Lay members of Standing Committee have seat and voice.

Very occasionally a special session of Diocesan Convention is called in addition to the annual session for a specific purpose, such as the election of a new bishop.

Everyone participates in the worship, ministry, leadership and governance of the Episcopal Church. Delegates to Diocesan Convention play an important leadership role as they not only represent to the wider church the particular character of God's mission as it is expressed in their local contexts, but also connect their local congregations with the wider church. Diocesan Convention is one way of gathering as a church and then being sent out to be that church in the world, answering God's urgent call, together.

### ***Ways to prepare, participate and share:***

Study resolutions and other materials, including the proposed diocesan budget and nominations for various diocesan offices. These materials are mailed from the diocesan Office of Convention and Council to all clergy and delegates in early October. They are also posted at [www.diomass.org/content/convention](http://www.diomass.org/content/convention).

Attend the regional pre-convention forums in October. These offer an important opportunity for learning and discussion about the issues and business to come before the convention, including resolutions and the proposed budget. Solicit feedback from your congregation to inform your voting.

Attend the convention in its entirety. Come prepared to vote on the diocesan budget, nominations for various diocesan offices, resolutions and other such business of the diocese which is presented at convention. Speak when so moved.

Give a report on Diocesan Convention to your congregation. Share with your congregation the actions taken by Diocesan Convention, as well as the spirit and message of the gathering and something of your experience of it. Communication with your congregation before and after the Diocesan Convention is critical to representative and transparent governance, and it helps strengthen the community and mission we share as the Episcopal Church in eastern Massachusetts.

*Excerpts from the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Massachusetts pertaining to delegates to Diocesan Convention, together with the Rules of Order for Convention (as of November 2011) follow.*

**From THE CONSTITUTION**

Article 2

(Revised November 17, 1984, November 2-3, 1990, November 6-7, 1998,  
November 1-2, 2002, November 2-3, 2007 and November 7-8, 2008)

**THE CONVENTION**

Sec. 1. There shall be a Convention of the Diocese, consisting of the Bishops and other clergy and laity as set forth in this Article.

Sec. 2. The Bishops shall each have a seat and vote in the Convention. Subject to Sec. 4 of this Article, every cleric who is canonically resident in the Diocese and lay members of the Diocesan Council shall be entitled to a seat and vote in the Convention. Officers of the Corporation, other Members of the Diocesan Council, Diocesan Youth Council and the Standing Committee, and Presiding Officers of Diocesan Commissions and Committees shall be entitled to all the privileges of membership in the Convention, except the right to vote; provided that members of the Diocesan Youth Council of age 16 or older shall have the right to vote.

Sec. 3. Every parish and mission of the Diocese in union with the Convention shall be entitled to send two lay delegates to any session of the Convention. The lay delegates of each parish or mission shall take office upon being certified to the Secretary of the Diocese, shall have a seat and a vote in the Convention and shall remain in office until his or her or their successors are elected and so certified, all subject to the provisions hereof and of the Canons. Every summer chapel in union with the Convention shall be entitled to send to any session of the Convention two lay delegates who shall be entitled to a seat and voice, but no vote, in the Convention.

Sec. 4. The Convention shall be the final judge of the qualifications of its members; provided that no cleric under canonical sentence of suspension, and no laity repelled from the Holy Communion with the subsequent approval of the Bishop of the Diocese, shall be qualified for membership; and no person shall be qualified for membership as a lay delegate unless he or she be a baptized person and a member qualified to vote in the parish or mission which he or she represents. Constitution or bylaws of the parish or mission notwithstanding, men and/or women may be sent to the Convention as delegates.

Article 3

(Revised November 14, 1987)

**ANNUAL SESSIONS OF THE CONVENTION**

Sec. 1. There shall be an annual session of the Convention during the month of November on such date, in such place and at such hour as shall have been determined by the Bishop or, in case of a vacancy in the episcopate or disability of the Bishop, by the Standing Committee.

Sec. 2. For any sufficient cause, the Bishop or, in case of a vacancy in the episcopate or disability of the Bishop, the Standing Committee may change the time and place of such session; provided, that the time of session shall not be more than three months later or one month earlier than the stated time.

Sec. 3. Notice of such session, and of any such change in the time or place thereof, shall be sent by the Secretary to every cleric canonically resident in the Diocese, and to the lay delegates or clerk of every parish and mission in union with the Convention, at least two weeks previous to the time such session is to be held.

Article 4

**SPECIAL SESSIONS OF THE CONVENTION**

Sec. 1. Special sessions of the Convention may be called by the Bishop, the Diocesan Council or the Standing Committee.

Sec. 2. Notice of such session, stating the purpose or purposes for which it is called, shall be sent by the Secretary to every cleric canonically resident in the Diocese, and to the lay delegates or clerk of every parish and mission in

union with the Convention, at least two weeks, or such longer time as may be required by any provision hereof, previous to the time such session is to be held.

Sec. 3. No business shall be transacted at such special session, other than that stated in the notice thereof, except by a vote of at least two-thirds of each Order.

Article 10  
TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS

Sec. 1. In all matters which shall come before the Convention, the clergy and laity shall deliberate and shall vote as one body, except that, when a vote by Orders shall be called for by any nine lay delegates or by any three clerical members, or shall be required by the Constitution or Canons of the Diocese, the two Orders shall vote separately, the clergy by individuals and the laity by individuals, each lay delegate and each clerical member having one vote and no more, and the concurrence of a majority of each Order being necessary to constitute a decision except as herein otherwise expressly provided.

Sec. 2. The presence of a number of clergy equal to one-third of the clergy who are physically resident in the Diocese and not retired who are entitled to vote in the Convention, and of one-third of the total number of lay delegates by whom the parishes and missions are entitled to be represented in accordance with Article 2, Sec. 3 of this Constitution, shall be necessary for the transaction of business; but a smaller number may adjourn from time to time.

Article 18  
(Revised November 7-8, 2008 and November 6, 2010)  
AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

This Constitution may be amended only as follows: any proposed amendment, except those proposed by the Committee on Constitution and Canons, shall be sent to the Secretary of the Corporation at least eight weeks before the annual session of the Convention and he or she shall refer it at once to the Committee on Constitution and Canons. The Committee shall report its recommendations thereon, and any amendments recommended by it, to the Secretary of the Diocese at least four weeks before such session and she or he shall include such report with the reports of the other committees which are sent to the delegates to the Convention. Each such proposed amendment shall then be placed before such session of the Convention and if, in its original form or after revision, it is adopted by a majority vote of each Order, voting separately, it shall be placed before a subsequent session of the Convention; and if then, in the form previously adopted, it is again adopted by a majority vote of each Order, voting separately, it shall become effective at the adjournment of the current Diocesan Convention unless otherwise directed by Convention.

**From THE CANONS**  
Canon 2  
(Revised November 14, 1986 and November 4-5, 1994)  
THE DIOCESAN CONVENTION

Sec. 2. Lay Delegates The method of choosing lay delegates to the Convention shall be fixed by the bylaws or rules of the several parishes, missions and summer chapels. The evidence of appointment shall be a certificate, signed by a Warden or Clerk of the parish or mission, or by the Warden or Clerk of the summer chapel. Such certificate shall be in the form approved by the Secretary of the Diocese, and shall certify that the delegate has been duly appointed in accordance with the relevant bylaws or rules, and that she or he has the qualifications specified in Article 2, Sec. 4. of the Constitution of the Diocese. It should be filed with the Secretary promptly after the delegate is chosen, so that notices may be sent direct to him or her; and it shall in any event be so filed before he or she is admitted to a seat in the Convention. The rights of lay delegates are also subject to Canon 9, Sec. 4.

Sec. 3. Preliminary Notices and Reports It shall be the duty of the Secretary, in December of each year, to transmit by mail a copy of the blank form of Parochial Report to every cleric in charge of a parish, mission or summer chapel, or to the Wardens where there is no cleric in charge, and two copies thereof to the Treasurer of each parish, mission and summer chapel, and a blank form for her or his personal report to every cleric without cure, and to every cleric engaged in educational or other non-parochial work, with a request in each case that the report be filled in and presented to the Bishop before the first day of February. Concurrently with the mailing of said blank form of Parochial Report, the Secretary shall mail to the Clerk of each parish, mission and summer chapel

in union with the Convention a printed copy of Canon 2, Sec. 2., and a form for certifying the lay delegates with a request that such form be completed promptly after the meeting at which such delegates are elected, to show the names of the lay delegate or delegates elected thereat, and certified by the Clerk or Wardens of the parish, mission or summer chapel and presented to the Secretary within ten days after such election.

#### Sec. 4. Organization of Convention

(1) Prayer and Holy Communion Every Session of the Convention shall be opened with prayer. The Holy Communion shall be administered at the Convention.

(2) Absence of Bishops If the Bishop be not present, nor a Bishop Coadjutor, nor a Suffragan Bishop, at the appointed time and place for holding the Convention, the Secretary shall call the members present to order, and shall preside until a Presiding Officer is elected.

(3) Action When No Certificates Received The Secretary shall call the parishes, missions and summer chapels from which no certificates of lay delegates have been received and certificates may then be presented.

(4) Organization A quorum being present, the Bishop, if present, shall declare the Convention duly organized. If the Bishop be not present, nor a Bishop Coadjutor, nor a Suffragan Bishop, the Secretary shall direct that the members proceed to vote for a Presiding Officer as provided in Article 5 of the Constitution. The Presiding Officer thus elected shall declare the Convention organized for business.

### Canon 9

(Revised November 14, 1987, November 3-4, 1989, November 4-5, 1992,  
November 4-5, 1994, November 8, 1997 and November 5-6, 2004)

#### THE DIOCESAN ASSESSMENT

##### Sec. 1. Purpose

As the ministry of Christ was supported by those who followed Him, and as the early churches supported each other's ministries, so we are called to support the mission and ministry of His church at home and abroad. Part of our ministry takes place through the Diocese, which has financial obligations over and above the obligations of its member congregations and must provide a fund to defray these expenses. Each parish, mission and summer chapel in union with Convention is called dutifully to accept its share of the Diocesan expenses through an annual assessment. This canon sets forth the means by which these necessary costs may be apportioned among the parishes, missions and summer chapels in union with Convention.

##### Sec. 2. Preparation of the Assessment Formula

(f) The entire list of assessments shall be compiled and sent, not less than four weeks prior to the annual session of Convention, to each member of the congregationally-affiliated clergy, each congregation's treasurer, and to each delegate to the Convention. The Convention, without further referral to committee, shall proceed to take up the list of assessments and shall act upon the same.

Sec. 3. Payment of Assessment Said assessed amount shall be paid in no more than twelve (12) successive monthly installments, the first installment to be paid in January.

##### Sec. 4. Nonpayment of Assessment

(a) If any parish, mission, or summer chapel in union with Convention has not paid its full assessment by May 1 of the ensuing year, notice of such nonpayment shall be sent to the proper corporate authority of such congregation and to the Secretary of Convention.

(b) If a parish, mission or summer chapel is in default for two consecutive years, the Secretary, unless otherwise ordered by the Convention, shall omit the name(s) of the lay delegate(s) of such congregation from the voting list of the Convention.

(c) The congregational support services of the Bishop's Office shall be available to any parish, mission or summer chapel in union with Convention notwithstanding a default in its assessment.

Canon 10  
(Approved November 4-5, 1994)  
THE ALLOCATION OF DIOCESAN RESOURCES

Sec. 1. Purpose The Diocese allocates financial and other resources to provide support for Diocesan and congregational mission. The purpose of a Diocesan Mission Strategy and budget is to provide for the allocation of resources by the Convention, Diocesan Council and the Bishop.

Sec. 2. Mission Strategy

- (a) Diocesan Council and the Bishop shall prepare the Diocesan Mission Strategy for approval of the Convention.
- (b) The Diocesan Mission Strategy shall identify and prioritize all Diocesan programmatic and administrative activities in sufficient detail to guide the allocation of resources by the Convention, Diocesan Council and the Bishop.
- (c) The Diocesan Mission Strategy shall be distributed annually prior to Convention, in conjunction with the Diocesan budget and list of assessments.
- (d) The first Diocesan Mission Strategy shall be prepared and submitted not later than the 1996 Diocesan Convention. Thereafter, the Diocesan Mission Strategy shall be reviewed, amended and approved by Convention at least once every three years.

Sec. 3. The Diocesan Budget

- (c) The proposed budget shall be printed and sent, not less than four weeks prior to the annual session of Convention, to each member of the clergy, each congregation's treasurer, and to each delegate to the Convention. The Convention, without further reference to committee, shall consider and shall act on the same.
- (d) Diocesan Council may amend the budget between the sessions of Convention, provided that new expenses conform to the Diocesan Mission Strategy, and that specific sources of income are identified to provide for such expenses.

**RULES OF ORDER OF THE CONVENTION**

Rule I. When the Presiding Officer takes the chair, no member shall continue standing, or shall afterward stand up, except to address the chair.

No member shall absent himself or herself from the Convention, unless she or he has leave or be unable to attend. When any member is about to speak or deliver any matter to the Convention, he or she shall with due respect address herself or himself to the Presiding Officer, confining himself or herself strictly to the point in debate.

No member shall speak more than twice in the same debate without leave of the Convention, no more than once until others desiring to speak shall have spoken, but the mover of a resolution shall have the privilege of closing the debate.

While the Presiding Officer is putting any question, the members shall continue in their seats and shall not hold any private discourse. Every member who shall be in the Convention when any question is put, shall vote, unless she or he be personally interested in the question or be excused by the Convention for reasons assigned.

Rule II. No motion shall be considered as before the Convention unless seconded by a member not belonging to the same parish with the mover; and every motion shall, if required, be reduced to writing and the name of the mover appended.

Rule III. Subject to the provisions of Rule XVII hereof, when the report of a committee is presented it shall be read and entered on the minutes unless otherwise determined by the Convention; provided, however, that any person presenting such a report requiring more than five minutes in delivery may give a summary of it. If such a report is accompanied by resolutions, the question shall be on adopting them.

Rule IV. When a question is before the Convention, it shall be in order: (1) to lay on the table; (2) to postpone to a day certain; (3) to postpone indefinitely; (4) to limit debate by taking a vote at a time certain, or by determining the time allowed for each speech; (5) to commit; (6) to amend. Motions for any of these proceedings shall have precedence in the order in which they are here named, and a question on any of these shall be decided before the original motion.

Rule V. If the question under debate contains distinct propositions, the same shall be divided at the request of any member, and a vote taken separately, except that a motion to strike out and insert shall be indivisible.

Rule VI. All amendments shall be considered in the order in which they are moved. When a proposed amendment is under consideration, a motion to amend the same may be made. No after amendment to such second amendment shall be in order; but a substitute for the whole matter may be received. No proposition on a subject different from that under consideration shall be received under color of a substitute.

If a motion to lay an amendment on the table be carried, the matter before the Convention shall be proceeded with as if no such amendment had been offered.

With respect to amendments to budgets, additional funding of specific programs voted from the floor of the Convention shall be on the basis of new income allocated to the specific additional expense. Any person proposing additional program expenses must show evidence of the source of such funding.

Rule VII. A motion to lay upon the table shall be decided without debate.

Rule VIII. A motion to adjourn shall always be in order when no member is speaking, and if unqualified, shall be decided without debate.

Rule IX. The Presiding Officer shall decide all questions of order subject to an appeal to the Convention. The chair shall be sustained on an appeal from his or her decision thereon unless a plurality vote shall be cast against her or his ruling.

Rule X. Record shall be made upon the minutes of every motion or resolution which is put upon its passage, or upon which any action allowed by Rule IV shall have been taken; but, with the consent of the Convention, the mover may withdraw a motion or resolution at any time before such action has been taken, or it has been put upon its passage.

Rule XI. An address or communication from the Bishop shall be in order at any time.

Rule XII. A question having been decided shall not be reconsidered during the same session, without the consent of two-thirds of the members present, nor unless the motion to reconsider be made and seconded by members who voted in the majority on the original motion.

Rule XIII.

1. Nominations may be made, subject to the provisions of these Rules of Order, by individual members of the Convention or by the Diocesan Council acting as a nominating committee; and it shall be the duty of the Diocesan Council to see that there are nominations for all positions to be filled. Written notice of each nomination signed by seven members of the Convention or on behalf of the Diocesan Council by one of its officers and accompanied by a written statement of the occupation, residence and parish or mission of the nominee together with a further statement, if desired, of not over fifteen words concerning the nominee shall be delivered to the Secretary not less than eight weeks before the session, after which other nominations cannot be made except to fill vacancies for which there is then no valid nomination. The Secretary shall notify each nominee of his or her nomination. The name of each nominee who declines to accept shall be removed from the list of nominees.

Not less than four weeks before the Convention, the Secretary shall mail to all clergy and lay delegates entitled to vote at such session the list of the nominees for all positions to be filled, together with the statements which accompanied their respective nominations as provided above, provided that failure to comply with this requirement shall not invalidate any election. All voting shall take place at the Convention. The Secretary shall cause appropriate ballots to be prepared on which the names of the nominees for each position shall be listed in such manner as the Secretary shall determine. Upon registration each lay and clergy delegate shall receive a ballot which shall be returned to the Secretary of the Convention at the time specified on the ballot. The tally of ballots will begin as soon as practicable after said time. The results of the tally will be certified to the Bishop by the Committee on Elections immediately after the tally has been completed, and the Bishop shall announce the results in open Convention if the tally has been completed at the session, and shall transmit the same to the Secretary of the Corporation to become a part of its records.

None of the foregoing provisions of this Section 1 shall be applicable to the election of Bishops.



2. The conduct of elections by proportional representation shall be in accordance with the “Regulations for election by ballot with computer processing in the Diocese of Massachusetts (according to the Single Transferable Vote) as proposed in 1967,” which regulations are hereby incorporated in and made a part of this Rule of Order.

3. All elections other than elections by proportional representation shall be by ballot in accordance with the Australian method, and concurrence of both orders shall be necessary to elect. Persons nominated for any position for which alternates, however designated, are also to be elected shall be deemed nominated for such position and for the position of alternate.

Rule XIV. At the request of the Presiding Officer, or on motion, the Convention may resolve itself into a committee of the whole.

Rule XV. When the Convention is about to rise, every member shall keep his or her seat until the Presiding Officer leaves the chair.

Rule XVI. Proposed new standing resolutions or rules of order or proposed amendments to existing resolutions or rules, unless proposed by a committee, shall be referred to a committee before passage. For the suspension of any part of the standing order of business, or of any of the rules of order, the consent of two-thirds of the members present shall be necessary.

Rule XVII. The Diocesan Council, special committees appointed to report to a succeeding meeting of the Convention, and each department, board, committee or organization whose report is regularly included in the Convention Handbook shall, except as otherwise specifically provided, submit their reports to the Secretary at least eight weeks before the time of the meeting. Any such reports, or portions thereof, proposing amendments to the Constitution, Canons or rules of order shall be submitted immediately upon receipt thereof by the Secretary to the Committee on Constitution and Canons for consideration and inclusion of its recommendations thereon in its report. The Secretary shall cause all such reports to be printed and mailed to all clergy and lay delegates entitled to vote at the meeting not less than two weeks before the time of the meeting. All reports which have been so printed and distributed in advance may be presented to the meeting by title only, and not read.

Rule XVIII. Any person desiring to propose any resolution expressing the sentiment or views of the Convention on any matter not subject to its control, at any session of the Convention, shall submit the same in writing to the Secretary not less than eight weeks before such session, and he or she shall forward it immediately to the Committee on Resolutions. No such resolution, unless so submitted, or included in the report of a committee, shall be considered by the Convention; provided that this rule shall not prohibit consideration of resolutions designed to carry out any recommendation contained in the address of any Bishop before the Convention. Copies of such resolutions as originally submitted under the above provisions shall be mailed to all clergy and lay delegates, entitled to vote at the Convention, not less than four weeks before the meeting of the Convention.

Rule XIX. It shall be unnecessary to read to the Convention the minutes of its business sessions. Authority to approve them shall be vested in a committee to consist of the Chancellor of the Diocese, the Presiding Officer of the Committee on Constitution and Canons and the Presiding Officer of the Committee on Dispatch of Business, or the persons who perform their respective functions at such sessions if any of them is absent therefrom.

*[Rules of Order continue on next page]*

Rule XX. The Timetable of Closing Dates and Secretary's Mailings shall be as follows:

I. For Annual Sessions

16 weeks before annual session:

- Secretary mails copy of Canon 2, Sec. 2. and form of delegate certificate to parish clerks (Canon 2, Sec. 3.)
- Preliminary notice and list of places to be filled, to clergy and parish clerks (Canon 2, Sec. 3.)

8 weeks before annual session:

Closing date for filing:

- a. reports of committees (except Committee on Constitution and Canons), for publication (Rule XVII)
- b. proposed amendments of Constitution (Article 18)
- c. proposed amendments of Canons (Canon 21, Sec. 1.)
- d. application for admission into union (Article 13)
- e. resolutions (Rule XVIII)
- f. notice of nominations (Rule XIII)

4 weeks before annual session:

- (1) Closing date for report of Committee on Constitution and Canons for publication (Article 18; Canon 3, Sec. 5. (4); Canon 21, Sec. 1.; and Rule XVII)
- (2) Closing date for report of Committee on Dispatch of Business (Canon 3, Sec. 5. (1))
- (3) Secretary mails:
  - a. list of nominees (Rule XIII)
  - b. Report of Committee on Resolutions (Rule XVIII)
  - c. estimate of expenses (Canon 10, Sec. 3.)

2 weeks before annual session:

- (1) Bishop files list of clergy (Canon 1, Sec. 3.)
- (2) Secretary mails:
  - a. Handbook to clergy and delegates, containing:
    - formal notice (Article 3, Sec. 3.)
    - order of business (Canon 3, Sec. 5. (1))
    - committee reports (Rule XVII)

II. For Special Sessions

8 weeks before special session to elect a Bishop: Secretary mails notice to clergy and parish clerks or delegates (Article 11)

2 weeks before ordinary special session: Secretary mails copies of resolutions to clergy or delegates (Rule XVIII)

2 weeks before any special session:

- (1) Closing date for resolutions (Rule XVIII);
- (2) Bishop files list of clergy (Canon 1, Sec. 3.)



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