

## #4 Revise Canons to Amend Canons 13, 14, and 15, and add Canon 15A, as amended

SPONSOR: Canons Committee, Diocese of Vermont

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RESOLVED, That the 193<sup>rd</sup> (2025) Convention of the Diocese of Vermont amend Canons 13, 14, and 15, and add Canon 15A, to read as presented below the Explanation, the new text underlined and the deleted text overstruck; and be it further

RESOLVED, That in accordance with Canon 37, Section 2, these amendments will take effect upon adjournment of the October 30, 2025, Diocesan Convention.

**From**  
**CONSTITUTION AND CANONS**  
**OF THE DIOCESE OF VERMONT**

**As Most Recently Amended on November 14, 2024**

*[Click on the title above to link to the full Constitutions and Canons on the Diocese of Vermont website.]*

### TITLE III PARISHES AND MISSION CONGREGATIONS

#### CANON 13: ORGANIZATION OF PARISHES

1. For purposes of these Canons, a congregation engaged in the mission of God in the Church qualifies as a Parish by meeting the following criteria:
  - (a) It has been duly admitted to union with the Convention of the Diocese of Vermont by an act of a meeting of Convention.
  - (b) It has paid when due the Diocesan apportionments as assessed by Convention.
  - (c) It is keeping its real and personal property in good repair and is maintaining its Clergy in accordance with standards established by the General Convention and by Convention.
  - (d) It has met all of the signs of vitality listed in Canon 15.2.
2. A congregation meeting the above criteria may continue to qualify as a Parish even though it requests and receives grants-in-aid from the Diocese.
3. A congregation which desires to become a Parish in accordance with Article VI of the Diocesan Constitution shall, in its written application to the Bishop, set forth its ability to meet the requirements ~~criteria~~ of Section 1 of this Canon.
4. Every Parish shall meet on the second Monday in January of each year or on one of the ~~fifteen~~ thirty days following the second Monday, for the purpose of electing by ballot at least one third of the Vestry to serve for a term of three years. The meeting shall also elect Delegates and Alternate Delegates to the annual Convention or any Special Convention within their term of office. The election shall be by ballot in accordance with Canon 1, Section 4 of these Canons. One of the Delegates elected to the annual Convention shall be a member of the Vestry and, if possible, one of the Delegates shall have served as a Delegate at the previous annual Convention.

In the event that the annual meeting neglects or fails to elect a sufficient number of Delegates and Alternate Delegates to assure full representation at the Convention, or if full representation is unlikely because the ranks of the Delegates and Alternate Delegates are diminished by resignation, death or some other cause, then a special meeting of the Parish may elect a sufficient number of Delegates and Alternate Delegates to assure full representation at the Convention; provided, however, that any such meeting shall take place no later than ~~sixty~~thirty days prior to the opening date of the business session of the Convention.

5. The Annual Meeting shall receive the report of the Treasurer of the Parish and such other reports as it may call for, including audited financial reports of all Parish organizations.

6. Those persons who are entitled to vote in a Parish meeting are defined as follows: those persons who are communicants in good standing and are enrolled upon the canonical register of the Parish or Mission in which they habitually worship, even though the residence of such communicant may be outside the bounds of such Parish or Mission.

7. The Rector shall preside at this and every Parish Meeting. If there be no Rector, the Senior Warden shall preside; if the Senior Warden is absent, the meeting may elect one of its number to preside.

8. The Secretary of the Vestry shall transmit without delay to the Secretary of Convention the names of the Delegates and the Alternates elected by the Meeting to represent the Parish at the next Diocesan Convention.

9. If any Parish fails to elect a Vestry at the Annual Meeting, a Special Meeting of the Parish may be called for an election. Until that time, the previous Vestry shall continue in office until a new Vestry has been elected.

10. Notice of the Annual Meeting and of any Special Meeting of the Parish shall be given at the public services of the Church on two Sundays immediately preceding such meeting. If there be no regular service, notice of such meeting and its purpose shall be authorized by the written consent of the majority of the Vestry. Sufficient notice shall be given to all members of the Parish at least seven days before the date of such meeting.

#### CANON 14: CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF A PARISH

1. If a Parish for a period of three consecutive years, has been unable to meet all of the criteria of Canon 13, or one or more of the signs of vitality in Canon 15.2, the Bishop shall review the situation with the Rector or Priest in Charge, and with the Vestry, to determine a course of action. The Bishop may, ~~in the Bishop's discretion after consultation with the Executive Council~~, recommend to the Standing Committee that the Parish become a Mission in accordance with Canon 15. If the Standing Committee accepts the Bishop's recommendation, it shall make an appropriate recommendation to the next Convention. A majority vote of the Delegates is required to change a Parish under Canon 13 to a Mission under Canon 15.

2. Alternatively, a Parish may, by vote of a majority of its Vestry in office and a majority vote at a regular or special Parish meeting, initiate the process set forth in Section 1 of this Canon 14.

## CANON 15: MISSION CONGREGATIONS

[New text underlined. Original text, struck through, follows Canon 15A]

1. The Bishop may establish and dissolve Mission congregations at such places within the Diocese and upon such terms as the Bishop may deem advisable with the consent of the Executive Council.

(a) All provisions of Canons 13, 15A and 16 apply to Missions of this Diocese except that, instead of a Rector, there is a Vicar who is appointed by the Bishop, not elected by the Mission, and instead of a Vestry, there is a Bishop's Committee. Except for holding office at the Bishop's pleasure, the Vicar's rights and duties are the same as those of a Priest in Charge.

(b) A Mission may become a Parish by applying to the Bishop to be admitted to union with the Convention of the Diocese in accordance with Article VI of the Diocesan Constitution and Canon 13.

(c) The spiritual and temporal control of all Missions and missionary work shall be vested in the Bishop and the Executive Council.

2. Mission congregations may ask or may be directed by the Bishop in consultation with the Executive Council to enter a Process of Renewal under their guidance if the Congregation is unable to meet the criteria of Canon 13 and/or is unable to satisfactorily demonstrate consistent achievement of any of these signs of vitality over a period of at least two years:

- (a) Offers weekly worship;
- (b) Offers Eucharist at least monthly;
- (c) Has strong lay leadership and active lay participation;
- (d) Offers formation for spiritual development and engages in missional activities;
- (e) Pays its diocesan assessment, submits required annual reports, follows the property, insurance, real property, audit and financial practices required by Canon 10, holds an annual meeting, and elects and sends delegates to Convention;
- (f) Maintains buildings and grounds in good repair and condition;
- (g) Does not, except in extraordinary circumstances, invade the principal of donor-restricted endowment or investment funds; and
- (h) Maintains an active presence in the community with commitment and purpose "beyond the walls".

3. Mission congregations who enter the Process of Renewal will, in collaboration with a special support team created by the Bishop and Executive Council, develop an action plan. The team shall include the clergy person in charge or, in the absence of a clergy person in charge, the senior warden, at least two lay leaders in the congregation, and at least two leaders from the Diocese with wisdom and experience in congregational development. The team will adopt an action plan by majority vote. The clergy person in charge, or another person appointed by the team, will report regularly to the Executive Council on progress and changes in circumstances.

4. For Mission congregations who refuse, or fail to enter into the Process of Renewal, the Bishop in consultation with the Executive Council may appoint a team to develop an action plan without input from the congregation. The team may recommend closure of the congregation.

5. For the purpose of Sections 904 and 905 of Title 27, Vermont Statutes Annotated, as amended from time to time, a Mission shall cease to exist upon the concurrent approval of the Bishop, the Executive Council and by two thirds vote of the Convention.

#### CANON 15A: CLOSURE OF A MISSION CONGREGATION

1. A Mission congregation may be dissolved by the Bishop with the concurrence of the Executive Council, under any of the following circumstances:

- After at least one year in an active Process of Renewal, the congregation has not made substantial progress toward meeting the criteria of Canon 13 or shown promise of satisfying all signs of vitality listed in Canon 15.2;
- The congregation refuses, fails, or is unable to participate in the Process of Renewal;
- The congregation voluntarily chooses to close.

2. When the process described in Section 1 of this Canon results in the closure of a Mission congregation, the Bishop's closure plan shall include:

- A service for the celebration of the life and ministry of the congregation, including the rite for secularization of the church property;
- Ongoing pastoral support of congregation members and guidance in the transfer of their membership to other congregations;
- The transfer of all assets to The Trustees of the Diocese of Vermont, Inc.

#### **Struck through text of CANON 15: MISSION CONGREGATIONS to be deleted:**

~~1. For the purpose of these Canons, a congregation engaged in the mission of God in the Church shall qualify as a Mission by meeting the following criteria:~~

~~(a) It is identified and constituted by the Bishop as a Mission for the purpose of carrying out or extending the mission of the Church.~~

~~(b) It has paid when due the Diocesan apportionments as assessed by Convention.~~

~~(c) It is keeping its real and personal property in good repair and is maintaining its Clergy in accordance with standards established by the General Convention and by Convention.~~

~~2. The Bishop may establish and dissolve Missions at such places within the Diocese and upon such terms as the Bishop may deem advisable with the consent of the Executive Council. A Mission may become a Parish by applying to the Bishop to be admitted to union with the Convention of the Diocese in accordance with Article VI of the Constitution and Canon 13.~~

~~3. The spiritual and temporal control of all Missions and missionary work shall be vested in the Bishop and the Executive Council, with the assistance of the Commission on Missional Vitality. The Bishop shall appoint the Priest in Charge of a Mission after consultation with the Executive Committee of the Mission.~~

~~4. A Mission shall hold an annual Meeting on the second Monday in January or on one of the fifteen days following for the purpose of electing an Executive Committee. The membership of~~

~~the Committee shall be not less than three or more than nine communicants in good standing. Election shall be on a rotating basis, if that be possible.~~

~~5. The Wardens of the Mission shall be appointed by the Vicar or, if there is none, by the Bishop, from the membership of the Executive Committee.~~

~~6. The Executive Committee shall exercise all the rights of a Vestry as set forth in Canon 16 subject, however, to Section 3 of this Canon. The Vicar shall preside at meetings of the Committee, or, if there be no Vicar, the Senior Warden shall preside.~~

~~7. At the annual Meeting of the Mission, Delegates and Alternate Delegates shall be elected to the annual Convention or any Special Convention held within their term of office. The election shall be by ballot and shall be in accordance with Canon 1, Section 4 of these Canons. Those entitled to vote are as defined in Canon 13, Section 6. One of the Delegates elected to the annual Convention shall be a member of the Executive Committee of the Mission and, if possible, one of the Delegates shall have served as a Delegate at the previous annual Convention. Delegates may be elected to a term of office not to exceed three (3) years. In the event that the annual meeting neglects or fails to elect a sufficient number of Delegates and Alternate Delegates to assure full representation at the Convention, or if full representation is unlikely because the ranks of the Delegates and Alternate Delegates are diminished by resignation, death or some other cause, then a special meeting of the Mission may elect a sufficient number of Delegates and Alternate Delegates to assure full representation at the Convention; provided, however, that any such special meeting shall take place no later than sixty days prior to the opening date of the Convention. Within thirty (30) days of the adjournment of the Convention, the delegation shall give to the Mission a summary report of the doings thereof.~~

8. [This has become #5 in the proposed revision.]