



Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Mid-America

As amended in 2019 by the 112th Council of the Diocese

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I

The name of this Diocese of the Reformed Episcopal Church is and shall be The Diocese of Mid-America.

ARTICLE II

The object of The Diocese of Mid-America is to establish, support, and maintain Churches and Missions of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and supervise and govern churches within its jurisdiction, aid the ministry of clergymen within the limits of the Diocese, and promote the general charitable work of the churches within the limits of the Diocese.

ARTICLE III – *The Diocese*

Section 1. The Diocese of Mid-America as a constituent part of the Reformed Episcopal Church, accedes to and accepts the principles and restrictions of the Declaration of Principles and the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Section 2. Said Diocese shall consist of all organized Parishes, Mission Parishes, and Extension Works, and all the assigned resident clergy of the Reformed Episcopal Church under the jurisdiction of this Diocese, such jurisdiction having been established by the General Council and its Constitution and Canons. The Parishes and Mission Parishes shall be represented at the Diocese meetings as the Canons of this Diocese direct.

Section 3. The territorial limits of the Diocese of Mid-America are those defined by the General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church, subject to such amendment as may be later voted by a Council of this Diocese, with the consent of the General Council as follows:

By action of the 48th General Council, the Diocese of Mid-America is comprised of all states presently in the Diocese of Mid-America – that part of Tennessee which is west of the eastern fork of the Tennessee River plus the States of Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Missouri, Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Oklahoma, and Puerto Rico.

ARTICLE IV – *Government of the Diocese of Mid-America*

Section 1. The legislation of the Diocese of Mid-America and the direction of all matters that belong to and affect the Diocese of Mid-America shall be vested in a Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, subject to the restrictions of Article III, Section 1.

Section 2. The Bishop and Standing Committee shall be the ecclesiastical authority of the Diocese of Mid-America. If there is no Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America, the Presiding Bishop, chairing the Standing Committee, shall be the ecclesiastical authority.

Section 3. All boards and committees of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be under the supervision of the Bishop and Standing Committee of the Diocese of Mid-America, which Committee shall within the limits of the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese have veto power over their operations and actions.

Section 4. The Bishop shall be a member *ex-officio* of all committees whether elective or appointed.

ARTICLE V – *Membership of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America*

Section 1. The Bishop Ordinary, Bishop Coadjutor, Suffragan Bishops, and any Bishop canonically elected or received in another capacity, and all Presbyters of the Diocese of Mid-America, and any Deacon who is Minister-in-Charge of a Parish within the Diocese of Mid-America shall be clergy members of the Council.

Section 2. All Chairmen of Committees of the Diocese of Mid-America and authorized Agencies of the Diocese of Mid-America including lay members of the Standing Committee and Board of Trustees of the Diocese shall be members of the Council.

Section 3. All lay delegates elected in accordance with the provisions of Title II, Canon V, of the Canons of the Diocese of Mid-America.

Section 4. Licensed Lay Readers pastoring a Church or a Parish within the Diocese of Mid-America may be elected by any Council to membership therein.

Section 5. No one shall be a member of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America who is not a communicant member of the Reformed Episcopal Church in good and regular standing.

Section 6. By a two-thirds vote, visitors and friends of our Church may be made Corresponding Members for the duration of the meeting of the Council. Corresponding membership shall confer the right to speak upon the floor of the house, but not to vote in deliberations.

ARTICLE VI – *Meetings of the Council*

Section 1. The Council or Synod, which terms shall be synonymous, of the Diocese of Mid-America shall convene its regular meeting on the second Wednesday of October each year, at such time and place as shall have been designated at the next preceding meeting, unless such time or place of meeting, or both, shall have been changed in the manner set forth in Section 2 or Section 3 of this Article.

Section 2. In case there shall be any good cause rendering it advisable to change either, or both, the time or the place fixed for any meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, the Bishop, by and with the consent of two-thirds of the members of the Standing Committee, may do so.

If such change is made, the Bishop shall give thirty days' notice thereof to every Parish and Mission Parish entitled to representation in the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

Section 3. The Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America may also call special meetings of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, by and with written consent of two-thirds of the members of the Standing Committee, and any such meetings shall be held at the time and place designated in the call to the meeting. Thirty days' notice thereof shall be given by the Bishop to every Parish and Mission Parish specifying the object or objects of such meeting in the manner prescribed in Section 2 of this Article.

Section 4. The Delegates appointed to the next preceding Council of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be delegates to any special meeting, unless in the interim, any Parish shall have elected other delegates.

ARTICLE VII – *Officers of the Council*

Section 1. The Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be the President and Presiding Officer of the Council, and except in the case of disability or other impairment shall preside at all meetings of the Council.

Section 2. The other officers of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and such other officers as the Diocese of Mid-America Council may decide upon from time to time. The officers shall be elected by ballot at each regular meeting, upon the organization of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America and shall hold their respective offices until their successors have been elected and have qualified.

Section 3. The Vice-President shall be a Bishop or Presbyter of the Diocese of Mid-America and shall preside at all meetings of Council when the Bishop Ordinary is absent or in the event of a disability or other impairment of the President until the election or installation of a new Bishop Ordinary.

Section 4. The Secretary may be a Presbyter, or a lay person in the Diocese of Mid-America. With the consent of the Council, the Secretary may appoint an Assistant Secretary to help with the duties while the Council is in session.

Section 5. The several officers described in Section 1 shall perform the duties which usually pertain to their offices and such other duties as may be assigned to them by the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

Section 6. In the event of the resignation, removal, or death of the President, the Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Standing Committee, shall appoint a suitable person to fill the office until the office can be filled.

Section 7. In the case of the death or disability or resignation of the Vice-President, the President, in concurrence with a majority of the Standing Committee, shall forthwith appoint a suitable person to fill the office and execute the duties thereof until the next regular meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

Section 8. In the case of the death or disability or resignation of the Secretary, or any Treasurer, the President, in concurrence with a majority of the Standing Committee, shall forthwith appoint a suitable person to fill the office and execute the duties thereof until the next regular meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

Section 9. The Treasurer of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees of the Diocese of Mid-America.

ARTICLE VIII – *Proceedings of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America*

Section 1. The proceedings at the meetings of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be regulated by such parliamentary rules as the Council may from time to time adopt; provided, however, that whenever ten or more members of the Council call for a vote by orders, it shall be allowed. In such case the Bishop shall vote as a Presbyter, and the concurrence of both orders shall be necessary to the passage of the measure so voted on.

Section 2. In all business of the Council, freedom of debate shall be allowed, subject to the Council to fix and limit the length of time for debate.

Section 3. A majority of the Presbyters and a majority of the delegates from the Parishes of the Diocese of Mid-America shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but any number may adjourn from day to day to await the arrival of a quorum.

Section 4. A call for prayer is always in order in the deliberations of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

ARTICLE IX – *Boards and Committees*

Section 1. The following Committees and Boards shall be appointed by the Bishop at the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America at its regular meetings:

(1) The Standing Committee shall consist of three Presbyters and three laymen nominated by a committee appointed by the Bishop for that purpose, and elected by the Council to serve overlapping three-year terms, with one new member of each order being elected at each annual meeting of the Council. The Council may also fill the unexpired portion of any term vacated during the previous year. The Bishop Coadjutor, and other Bishops together with the Archdeacon and Canons shall be ex-officio members of the Standing Committee in accordance with the Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church. The Standing Committee shall be organized and shall operate in conformity with Canon 46 of the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

(2) The Board of Trustees of the Diocese of Mid-America shall consist of three Presbyters and three laymen to be nominated by a committee appointed by the Bishop for that purpose, and with one of each order being elected by the Council to serve overlapping three-year terms, with one new member of each order being elected at each annual meeting of the Council. In addition, the Vice-President and Secretary of the Council shall be members of the Trustees.

(3) A Nominations Committee shall be appointed by the Bishop Ordinary to nominate one qualified person of each order for each open position for a full or partial term on the Standing Committee and the Board of Trustees and present such nominations to the annual or special Synod.

(4) A Board of Examining Chaplains shall be appointed in accordance with Canon 4 of the Reformed Episcopal Church consisting of at least three Presbyters of the Diocese.

Section 2. Such other Committees as are determined necessary to the orderly operation of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be appointed by the Bishop.

ARTICLE X – *Amendments*

This Constitution may be amended by a unanimous vote of any stated meeting of the Council, or of any special meeting thereof called for the purpose; otherwise, by a two-thirds vote at one stated meeting of the Council, ratified by a two-thirds vote at the next succeeding stated meeting thereof. A motion to adopt for first reading, even though passed unanimously when made, shall not constitute final passage but shall require ratification at the next stated meeting of the Council. If it is intended to have an amendment passed without a second reading, it shall be stated so when it is offered or proposed.

CANONS

TITLE I – THE DIOCESE OF MID-AMERICA

CANON I – *The Clergy*

Section 1. Annually before the meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, the Bishop, or if there be none, the Standing Committee, shall prepare or cause to be prepared, a Roll of the Clergy of the Diocese of Mid-America, with names of their respective charges, together with their places of residence; and also, with particulars of time and place, the names of all ministers who have been ordained or received from other churches or have resigned, or died, or have been dropped from the Clergy Roll, or may have been subject to discipline. Such Clergy Roll shall be laid before the Council immediately after it shall have been called to order and the names of the clerical members called therefrom. This Clergy Roll shall be published in the Journal, and the Secretary of the Diocese of Mid-America shall send a copy of the same to the Secretary of the General Council.

Section 2. It shall be the duty of every minister in the Diocese of Mid-America, except he be retired because of age or disability, who is not in charge of a Parish or otherwise engaged in the service of the Diocese of Mid-America, to report, in writing, within thirty days immediately preceding the convening of the annual Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, to the Bishop, or if he is not in office, to the Standing Committee, stating his address and occupation. The notation of the receipt of such reports shall be appended to the Clergy Roll.

Any minister failing so to report for two or more successive meetings of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be dropped from the Clergy Roll, in which event he may be restored by reporting for two successive years to the Bishop (or to the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Mid-America). Such reporting must include a satisfactory explanation for his previous failure to report. A call to an active pastorate will negate the need for the disciplinary action to be carried out.

Section 3.

(A) A Presbyterian in charge of a Parish shall be designated the Rector, or Pastor, thereof.

(B) A Deacon in charge of a Parish shall be designated the Minister-in-Charge thereof.

(C) A Presbyterian or Deacon in charge of a Mission Parish by appointment of the Diocese of Mid-America Bishop and Standing Committee shall be designated the Vicar thereof.

(D) A Lay Reader may be licensed by the Bishop to conduct Divine Worship in a Parish or Mission without pastoral care (Reformed Episcopal Church, Constitution and Canons, Canon 24, Section 1 (a)), but such licensing may only be provided to those who

are Communicants of this church and meet the requirements for a Deacon as noted in I Timothy 3:8-13.

Section 4. The mandatory age for retirement of Presbyters from active service on the employed staff of the Diocese of Mid-America, or in a Parish or Mission Parish, shall be 70 years of age, which period of service can be extended annually for a maximum of five more years by consent of the Standing Committee and the relevant employing Board where staff membership is concerned, or of the Bishop and Standing Committee alone where the Minister of a Mission Parish is concerned.

CANON II – *Bishops*

Section 1. The Bishop shall hold office during life, except as limited elsewhere in the Constitution or Canons of the General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Section 2. At least thirty days before the Council at which a Bishop is to be elected notice in writing of such election shall be sent by the Secretary of the Standing Committee to every clergyman and vestry in the Diocese. A majority of the parishes must be represented at a Council in which a Bishop is to be elected. The vote shall be by orders and a majority of those present of both orders shall be necessary to a choice.

Section 3. The Bishop shall preside at all meetings of the Council and may deliver his sentiments on any subject after it has been discussed and before a vote thereon. In case of tie he may cast the deciding vote. The Bishop shall also preside at all meetings of the Board of Trustees and Standing Committee. He shall have, in addition to all other powers hereby specifically conferred, those which ordinarily pertain to the President of an Illinois corporation organized under law, but not for pecuniary purposes.

CANON III – *The Vice-President*

In the event of the inability of the President to act during a session of the Council, or between sessions, the Vice-President shall discharge his duties while such inability continues, except the episcopal acts and ecclesiastical duties pertaining to the office of Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America.

CANON IV – *The Secretary*

It shall be the duty of the Secretary to take the Minutes and record all proceedings of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, and together with the Bishop, to attest its official acts, preserve its records, and notify the parishes thirty days in advance of the time and places of all meetings of the Council. The Secretary shall direct the printing and distribution to the parishes of the Journal of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America and shall preserve in the archives of the Diocese of Mid-America at least ten (10) copies thereof.

Before printing, the copy of the Journal shall be examined by and have the approval of the President of the Council, or in his absence by someone designated by the Standing

Committee. In the case of the death or disability or resignation of the Secretary, the President, in concurrence with a majority of the Standing Committee, shall forthwith appoint a suitable person to fill the office and execute the duties thereof until the next regular meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

CANON V – *The Treasurers*

It shall be the duty of all Treasurers elected by the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, or acting under its supervision, to receive the monies belonging to their respective funds and to distribute the same under the direction of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America and/or the conventions, boards or committees under which they serve. Their accounts shall be rendered to the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America and audited by a committee appointed by the Bishop. A certificate of audit by a professional accountant may be accepted in lieu of examination by such Auditing Committee. In the case of the death or disability or resignation of any Treasurer, the President, in concurrence with a majority of the Standing Committee, shall forthwith appoint a suitable person to fill the office and execute the duties thereof until the next regular meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America. The business of the Diocese shall be conducted according to generally accepted principles of accounting, and the records of the Diocese shall be maintained in accordance with Canon 44 of the Canons of the General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

CANON VI – *The Standing Committee*

Section 1. The Standing Committee, consisting of a minimum of three Presbyters and three laymen to be nominated by a committee appointed by the Bishop for that purpose, and with one of each order being elected by the Council to serve overlapping three-year terms, with one new member of each order being elected at each annual meeting of the Council, shall be the Advisory Board to the Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America and have such powers and perform such duties as are provided by the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church, the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Mid-America and such duties as may be assigned by the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

Section 2. The Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be Chairman of this Committee, *ex-officio*. At its first meeting after each Synod, the lay and clergy members of the Standing Committee shall elect from its own body, a President in accordance with Canon 46 Section 1 of the Canons of the General Council. The President shall be a Bishop or Presbyter. The President may call a meeting of the Standing Committee when he deems such to be necessary. The Secretary of the Diocese as elected by the Council shall also serve as the Secretary of the Standing Committee and shall keep the Minutes of its meetings, and perform such other clerical duties as the Committee may direct.

Section 3. A simple majority shall constitute a quorum.

Section 4. The Committee shall make a report of its proceedings to each annual Council of the Diocese of Mid-America and to each General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

CANON VII – *The Board of Trustees of the Diocese of Mid-America*

Section 1. The Board of Trustees shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and the other members. The Board shall meet upon call of the President, Vice-President, or any two members, upon three days' notice in writing. A simple majority of the Trustees shall constitute a quorum. The Board of Trustees of the Diocese of Mid-America shall consist of a minimum of three Presbyters and three laymen to be nominated by a committee appointed by the Bishop for that purpose, and with one of each order being elected by the Council to serve overlapping three-year terms, with one new member of each order being elected at each annual meeting of the Council. The Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America shall be Chairman of this Committee, *ex-officio*. The Bishop Coadjutor and Archdeacon, if any, shall also be *ex-officio* members of this Committee.

Section 2. The Board shall hold in trust, invest, change investment, control, and care for all funds and other property of the Diocese, and may, by vote of at least two-thirds of its members, authorize the leasing, mortgaging, encumbering, selling, and conveying of any and all property of the Diocese, in its discretion. It shall also take all necessary legal steps to establish title to the property of the Diocese and of all extinct parishes. It shall exercise special care that parish property which shall have been acquired in whole or in part by grants from the Board be secured to the Reformed Episcopal Church, and it shall make the amount of its grants to any parish for the acquisition of property payable to the Diocese whenever such property shall be alienated from the uses of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Section 3. The Trustees shall give such bonds as the Council from time to time may require and shall make full report to each Council of the condition of their trusts.

Section 4. The Secretary of the Diocese as elected by the Council shall also serve as Secretary of the Board of Trustees and shall keep the minutes of its meetings and perform such other clerical duties as the Board may direct.

Section 5. It shall be a specific duty of the Board to prepare annually an estimate of the financial requirements of the Diocese for the ensuing fiscal year and a plan for meeting them, and to submit this to the Diocesan Council for adoption. It shall also be the duty of the Board to take such steps as may be necessary to provide the monies required, except such portions as may be otherwise specifically provide for.

Section 6. The Board shall make a report of its proceedings to each annual Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

CANON VIII – *Authorized Agencies of the Diocese of Mid-America and Their Representation in the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America*

Section 1. The following organizations are recognized as authorized agencies of the Diocese of Mid-America and are entitled to representation in the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America under Article V, Section 2, of the Constitution:

The Women of the Church
Cranmer Theological House

Section 2. Each organization authorized under this Canon must operate under a constitution approved by the Bishop and the Standing Committee and must report their actions and finances to the annual Council of the Diocese of Mid-America. Failure to meet these conditions shall be grounds for action of the Bishop and the Standing Committee to rescind any previous recognition, to seize their funds for purposes of the Diocese of Mid-America and to forbid their activity among Parishes and mission Parishes of the Diocese of Mid-America.

TITLE II – OF PARISHES

CANON I – *Of Membership*

Section 1. No new Extension Work, Mission Parish, or Parish shall be formed without the consent of the Bishop and Standing Committee of the Diocese of Mid-America and without conforming to the requirements of Canon 48 of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Section 2. In the organization of a new Mission Work, Mission Parish, or Parish, the following Article of Association and Conformity shall be signed by at least twelve (12) persons of legal voting age, who have been duly examined by the Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America, or some Presbyter of his appointment, as to their personal faith, and as indicated by prior membership in an evangelical church, or by Confirmation by the Bishop, who intend to be supporters of the Parish, to wit:

“We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves for the purpose of maintaining the worship of God and the preaching of the Gospel according to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Reformed Episcopal Church, under the name of _____ Church, in the city (or town) of _____ State of _____, and we promise conformity to the Constitution and Canons of The Reformed Episcopal Church, and to the Diocese of Mid-America.

“We do hereby authorize the Chairman and Secretary of this meeting to certify this action, in writing, to both the Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America and to the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Mid-America.

Section 3. A Parish already in communion with the Reformed Episcopal Church may be admitted to the Diocese of Mid-America by the Standing Committee on its presenting,

with its petition for admission, a copy of its charter, its articles of incorporation or certificate thereof, its acceptance of the Constitution and Canons of this Diocese of Mid-America, duly certified by the Secretary thereof as the act of its Parish Meeting; provided that in every case the consent of the Bishop and Standing Committee or if there be no Bishop, of the Standing Committee of the Diocese or Jurisdiction, from which the Parish has chosen to transfer, be obtained.

(A) Every Parish or Mission which is incorporated under the laws of the state in which it is resident shall provide the Diocese with a current copy of its Articles of Incorporation or Articles of Association and shall notify the Diocese, in writing, of any proposed amendments or alterations to the same at least thirty days prior to any scheduled vote on said changes.

(B) In every case in which there is or appears to be a conflict between the clear meaning or requirements of Parish Articles of Incorporation or Association, Parish By-Laws, the Diocesan Constitution and Canons, or the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church, the order of precedence shall be as follows: The Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church shall take first priority followed in precedence by the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Mid-America, followed by the By-Laws of the Parish or Mission as approved by the Diocese, followed by the Articles of Incorporation or Articles of Association. Any conflict between the requirements or apparent meaning of the Constitution and Canons and the By-Laws or Corporate Articles of any parish or Mission shall be decided in favor of the Diocese. Any proposed change in the By-Laws or Articles of Incorporation or Association of a Parish or Mission, which are not submitted to the Committee on Constitution and Canons as required in Title II, Canon II shall be null and void and unenforceable.

(C) Every Parish or Mission shall provide the Diocese with a copy of its most current By-Laws together with an income statement and balance sheet annually.

Section 4. A congregation, or Parish, of another church that may desire to be received into union with this Church and Diocese of Mid-America may be received by the Standing Committee upon presentation to them of its acceptance of the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church and this Diocese of Mid-America, and of the doctrine, discipline, and worship of this Church, duly certified as the act of the congregational or Parish Meeting by the Secretary thereof.

Section 5. Where the adult membership, of legal voting age, of a Parish is between twelve (12) and twenty-nine (29) members, such Parish shall be designated a Mission Parish. A Mission Parish shall be under the sole government of the Bishop or a Presbyter appointed by him, who shall appoint and remove Wardens, Vestrymen and other officers and admit and dismiss members.

Section 6. Every group meeting for worship by authority of the Standing Committee, but not admitted as a Parish or Mission Parish shall be known as an Extension Work.

Section 7.

(A) In the event that the communicant membership of a Parish falls below the number of thirty (30) for two consecutive years, that Parish shall be given the status of a Mission Parish with all the limitations to which Mission Parishes are subject under the Canons of the Diocese of Mid-America. Should the Mission Parish again attain the membership of 30 or more, it shall be necessary for the Vestry of such a congregation to re-apply for the designation of Parish.

(B) In the event that the communicant membership of a Parish or Mission Parish falls below the number of twelve (12) for two consecutive years, that group may be disbanded by the Bishop with the approval of the Standing Committee and the members assigned to the pastoral care of a neighboring Reformed Episcopal Parish or Mission Parish. If a Reformed Episcopal group is not meeting in a neighboring area, an effort will be made to find a group compatible to the doctrinal standards of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

(C) The property of a disbanded parish, mission, or extension work shall be invested in and become the property of the Diocese unless it conflicts with civil law of the state in which the property is located.

Section 8. The consent of the Bishop and Standing Committee shall be a prerequisite to the merger of Parishes consisting of two or more congregations. In matters of representation, rights, and limitations enumerated in these Canons, the status of such Parishes with several congregations shall be determined by their total combined communicant membership.

Section 9. All Parishes affiliating with the Diocese must have the name of their Parish approved by the Standing Committee. These names shall be submitted for consideration by the Standing Committee.

CANON II – *Of Parish By-Laws*

By-Laws of any Parish must not conflict with the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church or the Diocese of Mid-America and must be submitted to the Committee on Constitution and Canons for correction, if need be, and for certification. Likewise, all proposed revisions of By-Laws of Parishes shall be so submitted. (The model Constitution and By-Laws for a Local Parish in the Diocese of Mid-America shall serve as a guide to any Parish formulating its By-Laws.)

Section 1. All officers and members of committees must be communicant members of this Church, in good and regular standing, of legal voting age or over.

CANON III – *Of Vacant Parishes*

Section 1. Whenever a Parish becomes vacant (without a regularly employed minister), it shall be the duty of the Wardens or the Secretary of the Vestry forthwith to notify the Bishop.

Section 2. The Bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America is *ex-officio* Rector of every vacant Parish until a Rector is elected and installed. The Bishop or his representative shall be *ex-officio* chairman of the Vestry at any Parish Meeting. The Senior Warden shall preside if neither the Bishop nor his representative is able to attend and is so directed by the Bishop.

Section 3. During the vacancy it shall be the duty of the Vestry under the direction of the Bishop, to make provision for maintaining Divine Worship in the Church, and for the pastoral care of the Parish.

CANON IV – *Of Parish Registers*

Section 1. In every Parish or Mission Parish, the Vestry shall provide a suitable book to become a Parish Register. It shall be in the custody of the Minister, whose duty it shall be to keep accurate and full records therein of all baptisms, confirmations, receptions by letter from other Churches, marriages, and burials, together with a complete list of the communicants and a list, so far as practicable, of families within his charge, which Register shall be the property of the Parish, and be preserved for the use of his successor. No names, once entered, shall ever be erased; changes of status being entered as notes or remarks.

Section 2. Communicants of a Parish are all persons who have been confirmed therein, or who have been received by letters of Dimissory from evangelical churches, or have presented satisfactory evidence of previous communicant membership and present purpose to serve the Lord, provided that in every case they have received the Holy Communion.

Section 3. The Communicant list shall be corrected annually by the Parish Council by removing from active membership, through notation, the names of all persons who have died or have been ordained to the Presbyterate, or dismissed to another church, or excommunicated, together with those who for a period of one year have not partaken of the Lord's Supper, or disappeared, or ceased to attend Divine Services, or to contribute to the support of the Parish; provided that all reasonable efforts to reclaim such members have been made.

Exceptions may be made of non-residents who continue to contribute and wish to retain their active standing, and of aged persons, invalids and persons who are financially unable to contribute, and in the military service or educational institutions which requires a change of residence. All who are placed upon the inactive list shall be notified if their addresses are known. In preparing statistical reports of Communicant Members, only those on the active list shall be enumerated.

Section 4. A communicant moving from one Parish to any other shall request and be granted a letter Dimissory, which shall give his status as shown by the Parish Register. A communicant who has resumed regular attendance at Divine Services, renewed his support, and partaken of the Lord's Supper, shall be restored at any time to the active roll from the inactive roll.

Section 5. Upon the death or removal of the Minister, the Parish Register shall pass to the Senior Warden, who shall keep the records, entering every change without delay, while the Parish is vacant.

Section 6. All Parish records shall be open to the Bishop, and it shall be his duty to examine them regularly, or to appoint a person or persons to act in his stead.

Section 7. Upon the dissolution of a Parish, the Parish Register shall become the property of the Diocese, to be preserved in the archives.

CANON V – *Of the Annual Parish Meeting*

Section 1. In each Parish, annually during Easter Week or on some other convenient occasion, an election shall be held for Wardens, Vestrymen, Parish Council, and Deputies to the General Council, and Delegates to the Diocese of Mid-America Council. Wardens, Vestrymen, Parish Council, and Delegates shall be chosen from among the communicants of legal voting age. One-third of the entire number of Vestrymen shall be elected for a three-year period, each year. One lay delegate to Council and one alternate shall be elected annually.

Section 2. A Parish or congregation consists of all persons enrolled as Communicant members or stated worshippers in the congregation, and who, in greater or lesser degree, contribute to its support, and have been thus connected with the Parish for twelve (12) months preceding. Only communicants of legal voting age shall be entitled to vote at the Parish Meeting. In any case of dispute as to the qualification of the electors, the decision shall rest with the Wardens.

Section 3. The election of Lay Delegates shall be certified by the Secretary of the Vestry, or some other officer of the parish, in the form following, to-wit,

At a parish meeting of _____ Church having _____ communicants, held on _____, _____ the following named communicants of said Church were appointed its Lay Delegates to the Synodical Council of the Diocese.

This certificate shall be returned to the Secretary of the Council prior to the meeting of the Council to which the delegates are accredited and by him be laid before the Committee on Credentials of the Council.

In case, however, it be found that any of the Delegates chosen at the Parish Meeting are not able to attend the Council, it shall be lawful for the Rector and Wardens to select substitutes for such Delegates, and to certify to such appointment.

Section 4. When no election is made of the Parish Council (Canon 50 of the Reformed Episcopal Church), the Wardens shall act as such Council when required. It is

recommended, in general, that the communicants of each parish constitute the Wardens thereof as its Parish Council.

Section 5. At the annual Parish Meeting, reports in writing shall be made by the Rector of the spiritual condition of the Parish with a synopsis of the official labors, and showings of the Parish Register, and from all other auxiliaries, boards, clubs, and departments of work in connection with the Parish. The Treasurer of the Parish and the treasurers of all Parish organizations, shall together with his (their) itemized report, present his receipts and vouchers. Such Treasurer's reports shall be audited by a committee of two or more, of whom one shall not have been a member of the Vestry for the year preceding.

Section 6. Every Parish Meeting, whether stated or special, must be announced at each church service on two Sundays preceding its date. The purpose for each special meeting shall be announced in its call, and this business and none other, shall be considered in such a special meeting.

TITLE III – OF PASTORAL CONNECTIONS

CANON I – *The Call of a Minister to a Parish*

Section 1. Unless otherwise provided by the Charter or By-Laws of the Parish, or ordered by the Parish at a stated meeting, the Vestry shall take initial and final action in the calling of a Rector or Minister-in-Charge, Interim Rector, Deacon or Deaconess. In the case of assisting clergy, the Rector shall seek the advice and consent of the Vestry in the calling of a Presbyter or the assignment of a Deacon or Deaconess. In every case the Vestry shall approve all compensation paid to the clergy and other financial terms of the call.

Section 2. The advice and consent of the Bishop Ordinary and Standing Committee, or the Standing Committee alone if there be no Bishop Ordinary, shall be required before a Call is issued by any Parish. No Deacon may be considered as a Candidate for a Call without the prior consent of the Bishop Ordinary of the Council.

Section 3. The Call of a minister shall be consistent with the following sections.

Section 4. Ministry Position Description Required

- a) Before the commencement of a search for a Rector or other Presbyter, Deacon or Deaconess, the Rector and Vestry shall produce a Ministry Position Description that contains a list of duties, goals and expectations of the person who shall be called to minister in the congregation. It should indicate minimum experience and educational requirements, whether the position is a full time or part time paid position or is non - stipendiary position. It may also include benefits and a salary or stipend range. If there is no Rector, and the search is to

be for a Rector, the Wardens and Vestry shall prepare the Ministry Position Description.

- b) Similar Position Descriptions should be prepared for calls to serve in other capacities in the Diocese and its institutions and subsidiaries of the appropriate authority under the supervision of the Bishop Ordinary or those appointed by him.
- c) The Ministry Position Description shall be made available to the Bishop Ordinary upon request and is to be provided to any and all candidates or applicants for the position.
- d) The Ecclesiastical Authority may issue other policies or guidelines to be followed in the production and use of the Ministry Position Description process.

Section 5. Letters of Call

- a) The Diocese shall produce templates of standard Letters of Call (also to be known as "A Letter of Agreement") for Rectors, Interim Rectors, Vicars, Assisting Clergy, Deacons and Deaconesses as the basic structure of the written call to ministry in a parish. These Letters of Call shall constitute a written contract between the Minister and the Parish.
- b) The Letter of Call shall be specific in reference to and should be congruent with the Ministry Position Description and differences that concern the nature of each type of call.
- c) Templates shall include, at a minimum the following:
 - i) Title, Position, Ministry and Duties (Ministry Review)
 - ii) Times of Work and Leave
 - iii) Compensation
 - iv) Benefits, the REC pension plan, health, disability, and other insurance if offered. Benefits for Rectors must include participation in the General Council mandated Disability and Group Life program.
 - v) Health Insurance may be mandated by the Ecclesiastical Authority or may be required by law but should be seen as a moral imperative for all full-time ministers - defined as those working an average of thirty hours or more each week.
 - vi) Ancillary topics as they apply: Expense Re-imbusement, Discretionary Fund, Use and return of Parish Property, intellectual rights, and non-parish income derived by the Minister separate from such as Sacerdotal Fees, and Honoraria.
 - vii) Templates may be modified to suit circumstances provided items c) i-iv are covered and to remain within the requirements of federal, state, or local employment law.
 - viii) Mandates, Recommendations and Best Practices.

From time to time diocesan policies regarding the call of ministers may be modified or changed by a mandate requiring said change via a duly adopted resolution of the Diocesan Synod, by a recommendation from the Bishop and Standing Committee that does not contravene the canons, or by a letter issued under the authority of the Bishop Ordinary setting forth a recommendation of best practices in some aspect of calling ministers or in other matters concerning employment.

- d) Eligibility to be called
 - i) No minister may be called who is not canonically resident in the Diocese of Mid-America without the prior approval of the Bishop Ordinary and a commitment that he will accept letter dimissory from the current diocese of canonical residence.
 - ii) All ministers may be subject to a background check or an updated background check prior to the finalization of a call.
- e) Parties to the Letter of Call Agreement & Reporting Requirements
 - i) Rectors. In the Call of a Rector, the parties are the Parish, as represented by the Vestry and the clergyman. The Letter of Call is issued by the Vestry and signed by the Sr. Warden and the Presbyter being called. The Bishop Ordinary is not a party to the contract but is to be provided with a copy of the Ministry Position Description and Letter of Call for the diocesan record.
 - ii) Interim Rectors. In the Call of an Interim Rector, the parties are the Parish, as represented by the Vestry and Sr. Warden and the Presbyter insofar as the financial arrangements and duties are concerned. The Bishop is a party in that he must consent to the call and its terms. A copy of all documents related to the contract shall be provided to the Bishop together with the Ministry Position Description. In the case of a "Priest-in-Charge", instead of an Interim Rector, the above process will be followed with necessary alterations until a Rector is called.
 - iii) In the appointment (call) of a Vicar, the parties are the Mission as represented by its Bishop's Committee or Vestry as represented by its Sr. Warden (or Bishop's Warden) and the Presbyter being called insofar of the financial arrangements, and of the Bishop Ordinary who retains the sole authority to appoint a Vicar. The Bishop issues the Ministry Position Description, appoints Vestry and the Presbyter who accept the Bishop's choice. All three parties must sign the Letter of Agreement.
 - iv) In the Call of a Presbyter in any other capacity than the above, the "call" is by Letter of Agreement.
 - v) In the appointment of a Deacon or Deaconess the initiative is from the Bishop, who in consultation with a Rector, Vicar or other Presbyter in charge assigns a Deacon or Deaconess to serve in the Parish, Mission or other institution of the church. Diaconal ministers are always under the local authority of the Rector or Vicar. The

Bishop is to be furnished with a copy of the call and other arrangements.

Section 6. The Bishop and Standing Committee shall appoint the Vicar of a Mission Parish or of an extension work. A Presbyter shall have the right to accept or reject such an appointment without prejudice. A Deacon shall be required to accept such an appointment and serve diligently at the pleasure of the Bishop.

Section 7. Unless otherwise provided in the By-Laws of a Parish, a Call shall be for an indefinite period of time but in no case for less than a period of two years.

Section 8. No Presbyter shall be settled as Rector or Pastor of a Parish of the Diocese of Mid-America unless he be duly installed according to the Order provided in the Book of Common Prayer by the Bishop, or a Presbyter appointed by the Bishop to act in his stead. This section shall not apply in the case of a Deacon called as a Minister -in-Charge or Vicar appointed to a Mission Parish or Extension Work.

Section 9. All parish clergy assisting the Rector in a parish, whether stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and regardless of the title by which they are known, shall serve with the consent of the Bishop Ordinary, under the day to day authority and direction of the Rector and shall serve in the parish at the Rector's pleasure.

CANON II – *Termination of a Pastoral Connection*

A pastoral connection in this church may at any time be terminated by the consent of both parties; or, after not less than thirty, nor more than ninety days, by the decision of the Bishop and Standing Committee, on the appeal by one party, after giving due notice to the other party. The Bishop and Standing Committee shall have the authority to dissolve any pastoral connection on its own initiative after not less than thirty and nor more than ninety days, after giving due notice to both parties, if viewed necessary and in the interest of the Church, but only after an open examination into the reasons for such dissolution. And in the event that either party refuses to abide by the decision rendered in either of these cases, such party shall forfeit the right, if a Presbyter, of a seat and a vote in the General Council and in the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America; or if Wardens or Vestrymen, of having their Parishes represented in the same. No minister shall be approved for a pastoral relationship in a Reformed Episcopal Church, nor shall any Parish have its pastoral Call approved, while refusing to abide by a decision of the Standing Committee made under this Section. In any case, the party or parties shall in other respects, be amendable to the ecclesiastical authority, as if these forfeitures of seats, representation and approvals had not been incurred; provided that either party shall have the right of appeal to the final decision of the next ensuing General Council.

TITLE IV – OF WORK AND WORSHIP

CANON I – *Of Ministers and Their Duties*

Section 1. In conformity with Canon 19 of the Reformed Episcopal Church, it shall be the duty of every Minister in charge of a Parish or Mission Parish of this Diocese of Mid-America to preach the Gospel and declare the whole council of God according to the Holy Scriptures, to appoint and conduct services for Divine Worship; to visit the members of his congregation, particularly such as are sick, infirm, or aged; to prepare candidates for Baptism, Confirmation; and conduct the funeral services of deceased communicant members; and in every way to seek to strengthen the spiritual life of the members of the Parish or Mission Parish, the cause of this Diocese of Mid-America and the advancement of Christ's Kingdom through the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Section 2. It shall be the duty of every Minister in charge of a Parish or Mission Parish to give due notice to his congregation of an Episcopal visitation, and to present such persons as are ready and desirous to be confirmed, with a list of their names, after having ascertained the fact of their baptism, to the Bishop making such visitation.

Section 3. It shall be the duty of every Clergyman in charge of a Parish or Mission Parish, with such assistance as he may see fit, to obtain from persons skilled in music, to give order concerning the tunes to be sung at any time in his church; and especially it shall be his duty to suppress all light and unseemly music, and all indecency and irreverence in the performance, by which vain and ungodly persons profane the service of the Sanctuary.

Section 4. The Minister in charge of a Parish or Mission Parish of this Diocese of Mid-America shall, within the limitations of *The Book of Common Prayer*, including the Rubrics thereof, The Received Doctrine of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese and of the Reformed Episcopal Church, be entrusted with general authority over public worship in accordance with the principle of *jus liturgicum*.

CANON II – *Of the Wardens and Vestry*

Section 1. The governing body of a local Parish or Mission Parish is called a Vestry, which shall legally exercise temporal authority in the conduct of parish business, hold title to and maintain all parish property, and have authority over the finances of the same within the limitations of the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Mid-America and of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Section 2. A Vestry shall consist of two Wardens: a Rector's Warden (or Senior Warden), and an Accounting Warden (or Junior Warden), and some number of Vestrymen. The term of office shall be determined by the Charter or By-Laws of the Parish or by the Parish at a stated meeting, subject to the Constitution and Canons of this Diocese of Mid-America and of Canon 49 of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Section 3. The Chairman shall have a vote only in case of a tie.

The Rector or Pastor is *ex-officio* Chairman of the Vestry and shall preside at all meetings when present.

The Senior Warden shall preside if the Rector or Pastor is absent.

The Junior Warden shall preside if both are absent.

A Deacon who is Minister-in-Charge of a Parish may act as Chairman upon the vote of the Vestry, but he shall have no vote.

The Vicar of a Mission Parish may preside by the appointment of the Bishop, but he shall have no vote.

Section 4. The Wardens and Vestry shall meet as soon as practicable after the annual election and organize by electing a Secretary and Treasurer and such other officers as may be necessary. Other meetings may be called by the Rector, or either of the Wardens, and shall be called whenever requested by any two members.

Section 5. Vacancies occurring in the Vestry during the year may be filled by the remaining members. Any person so elected may serve until the next Annual Parish Meeting, at which time a replacement shall be elected by the Parish to serve any unexpired term in office.

Section 6. The chief lay leader in a Reformed Episcopal Church is the Rector's Warden or Senior Warden. He shall be elected at an Annual Parish Meeting and may be nominated only by the Rector. He should be a person of outstanding Christian character. In consultation with the Bishop, he shall provide a supply for the pulpit in the case of illness, absence or resignation of the minister. He is the custodian of the Parish Register if there be no Rector or Minister-in-Charge.

Section 7. The Accounting (or People's) Warden, or Junior Warden shall be elected at the Annual Parish Meeting. He shall be responsible for the funds of the Parish unless a Treasurer be provided for this purpose. He should be a person of especial Christian character and be qualified in business ability.

(A). The People's (or Junior) Warden, sometimes known as the Accounting Warden, should be a person of especial Christian character, and shall be chosen annually by one of the following methods on the day of the Annual Parish Meeting:

(1) After the election of new members of the Vestry, and the choosing of the Senior Warden by the Rector, the Junior Warden shall be elected by the congregation from the remaining members of the Vestry.

(2) After the election of new members of the Vestry, and the choosing of the Senior Warden, he shall be elected by the Vestry at an organizational meeting called for that purpose, from the remaining members of the Vestry.

(B). The duties of the Junior Warden shall be the general care and oversight of the physical and real property of the Parish, including maintenance and repairs; and if there be no Treasurer, he shall also be responsible for the funds of the Parish. In the absence of the Rector or Senior Warden, he shall preside at meetings of the Vestry.

Section 8. It shall be the duty of the Vestry to take charge of all properties of the Parish, to regulate all its temporal concerns, to act in calling a Rector or Minister-in-Charge unless otherwise provided by the Charter and By-Laws of the Parish, to employ all other persons serving the Parish under salary and fix the amount of each salary. The Vestry cannot buy or sell real estate of the Parish without the approval of a Parish meeting called for that purpose.

Section 9. It shall be the duty of the Wardens, especially, to provide the elements for the Lord's Supper, to oversee the care of the communion ware, and to provide suitable vestments for the minister or ministers. In the absence of the minister, the Wardens shall see that orderly and worshipful Divine services are conducted.

CANON III – *Of Lay Readers*

Section 1. No one shall habitually officiate as Lay Reader in any Parish or Mission Parish of the Diocese of Mid-America without a license from the Bishop. Any licensure must be in accordance with the provisions of Canon 24 of the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Section 2. It shall be the duty of the Lay Reader to assist the Minister in the church services and prayer meetings as the Minister desires and directs.

CANON IV – *Of Order in Worship*

Section 1. In the conduct of the worship of the Church, where there is no Rubric or Canon, or where the Rubric or Canon is susceptible to various interpretations, recourse shall be had to the Bishop in case of doubt or dispute, and his decision shall be authoritative, subject however, to revision by the Standing Committee or the General Council.

TITLE V – AMENDMENTS

CANON I – *Of Standing Resolutions*

Standing Resolutions, being of doubtful authority and enforcement, shall not be adopted in lieu of Amendments of the Constitution and Canons. When adopted, they shall stand only for the duration of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America in which they were adopted and until the convening of the next regular or special meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America.

These Canons may be amended by a unanimous vote of any stated meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, or of any special meeting thereof called for the purpose; otherwise, by a majority vote at one stated meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Mid-America, ratified by a majority vote at the next succeeding stated meeting thereof.