

**THE CANONS OF  
THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE  
DIOCESE OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST, INC.**

**TERMINOLOGY**

1. **"The Church"** shall refer to The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as The Episcopal Church (which name is hereby recognized as also designating the Church);
2. **"The Diocese"** shall refer to The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Inc., otherwise known as The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast (which name is hereby recognized as also designating the name of the Diocese).
3. **"The Convention"** shall refer to the Diocesan Convention of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Inc.
4. **"The Bishop"** shall refer to the regularly elected and consecrated Bishop who is in charge of the Diocese.
5. **"Ecclesiastical Authority"** shall refer to the Standing Committee of the Diocese when, within provisions of the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention, it performs certain duties of the Bishop.
6. **"Constitution"** and **"General Canons"** shall refer to the Constitution and Canons of the Church. **"Articles"** and **"Canons"** shall refer to the Articles of Incorporation and Canons of the Diocese.
7. **"Congregation"** shall refer to a parish, an organized mission, a mission station, or a college chapel, in union with the Convention.
8. Whenever the words "he", "his", "vestry person", "vestry person", "clergyman", "clergymen" or words of similar import shall appear in these Canons, such words shall be construed as generic words, including males and females, except where the context clearly requires such words to mean male persons.
9. **"General Officers of the Diocese"** shall consist of the Chancellors, the Secretary, the Treasurer and the Registrar-Historiographer.
10. **"Rector"** shall refer to a priest canonically settled in accordance with the General Canons in a parish in union with the Convention.
11. **"Curate"** shall refer to a priest serving as an assistant, by whatever title designated, in a parish, who is canonically resident in the Diocese, and who is called by the Vestry on the recommendation of the Rector after communication with the Bishop as provided in the General Canons.
12. **"Vicar"** shall refer to a priest for a mission Congregation who is canonically resident in the Diocese and is appointed by the Ecclesiastical Authority.
13. **"Priest-in-Charge"** shall refer to a priest appointed by the Bishop, after consultation with the Vestry, to serve in any congregation in which there is no Rector, and who shall exercise the duties of Rector as provided in the General Canons.
14. **"Transitional Deacon"** shall refer to a deacon canonically resident in the Diocese who is determined by the Ecclesiastical Authority to be actively involved in training and preparation for ordination to the priesthood in the Diocese.
15. **"Vocational Deacon"** shall refer to any deacon who is not a Transitional Deacon.
16. **"College Chaplain"** shall refer to a priest or deacon for a college chapel appointed by the Ecclesiastical Authority.
17. **"Agency"** shall refer to any of the following organizations of the Diocese: Wilmer Hall Children's Home, Beckwith Camp and Conference Center, and Murray House.

**CANON 1: NAME**

The name of this corporation shall be THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST, INC.

**CANON 2: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF AUTHORITY**

The Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Inc. declares itself to be a constituent governing part of the "Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America" and, subject only to any limitations in the laws of Alabama and Florida, the corporation recognizes, accedes to, and adopts the Constitution of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and acknowledges its authority accordingly.

**CANON 3: DIOCESAN CONVENTION**

**Section 1.** The Diocesan Convention of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Inc. shall be the Legislative Authority.

**Section 2.** The time and place of each Annual Diocesan Convention shall be determined by the preceding Convention. For sufficient cause, the Ecclesiastical Authority, with the consent of the Standing Committee, may change the time or place, or both; provided that written notice of such change be given to all clergy and congregations at least thirty (30) days prior to such meeting.

**Section 3.** The Ecclesiastical Authority shall have power to call a Special Diocesan Convention with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee. Thirty (30) days' notice thereof shall be given to the clergy and congregations of the Diocese, stating the business to be transacted, and the time and place of meeting. Business other than that stated in said notice can be considered only by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Special Diocesan Convention.

**Section 4.** The voting membership of the convention shall consist of:

- a. Clerical Delegates, each of whom shall be either a priest canonically resident in the Diocese, and who is Rector or Curate or

Priest-in-Charge in a parish, or Vicar of a mission, or who is on the staff of the Diocese or an Agency of the Diocese; or a priest canonically resident in the Diocese who has retired in accordance with the General Canons and who serves in one of the aforesaid positions with the express approval of the Bishop according to the General Canons; or a Deacon assigned by the Ecclesiastical Authority to a parish or mission or an Agency of the Diocese; and

- b. Lay Delegates from the several Congregations in the Diocese, as follows:  
They shall be Confirmed Communicants in good standing, entitled to vote in Parish Meetings.
- c. Each Parish shall be entitled to the following representation, based on the last Annual Report of the Parish:  
Fewer than 300 communicants in good standing -- Three Delegates  
300-599 communicants in good standing -- Four Delegates  
600-999 communicants in good standing -- Five Delegates  
1,000 or more communicants in good standing -- Six Delegates
- d. Each Parish failing to maintain its status as a Parish in union with the Diocese shall be entitled to two (2) Delegates.
- e. Each Mission Station or Organized Missions shall be entitled to the following representation:  
Mission Stations and Organized Mission of fewer than 100 communicants in good standing -- One Delegate  
Organized Missions of 100 or more communicants in good standing -- Two Delegates
- f. Each Congregation entitled to the above representation shall also be entitled to elect one (1) Alternate Delegate for each Delegate.
- g. Youth Delegates from the several Convocations of the Diocese, as follows: They shall be Confirmed Communicants in good standing, entitled to vote in Parish Meetings and no older than nineteen (19) years of age at the time of the Convention for which they are elected. Each Convocation shall be entitled to one (1) Youth Delegate and one (1) Alternate Youth Delegate.

Youth Delegates entitled to vote are included with the Lay order, for Sections 9 and 10 of this Canon.

**Section 5.** Elections of Delegates, which may be by the congregation or be delegated by it to the Vestry, shall be held not later than sixty (60) days prior to the date of the Convention, and all Delegates so elected shall serve for one (1) year, or until their successors are elected, and shall also be the Delegates for all Special or Called Meetings of the Convention during their term of service. Elections shall be certified, according to the following form, which shall be completed and filed with the Ecclesiastical Authority not later than sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the Convention.

We do hereby certify that at a meeting of the (Congregation/Vestry) of \_\_\_\_\_ (Parish/Mission), held on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A. D. \_\_\_\_\_, DELEGATES ALTERNATES were duly elected to represent said Church in the Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, to be held at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, next, and that they are Confirmed Communicants in good standing and worshipers and regular contributors in the said Congregation.

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Rector, Vicar, Warden)

And \_\_\_\_\_  
(Clerk)

Youth Delegates may be elected by the active youth in the Convocation or, if no meeting of the youth is able to be conducted, shall be selected by the Dean of the Convocation in consultation with the Clergy in the Convocation, in either case, Youth Delegates and Alternate Youth Delegates shall be designated not later than sixty (60) days prior to the date of the Convention, and all Youth Delegates so designated shall serve for one (1) year, or until their successors are elected or selected, and shall also be the Delegates for all Special or Called Meetings of the Conventions during their term of service. Election or selection shall be certified, according to the following form, which shall be completed and filed with the Ecclesiastical Authority not later than sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the Convention.

The undersigned hereby certifies that (at a meeting of the Youth of the Convocation \_\_\_\_\_, held on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. \_\_\_\_\_) YOUTH DELEGATE/ALTERNATE were duly elected/selected to represent the Youth of Convocation \_\_\_\_\_ in the Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, to be held at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, next, and that I have confirmed that each is a Confirmed Communicant in good standing and worships and regularly contributes in their respective congregations.

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Dean for Convocation \_\_\_\_\_)

**Section 6.** The expenses of Delegates to the Convention.

- a. The expenses of the Clerical and Lay Delegates to the Convention shall be paid by the Congregations they represent and serve.
- b. The expenses of the Convocation Youth Delegates to the Convention shall be paid out of the diocesan youth ministries and program budget.

**Section 7.** All Clerical Delegates shall be required to attend the Diocesan Convention, unless excused by the Ecclesiastical Authority.

**Section 8.** All Officers of the Diocese, all clergy canonically resident in the Diocese but not entitled to vote in Convention shall be entitled to Seat and Voice in the Convention but no vote, unless otherwise qualified. The Convention may grant the Privileges of the Floor, including Seat and Voice, to visiting clergy and others, including clergy serving in the Diocese but not canonically resident. No Diocesan employee shall be eligible for election as a General Officer of the Diocese.

**Section 9.** The Convention shall sit as one (1) House, unless otherwise specified in the Canons, and each member, Clerical and Lay, shall be entitled to one (1) vote on any issue; provided that, upon call of five (5) Members, a Vote by Orders upon any issue may be required; in which case the Clerical and Lay Members shall vote separately, and concurrence in both Orders shall be required.

**Section 10.** One half (½) plus one (1) of the clergy entitled to vote in Convention, and one half (½) plus one (1) of the Lay Delegates entitled to vote in the Convention shall constitute a quorum, which shall be required for the transaction of business.

**Section 11.** The Bishop shall be the presiding Officer of the Convention. In the Bishop's absence, the Bishop Coadjutor, or the Suffragan Bishop, if there be one, shall preside. If no Bishop be present, the President of the Standing Committee shall call the Convention to order, and a President of the Convention, *pro tempore*, shall be elected by the Convention.

**Section 12.** All elections are to be by a majority, but the Convention may, from time to time, in elections involving several persons to the same office, e.g., Deputies to General Convention, amend this rule.

**Section 13.** In the event of the occurrence of a vacancy on any committee elected by the Convention, said committee shall have the power to fill such vacancy in conformity with the provisions of the Charter and Canons. If any individual elected or appointed to perform a duty is unable, for any reason, to perform the duty for which elected or appointed, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall appoint a successor for as long as may be necessary, unless otherwise provided in the and Canons.

#### **CANON 4: SUPPORT OF THE DIOCESE**

It shall be the privilege and responsibility of each Congregation to support financially and otherwise the Diocese and its programs.

#### **CANON 5: CHANCELLOR**

**Section 1.** Two Chancellors, one for the Alabama portion of the Diocese and one for the Florida portion of the Diocese, shall be nominated by the Ecclesiastical Authority, be elected by the Diocesan Convention annually unless the nomination be rejected in which event further nominations shall be made by the Ecclesiastical Authority until two be elected; and shall be a confirmed communicant in good standing, learned in the law. The Chancellors shall act as legal advisors of the Bishop and of the Standing Committee, and of all other committees of the Convention, whenever they may require legal advice in questions affecting the interest of the Church, in whose jurisdiction the matters rests, and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by Canon or by resolution of the Convention.

**Section 2.** Should the Ecclesiastical Authority desire a Vice-Chancellor, the same procedure as in nomination and election of the Chancellors shall be followed.

#### **CANON 6: SECRETARY**

**Section 1.** The Secretary shall be nominated by the Ecclesiastical Authority, be elected by the Diocesan Convention annually unless the nomination be rejected in which event further nominations shall be made by the Ecclesiastical Authority until one be elected; and shall have the power to appoint assistants, with the concurrence of the Convention. The Secretary shall not be eligible for re-election for one (1) year after having served five (5) consecutive terms.

**Section 2.** The Secretary shall receive the Annual Parochial Reports of each Congregation, as required by the Canons of the Church.

**Section 3.** At the opening of each Convention, the Secretary shall furnish a list of elected Delegates and Alternates to the Committee on Credentials. During the Convention, the Secretary shall keep a careful and exact record of the proceedings thereof. When such record has been certified by the President and Secretary, it shall serve as the official minutes of the Convention.

**Section 4.** The Secretary shall be responsible for publishing the Annual Journal of the Diocese, and shall notify all persons who have been elected to any office in the Diocese of the fact that they have been chosen.

**Section 5.** The Secretary shall fulfill all the requirements of the General Canons of the Church relating to that office, and shall fulfill all other duties that normally pertain to the Office of Secretary.

#### **CANON 7: TREASURER**

**Section 1.** The Treasurer shall be nominated by the Ecclesiastical Authority, be elected by the Diocesan Convention annually unless the nomination be rejected in which event further nomination shall be made by the Ecclesiastical Authority until one can be elected. The Treasurer shall not be eligible for re-election for one (1) year after having served five (5) consecutive terms.

**Section 2.** The Treasurer shall be responsible for all monies collected under the authority of the Diocesan Convention, and not otherwise regulated. The Treasurer shall forward, in due time, to the Treasurer of the General Convention, the amount assessed upon the Diocese for the contingent expenses of the General Convention. The

Treasurer's accounts shall be rendered to the Diocesan Convention annually, and bond shall be given in a sum, and with security, satisfactory to the Standing Committee. The Treasurer shall perform such other duties as pertain to the office, or which shall be enjoyed by the Convention. The Treasurer shall, from time to time, make such recommendations regarding finances as may seem to be for the best interests of the Diocese.

**Section 3.** The Treasurer shall furnish to the Secretary, prior to the convention, a list of all Congregations and their contributions to the Diocese.

**Section 4.** An Assistant Treasurer may be elected by the Convention, upon the nomination of the Bishop.

#### **CANON 8: REGISTRAR-HISTORIOGRAPHER**

**Section 1.** The Registrar-Historiographer shall be nominated by the Ecclesiastical Authority and elected annually by the Diocesan Convention.

**Section 2.** The Registrar-Historiographer shall gather, receive and safeguard all materials of historical significance in the Diocese and the several Parishes and Missions, and shall present to each Convention a report of all such events as may be deemed to be of permanent interest and importance.

#### **CANON 9: STANDING COMMITTEE**

**Section 1.** The Standing Committee shall consist of six (6) presbyters qualified to vote in Convention and nine (9) lay Confirmed Communicants in good standing. Of those to be initially elected by the Primary Convention, three (3) presbyters and three (3) lay communicants shall be nominated to the Convention by the Bishop, and three (3) presbyters and six (6) lay communicants shall be nominated by the Convention itself. At the first meeting after their election the members of the Standing Committee shall decide by drawing for terms their tenure of office as follows:

Of those nominated by the Bishop one (1) presbyter and one (1) lay communicant each to hold office for one (1) year, and one (1) of each to hold office for two (2) years, and one (1) of each to hold office for three (3) years; and of those nominated by the Convention one (1) presbyter and two (2) lay communicants to hold office for one (1) year, one (1) presbyter and two (2) lay communicants to hold office for two (2) years, and one (1) presbyter and two (2) lay communicants to hold office for three (3) years; so that thereafter the Convention shall elect annually persons to succeed those whose terms shall have expired at the said date and who, when so elected, shall serve the full term of three (3) years and until their successors are elected. Persons elected to succeed in office predecessors elected on nomination by the Bishop also shall be elected upon nomination by the Bishop; and in like manner those elected to succeed in office predecessors elected on nomination by the Convention, shall also be elected upon nomination by the Convention. A person who has served a full three (3) year term on the Standing Committee shall be ineligible to re-election for one (1) year after the term of office shall have expired. Vacancies occurring between Annual Conventions may be filled for the unexpired term thereof by a majority vote of the remaining members.

**Section 2.** The Standing Committee shall:

- a. Be a council of advice to the Bishop and shall fulfill, and in no manner be contrary to, the General Constitution and General Canons.
- b. Act as a planning committee for the Diocese, and shall advise the Bishop and/or the Diocesan Convention of procedures or actions which it deems wise to be taken under consideration.
- c. Establish a Commission on Finance which shall give effect to the standard business methods in Church affairs, and which shall fulfill such other duties as may be given to it from time to time by the Convention.
- d. Have no legislative authority of its own except such as may be provided by the General Canons, and such as may be given to it from time to time by the Convention.

**Section 3.** The Standing Committee shall annually elect its President and such other Officers as it may determine, and shall define their duties. It shall keep a record of its proceedings and make an annual report of them to the Convention, except such as pertain to the exercise of its function as a council of advice to the Bishop.

**Section 4.** The Standing Committee shall hold regular meetings, not less than four (4) times each year, at such time and place as it may select, and at such other times as it may be called into session by the President thereof, by the Bishop, or by any four (4) of its members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

#### **CANON 10: FINANCE**

**Section 1.** The fiscal year begins January 1.

**Section 2.** All accounts of the Diocese shall be audited annually by a Certified Public Accountant. All accounts of Parishes, Missions or other institutions shall be audited annually by a Certified Public Accountant, or Licensed Public Accountant, or such audit committee as shall be authorized by the Finance Committee, or other appropriate Diocesan authority.

**Section 3.** There shall be a Diocesan blanket bond approved by the Ecclesiastical Authority, if such bond be available, covering all persons authorized to receive or disburse monies of the Diocese or any organization thereof. If such blanket bond be not available, it shall be the duty of such persons to furnish bond in such amount and with such surety or sureties as the Bishop may deem proper, and payment for such bond shall be from the funds in the custody of each such person.

**Section 4.**

- a. The members of the Commission on Finance of the Diocese shall be ex officio the Trustees of all such Trust Funds as may be

committed to their charge by the convention or by the Standing Committee.

- b. The Trustees of the General Trust Funds of the Diocese shall be governed in the performance of their duties by the Canons of the Diocese and by resolutions of the Convention or of the Standing Committee not inconsistent with the Canons and the Articles of Incorporation.

#### **CANON 11: PENSION FUND**

**Section 1.** It shall be the duty of the Standing Committee to do all things that may be required or that it may deem proper to conform to and carry out the Church Pension Fund system as established by the Church, and provided for by the General Canons.

**Section 2.** Any Congregation which has not paid the full amount of its annual premium due the Church Pension Fund for the preceding year shall be deprived of its right to representation in the Convention, which right shall not be restored until the said premiums have been paid in full.

#### **CANON 12: TITLE TO PROPERTIES**

**Section 1.** Title to all real property pertaining to the Diocese, a Parish or other congregation shall be in the Diocese; and shall be held and conveyed in accordance with the provisions of these Canons.

**Section 2.** All legal instruments and papers relating to title shall be submitted to the Chancellor for examination and approval prior to conveyance of title to any such properties.

**Section 3.** No real property of any Parish, Organized Mission, or Mission Station on which is located its Church, Chapel, Parish House or Rectory, shall ever be encumbered or alienated without the written consent of the Rector, if there be one, the written consent of the Vestry, the written consent of the Ecclesiastical Authority, and the consent of Diocesan Convention or the Standing Committee, expressed by a resolution adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of such Convention or Committee.

#### **CANON 13: CONVOCATIONS**

The Diocese may be divided into Convocations if the Convention so authorizes upon request by the Bishop. The Bishop may determine from time to time the number of such Convocations, their geographical boundaries, and whether or not they shall be headed by Archdeacons or Deans.

#### **CANON 14: BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

The Bishop, if so desired, may establish such Boards, Commissions, and others as may expedite the work of the Church in the Diocese, by designating such Boards Commissions, and others the number of members of the same, as the Bishop shall deem necessary to fulfill their functions. The members of such Boards, Commissions, and others shall be nominated by the Bishop and be elected annually by the Convention, except that if any nomination be rejected further nomination to such position shall be made by the Bishop until one be elected.

#### **CANON 15: MISSIONS STATIONS**

**Section 1.** It shall be competent for any number of persons, ten (10) of whom are Confirmed Communicants of the Church in good standing nineteen (19) years of age and above, who are desirous of maintaining services in any community according to the doctrine, discipline and worship of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, to be formed into a Mission Station. Such persons shall make and sign a petition to the Bishop in charge of Missions, who in their discretion, may approve the same upon such terms and conditions as may be deemed expedient; and if approved, shall make and issue a certificate to that effect, stating therein the terms and conditions of the approval, and forward the same to the petitioners. The petition shall include a proposed name for the Mission Station, which shall be subject to the advice and consent of the Bishop in charge of Missions. The Bishop in charge of Missions may present to the Standing Committee a petition requesting admission of a Mission Station into union with the Convention. Upon approval by the Standing Committee, the Next Convention by majority vote may admit said Mission Station into union. The Bishop in charge of Missions may, upon the Bishop's own initiative, create a Mission Station at any place where it may deemed desirable or appropriate.

**Section 2.** The Bishop in charge of Missions shall annually appoint for each Mission Station not less than three (3) nor more than five (5) vestry members.

**Section 3.** No purchase of a church site shall be made for a Mission Station without the consent of the Bishop in charge of Missions and the Standing Committee.

#### **CANON 16: ORGANIZED MISSIONS**

##### **Section 1.**

- a. Not less than twenty-five (25) Confirmed Communicants of the Church, in good standing, of nineteen (19) years of age and upwards, may apply to become an Organized Mission in the following manner:
- b. They shall lay before the Bishop in charge of Missions and the Standing Committee a petition signed by not less than the minimum number of Confirmed Communicants as specified in **Section 1.a.** of this Canon, acknowledging and acceding to the

doctrine, discipline and worship of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and undertaking and promising that such Organized Mission, if consent to its organization be given, shall

- (1) Agree to pay a stated amount for the support of the salary of its Vicar.
- (2) Agree to submit annually a proposed budget to the proper Diocesan Committee.

- c. If the Bishop in charge of Missions and the Standing Committee consent to the organization of the Congregation as an Organized Mission, the Bishop shall appoint a Minister to perfect the same.
- d. The Vicar appointed by the Bishop in charge of Missions shall preside over the organizational meeting, and not less than three (3), nor more than nine (9), vestry members shall be elected, whose qualifications and duties insofar as applicable, shall be the same as those which devolve upon or pertain to the Vestry of a Parish, subject to interpretation by the Bishop in charge of Missions. From among their number, the Vestry shall elect two (2) Wardens, designated as Junior and Senior, although all duties belong equally to both, and from among their number or from among signers of the petition a Clerk and a Treasurer.
- e. At the meeting of the Diocesan Convention which follows the organizational meeting described in this Canon the Bishop in charge of Missions shall present the petition of the newly Organized Mission, along with the Bishop's recommendations and the recommendations of the Standing Committee. The Mission may then be admitted into union with the Convention as an Organized Mission by a majority vote of the Convention.

**Section 2.** No purchase of a church site shall be made for an Organized Mission without the consent of the Bishop in charge of Missions and the Standing Committee.

**Section 3.** The Vicar shall preside over and conduct the Vestry meetings which shall be held a minimum of once a quarter. In the absence of the Vicar, the Senior Warden, or if the Senior Warden be not present then the Junior Warden, shall conduct the Vestry meetings.

**Section 4.** The provisions of Canons 17, 18 and 19, which refer to Parishes, shall apply to Missions and Mission Stations where applicable.

## CANON 17: PARISHES

### Section 1.

- a. Notice of the desire to organize a Parish shall be given to the Ecclesiastical Authority. Said notice shall be in writing, and contain such information as may enable the Bishop and Standing Committee to judge the propriety of the proposed act, which notice shall be signed by the persons who desire to organize. Approval by the Bishop and Standing Committee shall be essential for organization, and for the admission of the Parish into union with the Convention.
- b. Every application to organize a new Parish in the general area served by an existing Parish or Parishes, shall be accompanied by a certificate showing the approval or disapproval of the Rector and Vestry of each of such existing Parishes. In all cases the consent of the Bishop and Standing Committee must be obtained.

**Section 2.** For the organization of a Parish, not less than one hundred (100) Confirmed Communicants nineteen (19) years of age or over, shall assemble at the specified time and place, due notice having been given at Divine Service on the two (2) preceding Sundays, and adopt and sign the Articles of Association prescribed by the Diocese in Section 3 of this Canon. Provided, however, that no such organization shall be had until a specified annual sum towards the support of the Rector and the expenses of the Parish together with the pension premium and a reasonable provision for the support of the Diocese and Diocesan expenses shall be assured to the satisfaction of the Bishop and the Standing Committee.

### Section 3.

We whose names are hereto subscribed, desirous of enjoying the privileges of religious worship and instruction for ourselves and families, according to the forms and doctrines of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Inc., and desirous of being assembled in conformity with the Canon prescribed by the Diocesan Convention, of said Church, for the government of Parishes composing same, under and by virtue of said acts, on this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, Anno Domini \_\_\_\_\_, do form ourselves into a Parish, and adopt the following Articles of Association, to-wit:

**Article I.** This Parish shall be known by the name of "The Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of

\_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_".

at

**Article II.** This Parish acknowledges, accedes to, and adopts, and shall at all times adhere to the doctrine, discipline, worship, and usages of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and likewise the Constitutions and Canons of said Church, as set forth by the General Convention and the Charter and Canons of the Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Inc., as prescribed by the Diocesan Convention.

**Article III.** When any person uniting with this Association shall disclaim, or refuse, conformity to the Authorities mentioned in the preceding Article, that person shall cease to be a member of this Parish.

**Article IV.** The Wardens and Vestry of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be elected as provided in the Canons of the Diocese, and their duties shall be such as are conferred by said Canons.

**Article V.** Delegates shall be elected to represent the Parish at the annual meeting of the Diocesan Convention as provided by the Canons and it shall be their duty to attend all meetings of the Diocesan Convention.

**Article VI.** In case of the dissolution or extinction of this Parish, for any cause whatsoever, the lands, tenements, and other estates,

real or personal, if such there be, shall vest in The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Inc.

**Section 4.** Any Congregation complying with the provisions of Canon 17 may, upon application in writing, accompanied by the Articles of Association, or a certified copy thereof, be admitted into union with the Diocesan Convention.

**Section 5.** With the adoption of these Canons by the Convention, each and every Parish now located in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast automatically comes under the items listed in **Section 3**.

**Section 6.** The Parish Vestry shall pay its clergy at least the minimum salary and allowances which have been or may be established by the Standing Committee for clergy serving in this Diocese.

**Section 7.** The Parish Vestry shall procure such property and liability insurance coverage as the Standing Committee may establish from time to time.

#### **CANON 18: PARISH MEETINGS**

**Section 1.** The Congregation of each Parish shall meet at least annually, on a date to be appointed by the Vestry. Notice of such meeting shall be given by the Rector, or, if there be none, by one of the Wardens, to the members of the Congregation, at least two (2) weeks before the appointed date, either in writing or at the regular services. The meeting shall be designated as the Annual Parish Meeting. At such meeting, after election of a Secretary for the meeting, there shall be conducted the election of vestry members, unless they have been elected previously; the Rector and Parish Treasurer shall make their reports and the reports of Parish organizations shall likewise then be made; and such other business as may be properly brought before the meeting by any Communicant entitled to vote as provided by **Section 4** of this Canon shall be transacted. A vestry member may be elected at any other Parish meeting if the Vestry so determines and notice is given as in the case of the Annual Parish Meeting.

**Section 2.** Other Parish meetings may be held as occasion may require, at such times as may be appointed by the Rector or Vestry. Due notice shall be given as provided for the Annual Meeting.

**Section 3.** At Parish Meetings, the Rector shall preside, or, in the Rector's absence, one of the Wardens.

**Section 4.** Except when otherwise specified by existing charter, those entitled to vote shall be confirmed Communicants in good standing of not less than sixteen (16) years of age who are canonically resident as of the first day of the month in which the meeting is held. The qualified voters present shall constitute a quorum.

**Section 5.** All elections and other matters voted upon shall be decided by a majority of qualified voters present.

**Section 6.** Wardens must be chosen from those who are vestry members. The Rector may appoint one (1) person of the Vestry as Senior Warden or as Junior Warden, or the choice of both Wardens may be left to election by the Parish Meeting, which may in turn leave the selection of Wardens to the Vestry.

#### **CANON 19: PARISH VESTRY**

**Section 1.** The Vestry shall consist of such number of Communicants entitled to vote in Parish Meetings, not less than three (3) nor more than thirty (30), as shall be determined by the Congregation. The election of Vestry members shall be held at a Parish Meeting and this election shall ensure adequate representation for the Parish and adequate qualifications for those elected.

**Section 2.** It shall be the duty of the Vestry to take charge of the temporal concerns of the parish. It shall elect a rector. Upon selection by the rector, and with the concurrence of the Vestry, curates may be called. Curates and all other staff and employees shall serve under the authority and direction and at the pleasure of the rector. It shall keep order in the church during Divine Service and work with the clergy for the furtherance of the Church's program. The Vestry shall be responsible for seeing that reports and registers required by the Canons are kept in order. All reports to be sent in to the Diocese shall be the responsibility of the Vestry and Rector working together.

**Section 3.** The officers of the Vestry shall include a Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Clerk, Treasurer, and any other offices as they may become necessary. The Clerk and Treasurer may be members of the Vestry but are not required to be.

**Section 4.** The Rector shall preside over and conduct the Vestry meetings which shall be held a minimum of once a quarter. In the absence of the Rector, the Senior Warden or if the Senior Warden be not present then the Junior Warden, shall conduct the Vestry meetings.

**Section 5.** The Rector may cast a vote when the Rector's vote will affect the outcome.

**Section 6.** The Vestry shall report to the Annual Parish Meeting each year on its activities from the previous year.

#### **CANON 20: CHANGES IN STATUS OF PARISHES AND MISSIONS**

##### **Section 1.**

a. When a Parish has not, for the space of two (2) years, complied with the conditions required for its organization as a Parish, as provided by Canon 17, this fact may be reported to the Convention by the Standing Committee, through its Secretary, whereupon the Convention may, by a majority vote of each Order, annul the organization of said Parish and thereupon said Parish shall become a Mission.

b. It shall be the duty of the Ecclesiastical Authority to take the necessary steps to preserve the property and records of such Parish for the benefit of the Diocese.

**Section 2.** If the Vestry of any Parish is of the opinion that the Parish is unable to comply with canonical conditions and requirements applicable to Parishes, it may so declare by resolution; which resolution shall be submitted to a meeting of the Congregation after notice of the time, place and purpose of the meeting has been given in writing to the members of the Congregation or from the chancel on a

Sunday preceding such meeting. If the resolution is approved by a majority of the Confirmed Communicants nineteen (19) years of age and above, certified copy thereof signed by each such Confirmed Communicant approving the same shall be forwarded to the Bishop together with a certificate by the Wardens that the resolution has been considered and adopted at a meeting of the Congregation duly called as above provided. If the Bishop approves such action in writing, such Parish shall thereupon become an Organized Mission in union with the Convention. The above papers shall be filed with the Secretary of the Convention who shall notify the next convention of such action.

**Section 3.** The Bishop in charge of Missions may, when an Organized Mission has not, for the space of two (2) years, complied with the conditions required for its organization as an Organized Mission as provided by Canon 16, annul the organization of said Organized Mission, with the approval of the Standing Committee, reporting this fact to the next Annual Convention, and it shall thereupon become a Mission Station.

**Section 4.** When, in the judgment of the Bishop in charge of Missions, a Mission has not for the space of two (2) years fulfilled the purpose for which it was created, the Bishop shall, with the approval of the Standing committee, declare such mission extinct and report such action to the next Annual Convention. It shall be the duty of said Bishop, with the approval of the Standing Committee, to make such disposition of the properties of an extinct Mission as shall be deemed best for the interests of the Diocese, and said Bishop may execute conveyance of any real property with the consent of the Standing Committee.

### **CANON 21: CLERGY AND THEIR DUTIES**

**Section 1.** Every Minister of this Church in charge of a Congregation shall keep a register of baptisms, confirmations, communicants, marriages, and burials within the Minister's cure, reporting the same to the Bishop ten (10) days before each Annual Diocesan Convention, stating the number of services held and official acts performed by him from January 1 through December 31.

**Section 2.** Each Rector of a Parish and Minister in charge of a Congregation shall send to the Bishop each year a list of communicants or members, as requested by the Bishop, of the Parish or Mission, with addresses.

**Section 3.** Before any clergy may be allowed to perform the Sacraments in any Church or Congregation, in this Diocese, they must first produce satisfactory evidence that they are an authorized Minister of this Church in good standing. Whenever there is a settled Rector or Minister, that person shall be the sole judge in the premises subject only to the Ecclesiastical Authority, but if the Parish is vacant, the Wardens and Vestry shall require the fulfillment of the above conditions, together with approval of the Ecclesiastical Authority.

**Section 4.** The staff and employees of a congregation shall serve under the direction and control and pleasure of the rector or minister in charge. Nothing in this section, however, shall prevent the rector or minister in charge from delegating to the Vestry or committee thereof, all or part of the authority to employ, direct, control, evaluate, discharge, or otherwise control the staff or employees.

### **CANON 22: COMMISSION ON MINISTRY**

**Section 1.** There shall be a Commission on Ministry of five (5) learned Presbyters (of whom two (2) must be Parochial Priests) canonically resident within the Diocese; one (1) Deacon and such number of Lay Persons, not exceeding six (6), as shall be determined by the Bishop, who shall be Confirmed Communicants in good standing. Such members shall be nominated by the Bishop and subject to confirmation by the vote of Convention to serve a term of four (4) years.

**Section 2.** The Commission on Ministry:

- a. May adopt rules for its work, subject to the approval of the Bishop, provided the same are not inconsistent with the General Canons and the Diocesan Canons.
- b. May appoint committees of the Commission to act on its own behalf.
- c. Shall assist the Bishop in matters pertaining to the enlistment and selection of persons for Ministry and in the guidance and pastoral care of all Postulants and Candidates for Holy Orders.
- d. Assist the Bishop in the guidance and pastoral care of Deacons, Deaconesses and Professional Church Workers.
- e. Assist the Bishop in matters pertaining to the continuing education of the Ministry.
- f. In the presence of the Bishop and under the Bishop's guidance and oversight, shall interview each Candidate before their ordination, alike to the Diaconate and Priesthood, to ascertain their personal readiness for such ordination, and shall report in writing and without delay the findings of this interview to the Standing Committee.
- g. May administer examination which are prepared by the National Board of Examining Chaplains.

### **CANON 23: DEPUTIES TO GENERAL CONVENTION**

**Section 1.** At the Diocesan Convention held not less than twelve (12) months next before the regular meeting of the General Convention, four (4) clergy qualified to vote in Convention (three (3) of whom must be Parochial Priests), and four (4) laypersons who shall be Confirmed Communicants in good standing, shall be elected to represent this Diocese as Deputies, in said Convention. Such Deputies shall be furnished with a certificate of election, signed by the President and Secretary of the Diocesan Convention. The Diocesan Convention shall in the same manner elect four (4) clergy qualified to vote in Convention three (3) of whom must be Parochial Priests), and four (4) laypersons, with like qualifications, as alternates.



**Section 2.** It shall be the duty of the Deputies-Elect, not less than four (4) months before the meeting of the General Convention, to signify to the Bishop their acceptance of the appointment, and intention to perform its functions, in default of which, the Bishop shall designate so many of the alternates having the greatest number of votes. Should there be an insufficient number of elected alternates to fulfill deputy vacancies, the Bishop may nominate enough lay and/or clergy persons, qualified as in Section 1 of this Canon, to insure a full representation of the Diocese. Such nomination shall be approved by the Standing Committee. The persons so designated by the Bishop, being furnished with the Bishop's certificate thereof, shall have all the power of authority of the Deputies elected by the Diocesan Convention. In case of a vacancy in the Episcopate, or the inability of the Bishop to act, this power of designation shall be exercised by the Standing Committee.

**Section 3.** If at a meeting of the General Convention, any Deputy elected by the Convention, or designated by the Bishop or Standing Committee, shall fail to attend, or after taking their seat, shall obtain leave of absence for the remainder of the session, such vacancy shall be supplied by the vote of the remaining Clerical and Lay Deputies who may be in attendance at said General Convention. In each case a Lay Deputy can only be replaced by a Lay Person, and a Clerical Deputy can only be replaced by a Clergy. If a deputy must be absent only for a portion of the session, the vacancy may be temporarily filled through use of the procedure provided in this Section.

**Section 4.** Reasonable travel and other expenses of Deputies to General Convention shall be paid by the Diocese.

#### **CANON 24: UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH**

**Section 1.** The University of the South is declared to be the institution of higher learning of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast.

**Section 2.** The diocesan Convention shall elect one priest and two lay communicants to serve for a term of three (3) years as Trustees of the University of the South, which terms shall be staggered. Trustees so elected shall meet the following criteria:

- 1) Trustees shall be personally committed to the aims and purposes of the University.
- 2) Each Trustee shall demonstrate his or her personal commitment to the University by, among other things, attending the Board of Trustee's annual May meeting, such other special meetings as may be called, and one orientation session for new Trustees, which sessions are held immediately prior to each annual meeting. Trustees shall also familiarize themselves with the Trustee Handbook and the University's governing documents, including its Charter, as amended, Constitution and Ordinances.
- 3) Trustees shall serve as direct communicators between the University and the Diocese from which the trustee was elected, and shall timely inform that Diocese of the actions of the Boards of Trustees and Regents and the University administration.
- 4) Trustees shall provide a meaningful level of annual financial support to the University as a symbol of their commitment to its mission and financial well-being.

In the event a Trustee becomes unwilling or unable to serve, the Ecclesiastical Authority of this Diocese shall appoint a qualified communicant to complete the remainder of the term.

**Section 3.** The Trustees shall annually report to the Diocesan Convention.

**Section 4.** Reasonable travel and other expenses of the Trustees shall be paid by the Diocese.

#### **CANON 25: ECCLESIASTICAL DISCIPLINE**

**Section 1.** Title IV of General Canons. Those provisions of the Title IV of the General Canons which are applicable to the Diocese are hereby incorporated as part of this Title. To the extent, if any, that any of the provisions of this Title are in conflict or inconsistent with the provisions of the Title IV, the provisions of the Title IV shall govern.

**Section 2.** Discipline Structure.

- a. Disciplinary Board. The Board shall consist of not less than seven persons, four of whom are members of the Clergy and three of whom are Laity.
- b. Clergy Members. The Clergy members of the Board must be canonically and geographically resident with the Diocese.
- c. Lay Members. The lay members of the Board shall be Adult Communicants in Good Standing, and geographically resident in the Diocese.
- d. Election. The members of the Board shall be elected by the convention. Each member shall be elected for a three (3)-year term; except, if a member is elected to fill a vacancy, the term of such member shall be the unexpired term of the member being replaced. The term of the member shall commence on the first (1st) day of the year following election. The terms of office of the Board shall be staggered and arranged into three classes.
- e. Vacancies. Vacancies on the Board shall be filled as follows:
  - (i) Upon the determination that a vacancy exists, the President of the Board shall notify the Bishop of the vacancy and request appointment of a replacement member of the same order as the member to be replaced.
  - (ii) The Bishop shall appoint a replacement Board member in consultation with the Standing Committee.
  - (iii) Persons appointed to fill vacancies on the Board shall meet the same eligibility requirements as apply to elected Board members.
  - (iv) With respect to a vacancy created for any reason other than pursuant to a challenge as provided below, the term of any person selected as a replacement Board member shall be until the next annual Convention. With respect to a vacancy resulting from a challenge, the replacement Board member shall serve only for the proceedings for which the elected Board member is not serving as a result of the challenge.
- f. Preserving Impartiality. In any proceeding under this Title, if any member of a Conference Panel or Hearing Panel of the Board shall become aware of a personal conflict of interest or undue bias, that member shall immediately notify the president of the

Board and request a replacement member of the Panel. Respondent's Counsel and the Church Attorney shall have the right to challenge any member of a Panel for conflict of interest or undue bias by motion to the Panel for disqualification of the challenged member. The member of the Panel not the subjects of the challenge shall promptly consider the motion and determine whether the challenged Panel member shall be disqualified from participating in the proceeding.

- g. President. Within sixty (60) days following the annual Convention, the Board shall convene to elect a President to serve for the following calendar year.
- h. Intake Officer. The Intake Officer shall be appointed from time to time by the Bishop after consultation with the Board. The Bishop may appoint one or more Intake Officers according to the needs of the Diocese. The Bishop shall publish the name(s) and contact information of the Intake Officer(s) throughout the Diocese.
- i. Investigator. The Bishop shall appoint an Investigator in consultation with the President of the Board. The Investigator may, but need not, be a Member of the Church.
- j. Church Attorney. Within sixty (60) days following each annual Convention, the Standing Committee shall appoint an attorney to serve as Church Attorney to serve for the following calendar year. The person so selected must be a Member of the Church and a duly licensed attorney, but need not reside within the Diocese.
- k. Pastoral Response Coordinator. The Bishop may appoint a Pastoral Response Coordinator, to serve at the will of the Bishop in coordinating the delivery of appropriate pastoral responses provided for in Title IV.8 of the General Canons and this Title. The Pastoral Response Coordinator may be the Intake Officer, but shall not be a person serving in any other appointed or elected capacity under this Title.
- l. Advisors. In each proceeding under this Title, the Bishop shall appoint an Advisor for the Complainant and an Advisor for the Respondent. Persons serving as Advisors shall hold no other appointed or elected position provided for under this Title, and shall not include chancellors or vice chancellors of this Diocese or any person likely to be called as a witness in the proceeding.
- m. Clerk. The Board shall appoint a Board Clerk to assist the Board with records management and administrative support. The Clerk may be a member of the Board.

**Section 3. Procedure.**

- a. Charges for which a member of the Clergy may be made to stand trial are contained in Title IV in the Canons of The Episcopal Church.
- b. The mode and manner of making charges securing presentments and of conducting trials shall be as established in the Canons of The Episcopal Church.

**Section 4. Costs and Expenses.**

- a. The reasonable costs and expenses of the Board, the Intake Officer, the Investigator, the Church Attorney, the Board Clerk and the Pastoral Response Coordinator shall be the obligation of the Diocese, subject to budgetary constraints as may be established by the Standing Committee.

**Section 5. Records.**

- a. Records of Proceedings. Records of active proceedings before the Board, including the period of any pending appeal, shall be preserved and maintained in the custody of the Clerk, if there be one, otherwise by the Diocesan offices.
- b. Permanent Records. The Bishop shall make provision of the permanent storage of records of all proceedings under this Title at the Diocese and the Archives of The Episcopal Church, as prescribed in Title IV of the General Canons.

## **CANON 26: ELECTION OF A BISHOP**

**Section 1.** Pursuant to the provisions of Article VII, Section 4, of the Articles of Incorporation of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Inc., the procedure for the election of a bishop shall be stated below.

**Section 2.** Nominees for the election of a bishop shall be chosen either by the Search Committee or by nominating petitions. The Search Committee will nominate from four to seven candidates. A nominating petition must be signed by four clergy who are eligible to vote in a diocesan convention and four lay persons eligible to serve as delegates to a diocesan convention. Nominating petitions must be submitted to the Search Committee by a deadline set by it in order for background checks on such nominees to be conducted. No nominations from the floor will be order.

**Section 3.** A Search Committee appointed by the Standing Committee will be charged with the responsibility of preparing and publicizing educational material on the historic episcopate; preparing a profile of the Diocese; interviewing potential nominees; choosing from four to seven nominees to be presented at the Convention at which the election will be held; verifying the validity of nominating petitions and carrying out any additional duties that may be assigned to it by the Standing Committee.

**Section 4.** The Standing Committee shall choose the date for the Convention at which the election will be conducted. The Standing Committee shall choose such additional committees as may be needed for securing a site for the electing convention and making all necessary arrangements for it; securing a site and making all necessary arrangements for the ordination of the new bishop; providing support to a retiring bishop and that bishop's staff and family and to the bishop elect and the family of the bishop elect and any such additional matters as the Standing Committee may deem appropriate.

## **CANON 27: ESTABLISHMENT OF A CATHEDRAL**

**Section 1.** A Cathedral may be established by the Bishop in the manner provided by this Canon and when so established shall be known and used as the Cathedral Church of the Diocese.

**Section 2.** The Cathedral shall be established by written agreement (“Agreement”) between the Diocese and the Parish to be designated as the Cathedral Parish, the terms and provisions of which must be approved by the Bishop, the Standing Committee of the Diocese, and the Vestry of the Cathedral Parish, and, which to become effective and binding upon the Diocese and the Cathedral Parish, must be approved by the Convention in a vote by orders.

**Section 3.** The Cathedral shall be governed and operated as set forth in the Agreement and in accordance with the Canons of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast and the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

#### **CANON 28: AMENDMENT OF CANONS**

All proposals altering or amending these canons shall be presented in writing by the Bishop, the Chancellors, or a delegate to the convention to the Secretary of the Diocese and the Chancellors not less than ninety (90) days prior to the opening of the Convention and shall be distributed to each congregation in the Diocese not less than sixty (60) days prior to the opening of the Convention. Any such proposal shall be referred to the Convention Committee on Canons and Rules of Order and shall be reported to the Convention as part of the report of the Committee or of the Chancellors, with or without endorsement. If it be approved by a majority of the two (2) orders voting separately thereon, it shall become effective upon adjournment of the Convention.