



THE DIOCESE OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST

Convention Delegate Guide

Almighty and everlasting Father, you have given the Holy Spirit to abide with us for ever: Bless, we pray, with his grace and presence, the bishops and other clergy and the laity soon to be assembled in your Name, that your Church, being preserved in true faith and godly discipline, may fulfill all the mind of him who loved it and gave himself for it, your Son Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP 255)

Selection of Convention Delegates

Delegates are elected by the congregation, or a congregation may choose to delegate the election to the Vestry. Delegates are elected no later than 60 days prior to the date of Convention and serve for one (1) year, or until their successors are elected. While each year typically only has the Annual Diocesan Convention, in years where there are Special or Called Meetings of Convention, Delegates will also serve at these gatherings.

To be elected as a Delegate, one must be a Confirmed Communicant in good standing. This means that an individual is a member of the Episcopal Church of at least sixteen years of age, Confirmed, received Holy Communion in this Church at least three times in the prior year, and in the past year has been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God (TEC Canons Title I, Canon 17, Section 1-3). Note: Parish bylaws may narrow this definition, such as defining faithfulness in giving or serving. Congregations are entitled to a specific number of lay delegates based on the number of congregants in good standing. This information is provided in the pre-Convention materials.

Overall, when identifying individuals to elect to serve as Delegates, since they represent the congregation, they must be active lay members of the congregation who not only serve but also give financially.

What is Diocesan Convention?

Diocesan Convention is the legislative authority of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast (Canon 3, Section 1). Convention meets in an annual session, normally sometime in mid to late February, at a location that rotates around the Diocese. All members of the Diocese are invited to attend Convention, but only Clergy and Lay Delegates will have seat and voice during business sessions.

How do I register for Convention?

Registration is via the Diocesan Website: diocgc.org. If you are Delegate or Alternate, your congregation is responsible for registering you for Convention. Congregations are also responsible for paying all Clergy and Delegate fees (Canon 3, Section 6, Subsection a).

Non-delegates are welcome to attend and will also need to register for Convention via the Diocesan Website.



Fees vary by year but typically are around \$150 for each Clergy or Delegate, \$50 for each attending Alternate, \$25 for each Visitor (such as non-voting Clergy, Clergy spouses, and Standing Committee members). Youth (Delegates, Alternates, or Visitors) attend for free.

Your Responsibilities as a Delegate at Convention

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Diocesan Convention Delegate. The role of a Convention Delegate is to:

- ❖ Attend the pre-Convention Zoom meeting.
- ❖ Read the Study Materials for Convention and come prepared for the Business Sessions.
- ❖ Represent your congregation at Convention.
- ❖ Report back to your congregation on events, actions, and decisions that occurred at Convention.

Communications to Expect from the Diocese

- ❖ The Diocesan Office will regularly send out electronic newsletters with important information for Convention. Diocesan newsletters will involve important information for submitting nominations, reports, and resolutions.
- ❖ The Diocesan website is the main hub for all information pertaining to Convention. A Diocesan Convention webpage will be active once the first electronic communication about Convention is sent out.
- ❖ Study Materials will be emailed out a few weeks before Convention gathers directly to all Delegates.
- ❖ The Journal of Convention is published the Fall following Convention and is found on the Diocesan Website under Governance of the Resource Center: diocgc.org/governance. The Journal contains important information including a directory of the Diocese, proceedings of Convention, reports of the prior year, Diocesan Articles of Incorporation, Rules of Order, and Diocesan Canons.

How to be Prepared for Convention

- ❖ Study Material – Importantly, familiarize yourself with the Study Material for Convention. The complete Study Material packet will include the schedule, list of Delegates, nominations for Standing Committee and General Convention Deputies, the Proposed Budget, the Financial Statement, Reports to Convention, and Resolutions. This information is available around the time of the Pre-Convention Meeting.
- ❖ Pre-Convention Meeting – Attend the Pre-Convention Zoom Meeting. If you are unable to attend, a recording is provided on the website. At the meeting, the Bishop and Diocesan staff will review important details related to the business of Convention. They will also practice voting and highlight important details related to the formative aspects of Convention.
- ❖ Delegation Meeting – While not required, it is recommended that the delegation from a congregation meets together, potentially with the vestry, to discuss issues being presented at Convention. Since the Delegates represent the congregation, it is important to be an informed representational voice.



What to Expect at Convention

Convention not only involves the legislative sessions, but also a ministry fair of vibrant ministries from across the Diocese, and workshops designed to nourish you spiritually. Throughout each day, there will be time for fellowship and formation through small group discussions, keynote speakers, workshops, and receptions. Convention also incorporates worship with Daily Office services the first day and culminating with Holy Eucharist at the close of the second day.

The day before Convention gathers, a budget hearing zoom meeting will take place as a forum for addressing questions and concerns related to the upcoming year's budget. The first day of Convention will involve time for registration and gathering before beginning with Morning Prayer. At registration, you will receive a nametag and packet with all pertinent information for business sessions. Business sessions comprise most of the first day, with time in the afternoon for workshops and an evening social. The second day often involves additional business sessions, a guest keynote speaker, and the closing Eucharist.

When gathering for business sessions, delegations often sit together and Alternate Delegates and Guests sit in a separate section. Individuals sitting at the front table, or the dais, are the leadership of Convention. They will include the Bishop, who is the President of Convention; the Chancellors of the Diocese, who serve as Parliamentarians; and the Secretary of Convention, elected as the session begins. Assistants and Diocesan Staff will normally be near the leadership to provide assistance.

Voting at Convention

In the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, we use an online voting platform called VPOLL®. When you arrive for Convention each morning, and when you sign on for the pre-Convention zoom meeting, log into VPOLL®.

1. On your device, go to <https://www.vpoll.mobi/>
2. Enter the Access Code. This code will be provided in pre-Convention materials. (Look for the section labeled "Join A Meeting" to enter the access code.)
3. Enter the Login Criteria: your last name, and your individual ID number. Your individual ID number will be provided in the pre-Convention materials.
4. Select the Polling Session. This information will be provided when you arrive.

VPOLL® directions and testing will take place as part of the pre-Convention zoom meeting.

Speaking at Convention

Convention is governed by Robert's Rules of Order for parliamentary proceedings. A copy of these rules will be provided as part of pre-Convention materials, in the packet given at registration, and on the Diocesan Convention webpage.

In short, a Delegate who speaks only to the point being discussed, shall rise, be recognized by the President, address the President in a clear and audible voice as follows: Right Reverend Sir. No Delegate may speak twice in the same debate without leave of the Convention. These rules will be covered by the Parliamentarians at the start of Convention.

Questions?

If you have any additional questions, please contact Jenn Roberts at jenn@diocgc.org.