

# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST COVENANT BETWEEN THE BISHOP AND THE DEANS OF REGIONS

**I. GENERAL** In order to deepen our common bonds as the Episcopal Church in the Central Gulf Coast, we commit to utilizing the current regional structure as envisioned and organized in 2014. At a meeting of the Archdeacons [now to be called Deans] and the Bishop on August 27, 2015 we discussed the benefits and challenges of such a structure. We shared what we have done, and what we have not done. It was candid and compassionate. Trying to legislate community is fraught with danger, especially for Episcopalians. Bureaucracy is the last thing we need. This strategy is not a proposed canon, nor is it a godly admonition. It is a strategy meant to express the spiritual bond forged between us through in the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are the Body of Christ; we find God most clearly and fully when we are together. A regional network is a means to express and further that reality.

## II. PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS

**A. Region:** The Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast is organized into six geographical entities called regions, the head of which is referred to as a Dean. The purpose of the regions is:

- 1. Collegiality:** Strengthen the bonds of community between the clergy of the region, as well as the laity and clergy of the region.
- 2. Collaboration:** A means by which the diocese can better accomplish goals, offer programs, provide resources that our churches cannot necessarily do on their own
- 3. Communication:** To assist the Bishop in sharing diocesan goals, projects and initiatives with the clergy and lay leadership.
- 4. Disaster Response:** To provide a network of resources to assist each other in the event of a disaster.

**B. Dean:** The Dean of each region shall be a member of the clergy appointed by the Bishop and continue at the direction of the Bishop for a term not to exceed three years. The Dean arranges meetings of the regional clergy to provide fellowship, continuing education, communication, planning and moral support for clergy and their families, and to gather lay members to share ideas and help facilitate diocesan projects. While serving as the Dean of a region involves responsibility and privilege, the Dean shall not take on the additional title of “The Very Reverend.”

**C. CLERICUS:** The clergy of the region. For clergy assigned to a church [active or retired] it is the geographical area of the church where they serve. For non-parochial clergy, it is the area in which they reside.

## **II. Responsibilities of the Dean:**

**A. With Clergy:** The Dean agrees to communicate and convene a minimum of four[4] meetings or events for the clergy of the region during a calendar year. The time, location and purpose of these meetings is up to the discretion of the Dean and clergy of the region. “Clergy” is meant to include all priests and deacons in the region. The schedule of all events will be communicated to the Bishop’s office for inclusion on his calendar. The Bishop will attend a minimum of one regional meeting of the clergy during the calendar year. The Dean will serve as a pastoral resource for clergy and lay leadership [Sr. Wardens] especially during times of transition, illness, or other pressing circumstances. The Dean will assist the Bishop in welcoming new clergy (priests and deacons) who enter the Diocese.

**B. With the Bishop:** The Dean serve as a group of advisors to the Bishop, and as ambassadors for the Bishop. The Dean agrees to attend occasional meetings between the Bishop and Deans.

**C. With the people of the region:** The Dean of each region will assist the Bishop in organizing, convening, and leading a pre-convention meeting for all lay and clergy delegates to the annual Diocesan Convention. The purpose of this meeting will be to meet other delegates, communicate details about the convention, present the budget and discuss issues that will be introduced at the convention. The location, time and format of the meeting is at the discretion of the Dean in collaboration with the Bishop. The Dean will assist the Bishop in the regional implementation of diocesan goals and projects, and help the Bishop ensure that each region is represented on the Commissions and Committees of the diocese. The Dean will be an active participant in any Diocesan liturgies in the region. [i.e. Ordinations, New Ministry, Funerals]

### **2016 PRE-CONVENTION REGIONAL MEETINGS**

As a means by which to utilize this network as a means for communication and collaboration, the following regional pre-convention meetings are proposed. The Bishop’s office will coordinate with each Dean the final times, details and location within each region. The Dean will open/close the meetings with prayer.

**Reg 1 & 2 Mobile/Eastern Shore area** [Due to Mardi Gras, these regions are combined]

Date: January 24, 2016

Place: Christ Church Cathedral [to be verified]

Time: 2:00 – 4:00

**Reg 6 Panama City area**

Date: January 31

Place: St. Andrews Panama City

Time: 4-6 pm

**Reg 5 Fort Walton Beach area**

Date: February 3

Place: St. Andrews Destin

Time: 6-8 pm

**Reg 3 Pensacola area**

Date: February 11

Place: St. Christopher's Pensacola

Time: 6-8 pm

**Reg 4 Dothan area**

February 14

Place: Nativity Dothan

Time: 3-5 pm