

**THE CANONS OF
THE CATHOLIC EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

21st February 2025

Preamble

We, the members of The Catholic Episcopal Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, adopt this Canon Law to govern our community, preserve our faith, and guide our practices. We seek to uphold the teachings of Jesus Christ, following the traditions of the historic Anglican Communion, and ensure the spiritual growth and well-being of all members of our church.

The History of the Catholic Episcopal Church

The Catholic Episcopal Church was founded by a group of visionary bishops who felt the need for an inclusive and spiritual community. The church was established with the mission of spreading God's love through faith, compassion, and service to others.

The Catholic Episcopal Church has witnessed numerous testimonies of transformation and spiritual renewal. The members of the church work tirelessly to help those in need and to promote peace and justice in society.

Today, the Catholic Episcopal Church is a beacon of hope and love, guiding its members on their spiritual journey and sharing the light of Christ with the world.

Mission

Our mission is to glorify God through reverent and sacramental worship, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and serve the community with love and compassion. We are committed to maintaining and promoting the rich Catholic and Anglican or Episcopal liturgical and theological heritage, providing a welcoming spiritual home for all who seek a Catholic faith within an Anglican tradition.

Vision

Our vision is to be a vibrant and welcoming community that reflects the love of Christ in all that we do. We aspire to be a beacon of light and hope in the world, demonstrating the presence of God through our sacramental life, our commitment to social justice, and our dedication to prayer and spiritual formation.

Title I: General Norms

The Canon Law refers to the body of laws and regulations adopted by The Catholic Episcopal Church. Clergy are ordained ministers of the church, including bishops, priests, and deacons. Laity are members of the church who are not part of the clergy. The term Synod refers to an assembly of clergy and laity for governing the church.

The authority of the Holy Scriptures as the inspired Word of God is emphasized. The importance of the sacraments in the life of the church is highlighted. The commitment to love, justice, and mercy in all actions and decisions is affirmed. Adherence to the Book of Common Prayer and other authorized liturgical texts is also underscored.

Title II: Ecclesiastical Authority

The Presiding Archbishop: The Presiding Archbishop oversees the spiritual and administrative affairs of the church. Providing pastoral care and guidance to clergy and laity is a key responsibility. The Presiding Archbishop presides over diocesan synods and other church meetings. Acting as the chief bishop and teacher of the church is another essential role.

Clergy: Leading worship services and administering sacraments are primary duties. Providing spiritual counselling and support to members is emphasized. Clergy are expected to uphold the moral and ethical standards of the church. Participation in diocesan and parish governance is also a significant responsibility.

Laity: Participating in worship services and church activities is encouraged. Supporting the mission and ministry of the church is highlighted. Lay members contribute to the decision-making processes of the church. Serving on parish councils and committees is another important role.

Title III: Sacraments and Liturgy

Baptism is described as the initiation into the Christian faith through the sacrament of Baptism, typically administered by a bishop or priest. The **Eucharist** is the celebration of the Holy Communion, with the consecration of bread and wine. **Confirmation** involves the laying on of hands by the bishop for the strengthening of the Holy Spirit. **Marriage** is the union of two people, regardless their gender in holy matrimony, following the rites of the church. **Ordination** refers to the consecration of clergy through the laying on of hands. **Confession** is the sacrament of reconciliation, with absolution by a priest. **Anointing of the Sick** involves the sacrament of healing through anointing with oil.

Liturgy: The structure and order of worship services are outlined in the Book of Common Prayer. The use of liturgical seasons and observances, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, is

described. Guidelines for special services, such as weddings, funerals, and ordinations, are also provided.

Title IV: Church Governance

Church Structure: The hierarchy of leadership includes the Presiding Archbishop, House of Bishops, priests, deacons, and lay members. The roles and responsibilities of various church offices and committees are defined. The establishment and management of church properties and resources are also covered.

House of Bishops: this includes all bishops of the church, and it is the Presiding Archbishop Council. All decisions will be made collegially. That is to say:

- **Joint Decisions:** Important decisions are made through group consensus or majority vote, promoting participation and equitable representation of all members.
- **Distribution of Power:** Power and authority are not concentrated in a single person but are shared among all members of the collegial body.
- **Diversity of Opinions:** The variety of perspectives and experiences of the members can enrich the decision-making process and lead to more balanced and thoughtful outcomes.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Collegiality fosters transparency in the decision-making process and facilitates accountability, as each member is responsible for their contributions to the group.

Church Meetings: The frequency and format of regular diocesan and parish meetings are described. The process for calling and conducting special meetings or synods is outlined. Guidelines for decision-making and voting within church meetings are also provided.

Committees: The formation and responsibilities of committees for specific ministries or functions are detailed. The process for appointing and evaluating committee members is described. Guidelines for committee meetings and reporting to the larger church body are also provided.

Title V: Clergy and Laity

Clergy are expected to maintain personal integrity and ethical conduct. Adhering to the teachings and doctrines of the church is essential. Providing exemplary leadership and serving as role models for the congregation are key responsibilities.

Lay members are encouraged to support and participate in church ministries and activities. Using personal gifts and talents for the benefit of the church community is highlighted. Contributing to the financial and material needs of the church is also emphasized.

Title VI: Disciplinary Measures

Actions that contradict the teachings and doctrines of the church are considered violations. Misconduct or unethical behaviour by clergy or laity is addressed. Disruption of the peace and unity of the church community is also considered a violation.

The process for reporting and investigating violations is described. The role of church leaders or committees in handling disciplinary cases is outlined. Steps for reconciliation and restoration within the church community are also provided.

Counselling or admonishment by church leaders is one option. Suspension or removal from church office or responsibilities is another. Excommunication or removal from church membership is also a possible penalty.

Title VII: Amendments

The authority to propose amendments may be held by clergy, laity, or church committees. The format and content required for amendment proposals are described. The process for submitting and reviewing amendment proposals is also provided.

The requirements for approval, such as a majority or supermajority vote, are outlined. The process for communicating and implementing approved amendments is described. Guidelines for incorporating amendments into the existing Canon Law are also provided.

Title VIII: Vocations and Calling

Article 1: Understanding Vocation

Vocation refers to a divine calling for individuals to serve God and the Church in various capacities. It is a lifelong commitment to fulfil God's purpose through different roles, whether as clergy or laity.

Vocations are integral to the growth and vitality of the Church. They encompass various paths, including ordained ministry, religious life, and lay service. Each vocation is a unique response to God's call, contributing to the spiritual and communal life of the Church.

Article 2: Discernment Process

The discernment process is a spiritual journey where individuals seek to understand and respond to God's call. It involves prayer, reflection, guidance, and consultation with spiritual mentors and Church authorities.

Individuals begin by seeking God's guidance through regular prayer and personal reflection. Engaging with a spiritual director or mentor to gain insights and support. Actively participating in Church activities and ministries to experience different facets of Church life. Initiating a formal inquiry with Church authorities to explore specific vocations.

Article 3: Formation and Training

Formation programs are designed to prepare individuals for their chosen vocation. These programs provide theological education, spiritual formation, and practical training. For those called to ordained ministry, including priests and deacons, seminary training is essential. Programs for individuals pursuing religious life, including monks, nuns, and friars. Courses and workshops to equip lay members for various ministries within the Church.

Ongoing education and formation are encouraged to ensure that individuals remain spiritually and theologically enriched throughout their vocation.

Article 4: Support and Community

The Church provides various support systems to nurture vocations, including mentorship, peer groups, and retreats. Pairing individuals with experienced clergy or lay leaders for guidance and support. Establishing groups for individuals in similar stages of their vocational journey to share experiences and encouragement. Organizing retreats for spiritual renewal and deeper discernment.

Building a sense of community is vital for those in vocations. The Church encourages active participation in parish life, diocesan events, and broader Church activities.

Article 5: Recognition and Celebration

The Church acknowledges and celebrates the commitment of individuals to their vocations through special ceremonies and public recognition.

An annual Vocations Day is established to promote awareness, celebrate existing vocations, and encourage new callings within the Church community.

Title IX: Holy Orders

Article 1: The Sacrament of Holy Orders

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is a divine institution by which men are consecrated to serve God and the Church through ordained ministry. It confers a sacred character that enables the ordained to act in the person of Christ and fulfil ecclesiastical duties.

Holy Orders comprises three degrees: the diaconate, the presbyterate, and the episcopate. Each degree signifies a distinct level of participation in Christ's priesthood and entails specific responsibilities and functions within the Church.

Article 2: The Diaconate

Deacons are ordained to serve the Church through ministries of charity, preaching, and liturgy. They assist bishops and priests and are instrumental in promoting the Church's mission and outreach to the community.

Candidates for the diaconate must demonstrate a deep commitment to their faith, possess requisite theological knowledge, and exhibit qualities of leadership and service. They undergo rigorous formation and training to prepare for their responsibilities.

Article 3: The Presbyterate

Priests are ordained to preside over the Eucharist, administer sacraments, and provide pastoral care to the faithful. They serve as spiritual leaders and shepherds, guiding their congregations in faith and moral life.

Candidates for the presbyterate are chosen based on their demonstrated piety, theological competence, and pastoral skills. Their formation includes seminary education, spiritual formation, and practical pastoral training.

Article 4: The Episcopate

Bishops are the successors of the apostles and hold the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. They oversee dioceses, safeguard doctrine, and ensure the unity and growth of the Church. Bishops ordain priests and deacons and serve as chief pastors.

Candidates for the episcopate are selected for their exemplary faith, wisdom, and leadership. They must have substantial pastoral experience and theological insight. Their consecration involves a solemn rite presided over by other bishops and the Presiding Archbishop as main consecrator.

Article 5: Lifelong Commitment and Community Support

Holy Orders entails a lifelong commitment to service and dedication to the Church. The ordained pledge to live according to the teachings of Christ and the Church, fulfilling their duties with fidelity and humility.

The Church provides ongoing support and formation for those in Holy Orders. This includes spiritual direction, continuing education, and pastoral care to ensure the well-being and effectiveness of the ordained in their ministry.

Title X: Training and Formation of Ordinands

Article 1: Purpose and Vision

The training and formation of ordinands aim to prepare individuals for ordained ministry by fostering their spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development. It ensures that candidates are equipped to serve the Church and its mission faithfully and effectively.

The formation process seeks to cultivate holiness, theological understanding, pastoral skills, and a deep commitment to the teachings of Christ and the Church.

Article 2: Spiritual Formation

Ordinands are encouraged to develop a robust prayer life and actively participate in the sacraments. This includes daily prayer, frequent reception of the Eucharist, and regular confession.

Regular retreats and spiritual direction sessions are integral to spiritual formation. These opportunities provide ordinands with time for reflection, discernment, and guidance in their spiritual journey.

Article 3: Intellectual Formation

Ordinands must undertake comprehensive theological education, covering scripture, dogma, moral theology, Church history, and other relevant subjects. This education is typically provided through seminary programs or accredited theological institutions.

Encouragement of continuous study and research to deepen theological knowledge and stay informed about current theological discussions and developments.

Article 4: Pastoral Formation

Ordinands receive training in pastoral skills such as preaching, counselling, liturgical leadership, and community service. Practical experience in parish settings and other pastoral environments is essential.

Experienced clergy and pastoral leaders provide mentorship and supervision to ordinands, offering guidance, feedback, and support throughout their formation.

Article 5: Human Formation

Formation programs emphasize the personal development of ordinands, fostering emotional maturity, self-awareness, and healthy relationships. Ordinands are encouraged to develop virtues such as humility, compassion, and integrity.

Living and learning within a community is an essential aspect of formation. Ordinands are encouraged to engage in communal activities, fostering a sense of fraternity and mutual support.

Article 6: Continuous Evaluation and Adaptation

Ordinands undergo regular assessments to evaluate their progress in spiritual, intellectual, pastoral, and human formation. Feedback from faculty, mentors, and peers is considered in these evaluations.

Formation programs are regularly reviewed and adapted to meet the evolving needs of ordinands and the Church. Continuous improvement ensures that the formation process remains effective and relevant.

Title XI: Ordinations

Article 1: The Significance of Ordination

Ordination is a sacred rite through which individuals are consecrated and endowed with the authority to perform specific religious duties. It is a solemn recognition of the candidate's calling and commitment to serve God and the Church.

Ordination bestows a spiritual and ecclesiastical role upon the individual, enabling them to lead worship, administer sacraments, and guide the faithful. It is both a divine calling and a solemn responsibility.

Article 2: Preparatory Stages for Ordination

Candidates for ordination undergo a discernment process to confirm their vocation. This involves spiritual reflection, guidance from mentors, and active participation in Church life.

Candidates are required to complete comprehensive formation and education programs. These programs provide theological knowledge, spiritual growth, and practical training necessary for their ordained ministry.

Article 3: The Ordination Ceremony

The ordination ceremony is a solemn and public event, presided over by a bishop. It includes the laying on of hands, prayer of consecration, and the presentation of symbols of the ordained office.

The faith community plays a vital role in the ordination ceremony. The community's presence and prayers affirm and support the candidate's commitment to serve.

Article 4: Responsibilities and Duties of the Ordained

Ordained individuals are responsible for leading worship, administering sacraments, and preaching the Word of God. They serve as spiritual leaders and shepherds to their congregation.

Beyond liturgical duties, the ordained are called to provide pastoral care, engage in community service, and promote social justice. They are ambassadors of Christ's love and compassion in the world.

Article 5: Lifelong Commitment and Ongoing Formation

Ordination entails a lifelong commitment to service and devotion to the Church. The ordained pledge to live according to the teachings of Christ and uphold the values of their faith.

The Church encourages ongoing formation and education for the ordained. This includes spiritual retreats, theological studies, and continuous professional development to enhance their ministry.

Title XII: The Sacraments

Article 1: The Essence of the Sacraments

The Sacraments are sacred rites instituted by Christ that confer grace and facilitate the sanctification of believers. They are outward signs of inward grace, essential for the spiritual growth and salvation of the faithful.

The Church recognizes seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Each Sacrament serves a unique role in the spiritual journey of believers.

Article 2: The Sacrament of Baptism

Baptism is the first Sacrament of initiation, marking the individual's entry into the Church. It cleanses the soul from original sin and bestows the grace of rebirth as a child of God.

The rite includes the pouring of water or immersion, accompanied by the Trinitarian formula. It is administered by a priest, deacon, or, in extraordinary circumstances, a layperson.

Article 3: The Sacrament of Confirmation

Confirmation strengthens and deepens the grace received at Baptism. It confers the Holy Spirit to empower the individual to live a Christian life and witness to their faith.

The rite involves the anointing with chrism and the laying on of hands by the bishop or a designated priest. It is typically administered during a special ceremony for eligible candidates.

Article 4: The Sacrament of the Eucharist

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, commemorating the Last Supper and the sacrifice of Christ. Through the Eucharist, the faithful partake in the Body and Blood of Christ.

The celebration, also known as the Mass, Holy Eucharist, or Holy Communion, includes the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. A priest consecrates the bread and wine, and the faithful receive Communion.

Article 5: The Sacrament of Penance

Penance, also known as Reconciliation, provides the means for the faithful to obtain forgiveness for sins and reconcile with God and the Church. It restores grace lost through sin.

The rite involves contrition, confession of sins, absolution by a priest, and the fulfilment of penance. It can be administered individually or communally.

Article 6: The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

Anointing of the Sick offers spiritual and physical healing and comfort to those who are seriously ill or near death. It strengthens the individual's faith and trust in God.

The rite includes the anointing with oil, prayer for healing, and the laying on of hands by a priest. It may be administered individually or in a communal setting.

Article 7: The Sacrament of Matrimony

Matrimony is the Sacrament that unites two persons, regardless their gender, in a lifelong covenant of love and partnership. It reflects the union of Christ and the Church and is ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children.

The rite involves the exchange of vows and the blessing of the union by a priest or deacon. It is typically celebrated within the context of a Mass.

Title XIII: Clergy Incardinations

The Incardination is the process by which a cleric (deacon, priest, or bishop) is formally attached to a specific diocese or ecclesiastical community, committing to serve it.

Article 1: Clergy Incardinations

Candidates must have completed adequate theological formation and have been ordained in accordance with church norms. Candidates must demonstrate a genuine vocation to ministry and a commitment to the teachings and practices of the church.

The candidate must submit a formal application for incardination, accompanied by their credentials and 2 letters of recommendation (not from family members). The candidate will be interviewed

by a person chosen by the House of Bishops to evaluate their suitability and commitment. The House of Bishops will make the final decision regarding the candidate's incardination.

Once accepted, the cleric will be formally incardinated, publicly committing to serve the church community.

Incardinated clergy have the right to exercise their ministry in the church and receive the necessary spiritual and material support to fulfil their functions. Incardinated clergy must faithfully fulfil their pastoral, liturgical, and administrative obligations, adhering to the teachings and norms of the church in their diocese.

Article 2: Transfer and Excardination

An incardinated cleric who wishes to transfer to another diocese or church community must apply for it, providing reasons and obtaining the approval of the House of Bishops. Excardination is the process by which a cleric is released from their bond with the originating church, allowing them to be incardinated in another jurisdiction. To do so, they must apply, providing reasons and obtaining the approval of the House of Bishops.

Title XIV: Sanctions

Article 1: Nature and Purpose of Sanctions

Sanctions are ecclesiastical penalties imposed to correct, deter, and repair offenses against Church law. They aim to restore justice, reform the offender, and uphold the integrity of the Church.

Sanctions can be medicinal, intended to encourage repentance and reform, or expiatory, serving as reparation for the offense. They vary in severity based on the nature and gravity of the offense.

Article 2: Grounds for Sanctions

Sanctions are imposed for violations of Canon Law, including acts of heresy, schism, apostasy, sacrilege, and other serious offenses that harm the Church or its members.

The gravity of the offense is assessed based on its impact on the Church, the community, and the individuals involved. Consideration is given to the circumstances and intent of the offender.

Article 3: Imposition of Sanctions

Sanctions are imposed by competent ecclesiastical authorities, including bishops and ecclesiastical tribunals. The process follows canonical procedures to ensure fairness and justice.

The imposition of sanctions involves a formal inquiry, investigation, and judgment. The accused is given the opportunity to defend themselves and present evidence.

Article 4: Types of Sanctions

Medicinal sanctions include admonition, rebuke, and temporary suspension from certain ecclesiastical functions. They aim to encourage the offender to repent and reform.

Expiatory sanctions include deprivation of office, dismissal from the clerical state, and excommunication. These sanctions are imposed for grave offenses and aim to restore justice and repair the harm caused.

Article 5: Remission and Reduction of Sanctions

Sanctions may be remitted or reduced if the offender demonstrates genuine repentance and reparation. The decision is made by the competent ecclesiastical authority based on the circumstances.

The process for remission involves a formal petition, examination of the offender's conduct, and evaluation of their commitment to reform. The decision is communicated to the offender and the relevant ecclesiastical community.

Title XV: Finances

Church funds will be obtained through donations, tithes, and fundraising activities of each diocese. Each diocese will be responsible for these funds and will manage its own assets and monetary funds.