Convention Primer

A Publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida

A guide for clergy and voting delegates to the 2012 Diocesan Convention
So, you’re a delegate

Chances are you were elected as a convention delegate at your congregation's annual meeting or you were appointed by your vestry or bishop’s committee. To be a delegate, you must satisfy the same qualifications that apply to an “elector” or voting member of a parish:  

1) at least 16 years of age  
2) name is duly enrolled in the register of your congregation  
3) regular in attendance at divine services  
4) make stated contributions of record to the general support of the congregation

If your congregation is a parish, you are one of three lay delegates. If your congregation is a mission, you have two delegates. Each congregation also has an alternate delegate in case a delegate is unable to serve. Notes about the role of the alternate will follow the “Job Description” section, below. Clergy members of the convention have separate rules under the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese.

What should delegates and alternates do?

Attend convocation meetings: In order to serve effectively, you need to be adequately prepared to vote on the resolutions that are placed into consideration. This requires your attendance at convocations, locally-convened meetings organized by deanery (or deaneries). Discussions at the fall meetings that precede convention are centered on the diocesan budget and any final preparations. The official convention books containing election nominee information, reports to convention, proposed budget and additional convention related information are distributed at these meetings.

The dates and locations for the fall convocations are:

- **Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater deaneries**: Tuesday, September 18, at 7 p.m. at Church of the Ascension, 701 Orange Ave., Clearwater.
- **Fort Myers/Naples deaneries**: Wednesday, September 19, at 7 p.m. at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 9801 Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Springs.
- **Manasota deaneries**: Thursday, September 20, at 7 p.m. at St. Mark's, 513 Nassau St. S, Venice.

Attend Convention: Lay delegates to convention are members of convention with the right to seat, voice and vote. It is your duty to attend every meeting of the convention. “Every meeting?” Yes. While very rare, it has come to pass that not all of the business of the convention was acted on in one day, and/or there was some urgent matter that required the un divided attention of the convention. You are a lay delegate at any subsequent meeting of the convention. You serve until you resign or until your successors are chosen.

A note for alternates: Alternate delegates to convention are members of convention with the right to seat but not voice or vote. You should be prepared to be of service. In the event a lay delegate is unable to attend convention, an alternate delegate from that congregation shall serve and shall have seat, voice and vote. If you are an alternate and there is a need for you to serve as a delegate, there is a separate registration process for this. See the “Registration” section that follows.

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1 Canon I.5.b.  
2 Constitution, Art. V.3  
3 Canon I.2.b.  
4 Canon I.4.a.  
5 Canon I.2.c.
What to expect

Diocesan convention weekend is much more than a business meeting. Usually, delegates are only half of the people in attendance. We gather to worship, to reunite with colleagues and friends, to learn and to share with others. Those who attend the Friday sessions (workshops, Ministry Fair, opening Eucharist, dinner) may not want to attend the business meeting. Delegates may not be able to attend anything but the business meeting. Others like to come and go and visit the Ministry Fair. The workshops on Friday are open to anyone in the diocese, and often appeal to those who are not necessarily voting delegates. These workshops offer a wide variety of subject matter that may be of interest to any lay person including treasurers, stewardship chairs, administrators and ministry leaders. The tables at the Ministry Fair display the work that goes on around the diocese and are a wonderful source of ideas and resources.

Delegates are encouraged to attend as many of the other meetings and events as possible. However, the varied nature of our gatherings requires distinction between the Friday and Saturday events. All events are at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center in Punta Gorda. This year's convention is Friday and Saturday, October 19-20.

How to Officially Register for Diocesan Convention

The official registration process for the 2012 Diocesan Convention will be limited to “mail-in” registration forms accompanied with check payments. Online registration will not be available.

During the summer, a complete packet of convention information is sent to all churches in the diocese and also to each individual Clergy and Lay member of Convention. The content of the packet includes both Friday and Saturday registration forms, a listing of workshops, lunch selections, hotel information, etc. The same material is available for download from the Convention page of the diocesan website, www.episcopalswfl.org.

Payment is by check only and must accompany the registration form/s. You must register by mail and your check payment must cover the total and correct amount reflected on the completed, accompanying registration form/s.

Registrations without full accompanying payment or faxed registrations with “mail-in” payments will not be accepted. Registration form/s and check payment must be mailed together.

- Convention registration deadline is Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012.
  No registration will be accepted after that date, and there is no provision for walk-in registration at the conference center. You must register in advance.

  No credentials are available in advance. You are required to pick up your nametag and other materials on Friday at the conference center for Friday's activities. You are required to pick up your Saturday credentials, voter packet and other materials on Saturday morning. Credentials for Saturday will not be handed out until Saturday morning. You must pick up credentials separately for Friday and Saturday on each respective day.
On Friday:
Register first!

- Locate the registration tables on the concourse of the conference center.
- Registration for Friday is alphabetically organized from A – Z. There is no designation for clergy or lay delegate/alternate.
- Everyone is listed by individual name, not by congregation or city.
- You will be handed your nametag, which will reflect your lunch and Friday night dinner party reservation.
- Once you have received this information you may help yourself to a continental breakfast, visit the Ministry Fair tables and locate your first workshop room.

The Ministry Fair
Our Ministry Fair, in the main concourse and in an overflow room, shows off the breadth and depth of ministry in our diocese with displays from congregations, ministry groups, national organizations and businesses that specialize in church products and services. There are shopping opportunities here and opportunities to contribute to Episcopal charitable causes, and there are always surprises. Don't forget to visit our very popular Altar Guild swap shop, where congregations offer at no charge vestments and equipment they no longer need.

The Ministry Fair opens at 8:30 a.m. on Friday and closes after lunch on Saturday.

Friday Workshops

We will offer a full day of continuing education that is open to anyone. Our workshops this year focus on congregational revitalization, building on the work that started at our vestry retreat last spring. The canonically required safeguarding training is offered, as are opportunities to learn about healing prayer and outreach/ministry, plus time to hear about the actions of General Convention 2012.

New this year: Sign up to meet with members of the diocesan staff to discuss business practices, publicity opportunities, and youth ministry. Watch for signs at the registration area for these “Backstage Pass” sessions, which will take place near the conference center's business office.

Please register in advance for workshops so that adequate provisions can been made for seating and handout material. This is your opportunity to learn new skills and find resources you can take back to your congregation. A list of workshops and registration forms may be found on the diocesan website and are included in the information packets mailed to all official members of convention.

Canned Food Drive

Each year we offer convention attendees the opportunity to help restock the shelves of food pantries that serve those in need. Our deacons are in charge of this friendly deanery competition, which leads to the awarding of the coveted “Canley Cup” each year. We invite you to be generous: Start stocking up now at sales and “buy one/get one” offers at your supermarket. Tables and scales to receive donations are located at the front entrance doors of the Conference Center.

Worship

When we ask for feedback about the annual convention weekend, many people tell us how much they appreciate the opportunity to worship together as a diocese. We offer Morning Prayer at 9 a.m. Friday and Saturday in Hibiscus Hall. This year’s Opening Eucharist will begin at 5:30 p.m. on Friday in Hibiscus Hall.

Some of you have asked why we don't hold the Opening Eucharist at the Church of the Good Shepherd, where we enjoy the Friday night dinner party that follows the service. The answer: It's too small. Good Shepherd’s sanctuary can hold 300 worshipers maximum. The convention Eucharist regularly attracts nearly 500.
**Friday Night Dinner Party**

The other important piece of feedback we hear each year is that as a diocese, we love to party. Annual convention weekend is our family reunion, the one time a year we get to be together, to relax, to enjoy a meal together and to sit back, talk with old friends and meet new ones.

Our hosts again this year are the congregation of Church of the Good Shepherd and their rector, The Rev. Roy Tuff. They look forward to welcoming you to our Friday night party. We’ll have tents outside with tables, lights and fans and a bar offering soft drinks, wine and beer. Inside the parish hall: more tables and the buffet line for a Hispanic-themed fiesta, acknowledging the accomplishments of our Hispanic ministries. Pre-registration and payment for the Friday Night Party should be made on a Friday registration form. We apologize but we are unable to accommodate any “walk in guests” to the Friday Night Party.

A map to get to the church from the convention center will be available at a table by the doors on the concourse, or set your GPS to 401 W Henry St., Punta Gorda.

**On Saturday:**

**Credentials and seating at the business meeting**

The annual business meeting of the diocese requires a separate registration process from Friday. We do this to differentiate "members of convention" -- lay and clergy voting delegates -- from all other attendees.

At the business meeting, seating is designated as follows:

- Voting members of convention sit at designated tables at the front of the hall labeled by deanery and congregation.
- Retired clergy, who retain seat and voice, sit at tables specifically designated for them. They do not sit with their former congregations.
- Tables are set aside for Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, Finance Committee, Chancellor and Vice Chancellors, Canon Pastors, and Special Guests.

All others are seated in the designated guest gallery. These include, but are not limited to, lay alternates; non-canonically resident clergy; clergy spouses; and anyone wishing to attend this annual business meeting of the Diocese of Southwest Florida.

The Saturday registration and seating maintain the integrity of the voting system, ensuring that everyone who is on the floor of convention is authorized to be there. From this registration we are able to obtain an accurate count of the delegates and the congregations represented in order to determine a quorum. That establishes the number of votes required to conduct the business of convention, such as approving resolutions and the budget, electing candidates and dealing with other business that may be brought to the floor.

You may not pick up your Saturday voter packets or sign in for the business meeting before Saturday morning. In your voter packet you will find convention information, ballots, etc. Your lunch request will be listed on your nametag. Nametags for Saturday are specifically color-coded as an additional way for us to easily distinguish the credentialed members of convention from our guests.

**Saturday On-Site Registration Pick-Up Process**

- Locate the registration table in the concourse of the conference center that corresponds to your standing as an attendee. The choices will be clergy, clergy spouse, lay delegate, lay alternate, pre-registered guests and visitors. There will be alphabetically designated signs atop each table (A-J, K-N, and so on) and you will be shown where to form a line. Make certain you are at the correct table category and in the correct line alphabetically. Everyone is listed by individual name, not by congregation.
- You will be handed your nametag and voter packet.
- Your lunch selection for Saturday will appear on the front of your nametag.
- Once you are registered, proceed to the floor of convention in Hibiscus Hall. Locate your deanery sign and find the table designated with your church name in the front of the hall. Joint Ministry Congregations will be seated together at adjoining tables and marked as such. Again, only voting delegates may sit at these tables. Retired clergy sit at their designated tables.
Clergy Members of Convention

The Canons have six (6) separate distinctions for clergy members of convention. The canon that applies to you will be noted on your nametag. The preliminary roster was published online in July 31, 2012. That is the appropriate time for review and change requests. **It is too late to make status changes on convention weekend.**

Lay Member Change from Alternate to Delegate

Delegates who know in advance of convention weekend that they will be unable to attend may arrange to have their congregation's alternate changed to full delegate status. The change form is on the diocesan website along with other convention registration materials. This form must be completed and signed by the rector/vicar/priest in charge and senior warden or secretary of the vestry, and mailed to Jan Nothum in the bishop's office to be received no later than close of business on Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012.

For delegate changes on the day of convention (Saturday only: no changes can be made on Friday), alternates and their rector, priest-in-charge or vicar should visit the credentials table in the registration area. The clergy member must sign the change form. If no clergy member from the congregation is present, a clergy member of the bishop's staff will verify and sign the change form. At that point the alternate's nametag will be updated and the alternate will receive a voter packet and will be seated at the congregation's table on the floor of convention.

Delegate changes are only permitted prior to the presentation of the final Credentials report of attendance is made presented and a quorum is established on the floor of convention (usually this comes about at 10 a.m. on Saturday). After that time no changes in delegate/delegation status can be made.

Once you have picked up your nametag and voter packet, you are officially registered and you alone are responsible for your personal convention materials and ballots. No duplicate materials will be handed out. Your voter packet includes the day’s agenda. We begin with registration at 8 a.m. followed by Morning Prayer at 9 a.m. and the business session at 9:30 a.m. You are invited to enjoy a continental breakfast and visit the Ministry Fair in the concourse before you enter the floor of convention in Hibiscus Hall.

Business Session/Voting

- As you enter Hibiscus Hall, a floor manager will direct you to the appropriate area -- the floor of convention or the guests’ gallery. We do this to assure that only those who are entitled to vote may do so. This is how we insure the integrity of the vote, which you, the delegates, have told us repeatedly, is critically important to you.
- Once the business meeting has begun, if you wish to speak at an appropriate time, please approach one of the microphones on the convention floor and wait to be recognized by the chair. First state your name and congregation, and then make your comments, which are limited to three minutes. Then return to your seat. Convention works through the agenda, with scheduled breaks and a lunch period.
- Votes will be taken throughout the day on a variety of issues. For some votes, you will fill in a printed ballot and hand it to an assigned page, who will then carry the ballots to the tellers to be counted electronically.
- Other votes maybe taken by a show of red or green cards, which you will receive in your voter packet, along with other official materials. At the appropriate time, hold up red for no and green for yes. The floor pages will count the cards. We believe this is a more accurate system than a voice vote.
Homework for Delegates

Your congregation elected or appointed you to do the business of the Diocese of Southwest Florida at convention. This includes:

- Voting on the budget
- Voting on resolutions
- Electing candidates to various positions

In order to be an effective delegate, therefore, you need to do some homework before you get to convention. All the materials you need to do that work are available to you well in advance, either on the diocesan website or in the convention book, which you will receive at the fall deanery convocation. No need to wait till the last minute! Let’s look at a few items:

The Budget

- Copies of the budget will be presented at the fall deanery convocations.
- Chief Financial Officer, Anne Vickers, will be present at the convocations to explain the budget. This is the best place to get your questions answered and seek clarity on anything you don’t understand. On the floor of convention at the business meeting, with lots of items on the agenda, it is difficult to ask or answer technical questions.
- The CFO is available to you after the deanery convocation if you have additional questions.

The Resolutions

- Throughout the year, resolutions are submitted seeking approval of the members of convention on a variety of topics. In the past, resolutions have included support for farm workers in Immokalee, revising or amending diocesan Canons, making changes in our financial procedures and granting voting rights to deacons.
- The text of the resolutions and explanations of what they would do is available on the diocesan website and in the convention book that you receive at your fall deanery convocation.
- Read the resolutions and the explanations, think about them, ask questions and determine how you plan to vote.
- Don’t wait until the morning of convention to start considering whether you will support one resolution or another.

Elections

- The canonical deadline for nominations was July 21 for those seeking election to a variety of diocesan committees, councils, and boards.
- The names, photos and statements of the candidates are available on the diocesan website and the convention book, as are the descriptions of what each job involves.
- Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor of convention. We are unable to provide biographical information for floor nominees because voting takes place immediately after nominations close.
- Take time to study the candidates and their qualifications before the business meeting and give prayerful consideration in determining whom you will choose to do the work of the diocese in the years to come.