BACKGROUND:

The Canons for the Diocese of Alabama define a “Worshipping Community” as “a congregation which has not been admitted to the Diocese as Parish but which has been designated annually at the discretion of the Bishop as a Worshipping Community.” (Canon 3, Section 2, paragraph 3).

The Canons for the Diocese of Alabama define a parish as “any number of persons who are confirmed adult communicants in good standing of this Church over the legal age of majority, who are desirous of maintaining services in any community according to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church...” (Canon 9 Section, 1) In establishing new urban/suburban parishes since 1990 through the work of the Department of Parish Development/Evangelism, the threshold for submitting petition from new start up congregations to be received as a parish has been 100 confirmed active communicants in good standing signing a petition to the Bishop which is then submitted as a resolution to the next diocesan convention.

However, given that the diocesan canon does not set any specific number of active confirmed members in good standing required before a petition for admission can be presented and given that in more rural areas of the diocese, the 100 member threshold might be a burden in more rural areas where congregations may never exceed 100 members but are viable, active parishes cared for by a part-time clergy person. The following non canonical criteria are presented for consideration by the Bishop and Diocesan Council for the purpose of considering admission of rural and small town congregations under Canon 9, Section 1 as parishes of the Diocese of Alabama.

STANDARD TO BE MET BY RURAL / SMALL TOWN WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES DESIRING A MORE PERMANENT STATUS AS A PARISH WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF ALABAMA

1. THE WORSHIPPING Community must be able to demonstrate no less than a five year uninterrupted period of regular weekly worship and presently in a permanent facility on property titled to the Diocese of Alabama and in trust for use by the congregation.
2. The Worshipping Community shall have no less than 40 confirmed adult communicants in good standing. Average Sunday Attendance shall be of no less than 25 persons as demonstrated on the latest filed Parochial Report.
3. The Worshipping Community shall be able to demonstrate no less than a three year period of regular budgeting as shown on either an end-of— the-year financial reports or the last three years of Parochial Reports.
Criteria for Worshipping Communities to become a Parish

January 1, 2013

4. The Worshipping Community shall have a regular part-time Priest in Charge available to the congregation at the time of the submission of the petition and a vestry in place with both a Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Treasurer and Clerk.

5. In accordance with Canon 3. Section 8 and Standing Resolution 8, the Worshipping Community shall have a history of corporate contributions the shared mission and ministry of the diocese through its annual diocesan covenant. The percentage of the annual covenant shall be in accordance with guidelines adopted by the convention or shall, in the opinion of the Department of Parish Development, reflect a strong commitment to participation in the shared mission and ministry of the diocese through support of the operating budget of the diocese.

6. A petition resolution of admission to the Diocese of Alabama shall be submitted to Diocesan Convention from the congregation and signed by no less than 75% of current members or no less than 37 confirmed adult communicant members of the Worshipping Community. Attached to the petition resolution must be written documentation of items 1 through 5 of these criteria.

7. A three year continuous period of time of less than 30 confirmed adult communicants in good standing shall constitute cause for the Diocesan Council to present a resolution to the next Diocesan Convention to have the parish revert back to Worshipping Community status.