

Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida 52nd Annual Diocesan Convention

October 16 – 17, 2020

Diocesan Convention is the annual gathering and business meeting of the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida.

The 52nd annual convention of the Diocese of Southwest Florida on October 16 and 17, 2020 will be a virtual convention, conducted via Zoom with delegates around the diocese.

Diocesan Council affirmed the bishop's decision for a virtual convention. "The health and safety of our congregations is our number one priority," the Right Rev. Dabney T. Smith said. "During this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had great concerns that we would be unable to maintain social distancing if we were to gather at the Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center, as we have done since 2009."

This document will give you the key details as of today, and outline when and how you will receive more information before Convention. As this year's virtual convention is quite different, we ask that you carefully read this information and ask questions early.

What will be Different This Year

As much as we would rather be together, this year will be different.

- * *There will be no ministry fair this year.*
- * *A consolidated lineup of workshops will be offered via live-stream in the weeks leading up to Convention. Details will follow in the Convention Guidebook.*
- * *The plans for the opening worship have not yet been determined by the bishop.*
- * *The business meeting on Saturday will be live-streamed to delegates from DaySpring, our camp and conference center. Delegations will be able to attend from their local church or in deanery gatherings via videoconference.*

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 of delegation form is on the convention page of the diocesan website (found under the "Governance" tab on the "Home" page) along with all the 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 the Rev. Canon Richard Norman at the Diocesan Office and received no later than close of business on Friday, Oct. 2, 2020 (2 weeks prior to the Convention date). Due to the requirements of executing a virtual convention credentialing, the deadline for changes will be strictly followed. **Unlike our usual procedures for the in-person convention, NO CHANGES will be permitted on the day of the 2020 Convention or any time after the October 2, 2020 deadline.***

How to Prepare for Convention

Your congregation chose 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 lay delegate, you will 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, both on the convention page of the diocesan website and in the convention guidebook, 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

- *Chief Financial Officer, Canon Anne Vickers, will present the 2021 Diocesan Budget details and you will have the full details in your hands six weeks prior to Convention.*

This is the best place to have your questions answered and seek clarity on anything you don't understand. On the day of convention at the business meeting, with lots of items on the agenda, it is difficult to ask or answer technical questions. We encourage you to ask questions any time by calling the Diocesan CFO at the Diocesan Office in advance of the Convention.

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 are intended to do is available on the diocesan website and in the convention book that you receive at the September "All 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 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 for these leadership roles to do the work of the diocese in the years to come.*

**Fall "All Deanery Convocation" via Zoom – Wednesday,
September 2, 2020**

In order to serve effectively, you need to be adequately prepared to vote on the resolutions and elections to leadership positions that are placed into consideration. It is essential that you attend the September “All Deanery Convocation” (convocations are locally-convened meetings organized by deaneries). Discussions at this meeting, that precedes convention, are centered on the diocesan budget and any other final preparations. The official convention guidebook containing election nominee information, reports to convention, budget adopted by the Diocesan Council (presented by the Finance Committee) on August 15, and additional convention related information is distributed at these meetings.

For this virtual Diocesan Convention, we will deliver a virtual “All Deanery Convocation” via Zoom on Wednesday, September 2, 2020. This event, canonically required for all members of Convention, will serve as the dress rehearsal for the virtual Diocesan Convention. It is critical that all delegates and clergy attend at their local congregation “convention studio” with their own device that can access the internet (laptops and tablet are best; smartphones can be used if necessary).

Virtual/Hybrid Convention Worship – Friday, October 16, 2020

Specific details will be communicated in the coming months, based on the evolving state of the pandemic.

Virtual Business Meeting - Saturday, October 17, 2020

Viewing the Business Meeting

Our plan is to allow for all members of convention and guests to participate in the business meeting via Zoom from their local congregation. In this way, we will have a network of technical support and accountability that will most effectively replicate the environment of our live business meeting. You will be able to speak with your delegation, ask questions and we will have a distributed team of support among our 78 locations.

Credentials for the Business Meeting

The credentials for the official “members of convention” (lay and clergy voting delegates) will exist in the form of a unique username and password for each member. Guests will also be able to join, but not have access to voting. We will count on the fact that each congregation will work to ensure every delegate has a device (laptops and tablet are best; smartphones can be used if necessary) on which they can individually log in and vote.

Special Guests and any general guest may attend the Zoom gathering at the congregation and access the online materials. Guests include members of Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, Finance Committee, Endowment Board, Chancellor and Vice Chancellors, Chaplains to retired clergy and families, Honorary Members of Convention, Assisting and Visiting Bishops and other designated Special Guests. Guests also include, but are not limited to, lay alternates; non-canonically resident clergy; clergy spouses; and anyone else wishing to attend this annual business meeting of the Diocese of Southwest Florida.

The business meeting will be streamed online for any guest who wishes to watch from their home.

Business Session/Voting

We will administer votes for resolutions and elections via an online voting system, where each “member of convention” has their own individual device and individual unique login name and password. We will conduct a test vote at the All-Deanery Convocation to ensure that all members are familiar with the process prior to the date of the Business Meeting.