

5.0 CANONICAL PRINCIPLES

The canons of our diocese provide the basic framework for our common mission. Please be familiar with them. In this section, you will find some basic ecclesiological reminders.

Principle 1 – Clergy and Laity are Partners

As the spiritual “head of household” our Bishop will be spending a couple of days of special time with each congregation approximately annually. These “Visitations” are in addition to the Bishop’s ongoing attention to the special needs of a congregation (and regular interaction with all priests and deacons in the Diocese). The Bishop’s interaction with the laity is no less important. Not only does the laity participate equally in Diocesan governance, but *all the people of God are the chief agents* of the mission of the Church to extend the Kingdom. (See the ACNA and Diocese of Western Anglicans Constitutions.) The Bishop earnestly seeks the perspective, wise counsel, prayers, and Godly fellowship of both lay and clergy persons.

Principle – The Episcopate

Before reviewing some specifics of the Bishop’s Visitation, consideration should be given to the role of an Anglican Bishop in the Church. The Anglican Church in North America and the Diocese of Western Anglicans affirm certain governing principles of our life as a part of the Body of Christ. (See these as listed in the ACNA Constitution.) They include “the historic Godly *episcopate*” as “an inherent part of the apostolic faith and practice, and therefore as integral to the fullness and unity of the Body of Christ.” The episcopate (a theological word simply meaning all of the Bishops together or a single bishop’s reign as bishop) is an essential part of the foundation laid by the Apostles and their immediate successors for building-up the Kingdom of God on earth. Bishops are not just about presiding; they have a line of descent tracing to the prophets and the Apostles and their delegates like Timothy and Titus. The episcopate is also about mission and spiritual leadership. The authority vested in Bishops is integral to the Anglican way, both historically and in the explosive growth of Anglicanism in the Global South. *Anglicans are the third largest Christian group, after the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.*

Principle 3 – Local Church is the Primary Agent of Mission

We affirm that the local congregation or church plant is the fundamental agency of the mission of the Church; we also affirm that the congregations are united and held together under the authority of the Bishop. The mission of this Diocese is one of supporting the congregations in extending the Kingdom of God by so presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that people will come to put their trust in God through Him, know Him as Savior, and serve Him as Lord in the fellowship of the Church.

Principle 4 - Subsidiarity

Because the visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful people where the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are ministered as Christ has ordained,



Rectors and Wardens Manual 2017

DIOCESE OF WESTERN ANGLICANS
ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

another of our governing principles is subsidiarity, an organizing principle that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority. In other words, whatever the Diocese can wisely leave to the local congregation should be left to the local congregation.

Principle 5 – Diocese Facilitates Mission and Order

The Diocese coordinates the work of Congregations and Church Plants for good order and smooth functioning; however, the ACNA and Diocese of Western Anglicans Constitution and Canons make clear that the Bishop is the “Ecclesiastical Authority” (the ultimate decision-maker) of the diocese.

Principle 6 – The Lord is our Leader

We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue leading the Diocese of Western Anglicans into Godly fullness as a servant community of mutual respect, support and cooperation, and that we may fulfill all righteousness in our mission, our work, and our communal life together as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ under the ecclesiastical authority of the Bishop.

