

## The Episcopal Church Governance

**Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.**

Today we will be going on a journey through what we call the Governance of The Episcopal Church. We will start off where we fit in the world of Anglicanism then to our nation then state and final our humble little city of Fairfield.

The Anglican Communion is a global community comprised of 44 geographical areas with over 80 million members in 160 countries. The Archbishop of Canterbury holds an honorary position among the Anglican Community's bishops as primus inter pares otherwise known as ("first among equals"). Justin Welby is the current Archbishop of Canterbury. The Archbishop holds no authority over the Anglican Communion other than to help unite the community. There are few types of gatherings that the Anglican Communion holds. One is the Lambeth Conference that occurs every 10 years and the Primates Meeting which has various intervals, finally there is the Anglican Consultative Council and they meet every two to three years. Of these gatherings, they are mostly for the Anglican Communion to have common ground between all the geographical areas.

Now we will move to our National Church or The Episcopal Church which has 3 Million members, 9 Provinces 109 dioceses in three regional areas (The Americas, Europe and the Pacific) located in 17 nations. Our spiritual leader for this vast group of Episcopalians is the Presiding Bishop. Our current Presiding Bishop is The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry. Every three years there is General Convention and is the highest governing body of The Episcopal Church. The General Convention is where our national canons and resolutions are voted on. This legislation of The Episcopal Church is voted on by the by the House of Bishops and House of Deputies which includes lay and clergy leaders elected by their Diocesan conventions. The House of Bishops also elects the Presiding Bishop. During the three years in between the General Conventions there are commissions, committees, agencies and boards that have deputies appointed by the President of the House of Deputies. The Presiding Bishop also appoints bishops to the commissions, committees, agencies and boards. The decision making board when the General Conventions is not in session is known as the Executive Council.

As we move further down the line, next is the Provinces. There are nine provinces in The Episcopal Church, ours is Province Eight and it encompasses nearly one third of the of the US land mass and 20 percent of the Episcopal Church's population. The Rt. Rev. James Mathes of the Diocese of San Diego

serves as President and D. Rebecca Snow of the Diocese of Oregon serves as Vice President of our Province.

Next step down is the diocese which is comprised of multiple parishes. We are in the Episcopal Diocese of Northern California if you didn't already know that. Our spiritual leader of a diocese is the bishop which is derived from the Greek word *epískopos*, meaning overseer or guardian. Our overseer or guardian of our diocese is The Rt. Rev. Barry Beisner. According to BCP he is responsible "to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building of the church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry." That is a quite the responsibility. At the diocesan level there are similarities of how the national church is run. We have the Annual Diocesan Convention which happens once a year in the early November time frame. Just as in the General Convention our annual Convention legislation for our diocese is brought up and voted on. There is also a group that provides oversight for the diocese that is comprised of elected members both lay and ordained called the Standing Committee. Inside of the Diocese there are Deaneries comprised of parishes: the Regional Dean shall be appointed by the Bishop. The deaneries deal with the issues of what happening around their local communities.

And finally we make it to our home, our parish Grace Episcopal Church of Fairfield. We have spiritual leaders of our very own in our congregation. We have

Perry + our priest and our associate priest David+. Like in my previous comments there has been a governing body in each step of the way. The one we have at our parish level is the vestry. Its members are voted in during Graces annual meeting that just happened a few Sunday's ago. We saw some Parish members leave the Vestry and others join. They meet monthly to do the business the congregation. They are our representatives for our congregation they make all the important decisions with input from all the parishioners of Grace.

There has been a theme throughout this journey of ours today. From the national church to our church the governance is very similar. One isn't exactly like the one before, but very familiar. It's here to help guide us together in the ways of Christ, whether it is with the people you sharing the Peace with here in a few minutes or whether it is with someone on the other side of the world. We are all in The Episcopal Church together sharing Christ's love.

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