

“O God, you have bound us together in a common life.”

Your Episcopal Church congregation is part of a much larger community.

“Episcopal” means “bishop” in Greek, and the Episcopal Church is governed in part by its bishops. The clergy and elected lay people work with bishops to run their local faith communities and larger church organizations.

Each congregation elects some of its members to manage its finances and property. Those members choose a priest to lead them in worship, teach them about the Christian life, help them minister in Christ’s name to the world and counsel them in times of need.



The Episcopal Church welcomes you
The 75th General Convention, Columbus

A geographic cluster of congregations forms a diocese and gives money to run that structure. The people and clergy elect a priest to lead their diocese as bishop. The bishop is the diocese’s head pastor but he or she is also an administrator, evangelist and teacher. The bishop, in consultation with the people and clergy, chooses people to serve as priests and deacons. Dioceses gather regionally in provinces because some ministry is better done with combined resources.

No bishop has authority in another diocese unless invited to minister there by that bishop. Every nine years, we elect a presiding bishop to be our chief pastor, to lead us in developing church policy and strategies, and representing our church to the world.

Each diocese meets annually to vote on mission and ministry policies and priorities, and to elect deputies to the General

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Convention which convenes every three years to make broad decisions about policy and worship. The 75th such gathering will be in Columbus, Ohio, June 13 to June 21.

General Convention deputies do not represent a constituency. They agree to have an open heart so that they can prayerfully listen to others and be led by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They also cannot abstain from voting.

The layers of our structure, and the jargon that comes with it, may seem complicated and cumbersome but it has its benefits. Together we agree on rules, called canons, that set broad boundaries and hold us accountable. The money given by congregations to dioceses, and by dioceses to the larger church, pays for ministry that individual congregations could not afford.

Within our boundaries the smallest groups of people and clergy can form communities that serve their needs and the needs of the world outside their doors. This means that Episcopal congregations have different looks and feels, and yet hold things in common with people all over the world.

“ Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it. . .”

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 818

Read more about it

- Episcopal Church organizational charts
www.episcopalchurch.org/67608_ENG_HTM.htm?menupage=59957
- A history of Episcopal Church decision making
www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/JimGundrum_ArringtonLectures1982.pdf
- Resources for vestries
www.episcopalfoundation.org/research/resources.html

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