

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-A059
Title: Create an Official List of Recognized Religious Orders and Christian Communities
Proposer: Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution and Canons
Topic: Canons, Ministry

Directly Related: (Attached)

1991-A130 Amend and Renumber Canons III.28-31 as follows:
Canon III.28 [Of Religious Orders and Other Christian Communities]
Canon III.29 [Of a Board for Theological Education]
Canon III.30 [Of a General Board of Examining Chaplains]
Canon III.31 [Of a Board for Church Deployment]
1982-B017 Amend Canon III.27 [Of Religious Orders]

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

None

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2022, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#).

A059 - Create an Official List of Recognized Religious Orders and Christian Communities

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution and Canons

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: Yes

Requests New Interim Body: No

Changes Mandate Of Existing Ib: No

Directs Dfms Staff: No

Directs Dioceses: No

Directs Executive Council: No

HiA: No House Assigned

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: No Committee Assigned

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

Resolved, That the 81st General Convention amend Canon III.14.1.b to read as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (*****) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>

Title III.14.1

b. To be officially recognized, a Religious Order must have at least six professed members, and must be approved by the Standing Committee on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops and be registered with the Committee. The Standing Committee on Religious Communities will keep the official list of recognized Religious Orders.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

Title III.14.1

b. To be officially recognized, a Religious Order must have at least six professed members, and must be approved by the Standing Committee on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops and be registered with the Committee. *The Standing Committee on Religious Communities will maintain the official list of recognized Religious Orders.*

And be it further.

That the 81st General Convention amend Canon III.14.2.b to read as follows:

<Amended text as it would appear if adopted and concurred. Scroll below the line of asterisks (***) to see the version showing all deleted and added text.>**

Title III.14.2

b. To be officially recognized such a Christian Community must have at least six full members in accordance with their Rule and Constitution, and must be approved by the Standing Committee on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops and be registered with the Committee. The Standing Committee on Religious Communities will keep the official list of recognized Christian Communities.

<Proposed amended resolution text showing exact changes being made:>

Title III.14.2

b. To be officially recognized such a Christian Community must have at least six full members in accordance with their Rule and Constitution, and must be approved by the Standing Committee on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops and be registered with the Committee. *The Standing Committee on Religious Communities will keep the official list of recognized Christian Communities.*

Explanation

The Canons do not currently require the maintenance of a list of officially recognized Religious Orders and Christian Communities. Canon III.14.1 and III.14.2 give the Standing Committee on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops the duty to approve religious orders and Christian communities, so we are proposing to amend those canons to give that Standing Committee the obligation to maintain an official list, as well.



Resolution Number: 1991-A130
Title: Amend and Renumber Canons III.28-31 as follows: Canon III.28 [Of Religious Orders and Other Christian Communities] Canon III.29 [Of a Board for Theological Education] Canon III.30 [Of a General Board of Examining Chaplains] Canon III.31 [Of a Board for Church Deployment]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That Canons III.28, 29, 30 and 31 be amended as follows:

CANON 28 27.

Of Religious Orders and Other Christian Communities

Sec. 1(a). A Religious Order of this Church is a society of Christians (in communion with the See of Canterbury) who voluntarily commit themselves for life, or a term of years: to holding their possessions in common or in trust; to a celibate life in community; and obedience to their Rule and Constitution.

(b). To be officially recognized, a Religious Order must have at least six (6) professed members, and must be approved by the Standing Committee on Religious Orders Communities of the House of Bishops and be registered with *the said* Committee.

(c). Each Order shall have a Bishop Visitor or Protector, who shall *need* not of necessity be the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Order is established. If, however, the Bishop Visitor or Protector is not the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Mother House of the Order is situated, *he the Bishop Visitor or Protector* shall not accept election without the consent of the Bishop of *said that* Diocese. *He The Bishop Visitor or Protector* shall be the guardian of the Constitution of the Order, and shall serve as an arbiter in matters which the Order or its members cannot resolve through its normal processes.

(d). Any persons under vows in a Religious Order, having exhausted the normal processes of the Order, may petition the Bishop Visitor or Protector for dispensation from those vows. In the event the petitioner is not satisfied with the ruling of the Bishop Visitor or Protector on such petition *he the person* may file a petition with the Presiding Bishop of ~~this Church~~ *who shall appoint a Board of three Bishops to review the petition and the decision thereon, and to make recommendation to the Presiding Bishop*, who shall have the highest dispensing power for Religious Orders, and *his whose* ruling on the petition shall be final.

(e). A Religious Order may establish a house in a Diocese only with the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese. This permission once granted shall not be withdrawn by ~~him~~ *the Bishop* or any succeeding Bishop.

(f). The Constitution of every Religious Order shall make provision for the legal ownership and administration of the temporal possessions of the Order and in the event of dissolution of the Order, or should it otherwise cease to exist, ~~to~~ *shall* provide for the disposition of its

assets according to the laws governing non-profit (religious) organizations in the State where in the Order is incorporated.

(g). It is recognized that a Religious Order is not a Parish, Mission, Congregation or Institution of the Diocese within the meaning of Canon I.7.3. ~~of these canons, and the~~ its provisions thereof shall not apply to Religious Orders.

Sec. 2 (a). A Christian Community of this Church under this Canon is a society of Christians (in communion with the See of Canterbury) who voluntarily commit themselves for life, or a term of years, in obedience to their Rule and Constitution.

(b). To be officially recognized ~~such~~ a Christian Community must have at least six (6) full members in accordance with their Rule and Constitution, and must be approved by the Standing Committee on Religious ~~Orders~~ *Communities* of the House of Bishops and be registered with *the* said Committee.

(c). Each ~~such~~ Christian Community of this Church shall have a Bishop Visitor or Protector, who shall *need* not necessarily be the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Community is established. If, however, the Bishop Visitor or Protector is not the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Mother House of the Community is situated, ~~he~~ *the Bishop Visitor or Protector* shall not accept election without the consent of the Bishop of *that said* Diocese. ~~He~~ *The Bishop Visitor or Protector* shall be the guardian of the Constitution of the Community ; and shall serve as an arbiter in matters which the Community or its members cannot resolve through its normal processes.

(d). Any person under full commitment in ~~such~~ a Christian Community, having exhausted the normal processes of the Community, may petition the Bishop Visitor or Protector for dispensation from that full commitment. In the event the petitioner is not satisfied with the ruling of the Bishop Visitor or Protector on such petition, ~~he~~ *the person* may file a petition with the Presiding Bishop of ~~the Church~~ who shall appoint a Board of three Bishops to review the petition and the decision thereon, and to make recommendation to the Presiding Bishop, who shall have the highest power for Christian Communities, and ~~its~~ whose ruling on the petition shall be final.

(e). Each such Christian Community may establish a house in a Diocese only with the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese. *This permission once granted shall not be withdrawn by the Bishop or any succeeding Bishop.*

(f). The Constitution of ~~every such~~ *each* Christian Community shall make provision for the legal ownership and administration of the temporal possessions of the Community, and in the event of dissolution of the Community, or should it otherwise cease to exist ~~to~~ *shall* provide for the disposition of its assets according to the laws governing non-profit (religious) organizations in the State wherein the Community is incorporated.

(g). It is recognized that ~~each such~~ *a* Christian Community is not a Parish, Mission, Congregation or Institution of the Diocese within the meaning of Canon I.7.3 ~~of these Canons~~ and ~~the~~ *its* provisions thereof shall not apply to ~~such~~ Christian Communities.

Sec. 3. *Any Bishop receiving vows of an individual not a member of a Religious Order or other Christian Community, using the form for "Setting Apart for a Special Vocation" in The Book of Occasional Services, or a similar rite, shall record the following information with the Standing*

Committee on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops: the name of the person making vows; the date of the service; the nature and content of the vows made, whether temporary or permanent; and any other pastoral considerations as shall be deemed necessary.

CANON 29 28.

Of *the* Board for Theological Education

Sec. 1(a). There shall be a Board for Theological Education of the General Convention, consisting of sixteen members with commitment to theological education; four of whom shall be Bishops; four of whom shall be Presbyters *Priests* or Deacons; two of whom, at the times of their appointments, shall be Postulants or Candidates for Holy Orders duly enrolled in accredited Seminaries, and six of whom shall be Lay Persons.

(b). Except for members who are Seminarians and ~~as provided in (d) hereafter~~, all members of the Board shall serve terms beginning with the ~~close~~ *adjournment* of the meeting of ~~the~~ General Convention at which their appointments are confirmed and ending with the ~~close~~ *adjournment* of the second regular meeting thereafter. ~~Such~~ *The* members shall not serve successive terms. Members who are Seminarians shall be eligible to serve only single terms equal in duration to the period between two successive regular meetings of ~~the~~ General Convention.

(c). Bishops shall be appointed by the Presiding Bishop; and ~~other Clerical and all Lay~~ *all other* members ~~including Seminarians~~, shall be appointed by the President of the House of Deputies. ~~a~~ *All members shall be* subject to the confirmation of ~~the~~ General Convention.

(d). Members, except for Seminarians, shall serve rotating terms, with one-half of the total membership being appointed and confirmed at each regular meeting of ~~the~~ General Convention. ~~To achieve such terms, in the first instance following the adoption of these provisions, one half of the appointees in each category indicated shall have terms equal only to the period between two successive regular meetings of General Convention.~~

(e). Positions of members of the Board which become vacant prior to the normal expiration of ~~such~~ *the* members' terms shall be filled by appointment by the Presiding Bishop or by the President of the House of Deputies, as appropriate. ~~Such~~ *The* appointments shall be for the remaining unexpired portion of ~~such~~ *the* members' terms, and if a regular meeting of the General Convention intervenes, appointments for terms extending beyond ~~such~~ *the* members' terms, and if a regular meeting of the General Convention intervenes, appointments for terms extending beyond ~~such~~ *the* meetings shall be subject to confirmation of the General Convention. Members appointed to fill ~~such~~ vacancies shall not thereby be disqualified from appointment to full terms thereafter.

Sec. 2. The duties of the Board for Theological Education shall be:

(a). to study the needs and trends of *theological* education ~~for Holy Orders in the Church~~, within the jurisdiction of this Church, and to make recommendations to the Boards of Trustees of the several Seminaries, the Executive Council, the House of Bishops, and the General Convention, with regard thereto.

(b). to advise and assist the Seminaries, and other institutions of the Church for the training of persons for Holy Orders, within the jurisdiction of this Church.

(c). to promote continuing cooperation between and among the Theological Seminaries of the Church.

(d). to compile and present to each regular meeting of the General Convention both a complete statistical report of education and financial data, and a statement of mission and goals, and progress in fulfilling them, for each of the several accredited Theological Seminaries of the Church, and, as far as possible, for other institutions for the training of persons for Holy Orders.

(e). to assist in the enlistment and selection of candidates for Holy Orders.

(f). to promote the continuing education of the Clergy.

(g). to assist in programs of Lay theological education.

(h). to aid the General Board of Examining Chaplains in the discharge of its responsibilities.

(i). to seek appropriate financial support for theological education.

Sec. 3. ~~It shall be the duty of each accredited Theological Seminary of this Church, and, as far as possible, of each other institution for the training of persons for Holy Orders, to~~ *shall* present to the Board for Theological Education both statistical reports and a statement of mission and goals, and progress in fulfilling them, on forms prepared and provided by the Board.

CANON 30 29.

Of a *the* General Board of Examining Chaplains

Sec. 1. There shall be a General Board of Examining Chaplains, consisting of four Bishops, six ~~Presbyters~~ *Priests* with pastoral cures, six members of ~~Theological accredited~~ Seminary faculties or of other educational institutions, and six Lay Persons. The members of the ~~b~~ *B* oard shall be elected by the House of Bishops and confirmed by the House of Deputies, one-half of ~~such~~ *the* members in each of the foregoing categories being so elected and confirmed at each regular meeting of the General Convention for a term of two Convention periods. They shall take office at the ~~close~~ *adjournment* of the ~~said~~ *meeting of the General Convention at which their appointments are confirmed*, and shall serve until *the adjournment of the second regular meeting thereafter*. ~~their successors are elected and qualified. The members shall not serve successive terms.~~ The House of Bishops, at any special meeting that may be held prior to the next *meeting of the General Convention*, shall fill for the unexpired portion of the term any vacancy that may have arisen in the interim. The Board shall elect its own Chair ~~man~~ and Secretary, and shall have the power to constitute committees necessary for the carrying on of its work.

Sec. 2(a). The General Board of Examining Chaplains, with professional assistance, shall prepare at least annually a General Ordination Examination covering the subject matter set forth in Canon III.7.5(a), and shall conduct, administer, and evaluate ~~the same~~ *it* in respect ~~of~~ *to* those Candidates for Holy Orders who have been certified *identified* to the Board by their several Bishops.

~~(b). Persons from jurisdictions outside the forty eight contiguous United States, and others specifically excepted (see Canon III.4.7(c); Canon III.6.4(a); and Canon III.9) shall may be examined by the Commission on Ministry of their Diocese.~~

~~(e). (b). Whenever a Candidate shall have been judged by the General Board of Examining Chaplains to have failed has not demonstrated proficiency in any one or more of the canonical areas covered by the General Ordination Examination, either in whole or in part, the General Board of Examining Chaplains shall recommend to the Commission on Ministry, and through the Commission on Ministry to the Board of Examining Chaplains, if such one exists, of the Diocese to which such the e C candidate belongs, how the deficiency proficiencies may be overcome might be attained.~~

Sec. 3. The General Board of Examining Chaplains may prepare, in each Convention period, guidelines based upon the subjects contained in Canon III.7.5(a), which guidelines shall be available to all persons concerned.

Sec. 4. The General Board of Examining Chaplains shall promptly report, in writing, *to the Candidate*, to the *Candidate's* Bishop and to the Dean of the Seminary the Candidate is attending, the results of all examinations held by them, *together with the examinations themselves* whether satisfactory or unsatisfactory, making separate reports upon each person examined. The Bishop shall transmit these reports to the Standing Committee and to the Commission on Ministry. *Notwithstanding the results of the examinations, I i n no case shall the Standing Committee recommend a Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate or to the Priesthood under this Canon III.7 until the Standing Committee has received from the Commission on Ministry a certificate to the effect that the Candidate has demonstrated a proficiency in all subjects required by Canon III.7.5(a). examinations have been satisfactorily sustained.*

The R r report of the Board shall be made in the following form, *viz.* :

To _____ (Candidate), the Right Reverend _____, Bishop of (or *in the absence of a Bishop*, the Clerical Members of the Standing Committee) of, as the case may be) _____ :
(Place) _____ (Date) _____

To the Dean of (Place) _____ (Date) _____

We, having been assigned as examiners of A.B., hereby testify that we have examined the said A.B. upon the subject matter prescribed in Canon III.7. Sensible of our responsibility, we give our judgment as follows: (Here specify the proficiency of A.B. in the subject matter appointed, or any deficiency therein, as made apparent by the examination.)

(Signed) _____

Sec. 5. ~~In any case when the report from the Board of Examining Chaplains is held in question on grounds of Doctrine, Faith, or Worship, by the Bishop and the Standing Committee, a Provincial Court of Appeal may be brought into being, according to provisions established by provincial authority.~~

Sec. 6 5. The General Board of Examining Chaplains shall make a report concerning its work to each regular meeting of the General Convention, and in years between sessions *meetings* of the General Convention shall make a report to the House of Bishops.

CANON 31 30.

Of a *the* Board for Church Deployment

Sec. 1(a). ~~There shall be a Board for Church Deployment of the General Convention consisting of twelve members, three of whom shall be Bishops, three of whom shall be Presbyters or Deacons, and six of whom shall be Lay Persons. There shall be a Board for Church Deployment of the General Convention consisting of twelve members, four of whom shall be Bishops, four of whom shall be Presbyters or Deacons, and four of whom shall be Lay Persons.~~

(b). The Bishops shall be appointed by the Presiding Bishop. The Presbyters *Priests* or Deacons and Lay Members shall be appointed by the President of the House of Deputies. All appointments to the Board shall be subject to the confirmation of the General Convention.

(c). The Members shall serve terms beginning with the adjournment of the *meeting of the* General Convention at which their appointments are confirmed, and ending with the adjournment of the second regular *meeting* ~~General Convention~~ thereafter. *The members shall not serve successive terms.*

(d). ~~At the General Convention in which these provisions are adopted, two Bishops, one Presbyter or Deacon, and three Lay Persons shall be appointed to serve for one-half of a regular term, and one Bishop, two Presbyters or Deacons, and three Lay Persons shall be appointed to serve full terms. At each succeeding regular *meeting of the* General Convention, one-half of the membership shall be appointed to serve full terms.~~

(e). ~~Positions of members of the Board which became vacant prior to the normal expiration of such members' terms~~ *Vacancies* shall be filled by appointment by the Presiding Bishop or by the President of the House of Deputies, as appropriate. Such appointments shall be for the remaining unexpired portion of such *the* members' terms, and, if a regular meeting of the General Convention intervenes, appointments for terms extending beyond such meetings shall be subject to confirmation of the General Convention. Members appointed to fill such *the* vacancies shall not thereby be disqualified from appointment to full terms thereafter.

Sec. 2. The duties of the Board ~~for Church Deployment~~ shall be:

(1 a). to oversee the Church Deployment Office.

(2 b). to study the deployment needs and trends in the Episcopal Church and in other Christian bodies.

(3 c). to issue and distribute such reports and information concerning deployment as it deems helpful to the Church.

(4 d). to cooperate with the other Boards, Commissions, and Agencies ~~of the Church~~ which are concerned with ministry, and particularly with the Executive Council.

(5 e). to report on its work and the work of the Church Deployment Office at each regular meeting of the General Convention.

(6 f). to report to the Executive Council at regular intervals as a part of its accountability to the Council for the funding which the Church Deployment Office receives.

(7 g). to work in cooperation with the Church Center Staff.

(8 h). to fulfill such other responsibilities as may be assigned to it by the General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 831.



Resolution Number: 1982-B017
Title: Amend Canon III.27 [Of Religious Orders]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred As Substituted and Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 67th General Convention amend Title III, Canon 27, so that it reads as follows:

CANON 27
Of Religious Orders and Other Christian Communities

Sec. 1(a). A Religious Order of this Church is a society of Christians (in communion with the See of Canterbury) who voluntarily commit themselves for life, or a term of years: to holding their possessions in common or in trust, to a celibate life in community; and obedience to their Rule and Constitution.

(b). To be officially recognized, a Religious Order must have at least six (6) professed members, and must be approved by the Standing Committee on Religious Orders of the House of Bishops and be registered with said committee.

(c). Each Order shall have a Bishop Visitor or Protector, who shall not of necessity be the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Order is established. If, however, the Bishop Visitor or Protector is not the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Mother House of the Order is situated, he shall not accept election without the consent of the Bishop of said Diocese. He shall be the guardian of the Constitution of the Order, and shall serve as an arbiter in matters which the Order or its members cannot resolve through its normal processes.

(d). Any persons under vows in a Religious Order, having exhausted the normal processes of the Order, may petition the Bishop Visitor or Protector for dispensation from those vows. In the event the petitioner is not satisfied with the ruling of the Bishop Visitor or Protector on such petition, he may file a petition with the Presiding Bishop of the Church, who shall appoint a Board of three Bishops to review the petition and the decision thereon, and to make recommendation to the Presiding Bishop, who shall have the highest dispensing power for Religious Orders, and his ruling on the petition shall be final.

(e). A Religious Order may establish a house in a Diocese only with the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese. This permission once granted shall not be withdrawn by him or any succeeding Bishop.

(f). The Constitution of every Religious Order shall make provision for the legal ownership and administration of the temporal possessions of the Order and in the event of dissolution of the Order, or should it otherwise cease to exist, to provide for the disposition of its assets according to the laws governing non-profit religious organizations in the State wherein the Order is incorporated.

(g). It is recognized that a Religious Order is not a Parish, Mission, Congregation or Institution of the Diocese within the meaning of Title 1, Canon 6, Sec. 3, of these Canons, and the provisions thereof shall not apply to Religious Orders.

Sec. 2(a). A Christian Community of this Church under this Canon is a society of Christians (in communion with the See of Canterbury) who voluntarily commit themselves for life, or a term of years, in obedience to their Rule and Constitution.

(b). To be officially recognized such a Christian Community must have at least six (6) full members in accordance with their Rule and Constitution, and must be approved by the Standing Committee on Religious Orders of the House of Bishops and be registered with said Committee.

(c). Each such Christian Community of this Church shall have a Bishop Visitor or Protector, who shall not necessarily be the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Community is established. If, however, the Bishop Visitor or Protector is not the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Mother House of the Community is situated, he shall not accept election without the consent of the Bishop of said Diocese. He shall be the guardian of the Constitution of the Community, and shall serve as an arbiter in matters which the Community or its members cannot resolve through its normal processes.

(d). Any persons under full commitment in such a Christian Community, having exhausted the normal processes of the Community, may petition the Bishop Visitor or Protector for dispensation from that full commitment. In the event the petitioner is not satisfied with the ruling of the Bishop Visitor or Protector on such petition, he may file a petition with the Presiding Bishop of the Church, who shall appoint a Board of three Bishops to review the petition and the decision thereon, and to make recommendation to the Presiding Bishop, who shall have the highest dispensing power for Christian Communities, and his ruling on the petition shall be final.

(e). Each such Christian Community may establish a house in a Diocese only with the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese.

(f). The Constitution of every such Christian Community shall make provision for the legal ownership and administration of the temporal possessions of the Community and in the event of dissolution of the Community, or should it otherwise cease to exist, to provide for the disposition of its assets according to the laws governing non-profit religious organizations in the State wherein the Community is incorporated.

(g). It is recognized that each such Christian Community is not a Parish, Mission, Congregation or Institution of the Diocese within the meaning of Title 1, Canon 6, Sec. 3 of these Canons, and the provisions thereof shall not apply to such Christian Communities.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, New Orleans, 1982* (New York: General Convention, 1983), p. C-93.