

Delegate/Alternate Orientation Frequently Asked Questions

Q. *Who will be present at Convention?*

There will be lay delegates, clergy delegates, lay alternates, officers of Convention who may be either lay persons or clergy, and invited guests who may be either lay or clergy persons. Those in each group, with the exception of guests, have certain responsibilities we'll address in a moment.

Q. *Where will people sit?*

Officers and delegates have assigned seating. The officers of Convention sit at a table at the front of the meeting space. At that table in the middle will be the presiding officer, who is the bishop. To the President's left are the Secretary and Assistant Secretary. They keep the minutes. To the Presiding Officer's right are the Chancellor and the Chair of the Committee on the Dispatch of Business. (Some years the Vice-President of Diocesan Council is also seated at this table.) The Chancellor is an attorney whose job is to make certain church laws are followed and rules are kept. He assures that Roberts Rules of Order are followed. Any legal ruling made by the Chancellor is final and cannot be appealed. The Chair of the Dispatch of Business is charged with keeping the agenda. Once it's approved at the start of Convention the Dispatch of Business cannot be changed except by a 2/3 majority vote.

Tellers are also officers of Convention. They'll be seen on the floor, counting hands when a voice vote is too close to call. Behind the scenes, the tellers will be counting paper ballots. Their job is to report the results of voting to the Presiding Officer.

Lay and clergy delegates sit in assigned seats in the front part of the room. Delegates from each parish are always grouped together so they may confer on any issue that comes before Convention. Each parish's seats are marked. A member of the clergy who is canonically resident in the Diocese of Easton, whether bishop, priest, or deacon, automatically has both voice and vote. Each parish sends two, three, or four delegates to Convention depending on the size of the congregation. These lay persons also have full voice and vote. There will be enough seats assigned to your parish to accommodate all your lay and clergy delegates.

Alternates and guests sit in an area assigned to them further back in the auditorium. Seating in that section is open and persons may take any seat they wish.

Q. *What responsibilities do officers and delegates have?*

The officers preside, make rulings when required, and keep the official record of Convention.

Delegates – lay and clergy – function as a kind of legislature. Delegates may speak to Convention on the various issues before it, and when the vote is called they approved or disapprove. They elect persons to the numerous offices of the Diocese. They may also make motions, propose amendments to motions, or offer substitute motions. Any delegate who wishes to speak simply stands in front of a microphone set up in the meeting room. The Presiding Officer will recognize speakers in the order in which they stand to speak. The speaker states his or her name, parish, and the community in which the parish is located. For example, he might begin by saying, "John Jones, Delegate from St. Timothy's Church, Smithville. Mr. President, I wish to urge my fellow delegates to vote in favor of ..." Speakers do not address each other. They always direct their comments to the Presiding Officer.

Q. *What responsibilities do other persons have?*

Clergy who are not canonically resident in the Diocese but who serve congregations here, lay alternates, lay members of Diocesan Council and lay members of the Standing Committee, have limited voice. They can address resolutions and amendments on the floor. They may not, however, propose motions, substitute motions, or amendments. And, of course, they cannot vote. Convention may also extend this limited voice to certain guests who are present.

Q. *How do delegates involve themselves in the debate?*

Any delegate who wishes to make a motion, amend a resolution or propose a substitute motion on the floor may do so. However, amendments and substitutes must be in writing. They must be read exactly as written, and then given to the Secretary for accurate minute taking.

Q. *What laws govern Convention?*

The Diocese has two kinds of laws. One is the Constitution. Changes in the Constitution take effect only if passed by delegates to two successive Conventions. In other words, should Convention vote for the first time this year to change the Constitution, the change would not be in effect until next year's Convention votes to approve it. The other group of laws is known as Canons. Changes in Canons take effect immediately upon passage.

Q. *How do we vote?*

Delegates often vote as one body, something like the parliaments of many national governments. These votes are customarily by voice. However, if the President cannot be certain if the motion carried, he will order a show of hands and tellers will do the counting. Instead of holding up hands, however, delegates hold up a green card to indicate a yes vote, and a red card to indicate a no vote. The cards are in the delegates' packages. Motions carry with a 50% plus one.

Sometimes, however, Convention splits into two bodies, which is known as voting by orders. Clergy vote together and lay persons vote together. We then resemble the U.S. Congress with its two bodies, the House and the Senate. A motion passes only if it receives 50% plus one approval in each order. In elections for office, Convention always votes by orders. In order to win election a candidate must have 50% plus one in each order.

We cast paper ballots for persons running for office. Clergy and lay delegates drop them in separate ballot boxes.

Q. *Why do we have up to four ballots scheduled?*

First, remember that election to office is always by order, so to be elected a candidate must get 50% plus one in each order. It's not unusual for candidates to fail to get a majority in one of the two orders. So we have to vote again. If we do not have a complete slate elected for each office after the third ballot, different rules go into effect on the fourth ballot. Instead of needing 50% plus one, the person getting a plurality, that is, the most votes, wins.

We are very likely to need four ballots in 2011 because we not only have to elect persons to diocesan offices but we will also elect Deputies to General Convention for the year following.