

Resolution to Amend Diocesan Canons

Canon 11 Congregations.

Proposers: The Canons Committee of the Diocese of Montana

Resolved, Canon 11 be amended with the addition of a new Section 2 and the remaining sections being renumbered accordingly.

Canon 11. CONGREGATIONS

Section 2. Impaired Congregations.

- a. Whenever in the life of a congregation, its ability to so function is impaired by instability and stress, it is the responsibility of the Ecclesiastical Authority and the congregation to attempt to restore it to vitality. Situations which may indicate that a Congregation is unable to function include:
1. A request of the Rector or the Priest in Charge for assistance;
 2. A request of the majority of the Members of the Vestry for assistance;
 3. Failure to make timely reports required of the Canons, including yearly audits;
 4. Failure or refusal to elect a governing body or send a delegation to any Annual Convention;
 5. Determination that the financial reports of the Congregation reveal evidence of financial instability sufficient, in the judgment of the Bishop and the Diocesan Council, to jeopardize the ability to function as a Congregation.
- b. The Ecclesiastical Authority shall appoint a Consulting Team of laity and clergy of at least three persons to help assess the health of the Congregation. The Ecclesiastical Authority may consult with the Rector and Vestry regarding the composition of the Consulting Team. In the event the Ecclesiastical Authority is a Bishop, the Bishop may appoint a designee to operate on his or her behalf.
- c. After consultation(s) with the Rector, the Vestry and other entities, the Consulting Team shall report to the Bishop, the Standing Committee, the Vestry and the Rector with an assessment and a plan of action to address issues raised in the report.
- d. The Rector and Vestry can respond to the report of the Consulting Team with commentary or an action plan of their own.
- e. The parties involved shall engage in a good faith effort to resolve the issues that have led to impairment.

Explanation: There does not exist in the canons a means by which the Ecclesiastical Authority can enter into assisting an impaired congregation back to health. While heretofore, advice or intervention could have been invited by the congregation, this canon would allow intervention by subsection (a) 1 - 5 if an invitation is not extended. This canon is not to be construed as a disciplinary canon with respect to the clergy. There are no penalties associated with it, *per se*.

Instead it is a means by which people with expertise, on behalf of the Ecclesiastical Authority engage with a Congregation which desires to regain health to restore the Congregation to vitality.

Fiscal Note: None