

Constitution of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion

Preamble

We are People of God and members of the ecclesial body herein to be referred to as the “Ecumenical Catholic Communion” or “ECC” or “Communion”. We recall the words of the second century church father, St. Ignatius of Antioch, when referring to the Church: we are a “communion of communities”.

We are men and women, baptized in Christ. We are laity and ordained. We join together at the messianic call of the Spirit to form the household of faith; to preach the Gospel of liberation and justice for the poor, the outcast, the sick, the disabled, the old, the young, and the imprisoned; to offer a refuge in Christ for those who suffer prejudice because of race, color, culture, philosophy, gender, sexual orientation or educational deprivation; to conform our lives to the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ through prayer and study, service, and the celebration of the liturgy and the sacraments.

We profess our faith in Christ in the living Catholic Tradition handed to us from the Apostles through many generations. And we stand open to a dialogue with those of other religious identities and faith traditions.

We hereby affirm this constitution as an instrument of governance and guidance for our ecclesial body and its member communities.

Mission Statement:

We are People of God baptized in Christ and professing our faith in a living Catholic tradition. We are men and women, lay and ordained, joining together as a “communion of communities” in response to the messianic call of the Spirit to preach the Gospel of liberation and justice; to offer a refuge in Christ for those who suffer prejudice; to stand open to dialogue with others so called and, to conform our lives to the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Section I: Polity of the Communion

- Canon 1. The Communion is a confederation of independently incorporated faith communities, which is governed by the House of Laity, the House of Pastors, the Office of the Presiding Bishop, and the Episcopal Council.
- 1.1 The Communion shall convene a synod of all the abovementioned governing bodies no less than once every two (2) years.
 - 1.2 All legislation shall originate and be approved by a vote of the House of Laity and the House of Pastors, unless otherwise designated.
- Canon 2. The House of Laity, herein referred to as “HOL”, is comprised of members of participating faith communities in the Communion. Members of the HOL are elected every two (2) years and shall be elected in accordance with the constitution or guidelines of each faith community.
- 2.1 Members must be at least 18 years of age and cannot be ordained clergy.
 - 2.2 Each faith community has the right to send at least one (1) voting delegate to the HOL (with the exception of the association of Chaplains, as ordained clergy are not permitted to serve in the HOL). An additional voting delegate for each unit of fifty (50) currently registered adult members in the faith community would also serve in the HOL. [For example, a faith community between 3 and 49 currently registered adult members would have two (2) delegates, while a parish with 50 to 99 would have three (3) delegates; and a parish of 100 to 149 would have four (4) delegates, and so on.] However, the number of voting delegates representing one community in the HOL shall not exceed one third (1/3) of the total number of delegates of the HOL.
 - 2.3 The HOL shall establish its own policies and procedures of its governance and shall convene no less than bi-annually during the synod.
 - 2.4 Issues of finance shall originate in HOL and be affirmed by HOP and signed by the Presiding Bishop.
- Canon 3. The House of Pastors, herein referred to as the “HOP”, is comprised of all pastors and designated ministerial representatives from the participating faith communities of the CECC.
- 3.1 Pastors shall be members of the HOP for as long as they are serving in the office of pastor at a parish. Bishops are not permitted to serve in the HOP. In parishes whose pastor is a bishop, a designated vicar shall serve in lieu of the pastor as the pastoral representative of that parish. Such a designated vicar shall be selected according to the guidelines of the parish.

- 3.2 In addition to the Pastoral Representative, each parish shall select one ministerial representative from the clergy of that parish to serve as a voting member of the HOP. Each representative of the HOP must be a clergy member in good standing with the CECC. If there are no other clergy of the Communion within the parish, an alternative representative may be selected from the laity to serve as the additional ministerial representative of that parish. The term of office is two (2) years and the number of terms shall be determined by each parish.
- 3.3 All other faith communities, other than parishes, have the right to two seats in the HOP: one is to be held by the leader of the faith community and the other seat shall be held by an official member of the faith community, as selected by the guidelines of that faith community. The term of office is two (2) years and the number of terms shall be determined by each faith community. These representatives are not required to be ordained clergy.
- 3.4 The HOP shall establish its own policies and procedures of its governance and shall convene no less than bi-annually during the synod.

Canon 4.. The Office of the Presiding Bishop shall be the central executive office of the Communion. The Presiding Bishop shall be elected by a two third (2/3) majority vote of an electoral college, which is comprised of all members of the two (2) houses of governance. The Presiding Bishop may be elected for a maximum of three (3) four (4) year terms, and serves as the President of the Episcopal Council.

- 4.1 The Presiding Bishop shall be responsible to establish an administrative body, which shall include a Chancellor, and other officers as deemed necessary in order to fulfill the duties of the Office of Presiding Bishop. The Presiding Bishop may also establish standing committees or ad hoc committees in order to further the mission of the Communion.
- 4.2 The Presiding Bishop shall be responsible to sign or veto all legislation, liturgical changes or intercommunion agreements. A veto may be overridden by a 2/3 majority vote of both the HOL and the HOP. When the veto is exercised the matter must be reviewed by the Episcopal Council.
- 4.3 The Presiding Bishop receives faith communities applying for membership into the Communion, as set forth in the Guidelines for Formation of New Faith Communities, with confirmation by the Episcopal Council.
- 4.4 The Presiding Bishop accepts a faith community's request for withdrawal from the Communion.

- 4.5 The Presiding Bishop may issue a pastoral letter with the confirmation of the Episcopal Council.
- Canon 5. The Episcopal Council shall be comprised of all bishops in good standing with the Communion.
- 5.1 The Episcopal Council may initiate liturgical changes and intercommunion agreements, which must be reviewed and confirmed by the House of Pastors. It may also issue joint pastoral letters and policy statements, with the review and confirmation of the House of Pastors.
- 5.2 The Episcopal Council is a Court of Appeal for the decisions of the 2 houses. The Communion shall establish an appeal process which includes the formation of an Appeal Commission. This commission shall be comprised of laity, clergy and bishops, and shall review all appeals and submit their recommendations to the Episcopal Council. The members of the Appeal Commission shall be selected according to guidelines established by the Communion.
- 5.3 The Episcopal Council is a Court of Review for cases of misconduct and/or incompetence and may appoint an investigating committee if deemed necessary.
- 5.4 The Episcopal Council may also establish standing committees or ad hoc committees to further the mission of the Church. This Council may establish and/or modify guidelines for ordination and guidelines for the formation of new parish communities. In addition this Council reviews and confirms all applications for vocations and the formation of new faith communities.
- Canon 6. All canons and bylaws regulating finances of the Communion must originate and be passed in the HOL and be confirmed by the HOP.
- 6.1 Recognizing that we have chosen to come together as a Communion and that there are necessary administrative costs to facilitate that Communion, we enter into a covenant with one another to fund these needs and suggest a five percent (5%) guideline for tithing by faith communities to the ECC. We acknowledge that some faith communities may not be able to meet this 5% guideline and we support their development. Larger Faith Communities are encouraged to contribute generously but no single Faith Community will be asked to give more than ten percent (10%) of the total ECC budget. The contribution of each faith community is based upon just compensation for staff and pattern of giving within the local faith community. It is requested that monies be submitted on at least a quarterly basis. The Office of the Presiding Bishop will submit a proposed budget annually to the House of Laity for approval. The House of Laity then submits their approved budget to the House of Pastors for affirmation. (Approved 10/2005)
- Canon 7. All canons and bylaws regulating liturgical changes of the Communion shall originate and be passed in either the HOP or the Episcopal Council, and shall be affirmed by the two houses and the Episcopal Council. Such changes shall be signed by the Presiding Bishop.

- Canon 8. Intercommunion agreements with other ecclesial bodies shall be negotiated and signed by the Presiding Bishop and become effective through a vote of confirmation by both the HOP and the Episcopal Council.
- Canon 9. Proposed changes to guidelines for the following areas shall be initiated in the HOP:
- 9.a. Guidelines for new faith communities to be received into the Communion.
 - 9.b. Guidelines for the ordination of bishops, priests or deacons of the Communion.
 - 9.c. Guidelines for the reception of ordained clergy from other ecclesial bodies into the Communion.
 - 9.d. Guidelines for the discipline and the termination of faculties of clergy of the Communion.

House of Laity

- Elected according to constitution of each faith community
- Term is two years with term limits established by constitution of each faith community
- Members must be 18 years of age
- Members cannot be ordained clergy

House of Pastors

- Members include Pastors and pastoral representatives selected by each parish
- Members also include Leaders of Ministry Organizations, Religious Orders, Chaplain Associations and Educational Institutions and their pastoral representatives.
- Term of Pastors is duration of pastorate
- Term is two years with term limits established by constitution of each community

Office of the Presiding Bishop

- Elected by a combined vote of the HOL and the HOP.
- Term is four (4) years

Episcopal Council

- All bishops are members of the council as long as they are in good standing with the Communion and until they retire or are incapacitated.

Section 2: Affirmations of Faith

- Canon 10. **Christ** – We affirm the faith of the ancient Christian Church that the person of Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Christ, the hope of Israel who has been revealed to us as the Son of God who through his life, death and resurrection brings salvation to the whole world.
- Canon 11. **Church** – We affirm that the Church of Jesus Christ embodies all who follow Jesus and are joined in an indissoluble union with Christ and one another through baptism becoming the People of God. This Body of Christ is one, catholic, and apostolic and is entrusted with continuing the saving work of Christ in the world through the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries which are commonly called the Sacraments.
- Canon 12. **Scripture** – We affirm the Sacred Scriptures that have been handed on to us through the Apostolic Tradition and are held in common with the historic Catholic Church. These Sacred Writings are truly inspired by the human encounter with the Divine in history and are both reliable and authoritative in matters of faith and practice.
- Canon 13. **Sacraments** – We affirm that the Church in her very nature is Sacramental. Therefore, the work of the Church is essentially understood as a Sacramental Ministry. The Sacraments are grace-filled moments of encounter with the Divine. Through our participation in the celebration of these Divine Mysteries we are renewed by the saving presence of the Resurrected Christ.
- Canon 14. **Creed** – We affirm the Nicene Creed as the foundational profession of catholic faith as it was originally promulgated by the Ecumenical Councils of Nicea in 325 and Constantinople in 381. We realize that this profession does not preclude further development in our theological understanding and expression.
- Canon 15. **The Declaration of Utrecht** – We affirm that the Declaration of Utrecht (September 24, 1889) is consistent with the ancient tradition of the Catholic Church in its rejection of both universal papal jurisdiction and the infallibility of the papal office.
- Canon 16. **The Distinctive Foundational Teachings of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion** – We affirm that these Distinctive Teachings form a foundational document in our growing understanding of the implications of the Gospel message of Christ in our time.

Section 3: Sacramental Guidelines

- Canon 17. Baptism is open to all who desire to follow Christ and affirm the Profession of Faith, such as is formulated in the Nicene Creed.
- Canon 18. Confirmation may be administered to anyone, regardless of age, as a part of the restored order of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Confirmation may also be administered to all baptized persons who have completed a course of preparation and requested the sacrament. Local custom and pastoral need shall determine the administration of the sacrament of Confirmation.
- Canon 19. Eucharist is open to all who come forward to receive – no test of faith or moral standing is allowed as requirement. Local custom and pastoral need shall determine the administration of the sacrament of First Eucharist.
- Canon 20. Reconciliation is open to all who request it. A clear delineation is made between external and internal (confessional) forum.
- Canon 21. Anointing of the sick is open to all who request it.
- Canon 22. Marriage is affirmed for couples who seek recognition and blessing of their union with the following guidelines:
- 22.a. It must be freely affirmed by the two (2) parties.
 - 22.b. Legally recognized marriages must conform to the laws of the civil jurisdiction.
 - 22.c. Clergy cannot be compelled against their conscience to recognize and bless the union of any couple.
 - 22.d. All couples must conform to the requirements and pastoral direction of the local faith community.
- Canon 23. Holy Orders shall conform to the guidelines set forth by the Communion and are understood as follows:
- 23.a. The ministry of deacon is particularly one of service to those outside the church, marginalized by society, the sick, poor, elderly, etc.
 - 23.b. The ministry of priest/presbyter is particularly one of care among members of the faith community, focused upon the celebration of the Sacraments and spiritual guidance.
 - 23.c. The ministry of bishop is particularly one of guidance as first shepherd. The episcopal ministry is one of evangelism, continuity and unity.

Section 4: Guidelines for Faith Communities

A. Parishes

- Canon 24. A parish is a recognized local and geographical faith community with full rights of polity as established by this constitution. Legal incorporation and the formation of a parish council are required in order to be admitted with parish status into the Communion.
- Canon 25. A parish must be financially self-sustaining to be admitted into the Communion, and it must form a finance committee prior to admission. The Communion holds no financial responsibility for a parish's property or operating expenses. The Communion holds no claim to the property and assets of the parish.
- Canon 26. The parish shall uphold its financial obligations to the Communion by regular and appropriate contributions as established by the synod.
- Canon 27. Each parish shall select and send the appropriate number of voting Laity to the synod of this Communion. The pastor of each parish must also attend the annual synod.
- Canon 28. Parishes shall receive a bi-annual episcopal visit unless otherwise determined by mutual agreement between the bishop and the pastor.
- 28.1 Parishes with bishops as pastors shall receive a bi-annual episcopal visit by another bishop of the communion, unless otherwise determined by mutual agreement between the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the pastor.
- 28.2 Parishes with bishops must also be visited once a year by another bishop of the Communion or designated representative from the Episcopal Office.
- 28.3 The parish shall cover all costs associated with the episcopal visit.
- Canon 29. Clergy and staff are required to maintain standards in accordance with the Ethical Code of Conduct, as outlined by this Communion.
- Canon 30. The parish is the employer of record for its clergy and staff, with the responsibility to hire and terminate all clergy and staff, practice pre-employment inquiries of sexual misconduct and conduct criminal background checks.
- 30.1 Pastors and other clergy staff members of ECC faith communities shall be incardinated clergy of the ECC. (Approved 10/2005)
- Canon 31. The Communion carries no legal responsibility or liability for the conduct of clergy or staff of each local parish. The parish is responsible for the investigation of allegations of misconduct by its clergy and staff.

Canon 32. Allegations of misconduct shall be reported, according to established guidelines of the Communion, to the Presiding Bishop and the Episcopal Council for review.

B. Religious Orders

Canon 33. A religious order is a community of individuals who have united for an evangelical mission of the pursuit of the spiritual life and/or social service.

33.1 Legal incorporation by the religious order and the selection of administrative leaders of the order are both necessary for both recognition by and admission to the polity of the Communion.

33.2 The process of recognition and admission of Religious Orders into the Communion is administered through the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

Canon 34. A religious order shall adhere to the guidelines of the Communion for religious orders as administered by an appropriate representative of the Episcopal Council and/or the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

Canon 35. A religious order must be financially self-sustaining to be admitted into the Communion, and it must form a finance committee prior to admission. The Communion holds no financial responsibility for the property of the religious order or its operating expenses. The Communion holds no claim to the property and assets of the religious order.

Canon 36. The religious order shall uphold its financial obligations to the Communion by regular and appropriate contributions as established by the synod.

Canon 37. The religious order shall be represented at the synod of the Communion in the HOP by its senior administrative member and one additional member as selected by the order, and by the appropriate number of lay Laity (representing lay members of the religious order) in the HOL, as prescribed by the formula for the representation of parishes. These representatives shall serve with full voting rights in their respective houses of governance.

Canon 38. The religious order shall review its administration and ministries with an appropriate representative from the Episcopal Council no less than once every two (2) years. The order shall be responsible for all costs involved with this review.

Canon 39. The religious order shall publish a code of ethical conduct to which all members of the order shall subscribe.

Canon 40. The religious order, as a legal corporation, is the responsible authority for any members of the order. The religious order is the employer of record for any members or additional staff employed by the order. The Communion holds no

legal responsibility or liability for the conduct of the members or employees of the religious order.

- Canon 41. The religious order has the right and responsibility to govern and guide its members through its own regulations and administrative practices. The administrators of the order have the obligation to screen potential members through appropriate psychological examinations, criminal background checks, and inquiries concerning sexual misconduct. All those employed by the order shall also be screened through the processes of background checks and inquiries concerning sexual misconduct.
- Canon 42. The religious order is responsible for the investigation of any allegation of misconduct by its members or staff. Allegations of misconduct and the findings of the investigation shall be reported, according to established guidelines, to the appropriate representative of the Episcopal Council and the Office of the Presiding Bishop, and appropriate actions taken by the representatives of the Communion.

C. Specialized Ministries

- Canon 43. A specialized ministry is a faith community independent of a parish or religious order devoted to the service of a particular need or population such as:
- 43.a. an educational institution such as a school, college, university or seminary;
 - 43.b. an association of chaplains to a school, hospital, prison, military service or other institution;
 - 43.c. a ministry organization created by members of the Communion, for the purpose of developing particular missions of spiritual development or social need
- Canon 44. A specialized ministry shall adhere to the guidelines of the Communion for Specialized ministries as administered by an appropriate representative of the Episcopal Council and/or the Office of the Presiding Bishop.
- Canon 45. A specialized ministry shall receive the endorsement of the Communion according to guidelines established by the Communion as administered by an appropriate representative of the Episcopal Council and/or the Office of the Presiding Bishop.
- Canon 46. The institution at which a chaplain endorsed by the Communion serves shall be the employer of record for that chaplain. No financial obligation is assumed by the Communion for a chaplain in such service.

- Canon 47. A specialized ministry, other than an institutional chaplaincy, shall be legally incorporated and shall establish appropriate governing boards and finance committees.
- 47.1 The corporation established for the specialized ministry shall be the employer of record for all employed by the incorporated specialized ministry, and no financial obligation is assumed by the communion for that specialized ministry.
- Canon 48. A specialized ministry shall be financially self-sustaining to be admitted to the Communion and form a finance committee prior to admission.
- 48.1 The Communion holds no financial responsibility the property or operating expenses of the specialized ministry. The Communion holds no claim to the property and assets of the specialized ministry.
- Canon 49. The specialized ministry shall uphold its financial obligations to the Communion by regular and appropriate contributions as established by the synod.
- Canon 50. Each specialized ministry shall conduct a review with the appropriate and designated member of the Episcopal council no less than once every two (2) years. The specialized ministry shall assume all costs involved with this review.
- Canon 51. Any individual engaged in a specialized ministry shall abide by a code of ethics appropriate to that ministry and to the code of ethics established by the Communion for clergy, if the individual is an ordained member of the Communion.
- Canon 52. Each specialized ministry, as a legal corporation, is the responsible authority for the ministry and the employer of record for its staff. The Communion holds no legal responsibility or liability for the conduct of the members or employees of the each specialized ministry.
- Canon 53. Specialized ministries shall be represented at the bi-annual synod in the following manner:
- 53.1 Educational institutions shall be represented in the HOP at the synod of the Communion by its senior administrative member and one additional member as selected by the institution. Representation in the HOL shall be the appropriate number of lay members of the educational institution, as prescribed by the formula for the representation of parishes.
- 53.2 Chaplains shall be represented in the HOP, through an association of all chaplains, by two (2) ordained members.
- 53.3 Each ministry organizations shall be represented in the HOP by its senior administrative member and one additional member as selected by the

ministry organization. Representation in the HOL shall be by the appropriate number of lay members of the ministry organization, as prescribed by the formula for the representation of lay members in parishes.

Canon 54. Each specialized ministries, (each educational institution, the associations of chaplains and each ministry organization), is responsible for the investigation of any allegation of misconduct by its own members or staff.

54.1 Allegations of misconduct and the findings of the investigation shall be reported, according to established guidelines, to the appropriate representative of the Episcopal Council and the Office of the Presiding Bishop, and appropriate actions shall be taken by the representatives of the Communion.

Section 5: Principle of Self-Determination

Canon 55. When clergy choose to terminate faculties with the Communion, faculties may be withdrawn.

Canon 56. The granting of faculties shall be followed according to Subcanon 2 of Canon 60: The Bylaws of the Constitution.

Canon 57. The termination of faculties by the Communion shall be administered by the local Ordinary. All granting and termination of faculties by the local Ordinary shall be reported to Office of the Presiding Bishop. Termination of faculties with cause shall be reviewed by the Episcopal Council. An exit interview may be administered by the Office of the Presiding Bishop upon termination of faculties.

Canon 58. Petitions for the restoration of clergy faculties are administered by the local Ordinary. When such faculties are restored they shall be affirmed by the majority vote of the Episcopal Council. Faculties shall not be restored in cases of:

58.a. Conviction for sexual assault of an adult or minor.

58.b. Conviction of homicidal threat or attempt.

58.c. Faculties may be restored following a psychiatric episode upon the recommendation of 2 (two) qualified medical examiners.

Canon 58. A faith community may choose to withdraw from the Communion. This shall be administered by the Office of the Presiding Bishop, and reviewed by the Episcopal Council. An exit interview shall be conducted with the leadership of the withdrawing faith community by a member of the Episcopal Council.

Canon 59. All community property and assets are held in sole ownership by the local faith community, in accordance with its own constitution and the laws of the state in which it exists. The Communion claims no rights to the properties owned by its faith communities.

Section 6: Amendments to the Constitution

Canon 60. Amendment of this Constitution shall originate in either the HOL or the HOP and shall be addressed at the bi-annual synod.

Canon 61. Bill of Rights: Rights and Responsibilities
The following are the Church members' fundamental rights, flowing either from their basic human rights or their basic baptismal rights. Each right entails a corresponding responsibility on the part of the rights holders, some of which are so obvious that they do not require specific articulation. In all instances these rights and responsibilities apply to all Catholics, regardless of race, age, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, state-of-life, social or economic position.

61.1. Basic Human Rights and Responsibilities

We affirm the rights and responsibilities of all Christians as expressed in the following Bill of Rights as published by ARCC – Association for Rights for Catholics in the Church.

61.1.1 All Catholics have the basic human rights based on the following examples:

- 61.1.1.a. freedom of action
- 61.1.1.b. freedom of conscience
- 61.1.1.c. freedom of opinion and expression
- 61.1.1.d. the right to receive and impart information
- 61.1.1.e. freedom of association
- 61.1.1.f. the right to due process of law
- 61.1.1.g. the right of participation in self-governance
- 61.1.1.h. the right to the accountability of chosen leaders
- 61.1.1.i. the right to the safeguarding of one's reputation and privacy
- 61.1.1.j. the right to marry
- 61.1.1.k. the right to education and the corresponding duty to exercise them responsibly

61.1.1.2. As a consequence of the basic human right of freedom of action, all Catholics have the right to engage in any activity which neither causes harm nor infringes on the rights of others.

61.1.1.3 As a consequence of the basic human right of freedom of conscience, all Catholics have the right and responsibility to follow their informed consciences in all matters.

61.1.1.4 As a consequence of the basic human right to receive and impart information, all Catholics have the right of access to all information possessed by Church authorities concerning their own spiritual and

- temporal welfare, provided such access does not infringe on the rights of others.
- 61.1.1.5. As a consequence of the basic human right of freedom of opinion and expression, all Catholics have the right to express publicly in a responsible manner their agreement or disagreement regarding decisions made by Church authorities.
- 61.1.1.5.a. Laity have the right and responsibility to make their opinions known in a responsible manner, especially where they have first-hand experience of the issue at hand.
- 61.1.1.5.b. Catholic teachers and scholars of theology have a right to, and responsibility for, academic freedom; the acceptability of their teaching is to be judged in dialogue with their peers and, when appropriate, Church authorities. Such scholars and teachers shall keep in mind that the search for truth and its expression entails following wherever the evidence leads, and hence, the legitimacy of responsible dissent and pluralism of thought and its expression.
- 61.1.1.6. As a consequence of the basic human right of freedom of association, all Catholics have the right to form voluntary associations to pursue Catholic aims; such associations have the right to decide on their own rules of governance.
- 61.1.1.7. As a consequence of the basic human right to due process of law, all Catholics have the right to be dealt with according to commonly accepted norms of fair administrative and judicial procedures without undue delay, and to redress of grievances through regular procedures of law.
- 61.1.1.8. As a consequence of the basic human right of participation in self-governance, all Catholics have the right to a voice in decisions that affect them, including the choosing of their leaders, and a duty to exercise those rights responsibly.
- 61.1.1.9. As a consequence of the basic human right to the accountability of chosen leaders, all Catholics have the right to have their leaders render an account to them.
- 61.1.1.10. As a consequence of the basic human right to the safeguarding of one's reputation and privacy, all Catholics have the right not to have their good reputations impugned or their privacy violated.
- 61.1.1.11. As a consequence of the basic human right to marry, all Catholics have the right to choose their state in life; this includes the right for both laity and clergy to marry, remain single or embrace celibacy.
- 61.1.1.12. As a consequence of the basic human right to marry, with each spouse retaining full and equal rights during marriage, all Catholics have the right to withdraw from a marriage which has irretrievably broken down.

- 61.1.1.12.a. All such Catholics retain the inalienable right to remarry
- 61.1.1.12.b. All divorced and remarried Catholics who are in conscience reconciled to the Church retain the right to the same ministries, including all the sacraments, as do other Catholics.
- 61.1.1.13 As a consequence of the basic human rights to marry and to education, all Catholic parents have the right and responsibility
 - 61.1.1.13.a. To determine in conscience the size of their families,
 - 61.1.1.13.b. To choose appropriate methods of family planning
 - 61.1.1.13.c. To see to the education of their children.
- 61.2. Basic Baptismal Rights and Responsibilities
 - 61.2.1. As a consequence of their baptism, all Catholics have the right to receive in the Church those ministries which are needed for the living of a fully Christian life, including:
 - 61.2.1.a. Worship which reflects the joys and concerns of the gathered community and instructs and inspires it;
 - 61.2.1.b. Instruction in the Christian tradition and the presentation of spirituality and moral teaching in a way that promotes the helpfulness and relevance of Christian values to contemporary life; and
 - 61.2.1.c. Pastoral care that applies with concern and effectiveness the Christian heritage to persons in particular situations.
 - 61.2.2. As a consequence of their baptism, all Catholics have the right,
 - 61.2.2.a. To receive all the sacraments for which they are adequately prepared,
 - 61.2.2.b. To exercise all ministries in the Church for which they are adequately prepared, according to the needs and with the approval or commissioning of the community.
 - 61.2.3. As a consequence of their baptism, all Catholics have the right to expect that the resources of the Church expended within the Church shall be fairly distributed on their behalf. Among other concerns, this implies that,
 - 61.2.3.a. All Catholic women have an equal right with Catholic men to the resources and the exercise of all the powers of the Church;
 - 61.2.3.b. All Catholic parents have the right to expect fair material and other assistance from Church leaders in the religious education of their children; and
 - 61.2.3.c. All single Catholics have the right to expect that the resources of the Church be fairly expended on their behalf.

- 61.2.4. As a consequence of their baptism, as well as the social nature of humanity, all Catholics have the corresponding responsibility to support the Church through their time, talents and financial resources.
- Canon 62. The Bylaws of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion may be amended by a vote of the House of Pastors and the House of Laity with the signature of the Presiding Bishop. A veto by the Presiding Bishop can be overridden by a 2/3 majority vote of each of the two Houses.
- Canon 63 No bishop shall serve as a member of the Episcopal Council unless affirmed as such by a majority vote of each of the two house and the Episcopal council. (Approved 10/2005)
- Canon 64 Selection of Bishops for Ministerial Service within the ECC (Approved 10/2005)
- 64.1. A candidate for ordination to the Episcopal Office must fulfill the guidelines as set forth in the bylaws of the Constitution of the ECC.
- Canon 65 Admission of Bishops and their faith communities into the ECC from other ecclesial bodies. (Approved 10/2005)
- 65.1. A bishop shall not be received into the ECC with the full privileges and authority of the Episcopal Office apart from the reception of his/her local faith community.
- 65.2. A bishop who is a candidate for reception into the ECC must fulfill the guidelines for reception as set forth in the Bylaws of the constitution of the ECC.
- 65.3. The bishop petitioning for reception into the ECC, along with his/her faith community, shall be presented to the two houses and the Episcopal Council for a vote of affirmation.
- 65.4. The petitioning bishop, along with his/her faith community, shall promise to uphold the constitution and bylaws of the ECC prior to their reception.
- 65.5. The newly received bishop shall retain the pastoral responsibilities for his/her local faith community or communities.
- 65.6. Faith communities that are received, along with their petitioning bishop, shall be accorded all the rights, responsibilities and privileges of all member faith communities, as provided by the constitution and bylaws of the ECC.
- 65.7. The newly received bishop becomes eligible for election to the Episcopal Council according to the constitution and guidelines of the ECC.
- Canon 66 Succession of Presiding Bishop before the completion of term of office (Approved 10/2005)
- 66.1 In the event of resignation, death or incapacitation of the presiding Bishop, the senior bishop of the Episcopal Council shall serve as interim presiding bishop until a new presiding bishop is chosen according to Canon 4.

66.2 In the absence of any bishop in the Episcopal Council, the president of the House of Pastors (HOP) shall serve as senior officer in the office of the Presiding Bishop until a new presiding bishop is chosen according to Canon 4.

Bylaws

Subcanon 1: Guidelines for the Formation of Faith Communities are administered and amended by the Episcopal Council.

The growth of the household of faith has always had 2 (two) dimensions:

1. Growth is understood in terms of numbers, as seen in the increase of local communities, and the increase of members in each community. The scriptural model for such growth is found in the second chapter of Acts, concluding with the sentence: “Day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”
2. Growth is also understood in terms of the maturation of the members of the Church. This is exemplified in Saint Paul’s concern that the Corinthian community (chapter 3) develop from the infancy of spiritual milk to the solid food of faith
- 3.

It is therefore our desire to aid the clergy and people of the Communion, as well as those who wish to join the Communion, with these guidelines for the formation of faith communities, and their incorporation into the Ecumenical Catholic Communion.

The following points are not meant to be an exhaustive treatment of the process, but rather, an aid in discerning the readiness of any group to join the Communion.

The Discovery of a Faith Community

This article purposely acknowledges the place of grace in the idea that a community is “discovered.” Men and women who find themselves in a continual communal experience of sharing and celebrating their spiritual journey in Christ come to discern their need formally create a faith community, commonly understood as a church, parish or mission. These communities are somewhere along the continuum of being established as a permanent association of faithful individual members. This corporate experience may be that of regular eucharistic celebration; change in identity from connection with another ecclesial body; or the outgrowth from an established community of the Communion (such as second community arising from a specific geographical location that affords some members easier and more frequent access to communal functions). Such a discovery is generally confirmed by the members of the specific group meeting and agreeing upon the affinity they feel, and the lead of the Spirit in creating a sacramental community. Conversely, it is not usually the action of a single person – even a member of the clergy – who attempts to establish a community with no other members. We may be reminded of the words of Scripture that the presence of the Living Christ is felt where *two or three* are gathered in faith.

The Formation of Community Leadership

When a group of the faithful believers express their awareness of their identity as a community of faith, they must ask if that identity is a share in the ancient Catholic tradition of sacramental ministry and liturgical celebration. If so, then they are ready to approach the Communion through the appropriate means. In doing so, it shall be necessary that both lay leaders and the

clergy of the Communion to begin the dialogue with the Communion. This means that there must be a sufficient number of lay leaders in the community to allow for a variety of voices in this dialogue. Such a process is not the sole realm of the pastor of the community. It must reflect the diversity of the members of the faith community. Although it is normative that a community would have its own ordained pastoral leader, a community may find that it has no permanent clergy. This is not an obstacle to applying to become a part of the Communion. Indeed, it is sometimes the case that a community comes to the Communion, often through the bishop, precisely because it has no permanent member who is an ordained priest or deacon.

A leadership council should be elected by the members of the community before applying for acceptance into the Communion. While the structure of the council may differ from those of other faith communities, in general, it should include lay leaders as the president or chairperson, the financial officer and financial committee members, the recording secretary, and various committees to coordinate functions of the community.

Clergy of the Community

Faith communities have generally joined the Communion with established clergy as a part of their regular life. The clergy of such communities must make a separate application to the Communion for faculties. Their acceptance as clergy of the Communion may begin with an interim or probationary period. It is important for the lay leaders of a community to understand that their application to the Communion is separate from that of their clergy – though it is related to the clergy applications. Should the community find that it has no permanent clergy, it may apply to the Communion for temporary and voluntary coverage of sacramental ministries through the established clergy of the Communion. However, qualified priests and deacons should be sought by the community to serve in their various permanent ministries. And qualified men and women should be encouraged to consider ordination. The Communion seeks a return to the understanding that each community shall cultivate such vocations to ordained ministry; and that the ordained leadership of the Church arises from within the eucharistic community itself.

Clergy who have resigned from other ecclesial jurisdictions have often been the primary individuals in the formation of new faith communities. In such cases, the Ordinary shall review the background of applicants who desire faculties with the Communion. Such members of the clergy may require appropriate actions to regularize their ministerial orders (and additional training in some cases). However, it is always the primary concern of the Ordinary that the call to ministry by the faith community is seen as a substantial affirmation of the call to orders for those who apply for ordination or for faculties with the Communion. The reception of clergy shall be administered by the Ordinary and confirmed by the Office of the Presiding Bishop.

Financial Considerations

Newly formed faith communities have the task of gathering assets from members and wisely distributing revenue for employee salaries and other expenses of the business side of community life. Congregations should form a committee to oversee this activity within one month of application for acceptance into the Communion. This committee *should not be chaired by the*

pastor of the community, and should generally not include members of the pastor's immediate family. This allows the committee members a sense of freedom in dealing with financial considerations of pastoral salaries, etc. Committee members should include individuals who are accustomed to business practices, yet understand the spiritual and social mission of a faith community.

Accounting of all funds should also reflect standard business practice in accordance with federal and state laws. All contributions and expenditures should be recorded in a timely fashion, and the finance committee should publish a summary of its activities on a regular basis – minimum once a year.

Within three months of incorporation, the governing board of the faith community should establish in writing any contractual relationships it has with clergy. This should include reimbursement of stipends or salaries, benefits and allowances for living expenses. Reimbursements and stipends to non-staff clergy should also be established as to amount and procedure, through a joint effort of the community's pastor and its finance committee or governing board.

Legal Considerations

At the time of application for acceptance into the Communion, the faith community should also have applied for not-for-profit status to the appropriate authorities of the state and federal governments. The formation of a non-profit board or council, as required by law, should take place in accordance with the legal requirements. This formation of such a board or council would also fulfill the requirement set forth in article II of this document. A chairperson or president and other appropriate officers should be elected in accordance with bylaws of incorporation. And all committees of the faith community should make regular reports to the board.

Before application for acceptance into the Communion, the board or council of the faith community should apply for insurance to cover liability for clergy and the community's council or board. This can be aided by contacting the Communion to for possible referrals to agents who provide such coverage, or by the recommendation of members of the community who are familiar with this process.

Episcopal Visitation Status

Before a faith community discerns that it shall seek application to the Communion, it may require the presence of the bishop to fulfill the needs of our Catholic heritage in terms of sacramental celebrations, such as the call to holy orders or the sacrament of confirmation. A community may find that it is not ready for application to the Communion, yet stands in need of the specific ministry of the bishop. In such cases, the community should at least be in the initial stages of discernment of the appropriateness of application to the Communion. If its pastor has received faculties from the Communion, it may consider this the first step in this process.

Any visit from the bishop or episcopal representatives may include expenses incurred by the Communion. The community being visited should expect to reimburse the Communion for these expenses unless alternate arrangements are made with the Communion.

Conclusion

The journey of faith is one that is experienced by individuals and by the faith community. These are intertwined in such a way that they are “not 2 (two).” A community is impacted by the life of its members, and the converse is also true. It is our hope that these guidelines may be seen as a way to assist both the community and its members in establishing a path of justice and service, as well as a foundation for the continued spiritual life of all concerned. The liturgical, sacramental, and service ministries of each community depend upon wise and just decisions and practices by its leaders. So too, the social life of the community develops into friendships that are entries into the walk of faith – but only if there is a sense of consensus and justice in the dealings of the community with those who are a part of it and those whom it serves.

The people of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion pray that communities applying to the Communion shall flourish in faith, be well served by ministries of the Church, and grow in the awareness of the Living Christ, who makes us ever new. The bishop, governing boards and clergy of the Communion extend hands of support to these new communities, in the name of Lord Jesus.

The reception of a newly formed faith community shall be administered by the Ordinary and confirmed by the Office of the Presiding Bishop. Probationary status may be granted until legal incorporation of the faith community is completed.

Subcanon 2: Guidelines for Ordination are administered and amended by the Episcopal Council.

A. Guidelines for Receiving Persons Who Have Already Been Validly Ordained to the Presbyterate (Priesthood) into the Communion

Once a candidate has completed a written inquiry or equivalent conversation to the local Ordinary, he/she should complete each requirement in the following order:

- ___ 1. Submit a formal Letter of Intent including a *curriculum vitae* or resume highlighting educational background, work experience, and ministerial experience. (Please provide original transcripts.)
 - A minimum list of educational requirements should be met before continuing (i.e. Masters of Divinity degree or equivalent degree of theology, thereof...).
 - A theological examination may be administered, in writing, in order to determine a candidate's theological proficiency.
- ___ A copy of the candidate's baptism certificate should accompany the *curriculum vitae*.
- ___ 2. Background Evaluation

Completion of a psychological evaluation using the following or similar instruments: [The expense of this evaluation will be incurred by the candidate]

- Clinical observations and interview with a designated psychologist
- PPCA (Personal Problems Checklist for Adults)
- MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory)
- 16 Personality Factors
- The FIRO-B

- ___ Completion of the Sexual Misconduct Inquiry [SMI]. (See attached)
- ___ Completion of standard Criminal Background Check, administered by the Communion Office
- ___ 3. An autobiographic statement regarding the reasons he/she feels called to serve in the ministerial office of priest.
- ___ 4. A minimum of five letters of recommendation from those that have had a ministerial relationship with the candidate seeking incardination. This would include individuals who may have been involved in the ministerial formation of the candidate as well as individuals who have served as co-workers in ministerial work.

Once the above requirements are completed satisfactorily, the candidate can expect the final stages of discernment as follows:

- ___ 5. An Evaluative Team will be assigned to the candidate by the office of the Presiding Bishop.
 - The Evaluative Team serves with the Ordinary Bishop as the decision making body in regard to application for reception into the Communion. This Team will review the candidate's file, including all the above-mentioned materials (academic transcripts, psychological tests, letters of recommendation, etc...)
 - The candidate will be personally interviewed by each of the members of the Evaluative Team. This may involve a travel expense to be incurred by the candidate.
- ___ 6. Candidates are to be presented by an established ECC faith community; members of the faith community are invited to submit letters of support and/or concern regarding the incardination of the candidate. A statement and petition signed by a majority of the members of the faith community would suffice. If an established community does not present the candidate for incardination and if the bishop believes that the circumstances are extraordinary the bishop may incardinate the individual after consultation and approved of the Episcopal Council. In the absence of the Episcopal Council, the Leadership Council will assist the bishop in the above process. (Amended 10/2005)

B. Guidelines for Receiving Persons Who Have Already Been Validly Ordained to the Diaconate into the Communion

Once a candidate has completed a written inquiry or equivalent conversation to the local Ordinary, he/she should complete each requirement in the following order:

- ___ 1. Submit a formal Letter of Intent including a *curriculum vitae* or resume highlighting educational background, work experience, and ministerial experience. (Please provide original transcripts.)
 - A minimum list of educational requirements should be met before continuing (i.e. an approved program of diaconal formation).

- A theological examination may be administered, in writing, in order to determine a candidate's theological proficiency.

___ A copy of the candidate's baptism certificate should accompany the *curriculum vitae*.

___ 2. Background Evaluation

Completion of a psychological evaluation using the following or similar instruments:
[The expense of this evaluation will be incurred by the candidate]

- Clinical observations and interview with a designated psychologist
- PPCA (Personal Problems Checklist for Adults)
- MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory)
- 16 Personality Factors
- The FIRO-B

___ Completion of the Sexual Misconduct Inquiry [SMI]. (See attached)

___ Completion of standard Criminal Background Check, administered by the Communion Office

___ 3. An autobiographic statement regarding the reasons he/she feels called to serve in the ministerial office of the deaconate.

___ 4. A minimum of five letters of recommendation from those that have had a ministerial relationship with the candidate seeking incardination. This would include individuals who may have been involved in the ministerial formation of the candidate as well as individuals who have served as co-workers in ministerial work.

Once the above requirements are completed satisfactorily, the candidate can expect the final stages of discernment as follows:

___ 5. An Evaluative Team will be assigned to the candidate by the office of the Presiding Bishop.

- The Evaluative Team serves with the Ordinary Bishop as the decision making body in regard to application for reception into the Communion. This Team will review the candidate's file, including all the above-mentioned materials (academic transcripts, psychological tests, letters of recommendation, etc...)
- The candidate will be personally interviewed by each of the members of the Evaluative Team. This may involve a travel expense to be incurred by the candidate.

___ 6. Candidates may be presented by and established ECC faith community; members of the faith community are invited to submit letters of support and/or concern regarding the incardination of the candidate. A statement and petition signed by a majority of the members of the faith community would suffice. (Amended 10/2005)

C. Guidelines for Receiving Candidates for the Diaconate

Once a candidate has completed a written inquiry or equivalent conversation to the local Ordinary, he/she should complete each requirement in the following order:

___ 1. **Letter of Intent:**

Submit a formal Letter of Intent including a *curriculum vitae* or resume highlighting educational background, work experience, and ministerial experience. (Please provide original transcripts.)

- A minimum list of educational requirements should be met before continuing (i.e. an approved program of diaconal formation). A list of resources is available at the Communion Office.
- A theological examination may be administered, in writing, in order to determine a candidate's theological proficiency.

___ A copy of the candidate's baptism certificate should accompany the *curriculum vitae*.

___ **2. Background Evaluation:**

Completion of a psychological evaluation using one of the following or similar instruments: [The expense of this evaluation will be incurred by the candidate]

- Clinical observations and interview with a designated psychologist
- PPCA (Personal Problems Checklist for Adults)
- MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory)
- 16 Personality Factors
- The FIRO-B

___ Completion of the Sexual Misconduct Inquiry [SMI]. (See attached)

___ Completion of standard Criminal Background Check, administered by the Communion Office

Upon approval of the above list of requirements, the candidate is expected to select a mentor to assist them as they continue this very important period of discernment. The local Ordinary will provide a list of clergy who have agreed to act as mentors to incoming candidates; however the candidate may choose to select their own mentor. This period may expect to continue for a minimum of one year, including monthly contact between the mentor and candidate as well as a minimum of two scheduled visits. Frequent contact between the mentor and local Ordinary, regarding the progress of the candidate, is also expected.

Toward the end of this mentoring period, the candidate can expect the progression of the final stages of discernment as follows:

___ **3. Autobiography:**

An autobiographic statement regarding the reasons he/she feels called to serve in the ministerial office of the diaconate.

___ **4. Letters of Recommendation:**

- A minimum of five letters of recommendation from those that have had a ministerial relationship with the candidate seeking ordination. This would include individuals who may have been involved in the ministerial formation of the candidate as well as individuals who have served as co-workers in ministerial work.
- Candidates may be presented by an established ECC faith community; members of the faith community are invited to submit letters of support and/or concern regarding the ordination of the candidate. A statement and petition signed by a majority of the members of the faith community would suffice. (Amended 10/2005)

___ **5. Final Evaluation:**

An Evaluative Team will be assigned to the candidate by the office of the Presiding Bishop.

- The Evaluative Team serves with the local Ordinary as the decision making body in regard to application for reception into the Communion. This Team will review the candidate's file, including all the above-mentioned materials (academic transcripts, psychological tests, letters of recommendation, etc...)
- The candidate will be personally interviewed by each of the members of the Evaluative Team. This may involve a travel expense to be incurred by the candidate.

D. Guidelines for Receiving Candidates for the Presbyterate (Priesthood)

Once a candidate has completed a written inquiry or equivalent conversation to the local Ordinary, he/she should complete each requirement in the following order:

___ 1. **Letter of Intent:**

Submit a formal Letter of Intent including a *curriculum vitae* or resume highlighting educational background, work experience, and ministerial experience. (Please provide original transcripts.)

- A minimum list of educational requirements should be met before continuing (i.e. Masters of Divinity degree or equivalent degree of theology, thereof...).
- A theological examination may be administered, in writing, in order to determine a candidate's theological proficiency.

___ A copy of the candidate's baptism certificate should accompany the *curriculum vitae*.

___ 2. **Background Evaluation**

Completion of a psychological evaluation using one of the following or similar instruments: [The expense of this evaluation will be incurred by the candidate]

- Clinical observations and interview with a designated psychologist
- PPCA (Personal Problems Checklist for Adults)
- MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory)
- 16 Personality Factors
- The FIRO-B

___ Completion of the Sexual Misconduct Inquiry [SMI]. (See attached)

___ Completion of standard Criminal Background Check, administered by the Communion Office

Upon approval of the above list of requirements, the candidate is expected to select a mentor to assist them as they continue this very important period of discernment. The local Ordinary will provide a list of clergy who have agreed to act as mentors to incoming candidates; however the candidate may choose to select their own mentor. This period may expect to continue for a minimum of one year, including monthly contact between the mentor and candidate as well as a minimum of two scheduled visits. Frequent contact between the mentor and local Ordinary, regarding the progress of the candidate, is also expected.

Toward the end of this mentoring period, the candidate can expect the progression of the final stages of discernment as follows:

___ 3. **Autobiographic Statement**

An autobiographic statement regarding the reasons he/she feels called to serve in the ministerial office of priest.

___ 4. **Letters of Recommendation:**

- A minimum of five letters of recommendation from those that have had a ministerial relationship with the candidate seeking ordination. This would include individuals who may have been involved in the ministerial formation of the candidate as well as individuals who have served as co-workers in ministerial work.
- Candidates are to be presented by an established ECC faith community; members of the faith community are invited to submit letters of support and/or concern regarding the ordination of the candidate. A statement and petition signed by a majority of the members of the faith community would suffice. If an established community does not present the candidate for ordination and if the bishop believes that the circumstances are extraordinary the bishop may ordain the individual after consultation and approved of the Episcopal Council. In the absence of the Episcopal Council, the Leadership Council will assist the bishop in the above process. (Amended 10/2005)

___ 5. **Final Evaluation:**

An Evaluative Team will be assigned to the candidate by the office of the Presiding Bishop.

- The Evaluative Team serves with the local Ordinary as the decision making body in regard to application for reception into the Communion. This Team will review the candidate's file, including all the above-mentioned materials (academic transcripts, psychological tests, letters of recommendation, etc...)
- The candidate will be personally interviewed by each of the members of the Evaluative Team. This may involve a travel expense to be incurred by the candidate.

The candidate shall serve as a transitional deacon for a period to be determined by the sponsoring community in consultation with the office of the local Ordinary.

Subcanon 3: Guidelines for Selection of Bishops shall be developed by the Episcopal Council in consultation with an ad hoc committees comprised of both houses. The bishop is the primary missionary in establishing new faith communities. Therefore, when a local faith community is large enough and begins to establish two (2) or more missions, a pastor may be ordained bishop as spiritual leader for that faith community and its missions. Qualified clergy may be elected as Vicarial Bishops by the Communion (and given episcopal ordination, if necessary) to serve particular geographic areas or particular populations.

Subcanon 4: Guidelines for the formation and governance of religious orders and societies shall be developed by the Episcopal Council and shall be administered and amended by the Episcopal Council.

Subcanon 5: An Ethical Code of Conduct shall be developed by an ad hoc committee comprised of both houses and administered and amended by the Episcopal Council.

Subcanon 6: Termination of Faculties of Clergy

When clergy faculties are terminated the faith community is to be notified by the local Ordinary within 72 hours by telephone or e-mail, and by formal letter within one week.

- Faith Communities must remove clergy from staff positions within 30 days if their faculties are terminated without cause. Faith Communities who do not follow this shall be placed on probation status without voting rights for a period of three months, with termination of membership in the Communion after three months of failure to conform to this canon.
- Immediate administrative leave is required for those clergy accused of sexual misconduct, physical assault, homicidal or suicidal threat, homicidal or suicidal attempt, allegations of fraud or major psychotic episode.
- Termination of clergy faculties is immediate for conviction of a crime of sexual or physical assault, sexual or physical abuse of a minor or dependant elder, or a psychiatric episode in which there is a professional psychiatric determination of the inability to perform duties.

Parishes must remove clergy from staff positions immediately, if their faculties are terminated with cause. Parishes who do not follow this shall be placed on probation status without voting rights for a period of three months, with termination of membership in the Communion after three months of failure to conform to this canon.

Petitions for the restoration of clergy faculties are administered in accordance with Canon 57.