

## **Report of the Task Force on Canon 28 – “Of Congregations” to the 170<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee**

At the 169<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Convention, the convention passed a resolution creating a task force to study and make recommendations for the refinement or outright rewriting of Canon 28 – “Of Congregations” (copy appended). After some debate and discussion about the language of that resolution, it was amended to increase the size of the task force, and then was passed. The Bishop, in consultation with members of the Standing Committee, began forming the committee by first appointing the Rev. Scott Leannah (St. Mary’s Dousman) and Bill Robison (Trinity, Wauwatosa) as co-chairs of the committee, and then worked with them to identify and invite clergy and lay members from around the diocese, representing congregations of varying size, geographic location and resources. The remaining committee included: Rev. Martha Berger, Very Rev. Andy Jones, Mary Washbush, Rev. Dr. Miranda Hassett, Rev. David Simmons, Katherine Farseth, Janet Finn, Chancellor Stuart Parsons, Rev. Joel Prather, and Ron Johnson. The committee was fully formed in December of 2016 and began work in earnest in early 2017.

We began the work of the Task Force assuming several requirements:

1. A “clean start” which involved no requirement that the existing canon be carried forward in whole or in part
2. A review of the work of other Dioceses on this topic, so that we might benefit from the use and testing of other approaches and methods
3. Creation of a framework for input and feedback by members of the Diocese
4. Presentation of a final draft Canon to Diocesan Convention 170 in October of 2017

After spending some time reviewing the existing canon, the work of other Dioceses on this subject, and the work of the previous task force and previous working groups, the committee set out to create a draft document, using in-person meetings and technology to allow for shared editing of the draft and input and comment by all committee members. That draft has continued to develop, and the version being distributed at this convention represents the efforts of the task force through September of this year. What is now contemplated is a new Canon 8, focused on the work of identifying parishes in need of review and oversight, and defining the methods to support such congregations and ways to measure success in that effort. The Canon as currently imagined creates a process by which the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority, drawing on resources available within and beyond the Diocese, may come alongside a parish in need of review and support, and with the aid of a review committee and a plan for restoration, move parishes whenever possible back to full and healthy status. The Canon then contemplates the steps needed to return to full status, and also the possible outcomes should the effort be unsuccessful.

While continuing this work, we also realized that sufficient time did not exist to share this draft document with the diocese and to engage in meaningful conversations with lay and clergy members to gain feedback and comment on the work of the group. To that end, we come to you today with a draft document, and a plan to conduct a number of sessions in the coming year to meet with each Convocation, with members of the Executive Committee, Standing Committee, Commission on Ministry, Finance Committee, and as needed with the staff and members of specific affected congregations. The draft Canon will also be published via the Diocesan website, and resources made available to permit input by those unable to participate in the various sessions. Our goal is to consider that input and synthesize the draft document into a final resolution, which will now come before the 171<sup>st</sup> Convention of the Diocese in October of 2018. To that end, we will ask the convention to authorize the continuation of this Task Force for one additional year, so that our work may be completed.

**(OVER)**

**Task Force to Review and Propose Revisions to Diocesan Canon 28 “Of Congregations”  
(adopted by the 169<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Convention, meeting in Madison, Wisconsin on October 8, 2016)**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the 169<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee create a Task Force of eight to twelve people appointed by the Bishop, in consultation with the Standing Committee, for the purpose of reviewing the existing diocesan Canon 28 “Of Congregations” and proposing revisions for consideration at the 170<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee in 2017; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that membership to the Task Force shall be named by December 1, 2016 and made up of a balanced representation of members from small and large congregations; a member of the Standing Committee; a member of Executive Council; a member of the Commission on Mission and Development; and balanced representation of clergy and laity; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the language of the revisions shall be consonant with language used in the remainder of the canons; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the revised canon shall reflect and authorize the variety of congregational structures as they currently exist in the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the revised canon shall reflect the respect and care that we have for one another in the Diocese of Milwaukee and the desire that we have to work together to share the Good News of God in Christ, encouraging one another even as we hold ourselves mutually accountable to our communion as the Body of Christ; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the revised canon shall provide a clear process whereby the Bishop and the Standing Committee may bring a congregation under the direct pastoral oversight of the Bishop and the Executive Council.

**(OVER)**