

Parish Admission Process

These guidelines are for use by the requesting mission and the reviewing committee appointed by the Office of the Bishop. There are two parts to these guidelines. The first part is clarifying the procedure specified in the Constitution and Canons. Reference is made to the appropriate documents for each area and sample documents are included in this report.

Part I - Parish Admission Guidelines

The legal requirements for Parish status are listed below with the references in the right column.

ARTICLE XV Admission of New Parishes and Missions	
<u>Section I</u>	
A parish may be admitted into union with Convention on motion, by a majority of votes, provided that the Parish shall have delivered to the Secretary of Convention at least one month before its Annual Meeting:	
a) Written approval of the organization of such Parish, from the Bishop	Sample letter from Bishop
b) Satisfactory evidence that Articles of Incorporation have been adopted by which the Parish accedes to the Constitutions and Canons of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Olympia;	Articles of Incorporation
c) A written statement, subscribed by the wardens, by which the Parish access to the doctrine and discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church;	Sample letter from Bishop
d) Satisfactory evidence that the Parish has been regularly organized by the election of two wardens, with a total of not fewer than six nor more than fifteen vestry members, and that the Parish contains at least twenty-five Communicants in Good Standing committee.	Bylaws & Roster of the Bishop committee members and affidavit of number of members
e) A written statement made by the authority of the vestry at a duly called meeting that the Parish will support a rector without financial aid from the Diocese, and agreeing that in the event it shall not be able so to do and becomes dependent on such financial aid, the Convention may change its status to that of a Mission.	Sample letter to Committee

CANON 8
The Parish

<p><u>Section 1</u></p> <p>Any number of person, not fewer than 25, of legal age, who shall be Communicants of this Church and resident of the community, town, city or district where the proposed Parish is to be located, may organize themselves as a Parish in the following manner.</p> <p>Notice of intention to organize a Parish shall be first given to the Bishop of the Diocese. Such notice shall be in writing in the following form:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Reverend Father in God: We, whose names are hereunto subscribed Church, anddesirous of securing the holy influence of the Church for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors, do hereby respectfully ask permission to associate and organize ourselves, and others as a Parish under the name of _____Parish. We do hereby promise and agree that said Parish shall always be held under the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Bishop of Olympia and his successors in office, and in conformity with the Constitution and Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America and Constitution and Canons of the Dioceses of Olympia, the authority of which we do hereby recognize and bond ourselves to make them part of the Constitution of said Parish, and to whose Liturgy, doctrine, Discipline, Rites and Usages we promise at all times, for ourselves and our successors, corporate obedience and conformity, being attached to the Doctrine, Discipline and Worship of the Protestant Episcopal</p>	<p>Sample letter to Bishop (Same as c) above)</p>
<p><u>Section 2</u></p> <p>Upon receipt of the written approval of the Bishop, the petitioners shall then proceed as follows:</p> <p>Notice of the meeting to organize, setting forth the object, the time and place of such meeting, shall be publicly read at the time of morning service, and on two Sundays next proceeding said meeting by some member of the clergy of the church appointed by the Bishop.</p>	
<p><u>Section 3</u></p> <p>At the meeting a member of the clergy appointed by the Bishop shall preside. A secretary shall be chosen. A book provided to record the proceedings of the meetings shall include the notice described above in Section 1 and the approval of the Bishop, the record of the action taken for organization, the names of the vestry chose, and any other matters of importance pertaining to the organization; and second, the Articles of Incorporation adopted at the meeting.</p>	
<p><u>Section 4</u></p> <p>Parishes hereafter organized may be admitted into union with the Convention in this Diocese in accordance with Article XV of the Constitution, and upon compliance with the provisions thereof. Application for admission into union with the Convention shall be made within two years from the date of legal incorporation of the Parish. If not, The Bishop, with the consent of the Standing committee, may declare the permission to organize withdrawn, and the organization null and void.</p>	
<p><u>Section 5</u></p> <p>If a proposed new Parish is within the limit of an existing Parish, the written consent of the</p>	

Rector and Vestry of the existing Parish shall first be had and obtained for the organization of a new Parish. If such consent cannot be obtained, the permission for the organization of a new Parish within the parochial limits of an existing Parish shall be vested in the Bishop of the Diocese, acting by and with the consent of the Standing Committee.	
Section 6 For the purpose only of private or domestic pastoral ministrations, the residence, wherever situated, of each registered parishioner of any Parish or Mission shall be deemed a part of the Parish or Mission in which such parishioner is registered.	

Part 2 — General Guidelines for Parish Status

These areas would be investigated prior to the formal request for parish status and are not prescriptive in nature but rather to be used as general guidelines and helpful indicators.

Financial

- The Diocesan assessment has been paid on regular basis.
- The congregation has been self-sufficient meaning that it is independent of outside grants for at least three years.
- There is adequate debt coverage if there is current debt.
- The clergy is financially supported with salary and benefits meeting Diocese standards.
- The size of the congregation is healthy. This means that the pledge numbers cover the budget, average pledge income is consistent over the last **3-5** years, and the pledge dollar distribution among members is appropriately weighted;
- The annual audit is completed for current and past three years.
- The parochial reports are on file and have been submitted to the Diocesan office in a timely fashion.

Growth

- There is reported increased attendance for three or more years
- There is evidence of active lay leadership through the overall number of people involved in a variety of programs, e.g. Sunday School teachers, choir, adult education programs. Outreach to the community and/or beyond is supported.
- The parish is located in a growing community. In other words, there are demographic indicators that the congregation can maintain its viability and growth.
- Both clergy and lay leadership can speak to and demonstrate a congregational plan for growth in church membership.

Committee Membership

It is recommended that the committee membership consist of experienced Diocesan lay leaders and a clergy member. Its role is to assist the congregation in both formal and informal ways to accomplish their goal of parish status. Review last five years parochial reports.