

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA

EPISCOPAL PLEDGE COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE

[approved by the Diocesan Executive Council on September 15, 2007]

The Canons of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina require as a condition of becoming a parish that the congregation provide its proportionate share of the support of the Diocese. (Title VIII, Canon 7, Section 1(b)). The Canons further provide that failure of a parish to maintain the conditions for becoming a parish warrant the Ecclesiastical Authority, with the approval of Convention, placing the parish in mission status and appointing a priest-in-charge. (Title VIII, Canon 9, Section 1). The Diocese has established an Episcopal Pledge for each parish as its proportionate share of the parish's support of the Diocese. Failure of a parish to comply with the Episcopal Pledge requirements would, therefore, constitute failure of a parish to maintain the conditions for becoming a parish, and thus could place a parish in jeopardy of being reduced to mission status.

There are many reasons that a parish or mission might not be in compliance with its Episcopal Pledge obligations. The following sets forth a process for engaging in a dialogue and working with parishes or missions that are not in compliance with their Episcopal Pledge requirements, with the ultimate goal of helping to move them into compliance. This process is not intended to be punitive, but rather, it is intended to be applied compassionately and with the greatest effort at each step to understand and take into account the various circumstances and/ or limitations of the parishes or missions affected and work toward a resolution that is acceptable to all involved.

These are the steps that will be followed in this order:

1. When a parish or mission has failed to comply for a period of at least six months with its Episcopal Pledge requirements, whether as a result of failing to accept the full pledge requested by the Diocese or as a result of failure to pay its full pledge, the Treasurer of the Diocese will give notice of non-compliance to the parish or mission and set a date for the parish or mission to provide a written response with an explanation of the circumstances underlying the non-compliance.
2. The Treasurer will review and consider the response and request any additional information deemed necessary for an understanding of the underlying circumstances.
3. The Treasurer will then present the response and any additional information to the Executive Committee of the Diocesan Executive Council, which will determine whether further action is warranted. A report will be provided to the Diocesan Executive Council.
4. If the Executive Committee of the Diocesan Executive Council determines that further action is warranted, it will arrange a meeting between the Executive Committee and representatives of the parish or mission, including at least the rector or vicar and the senior warden and treasurer, to discuss the situation and determine whether further action is warranted. A report will be provided to the Diocesan Executive Council.

5. If the Executive Committee determines that further action is warranted, it will request that the parish or mission prepare a strategic plan outlining the steps the parish or mission intends to take to come into compliance with its Episcopal Pledge requirements, and projected dates by which it expects to achieve each step. The Diocese will provide all such resources and advice as may be reasonably requested to assist the parish or mission in preparing and implementing the strategic plan. The parish or mission shall keep the Treasurer of the Diocese apprised of its progress in achieving each of the steps in the strategic plan, and, in particular, of any material difficulty in achieving any step. A report will be provided to the Diocesan Executive Council.
6. If a parish or mission that is not in compliance with its Episcopal Pledge requirements refuses to participate in the foregoing process, a formal meeting between the representatives of the non-compliant congregation and the President of Diocesan Executive Council, Canon to the Ordinary, Treasurer of the Diocese, and Canon for Finance and Administration will take place to determine what actions should be taken, including, if appropriate, imposing a payment schedule. A report will be provided to the Diocesan Executive Council.
7. If a suitable resolution cannot be ultimately achieved through the foregoing process, the Diocesan Executive Council shall determine whether it is appropriate to recommend to the Bishop and the Convention that the applicable sanctions provided for by the Canons of the Diocese be applied.