

A Summary of the Report of the Court of Review of the Episcopal Church Concerning the Objections Filed to the Election of a Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Florida

BACKGROUND: *The Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Florida* state, “The quorum required for the election of a Bishop shall be two-thirds of all Clergy entitled to vote and two-thirds of all Lay Delegates entitled to be members of the Diocesan Convention.”

In that diocese, “clergy entitled to vote” are all canonically resident clergy, which includes all retired clergy, many of whom live outside the diocese, are medically unable to participate, or who choose not to attend diocesan events.

Their Canons do not allow virtual attendance at Conventions or voting by electronic means.

A month before the special convention, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Florida gave notice to the diocese of the deadline for clergy and lay delegates to register for the Convention. That notice included: “if you do not register by the deadline, you will not be allowed to attend. There will be no exceptions.” And, “there is no provision for remote or proxy voting. Delegates must be present at the Special Convention to vote.”

On the deadline for registration, not enough clergy had registered to constitute a quorum, so the Standing Committee continued accepting clergy registrations. Two days before the Convention, it became apparent there would not be enough clergy onsite at the convention to constitute a quorum, and steps were taken to change the rules to allow clergy to attend and vote remotely. On the morning of the Convention, the Diocesan Council (the equivalent of our Diocesan Board) convened a special meeting and “enacted procedural rules...which permitted electronic attendance and voting.”

In the Episcopal Church, if over 10% of the delegates of a convention object to an election, they can appeal to the Presiding Bishop. A sufficient number of delegates filed objections, and the Presiding Bishop referred their objections to a Court of Review of 15 lay and clergy (Bishops, priests, and deacons). The Court also consulted two attorneys who specialize in non-profit law, one of whom specializes in Florida law.

THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE COURT OF REVIEW

(Quoted directly from page 32 of the Report):

- a) a clergy quorum was not reached in accordance with the Diocese's own Articles of Incorporation, Canons (bylaws), Robert's Rules of Order and Florida law;
- b) the irregularities in the Convention process itself cast a shadow over the legitimacy of the election; and
- c) the action of the Diocese in changing its manner of voting two days prior to the election was fundamentally unfair to the Delegates of the Convention and the candidates who relied on the April 7, 2022 notice in preparation for the election.

The entire report can be found at:

<https://episcopaljournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Findings-of-the-Court-of-Review-for-Diocese-of-Florida-Election-with-Exhibits-1.pdf>

THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE DIOCESE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA ANTICIPATES A VALID ELECTION BECAUSE:

Our Diocesan *Constitution and Canons* are different from Florida's.

Ours define a quorum for convention, which includes a special convention for electing a Bishop, as "one-third of the clergy entitled to vote," which, in our diocese includes only those canonically resident clergy who are licensed by the bishop for "sacerdotal and/or pastoral ministry."

In our diocese, we respect, honor, and love our inactive clergy, but they don't count toward a quorum at conventions, so we always have enough clergy in attendance to make a quorum.

And, finally, in our search process, we have observed the deadlines and rules the Standing Committee set for us in the original Charge to the Search Committee this past January.