



**THE CANONS OF THE CHURCH  
COMMUNITY**

**+ Updated May 01 2026 +**

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## **The Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA**

### **THE CANONS OF THE CHURCH COMMUNITY**

+ Updated May 01, 2026 +

+ **BOOK ONE** +

#### **Name, Seal, Mission, Ecclesial Tradition**

**CANON 1 § 1** The official name of this Church is: Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA with "An Independent Catholic Church" as an optional subtitle.

**§ 2** Each congregation and ministry within the Church must include as part of its official and operating name "ECC+USA" or where it is spelled out "Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA," for example, Sts. Peter and Paul ECC+USA; Holy Family Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA.

**CAN 2. §1** The Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA is a non-profit corporation incorporated in the State of Missouri. The "National Church Office" is in the resident state of the Presiding Bishop. The presiding bishop shall appoint a national chancellor, in consultation with the Council of Bishops, to oversee the day-to-day operations of the national church.

**§2** The official corporate seal of the Church is:



**§3** Member ministries may also develop their own logos.

**CAN 3.** The mission of the Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA is fulfilled in ministering to all people by preaching the Word of God, offering the Seven Sacraments of the Church, and witnessing Christ's mercy and love using an ecumenical approach that maintains Catholic tradition.

**CAN. 4 & 5** *[Omitted — no longer applicable]*

+ BOOK TWO +

**Beliefs, Liturgy, Sacraments**

**Title 1. Belief Statements**

**CAN 6. The following are the core doctrinal statements of the Church:**

**1<sup>o</sup> We believe in The Holy Trinity.**

**2<sup>o</sup> We believe that Jesus is the Christ, that he is God, and he is our personal savior.**

**3<sup>o</sup> We believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of Jesus and worthy of honor, liturgical observance and intercession in prayer.**

**4<sup>o</sup> We believe in the inerrancy and divine inspiration of Holy Scriptures.**

**5<sup>o</sup> We believe in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.**

**6<sup>o</sup> We believe in the three historic creeds: Niceno-Constantinopolitan, Apostles, and Athanasian.**

**7<sup>o</sup> We believe and accept the doctrines of the Seven Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Catholic Faith of the First Millennium.**

**8<sup>o</sup> We believe and appreciate the wisdom and guidance of the Early Church Fathers.**

**9<sup>o</sup> We believe in the seven sacraments of the Catholic Faith Tradition: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Anointing and Anointing the Sick, Reconciliation (Confession), Marriage, and Holy Orders.**

**10<sup>o</sup> We believe that Jesus Christ is present in the Eucharist, body and blood, humanity and divinity under the appearance of bread and wine.**

**11<sup>o</sup> We believe in and hold the Apostolic Succession of Holy Orders.**

**12<sup>o</sup> We believe that all Holy Orders (bishops, priests, and deacons) are open to both men and women.**

**13<sup>o</sup> We believe that celibacy for those in Holy Orders is a personal decision.**

**14<sup>o</sup> We believe in the sanctity of marriage as a life-long commitment between two persons.**

**15<sup>o</sup> We believe that within certain marriages there may be circumstances or conditions that make life within that relationship unbearable or dangerous and thus divorce becomes appropriate or even necessary. Realizing that Jesus is merciful and it is he alone who understands fully the reality of any human decision, the church welcomes to all the sacraments those who have been divorced and/or remarried.**

**16<sup>o</sup> We believe that all humankind is called to chastity and sexual purity within their state in life.**

**17<sup>o</sup> We believe contraception is a personal decision of the married couple.**

18° We believe that all life is sacred. We believe that abortion and euthanasia is the taking of human life.

19° We believe that the Gospel commandment to "love others as we love ourselves" is the key to living the Christian life and it manifests itself in global concern for all peoples, patriotism for one's nation, good citizenship, and responsible stewardship of our planet.

## **Title 2. Liturgy**

**CAN 7.** The ministry of the Sacraments must always be identical in matter, form, and intent to those used by other historic Catholic churches, specifically the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal, Anglican, Old Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches and in compliance with the CANs of this church.

**CAN 8.** Rituals surrounding the matter and form of the Sacraments will show respect for the Catholic liturgical traditions, reflect the meaning of the mystery that is celebrated, but may also reflect appropriate local customs.

**CAN 9.** In the liturgy, references to the Trinity must be in the traditional Catholic format, i.e., God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

## **Title 3. The Sacraments: Matter, Form, Minister, Norms.**

### **Chapter One The Sacrament of Baptism**

**CAN. 10. §1** The Sacrament of Baptism is administered by the pouring of water three times over the forehead while saying the words: "I baptize you, in the name of the Father (pour water the first time), and of the Son (pour water the second time), and of the Holy Spirit (pour water the third time)." Additional blessings and anointing are included in the traditional baptismal rite and should usually be included in each baptismal ceremony.

**§2** Immersion is also an acceptable format for administering Baptism.

**§3** Sprinkling with water is not considered a flowing of water and must not be used for the Sacrament of Baptism in this church.

**CAN 11.** The ordinary minister of baptism is the pastor of the congregation or any priest or deacon appointed by the pastor. In danger of death situations, any person may administer the Sacrament of Baptism.

### **Chapter Two The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (Mass)**

**CAN 12. §1** The bread and wine (not grape juice) is the matter of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The form is the words of institution. "This is my body" said over the bread and "This is my blood" said over the wine both coupled with the intention of the

priest to consecrate the specific bread and wine on the Altar.

§2 It is neither customary nor acceptable to consecrate bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ except in the larger context of the Mass liturgy establishing the Eucharistic meal of the People of God.

CAN 13. The ordinary minister of the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist is a validly ordained bishop or priest in good standing in a church which holds to the teaching and demonstrates to be a church in apostolic succession.

CAN 14. Deacons and ministers of the Eucharist may distribute Communion in a church or to the sick at other places, however, they do not have the Holy Orders required to validly "say" Mass. The term "Deacon's Mass" must not be used; the accurate terms for Communion Services conducted by a deacon are "Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified" or "Pre-Sanctified Liturgy" or it may be called simply "Communion Service".

CAN 15. §1 The 1964 English translation of the Missale Romanum is endorsed by this church as the standard for the Celebration of the Eucharist.

§2 Any of the traditional Eastern and Western Catholic liturgies (e.g., Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Episcopal) are also approved for use by clergy in this church.

§3 Adaptations and changes to the traditional Eastern and Western Catholic liturgies must be approved by the Council of Bishops prior to their use in any of the church's congregations or ministries.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation)**

CAN 16. §1 The Sacrament of Penance (Confession, Sacrament of Reconciliation) may be celebrated privately with individual absolution, or publicly as part of a Penance Service or in the Celebration of the Eucharist with General Absolution.

§2 The preferred celebration of this sacrament is by the bishop or priest after sufficient catechesis giving General Absolution at Mass or a Penance Service. Neither Private confession nor individual absolution afterwards is required.

CAN 17. The matter of the Sacrament of Penance is generally considered to be the contrition of the penitent for his or her sinfulness. The form of the sacrament is the following statement by the priest: "May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve you, and by his authority I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

CAN 18. The ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Penance is a bishop or priest in good standing with the church. In danger of death situations, any priest validly ordained in any church in Apostolic

Succession may administer the sacrament when requested by the dying person.

**CAN 19. §1** The secrecy of sacramental confession is morally absolute for the confessor and must under no circumstance be broken by word or in any other manner.

**§2** An interpreter, if one is being used, and all others to whom knowledge acquired from a confession shall come in any way are also absolutely obliged to maintain confidentiality.

**§3** The confessor must in no way make external use of any knowledge gained in confession. The content of a confession must not be a topic of subsequent discussion with the penitent, unless initiated by the penitent. A confessor with authority over someone must in no way use information acquired in confession for external governance.

**§4** This obligation of confidentiality of Sacramental Confession (referred to as the "seal of Confession") rises above the demands of the civil legal system.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Sacrament of Confirmation**

**CAN 20.** The matter of the Sacrament of Confirmation is the laying on of the minister's hand on the head of the one being confirmed while anointing his/her head while making the sign of the cross with oil. The form of the sacrament is the following prayer said while anointing: I sign you with the sign of the cross + and I confirm you with the Chrism of salvation, In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, +, and of the Holy + Spirit. Amen.

**CAN 21. §1** The ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation is the bishop of the diocese. The diocesan bishop may ask another bishop of this Church to administer the sacrament in his/her diocese.

**§2** In special situations when a bishop is not available, the Ordinary or the Presiding Bishop may delegate or appoint any priest of this Church to be the extraordinary minister of Confirmation.

**§3** The pastor of the congregation or the celebrant of the Easter Vigil Mass may administer the Sacrament of Confirmation for adults receiving the Rites of Christian Initiation.

**§4** In danger of death situations, any priest anywhere, may be extraordinary minister of the sacrament of Confirmation.

## **Chapter Five**

### **The Sacrament of Marriage**

**CAN 22.** The matter of the Sacrament of Marriage is the man and woman's exchange of body and soul, heart and mind with the intention of entering freely and without reservation into this union "until death do us part". The form of the Sacrament is the exchange of the marriage vows, using the traditional formula or other words expressing the same promises, made before a priest or deacon and two witnesses. Ordinarily, the formula and

surrounding prayers and exhortation found in the traditional Catholic rituals should be followed.

§1 The theology of marriage identifies the couple as being the ministers of their marriage to each other.

§2 The following applies to the ordained minister as the official church witness to a marriage.

1<sup>o</sup> The ordinary minister of the sacrament of marriage is the diocesan bishop or pastor. Any other bishop, priest, or deacon delegated by the bishop or pastor may be the minister of marriage.

2<sup>o</sup> A deacon may officiate at a marriage with the approval of his/her pastor (within the parish) or the bishop (within the diocese).

3<sup>o</sup> In emergency situations where a priest or deacon is not and will not be available for a wedding ceremony, a cleric in minor orders of the church as available in rank order (subdeacon, acolyte, lector, porter) may be appointed by the Presiding or diocesan bishop, but only in accordance with the civil law of the State where the marriage is taking place. Clerics in Minor Orders are never to be appointed or assume the role of being the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Can 24. In witnessing marriages, the individual minister will be personally responsible to be aware of and conform to all civil laws, procedures, and registrations pertaining to ministers and the witnessing of marriages.

Can 25. Clergy may witness simply civil marriages in accord with state law; however, the cleric should seek to use every marriage as a way to bring Christ and his church into the lives of the married couple.

CAN 26. §1 The couple must conform to all civil regulations regarding marriage.

§2 The minister must provide a minimum of at least two one-hour conferences about the sacrament of marriage, characteristics of successful marriages, and preparation of the marriage ceremony.

§3 While the church believes that marriage is for life and that such an intention must accompany a Christian marriage, it recognizes the possibility of divorce. Clergy may witness a marriage of a person who has been legally divorced from a previous marriage.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick**

CAN 28. The matter of the sacrament is laying hands on the head of the sick person and then anointing the person on the forehead and hands by a priest with the properly blessed Oil of the Sick. The form of the sacrament is: Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen., while anointing the head, and May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. Amen., while anointing the hands. The extended ritual of prayers, blessings, and anointing of the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands and feet (as convenient and

appropriate) may be included in the administration of this sacrament.

**CAN 29.** The ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is a bishop or priest in good standing with the church. In danger of death situations, any priest validly ordained in any church in Apostolic Succession may administer the sacrament. Deacons may never attempt to administer this sacrament.

**CAN 30.** The Sacred Oil used in the Anointing of the Sick (Oil of the Sick) is ordinarily to be blessed by the Presiding or Diocesan Bishop. However, in case of necessity, any priest may bless the oil during the actual celebration of the sacrament. Any priest may carry the holy oil with him or her so that in the case of necessity the sacrament can be administered in a timely manner.

## **Chapter Seven The Sacrament of Holy Orders**

**CAN 31. §1** The Sacrament of Holy Orders confers according to the intention of the ordaining bishop, the sacred order of deacon, priest, or bishop.

**§2** The Rite of Tonsure and Minor Orders (Porter, Acolyte, Lector, and Subdeacon) are steps to Major Orders and are not part of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

**CAN 32.** Sacred Orders is conferred by the imposition of hands (matter) and the prayers of consecration (form) which the liturgical books prescribe for each grade.

**CAN 33.** The minister of holy orders is a consecrated Bishop. Ordinarily for episcopal ordinations, three bishops (the principal consecrator and two co-consecrators) are required by church tradition.

**CAN 34.** The following are prerequisites and regulations regarding the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

**1<sup>o</sup>** Baptism is required for the valid reception of all ordained orders within the church.

**2<sup>o</sup>** A candidate for Orders must have received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

**3<sup>o</sup>** All levels of Holy Orders are open to both men and women.

**4<sup>o</sup>** Celibacy is optional and is not a requirement for Holy Orders.

**5<sup>o</sup>** Christians are required to live chastely according to their state in life, and clergy are called to model Christian virtue.

**CAN 35.** To be eligible for the Sacred Order of Deacon, the candidate must, in addition to the requirements of CAN 34, fulfill the following:

**1<sup>o</sup>** The candidate for the Sacred Order of Deacon must be at least 23 years old at the time of the deaconate ordination.

**2<sup>o</sup>** The candidate must have completed all of the approved course of studies in the church disciplines

of Sacred Scripture, Sacred Theology, Liturgy, and Homiletics.

3<sup>o</sup> The candidate must have completed the requirements and been ordained to the Minor Orders of Subdeacon.

4<sup>o</sup> The candidate must have developed with an approved mentor a plan for developing a ministry and have received the approval of the diocesan bishop and the Presiding Bishop.

**CAN 36.** To be eligible for the Sacred Order of Priesthood, the deacon candidates must have fulfilled the following:

1<sup>o</sup> The candidate for the Sacred Order of Priest must be at least 24 years old at the time of the priestly ordination.

2<sup>o</sup> The deacon must have completed the approved course of studies for the Sacred Priesthood in theology and Sacred Scriptural and have successfully passed the Council of Bishops' Canonical Examination.

3<sup>o</sup> The deacon must have served the church as a deacon for at least six months in a ministry approved by the diocesan bishop and the Presiding Bishop.

4<sup>o</sup> The deacon must have implemented the plan of ministry and incorporated the ministry as a state non-profit corporation or church.

**CAN 37.** To be eligible for the Sacred Order of Bishop, the priest candidates must have fulfilled the following:

1<sup>o</sup> The priest must be at least 35 years old at the time of the episcopal consecration.

2<sup>o</sup> The priest must have served as a priest in this church for at least five years.

3<sup>o</sup> The priest must have developed a successful church ministry.

4<sup>o</sup> The priest must have contributed to the church-at-large through participation in church meetings, synods, projects, or effectively carrying out church-wide responsibilities.

5<sup>o</sup> The priest must have been nominated by the presbyterate of the diocese, received the endorsement of the laity of that diocese, and the approval of the Council of Bishops.

+ BOOK THREE +

**The Laity**

**Title 1: Membership in the Church**

**CAN 38.** The necessary and sufficient condition for membership in this church is to believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and to be configured to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, through the Sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation.

**CAN 39.** Any Baptized and Confirmed Christian is welcomed to membership in the Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA and is invited to full participation in the sacraments, ministry, and polity of the Church. Reception into membership in this Church is through the local congregation or, in its place, through a clergyperson of this Church.

**CAN 40.** The process for Reception or Resignation of a congregation's membership in this Church is governed as described in the following paragraphs of this CAN.

**§1** In order for a congregation (parish) to receive membership as a congregation in this Church, the Parish Council of the congregation must make be a specific resolution requesting such membership passed by unanimous favorable vote of the voting members of the Council. The pastor, if he (or, she) is not a voting member of the Council, must also submit his approval and endorsement of the Council's resolution. The approval of the diocesan bishop or other regional or national church body is not required, although each must be informed of the intention and vote of the Parish Council.

**§2** When the bishop of a diocese petitions for incardination (membership) in this church with the intention that member congregations of the diocese will also join with him, each Parish Council of all member congregations must petition separately as described in §1 above.

**§3** In order for a congregation to withdraw from membership in this Church, the Parish Council (which in this Church includes the pastor as an ex officio voting member) must make a specific resolution of withdrawal to the Council of Bishops that has been duly proposed, moved, seconded, and approved unanimously by the Parish Council and has received a three-fourths (3/4) favorable vote to secede by the clergy and registered members of the congregation. The Council of Bishops has the right to audit the voting process and results.

**Title 2: The Rights and Obligations of the  
Christian Faithful**

**Article One: Rights and Obligations within the  
Church Community**

**CAN 41. All members of this Church have the following rights and obligations to live the Gospel message within the Church community:**

**1° To maintain fellowship with one another.**

**2° To live a holy life and to promote each other's growth.**

**3° To work as individuals or in associations to spread the divine message of salvation.**

**4° To hear and follow, when such is reasonable, the pastors of the church as teachers of the faithful.**

**5° To make known their needs and desires to the pastors of the church.**

**6° To receive appropriate formation and on-going spiritual support from pastors for whatever ministry one exercises for the Church.**

**7° To manifest their opinion on matters that pertain to the good of the church to their pastors and other Christian faithful, with due regard to the integrity of faith and morals, and consideration for the common good and respect for persons.**

**8° To assist and counsel pastors as experts or advisors in areas where qualified.**

**9° To receive assistance from pastors, especially the Word of God and the Holy Sacraments of the Catholic Faith Tradition.**

**10° To worship God according to their own rite and follow their own spiritual life as they understand such spiritual life through the teachings of the church.**

**11° To participate and govern, and if necessary to establish, charitable and religious associations or those that promote the Christian vocation in the world.**

**12° To promote the mission of the church and to sustain apostolic action according to their own state and condition.**

**13° To obtain a Christian education; to acquire knowledge of Christian doctrine, to attend ecclesiastical and public colleges, seminaries, and universities and obtain ecclesiastical degrees, and when qualified, to respond to a call to teach sacred sciences and subjects.**

**14° To be free from any coercion in choosing a state in life.**

**15° To be installed in the lay ministries of Communion assistant, Reader (Lector), Altar Assistant (Acolyte), or Sacristan.**

**16° To fulfill the functions of Lector, Commentator, Cantor, Communion assistant, Reader, or Altar**

**Assistant (Acolyte), or Sacristan even if not formally installed, when necessity warrants.**

**17° To respond to the call of a community or pastor to seek one of the Offices of Minor or Major Orders.**

**18° To enjoy a good reputation and privacy.**

**19° To legitimately vindicate and defend rights before a competent ecclesiastical tribunal; to be judged by law with equity; not to be punished except in accord with the norm of law.**

**20° To consider and respect the common good when exercising one's rights.**

**21° To support the Church's mission according to one's own opportunity, ability and means through involvement in the local congregation and ministries with treasure, talent and time.**

**22° To receive a decent remuneration, social security and health benefits when employed by the Church.**

#### **Article Two: Rights and Obligations within the Civil Community**

**CAN 42. All members of this Church have the following rights and obligations to live the Gospel message within the civil community:**

**1° To imbue the economic, political and social order in which one lives and works with the spirit of the Gospel.**

**2° To live the Gospel message to "love Almighty God with your whole mind, heart, and soul, and love neighbor as you love yourself."**

**3° To live and promote the "common good" in society as a witness to the words of Jesus Christ "that whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me."**

**4° To exercise freedoms that are one's entitlement within the society in which one lives but to exercise such freedom imbued with the spirit of the Gospel.**

**5° To enjoy a freedom of expression and to prudently express opinions on matters in which one has expertise, while observing due respect for fellow human beings.**

**6° When qualified, to assume public positions and offices that one has the training, education, or expertise to exercise.**

#### **Article Three: The Rights and Obligations of all Christian Married Persons**

**CAN 43. All Christian married persons have the following rights and obligations:**

**1° To work to build up the People of God through marriage and family.**

**2° To educate their children in the norms and spirit of the Gospel message.**

3<sup>o</sup> To provide Christian education for their children.

**+ BOOK FOUR +  
The Clergy**

**Title 1: Membership  
and Spiritual Endorsement of Clergy.**

**CAN 44. §1 Clerical Membership is shared by all clergy in Minor or Major Orders in good standing with this church.**

**§2 Membership is established through ordination by a bishop in the church or through an act of incardination by the Council of Bishops.**

**§3 These clergypersons enjoy all rights and assume all responsibilities attached to clerical membership as appropriate for their order as outlined in these CANs and as associated with customs and practices of the Catholic Faith Tradition.**

**§4 In order to exercise public, pastoral ministerial functions in the Apostolic Succession of the bishops of the Church a cleric must have the spiritual endorsement (faculties) of the Church.**

**Chapter One: The prerequisites for  
Spiritual Endorsement of a cleric by this Church**

**CAN 45. Valid ordination to Minor or Major Orders and membership in good standing in this church are required to receive the spiritual endorsement (faculties) of the church to perform ministry within the Apostolic Succession of the Church.**

**CAN 46. To receive the spiritual endorsement of the church to perform public, pastoral ministerial functions, the cleric must have developed a ministry to serve as cleric in a particular ministry or be assigned to serve a ministry by the Diocesan Bishop and the Council of Bishops.**

**Chapter Two: The Ministry Council's Relationship  
to the Cleric, the Church, and Requirements of  
State and Federal Law.**

**Article One: The Cleric and the Ministry Council.**

**CAN 47. §1 The spiritual endorsement from the Church to practice his/her ministry is based on the cleric's Ordination order and is contingent upon the cleric maintaining good standing within the church.**

**§2 The Pastor (Pastoral Director) serves as an ex officio voting member of the Ministry Council's Board of Directors and serves as its Chief Operational Officer in the day-to-day operations of all fiscal aspects of the ministry. Further, the cleric, with advisory support from the Board of Directors, is in charge of all spiritual and liturgical aspects of the ministry; scheduling of services; and use of the building; hiring and supervision of staff; and all other responsibilities that support the mission of the ministry.**

**CAN 48. §1 The Regional Bishop is responsible for supervisory oversight of all aspects of the cleric's ministry.**

**§2 The clergyperson is directly responsible to Regional Bishop for the civil and legal performance of his/her ministry.**

**§3 The cleric serves as the spiritual leader in the care of souls and wise steward of the temporal aspects of the ministry.**

**§4 The clergyperson and the Ministry Council work together as collegial partners accomplishing the mission of the ministry.**

## **Article Two: Non-profit Legal Status**

**CAN 49. The Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA corporation herewith subscribes and includes in these its corporation by-laws, and further requires each member ministry's non-profit corporation board of directors in its supervisory oversight of all civil and legal aspects of their ministry to have set in its by-laws rules, regulations, and procedures for financial accountability, conformity to reporting requirements of the Internal Revenue Service, maintenance of legal and church records, and other generally accepted good business practices including the following specific articles:**

**§1 PURPOSE: The corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c) (3) of the IRS Code.**

**§2 INUREMENT OF INCOME: No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, directors, officers or other private persons except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered.**

**§3 CONFLICT OF INTEREST. All actual conflicts of interest are forbidden and all apparent conflicts of interest are to be avoided by anyone holding an organizational position which controls or influences the hiring of employees, the determination of compensation and benefits, the awarding of contracts, or entering into any arrangement that might benefit the private interest of him or herself or any officer or director of the organization or which might result in a possible excess benefit transaction to a family member of that person. Compensation includes direct or indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial. A person with a real or apparent personal, family or corporate interest in the outcome of a vote must recuse him or herself from the voting on that issue.**

**§4 LEGISLATIVE OR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES: No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation and the corporation shall not participate in or intervene (including the publishing or distribution of**

statements) in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

**§5 OPERATIONAL LIMITATIONS:** Notwithstanding any other provisions of these articles, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from Federal Income Tax under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law) or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

**§6 DISSOLUTION CLAUSE:** Upon the dissolution of the corporation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

**Article Three: Responsibility of Ministry Council's board members, clergy, and participants at any job or volunteer level to report physical, sexual, or mental abuse.**

**CAN 50. §1** All persons involved with this church at any level of responsibility and participation must fully and immediately comply with all state laws regarding the reporting of mental and physical abuse of minors, including sexual abuse.

**§2** All persons involved with this church at any level of responsibility and participation must commit to and comply with the directives of this Church's "Protecting God's People Policy" as presented in the Appendix of this document.

**§3** The sole exception to the directives of this CAN is for those ordained to the Sacred Priesthood for information learned as a confessor from a penitent within the Sacrament of Penance taken in the most formal sense.

**Article Four: Regarding disputes and dysfunctional relationships between the cleric and the ministry's Board of Directors.**

**CAN 51. §1** If a dispute between the Ministry Council and the cleric develops making their mutual relationship for the benefit of the ministry dysfunctional, the cleric or the Board of Directors must immediately inform the Council of Bishops

through the Regional Bishop in writing and present explicit details of the dispute.

§2 Upon receipt of the statement from either the cleric or the Board of Directors, the Regional Bishop will investigate the matter and make a recommendation to the Council of Bishops concerning the resolution of the dispute.

§3 Beyond providing assistance through mediation aimed at ameliorating the situation, the church has no recourse, beyond advisory, for dealing with disputes or an otherwise dysfunctional relationship between the cleric and the Ministry Council.

§4 In disputes between the cleric and the Ministry Council, there may be legal recourses for either or both the cleric or the organization.

#### **Article Four: Regarding Actual or Threatened Litigation.**

**CAN 52.** The Board of Directors of the Ministry Council must inform the bishop of the diocese (who will inform the Presiding Bishop) of any type of actual or threatened litigation by or to the church, Ministry Council, any of the church corporation officers, or any cleric.

#### **Article Five: The Church's role in assigning and replacing clergy for Ministry Councils.**

**CAN 53. §1** The Church has no canonical or civil legal obligation to assign clergy to a ministry, or to replace clergy when the relationship between the Board of Directors and the cleric becomes dysfunctional, or to assign or replace clergy when a cleric retires, dies, is removed for cause, or voluntarily withdraws his/her services to the ministry.

§2 The church will within the scope of these Canons and as far as practicably possible within its financial and personnel resources, assist the Ministry Council in finding and selecting a clergy person to serve the spiritual goals of that organization.

**CAN. 54 & 55** *[Content omitted no longer applicable]*

### **Title 2: Ecclesiastical Titles**

**CAN 56.** The following are titles of offices of orders and honors within this church. Duties are traditional to the title and can be assigned to serve special organizational needs:

**Ordained Major Orders:** Bishop, Priest, Deacon,

**Minor Orders:** Subdeacon, Lector, Acolyte, Sacristan.

**Responsibility Titles:** Presiding Bishop, Regional Bishop, Personal Prelature, Pastor, Chancellor, Pastoral Director,

### **Title 3: General Norms for Clergy**

#### **Article One: Jurisdictional Relationship of Clergy Members of this Church.**

**CAN 57. §1 Every Priest, Deacon, clergy in Minor Orders, and clergy candidate must serve under a jurisdictional (Diocesan, Protector of an Order) bishop.**

**§2 There are to be no *clerici vagi* ("free-lance") clergy within this church.**

**§3 Spiritual endorsement (faculties) from the Council of Bishops is required in the exercise of ministry as a representative of this church.**

#### **Article Two: Requirements for Incardination and Clerical Candidacy**

**CAN 59. §1 An applicant for incardination or clerical candidacy must undergo an in-person interview before acceptance by the Vocation Director and the bishop of the diocese where he/she lives, or another person designated by the Presiding Bishop.**

**§2 The background examination of an applicant will include:**

**1<sup>o</sup> Academic, personal, and employment history evaluation;**

**2<sup>o</sup> Three letters of reference from three persons not associated with the church;**

**3<sup>o</sup> A letter of spousal support (if applicable);**

**4<sup>o</sup> A personal and professional background report according to the norms of the church's "Protecting God's People" policy (See Appendix E);**

**5<sup>o</sup> A copy of sacramental records: Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, and Orders;**

**6<sup>o</sup> Academic credentials and transcripts;**

**7<sup>o</sup> For the incardination of priests and deacons, the Council of Bishops may require a Canonical Examination of ministerial competency.**

**§3. Personnel files of each applicant containing evaluations and supportive documentation will be maintained in the Church Archives maintained by the Office of the Presiding Bishop.**

**§4 Candidates with observable body piercings that are considered by the Council of Bishops to be detrimental to ministerial decorum will not be accepted as candidates unless the piercing item is removed and the skin properly repaired.**

**§5 Candidates with observable tattoos will not be accepted with tattoos that are obscene, morally or socially offensive, or are distracting to the ministerial function as a cleric as determined by the Council of Bishops.**

**CAN 60. §1 Each candidate after initial acceptance for incardination or clerical candidacy will participate in a full year of "Mutual Discernment."**

**§2** During the year of Mutual Discernment, the candidate is expected to participate fully in Church activities, especially the annual Synod; attendance at the annual synod is required within the Year of Mutual Discernment. The goal for the candidate is to meet the Church's clergy as well as learn about and experience Church culture and polity.

**§3** The candidate's "Year of Mutual Discernment" begins on the date of his/her acceptance letter from the Council of Bishops. At any time during the "Year", if the relationship of Church and candidate does not seem compatible enough to live and work in personal, liturgical, or theological peace, harmony, cooperation, and mutual respect, the Church is free to end the relationship of candidacy. The candidate is also free to end his/her candidacy anytime during the "Year" without explanation. It is expected in all cases of termination of candidacy that the bishops of the Church and the candidate will go their own way in peace without incriminations or rancor.

**§4** The "Year of Mutual Discernment" may be extended beyond one year by mutual agreement when requirements have not been fulfilled or other circumstances have not provided enough time and opportunity for mutual discernment.

**§5** Candidates for ordination must begin his/her ministry studies during this year.

**§6** All candidates for ordination and incardination are required to take an approved Church Law course through the church's seminary program so they are fully aware of the beliefs, expectations, and polity of the church.

**CAN 61. §1** Applicants approved by the Council of Bishops for ordination candidacy, must assume preparation for ordained ministry as their primary Church responsibility and provide focus and time to complete the formation program as prescribed by the Council of Bishops in a timely manner.

**§2** All clergy candidates for ministry in this Church shall be trained in a program endorsed by the Council of Bishops; the candidate's Diocesan Bishop will serve or appoint someone as a mentor during the candidate's "Year of Mutual Discernment" and during his/her formation program.

**§3** Courses of study may be individualized for each candidate based on his/her educational and experiential background. However, these courses of studies are subject to review and prior approval by the Presiding Bishop and the Vocational Formation Committee.

#### **Article Three: Clerical Attire**

**CAN 62. §1** The preferred street attire for clergy is a clerical shirt for deacons and priests, and for bishops a clerical shirt with pectoral cross.

**§2 Any traditional (standard) color of clerical shirt as sold in religious goods store is acceptable; purple and red are reserved for bishops.**

**§3 Since many clergypersons minister as "Worker-Priests" in a variety of settings, the decision on when to wear clerical attire is made by each clergyperson based ministerial environment.**

**§4 It is acceptable for those clerics ordained to minor orders to wear the clerical shirt and collar when it is appropriate to the ministry they are performing.**

**However, clerics in minor orders ordinarily do not wear the clerical collar as street attire.**

**§5 When wearing secular attire the clergy of this church are expected to wear some symbol (e.g., clergy lapel pin) of their association with this church.**

#### **Article Four: Civil Incorporation of Ministries; Annual Ministry Report**

**CAN 63. Every ministry must be incorporated as a non-profit corporation in the state of residence of the deacon, priest, or bishop who serves as a cleric in that ministry. The cleric serves as an agent, appointee, employee, or volunteer of the corporation board.**

**CAN 64. Deacons, priests and bishops are expected to make a descriptive and statistical report on their ministry to the Presiding Bishop and the Council of Bishops at the end of each calendar year.**

#### **Article Five: Lawsuits involving clergy or ministries**

**CAN 65. Clergypersons of this church shall immediately inform the Ministry Council of any civil or criminal actions and the circumstances surrounding the litigation or action whether these actions relate to church business or not. The Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the cleric's Ministry Council and the Council of Bishops, shall decide whether the cleric should continue public service pending the resolution of the matter.**

#### **Article Six: Mandatory Reporting of Physical or Mental Abuse of Minors**

**CAN 66. §1 Following the Church's "Protecting God's People" policy, all accusations of mental or physical (including sexual) abuse of a minor by any clergyperson of this Church shall immediately be reported to the appropriate civil authorities having legal jurisdiction for such an accusation.**

**§2 The Church's spiritual endorsement of that clergyperson will be withdrawn pending the outcome of the legal investigation. The clergyperson**

may not perform acts of ministry during the time of investigation.

**Article Seven: Maintenance of Sacramental Records**

**CAN 67. §1** Every clergy person has the responsibility to see that the exercise of ministry in the following areas are duly recorded in the record books of the church or diocese where the sacred event occurs: Baptism, Confirmation, First Holy Communion, Holy Orders, Marriage, Funerals.

**§2** In non-congregational ministries the cleric must maintain a set of sacramental records as in §1 of this CAN within the records of the Ministry Council.

**§3** The clergy person must make written arrangements with his/her family and the Ministry Council that such records will be forwarded to the bishop of the diocese or to the Presiding Bishop at the cleric's death or other circumstance where the cleric no longer is functioning as a clergy person of this church.

**Article Eight: Retirement of Clergypersons.**

**CAN 68. §1** There is no mandatory retirement age for clergy.

**§2** The Council of Bishops will provide spiritual endorsement for the ministry of retired clergy who maintain at least annual contact by filing the annual report and pay the annual retired clergy dues.

**Article Nine: Formal Participation in Rites of Other Churches**

**CAN 69. §1** Clergy of this Church may participate in the liturgical rites of churches possessing Apostolic Succession within the Catholic Faith Tradition.

**§2** Clergy may provide supply services to churches and congregations within the Christian Tradition on a temporary and limited basis.

**Title 4: Norms for Bishops**

**Article One. Duties and Responsibilities of Bishops**

**CAN 70.** A bishop is ordained to be a pastor, the good shepherd of the clergy, religious, and laity in his/her jurisdiction. That responsibility includes, but is not limited to the following:

**1<sup>o</sup>** To serve as an active member of the Council of Bishops; protect the Catholic Faith Tradition; instruct, encourage, and enforce adherence to these CANs within the Church community; to communicate and listen to the concerns, suggestions, and aspirations of clergy and laity within the mission of the Church; and to appoint personnel and personally assume offices and duties as required for the spiritual growth of the Church and the people of God entrusted to its ministries.

- 2<sup>o</sup> To pray each day the Liturgy of the Hours or other appropriate prayers for the church, the people of God and the world-at-large.
- 3<sup>o</sup> To continue life-long study in Sacred Scripture and Theology.
- 4<sup>o</sup> To preach the word of God based on Sacred Scripture and Catholic Faith Tradition.
- 5<sup>o</sup> To celebrate the Eucharist frequently.
- 6<sup>o</sup> To share responsibly in the administration of the church through an active role in the Council of Bishops.
- 7<sup>o</sup> To visit congregations within his/her jurisdiction at least once every year.
- 8<sup>o</sup> To examine and select candidates for the ministry.
- 9<sup>o</sup> To participate in the education of candidates for the ministry.
- 10<sup>o</sup> To listen to clergy and laity in the administration of the jurisdiction.
- 11<sup>o</sup> To be an example of Christ's justice, love, and mercy in dealing with clergy and laity.
- 12<sup>o</sup> To attend the annual church Synod/Retreat unless unable for serious reasons.

#### **Article Two: Election of Bishops**

**CAN 71. §1** When the pastoral need for a bishop is determined by the Council of Bishops, the local clergy in Major Orders (i.e., priests and deacons) of that diocese will be asked to nominate a candidate who meets the criteria of eligibility for Episcopal Consecration.

**§2** If the nomination is accepted by the candidate, the local clergy in Major Orders will present the candidate to the laity of that diocese for their concurrence.

**§3** If the nominee has the concurrence of the laity, the priest will be presented to the Council of Bishops for final vetting under the guidance of the Presiding Bishop. If the Presiding Bishop determines that the nominee is acceptable, a recommendation for consecration is made to the Council of Bishops. If the nominee is deemed unacceptable because of heresy or immorality, or some other fault, the Presiding Bishop will not recommend consecration to the Council of Bishops. The Council of Bishops will review either the recommendation or non-recommendation of the candidate.

**§4** Once approved by the Council of Bishops by a unanimous vote, the members of the Council will consecrate the bishop-elect at the next annual Synod, or at another appropriate time and place.

**CAN 72.** In addition to holding a Master Degree, a cleric must have been functioning as a priest within this Church for at least five years before he/she can be nominated by the local clergy as a bishop

candidate. Any exception to the five-year rule must be based strictly on the need of the Church as recommended by the Presiding Bishop and approved by unanimous vote of the Council of Bishops.

### **Article Three: Incardination of Bishops**

**CAN 73. §1** When a bishop from another church seeks incardination in this Church, the bishop will be vetted by the Council of Bishops under the guidance of the Presiding Bishop. The Presiding Bishop will make a final statement of findings to the Council of Bishops which will vote on the incardination request. A unanimous favorable vote by the Council of Bishops is required for the incardination of the candidate. Once approved, the Presiding Bishop or delegate, as soon as possible, will preside at an Incardination Ceremony to officially welcome the bishop to this Church.

**§2** If the newly incardinated bishop brings a significant number of clergy and laity to this Church, the Council of Bishops will determine if establishing a new region and appointing the bishop as its Regional Bishop is appropriate based on the best interests of the Church.

**§3** If the newly incardinated bishop enters this Church without a significant number of clergy and laity, the bishop will be recognized as a bishop member of the clergy in the Region of ministry or residence.

**§4** An incardinated bishop serving as a member of the clergy of a Region and is eligible, when fulfilling the provisions of CANs 37 and 71, to be nominated by the local clergy to the office of Regional Bishop.

### **Title 5: Norms For the Council of Bishops**

#### **Article One: Meetings of the Council of Bishops**

**CAN 74. §1** The Council of Bishops will meet in a formal in person and in camera session at least once a year during the second or third calendar quarter.

**§2** The Council of Bishops may meet at other times as needed either in person, electronically, or telephonically, as practicable and convenient.

**§3** Typically the responsibility to establish an agenda and call a meeting of the Council of Bishops belongs to the Presiding Bishop. However, any bishop may call a meeting providing each bishop is notified and supplied prior to the meeting an agenda of items or topics to be discussed.

**§4** The proceedings and decisions of the Council of Bishops meetings, with the exception of personnel and other confidential matters, are reported and,

when appropriate, promulgated in ECC+USA letters from the Presiding Bishop.

**§5** Additions, deletions, and modifications of these CANs are presented to the participants at the next annual synod for their concurrence.

**Article Two: Membership of the Council of Bishops**

**CAN 75. §1** All diocesan bishops and diocesan apostolic administrators are members of the Council of Bishops.

**§2** Bishop Protectors of Orders may be invited to participate without a right to vote at Council of Bishops meetings.

**§3** The Presiding Bishop is the ex officio chairperson of the Council of Bishops.

**Article Three: Agenda for the Council of Bishops Annual Meeting**

**CAN 76.** Each year during the first quarter of the calendar year, the Council of Bishops will invite proposals from clergy and laity that will enhance the church. These proposals may be new church law statements; a clarification, an addition, improvement, or removal in the Church's doctrinal belief statements, changes to the church's procedures or polity; and literally anything else that pertains to the good of this church.

**CAN 77. §1** The Presiding Bishop is responsible to collect agenda items for the meetings of the Council of Bishops. Sources of these agenda items are bishops, clergypersons, Ministry Councils, and laypersons.

**§2** All items presented for inclusion on the agenda must include a clear statement of the purpose of the agenda item, the requested outcome, and sufficient focused documentation to assist the bishops in fully understanding the issue and making an informed decision.

**§3** Each proposal must be formally presented on the "Proposal for Consideration by the Council of Bishops" form which will be mailed to all clergy in January of each year with the instruction to distribute copies of the document to lay members of their ministries.

**§4** All items must be presented to the Presiding Bishop at least two months prior to the next scheduled Council of Bishops meeting so that documentation can be forwarded to the bishops prior to the meeting.

**§5** The Presiding Bishop will be the competent authority to determine the sufficiency and appropriateness of the documentation and will work with the person or group making the request to develop focused documentation.

**Article Four: Voting in the Council of Bishops Meetings**

**CAN 78.** Each Region shall have only one vote within the Council of Bishops. The Regional Bishop has the right to vote and may appoint a proxy.

**CAN 79.** Each regional bishop and duly appointed regional apostolic administrator will have equal rights and responsibilities within the Council of Bishops and the Church itself when acting within the context of a meeting of the Council of Bishops.

**CAN 80. §1** Except as provided in Canons that require a unanimous favorable vote, a 2/3 favorable vote is sufficient to pass proposals, propositions, and other items presented on the agenda.

**§2** To vote, Regional Bishops must be present in person or by proxy with the following exception. For motions that have been circulated to the bishops prior to the meeting and which have not been substantially modified by the bishops present at the meeting, the votes of the absent but voting bishops are included in the requirement for passage

**§3** If the motion does not have the required agreement of the Regional Bishops as stated in §2, the motion fails.

#### **Article Five: Council of Bishops Meeting, Reports and Promulgation**

**CAN 81.** The proceedings and decisions of the Council of Bishops meetings are reported and, when appropriate, brought to the Synod for Concurrence, and promulgated in church-wide newsletters from the Presiding Bishop.

#### **Title 6: Norms for the Presiding Bishop**

##### **Article One: Election, Term of Office, and Removal of the Presiding Bishop**

**CAN 82. §1** The candidate for Presiding Bishop must have served as a bishop in this church for a period of at least five years prior to the beginning his/her first term as Presiding Bishop.

**§2** The Council of Bishops, after surveying all clergy and congregations, elects the Presiding Bishop for a five- year renewable term of office.

**§3** The Presiding Bishop is not limited in the number of consecutive or non-consecutive terms to which he/she may be elected or serve.

**§4** If the office of Presiding Bishop becomes vacant from removal, resignation, or death, the new Presiding Bishop will be elected to begin a five-year term.

**CAN 83. §1** The Presiding Bishop may be removed from office during his/her term only by a unanimous vote by the Council of Bishops at a special meeting called by three-fourths of the council's membership to consider removal.

**§2** Prior to any vote of removal of the Presiding Bishop, the reasons for such an action will be presented in detail and the Presiding Bishop will be

given an opportunity to respond to concerns of the other bishops. The Presiding Bishop will not vote on the motion for removal.

**Article Two: Role of Presiding Bishop.**

**CAN 84. §1** The Presiding Bishop is the "visible head of the church", its spokesperson, and leader during his/her term of office. As such, clergy and laity show loyalty, fidelity, reverence, and conformity to directions resulting from the bishop's leadership responsibilities.

**§2** In the CANON of the Mass, the remembrance of the Presiding Bishop follows this format: "for FIRST NAME, our Presiding Bishop, (for N., our Diocesan Bishop,) and for all the bishops, together with the clergy and the entire people...." or a similar format depending upon the CAN wording.

**CAN 85. §1** As the Chief Executive Officer of the Church, the Presiding Bishop makes day to day operational decisions and is expected only to inform the Council of Bishops on matters of peculiar significance.

**§2** The Presiding Bishop has broad discretionary authority, independent of the Council of Bishops, to carry out his/her duties within the church. The Council of Bishops, however, may reasonably expect that the Presiding Bishop provide appropriate details for his/her decisions made outside a meeting of the Council of Bishops.

**§3** The Presiding Bishop will establish a group of church consultants who will advise him/her in matters of significance in the operation of the church; all bishops serve as special consultants to the Presiding Bishop.

**§4** The Presiding Bishop will organize a Church Synod each year.

**§5** The Presiding Bishop will act as mediator and/or judge in all disputes within the church unless due to real or apparent conflict of interest, the matter is referred to another bishop or other cleric by the Council of Bishops.

**Title 7: Norms for Priests**

**Article One: Duties and Responsibilities of Priests**

**CAN 86.** A priest is ordained to serve the people of God and all humankind by providing the Sacraments and the Word of God to those entrusted to his/her care. That responsibility includes, but is not limited to:

**1<sup>o</sup>** To support the Regional Bishop in the pastoral responsibility of the care of souls entrusted to Church's care; to give respect and obedience, as promised at ordination, to the directives of the bishop and the Council of Bishops in matters related to Church doctrine, discipline, these CANs, and general administration of the Church.

2<sup>o</sup> To pray each day the Liturgy of the Hours or other appropriate prayers for the church, the people of God and the world-at-large.

3<sup>o</sup> To continue life-long study in the Sacred scripture and Theology.

4<sup>o</sup> To preach the word of God based on Sacred Scripture and Catholic tradition.

5<sup>o</sup> To celebrate the Eucharist frequently. As a pastor to provide a Mass schedule for his/her congregation (parish) at least weekly, frequently, and, if possible, every day.

6<sup>o</sup> To teach and administer the Sacraments of the Catholic Faith Tradition to the laity.

7<sup>o</sup> To share responsibly in the administration of the church through an active role in the Regional Synod; to accept duties as assigned by the bishop.

8<sup>o</sup> To personally practice and encourage those entrusted to his/her care to practice in their lives the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

9<sup>o</sup> As pastor or parish administrator to listen and be cooperative with other clergy and laity in the administration of the parish.

10<sup>o</sup> To be an example of Christ's justice, love, and mercy in dealing with fellow clergy and laity.

11<sup>o</sup> To know, respect, and promote the rights and responsibility of the Church's laity as presented in CANs 41-43.

12<sup>o</sup> To attend the annual church Synod/Retreat unless excused for serious reasons.

#### **Article Two: Spiritual Endorsement (Faculties) Granted to Priests**

**CAN 87. §1** The following faculties (spiritual endorsements) are granted to all priests within the Jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA. Priests may celebrate according to the CANs of this Church and according to the traditional liturgy of the Catholic Faith Tradition, the following Sacraments of the Catholic Faith.

1<sup>o</sup> Baptism (administered to a child or adult of any age using either baptismal rite only or with the full ancient rite of Baptism, Chrismation, and Holy Communion);

2<sup>o</sup> Confirmation (in the Vigil of Easter liturgy; in danger of death situations; and with permission of the diocesan bishop);

3<sup>o</sup> Reconciliation (General absolution or private confession; no sins are reserved);

4<sup>o</sup> Anointing of the Sick;

5<sup>o</sup> Celebration of the Holy Eucharist (Priests may celebrate the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist publicly or privately at any time and at any suitable place following any traditional liturgical text of the Catholic Faith Tradition.);

6<sup>o</sup> Holy Orders (granted only to priests who are bishops; the Council of Bishops must approve all ordinations in this church);

7<sup>o</sup> Marriage (for baptized or non-baptized persons; observing all State Laws regarding marriage).

§2 Priests may preach everywhere in our churches, congregations, and ministries, unless this faculty has been restricted or removed by the Regional or Presiding Bishop.

§3 Priests may lead the rites of funerals for members of our ministries or for anyone upon request of the family or other responsible person.

§4 Priests may serve as Pastors of congregations and pastoral directors of ministries when assigned by or with the approval of the Ordinary, the Presiding Bishop, or the Council of Bishops.

§5 Except in the Rite of Baptism, priests may only perform the Exorcism Rite of the Catholic Faith Tradition with a just and sufficient spiritual cause and with the prior approval of the Council of Bishops.

## **Title 8: Norms for Deacons and Subdeacons**

### **Article One: Duties and Responsibilities of Deacons and Subdeacons**

**CAN 88.** Deacons and Subdeacons are ordained to a ministry of service to the church, to the bishop, to the pastor, and to the people of God. That responsibility includes, but is not limited to:

1<sup>o</sup> To support the Regional Bishop in the pastoral responsibility of the care of souls entrusted to Church's care; to give respect and obedience, as promised at ordination, to the directives of the bishop and the Council of Bishops in matters related to Church doctrine, discipline, these CANs, and general administration of the Church.

2<sup>o</sup> To actively and willingly assist the pastor of the congregation with the care of souls, to give respect and obedience to the directives of the pastor who is acting in the name of the Diocesan Bishop.

3<sup>o</sup> Praying each day the Liturgy of the Hours or other appropriate prayers for the church, the people of God and the world-at-large.

4<sup>o</sup> To continue studies after ordination in the sacred scripture and theology.

5<sup>o</sup> To preach the word of God based on Sacred Scripture and Catholic tradition.

6<sup>o</sup> To participate in the Celebration of the Eucharist frequently.

7<sup>o</sup> To share responsibly in the administration of the parish through an active role in parish events; to accept parish duties as assigned by the pastor willingly and actively.

8<sup>o</sup> To personally practice and encourage parishioners to practice in their lives the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

9<sup>o</sup> To be an example of Christ's justice, love, and mercy in dealing with fellow clergy and laity.

10<sup>o</sup> To attend the annual church Synod/Retreat unless excused for serious reasons.

## **Article Two: Spiritual Endorsement (Faculties)**

### **Part One: Granted to Deacons**

**CAN 89.** Contingent upon the specific approval of the diocesan bishop and the pastor of the parish, the following faculties are granted to all Deacons within the Jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Catholic Church +USA.

1<sup>o</sup> Deacons may assist in the Ministry of the Word to the people of God in communion with the bishops and priests. Accordingly, deacons may assist in the catechetical formation of the laity and may especially assist in the preparation of the faithful for the receptions of the Sacraments.

2<sup>o</sup> Deacons may baptize infants or children, and adults whom they have instructed in the faith or when they are delegated by the pastor. Baptism is to take place if possible and appropriate, in the parish church; or in emergency anywhere.

3<sup>o</sup> Deacons may assist at the celebration of the Eucharist according to the rubrics as outlined in the church's document, Ritus Servandus for Priests and Deacons.

4<sup>o</sup> Deacons may distribute the Eucharist outside of Mass or lead the faithful in a Pre-Sanctified Eucharist Liturgy.

5<sup>o</sup> Deacons are granted the faculty to preach everywhere in our churches, chapels, congregations, and ministries, unless this faculty has been restricted or removed by the Ordinary or Presiding Bishop. This faculty should always be exercised with the approval of the Celebrant at the Mass, the Pastor, the Ordinary, or the Presiding Bishop.

6<sup>o</sup> Deacons, with the approval of the Pastor, Ordinary, or Presiding Bishop may validly assist at all marriages within the State of the parish to which they are assigned. Deacons may assist at marriages in other States with the approval of the Ordinary within the diocese or the Presiding Bishop. State laws must be carefully observed, and according to CAN 24 the minister is always personally and professionally responsible for knowing and fulfilling State marriage laws, regulations, and marriage reporting and filing documentation.

7<sup>o</sup> Deacons may preside at the rites of funerals.

8<sup>o</sup> Deacons may impart those blessings which have been expressly committed to them in the rubrics and in the Book of Blessings.

9<sup>o</sup> Deacons may serve as Pastors of congregations and ministries when assigned by the Ordinary and Presiding Bishop.

**CAN. 90.** Contingent upon the specific approval of the diocesan bishop and the pastor of the parish, the

following faculties are granted to all subdeacons within the Jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA.

1<sup>o</sup> The liturgical role of the Subdeacon is to assist at the celebration of the Eucharist in much the same way as a Deacon with these major exceptions:

a) The Subdeacon does not kiss the altar at the beginning or end of Mass, nor does he/she hold up the host or chalice at the minor elevation at the end of the liturgy of the Canon of the Mass.

b) The Subdeacon never gives blessings with the host or chalice; he/she may not bless with the sign of the cross within a Communion service. Minor blessings outside of a liturgical service are acceptable if the pastor or Ordinary approves (e.g., blessing of an animal, car, or other inanimate objects).

c) The Subdeacon does not deliver the homily at Mass unless he/she has an appropriate level of training and educational background and has the permission of the celebrant and the celebrant has approved the text of the homily. A Subdeacon will not ordinarily deliver the homily at Mass.

2<sup>o</sup> The Epistle (Second Reading of the Mass) should be read by the Subdeacon. The First Reading ordinarily is read by an ordained Lector or layperson authorized to be a reader at Mass. (The reading of the Gospel is reserved for the Deacon and is read by the Celebrant when there is no Deacon at the Mass.)

3<sup>o</sup> At a Solemn Mass (that is, Mass with the Celebrant assisted by a Deacon and Subdeacon) the Subdeacon may serve as crucifer on certain occasions such as Palm Sunday, Requiems, Holy Saturday, Christmas and Easter or other major liturgical feasts) thus adding solemnity to the liturgy.

4<sup>o</sup> At a Solemn Mass, after the Deacon processes with the Book of Gospels to the reading place, the Subdeacon may hold the Book of the Gospels while the Gospel is read or sung by the Deacon. Then, the Subdeacon may carry the Book of Gospels back to the Celebrant holding it open to where it will be kissed by the Celebrant.

5<sup>o</sup> At a Solemn Mass, the Subdeacon assists the deacon and priest in setting the altar for the Offertory. In a Mass without a Deacon, the Subdeacon helps the Celebrant directly.

6<sup>o</sup> The Subdeacon may say or sing the following directives at Mass in the absence of a Deacon and with the approval of the Celebrant of the Mass:

- "Calling to mind our sins..." in the Penitential Rite;
- "Let us pray to the Lord" in the Prayers of the Faithful.
- "Let us be attentive!" at the Gospel.

- "Let us Proclaim the mystery of faith." after the Consecration.
- "Let us bow our heads and pray for God's blessing" before the Last Blessing.
- "The Mass is ended; Go in peace," after the Last Blessing.

7<sup>o</sup> Subdeacons may preside at the rites of funerals outside of Mass (e.g., funeral homes; graveside services).

8<sup>o</sup> Under these very restricted conditions, the Subdeacon may be the extraordinary minister of the Sacraments of Marriage and Baptism.

a) The Subdeacon may witness marriages in emergency situations and with the delegation of the diocesan bishop and providing that all State legal requirements are met. Because the Subdeacon so acts only in emergency situations, it would follow that he/she would not be the cleric to fulfill the Church requirement of providing two instructional sessions for the couple before marriage.

b) The Subdeacon may confer the sacrament of Baptism with the approval of the diocesan bishop only if a bishop, priest, or deacon is not available in an extreme situation.

c) An example of emergency and extreme situations would be if the event was scheduled and it could not be easily delayed and the deacon or priest who was going to confer the rite fell ill or was injured and another cleric in Major Orders could not be at the service because of distance, etc.

d) It is intended that the Subdeacon does not become the ordinary minister of these sacraments. Except in extreme situations the Subdeacon may not witness Marriages and may not confer the sacrament of Baptism.

e) When the Subdeacon is authorized to confer either of these sacraments a special rite for such administration by a Subdeacon must be carefully followed because the Subdeacon is not ordained with the Sacrament of Holy Orders and there are some parts the formal ritual which he/she is not authorized to do. The Subdeacon must follow the ritual approved by the Church.

f) It is intended that the Subdeacon assume some of the liturgical roles of the Deacon; however, the clear distinction between a cleric in minor and Major Orders must be maintained and protected by the pastor and celebrant, as well as the Council of Bishops.

g) The Subdeacon can be delegated to serve in various administrative roles as assigned to him or her by the pastor or Diocesan Bishop.

**Title 9: Norms for Minor Orders and Commissioned Church Ministers.**

**Article One: Duties and Responsibilities of Clerics in Minor Orders, Commissioned Ministers, and Dedicated Religious Men and Women (Oblates).**

**CAN 91. §1 Worthy persons are ordained or commissioned to assist bishops, priests, and deacons in performing their ministries as the need in the church, diocese, or parish necessitates. These are roles of service at the direction of the Ordinary or pastor. These include:**

**1° those ordained to the Minor Orders of Porter, Lector, and Acolyte; and Subdeacon;**

**2° those laypersons commissioned (appointed) to serve as Communion assistants, ministers of sacred music, and religious educators; and those men and women who have made a religious oblation (personal commitment) to a religious organization established by the Church with an assigned Bishop Protector and Spiritual Director.**

**§2 Specific responsibilities will differ with each ministry however, the following are common obligations of those in all Minor Orders, Commissioned Ministries, and Oblates.**

**1° To actively and willingly assist the clergy with the care of souls; to give respect and obedience to the directives of the pastor or pastoral director who is acting in the name of the Regional Bishop.**

**2° Praying each day appropriate prayers for the Church, the people of God and the world-at-large.**

**3° To continue studies after ordination, appointment, or oblation in the Sacred Scriptures and Sacred Theology.**

**4° To witness the word of God based on Sacred Scripture and the Catholic Faith Tradition.**

**5° To participate in the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist frequently.**

**6° To share responsibly in the administration of the parish through an active role in the parish synod; to accept parish duties as assigned by the pastor.**

**7° To personally practice and encourage all people to practice in their lives the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.**

**8° To be an example of Christ's justice, love, and mercy in dealing with all people.**

**9° Clerics in Minor Orders are strongly encouraged to attend the annual church Synod unless unable for serious reasons; appointed or commissioned ministers and oblates are encouraged to attend the annual Church Synod.**

#### **Title 10: Norms for Clergy Candidates**

**CAN 92 §1 Clergy candidates (seminarians) must assume preparation for ordained ministry as their primary Church responsibility providing sufficient focus and time to complete the studies in a timely manner.**

**§2 Seminarians must participate as much as possible in the life of the Church by attending Synods, praying for the Church and its people, and**

if geographical location permits by becoming involved in a local congregation or ministry.

**§3** The Council of Bishops does not encourage and will not endorse seminarians who are not deacons to begin any type of ministry because of its likely interference with the seminarian's primary responsibility to seminary coursework.

**§4** The provisions of CAN 91 are applicable to seminarians to the degree that they do not interfere with coursework studies.

#### **Title 11: Discipline and Dismissal of Clergy**

##### **Article One: Lines of Authority**

**CAN 93.** Each jurisdictional bishop (i.e., Regional bishop, bishop protector, and personal prelatry) while observing the CANONS is autonomous within his/her Diocese, jurisdiction, or Order with regard to discipline and dismissal of clergy from that jurisdiction.

**CAN 94 §1** All acts of discipline and dismissal within the Church may be appealed to the Presiding Bishop and further appeal, if appropriate, to the Council of Bishops as the final juridical court.

**§2** A cleric who resigns his/her clerical membership in this Church before, during or after the following appeal process thereby loses all standing within the Church and all rights of appeal end with acceptance of that resignation by the Presiding Bishop.

##### **Article Two: Stages of Clerical Discipline**

**CAN 95. §1** The following six stages of disciplinary action toward a priest, deacon, or cleric in minor orders must be followed by the jurisdictional bishop and the subject of discipline in-order-to be eligible to participate in the appeal process.

**Stage 1:** The cleric's bishop will arrange for a discussion between the cleric and the bishop (or an appointee) covering areas of concern with some counsel as to how to proceed to ameliorate the situation. There is no written record at this stage.

**Stage 2:** If the matter is not corrected: The bishop sends a letter of concern with suggestions as on how to handle the difficulties. A copy of the letter is to be kept in the cleric's file, which is sealed to all but the jurisdictional bishop and later upon appeal to the Presiding Bishop and Council of Bishops.

**Stage 3:** If the matter is not corrected: The bishop sends a letter of warning, with specific directions as to how to proceed or modify behavior or deal with a situation. A time limit is set and the cleric is directed to comply. This letter and all correspondence from the cleric is placed in the cleric's file.

**Stage 4:** If the matter is not corrected: The bishop issues a letter of suspension with specific direction as to actions necessary to be taken before the suspension may be lifted. A time limit is started and the cleric directed to comply. Suspension means the individual has lost the church's spiritual endorsement for ministry and may not function as a cleric of this church. Documentation and correspondence are maintained in the cleric's file.

The cleric may appeal the suspension to the Presiding Bishop.

**Stage 5:** If the suspended cleric does not appeal the jurisdictional bishop's suspension within 30 days, or because of the gravity or immediacy of the situation, at the discretion of the Presiding Bishop, within seven days, a letter of dismissal and formal excommunication from the Presiding Bishop is issued to the cleric.

This letter of dismissal severs the cleric from the diocese and removes spiritual protection and ecclesial endorsement.

Copies of this document are placed in the cleric's file and the Presiding Bishop will send a copy with a brief explanation to each member of the Council of Bishops.

**CAN 96.** When the jurisdictional bishop considers immediate excommunication of a cleric necessary because of the nature or gravity of the charge, issue, or behavior, and for the good of the Church, the case shall be referred directly to the Presiding Bishop who will present the case to the Council of Bishops which will conduct a hearing in accord with the directives of CAN 97.

**Article Three: Appeal Process and Hearing by the Council of Bishops.**

**CAN 97. §1** After the jurisdictional bishop and cleric have completed the stages of clerical discipline as outlined in CAN 94, the excommunicated cleric may appeal to the Council of Bishops to hear the matter and make a definitive decision for the church.

**§2** The Council of Bishops will appoint an Advocate to assist the cleric in presenting his/her case. The jurisdictional bishop and the cleric must submit documentary evidence on the case within a timeframe set by the Presiding Bishop as chairperson for the Council of Bishops.

**§3** The Council of Bishops will determine the specifics of the hearing format (annual meeting agenda item; conference call; review of documentation and written statements) and determine the hearing timeline.

**§4** At the hearing by the Council of Bishops, the excommunicated cleric and the jurisdictional bishop will present information and documentation supporting their positions in the issue.

**§5** The Council of Bishops may decide to uphold the jurisdictional bishop's decision; reverse or mitigate the decision; or provide alternatives for the cleric to continue ministry within the church.

**CAN 98.** When a cleric is under a disciplinary charge, a bishop of another diocese or jurisdiction shall not give spiritual protection, endorsement, or solace until the charges are resolved.

**+ BOOK FIVE +  
CHURCH AUTHORITY AND STRUCTURE**

**Title 1. Authority in the Church**

**Chapter One: Hierarchical Authority:  
Spiritual and Civil**

**CAN 99. §1 This Church follows the Catholic Faith Tradition of church administration through a hierarchical organization; namely, a hierarchy of orders and office, with concomitant spiritual authority and responsibility appropriate to each hierarchical level.**

**§2 The ordained membership has the prime authority and responsibility for all the Scriptural, dogmatic and moral, liturgical, and spiritual aspects of this church.**

**§3 The Council of Bishops has the prime authority and responsibility for the civil and legal aspects of this church (i.e., the business aspects and church polity) as conducted through church synods, corporation boards, and parish councils.**

**Chapter Two: Authority of the Canons of the  
Church**

**CAN 100. The CANONS of this Church serve variously as the By-laws, directives, guidelines, norms, and goals of this Church; as such they constitute the contract of mutual understanding and expectation under which all clerical and lay members serve after making their commitment to the Church.**

**CAN 101. Additions, deletions, and amendments to these CANs shall require a unanimous positive vote at a properly convened meeting of the Council of Bishops.**

**CAN 102. Changes to these CANs will be presented by the Presiding Bishop at the next annual synod following the Council of Bishops meeting.**

**Chapter Three: Authority of the Council of Bishops**

**CAN 103 §1 The primary decision-making authority within the Church is the Council of Bishops meeting in a formal session.**

**§2 An individual bishop may not act, declare, legislate, or speak for the Church on matters not clearly stated in these CANONS or defined by the Council of Bishops. Personal opinions should be clearly stated as such and must not be contrary to**

matters clearly defined by these CANONS or the Council of Bishops.

**CAN 104** Major decisions in matters of faith, morals, church discipline, and Church Law will be made only at a properly convened meeting of the Council of Bishops.

**CAN 105.** The Council of Bishops will regularly seek the advice, recommendations, suggestions, and opinions from the clergy and laity on all aspects of the church's mission and polity.

#### **Chapter Four: Standing Committees to the Council of Bishops**

**CAN 106.** The following committees will be established (with a committee of three clerics and three lay members) on an as needed (temporary or permanent) basis by the Council of bishops:

- 1<sup>o</sup> The Church Law, Policy Procedures Committee.
- 2<sup>o</sup> The Liturgical Text Authorization Committee.
- 3<sup>o</sup> The Vocational Formation Committee.
- 4<sup>o</sup> The Seminary Supervisory Committee.
- 5<sup>o</sup> The Social Media Communication Committee.

#### **Chapter Five: Synods: Purpose, Attendance, Voting**

##### **Article One: Purpose of Synods**

**CAN 107.** An annual synod of this Church shall be held at a date and time determined by the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Council of Bishops and clergy as representatives of congregations and ministries.

**CAN 108.** The purpose of the annual synod is to bring together the clerical and lay membership of this Church for a time of liturgical prayer, fellowship, learning, discussion, conduct of church business, and development of friendships and relationships of mutual support in the service of the Lord.

##### **Article Two: Attendance at Synods**

**CAN 109. §1** Attendance at the annual synod is open to all clergy, clergy candidates, and active lay participants of the church's congregations and ministries.

**§2** Attendance and participation at the annual synod is not open to the public without a specific invitation from the Presiding Bishop.

**§3** Clerics in major orders are required to attend the annual Synod unless specifically excused by the Presiding Bishop for matters of health or other grave circumstance.

**§4** Clerics in minor orders and clergy candidates should make every reasonable effort to attend.

**§5** Members of the laity are invited to attend and two representatives from each congregation and ministry should be encouraged and as much as possible receive financial assistance from the parish or ministry to attend.

### **Article Three: Voting at Synods**

**CAN 110. §1** All registered synod participants who are active members of the Church are entitled to one vote in all Synod elections.

**§2** Voting must be presented in person; proxy voting is not allowed at synods.

**§3** Delegate voting by a specific or proportional representation of each congregation or other ministry may be introduced in the future as the number of congregations and ministries increases.

**§4** Although registered synod attendance is open to non-ECC+USA members of our ecumenical orders and ministries, as well as people invited by the Presiding Bishop because they have expressed an interest in attending a synod before joining the Church or applying for membership, incardination, or ordination candidate status, they are not allowed to vote at the synod.

**§5** For a Synod resolution to “pass”, a 70% majority vote of those in attendance and eligible to vote at the time of voting is required. A vote between 50% and 69% results in the proposal being tabled for study and future discussion. A vote of less than 50% results in the resolution simply “not passing”.

### **Title 2. Jurisdictional Designations**

**CAN 111. §1** The Jurisdiction of bishops in this Church may be Regional (i.e., limited to a state or region) or, non-territorial (i.e., at-large: any state, any region).

**§2** Bishop Protectors (aka: Personal Prelatures) of a religious order, institute, or community generally have non-regional jurisdictions and thus may have clergy serving anywhere within the Church's jurisdiction.

**§3** The jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA is limited by this CANON to North America.

**CAN 112.** There are currently (2026) four Regional jurisdictions within this Church:

East Coast	Mid-Eastern
Mid-West	West

+ BOOK SIX +

**Church Finances**

**CAN 113. §1** The mission of this Church is financed through the good will offering of the clergy and lay membership in congregations and ministries.

**§2** Clergy Dues, as determined by the Council of Bishops, will be requested each year from all clergy receiving Spiritual Endorsement from this Church.

**§3** Tithing, based on the Scriptural precept of giving a 10% share of one's income back to God who is the giver of all the good things that a person receives in life, will be taught and recommended in each congregation and ministry as God's way of financing the work of the Church.

**CAN 114. §1** The management of church corporations' finances is described in "ByLaws for ECC+USA Corporations and Parish Councils", Appendix F of these CANONS. The "ByLaws" are the required template of Bylaws for all church related corporations, ministries, and councils; any changes to these "ByLaws" require the approval of the Council of Bishops.

**§2** The compensation package for clerics and other employees, which may include salary, health insurance, retirement and various other benefits commensurate with the person's job responsibility and the corporation's income, is determined by the individual ministry corporation's Board of Directors.

**§3** Retirement benefits for any full-time church related employee must be structured by the Board of Directors with a written plan that is compliant with USA Internal Revenue Service rules for church employee retirement plans.

**§4** Retirement benefit payments are to be retained in a commercial retirement instrument; they may not be retained in any church corporation owned bank account.

**§5** Contributions to employee retirement plans by church corporations may only be made during the active employment of the employee; no contribution to the plan may be made after retirement or other termination of employment.

**§6** No other retirement benefit method can be promised or negotiated between the Board and the employee; the Board cannot make any benefit agreement that obligates the Board, Congregation, or any other church related ministry beyond the active employment of an employee.

**CAN 115. §1** Standards of accountability for church funds at all levels will be in accord with accepted practices of good business; internal and external audits scheduled as determined by the corporation boards; conformity to the regulations of the United States Internal Revenue Service for church and non-profit corporations; and standards of state laws for non-profit corporations.

**§2 Annual financial reports will be published for the diocesan bishop, the local clergy and the lay membership by the Presiding Bishop's Office for the national church; Diocesan Bishops for the dioceses; pastors for all congregations and pastoral directors for all other ministries which maintain membership in this Church.**

**+ BOOK SEVEN +  
Inter-Communion**

**Norms for Intercommunion with other  
Christians.**

**CAN 116. §1 As an ecumenical catholic church, this church welcomes all Christians to participate fully in the life of the church.**

**§2 This church does not enter into formal intercommunion agreements with other churches. However, other Christian churches and their membership are invited to worship with our clergy and faithful according to following norms.**

**1° All Christians who believe in the true presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Holy Communion are invited to receive Communion at our Celebration of the Sacred Liturgy.**

**2° Bishops and priests ordained in a valid line of Apostolic Succession are invited to concelebrate in our Celebration of the Sacred Liturgy. Deacons and clerics in Minor Orders are also invited to participate according to their order.**

**§3 Members of this church may participate in the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist in church communities within the Catholic Faith Tradition. Participation in churches of other traditions is at the discretion of each member of this church while showing respect for the traditions of the other church regarding participation by non-members.**

**§4 Bishops and priests, and other clerics of this church may concelebrate or participate in the Liturgical celebrations of churches within the Catholic Faith Tradition.**

**§5 The norms listed in CAN 69 must be respected in the application of the norms of this CANON, particularly those norms relating to bishops serving as episcopal co-consecrators and to all clerics providing extended pastoral supply to other churches.**

+ BOOK EIGHT +  
Appendices

Appendix A Lines of Apostolic  
Succession

Appendix B "Protecting God's People"



Appendix A

Lines of Apostolic Succession

**The Lines of Apostolic Succession enjoyed by all bishops of the Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA are as follows:**

**The Vilatte Succession**

**The Utrecht Succession**

**The Duarté-Costa Succession**

**As established at the 2005 Synod, these three Apostolic lines will be retained in perpetuity as our Church's Official Lines of Apostolic Succession. While some of our bishops have also received other lines through their Consecrator or Co-consecrator, these three lines are recognized as our primary lines, and all of our bishops have been ordained in these lines. All future bishops, either newly ordained or incardinated in this Church, will also receive these lines through the imposition of hands by the Presiding Bishop.**

**The current bishops of this Church do not consider it appropriate and therefore will not engage in any activity of going about gathering other lines of Apostolic Succession in order to enhance their own or the Church's Apostolic résumé. The Church's Council of Bishops is confident of the validity of these three lines as well as our bishops individual and collective sharing in these lines.**

*Documents attesting to the Lines of Apostolic Succession are maintained in the Church archive and are available for examination upon request to the Presiding Bishop or to the individual bishop.*



**Appendix B "Protecting God's People"**

**Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA**

**"Protecting God's People"**

**Policy and Procedures**

**Adopted: October 2011**

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**ECUMENICAL CATHOLIC CHURCH+USA  
“PROTECTING GOD’S PEOPLE”**

**Policy and Procedures**

Effective: October 2011

**I. Purpose**

**It is the intent of the Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA, hereinafter referred to as “The Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA”, “ECC+USA”, the “Church”, and/or the “Church Corporation”, its Council of Bishops and all associated member ministries of the ECC+USA to provide a safe and secure environment for all God’s people to work, worship and participate in church sponsored activities. Through the establishment of this “Protecting God’s People” Policy and Procedures document, the goal of the ECC+USA, its Council of Bishops and all member clergy is to protect all persons, adults and children alike, from incidents of misconduct, inappropriate behavior or harassment, while also protecting the Church and member ministries, their staff members and volunteers from false accusations.**

**This policy is designed to maintain and respect the rights and responsibilities of the Boards of Directors of each member ministry as particularly described in the Church Law of the Ecumenical Catholic Church+USA, Chapter Three, Sections 1 and 2 (see Appendix A). At the same time, this policy is intended to create an umbrella of expectations in regard to protecting God’s people for each member ministry and its personnel and each clergy member associated with this Church.**

**II. Objectives**

**There are two general objectives which are sought to be achieved by this policy. The first, legal in nature, is to discover the truth and, in cases of substantiated Sexual Misconduct, to impose appropriate ecclesiastical discipline. The second, pastoral in nature, is to care for those affected by such conduct: the victim(s), the offender(s), their families, and affected clergy and congregations. These two tracks proceed in parallel fashion but are separate. The Presiding Bishop, in consultation with the Council of Bishops, will provide oversight and guidance of the implementation of this policy.**

**III. Policies Concerning Sexual Misconduct, Protection of Children, Extended Counseling Relationships and Spiritual Direction A. General Statement of Policy As stated in**

**Section I, “Purpose”, it is the policy of the ECC+USA and all member ministries that “Sexual Misconduct” as defined herein on the part of any person employed or engaged by, volunteering for or otherwise representing or serving the Church corporation and/or member ministries in any manner, is strictly prohibited. This policy applies to all persons including, without limitation, any ordained person (cleric), aspirant, postulant, candidate or seminarian sponsored by a member ministry of this Church, or by any lay employee or volunteer working in any capacity for any member ministry of this Church, or any other person who provides pastoral care or who supervises youth ministries or activities for any member ministry of this Church.**

**Sexual Misconduct includes adultery, any sexual activity with a counselee, a person under the age of eighteen or a person lacking in full mental capacity, any sexual activity with a non-consenting person, and any illegal or aberrant sexual activity. It also includes any words or conduct which constitute illegal sexual harassment in the workplace, whether involving employees (paid or volunteers) such as unwelcome sexual advances, improper touching and obscene or sexually provocative or offensive language or gestures.**

#### **B. Examples of Child Abuse, Sexual Misconduct; Pastoral Relationship Defined**

**Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the following are examples of Sexual and Abusive Misconduct:**

**Child Abuse: For purposes of this policy, child abuse is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes physical abuse (beating, shaking, burns, biting); emotional abuse (constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing); and neglect (depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter and medical care).**

**2. Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent; physical abuse or sexual violence, criminal or aberrant sexual behavior (such as voyeurism or exhibitionism) or the use or display of pornographic material in the**

presence of children or in the employment, pastoral or volunteer setting.

**3. Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment in a situation where there is an employment, mentor or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including but not limited to, sexually-oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to job performance or employment qualifications; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or repeated unwelcomed requests for social engagements.

**4. Sexual Exploitation:** Sexual exploitation including, but not limited to, the development of or the attempt to develop a sexual or romantic relationship between cleric, employee or volunteer and a person with whom he/she has a Pastoral or Fiduciary Relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent from the individual.

Pastoral Relationship, as used in this policy, refers to a relationship between a cleric, employee or volunteer and any person to whom such cleric, employee or volunteer provides counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction or guidance, sacramental education, or from whom such cleric, employee or volunteer has received a confession or confidential or privileged information.

#### **C. Procedures for Investigation**

This policy sets forth procedures for the investigation of allegations of Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct, and for discipline. Such procedures include:

- 1. Immediate consultation with the appropriate law enforcement authorities for the investigation of and, where warranted, criminal prosecution,**
- 2. Immediate notification of the Diocesan Bishop, the Presiding Bishop, the Pastor, Parish Council/Board of Directors or other employer, and**
- 3. Immediate notification and consultation with the ministry's insurance carrier, if applicable.**

#### **D. Prohibition with Respect to Youth Ministries or Activities**

No person with a criminal record of child sexual abuse or a paraphiliac diagnosis<sup>1</sup> (e.g. pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism as

defined by the American Psychiatric Association), and no person with respect to whom it is reasonably believed that he or she may likely be an abuser of children, shall be permitted to serve this Church in an official capacity (cleric, employee, volunteer).

1 Paraphilia is a biomedical term used to describe sexual arousal to objects, situations, or individuals that are not part of normative stimulation and that may cause distress or serious problems for the paraphiliac or persons associated with him or her. Paraphilia involves sexual arousal and gratification towards sexual behavior that is atypical and extreme.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paraphiliac>)

#### **E. Child Abuse Reporting**

All incidents and allegations of sexual abuse and/or misconduct shall be immediately reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities for investigation. This shall be done by the local ministry's Board of Directors, the Pastor, or any person in any way associated with the local ministry who has first-hand and credible knowledge of a violation of this policy.

The Diocesan Bishop and the Presiding Bishop shall also receive immediate notification by the local ministry's Board of Directors and/or the Pastor. The primary person responsible for reporting said violation of policy rests with the person who becomes knowledgeable or suspicious of a violation and that person, even if he/she involves members of the ministry leadership, must ensure proper notification to civil authorities as outlined herein.

#### **F. Application, Background Checks; Evaluations**

Applications and background checks are required of all clerics requesting incardination, all clergy candidates to Major and Minor Orders, all employees and volunteers. The following describes the specific method of background checks for each of these levels of ministry membership.

1. **Incardination Candidates:** These are clerics ordained in another Church who seek clerical membership in this Church.

a. Complete the "Application for Incardination" and provide personal, educational, employment, and personal spiritual formation information statements and references, as requested.

**b. Disclosure of any criminal accusations or convictions.**

**c. Consent for the ECC+USA to conduct a criminal record background check, as well as contacting all references, present and former employers, church related supervisors, and verification of educational credentials.**

**d. The application fee, paid by the applicant, will cover the cost of the record search and report conducted by an agency specializing in such matters for churches. All records and notes gathered from the candidate's background review will be maintained in the clergy files of the Presiding Bishop.**

## **2. Ordination Candidates**

**a. Major Orders (Aspirants to the Diaconate and Priesthood)**

**1. Complete the "Application for Ordination Candidates" and provide personal, educational, employment, and personal spiritual formation information statements and references, as requested.**

**2. Disclosure of any criminal accusations or convictions.**

**3. Consent for the ECC+USA to conduct a criminal record background check, as well as contacting all references, present and former employers, church related supervisors, and verification of educational credentials.**

**4. The application fee, paid by the applicant, will cover the cost of the record search and report conducted by an agency specializing in such matters for churches. All records and notes gathered from the candidate's background review will be maintained in the clergy files of the Presiding Bishop.**

**b. Minor Orders only (Aspirants to Porter, Lector, Acolyte, Subdeacon only)**

**1. Completion of six months of active participation in the member ministry.**

**2. Complete the "Application for Minor Orders" and provide personal, educational, employment, and personal spiritual formation information statements and references, as requested.**

**3. Disclosure of any criminal accusations or convictions.**

**4. Consent for the ministry member to conduct a criminal record background check, as well as**

contacting all references, present and former employers, church related supervisors, and educational credentials.

5. The cost of the record search, paid for by the candidate unless otherwise decided by the member ministry's Board of Directors, will cover the cost of the record search and report conducted by an agency specializing in such matters for churches. All records and notes gathered from the candidate's background review will be maintained in the clergy files of the Diocesan Bishop, with a copy sent to the Presiding Bishop.

**c. Volunteers who work with children at the member ministry**

1. Completion of six months of active participation in the member ministry.

2. Complete the "Application for Child Worker Volunteers" and provide personal, educational, employment information and references, as requested.

3. Disclosure of any criminal accusations or convictions.

4. Consent for the ministry member to conduct a criminal record background check, as well as contacting all references, present and former employers, church related supervisors, and educational credentials.

5. The cost of the record search, paid by the member ministry's board of Directors, will cover the cost of the record search and report conducted by an agency specializing in such matters for churches. All records and notes gathered from the candidate's background review will be maintained in the permanent personnel files of the member ministry, with a copy sent to the Diocesan Bishop.

**d. Employees and independent contractors who work with children at the member ministry**

1. Complete the "Application for Child Worker Volunteers" and provide personal, educational, employment information and references, as requested.

2. Disclosure of any criminal accusations or convictions.

3. Consent for the ministry member to conduct a criminal record background check, as well as

contacting all references, present and former employers, church related supervisors, and educational credentials.

4. The cost of the record search, paid for by the employee and/or independent contractor unless otherwise decided by the member ministry's Board of Directors, will cover the cost of the record search and report conducted by an agency specializing in such matters for churches. All records and notes gathered from the candidate's background review will be maintained in the permanent personnel files of the member ministry, with a copy sent to the Diocesan Bishop.

In the event a person with any credible history of evidence indicating Sexual Misconduct applies for any position in the Church, he or she will not be accepted for any clergy order, nor hired for any position, nor allowed to volunteer for any position of assistance to the member ministry.

#### **G. Adoption of Policies by Congregations/Ministries; Retention of Records**

The Parish Council/Board of Directors of each member ministry shall, on or before December 1, 2011, adopt this Policy by a formal resolution, and the full text of this Policy shall be recorded in the official minutes of the Parish Council/Board of Directors. On or before April 1 of each year, the Parish Council/Board of Directors of each ministry of this Church shall reaffirm the applicability of this Policy to all clergy, lay employees and volunteers of such ministry and all clergy, all lay employees and all volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities, will receive a copy of this Policy and shall complete and sign a certificate evidencing the receipt of this Policy prior to beginning work with the member ministry. Each member ministry shall retain the foregoing resolutions and receipts among its permanent records.

#### **H. Signed Statements Kept on File**

Each person in this Church who provides pastoral care or who supervises youth ministries or activities shall sign a statement attesting that he or she has received this Policy and understands its contents. Such statements shall be kept on file as follows: clergy and clergy candidates in the Office of the Presiding Bishop; volunteers in the office of the local ministry and the Diocesan Bishop; employees in the office of the local ministry.

## **I. Training**

**All current and new clergy, employees, paid church workers and volunteers who supervise youth ministries or activities shall receive training on this Policy. Such training shall include child sexual abuse in church settings, state laws regarding reporting requirements, sexual harassment in employment, mentor and colleague relationships, and sexual exploitation in pastoral relationships.**

**Training should also include, where applicable, how to avoid potential problems, e.g., enforcement of the six-month active participation in the member ministry, two volunteers with children – especially when they are going to the toilet, not allowing husband and wife together alone with children, prohibiting dealing with individual children behind closed doors, etc. 10**

**The member ministry's Board of Directors shall be responsible for arranging said training.**

## **J. Violations**

**Any violation of this policy will result in appropriate disciplinary action against the offending person, which may include loss of employment as well as, in the case of a cleric, removal of all spiritual endorsements (faculties). Such violation(s) may also be the basis of civil liability and criminal prosecution.**

## **IV. Procedures for Responding to Complaints of Sexual Misconduct**

**A. Upon receipt of a complaint of Sexual Misconduct by a cleric of the Church, the Diocesan Bishop shall immediately place the cleric on leave and remove him/her from active ministry pending the outcome of the Church's investigation.**

**B. All complaints alleging Sexual Misconduct by a cleric within this Church shall be referred immediately to the Offices of the Diocesan and Presiding Bishop.**

**C. Upon receiving a complaint of Sexual Misconduct, the Diocesan Bishop will assure the complainant of the Church's concern regarding the matter and that it will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. The Bishop will encourage the complainant to sign a written statement describing the alleged misconduct in reasonable detail, but the**

**complainant's refusal to do so shall not necessarily cause the Bishop to regard the complaint as withdrawn.**

**D. If the complaint alleges sexual abuse of a minor or an incompetent adult, the Diocesan and Presiding Bishop will verify the relevant law enforcement, social welfare authorities and the child's parents are notified.**

**E. The Diocesan Bishop will thereupon commence an investigation of the complaint and as soon as may be appropriate, will initiate the procedures for providing pastoral care to all affected parties, as provided in Section IV hereof.**

**F. Any party or witness to an alleged act of Sexual Misconduct may submit a statement in writing if desired.**

**G. Neither the Bishop, nor any member of the congregation/ministry staff may pastorally counsel or hear the sacramental confession of any persons involved in a complaint, but they shall arrange for such resources to be available to such persons, as provided in Section IV below.**

**After verifying the alleged violation has been reported to the appropriate civil authorities, the Church corporation will conduct its own investigation. Appropriately trained persons, appointed by the Diocesan Bishop, will conduct the investigation. The investigation would ordinarily include, without limitation, the following at the appropriate time: interviews with the complainant, the alleged victim (if other than the complainant), the alleged offender, and all other witnesses. To the extent consistent with the best interests of the Church corporation and member ministry, during the preliminary phases of the investigation efforts will be made to assure the privacy of all persons involved.**

**The Investigative Team will report regularly to the Diocesan Bishop as to the progress of the investigation. It will focus on discovering the truth of the matter and will conclude its work as swiftly as reasonably possible. It will issue a final report to the Diocesan Bishop, which will include the original written statement of the complainant, all written statements submitted by other persons, a summary of oral statements and other evidence, and the findings and recommendations of the Investigative Team.**

**H. If the Presiding Bishop and the Council of Bishops conclude from the report of the Investigative Team there is probable cause to believe that the allegations of Sexual Misconduct are true, the Diocesan Bishop will so notify the complainant and alleged offender, as well as all other persons who have a legitimate need to know. The Diocesan Bishop shall then recommend for an evaluation of the alleged offender by professionally qualified and experienced persons, in conformity with the directions and guidelines of the ministry's Insurance Company, if applicable. The Diocesan Bishop will direct the alleged offender to undergo the evaluation and to authorize that all results and findings thereof be released to the Diocesan and Presiding Bishop and the Council of Bishops. Failure of the alleged offender to comply will be grounds for ecclesiastical discipline. The Diocesan Bishop also will take the following steps:**

**1. A written report of the Diocesan Bishop's finding will be placed in the case file and, a copy will also be placed in the cleric's diocesan personnel file. 12**

**2. The Diocesan Bishop (and any other Diocesan representatives whom the Presiding Bishop desires to attend) will attempt to meet with the alleged victim to discuss appropriate responses. The victim may be accompanied by another person if desired.**

**3. If the alleged offender is a cleric, the Presiding Bishop and Council of Bishops shall also determine whether disciplinary action under Church Law is appropriate. The Presiding Bishop shall initiate such ecclesiastical action as deemed warranted.**

**The Diocesan Bishop (and any other church corporation representatives whom the Presiding Bishop desires to attend) will arrange to meet with the alleged offender. The alleged offender may be accompanied by another person if desired. The Bishop will discuss with the alleged offender the actions the Council of Bishops intends to take.**

**5. The Bishop will notify the appropriate persons in leadership positions that a probable cause determination has been made. The member of the congregation/ministry with which the alleged offender is employed or engaged or provides volunteer services shall, after consultation with the Presiding Bishop, immediately take action to assure that no**

further injury is done. Such action may include suspension with or without pay, termination, or other action as may be appropriate.

6. The Diocesan Bishop may, if appropriate, seek to meet with the alleged offender's spouse and/or family to discuss how the Church may assist them.

7. Unless there are specific factors which make it inappropriate, the Diocesan Bishop normally will commence, consistent with protection of the church interests and the legitimate privacy interests of others, the congregational healing process described in Section V below.

I. If the Bishop is unable to conclude from the report of the Investigative Team whether there is probable cause to believe that the allegations of Sexual Misconduct are true, the Bishop shall cause a further investigation to be carried out.

J. If the Bishop concludes from the report of the Investigative Team there is not probable cause to believe that the allegations of Sexual Misconduct are true, the complaint shall be dismissed and an appropriate record shall be made. Such decision shall be placed in the alleged offender's personnel file. The Diocesan Bishop will meet with the complainant to discuss the determination and will also meet with the alleged offender to discuss any steps that may be necessary to make known the determination. Reasonable efforts shall be made (if the cleric so requests) so to inform all persons who became aware of the complaint or the investigation.

K. The complainant, the alleged victim (if not the complainant) and the alleged offender each may request, within five days after the Bishop's determination, that the Bishop reconsider the determination. The party requesting reconsideration shall specify with particularity the basis on which the request for reconsideration is requested.

L. Reasonable efforts will be made to assure that all records of investigations and determinations will be held in confidence and supplied only to persons deemed by the Diocesan Bishop (or Presiding Bishop in the case of clerics) to have a legitimate need or reason to know; for example, other bishops requesting a letter of reference, employers, Pastors, Boards of Directors, etc.

## **V. PASTORAL CARE TO ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN A COMPLAINT OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

**These Policies generally refer to the person with whom the cleric, lay employee or church volunteer was alleged to have been sexually involved as the victim of the misconduct. While it is true that such a person is a victim and needs pastoral care, there are also other persons who need pastoral care whenever there is an allegation of Sexual Misconduct. Those persons include the alleged offender, families of the persons involved, the clergy who have succeeded an alleged offender-cleric, and the congregation.**

**The Diocesan Bishop shall be available to facilitate the provision of pastoral, social, and psychological support for victims, alleged offenders, families of persons involved, clergy who have succeeded and alleged offender cleric, and members of the congregation(s) involved. Support will be provided by neutral clergy and professional counselors. 14**

## **VI. CHURCH POLICY FOR RESPONDING IN THE CONGREGATION TO ALLEGATIONS AND INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

**The response of the congregation to allegations of betrayal and violation of the trust relationship is akin to that in cases of physical or other psychic trauma as if the congregation has experienced the alleged behavior firsthand. The following procedures are intended to facilitate the healing that will be needed in the congregation.**

**The principle guiding these procedures is that the healing of a congregation occurs best when people are informed of the facts of alleged misconduct and are able to move forward as a community from the trauma. The Church is a place for telling the truth because, in our Lord's words, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:32). Accordingly, the Church will provide as much information regarding the matter as it can, in keeping with the protection of its own legal interests and the legitimate privacy interests of others.**

**The Diocesan Bishop or the Bishop's representative will meet as soon as may be**

appropriate with the leaders of the congregation (the "Leaders") to discuss plans for congregational healing. An open congregational meeting will normally be held if the complaint alleged that misconduct occurred in the current congregation or if the misconduct is the subject of rumor or gossip in the congregation. The format of this meeting should follow the outline of a Trauma Debriefing Process, with modifications made as needed to fit the particular circumstances. Normally, the congregational meeting will be held in the church and the Diocesan Bishop, or the Bishop's representative, will be present at the meeting.

The Diocesan Bishop, or the Bishop's representative, will also encourage and assist the Leaders in planning regular follow up sessions with the congregation for as long as needed. If an interim cleric is deemed necessary, the Diocesan Bishop, or the Bishop's representative, will assist the Leaders in finding an interim cleric. The Bishop's representative will also offer the interim and the Leaders regular opportunities to debrief, report, and consult about the congregation with the Bishop or with designated representatives.

The Diocesan Bishop or the Bishop's representative will assist the Leaders in making available information about local mental health resources (including sliding scale fee agencies) so that members of the congregation know how to obtain counseling services if necessary, and all parties will make every effort to protect legitimate privacy interests.

## **VII. THE REDEMPTIVE ACTIVITY OF HEALING IN THE CONGREGATION**

### **Basic Principles**

- 1. It is appropriate for the Diocesan Bishop (or his representative) to be in regular pastoral contact with the victims and to describe to them the process for congregational healing before such a process actually begins.**
- 2. After completion of an investigation, the lay leadership of a congregation should be given the first opportunity to be made aware of the**

issues which have emerged. The participation of this group is vital in planning the processes for congregational healing.

**3. The Diocesan Bishop should consult with the Presiding Bishop for advice with respect to disclosure of information in connection with the healing process.**

**4. There is a need to balance legitimate privacy interests against the important posture of openness with the congregation.**

**5. Insofar as possible, the identity of affected parties needs to be kept in confidence. Therefore, any details which may identify such parties must be guarded carefully.**

**6. Studies and experience indicate that parishioners usually know that "something is going on." In the absence of facts, rumor and speculation increase.**

**7. The healing and unity of a congregation are fostered if there is an open congregational meeting at which the Bishop and designated representatives present as much information (facts only) as possible to the assembled group. It is important that such a meeting take place as soon as practicable after completion of an investigation.**

**8. The format of the congregational meeting should follow the outline of a Trauma Debriefing Process, with minor modifications made as needed to fit the particular circumstances. It is important that the congregational meeting be held in the church building.**

**9. Such a meeting, regardless of the extent of the information given, constitutes a trauma for the congregation. Appropriate, trained persons, under the direction of the Presiding Bishop, shall be part of the Congregational Debriefing Team and shall facilitate the Debriefing Process.**

**10. Regular follow up sessions with the congregation should be held in the first year (or longer if necessary) after the disclosure of the incident(s).**

**11. An Interim Pastor shall be made available, if requested and if possible. The Church corporation will do whatever it can to help the Board of Directors find an interim pastor. That person should have regular opportunities to debrief, report and have consultation with**

the bishop (or the designated staff person) and other counselors.

**12. Local mental health resources (including sliding fee scale agencies) should be publicized so that members of the congregation know how to access these services.**





