

## Governance of the Episcopal Church



"Episcopal" means "bishop" in Greek, and the Episcopal Church is governed in part by its bishops. The basic unit of ministry in the Episcopal Church is the "diocese," or a region of a reasonable number of Episcopalians. Each diocese is presided over by a "diocesan bishop" who may have help from a variety of other kinds of bishops, depending on the circumstances.

The Diocesan Bishop chooses and ordains priests and deacons to serve the "parishes," or congregations, of the diocese, which carry out the ministry of the diocese in their local communities. The priests lead the parish in worship, make decisions related to the sacramental life of the parish, and in general, supports the ministry of the worshipping Christians there.

The Episcopal Church is governed by a Constitution and a set of laws (known as "canons") which it establishes for itself by Convention, but the diocesan bishop is the ecclesiastical (or "church") authority in his

or her particular diocese. The bishops of the Episcopal Church have no jurisdiction outside of their dioceses, so they meet together twice per year to pray and make decisions about the life of the Church. Every nine years, the Church elects a "Presiding Bishop" who represents the Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion and "presides" over meetings of the bishops, known as the "House of Bishops."

Every three years, delegations (or "deputations") from all the dioceses, along with the House of Bishops, gather to worship and pass legislation for the Church. This General Convention is where broad decisions are made about policy and worship, as well as revitalizing the Christian community for ministry "back home."

Taken from [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/visitors\\_17012\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/visitors_17012_ENG_HTM.htm) (accessed 1 February 2006)