

Procedure for Receiving Existing Parishes

THE GOAL

To create a climate which can prepare, nurture and bring into full participation existing parishes throughout the United States which are not presently affiliated with the Reformed Episcopal Church.

THE PROCESS

There is a process involved in bringing a non- Reformed Episcopal parish into membership. This process very often takes time and much effort. In some cases, that process may even take a generation. The affiliation of a parish with the denomination can be likened to the process leading up to the marriage relationship of a man and a woman. After they meet and decide that they like each other, at least three steps are involved by the time they get married.

FIRST: They decide to go steady. In this stage, they pledge fidelity to one another. They court no one else. Their main goal is to get to know one another better. At this stage, they are still learning about one another's characteristics.

SECOND: They become engaged. In an engagement, the relationship deepens. The two spend more time together. They are clearly identified as belonging to each other. The input of one to the other becomes more important. Decisions are made together and plans are laid for the upcoming marriage.

THIRD: The marriage is effected. Now the two become one in heart and soul. All things are held in common.

THE PROCEDURE

There is a three-level process of affiliation for existing parishes who wish to join the Reformed Episcopal Church. During the stages of association, the Bishop in charge of the geographical area in which the parish exists will oversee the process. During the first two stages of this process, the parish will be designated either as an Associate Parish or Affiliate Parish.

LEVEL ONE: (Associate Status)

Upon Admission by the Bishop and Standing Committee

(1) EPISCOPAL FIDELITY: Every parish must agree to maintain Episcopal fidelity with the Reformed Episcopal Church so long as they remain in association. This means that the Bishop will oversee the development process of incoming parishes.

(2) ADHERENCE TO THE DOCTRINAL STANDARDS OF THE CHURCH:

(3) REFORMED EPISCOPAL BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: The exclusive use of the Reformed Episcopal Book of Common Prayer is not required in this status. It would be introduced as opportunity is afforded. In this stage, non-liturgical parishes can learn about Liturgical Worship.

(4) ASSESSMENTS: In associate status, an appropriate assessment of the General Fund Offerings would be required of parishes. This is usually 4-5%. This assessment will be determined by the Diocese to which the Parish is assigned and paid to the treasurer. The assessments will help meet the costs of exercising oversight.

(5) REPRESENTATION: In associate status, parishes would be permitted to sit in Councils as observers. This is their period to learn about the church.

(6) IDENTIFICATION: The parish in associate status may advertise that they are in associate status with the Reformed Episcopal Church if they gain the permission of the Bishop.

(7) MINISTERIAL STATUS: The parish Minister is not required to transfer his credentials to the Reformed Episcopal Church at this level. If there is no parish Minister, the Bishop will endeavor to appoint a Vicar.

LEVEL TWO: (Affiliate Status):

Admission by Bishop and Standing Committee. In addition to the items mentioned in Level One, the incoming parish must conform to the following:

(1) BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: It must be clearly demonstrated that a permitted version of the BCP is being used on all occasions of Sunday morning worship. This is either the REC 1662 BCP or the 1928 BCP.

(2) PARISH ORGANIZATION: Work must begin on reorganizing the parish to conform to the Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church. While it does not have to be complete in order to enter this phase, it must begin upon entrance into this status.

(3) APPLICATION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE: A statement indicating desire to be placed in affiliate status must be submitted to the Bishop and Standing Committee and acceptance to this status by the Bishop and Standing Committee is required. An annual review of the status of each parish will be made by the Bishop and Standing Committee. A written copy of that review will be sent to the Bishop of the Diocese in which the affiliate parish is located.

(4) ASSESSMENTS: The assessment for this status is an appropriate amount of the General Fund Offerings to the parish as determined by the Diocese to which the Parish is assigned. This is usually 5 to 7 %. Assessments will be collected by the Diocesan Treasurer who will give an accounting at the Annual Meeting.

(5) REPRESENTATION: Upon acceptance as an affiliate parish, a Diocese may grant the parish the privilege of sending one lay delegate to the council. This delegate would be entitled full voting privileges in the Annual Council. Through the Diocese the affiliate parish would have representation at the General Council.

(6) MINISTER: At this level, the minister of the parish (if there be one), must join the Reformed Episcopal Church. He must submit his credentials in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church. An appropriate examination for either the Diaconate or Presbyterate will be given.

(7) IDENTIFICATION: In this public representation, the parish must advertise that they are an affiliate of the Reformed Episcopal Church in America.

LEVEL THREE: FULL MEMBERSHIP

Admission by Bishop and Standing Committee

(1) FULL USE OF THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: The Books of Common Prayer permitted for use in the Reformed Episcopal Church(1662,1928) must be used in accordance with the Canons of the R.E.C.

(2) RECEPTION BY DIOCESE: Application must be made to the Bishop and Standing Committee of the Diocese which will exercise oversight. Final acceptance into full membership is subject to the approval of the Diocese which will exercise oversight.

(3) ASSESSMENTS: At this stage, it is expected that the parish will be willing to enter into the full life of the church. Consequently, the parish will be required to tithe 10% of their General Fund Offerings to the Diocese

(4) REPRESENTATION: At this stage, the parish will be able to send such delegates as the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese to which they belong allows.

(5) CANONS AND CONSTITUTION: Full compliance means that the incoming parish has revised their Constitution and Canons to completely conform with the Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

The process of stages of affiliation described above is intended to be used where it is determined it would benefit both the Diocese and the local parish. It has been our experience that it is best for non-liturgical Parishes to begin at level 1 and for Liturgical or parishes from an Episcopal background to begin at level 2 or 3.

To the Bishop and Standing Committee of the _____ Diocese of the Reformed Episcopal Church

Brethren:

At a Parish meeting of (Church), called in accordance with the by-laws of said Church and held on _____ (date) at _____ (Street) _____ (City, State) a majority of the members present and voting declared their desire that _____ (Church) be received in union with the Reformed Episcopal Church under the name of _____ Reformed Episcopal Church.

At the said meeting, it was further voted by a majority of the members present and voting that this Parish declares itself in agreement with the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Reformed Episcopal Church. We further promise conformity to the Constitution and Canons of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

We do hereby authorize the Chairman and Secretary of this meeting to certify the above actions, in writing, to the Bishop and Standing Committee of the _____ Diocese, of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

Membership on the roll of _____, (Church):

_____ Members present at the above meeting:

_____ Members present and voting in favor of the actions noted above:

We certify the above to be a true record of the Parish Meeting held on _____ .

(Signed) _____ Chairman,

(Signed) _____ Secretary,