

Resolution 2019-02

Title: Revision to Imperilment Canon

RESOLVED, that the 235th Convention of the Diocese of Maryland amend Canon 2-190 "Of Imperiled Parishes or Separate Congregations" to read:

Of At-Risk and Imperiled Congregations

Sec. 1. A Parish or Separate Congregation (herein a "congregation") is considered to be at-risk of imperilment} when any two or more of the following conditions exists:

- a) The congregation does not assemble and elect a full Vestry, as provided in these canons or in the congregation's by-laws;
- b) The congregation is not represented due to absence or ineligibility at any annual Convention of this Diocese;
- c) The congregation does not search for and elect a rector or priest-in-charge after twenty-four (24) months;
- d) The congregation does not comply with the provisions of The Episcopal Church Canon I.7 Of Business Methods in Church Affairs or have engaged in improper or unethical business practices;
- e) Financial reports reveal an invasion of investment funds or other practices that are evidence of existing or probable future financial instability sufficient, in the judgment of the Bishop and Standing Committee, to warrant action under this canon;
- f) The congregation's Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) drops more than fifty percent (50%) in a ten-year period;
- g) The congregation's buildings and grounds expenses exceed fifty percent (50%) of the annual budget for more than one year; excluding cemetery and mandated historical site costs.

Sec. 2 Action under this canon may be initiated by any of the following:

- a) The rector, priest-in-charge, or vestry of any such congregation; or
- b) The Bishop; or
- c) The Standing Committee upon the affirmative vote of a majority of its members.

Sec. 3. The bishop may appoint a team of three (3) persons who are not members of the congregation to investigate and advise as to how to ameliorate the conditions or recommend moving in a different direction, and to give a report to the bishop thereon. The bishop shall have the further right to have the financial records of the congregation audited.

Sec. 4. In the event that the conditions specified shall persist, the Bishop, with the consent of a majority of the members of the Standing Committee, may declare the congregation to be an Imperiled Congregation and may require the application of one or more of the following:

- a) Appointment by the Bishop of five or more adults to govern the affairs of the congregation as the vestry, during the pendency of these conditions.
- b) Designation of the rector of the congregation as vicar, during the pendency of these conditions.

Passed as amended, 5/11/2019

- c) Conveyance of title of all real property to the Diocese, which shall hold the same in trust during the pendency of these conditions.
- d) Such other measures, during the pendency of these conditions, as may be necessary measures to restore health to the congregation.

Sec. 5. It shall be the duty of all parties to labor to restore the congregation to a greater degree of health or discern and implement other alternatives that further the mission of the congregation, setting forth issues to be addressed in an open, honest manner and working toward the resolution of such issues in a climate of respect and charity, and for the greater good of the Church's witness to its Lord.

Sec. 6. When the Bishop, in consultation-with the Standing Committee, determines that restoration or revitalization is no longer viable or feasible, the Bishop, with majority support of the Standing Committee, shall have the authority to close the congregation permanently and take the necessary steps to disperse the assets and provide pastoral provision for transfer of membership of parishioners to other congregations as requested.