

Diocese of Georgia Congregational Covenants

A congregation-priest-diocese expression of mutual support and accountability

These Covenants are made with the Bishop, Priest, and Congregation's Wardens. The Covenant establishes clear mutual support and accountability that enables the congregation to make and achieve intentional goals focused on

- (1) Proclaiming the Gospel,
- (2) Serving the lost and left-out,
- (3) Stewardship of our gifts from God.

The purpose of the Covenant is to state clearly the vision and primary goals for the congregation over a specific period of time. It names and details those goals in the missional areas named above. These will become the special focus of the congregation, priest, and bishop's office.

The Covenant is agreed upon after the congregation has completed a self-assessment of congregational life and ministry with a corresponding process of reflection, discernment and planning, after which the priest and wardens work together to draft a statement of goals focused on Proclaiming the Gospel, Serving the lost and left-out, and being excellent Stewards of our gifts from God. These are then shared with the Bishop who might respond with suggestions or questions for clarification. If part of the statement of goals includes requests for diocesan resources/support, the Bishop will respond specifically to those requests so mutual expectations are clear. A Covenant can go through two or three drafts in its development.

The following provides the general outline that is used in creating a Covenant.

Background

This contains a description of the congregation's self-assessment of its congregational life and ministry and how it arrived at its goals through a process of reflection, discernment and planning. It should also state what external forces are impacting the congregation currently and what internal strengths and weaknesses the congregation has as it embraces its future.

Vision & Goals

This is a statement that lays out a broad vision of the congregation and then lists the primary goals it will pursue in the areas of Proclaiming the Gospel, Serving the lost and left-out, and being excellent Stewards of our gifts from God. These goals should clearly fit the congregation's current reality and community context. The goals should be:

- 1) *Specific*: saying clearly what the congregation will do;
- 2) *Realistic*: reflecting what the congregation believes it can manage;
- 3) *Sacrificial*: demanding something of the congregation;
- 4) *Flexible*: being appropriate to the life experience of the congregation;
- 5) *Responsive*: reflecting the claims of Christ and His Church.

Time Period

The Covenant must have a finite time period. First time Covenants or ones involving struggling congregations or new clergy are best made for one year, with frequent "check-ins", otherwise they should be for three years.

The Congregation will:

This states clearly what the congregation's lay leaders are willing to do over the period of the Covenant in order to accomplish the vision and goals. This might include equipping people for the specific ministries related to the goals, the use of training workshops, and/or hiring a consultant or some outside resource person.

The Priest will:

This states clearly what the Priest will do to provide leadership toward the vision and goals. This might highlight parts of the Priest's job description that reflects special attention toward the named goals.

The Bishop's Office will:

This states clearly what the Bishop's office will do including a statement of support for the vision and goals, a commitment to any special funding to support the goals, an understanding of how often the bishop or his representative will meet with congregational leaders about the Covenant.
Note: Progress toward the goals stated in the Covenant will be the major agenda item for the Vestry meeting at the Bishop's annual visitation.

Revision

Revisions of the Covenant once all parties sign it may be revised only by the mutual agreement of all the parties involved. Revisions sometimes are needed as new opportunities and challenges emerge during the life of the Covenant.