

Convention Primer 2023

**A Guide for Voting Clergy, Elected Members,
Delegates & Alternates**



Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, Punta Gorda
Friday and Saturday, October 6 & 7, 2023

So, You are a Lay Delegate/Alternate...?

Chances are you were elected as a convention delegate at your congregation's annual meeting or you were appointed by your vestry or bishop's committee. To be a delegate, you must satisfy the same qualifications that apply to an "elector" or voting member of a parish including:

- 1) you are at least 16 years of age
- 2) your name is duly enrolled in the register of your congregation
- 3) you are regular in attendance at divine services
- 4) you make stated contributions of record to the general support of the congregation

If your congregation is a parish, you are one of three lay delegates. If your congregation is a mission, you have two delegates. Each congregation also has an alternate delegate in case a delegate is unable to serve. Notes about the role of the alternate will follow in the section below. Clergy members of the convention have separate rules under the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese.

CONVENTION WEBSITE!

All the information about this year's convention, including hotel and restaurant information, registration, agendas, workshops and more can be found on our convention website: www.conventionswfl.org.

The online Convention Registration **deadline is Friday, Sept. 22, 2023.**

What Should Lay Delegates/Alternates Do?

1. Attend a fall deanery convocation meeting.

In order to serve effectively, you need to be adequately prepared to vote on the resolutions and elections to leadership positions that are placed into consideration. This requires that you attend your deanery convocation (locally-convened meetings organized by deaneries). Discussions at these meetings that precede convention are centered on the diocesan budget and other final convention preparations.

2023 Fall Convocation Meetings:

- **Ft. Myers/Naples Deaneries:** Tuesday, Sept. 5, 7 p.m., St. Mary's, Bonita Springs
9801 Bonita Beach Rd SE, Bonita Springs, FL 34135
- **Clearwater/St. Petersburg/Tampa Deaneries:** Wednesday, Sept. 6, 7 p.m., St. Mary's, Tampa
4311 W. San Miguel St., Tampa, FL 33629
- **Manasota/Venice Deaneries:** Thursday, Sept. 7, 7 p.m., Church of the Nativity, Sarasota
5900 N. Lockwood Ridge Rd., Sarasota, FL 34243

2. Attend convention.

Lay delegates to convention are members of convention with the right to seat, voice and vote. Diocesan Canons state that it is the duty of all members of convention to attend every meeting. "Every meeting?" Yes. While very rare, it has come to pass that not all of the business of the convention was acted on in one day, and/or there was some urgent matter that required the undivided attention of the convention. You are a lay delegate at any subsequent meeting of the convention. You serve until you resign or until your successor is chosen.

Lay alternates to convention should be prepared to be of service. In the event a lay delegate is unable to attend convention, an alternate delegate from that congregation shall serve and shall have seat, voice and vote. The process for substituting an alternate for a delegate who has resigned is discussed on pg. 6.

What to Expect

Diocesan convention weekend is much more than a business meeting. In fact, delegates account for only half of the convention attendees. We gather to worship, to reunite with colleagues and friends, to learn and to share with others. Those who attend the Friday sessions (Morning Prayer, Workshops, Ministry Fair, Opening Eucharist, Evening Reception) may not want to attend the Saturday business meeting. Some delegates may not be able to attend anything *but* the Saturday business meeting. Others like to come and go and visit the Ministry Fair, which displays the extensive work that goes on around the diocese and is a wonderful source of ideas and resources.

How to Officially Register for Convention

Registration for this year's Diocesan Convention is being conducted online only. The registration link is available in our BRIDGES weekly email, and also on our special convention site: www.conventionswfl.org. Please note that if you are purchasing meals with your registration, you are not officially registered until payment is received.

For help with online registration, call (941) 556-0315 and ask for Beth Gould, or email her at bgould@episcopalswfl.org. The final convention registration deadline is Friday, September 22. No registrations will be accepted after the deadline and there is no provision for walk-in registrations at convention.

How to Prepare for Convention

Your congregation chose **you** to do the business of the Diocese of Southwest Florida at convention. This "business" includes:

- Voting on the budget
- Voting on resolutions
- Electing candidates to various positions

In order to be an effective delegate, you will need to do some homework BEFORE you get to convention. All the information you will need will be made available to you well in advance. Let's look at some of the specific items you will need to learn about:

The 2024 Diocesan Budget

The deanery convocations are the best place to have your budget questions answered and seek clarity on anything you don't understand. On the floor of convention at the business meeting, with lots of items on the agenda, it is difficult to ask or answer technical questions.

- Copies of the diocesan budget will be presented and reviewed at all of the fall deanery convocations (see pg.1) by Chief Financial Officer Mike Booher.
- The CFO will be available to you after the deanery convocations if you have additional budget questions.

The Resolutions

Throughout the year, resolutions are submitted seeking approval of the members of convention on a variety of topics. In the past, resolutions have included support for farm workers in Immokalee, revising or amending diocesan Canons, making changes in our financial procedures and granting voting rights to deacons and voting rights to every member of the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, Disciplinary Committee and Deputies and Alternate Deputies of General Convention.

- The text of the proposed resolutions and explanations of what they would will be made available on the diocesan convention website www.conventionswfl.org.
- Read the resolutions and the explanations, think about them, and ask questions, that way, when you get to convention you will be ready to vote!

Elections

- Bios, photos, and statements of the candidates who have been nominated for election for Diocesan committees such as the Ecclesiastical Disciplinary Board, Diocesan Council, the Standing Committee, among others, are available on the convention website, and in The Bridges Newsletter, as are the descriptions of what each job involves.
- Take time to study the candidates and their bios and statements *before* the Saturday business meeting and give prayerful consideration to determining whom you will choose for these leadership roles. These are some of the people who will be doing the work of the diocese for years to come!
- Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor of convention. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide biographical information for floor nominees because voting takes place immediately after nominations close.

Obtaining Your Credentials For Convention

Because of the varied nature of Friday and Saturday activities, you will have two different sets of credentials.

- You will pick up your nametag and other materials on Friday at the conference center for Friday's activities. Check-in begins at 8:00 a.m.
- You will pick up *new* credentials, your nametag, and any other pertinent materials on Saturday morning. Check-in is at 8:00 a.m.

You *cannot* use your Friday credentials for the Saturday business meeting. No credentials will be provided in advance.

Friday, October 6, 2023

Check-in begins at 8 a.m.

- Locate the check-in tables on the concourse of the conference center.
- Check-in tables for Friday will be alphabetically organized by last name from A – Z. There will be no separate designations for clergy, lay delegate/alternate or guests/visitors.
- Everyone will be listed by individual last name, not by congregation or city. You will be given your name tag, your ticket for lunch (if this has been pre-ordered), and 2 drink tickets for the evening reception. Unfortunately, no additional lunch tickets will be available to purchase at convention. Once you have picked up your materials, you will be invited to help yourself to the continental breakfast, visit the Ministry Fair tables, locate your first workshop room and attend Morning Prayer.

Friday Workshops

On Friday, a full day of workshops dedicated to continuing education on a wide variety of interesting topics, is open to anyone, convention delegates/alternates, clergy, guests and visitors. The workshops provide an opportunity to learn new skills and find resources that can be taken back to your congregation. Some people from the same congregation choose to spread themselves out among the workshops so they can share cover as much of the available information as possible! To make sure we make adequate provisions for seating and handout material, workshop selections will be made while registering for convention. Review the workshop descriptions ahead of time on the convention website.

The Ministry Fair

Our Ministry Fair, on the main concourse, shows off the breadth and depth of ministry in our diocese with displays from congregations, ministry groups, national organizations and businesses that specialize in church products and services. There are shopping opportunities here, as well as opportunities to contribute to Episcopal charitable causes, and there are always surprises. Don't forget to visit our very popular Altar Guild booth, where congregations offer, at no charge, vestments and equipment they no longer need. The Ministry Fair opens at 8:00 a.m. on Friday and closes after lunch on Saturday.

Worship in Hibiscus Hall

Our time at convention gives us a rare opportunity, to worship as ONE Diocese. Join your fellow Episcopalians for:

- Morning Prayer: Friday and Saturday at 9 a.m.
- Opening Eucharist: Friday at 5:00 p.m.

Evening Reception

Immediately following the Friday Opening Eucharist (approximately 6:30 p.m.) an evening reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres will be offered. Enjoy this time to fellowship with others in your diocese. Should you want to venture out for dinner Friday evening, we have posted a list of Punta Gorda restaurants on our convention website for your convenience.

Make sure to have an electronic device such as a smart phone or tablet with you for Saturday's business meeting. Voting is being conducted on an online platform only. No paper ballots will be available.

Saturday, October 7, 2023

Check-in begins at 8:00 a.m.

The Saturday annual business meeting of the diocese requires a separate check-in process from Friday. We do this to differentiate “members of convention” (lay and clergy voting delegates) from all other attendees.

- Locate the check-in table in the concourse of the conference center that corresponds to your standing as an attendee. The choices will be clergy/clergy spouse, lay delegate, lay alternate/guests/visitors. Each category will be sub-sectioned alphabetically (A-J, K-N, and so on) by last name.
- Make certain you are at the correct table category and in the correct line alphabetically. You will be given your nametag, your lunch tickets for Saturday, and all the information you need for the day. No additional lunch tickets will be sold or available at convention.
- Once you are officially checked-in, proceed to the floor of convention in Hibiscus Hall and locate your designated seating area/deanery. Convention Pages will be assigned to each deanery and can help you find your table.
- You are invited to enjoy a continental breakfast, visit the Ministry Fair, and participate in Morning Prayer at 9 a.m before joining the business session which begins at 9:30 a.m.

Credentials and Seating at the Business Meeting

At the business meeting, seating is designated as follows:

- Voting members of convention sit at designated tables at the front of the hall labeled by deanery and congregation.
- Retired clergy, who retain seat and voice, sit at tables specifically designated for them. They do not sit with their former or current congregations.
- Tables marked “Special Guests” are set aside for members of Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, Finance Committee, Endowment Board, Chancellor and Vice Chancellors, Chaplains to retired clergy and families, Honorary Members of Convention, Visiting Bishops and other designated Special Guests.
- All others are seated in the designated guest gallery. These include, but are not limited to, lay alternates; non-canonically resident clergy; clergy spouses; and anyone else wishing to attend this annual business meeting of the Diocese of Southwest Florida.

The Saturday check-in process and seating organization help to maintain the integrity of the voting system, ensuring that everyone who is on the floor of convention is authorized to be there. We are also able to obtain an accurate count of the delegates and the congregations represented in order to determine a quorum. Once we determine a quorum, we can establish the number of votes required to conduct the business of convention, such as approving resolutions and the budget, electing candidates and dealing with other business that may be brought to the floor.

Note for Clergy Members of Convention:

Diocesan Canons list six (6) separate distinctions for clergy members of convention. The canon that applies to you will be noted on your nametag. The preliminary roster was posted online on July 28th, 2023 and emailed on July 31st, 2023 to provide for adequate time for review and change requests. We are unable to make changes Convention Weekend.

Lay Member Change from Alternate to Delegate

- **In Advance:** Delegates who know in advance of convention weekend that they will be unable to attend may arrange to have their congregation's alternate changed to full delegate status. To make the change, a "change of delegate form" MUST be filled out. The form link may be found on the convention page of the website or go directly to the form: <https://tinyurl.com/SWFLayDelegateCorrection>.
- **Day Of:** For delegate changes on the day of convention (Saturday only), alternates and their rector, vicar, priest-in-charge or interim must visit the credentials room located behind the registration tables. The clergy member must sign the change form. If no clergy member from the congregation is present, a clergy member of the bishop's staff will verify and sign the change form. At that point the alternate's nametag will be updated and the alternate will receive a voter packet and will be seated at the congregation's table on the floor of convention. Delegate changes are only permitted prior to the presentation of the final credentials report (usually this comes about at approximately 10 a.m. on Saturday). After that time no changes in delegate/delegation status may be made.

Business Session/Voting

As you enter Hibiscus Hall, Convention Pages will be on hand to direct you to your assigned seating area. We do this to ensure that only those who are entitled to vote are seated on the voting floor of convention. This is how we maintain the integrity of the vote, which you, the delegates/clergy have told us is critically important to you.

Once the business meeting has begun, if you wish to speak at an appropriate time, please approach one of the two microphones on the convention floor and wait to be recognized by the chair. First state your name and congregation, and then make your comments, which are limited to three minutes. Then return to your seat. Convention works through the agenda, with scheduled breaks and a lunch period.

VPOLL Electronic Voting

This year we are using an electronic voting system. You will need to bring an electronic device such as a smartphone, tablet, or computer with you to the Saturday business meeting. A Login ID number will be provided at check-in on Saturday morning; ID numbers will not be given out early. Everything you need to know about how to vote electronically will be printed on your name tag. You can sign on as soon as you have registered - that way you will be ready when the voting begins. Please note, you **must** be present on the convention floor to vote. Remote voting will not be allowed.

Once you have checked in for the business meeting, log on to www.vpoll.mobi and enter the access code SWFL55. Enter the **ID number** found on your name tag and your last name. Select **Polling Session 55 Convention** and click **SUBMIT**. Convention Pages will be on hand if you need help getting into the online platform.

You are now ready to vote!