



## The Episcopal Diocese *of* Southwest Florida

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July 1, 2025

Dear Lay and Clergy Members of Convention,

I am looking forward to gathering with you in Punta Gorda again this year on October 10-11 for our 57th Annual Diocesan Convention. Thank you for offering yourself for this important work and for your steadfast commitment to our common life and shared mission. We are one body with many members. We offer a variety of gifts, yet we are bound together by one Spirit. Together we are *One Diocese* with *One Future* in Jesus Christ. This year's convention will include some important changes that will allow us to spend more time focusing on mission and engaging in meaningful conversation about our strategic planning for the future.

### **Friday Schedule: *Focused on Mission***

The events on Friday will begin one hour later than in previous years, which will allow additional travel time for those driving longer distances. Registration will open at 9:00 am and the first session will begin at 10:00 am. I would like to emphasize that Friday's events are open to *everyone*, not just voting members. I encourage you to invite members of your congregation to attend these dynamic workshops and fellowship opportunities.

Our day together on Friday will begin with an opening presentation and conversation with me regarding the state of the diocese and our goals for the future. This opening plenary session will include important updates on our strategic plan and the adaptive challenges we are facing as a diocese. Friday afternoon will include a series of workshops focused on our four strategic pathways: Forming Disciples, Developing Leaders, Embracing Differences, and Transforming Communities. Our day will end with Evensong, followed by a time of fun and fellowship overlooking the beautiful Peace River.

### **Saturday Schedule: *Rooted in Oneness***

On Saturday morning, we will begin with Holy Eucharist. Moving the celebration of Holy Eucharist to Saturday morning will ensure greater participation and accessibility. Moreover, I believe it is vitally important that we ground our work of governance in the *oneness* that is made manifest when we gather to partake of the *one bread* and *one cup*. The remainder of our time together on Saturday will include the usual elements of our convention business meetings.

**Diocesan Elections: *Opportunities to Serve***

Every year, we elect new members of our various committees and commissions, which assist in the oversight and governance of our diocese. In addition to our usual annual elections, this is also a year when we will be choosing deputies to serve at the next General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 2027. I would like to encourage you to prayerfully consider offering yourself to be nominated for one of these important leadership roles in the life of our diocese. In this time of renewed vision and strategic engagement, we need to draw upon the full variety of gifts that God has entrusted to our diocesan community.

**Deanery Convocations: *Preparing for Convention***

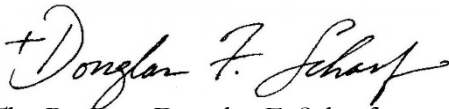
One month prior to the Convention, we hold our convocation meetings. *These meetings are mandatory for voting members of convention.* You will learn about the elections, resolutions, and budget information that you will be voting on at Convention. This is an extremely important part of your responsibility as a voting member and is also a great opportunity for fellowship with other lay and clergy delegates. Information regarding dates and locations of each convocation meeting is included with this letter.

As our 57th Diocesan Convention draws near, I ask that you be diligent in praying for the whole diocese, our leaders, and all who are seeking to faithfully follow Jesus in our congregations and local communities. Also, please regularly visit our diocesan convention website for updates and additional information.

<http://www.conventionswfl.org>

I am looking forward to being with you. May God bless you now and always!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas F. Scharf". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross-like mark at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Douglas F. Scharf  
*Sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Southwest Florida*