

What's Diocesan Council?

The Diocese of North Carolina meets in Convention usually one time each year, currently November. Although special conventions can be called, such as for an election to the episcopate, the Diocese has chosen to create a standing body called Diocesan Council to undertake administration of the Diocese between annual conventions. Most dioceses of the Episcopal Church have a similar body, although its name, composition and specific duties may vary from one diocese to another.

Consider a parish in our Diocese: it has an annual meeting to elect a vestry, and it calls a rector who shares leadership of the parish with the vestry. Although the following analogy is not entirely correct, it could be said that Diocesan Council is the vestry of the Diocese; elected by the annual Convention, it works with the bishops to provide leadership from one November to the next.

In this regard, Diocesan Council has broad authority under the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese with respect to the programs, employees, resources and mission and ministry budget of the Diocese. Supervision of employees of the Diocese remains with the bishop, but Diocesan Council approves the creation of positions, the writing of job descriptions and so on.

In a typical meeting of Diocesan Council, the Bishops report on recent activities; actions are reviewed against the annual priorities of the Diocese; year-to-date revenues and expenses of the Diocese are compared to the mission and ministry budget; changes to the budget are sometimes considered in light of new developments; and various items are brought forward for Council's consideration and adoption.

A major task of Diocesan Council is to prepare and to propose a mission and ministry budget for the following year. A tentative budget is adopted in September and presented to the Diocese for feedback in October. Diocesan Council then perfects a proposed budget for consideration by Convention in November.

Diocesan Council is organized into five departments, which are essentially subcommittees augmented by the bishop's appointments of other clergy and lay persons in the Diocese. Each department oversees the activity of one or more chartered committees of the Diocese.

The role of Diocesan Council is complementary to the roles of the Standing Committee, Trustees and officers of the Diocese.

The bishop diocesan is the chairperson of Diocesan Council, and the secretary of Convention is the secretary of Diocesan Council. Typically the Diocesan Council meets 10 times per year. Meeting sites are rotated across the Diocese. Diocesan Council is composed of six clergy of the Diocese and nine members of the laity. The term of office is three years. Service on Diocesan Council is facilitated by broad exposure in parish affairs, and some exposure to diocesan affairs is helpful. Convention, however, ultimately decides who serves.