



Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia
February 25, 2023

2023 CONSTITUTIONAL RESOLUTION CON-1

Second Reading

Submitted by The Executive Board and the Committee on Constitution and Canons

RESOLVED, That the 131st Council of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia amend Article V of the Constitution to read in the form and language as herein proposed:

ARTICLE V: QUORUM

~~_____1. One~~ 1. Except as provided in Section 2 of this Article regarding the election of a Bishop, Bishop Coadjutor, or Bishop Suffragan, one half of the total number of Clergy entitled to membership in Council and residing within the geographical boundaries of the Diocese and not listed as retired with the Church Pension Fund and Lay Delegates from at least one half of the total number of Parishes and Organized Missions shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, but a smaller number may adjourn to a specific date.

~~_____2.~~ 2. For an election of a Bishop, Bishop Coadjutor, or Bishop Suffragan, two-thirds of the Clergy entitled to membership in the Council or a special Council and residing within the geographical boundaries of the Diocese and not listed as retired with the Church Pension Fund, and Lay Delegates from at least two-thirds of the total number of Parishes and Organized Missions, shall constitute a quorum for the election, but a smaller number may adjourn to a specific date.

~~_____3.~~ 3. In the determination of a quorum each Parish and each Mission shall be considered as a single unit regardless of the number of worship locations located within each Parish or Mission.

RATIONALE:

The Constitutional resolutions for Articles V and VII seek to change what constitutes a quorum for a Bishop's election, directed primarily at achieving a clergy quorum.

Presently, Article V states that 1/2 of **active** clergy constitute a quorum at Annual or any special Council. But, Article VII states that 2/3 of **all (active and retired)** clergy is required for a quorum at a council for election of a Bishop.

At the most recent Bishop election at Dinwiddie in September 2019, while the Diocese easily achieved a quorum (2/3) of lay delegates from parishes and organized missions, because of the increasing number of retired clergy, we were unable to obtain a quorum of 2/3 of **all (active and retired) clergy**. When a Bishop election quorum does not exist, then any election requires a 2/3 majority (super majority) of each Order, lay and clergy. This is exactly what occurred at Dinwiddie in September 2019. In the future, with an increasing number of clergy retirements, the super majority requirement could result in an increasing number of ballots and perhaps days for a Bishop election.

The proposed changes focus on determining a quorum based only upon the **active** clergy in the Diocese, a quorum requirement of 2/3 of active clergy in the Diocese. The lay delegate quorum requirement for a Bishop election remains at two-thirds.

The proposed amendments to Articles V and VII do not make an Episcopal election easier. But they do allow voting to follow what most dioceses now have for an Episcopal election; once a quorum is established, an election based upon a concurrent majority in each order. The proposed changes do not in any way disenfranchise any clergy who desire to participate in an Episcopal election.

The amendments recognize that people now live differently and longer than 50-80 years ago. The changes are directed at the ability to hold an orderly Episcopal election. They will not necessarily avoid the supermajority requirement, but will help. Under any circumstance, we have faith that the Holy Spirit will guide the election.