



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA

FAQ

Frequently asked questions and answers regarding the life and ministry of our diocese. We invite you to taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

WHO TO CONTACT

If you have more questions after reading this FAQ document, or you would like to have a conversation about where to go from here, please contact our Missioner for Returning Congregations, the Rev. William Coyne, at [843-614-0679](tel:843-614-0679) or wcoyne@episcopalchurchsc.org.

We also invite you to read “Our Future Work Together,” a message about reconciliation from our Missioner for Returning Congregations.

ABOUT THE PEOPLE

I am a member of a church that disaffiliated. What do I have to do to return to The Episcopal Church? Do I face any kind of penalty, or do I have to go through some process?

Every person who has been baptized and/or confirmed in The Episcopal Church is an Episcopalian. Transferring your membership to another denomination is the only way that it can be changed. Parishioners who have been attending other churches are still Episcopalians, as long as they want to be. There is no penalty in returning, and no formal process or action is required. We mean it when we say “The Episcopal Church welcomes you.”

Will parishioners be forced to leave their churches?

No. The Episcopal Church and The Episcopal Church in South Carolina (TECSC) are committed to helping congregations continue to worship and serve God in their church homes, in much the same way they have done since before the split. The main changes for a returning parish are the following: (1) congregations and liturgies would be led by clergy who are in good standing with The Episcopal Church, and (2) parish vestries and bylaws would function in accordance with Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church again, as they did before the split. The parishes affected by the split are like families and are important parts of the communities they serve. TECSC leadership is committed to working with each congregation to help it continue and thrive.

What will happen to the disaffiliated clergy of the congregations?

When the split occurred, all clergy in the diocese were offered an opportunity to remain in The Episcopal Church. Those who chose to leave the ordained ministry of The Episcopal Church in 2013 are no longer able to serve in Episcopal churches. However, TECSC worked to ensure that there would be a path for clergy to be reconciled with and return to the Church, if that is their desire, and to include a clear process of discernment for the good care of all. Since 2013, three priests have been welcomed back through this process. For clergy who wish to explore this path, the first step is to contact Bishop Skip Adams in the Diocesan Office.

Will my church have a priest after the transition?

Yes. TECSC is working with many Episcopal priests (and even some bishops) who want to help churches through this transition time. Our Missioner for Returning Congregations, the Rev. William Coyne, and the diocesan transition team will work with the Episcopal leadership in each parish to ensure they have the clergy they need, and so Sunday services can continue.

Some of our members plan to leave the parish and start a new church elsewhere. How should we respond?

Jesus prayed for his Church in his high priestly prayer found in John 17:11, “Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.” We hope you will join your prayers with ours for the unity of the Church in this diocese. Continue to pray for all the people who have chosen to leave the church. Work to maintain an open door for conversations and relationships that, in time, can provide a path for reconciliation. Finally, continue to support the health and vitality of your own Episcopal parish, so it can carry on as a witness to our Lord long after the memories of this division have faded.

ABOUT THE PROPERTY

Who owns the property of my parish?

Every parish owns its own property and holds it “in trust” for the use of the Church. The South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that 29 disaffiliated properties are held in trust for the diocese (TECSC) and for The Episcopal Church. The trustees are the vestries of the parishes, and they are responsible for ensuring that the property is used for the benefit of The Episcopal Church. In June 2018, the US Supreme Court declined to review that decision, so the ruling of the state Supreme Court on this matter is final.

Will my church be sold?

No church property can be sold without the consent of the duly elected Episcopal vestry, the Standing Committee of the diocese, and the Bishop. TECSC recognizes the important role these buildings play in the history and life of the communities they serve, our state, and our diocese. We are committed to working with the faithful and committed people of each parish to help them maintain strong congregations that can sustain their property and their ministry.

Can the disaffiliated groups that are now aligned with ACNA buy or lease the properties from TECSC?

No. Our focus is on working with those who want to remain in their churches and worship as Episcopalians. TECSC is responsible for being good stewards of all the property and assets of our diocese, seeing that they are used for the mission of the church. We are committed to helping each congregation move through the transition process in ways that will help them grow and flourish.

What will happen to Camp St. Christopher?

Camp St. Christopher is one of the diocesan properties belonging to TECSC under the South Carolina Supreme Court decision. The importance of this beloved camp and conference center is much larger than our recent divisions. Our prayer is that it will continue to bless generations to come and be a focal point for unity and healing in our diocese. When the court decision is implemented, TECSC has a transition plan ready, so St. Christopher can continue operating with minimal or no disruption. All who are seeking a deeper relationship with God are welcome to the Camp.

ABOUT THE WIDER CHURCH

What is The Episcopal Church in South Carolina like today?

TECSC has 31 congregations and about 7,000 members, in addition to those who are rejoining the diocese in parishes affected by the split. Under Bishop Skip Adams, we have more than 90 priests and 13 deacons who are either canonically resident, or licensed to serve, in our diocese. Our parishes and missions range from very large to very small and are located throughout the eastern/coastal half of South Carolina. 22 congregations are worshipping in the buildings they were using before the schism. Another 9 congregations were formed after the split and are worshipping in spaces they have bought, leased, or borrowed. You can find a list and a map at episcopalchurchsc.org.

Being an Anglican is important to me. What is the relationship between TECSC and the Anglican Communion?

The Anglican Communion consists of dioceses and provinces around the world that are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Episcopal Church is the only recognized province of the Anglican Communion in the United States, and churches in TECSC are all part of this Communion. There are church groups outside the Communion that use “Anglican” in their name, but they are not a recognized part of the Anglican Communion.

Who will be making decisions about what happens in my church?

The decisions of dioceses and parishes are local. The clergy and vestries of churches make decisions in consultation with the Bishop and with the leadership of the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council and Diocesan Trustees, following the canons and constitution of The Episcopal Church. Episcopalians in eastern South Carolina elect their diocesan representatives (deputies) to General Convention every three years to vote on matters affecting the whole church. The 79th General Convention was held July 5-13, 2018 in Austin, Texas, and the 80th will be in Baltimore in 2021.

ABOUT THEOLOGY AND BELIEFS

I have heard The Episcopal Church does not follow certain core beliefs of Christianity. How do I get an accurate picture of what The Episcopal Church believes?

There are many ways to explore the beliefs of The Episcopal Church, but a good summary can be found in The Book of Common Prayer, which is used in worship in our TECSC congregations.

Start with the historic credal statements of the Church, known as The Apostles’ Creed and Nicene Creed, proclaimed regularly in our worship. Along with the Creeds, The Baptismal Covenant grounds us in the manner in which we affirm Christ as Lord and seek to follow him as faithful disciples. In that context, The Episcopal Church is part of the greater Anglican tradition that respects and honors many different ways of living out the faith within the unity of the Church as the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A good resource for specific topics can be found here: episcopalchurch.org/what-we-believe.

We believe the best way to get an accurate picture is to visit one of the Episcopal churches in TECSC. You will find the Prayer Book used, the Scriptures read, the hymns sung, the Creeds prayed and proclaimed, and the Gospel preached – every Sunday.

How do Episcopal churches worship?

A typical Sunday service in our diocese will be deeply familiar to all Anglicans and Episcopalians: Holy Eucharist from the Book of Common Prayer (1979, Rite I or Rite II). The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed, and the Nicene Creed (or Apostles’ Creed) is said. We sing hymns from The Hymnal 1982 and other familiar sources such as “Lift Every Voice and Sing”. We read the same Scripture readings in the lectionary shared by Anglicans and other Christian denominations around the world.

Again, the best way to know for yourself is to “taste and see” by visiting an Episcopal church. Find one here. You can also...

- Watch online at Grace Church Cathedral’s [YouTube](#) channel, where you’ll find weekly services both livestreamed and recorded.
- [Listen to audio](#) of Sunday services at Holy Cross Faith Memorial, Pawleys Island
- [Visit this link](#) to see a sampling of the printed bulletins (aka service leaflets, or orders of service) from Episcopal churches in your area.

What do you believe about the Bible?

We believe “the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation.” Our understanding is in accordance with the words of our Lord Jesus who said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and Prophets.”

- Matthew 22:37-40

The Episcopal Church permits same-sex couples to marry. Will my individual beliefs about human sexuality be respected if my parish returns to The Episcopal Church?

In keeping with the living out of our Lord's two great commandments, our Baptismal promise is to "respect the dignity of every human being." We believe we are all part of the Body of Christ, and that unity transcends our individual differences of opinion on the controversial issues of our day. Same-sex marriage is included in the life of The Episcopal Church. No clergy person is required to officiate any marriage ceremony that goes against her or his beliefs.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

I'd like to help my parish stay together as an Episcopal church. What should I do?

Call or email Bishop Skip Adams ([843-259-2016](tel:843-259-2016) or bpadams@episcopalchurchsc.org) or our Missioner for Returning Congregations, the Rev. William Coyne ([843-614-0679](tel:843-614-0679), wcoyne@episcopalchurchsc.org). They will be glad to talk with you about options and next steps.

How do I keep up-to-date with what's going on?

Subscribe to our email newsletter [HERE](#) to receive weekly news, as well as updates when major news occurs. Visit our website, episcopalchurchsc.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).