PROPOSITION 2026-P02

Amend Title VII, Canon 3 as follows:

1. Amend Title VII, Canon 3 Section II to read as follows:

> **SECTION II. Procedure for the Standing Committee.** Such application shall be referred by the Ecclesiastical Authority, being a Bishop, to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall consider the application and, by a majority vote, approve or disapprove the application for admission into Union. The Standing Committee shall report its decision, together with the reasons therefor, to the Bishop with all convenient speed. No application shall proceed to the Convention unless it has received the approval of the Standing Committee. If the See be vacant, the Standing Committee shall report its decision and the reasons therefor to the Convention next following such application, together with the opinion of the Chancellor thereon.

2. Amend Title VII, Canon 3**,** Section III to read as follows:

> **SECTION III. Procedure of the Bishop.** After receipt of the approval of the Standing Committee, the Ecclesiastical Authority, being a Bishop, shall, after taking the opinion of the Chancellor, report the Bishop's own opinion and recommendation to the Convention next following.

3. Amend Title VII Canon 3 to add a new Section IV to read as follows:

"The approval of the Standing Committee shall constitute a prerequisite for an application to proceed to Convention but shall not itself constitute admission into Union."

4. Amend Title VII Canon 3 to renumber existing Sections IV, V and VI as Sections V, VI and VII, respectively.

Explanation

This amendment is intended to strengthen the system of shared governance and checks and balances within the Diocese. Admission of a church or parish into Union is not a routine administrative action. It creates a lasting relationship and carries significant canonical, pastoral, financial, property, and institutional responsibilities for both the congregation and the Diocese. A decision of that magnitude should involve the meaningful participation and consent of the several bodies entrusted with diocesan governance.

Under the present Canon, the Standing Committee is required to consider an application, but its formal role is limited to offering its opinion and recommendation to the Bishop. In the past, there have been occasions when the Bishop has not heeded the advice of the Standing Committee. While the current Canon permits that, it also demonstrates the limitation of a process in which the Standing Committee is required to conduct meaningful review but its conclusions remain entirely advisory.

The proposed amendment gives that review appropriate canonical weight. The Standing Committee would be required to approve or disapprove an application and provide the reasons for its decision. If it approves the application, the Bishop would then undertake the Bishop's own review, including consultation with the Chancellor, and make an independent recommendation to Convention. Convention would continue to make the final decision.

The amendment therefore does not substitute the judgment of the Standing Committee for that of the Bishop or Convention. Instead, it creates a genuine system of checks and balances: the Standing Committee must approve, the Bishop must independently consider and report, and Convention must ultimately decide. No one person or body controls the entire process. That structure better reflects the shared polity of the Diocese and provides an important safeguard when making a decision that affects the whole diocesan community.

Submitted by: The Rev. Keith Voets, The Very Rev. Hickman Alexandre, The Very Rev. Dr. Walter Hillebrand, The Rev. Lilo Carr Rivera, The Rev. Rudolph Anthony, The Rev. Canon Karen Davis-Lawson, The Rev Jimmie Sue Deppe, The Very Rev. Steve Foster, The Rev. Dr. Allen Robinson, The Rev. Lawrence Womack