

Ecclesiastical Discipline

Canons of The Episcopal Church: Title IV

What is Title IV?

Title IV is the section of the Canons of the General Convention that relates to ecclesiastical discipline. As stated in Title IV, Canon 1, “By virtue of Baptism, all members of the Church are called to holiness of life and accountability to one another. The Church and each Diocese shall support their members in their life in Christ and seek to resolve conflicts by promoting healing, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, justice, amendment of life and reconciliation among all involved or affected. This Title applies to Members of the Clergy, who have by their vows at ordination accepted additional responsibilities and accountabilities for doctrine, discipline, worship and obedience.”

How is clergy misconduct defined?

Canon 3: Of Accountability

Sec. 1. A Member of the Clergy shall be subject to proceedings under this Title for:

- (a) knowingly violating or attempting to violate, directly or through the acts of another person, the Constitution or Canons of the Church or of any Diocese;
- (b) failing without good cause to cooperate with any investigation or proceeding conducted under authority of this Title; or
- (c) intentionally and maliciously bringing a false accusation or knowingly providing false testimony or false evidence in any investigation or proceeding under this Title.

Sec. 2. A Member of the Clergy shall be accountable for any breach of the Standards of Conduct set forth in Canon IV.4.

Sec. 3. In order for any conduct or condition to be the subject of the provisions of this Title, the Offense complained of must violate applicable provisions of Canon IV.3 or IV.4 and must be material and substantial or of clear and weighty importance to the ministry of the Church.

Canon 4: Of Standards of Conduct

Sec. 1. In exercising his or her ministry, a Member of the Clergy shall:

- (a) respect and preserve confidences of others except that pastoral, legal or moral obligations of ministry may require disclosure of those confidences other than Privileged Communications;
- (b) conform to the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer;
- (c) abide by the promises and vows made when ordained;
- (d) abide by the requirements of any applicable Accord or Order, or any applicable Pastoral Direction, restriction on ministry, or placement on Administrative Leave issued under Canon IV.
- (e) safeguard the property and funds of the Church and Community;

- (f) report to the Intake Officer all matters which may constitute an Offense as defined in Canon IV.2 meeting the standards of Canon IV.3.3, except for matters disclosed to the Member of Clergy as confessor within the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent;
- (g) exercise his or her ministry in accordance with applicable provisions of the Constitution and Canons of the Church and of the Diocese, ecclesiastical licensure or commission and Community rule or bylaws;
- (h) refrain from:
 - (1) any act of Sexual Misconduct; [Defined in Canon IV.2 as “(a) Sexual Abuse or (b) Sexual Behavior at the request of, acquiesced to or by a Member of the Clergy with an employee, volunteer, student, or counselee of that Member of the Clergy or in the same congregation as the Member of the Clergy, or a person with whom the Member of the Clergy has a Pastoral Relationship.”]
 - (2) holding and teaching publicly or privately, and advisedly, any Doctrine contrary to that held by the Church;
 - (3) engaging in any secular employment, calling or business without the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident;
 - (4) being absent from the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident, except as provided in Canon III.9.3(e) for more than two years without the consent of the Bishop Diocesan;
 - (5) any criminal act that reflects adversely on the Member of the Clergy's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a minister of the Church;
 - (6) conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation; or
 - (7) habitual neglect of the exercise of the ministerial office without cause; or habitual neglect of public worship, and of the Holy Communion, according to the order and use of the Church; and
 - (8) any Conduct Unbecoming a Member of the Clergy. [Defined in Canon IV.2 as “any disorder or neglect that prejudices the reputation, good order and discipline of the Church, or any conduct of a nature to bring material discredit upon the Church or the Holy Orders conferred by the Church.”]

How does one file a complaint?

Complaints alleging clergy misconduct should be made to the Intake Officer. They may be made in any form (phone call, email, letter, etc.).

Contact the Intake Officer, the Rev. Canon Jason Alexander, in the bishop's office at 501-372-2168 or jalexander@episcopalarkansas.org. The Title IV canons are available for download as part of the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention: <https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/15057>.