



MEMORANDUM

TO: 2026 ACNA Provincial Council and Assembly Delegates
FROM: The Rev. Cn. Andrew M. Rowell, Esq.
Chair of the Governance Task Force and
Director of Anglican Governance Ministries, American Anglican Council
RE: Draft of Succession Canons for your review
DATE: May 14, 2026

The Governance Task Force (GTF) of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) presents for your prayerful study these urgently needed succession canons for a brief but crucial period of review and comment.

We ask you to read through these canons and provide the GTF feedback from today, May 14, until May 28, 2026, by email to arowell@christchurchanglican.net. The GTF will carefully consider all comments received and release a final version of these canons on or about June 3, 2026. We will present that final version for a vote at Provincial Council 2026 and, if passed, for ratification at Provincial Assembly 2026.

We acknowledge that this is a greatly foreshortened review period, much different than the usual roughly year-long review canonical changes ordinarily undergo. However, the ACNA finds itself in a moment of leadership transition for which our canons are currently inadequate.

When Archbishop Steve Wood took a voluntary leave of absence (prior to his later inhibition) and our Dean of the Province Bp. Ray Sutton assumed his duties, our canons did not provide for the naming of a new “second chair” for provincial leadership. Subsequently, when Bp. Sutton stepped down as Dean on November 15, 2026, he appointed, on that same day, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of the Living Word, Julian Dobbs, as his replacement. The ACNA College of Bishops unanimously affirmed that decision that same day. On January 16, 2026, the Executive Committee passed a resolution recognizing Bp. Julian Dobbs as Interim Ecclesiastical Authority. While we are thankful for Bp. Dobbs’ able leadership over these last months, we must also acknowledge that our canons need urgent amendment to ratify these actions taken to shore up provincial leadership. Moreover, it is incumbent on us to provide for potential transfers of power in the future.

Another note about this foreshortened review period. We have incorporated in Title V, Canon 1.5 a “sunset provision.” This means that, given how short a time period we are providing for a review of these needed canons, we have set them to expire at Provincial Council 2027 (without the need for further action by Provincial Assembly) unless made permanent by Provincial Council 2027. Accordingly, we will provide a full-year of review and amendment to these canons in 2027 and, if we do not get them just right in the short time between now and Provincial Council, they will “sunset” and we can work in a less time-pressured way on these canons on proper transfer of ecclesiastical authority.

Here is a summary of these proposed amendments:

First, **Title I, Canon 1, Section 5** establishes the structure of church leadership. The Archbishop serves as the presiding officer over both the Church and the Council. Supporting officers — including a Deputy Chair, chancellor, secretary, and treasurer — are appointed by the Council. We have now provided in this amendment that the Archbishop will appoint, in consultation with the College, not just a Dean of the Province, but now also an Assistant Dean.

A transitional provision ratifies all proper canonical actions taken by the current Dean (the Bishop of the Diocese of the Living Word) since his appointment on November 15, 2025.

Title I, Canon 3, Section 3, as amended by these proposals, more adequately addresses situations where the Archbishop may be unable to fulfill his duties. If the Executive Committee has serious concerns about the Archbishop's physical or mental capacity, they can require a medical evaluation by two physicians or psychologists. Following that evaluation, a two-thirds majority of the Executive Committee may require the Archbishop to resign or take medical leave, with the Archbishop retaining the right to appeal to the Provincial Tribunal within 30 days. The Dean of the Province, and, if needed, the Assistant Dean, plays a central role throughout, providing pastoral oversight and, if necessary, initiating disciplinary proceedings.

Title I, Canon 3, Section 4, as amended by these proposals, provides much clearer guidance for the temporary transfer of authority when the Archbishop is unable to act. If the Archbishop is unable to serve for any reason, the Dean of the Province becomes Interim Ecclesiastical Authority, followed by the Assistant Dean, with the College of Bishops empowered to act if all the three of them fail to serve. The Interim Ecclesiastical Authority holds all the powers of the Archbishop's office.

Title V, Canon 1, Section 5 governs how canons are amended, generally requiring a 90-day waiting period after ratification. This proposed amendment not only makes the amendments to Title I immediately effective (without the usual 90-day period), but also provides that they will “sunset” at the close of the 2027 Provincial Council unless made permanent.

Thank you for your close attention to these proposed amendments. The GTF asks for your continued prayers as we seek to provide for godly and just governance for the ACNA. May God be glorified by all that we do in His name!

Respectfully submitted,

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Chair, Governance Task Force of the ACNA
for the GTF