



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

EPISCO-POLITY

INTRODUCTION

This document is recommended for any member of Episcopal congregations as a basic introduction to our Church's polity (or how we organize ourselves). It highlights the unique way authority is derived in the Episcopal Church flowing from our baptism into the Body of Christ.

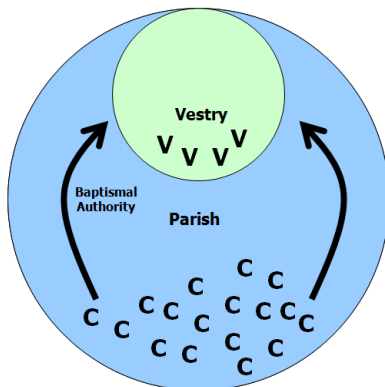
WHERE AUTHORITY COMES FROM

In the Episcopal Church we believe that authority is given to us through baptism. We all have equal authority through our baptism:

- ❖ The Holy Spirit is active in everyone's life.
- ❖ Everyone has a voice.
- ❖ Everyone has gifts to give.
- ❖ True for everyone: Communicants, vestry members, deacons, priests, and bishops.

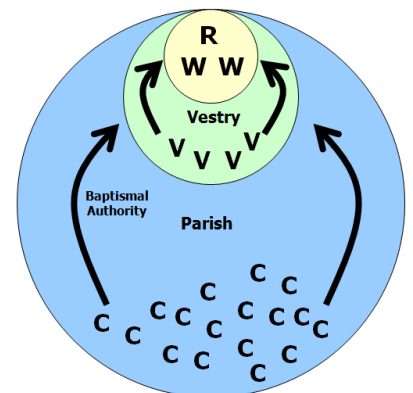
THE "FLOW" OF BAPTISMAL AUTHORITY: LOCAL CONGREGATION

The process of sharing Baptismal authority begins with the "communicants" in the parish. At the parish annual meeting, the communicants in good standing of the parish vote to elect new members of the vestry, thereby investing some of their baptismal authority in the vestry.



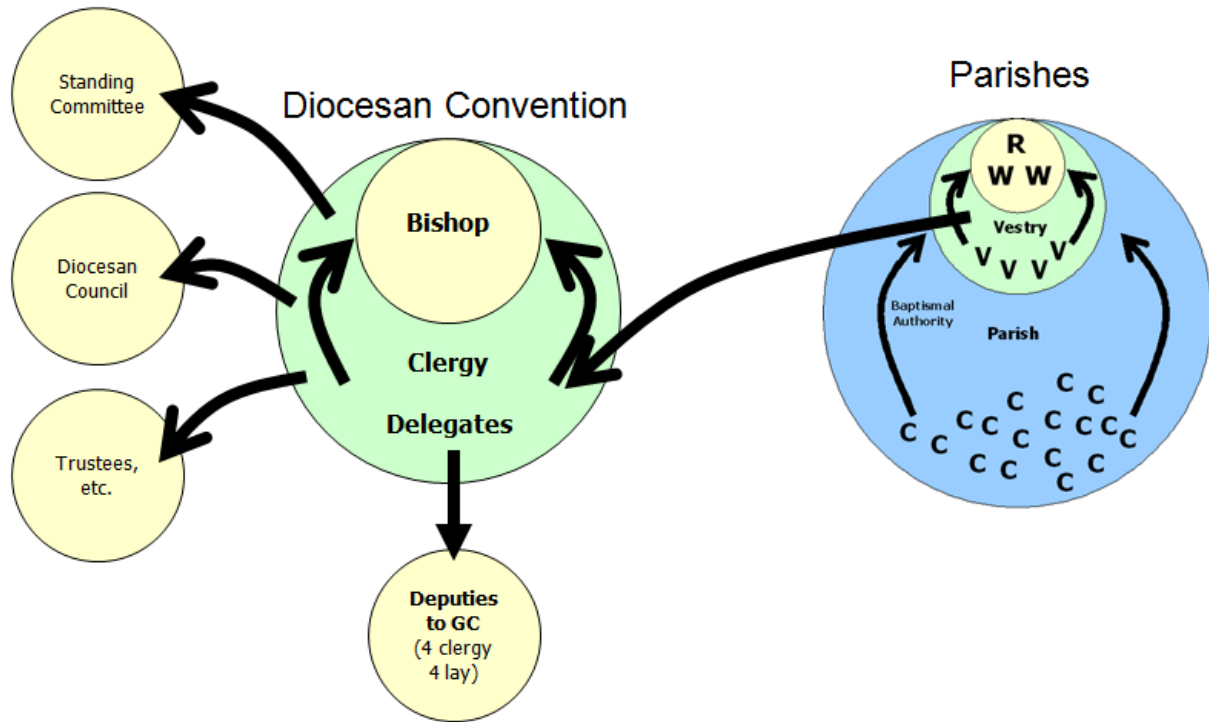
When a communicant, "C," votes in the annual meeting of her parish, she invests SOME of her baptismal authority in the Vestry. The vestry members receive that authority as responsibility to make their appointed decisions on behalf of the parish.

A vestry's election of wardens and appointment of a rector are further examples of investing SOME of one's baptismal authority in others.



THE "FLOW" OF BAPTISMAL AUTHORITY: DIOCESE

The congregation also invests baptismal authority in the delegates it sends to the annual Diocesan Convention.



Delegates have seat, voice, and vote and are charged with

- Electing a bishop (*when required*)
- Passing the diocesan budget
- Electing leaders of the diocese (Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, Trustees, etc.), who in turn receive the baptismal authority as responsibility to make their particular decisions on behalf of the diocese
- Setting policy and canon law for the diocese.
- Electing the Diocese of Missouri deputies to General Convention.

