

THE PLAN OF UNION

FOR

The Old Catholic Church, Province of the United States

The name of the new Church will be *The Old Catholic Church, Province of the United States*, referred to herein as *OCC:US*. Once formally adopted, the new Church shall be incorporated and all member dioceses and parishes shall amend their incorporation bylaws and recognize its authority in their governing constitutions and canons.

SCRIPTURE

1. The Church accepts as *canonical* the *Holy Scriptures* as defined by the *Union of Utrecht*.

CREEDS

2. The Church accepts the Creeds of the *Oecumenical Councils* and liturgically uses the *Nicene* and *Apostles* creeds in its worship.

UTRECHT – DOCUMENTS

3. The Church further accepts the *Declaration of Utrecht* and the subsequent declarations made by the *Union of Utrecht* including the Preamble to the Statutes of the International Bishops Conference, and the *Order Document* which govern the life of the Union of Utrecht.

AUTHORITY

4. The Church accepts as authoritative the Holy Scriptures, the Oecumenical Creeds, the Declaration of Utrecht, the Preamble to the Statues of the International Bishops Conference, the Unity Statement of this Church, and the Order Document of this Church. The Church also acknowledges the place of informed reason and experience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as sources of authority in the life of The Old Catholic Church, Province of the United States.

INCLUSIVENESS

5. The *inclusive nature* of this Church shall not be abridged or changed since to do so would betray fundamental and foundational beliefs existing in this Church. All future members of the new Church must be willing to be in full communion with all the bishops and their respective Churches and jurisdictions.

CLERGY & GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES

6. Existing *clergy* members of the churches living and working outside of diocesan boundaries as determined by the *House of Bishops*, shall remain canonically members of their existing Churches (dioceses), unless choosing to change to the diocese nearest their present location. They shall work cooperatively with their own bishop and the Bishop of the diocese in which they reside.

CLERGY APPLICATIONS

7. All future clergy members must apply for admission to the church by way of the diocesan bishop where they reside. In instances where clergy and/or parishes are applying from areas where there are no established OCC:US dioceses, the House of Bishops may assign pastoral oversight of such persons as they deem appropriate.
8. Other jurisdictions seeking membership in this Church must accept the foundational documents of the Union of Utrecht and the Conference's Unity Statement and Order Document.

GOVERNANCE

This Church accepts the principle of the *Ancient Church* in which decisions are made by councils and synods composed of elected representatives of the people. Thus, this Church will have bishops elected by their Diocesan Synods who will compose a House of Bishops. Each Bishop shall be entitled to one vote. In addition, each Diocesan Synod shall elect one clergy and two laity delegates to represent the laity and non-episcopal clergy from that synod in the National Assembly.

POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS

1. The House of Bishops (*HOB*) shall be governed by the principles set forth in the Unity Statement, Order Document of the Conference of Bishops and the Statutes of the International Bishops' Conference of the Union of Utrecht.
2. The HOB shall have oversight of clergy, establishing programs of clergy preparation and formation.
3. As provided in the Order Document, the HOB shall determine the conditions for new member dioceses and the formation of new dioceses. The addition of new dioceses shall be confirmed by a vote of the National Assembly. They shall also determine diocesan boundaries and submit them for confirmation to the House of Delegates.

4. The House of Bishops will nominate the Moderator for the Church, who must be a bishop in good standing. The Moderator shall be the Chairperson of the House of Bishops in order to convene and preside at its meetings. The HOB will also elect other officers as needed. The nomination of the Moderator must be confirmed by the House of Delegates. The term of the Moderator for the whole Church is a two-year position, although a longer term of office may be decided by the National Assembly, after consultation with the Diocesan Synods. There are no limits as to the number of times the Moderator may serve.

5. The House of Bishops may choose to meet monthly via teleconferencing, but must convene at least one meeting a year in which to conduct business in person.

POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES

1. The HOD shall be comprised of all the elected delegates of laity and clergy from the Diocesan Synods.
2. The Moderator for the Church must receive a confirmation by vote from the HOD. A vote of non-confirmation sends the question back to the House of Bishops for further discussion and vote.
3. The Chairperson for the HOD must be a Lay delegate. The HOD shall determine which other offices are necessary for the operation of the HOD and elect persons from within the HOD.
4. The HOD, its committees, et al, shall function under the concept of consensus whenever possible. If consensus is not achieved, the question or issue is returned for discussion until such time consensus is reached. The chair of a group within the HOD may call for a vote where deemed necessary.

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

1. The *National Assembly (NA)* shall be comprised of the Bishops, the elected Clergy and Lay Delegates as elected by the Diocesan Synods.
2. The NA shall be convened at least every two years to elect officers and conduct business, or more frequently as needed.
3. The NA shall be responsible for the temporal affairs of this Church at the national level, including arranging for the incorporation of the National Church
4. The NA shall be responsible for the planning and physical arrangements of any *Congresses* called in which all members of OCC:US may attend in general assembly. Such an assembly will be educational in nature and not legislative.

5. The NA shall propose such missional and educational projects as deemed appropriate for the work of this Church.
6. The NA shall be the final authority of The Old Catholic Church, Province of the United States.
7. The Moderator of the Church shall be the Chairperson of the NA. The Chairperson of the HOD, elected by the HOD, choosing from the Lay delegates, shall be the Vice-Chairperson of the NA. A secretary and treasurer or other officers, shall be elected by the members of the National Assembly.
8. Whenever possible, decisions of the NA shall be by consensus and shall apply to all dioceses.
9. All powers not delegated in the Plan of Union reside with the *Diocesan Synods (DS)*.

ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT

The House of Bishops and the National Assembly shall be convened by action of the Conference of North American Old Catholic Bishops upon passage of the proposed Plan of Union, no later than six months after adoption by the last Synod vote.

ACT OF UNION

WHEREAS we the present members of the Conference of North American Old Catholic Bishops, representing the Old Catholic Diocese of Napa, the American Catholic Church of New England, and the Heartland Old Catholic Church, desiring greater union among our jurisdictions as outlined in this Conference's Unity Statement of 2006, have written this Plan of Union, which creates The Old Catholic Church, Province of the United States; and,

WHEREAS we affirm that we have submitted this Plan of Union to the synods of each of our jurisdictions for ratification of said Plan of Union; and,

WHEREAS each of our synods, which also are committed to unity, have studied said Plan of Union; and,

WHEREAS each of our synods have affirmed and ratified without qualification said Plan of Union;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Conference of North American Old Catholic Bishops, having invoked the Holy Spirit in response to the prayer of Christ Jesus that we all may be one, do hereby merge our jurisdictions and thereby create and establish:

The Old Catholic Church, Province of the United States

Given at Dunrovin Christian Brothers Retreat Center in Minnesota
24th of September, 2010

the Most Rev. Robert T. Fuentes
Old Catholic Diocese of Napa

the Most Rev. Michael J. Scalzi
Old Catholic Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic
(formerly of American Catholic Church
of New England)

The Most Rev. Rosemary Ananis
Old Catholic Diocese of New England
(formerly of American Catholic Church
New England)

the Most Rev. Charles L. Braun
St. John the Beloved
Old Catholic Diocese of Washington, D.C. of
(formerly Heartland Old Catholic Church)

the Most Rev. James R. Judd
Holy Cross Old Catholic Diocese of Minnesota
(formerly Heartland Old Catholic Church)
Addendum: April 12, 2011

During the HOB conference call of March 8, 2011, it was noted that the original signed Plan of Union had an error – for the Old Catholic Diocese of New England, what was omitted in the parenthesis was the following: “formerly of American Catholic Church”. At said conference call, the consensus of the bishops was to send an addendum with the correction. Copies of the signatory page with the error that each diocese have in their archives remain valid and binding.)

Amendments to the Plan of Union

Amendment 1 – Naming of the New Church

As stated in the Plan of Union that has been adopted by each diocesan synod, the proposed name of the church is **The Old Catholic Church, Province of the United States**. The acronym of the National Church is changed from OCC:US to **TOCCUSA**. (Adopted: at National Assembly 2010. Source: Consent Calendar.)

Amendment 2 – Diocesan Boundaries

The geographical boundaries of a diocese are to be set at the distance that can be traveled by the bishop by car in one day. (Adopted: at National Assembly 2010. Source: Consent Calendar.)

Amendment 3 – Establishment of the Executive Council

The Executive Council shall be the body that governs The Old Catholic Church between National Assemblies. It implements any decisions agreed upon at National Assemblies. It also will act as the Board of Directors or Trustees of the Old Catholic Church should TOCCUSA seek incorporation. The Moderator is Chairperson. The Chairperson of the House of Delegates is Vice Chairperson. The Executive Council will have at least 5 members – 4 traditional officers and an at-large seat. Should any of the officers elected come from same diocese of the Moderator, another at-large seat will be added to bring balance to the Executive Council. (Adopted: at National Assembly 2010. Source: Consent Calendar.)

Amendment 4 – Terms of Office of Executive Council Members

The term of office for each member of the Executive Council shall be the time between two convened meetings of the National Assembly. (Adopted: at National Assembly 2011. Source: Finalized Minutes of National Assembly 2011.)

Amendment 5 – Filling a Vacancy on the Executive Council

Should a vacancy occur on the Executive Council between National Assemblies, the vacancy shall be filled by a vote of the Executive Council, until the convening of the next National Assembly at which time an election can take place to fill the vacancy. (Adopted: at National Assembly 2011. Source: Finalized Minutes of National Assembly 2011.)

Amendment 6 – Parity among Dioceses when Electing Officers

In order to ensure parity wherever possible among the Dioceses of TOCCUSA, the Moderator of TOCCUSA and the Chairperson of the House of Delegates cannot be elected from the same Diocese during the same term of office. (Adopted: at National Assembly 2012. Source: Approved Minutes of National Assembly 2012.)

Amendment 7 – Roles of the Moderator and the Chairperson of the House of Delegates

Both the Moderator and the Chairperson of the House of Delegates shall act as co-chairpersons of the Executive Council, working collegially to set the Council's agenda and business and to ensure follow-through on decisions of the Executive Council. As elected chairpersons of their particular House, both the Moderator and the Chairperson of the House of Delegates shall be liaisons between their respective Houses. (Adopted: National Assembly 2013. Source: Approved Minutes of NA 2013).

Amendment 8 – Term of office of the Moderator

The term of the Moderator was extended from two years to four years. (Adopted National Assembly 2016. Source: Approved Minutes of NA 2016)