



The Episcopal Diocese of Alaska

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Dear Friends in Christ:

At the 2019 Diocesan Convention it was announced that the standing committee is seeking advice and help from the delegates and members of the Diocese to look at ongoing viability of the Society of St Simeon and St. Anna, as it is currently structured. The current structure is administratively cumbersome and may not be meeting the needs and goals of its original intention. The Society of St Simeon and St. Anna is currently over 500 members, with 15 – 30 new inductees a year.

Convention delegates were asked to please take this concern home to parishes and deaneries for discussion and prayer. All were asked to consider and study cultural differences in the ways of honoring elders and other ideas to decrease the administrative burden on the Diocesan office and to consider how we can serve our elders and how can our elders serve us. Finally, the standing committee requested, “please discuss this at the next meeting of your deanery and report to the standing committee.”

The standing committee took action at their November 2019 meeting to put a moratorium on and suspend nominations to the Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna for the year 2020; to give time for discussions at deanery meetings and consider input and ideas on the possibility of changing the structure of the Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna.

Therefore, we will not be accepting nominations to the Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna in 2020.

To assist in the deanery discussions, I have provided some historical information regarding the Society. Enclosed is also the latest list of members of the Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna and the Rule of Life for the Society.

History of the Society:

The Episcopal Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna was founded by The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston in 1991 with the first members inducted at that year’s Diocesan Convention.

The purpose of the society is to recognize, honor and celebrate the wisdom, experience, maturity and ministry of older persons in the Diocese of Alaska. Members shall have at least 15 years as an active Episcopalian and be 60 years of age or older. Nominations are by Parish Vestry, Parish Council, Church Committee or

comparable body and are submitted to the Deanery. Selection of members is prayerfully made by each Deanery at their annual meeting and submitted to the Diocese for affirmation at Convention. Each year 3 elders from each deanery will be nominated and inducted. At some point after 1992, the inductees per year became 2 elders from each deanery.

In 2003, diocesan convention passed a resolution to remove the 2 elder per deanery limit.

“Resolved: No restriction to be set on the number of Elders nominated to the Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna by each deanery. The eligibility for nomination to this Society are:

1. Membership in the Society is open to all Elders in Alaska who have been active in the Episcopal Diocese for at least 15 years and who are 60 years of age or older.
2. Nomination by Parish Vestry, Parish Council, Church Committee, or comparable body.
3. Affirmation by the Deanery through prayer at their annual meeting.
4. Elders are nominated for the Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna by the local congregation. It is resolved as a way to show support for the nominee(s), each congregation will be responsible for the cost of the St. Simeon and St. Anna cross.”

Duties of the Society:

- A community at prayer: Members pray daily for the Bishop, Diocese and its people.
- A council of elders: Members stand ready to share their wisdom with the Bishop and others when asked.
- A valuable resource and model for Christian living: All persons in the Diocese are encouraged to look to the Society for images of life that are lived in imitation of Christ.

Rule of Life:

Members of the Society are bound by a threefold Rule of Life:

- To be constant in prayer
- To be conscientious in ministry
- To be compassionate in life

This rule is lived out by the Society in the following ways:

- Society members pray for the Diocese of Alaska each day. Through their constant intercession, our church is supported and strengthened by the grace of God and the response of the Holy Spirit.
- The on-going ministry of the Society is to serve the Bishop as a council of advice. Society members are expected to draw on their wealth of experience to assist the Bishop whenever he requests their wisdom and counsel.
- Society members are to be living examples of the Christian witness. Through their compassionate lives of faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, they embody the hope of the gospel for all persons in the Diocese of Alaska.

In Summary, the Society's:

Purpose: to honor those individuals who have worked in the church at least 15 years

Responsibilities 1) To pray daily for the Diocese and its people 2) Advise the bishop on matters concerning the church. 3) Provide a living example of the Christian life.

Membership: Is limited to those persons who are 60 years of age or older, and who have worked in the Episcopal Church in Alaska for at least 15 years.

To further assist in the conversation, I listed a few of the issues/concerns that have surfaced. This is not a complete list and I encourage each deanery to take be open and honest in their discussion.

- The society's membership has grown to over 500 members, making the administration cumbersome to maintain and questioning whether such a large group is able to act as a council of advice.
- Induction into the Society is at Diocesan Convention and many (if not most) of the inductees are not able to attend Convention. Is Convention the most appropriate time/place to induct members into the Society?
- Is the Society still meeting the goals of the original intention of the society? If so, how? If not, how/why?
- How might we make changes so that the local churches are more involved?
- The nomination process is sometimes hard to follow. How might we change or simplify the process?
- What are other options/ideas for the continuance of the Society of St. Simeon and St. Anna?
- Other thoughts, comments, ideas, issues, concerns?

In His Service,

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