

WHEREAS, The original Vestry Act of 1798, relating to the organization and administration of the Vestries of the Parishes of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of Maryland, has been heretofore amended by Chapter 189 of the Acts of 1823; Chapter 50 of the Acts of 1922; Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1945 (applicable only to the four Maryland Counties within the Diocese of Washington); Chapter 711 of the Acts of 1949; Chapter 136 of the Acts of 1828; Chapter 509 of the Acts of 1922 (applicable only to the four Maryland Counties within the Diocese of Washington); Chapter 20 of the Acts of 1827; Chapter 196 of the Acts of 1833; and Chapter 462 of the Acts of 1951 (applicable only to Baltimore City and the ten Maryland Counties comprising the Diocese of Maryland); and

WHEREAS, The original Vestry Act and the several amendments thereto, with the exception of the amendments set forth in detail in said Chapter 462 of the Acts of 1951, now codified as Sections 267 to 288, inclusive, of Article 23 of the Code (Edition of 1951), have not been included in said Code, but have, nevertheless, continued to be in force and effect; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of this Act is to include in said Code much of the substance of the provisions of the original Vestry Act and its several amendments, together with certain further amendments set forth in this Act affecting the Parishes of the Diocese of Easton only, which experience has shown are desirable for greater flexibility in the administration of the secular affairs of said parishes because of the vast changes in conditions and circumstances as well as geographical concepts on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and elsewhere during the last century and a half, which said amendments have not, however, impaired the historical concept of vestry laws or changed the basic principles of the nature, powers, duties and functions of the several Vestries in the Diocese of Easton, except in so far as such have been deliberately liberalized by these present amendments in an effort to grant each Parish greater opportunity and duty to govern its own parochial affairs; and

WHEREAS, (a) The Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Easton, as hereinafter referred to, was incorporated by Chapter 23 of the Acts of 1870, and amended by Chapter 147 of the Acts of 1878, and by Chapter 596 of the Acts of 1908, and by said Chapter 23 of the Acts of 1870 was granted the same power and authority granted by law to the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Maryland, incorporated by Chapter 67 of the Acts of 1840, and amended by Chapter 17 of the Acts of 1856; and as to ecclesiastical matters the several Parishes in the Diocese of Easton are governed by the constitution and canons of said Diocese and the constitution and canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, but with respect solely to secular matters, the Vestries of said Parishes in the Diocese of Easton as corporate bodies are subject to the laws of the State; and

(b) The word "Parish" as originally used in the Vestry Act referred particularly only to territorial limits in relations to churches of the Parish respectively but by common usage the term as now used, dependent upon context, sometimes refers to the church congregation rather than territorial limits; and