

## *What do we look for in a Bishop Suffragan?*

### **Accompanying notes to the Diocese of Virginia's Educational Resource on the Bishop and the Bishop Suffragan**

#### **Format**

This curriculum is ideal for a single adult forum setting lasting approximately 45 minutes. The presentation itself may take between 20-35 minutes, with 10-25 minutes for questions and answers. We recommend a shorter presentation with more time for conversation: in this case the presenter must be assiduous in moving the presentation forward given the many concepts involved. In a smaller group, the curriculum may be adapted to accommodate a more informal context, e.g. with questions and answers along the way.

#### **Objectives**

The curriculum aims to:

- 1) Provide a brief overview of the bishop suffragan election process in the Diocese of Virginia through the timeline.
- 2) Give a basic overview of the role and responsibility of the bishop generally.
- 3) Give an overview of the specific elements of the Bishop Suffragan.

This curriculum is broad in nature, i.e. it does not emphasize the specifics of Virginia's election process beyond a basic timeline. This is intentional in that it provides both resources to inform delegates who vote in the election and a general overview of the episcopacy from which any parishioner would benefit.

#### **Content**

The PowerPoint presentation consists of 6 slides with the accompanying notes below. Fewer slides provides for a concise arrangement of information that keeps the focus on the presenter and the conversation rather than on the PowerPoint. The information below is a starting point: not all elements need be presented and the presenter should add her own insight as well.

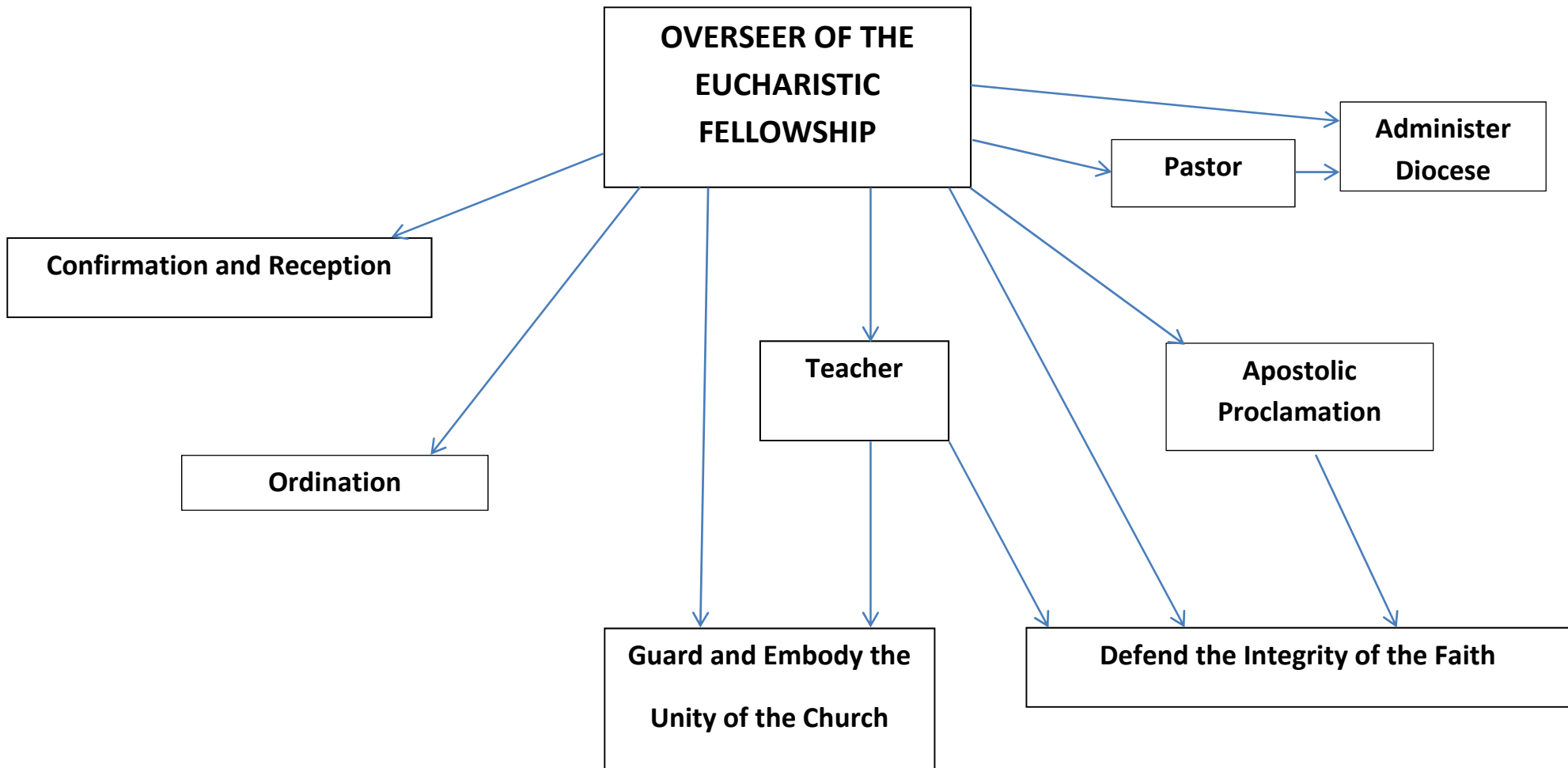
---

**Slide 1-2:** Overview slides that present the “why we are here” question in slide 1 and provides the context of Virginia's election in Slide 2.

**Slide 2:**

This PowerPoint slide animates in 3 parts: the slide initially reads “What is a Bishop,” the next click brings in “Overseer of the Eucharistic Fellowship” to emphasize the centrality of the Eucharist to the bishop’s identity, then another click presents the other arrows and boxes.

**The Bishop’s Role and Function within the Church**



## Slide 2, continued:

### Key Ideas from the above flowchart

*Overseer of the Eucharistic Fellowship:* The bishop's primary role and function is that of leading the gathered in worship: other ministries of the bishop flow out of this sacramental act. This is the case both theologically and in practice: historically the bishop's identity is connected to the celebration of Holy Communion (BCP 518, 522), functionally the bishop leads us in Holy Communion during parish visitations and diocesan events

- *Confirmation and Ordination*, these sacramental rites are the exclusive prerogative of the bishop and occur within the liturgy of the Eucharist. These bring people deeper into the Eucharistic fellowship (confirmation) and set aside persons to preside and serve at the Eucharist (ordination).
- *Bishop is a Person of Prayer.* Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold says, "The Bishop's own prayerfulness enables the liturgy for others."

*Apostolic Proclamation:* (BCP 517-518) Apostolicity refers to a direct line of bishops going back to Jesus' disciples, upon whom Jesus laid his hands and they in turn laid their hands upon other ministers (Acts 6). The task of proclamation is to spread the same good news Jesus proclaimed to the world: this is both evangelistic—to "boldly proclaim"—and prophetic—to "stir up the conscience" of the peoples (BCP, 518).

*Teacher:* (BCP 518) The bishop is called to expound upon scripture and tradition, opening them up to laity and clergy alike. *Faithful study of the scriptures* is vital both to the vocation of teaching and the spiritual sustenance of the bishop.

*Guard and Embody the Unity of the Church* (BCP 517-518). The bishop is the embodiment of the church catholic.

- Bishop as a symbol: s/he is a sign of the church's unity: for local parishes the bishop is the visible connection to the wider church.
- In guarding the unity of the church, the bishop has "the authority of unify," that is, to be in communion with various churches despite differences. "A bishop says to one group, 'Your opponents are also "in my communion"'. I recognize them as baptized" (Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury).

*Defend the Integrity of the faith* (BCP 518-519). The bishop is called to affirm and make intelligible the beliefs and creeds of the church.

*Pastor:* The bishop is the chief pastor for the diocese, offering care and support particularly to the diocesan clergy. The pastoral ministry of caring extends into all other aspects of the bishop's ministry.

*Administer Diocese* (BCP 518). The bishop administers a diocese with an authority exercised with gentleness (1 Tim 3). The bishop also carries out the canonical discipline of the church. The bishop shares in the administration of the larger church—both TEC and the wider Anglican Communion.

*The Character of the Bishop* (1 Tim 3, BCP 518ff). Scripture calls the bishop to be above reproach, faithful to spouse, temperate, sensible, respectable, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, a disciplined parent, well thought of by others, compassionate to the poor and strangers.

**Slide 4:** This slide animates in 3 parts. The slide initially reads “What is a Bishop Suffragan”, then a click brings up the “Bishop Aspect” and another click brings up the “Suffragan aspect.”

*Suffrage* – meaning **prayer** in medieval English; also means vote or support

A Suffragan Bishop is one who *prays* for and with the diocesan bishop,  
one who *supports* the diocesan bishop

A Suffragan Bishop’s roles and responsibilities involve two emphases: the suffragan emphasis and the bishop emphasis

<b>Bishop aspect</b>	<b>Suffragan aspect</b>
Sacramental responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• celebrating Holy Communion and baptizing</li> <li>• Confirmation</li> <li>• Ordination</li> </ul>	Authority (canonical and otherwise) given to the Suffragan is delegated from the Diocesan Bishop and the Diocesan retains oversight.  The Suffragan is chosen with specific tasks in mind and should fit well with such tasks.
Full member of House of Bishops – with vote like all other bishops (TEC Constitution 1.2)	While authority lies with the Diocesan, it is expressed with <i>collegiality</i> vis-à-vis the Suffragan.
Full participant in the Lambeth Conference (as of 1998)	Key words for Suffragan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helper</li> <li>• Deputy</li> <li>• Collegiality with Diocesan</li> </ul>
A focus of unity: a living embodied representation of the church catholic	The Suffragan often carries a certain freedom in their ministry because they do not have the responsibilities that go with running a jurisdiction: eg ecumenical relationships, community work, political advocacy

Brief History and Context of Suffragan Bishops:

- “Vicar bishops” existed in the early church and were present at church councils, e.g. Council of Nicea (*chorepiscopoi*). Were suspended in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and revived in the 11<sup>th</sup>.
- In England, Suffragan bishops ministered until the Reformation, were revived in 1870 as the practice of confirmation revived
- Suffragan Bishops play various roles in various places in the Anglican Communion
  - Serve as functioning bishop of a particular area within a larger diocese (not the case in U.S.)
  - Roles vary from functionally a co-bishop to a highly limited role when Diocesan Bishop is present
  - In the U.S., generally serve in large dioceses that require significant sacramental and administrative responsibilities.

**Slides 5 and 6** offer a prayer for the church and curriculum acknowledgements.

Sources:

*Anglican Theological Review*, LXXVII:1 (Winter 1995).

Education Subcommittee, Virginia Coadjutor Search, 2005.

F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, eds, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York: Oxford Press, 2005).

Rowan Williams, "Authority and the Bishop in the Church" *Their Lord and Ours: Approaches to Authority, Community and the Unity of the Church*, Mark Santer, ed (London: SPCK, 1982).

J. Robert Wright, ed. *On Being a Bishop: Papers on the Episcopacy from the Moscow Consultation* (Church Hymnal Corporation, 1992).