

## **R-9 Spanish Language LatinX/Hispanic Centered Discernment to Ordained Ministry**

Resolved, That the 227th Convention of the Diocese of Virginia recognizes that despite repeated efforts at racial justice and racial reconciliation initiatives, the Diocese of Virginia does not currently provide formal discernment events, workshops, or materials in Spanish focused on the specific cultural and linguistic needs of congregations with LatinX/Hispanic ministries and Spanish-speaking individuals who may be called to ordained ministry; and

Resolved, That this Convention requests the appointment of an information gathering and discernment team composed of an equal balance of LatinX/Hispanic lay leaders and clergy who are monolingual Spanish-speakers, bilingual, or monolingual English-speakers as well as multicultural lay leaders and clergy who do not identify as LatinX/Hispanic to explore pathways for discernment and formation in Spanish for LatinX/Hispanic communities of the Diocese; identify concerns of LatinX/Hispanic seekers, consider the benefit of future consultation and/or staffing needs within the diocese, and recommend future pathways for discernment and formation in Spanish to the Commission on Ministry.

Resolved, That the team be charged to offer programmatic and budgetary recommendations by August, 2022 for inclusion in 2023 budget planning and to prepare a full report with more detailed recommendations delivered to the Commission on Ministry before the 228th Convention of the Diocese of Virginia.

Resolved, That this Convention requests the Commission on Ministry to receive the recommendations of a task group appointed by the bishop with ecclesiastical authority and that the group's recommendations be provided to the 228th Convention of the Diocese of Virginia for approval.

Submitted by:

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Endorsed by:

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The Rev. Mary Kay Brown  
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The Rev. Deacon Theresa Lewallen  
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The Rev. Dr. Hilary Borbón Smith  
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The Rev. Dr. Dorothy A. White  
Discernment Retreat Leader and Interim Rector, St. Peter's Richmond

The Rev. Deacon Shea Godwin  
Deacon, Calvary Episcopal Church Front Royal

The Rev. Deacon Karla Westfall Hunt  
Deacon, St. Peter's Episcopal Church Richmond

The Rev. Deacon Emmetri Monica Beane  
Deacon, St. Stephen's Culpepper

The Rev. Deacon Steven Busch  
Deacon, St John's Episcopal Centreville

The Rev. Deacon Steve Pace  
Deacon, Church of Our Saviour Montpelier

The Rev. Deacon Kathryn Thomas  
Deacon, Grace Stanardsville and Piedmont Madison

#### Explanation:

The terms Latino, LatinX, Hispano, Latine, and Hispanic are often used interchangeably to describe the Spanish-speaking demographic commonly known as Latino/Hispanic. Members of this population differ in terms of which of these designations they use to self-identify. The

choice for self-identification is based on regions, context, history, political perspective, personal preference, and other variables. This process, one of self-determination, is another indication of the beautiful diversity and self-agency of this vibrant population. For the purposes of this resolution and the accompanying explanation the term LatinX/Hispanic will be used when referring to this population in our communities in the Diocese of Virginia.

There are six congregations in the Diocese of Virginia with recognized LatinX/Hispanic ministries, five of which are mission congregations, and all of which are located in Northern Virginia (San José, Arlington; Cristo Rey, Arlington; Grace-La Gracia, Alexandria; Santa María, Falls Church; San Marcos, Alexandria; St. Gabriel's ~ San Gabriel, Leesburg). In addition, there is a LatinX/Hispanic gathered community at St. Timothy's, Herndon. The concentration of LatinX/Hispanic people in Northern Virginia is due to business development, educational opportunities, employment opportunities for documented and undocumented persons, and the proximity to the nation's capital.

There are likely other parishes and areas of the Diocese of Virginia serving LatinX/Hispanic communities with social needs programming although not with trained Spanish-speaking clergy exercising ordained ministry. Clergy staffing at both recognized congregations and gathered communities has been challenging to maintain. Currently, one priest is vicar of two congregations, two priests are full-time in their congregations, one priest serves part-time, and a special supply priest serves part-time in one congregation as well as a gathered community. Similarly, there is a need and desire for monolingual Spanish and bilingual (English-Spanish) deacons called to serve these contexts and translate the needs of these communities to the parish, diocese, and wider church.

The LatinX/Hispanic population is the fastest growing non-English speaking demographic in the United States, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and Northern Virginia. Seven Northern Virginia towns and cities are in the top ten locations in the Diocese of Virginia with the LatinX/Hispanic population ranging from 16.69% of the total population in Alexandria to 39.73% in Manassas Park, VA.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is likely that the concentrations of gathered communities and parishes seeking monolingual Spanish or bilingual English-Spanish speakers will continue to expand, necessitating attention to discernment and formation in Spanish for clergy called to serve these contexts.

The LatinX/Hispanic community contributes vastly to the economic, social, and more recently political structures that are the bedrock of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and especially in Northern Virginia. Notwithstanding their contributions and presence in the area, they are treated as second class citizens and experience racial discrimination, xenophobia, and linguistic discrimination.

The Diocese recognizes the importance of enriching personal practices of discernment, and the importance of congregants being able to be part of a local discernment committee, expand their expertise, explore the call to Holy Orders, learn tools for spiritual development that are grounded in the baptismal covenant, and explore spiritual paradigms that help to frame their daily lives and current and future vocations. It is equally important to provide culturally and

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<sup>1</sup> 2015-2019 American Community Survey data from the US Census. *2015-2019 American Community Survey data from the US Census.*

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?tid=ACS5Y2019.B03002&q=ACS5Y2019.B03002>

linguistically informed discernment opportunities and resources for the LatinX/Hispanic populations in our churches and Diocese.

As we strive to promote racial, social and economic justice throughout our Diocese and communities, we are compelled to examine the cultural and linguistic competence in our discernment and formation processes for ordination as well. We recognize that people experience a call to serve the church through their local context, and as a Diocese, we feel compelled to offer the resources necessary to discern vocation and call in a culturally and linguistically relevant manner. We feel that the support and endorsement of the Convention of the Diocese of Virginia is vital to this process at this stage of exploration and program development and will benefit diocesan staff and Commission on Ministry members who are already beginning this important work.