

Report of the Standing Committee to the Annual Convention 2021

Bishops and Delegates of the 227th Annual Diocesan Convention,

Your 2020-2021 Standing Committee has been: Jessica Atkinson, Ashley Cameron, Deborah Gandy, The Rev. Laura Minnich Lockey, The Rev. Andrew Merrow, Diane Miller, The Rev. Cayce Ramey, The Rev. Anne Turner, The Rev. Dr. Dorothy White, The Rev. Bambi Willis, and Margaret Woody; and I, Christie Thomas, am grateful for the honor and privilege to have worked alongside my faithful siblings and to have served as president this year.

While giving great thanks for technology and the ability to gather virtually, the Committee members were disappointed by the loss of in-person work together. Each meeting during the 2020-2021 term has been conducted via Zoom, due to the continuing impacts of COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, the Committee met in person in Fredericksburg on the first Thursday of each month. The Committee voted to continue the first-Thursday schedule for its regular monthly meetings, though we did have rich conversations about various ways to accommodate the schedules of (particularly) lay members who work outside of the church. Increasing the accessibility and approachability of Committee service has been a topic that members have focused on over several years, with the desire that all people of the Diocese who feel called to this work may do so without wrestling with whether they can afford to serve.

The Standing Committee is made up of 12 members—six from the lay order and six from the clergy order—and each year Convention delegates elect two new members of each order for a three-year term. The Committee has several roles as set forth in the Canons:

- *Serving as a Council of Advice for the Bishop*
Bishop Goff joins each of the Committee's monthly meetings to brief us on the work of the Diocese and to request our input on various aspects of her work as our Ecclesiastical Authority. We value the opportunity to join her in this sacred responsibility, and we give thanks for her dedicated, thoughtful and wise leadership—always, but especially through this pandemic time. We also give thanks for the leadership and work of Bishop Brooke-Davidson and Bishop Taylor.
- *Approving Candidates for Ordination to the Priesthood and the Vocational Diaconate*
It is a specific joy for members of the Committee to be in conversation with those who are requesting ordination to the Priesthood and Vocational Diaconate. This step comes at a point in their journey when they have devoted significant prayer, time, energy and devotion to their call to ordained ministry, and it is one of the last stops along the way before, God willing, they stand before God and their loved ones to take their vows. Our conversations with them are a solemn and sacred responsibility, and as I noted above, they are a particular joy that fills us with hope for the future. This year the Committee approved 11 Priesthood candidacy requests. Thanks be to God for the hard work and unwavering support of Vocational Development Minister, Ed Keithly who has been our strong guide for the candidacy process. We also give thanks for the work of Vicky Bickel who worked alongside Ed and retired during our term.
- *Consenting to the Election of Bishops in Other Dioceses*
The Standing Committee is responsible for reviewing information and providing consent for the election of bishops in other dioceses. During the 2020-2021 year, we consented to the election of seven new bishops.
- *Approving Indebtedness and Requests to Encumber or Sell Property*

The Committee is called on to review requests to encumber or sell property, including requests for refinancing indebtedness. During the 2020-2021 year, the Committee approved six such requests.

- *Nominating Candidates for the Disciplinary Board to be Elected by Convention Delegates*
Canon 27.2C outlines provisions for the Standing Committee to nominate members to the Disciplinary Board who are then considered for election by delegates to Annual Convention. The Disciplinary Board consists of eleven (11) members, six (6) of whom are priests or deacons and five (5) of whom are lay persons, and it is responsible for dealing with matters pertaining to Ecclesiastical Discipline. This year, the Standing Committee nominates the following people to the Disciplinary Board for the specified terms:

The Rev. Herbert Jones (for a 3-year term ending in 2024)
The Rev. Dina Widlake (for a 3-year term ending in 2024)
Mr. David Meeker (for a 3-year term ending in 2024)
Ms. Marleen McCabe (for a 3-year term ending in 2024)
The Rev. Crystal Hardin (for a 1-year term ending in 2022)*
The Rev. Daniel Johnson (for a 2-year term ending in 2023)*

**nominations to fill vacancies*

The 2020-2021 year brought additional special opportunities to the Standing Committee, as the Diocese prepares to elect our 14th Bishop Diocesan:

- In February 2021, the Standing Committee called The Rev. Dr. L. Ann Hallisey to serve as Elections Consultant. Dr. Hallisey's primary role is to advise and assist the Standing Committee, the Search Committee and the Transition Committee as they discharge their various responsibilities in the election and consecration of the new Bishop Diocesan. We are grateful to Dr. Hallisey for her work and guidance thus far and for all that she will continue to do through this exciting time in the life of the Diocese.
- In April 2021, the Standing Committee called 14 people to form the Bishop Diocesan Search Committee. They are:
 - The Rev. Deacon Emmetri Beane, St. Stephen's, Culpeper
 - Brad Davenport, Grace & Holy Trinity, Richmond
 - The Rev. Will Dickinson, St. George's, Fredericksburg
 - Francisco Escobar, St. Mark's, Alexandria
 - The Rev. Deacon Christine Garcia, Christ Ascension, Richmond
 - The Rev. Deacon Frederico Garza, St. Philip's, Richmond and Food for the Poor
 - Maggie Keller, St. John's, McLean
 - Carolyn Lanier, St. Philip's, Richmond
 - The Rev. Will Peyton, St. Paul's Memorial, Charlottesville
 - The Rev. Scott Parnell, Ware Church, Gloucester
 - The Rev. Elizabeth Rees, St. Paul's, Alexandria
 - Rebecca Shannon, Canterbury, Harrisonburg
 - The Rev. Dr. Rosemari Sullivan, Immanuel Church on the Hill, Alexandria
 - Rushad Thomas, Grace, Alexandria

The Search Committee, chaired by The Rev. Dr. Rosemari Sullivan, has already devoted countless hours to their work, with the promise of much more to come before they submit a slate of candidates to the Standing Committee in the coming months.

- In November 2021, the Standing Committee will call a Transition Committee, whose responsibility is to shepherd the process of choosing our next spiritual leader, from the time that the Search Committee selects the candidates until the time of the consecration in December 2022.

Thank you for your prayers and support for the work of these two vital Committees and their leaders. May God richly bless each member and each step and phase of their efforts. And may God also bless and guide each person who may be, even now, discerning a call to become the next Bishop in our beloved Diocese of Virginia.

The Standing Committee is grateful for this opportunity to serve. We close with this prayer:

For the Diocese:

Oh God, by your grace you have called us in this Diocese to a goodly fellowship of faith. Bless our Bishops, Susan, Jennifer and Porter, and other clergy and all our people. Grant that your Word may be truly preached and truly heard, your Sacraments faithfully administered and faithfully received. By your Spirit, fashion our lives according to the example of your Son, and grant that we may show the power of your love to all among whom we live; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Faithfully submitted on behalf of the Standing Committee,

Christie Thomas
President of the Standing Committee (2020-2021)
Episcopal Diocese of Virginia