

R-6 Approve the Creation of Assistant Bishop Positions

Resolved, that the 228th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia, receiving the opinions of its Bishop Suffragan and Ecclesiastical Authority and Bishop Diocesan-Elect that additional episcopal services are required for the Diocese, with the consent of the Standing Committee, approve the creation of the positions of Assistant Bishops, not more than two (2) of whom shall be actively serving at any one time, and authorize the Bishop Diocesan, after December 3, 2022, with the consent of the Standing Committee, to appoint bishops for the Assistant Bishop positions under such conditions as the Bishop Diocesan may determine. The authorization to appoint more than one Assistant Bishop to actively serve at any time shall expire upon the consecration of a Bishop Suffragan

Submitted by:
The Standing Committee

Authority: General Convention Canon III.12.5

Rationale: With the resignation of Assistant Bishop Brooke-Davidson and the expected retirement of Bishop Susan Goff, the Diocese has limited Bishops, especially for a diocese our size. This resolution authorizes the appointment of not more than two Assistant Bishops by the Bishop Diocesan to serve at any one time until the consecration of a Bishop Suffragan, and one Assistant Bishop to serve after the election of a Bishop Suffragan. The term of an Assistant Bishop expires upon the termination of the jurisdiction of the appointing Bishop Diocesan.

Bishops Identified in the Constitution of the Diocese of Virginia

The Holy Scriptures and ancient Christian writers make it clear that from the apostles' time, there have been different ministries within the Church. Since the time of the New Testament, three distinct orders of ordained ministers have been characteristic of Christ's holy catholic Church. The order of bishops carry on the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the Church.¹ The Catechism found in the Book of Common Prayer states "the ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry." Bishops stand in the apostolic succession, maintaining continuity in the present with the ministry of the Apostles.

According to ARTICLE VI of the Constitution of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia: "In addition to the Bishop of the Diocese, there may be a Bishop Coadjutor, Bishops Suffragan, Assistant Bishops, or any combination thereof, upon the conditions and pursuant to the authority contained in the Canons of the General Convention."

In the Episcopal Church, Bishops Diocesan and Suffragan are elected by Diocesan Convention. Bishops-elect are ordained and consecrated after consents have been received from a majority of the diocesan standing committees and from a majority of the bishops exercising jurisdiction in the Episcopal Church. Once elected as a bishop in The Episcopal Church, they may serve in the following roles:

Bishop Diocesan – The chief pastor, exercising a ministry of oversight and supervision, who is called to provide Christian vision and leadership for their diocese. Bishops Diocesan hold jurisdiction in their diocese, with particular responsibility for the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the church. Bishops Diocesan serve as the focus for diocesan unity and for the relationship of their diocese with the wider church. Bishops Diocesan are *elected* by Diocesan Convention; they may be assisted by a Bishop Coadjutor, Bishops Suffragan and Assistant Bishops.²

Bishop Coadjutor – A bishop with the right of succession upon the resignation of the Bishop Diocesan. Before a Bishop Coadjutor is *elected*, the Bishop Diocesan must consent to such an election and state the duties which will be assigned to the Bishop Coadjutor when duly ordained and consecrated.²

Bishop Suffragan – A bishop, *elected* by Diocesan Convention, who serves as a subordinate to the Bishop Diocesan. Though a diocese may have more than one Bishop Suffragan, no diocese of The Episcopal Church may have more than two Bishops Suffragan, except with the special consent of a General Convention. A Bishop Suffragan has no right of succession upon the resignation of the Bishop Diocesan, though a Bishop Suffragan may be *elected* Bishop Diocesan or Bishop Coadjutor.²

Assistant Bishop – A bishop, *appointed* by the Bishop Diocesan, who serves as a subordinate to the Bishop Diocesan. An Assistant Bishop serves, by Letter of Agreement, for a term not to exceed the term of the appointing bishop. One or more Assistant Bishops may serve in the diocese, full- or part-time, depending upon the needs of the diocese.²

¹ Source: Book of Common Prayer, page 510, "Preface to the Ordination Rites".

² Source: "An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church" (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/>). Glossary definitions provided courtesy of Church Publishing Incorporated, New York, NY, (All Rights reserved) from "An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, A User Friendly Reference for Episcopalians," Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, editors.