

Annual Report from the Canon to the Ordinary

231st Annual Diocesan Convention

Theme: Telling Our Stories: Sharing Our Gifts

Dear Friends,

It is with deep gratitude and joy that I present this annual report to the 231st Annual Diocesan Convention. This year, we are focusing on the theme **“Telling Our Stories: Sharing Our Gifts,”** a call that has resonated deeply across our congregations, ministries, and communities. Through this theme, we have embraced the sacred work of storytelling—not merely as a recounting of events, but as a transformative act of faith, healing, and unity.

At the heart of the Diocese of Virginia is the mission to Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples. This mission guided every step taken, every story shared, and every gift offered.

Ministry Highlights in 2025

Clergy/Congregational Coaching – Work in this area includes Vestry Retreats, Reconciling Conversations, Strategic Visioning opportunities, and Title IV response.

Connecting in Ministry – Year Two

Connecting in Ministry is a formative 2-year program for newly ordained clergy and those called to a new position in the diocese. Sincere gratitude is extended to the people of Christ Church, Spotsylvania for hosting our in-person gatherings.

Objectives

- Provide a learning community for continued formation beyond seminary.
- Develop and strengthen clergy collegiality within the Diocese of Virginia.
- Equip clergy to grow more fully into ordained ministry.
- Participate in collegial conversations that strengthen our common ministry.
- Engage in best practices and formative opportunities to ensure clergy health and wellness.
- Explore more fully the diocesan vision: Love Jesus. Embody Justice. Be Disciples.

Sessions

- **Will You Be Loyal?: A Fresh Look at the Constitution and Canons;** The Rev. Canon d’Rue Hazel, Canon to the Ordinary, Diocese of Virginia
- **Ministry in the Context of Our Anglican Identity: Leading in a Time of Partisan Polarization** · The Rt. Rev. Mark Bourlakas, Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Virginia
- **Serving as Stewards: Financial Practices and 501c3 Administration** - Mr. Ted Smith, Treasurer, Diocese of Virginia
- **I Am So Called: Exploring Vocational Discernment;** The Rev. Sarah Kye Price, Vocations Minister; The Rev. Will Dickinson, Transitions Minister; and The Rev. Ricardo Sheppard, Canon for Discipleship, Diocese of Virginia

- **You Have to Go Home: *Family Systems Theory and Church Leadership*** – The Rev. Richard Blackburn. Senior Consultant, Systems Thinking Ministry
- **End of Program Year Celebration with the Bishops**

CONNECTING IN MINISTRY 2025 - 2026 PROGRAM YEAR

Connecting in Ministry is a two-year diocesan program that fosters clergy growth, collegiality, and well-being through ongoing formation, shared learning, and collaboration.



Featuring the Rev. Canon d'Rue Hazel on canons, the Rt. Rev. Mark Bourlakas on Anglican identity, Mr. Ted Smith on stewardship, the Rev. Sarah Kye Price, the Rev. Will Dickinson, and the Rev. Ricardo Sheppard on vocation, the Rev. Richard Blackburn on family systems, and concludes with a celebration with the Bishops.

Monthly Clergy Calls: Monthly clergy calls continue to provide an excellent opportunity for communication, support, and collegiality for the clergy of the diocese. Topics included:

- Ms. Sarah Shipman, Director of Episcopal Migration Ministries, Ms. Rebecca Blachly, Director of The Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relation, and Mr. Kent Anker, Chief Legal Officer of The Episcopal Church provided immigration resources for the clergy of the diocese. Church Insurance and Property Management
- Update and Resources related to pending federal layoffs and the impact experienced by our communicants and congregations.
- The Rev. Bart Natoli presented learning opportunities for **Biblical Greek**, and The Rev. Canon Ricardo Sheppard highlighted other **continuing education options for clergy**.
- **Shrine Mont Camps**: Mr. Greg Randall, Director of Shrine Mont Camps
- Online Security Awareness – Mr. Tom Anderson, CEO, IT4Causes
- Best practices when managing church properties – Ms. Linda Knowlton, Vice President Client Services, Church Insurance Agency Corp
- The 231st Annual Diocesan Convention – Mr. Mark Eastham, Secretary and Chief of Staff
- **Pathways to Prayer and Practice** – Mr. Tyler Henderon, Grant Director

Chrism Mass and Reaffirmation of Ordination Vows

Five congregations in the diocese served as hosts for the Chrism Mass and Reaffirmation of Ordination Vows, Tuesday of Holy Week: All Saints, Sharon Chapel, Alexandria; St. Peter's, Richmond; Leeds, Markham; Wicomico Parish, Wicomico Church; and Emmanuel, Harrisburg. We are grateful for the hospitality extended by each.

Diocesan House Staff Searches: Working closely with Chief of Staff, Mr. Mark Eastham, engaged and supported several processes to call new members of Diocesan Staff.

Clergy Orientation: An essential practice to ensure our clergy (newly ordained and those call to a new cures) are well informed regarding the resources and support provided by the diocesan office. During the Clergy Orientation the bishops met with the participants for lunch to engage in conversation and fellowship.

Diocesan Convention Workshops

Members of the Diocesan Staff collaboratively designed a series of workshops to be offered at the 231st Annual Convention.

- ***Hiring and Retaining Quality Staff: A Panel Discussion***, Will Dickinson, Laurel Loch, John Rohrs: Churches of all sizes and character benefit from finding (and retaining) quality staff, especially as tenures of both clergy and lay employees continue to shorten. This panel will explore good practices around search, especially with a Christian ethic.
- ***Telling Your Story: A Personal Approach to Discipleship***, Ricardo Sheppard: Discipleship is not only about learning the story of Jesus, it's also about recognizing and sharing how His story is alive in us. This workshop invites participants to explore their own faith journeys and discover the power of personal storytelling as a tool for witness, encouragement, and building authentic community. Together, we will reflect on Scripture, practice articulating our stories, and learn practical ways to share them in everyday life. Participants will leave with greater confidence to tell their story in ways that inspire others and deepen their own walk with Christ.
- ***Re-Imagining the Gift of Underutilized Church Property***, Nina Janopaul, President and Kat Turner, Secretary, VEREP: Learn about how congregations have found new uses for their underutilized properties and land for mission and financial sustainability. This workshop will share information about the resources available from VEREP, including discernment coaching, expert real estate advice and feasibility studies. VEREP has been able to leverage grants from Trinity NYC and Virginia Housing for robust consultant studies. We have identified experts in leasing, housing development, architecture and childcare.
- ***Pathways to Prayer & Practice: Engaging Children in Worship***, Tyler Henderson: An interactive, peer-to-peer listening session to gather parish perspectives on engaging children in worship. After a brief Pathways introduction, we'll focus on your experiences, needs, and ideas. What you share will guide Pathways priorities. We'll document themes and follow up with clear ways to stay involved.
- ***Rediscovering Our Church's Identity and Vocation Through Storytelling***, Shirley Smith Graham and the Committee for Congregational Vitality Description: The story of a congregation is always evolving. Creating space to discover our stories helps clarify who we are as disciples of Jesus and what God may be calling us to as our

missional purpose. We will spend time learning about types of stories and practice discovering our stories.

- **Telling Stories of Global Mission, Action that Strengthens Churches**, Shirley Smith Graham, Diane Wright, and Nancy Searby (congregational vitality and global mission): We will demonstrate how storytelling about global mission can be a way of energizing a congregation. Participants will have the opportunity to practice their own storytelling.
- **I Will, With God's Help: Equipping God's People for the Work of Racial Justice Time**, J. Lee Hill, Jr. and Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing Description: This workshop offers preview of foundational training for all who seek to actively dismantle racism and build a more just and loving world. It provides participants with a historical overview of the Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing, and a preview of essential tools to recognize and confront systemic racism and build beloved community. Through facilitated discussion, personal reflection, and practical exercises, participants will gain a deeper understanding of racial bias and preview concrete strategies for promoting racial justice and healing.
- **Godparents: Presence and Presents**, Lisa Kimball: Godparents are hidden treasures. Research consistently finds that young people who have a healthy mentor and role model demonstrate higher resilience in daily life. Godparents are natural mentors, and congregations can be communities of intentional support for healthy discipleship by taking godparenting seriously. This “no guilt zone” workshop is designed to (re)ignite enthusiasm and confidence in godparents, and to equip congregational leaders to nurture the potential of godparenting to form healthy intergenerational relationships and grow Christian Vocations.
- **We are all the Ministers of the Church: Embracing Vocational Discernment for all the Baptized**, Sarah Kye Price, Vocations Minister: The waters of baptism invite us to explore our vocation: the ways that God invites us to use our gifts, skills and experiences to serve the church and the world. This workshop embraces the idea that discernment of vocation is the work of all the baptized, and all are welcome to learn about and explore how vocational discernment impacts us in our roles with family, workplace, schools and communities.
- **Good Stewardship of Episcopal Funds**, Lynn Ivey, Executive Director, Trustees of the Funds; Alan Gayle, investment Committee Chair, Trustees of the Funds: Episcopal organizations with dollars to invest should practice stewardship aligned with Episcopal values: - Pooling money with fellow Episcopalians for mutual support - Minding the guidance of the church with respect to some investments (e.g. avoiding "blood diamonds" and for-profit prisons) - Aligning the types of investments with the needs for cash. Our panel will cover these and other topics that apply to all funds held by Episcopal organizations.
- **Youth and College Delegate Convention 101**, Greg Randall, Director of Shrine Mont Camps: Youth and college-aged delegates gather for informal discussion, Q&A,

Liturgy and Music

Preparations for Diocesan Liturgies continue to be led by The Rev. Crystal Harden. A great deal of support was provided to Shrine Mont Camps for their 100th Anniversary as well as 2 ordinations. Preparations are now underway for Diocesan Convention. It is with prayers of thanksgiving for Crystal's leadership in this ministry.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, may we continue to be a diocese that listens deeply, tells our stories boldly, and shares our gifts generously. Let us remember that every story—whether of joy or struggle—is a thread in the tapestry of God's redeeming work among us.

May we be faithful stewards of the mission of the church entrusted to us as we **restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ**

Faithfully,

The Rev. Canon Dorothy "d'Rue" Massey Hazel, *Canon to the Ordinary*