

## **Commission on Ministry Report to the 2025 Annual Convention**

In the Diocese of Virginia, the Commission on Ministry serves as an “umbrella” which includes several working committees and programs that advise and assist the Bishop in overseeing the Canonical responsibilities of Title III (“Ministry”) of the Canons; the determination of present and future opportunities and needs for the ministry of all baptized persons, and the design and oversight of the ongoing processes for recruitment, discernment, formation for ministry, and assessment of readiness for those preparing for Holy Orders as Deacons and Priests.

### **Commission on Ministry:**

This year, the Commission on Ministry has undertaken work in strengthening our understanding what is required to create a meaningful pathway of discernment and formation for those whose primary language is other than English. We understand this to be a thoughtful and community-engaged process, and we’ve undertaken care for two members of the COM who are closely embedded within our Spanish-speaking communities to help us move forward with clarity.

We are also working to strengthen the COM’s commitment to discernment and formation for both lay and ordained ministries. At our September COM retreat, Canon Ricardo Sheppard attended and we were able to gain some good momentum in ensuring that we are raising up leaders, both lay and ordained, to meet the emerging needs of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia.

### **Committee on Discernment:**

The discernment of vocation is a community-led and Spirit-filled process in the Diocese of Virginia. During 2025, we have held three filled Diocesan Discernment Retreat Weekends and staffed 18 Parish Discernment Committees for seekers for the diaconate and priesthood. At our Fall meeting, we re-affirmed that discernment is available for all Episcopalians, lay and ordained, seeking God’s call in their life. Our discernment retreats are for people seeking to discern their call to lay ministries as well as ordained ministries; we have staffed each retreat with lay leaders, deacons and priests for this reason. Similarly, our Parish Discernment Committees are also intended to be helpful to clarify community calls to lay ministries; however, there has been less call for discernment committees for lay leadership. We hope that the Convention is an opportunity for people to explore discernment of God’s call in many ways in their lives of faith.

### **Committee on Priesthood:**

The Committee on Priesthood is charged by the COM and Bishop to thoughtfully evaluate those applying for Postulancy for the Sacred Order of Priests before beginning formation, and to evaluate the formation of those engaging seminary studies for advancement to Candidacy. During 2025, the COP has thoughtfully engaged with 14 people who have, or will,

meet with the full committee for Postulancy interviews. In addition, six people were interviewed and advanced to Candidacy who are currently engaging in seminary study. Each interview reflects a thorough preparation and review of materials, shepherding by a member of the COP before each interview, and a full committee interview following up on written materials. Members of the COP serve faithfully, inquire earnestly and prayerfully support Postulants and Candidates throughout their vocational process. We also began holding quarterly information sessions during Ember weeks to answer questions about the priesthood for those early in discernment in order to help grow robust interest among those whom God may call to serve the Church.

### **Committee on the Diaconate:**

The Committee on the Diaconate is charged by the COM and Bishop to thoughtfully evaluate those applying for Postulancy for the Sacred Order of Deacons before beginning formation, and to evaluate the formation of those engaging studies through St. Phoebe School for advancement to Candidacy. This year's committee thoughtfully engaged with those discerning the vocation of deacon as well as making postulancy applications. Since formation is local, the COD has a role in helping to shape the nature and length of diaconal formation to be sure each Postulant and Candidate receives formation specific to their unique diaconal call. That means that some processes will take different timelines and directions, all in God's time. We are working to create the most flexibility for those whom God has called who are also working, caregiving and serving the needs of the world on a full-time basis. The Committee on Diaconate is also carefully considering how to advance Spanish language discernment and formation, with awareness of the needs within our communities for those whose primary language is Spanish. We're grateful for the addition of members of the COD who are helping us think through possibilities for future discernment and formation.

### **Diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains:**

An often overlooked working ministry of the Commission on Ministry are those who prepare, read, evaluate and offer feedback to those preparing for ordination as Deacons and Priests who sit for General Ordination Exams (priesthood) and Canonical Exams (diaconate) to evaluate their academic preparation for ministry in the areas identified in the Canons of The Episcopal Church. In the year between Conventions, the DBEC administered and evaluated Canonical exams for two deacons-in-formation (these exams are locally prepared) and read the results of the General Ordination Exams and offered feedback for six people preparing for the priesthood. Each member of the DBEC reads all exam responses and offers areas of particular strength and areas for ongoing formation, all of which provides insight for the COM Committees, Bishop, and Standing Committee regarding overall preparation for ministry.

**COM Programs:** In addition to these active committees, the Commission on Ministry also staffs three specific formation programs: the **Young Priest Initiative** which supports those under age 30 who are exploring calls to ordained ministry, including stipended discernment internships; the **Mid-Atlantic Parish Training Program** which offers a colloquy-based and stipended full time immersion experience to rising Senior Seminarians to more deeply engage in specialized areas of ministry development and the **St. Phoebe School for Deacons** which prepares those called to the vocation of Deacon through local formation encompassing academic, spiritual and practical formation (St. Phoebe School also prepares those supported for the diaconate from the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia).

Please visit the COM/Vocations Table in the Exhibit Hall for more information on the robust offerings of the Commission on Ministry for discernment and formation for ministry in the Diocese of Virginia. Our Diocesan Vocations Minister, the Rev. Dr. Sarah Kye Price, serves as the staff liaison for the Commission on Ministry and is available to answer questions and provide resources regarding the work of the Commission and our processes for discernment and formation for ministry.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah Kye Price". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sarah" being more prominent.

The Reverend Dr. Sarah Kye Price  
Vocations Minister