Commission on Congregational Missions

The Commission thanks you for the opportunity to guide and support the mission churches of our diocese. The current list of our twenty-five mission churches can be found on the diocesan website under the Commission on Congregational Missions. Five of the churches have not applied for an annual financial grant for 2027. All mission churches may apply for additional special project or special maintenance grants from reserves. At the time of publication, $51,753 was granted from these reserves for three churches (Christ Church in Lucketts, Grace in Red Hill, and St. Gabriel's in Leesburg).

The commission's focus this year has been three-fold: supporting the churches in their budget applications and the recommendation for annual grants; updating the commission's handbook; and starting the conversation with each mission church about each church having a calling (or vocation) and a future. Discerning the church's calling for this present time is an essential thing for growth and vitality. We outline three main paths to the future: growing in strength toward parish status; discovering collaborating partners that help make the ministry sustainable (numbers of people and finances); or acknowledging a limited lifespan due to the lack of growth and planning for the pastoral care of members. With twenty-five mission churches and a small group of volunteers and one diocesan staff person (who also guides Congregational Vitality), we have begun this process but hope to have a future path articulated by each church in 2027.

These conversations, which incorporate spiritual discernment, have led to innovative progress. St. John's Church in Columbia has entered an Episcopal Area Ministry with Grace Church in Goochland to care for the residents in their shared area. St. George's in Pine Grove (near Stanley) is working on a plan to redevelop as a community services center (restoring its original focus as a mountain mission) with reinvigorated worship as part of its rhythm of life. Moreover, three churches are engaged in a plan for revitalization and growth: Church of the Good Shepherd in Bluemont and La Iglesia de San Jose and La Iglesia de Cristo Rey (as they expand programs and work together). Churches with vision and capabilities need more than these to grow. They also need investment, so this year's budget reflects increases for congregations working a revitalization or redevelopment plan.

In addition, St. Gabriel's/San Gabriel's in Leesburg is matching its sense of mission to the physical buildings where church happens by relocating its English-language service from rented school facilities to the consecrated building of the former Church of the Redeemer Aldie.

The relationships among the Spanish-speaking mission churches, in collaboration with others, made possible our diocese's first celebration of Hispanic/Latino peoples and cultures, held on October 24, at St. Timothy's in Herndon. The Rev. Edgar Otero, the new Hispanic/Latino Minister, will be an essential partner in our work.

This work would not be possible without Bishop Bourlakas' supportive leadership and the able and dedicated efforts of the members of our commission: Dorothy DeJong, Ginny Ferguson, Elizabeth Kim, Kathie Panfil, Tomas Saucedo, the Rev. Stephen Haggerty, the Rev. Jennings Hobson, and the Rev. Emily Krudys. We especially remember an influential mentor and tireless leader of this work, Mrs. Linda Strickland, who died in 2026, and whose memory continues to inspire.

Submitted by,

(The Rev.) Shirley Smith Graham, Canon for Congregational Vitality and Staff Liaison for CCM