

## **Report of the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia to the 231st Annual Convention**

**November 6-8, 2025**

Since last year's Annual Convention, significant work has been accomplished in multiple areas including:

- Constitution and Canons
- Staffing
- Shrine Mont Camps
- Communications
- Archives
- Stewardship

Following is an update on each of these areas.

### **Annual Convention**

The 230<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia—"Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples."—laid the groundwork for the 231<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia, which will be held at the Fredericksburg Convention Center (FCC) in Fredericksburg, VA on November 6-8, 2025.

Due to delegate feedback regarding the positives of this location, (centrally located, lower hotel costs, free parking, and ample space for exhibitors, workshops, and fellowship) we have signed a two-year contract with the FCC for 2026 and 2027, allowing us to lock in 2025 rates. Our goals for convention are to provide a comfortable space to conduct the business of our diocese, to learn and grow together, and to have fellowship with one another.

New to the 231<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention will be:

- an all-delegate reception Friday evening to allow for more fellowship among attendees
- increased table work among delegates to allow attendees to be more active and involved
- an art show by members of the Association of Visual Artists of the Diocese of Virginia

These enhancements were added based on feedback given in evaluations of last year's Convention.

### **Constitution and Canons Work Group**

In 2024, Bishop Stevenson appointed a Constitution and Canons Work Group to conduct a comprehensive review of our Constitution and Canons, the results of which were approved amendments at the 2024 Annual Convention as well as the first reading of the Constitutional amendments. The amendments to the Constitution will be presented again at the 2025 Convention for final approval. Primarily, the work group's focus was on replacing gendered language throughout the document and removing and/or changing obsolete language, ensuring that we are up to date in our wording.

Bishop Stevenson has appointed a work group to conduct the second phase of this project. This year's group will address more substantive revisions to be presented at this year's Annual Convention.

Special thanks go to this year's work group members:

- The Rev. J. Michael Cadaret, St. Bartholomew's, Richmond
- The Rev. Emily Krudys, Our Savior, Montpelier
- The Rev. Jay Morris, Aquia
- The Rev. Sven vanBaars, Abingdon, White Marsh
- Mr. Scott Caulkins, Church of our Savior, Charlottesville, chair
- Ms. Allison Otto, St. George's, Arlington
- Mr. Garway Bright—Christ Church, Glen Allen
- Mr. Trevor Cox, St. James's, Richmond
- The Rev. Amanda Kotval, St. Paul's, Ivy
- Mr. J.P. Causey, Jr., St. John's, West Point, advisor to the work group

### **Diocesan Staffing**

Since our last Convention, we have welcomed to the diocesan staff the following new employees:

- Mr. Tyler Henderson, Pathways to Prayer and Practice Grant Director
- The Rev. Ricardo Sheppard, Canon for Discipleship
- Ms. Lesley Birdie, Executive Assistant to the Bishops
- The Rt. Rev. Mark Bourlakas, Assistant Bishop
- Ms. Kristen Hester, Assistant to Assistant Bishop Mark Bourlakas
- Ms. Emily Davis, Interim Director of Advancement
- Mr. Gregory Randall, Director of Shrine Mont Camps

Special thanks go to Ms. Heidi Kim who served as Interim Canon for Discipleship.

### **Shrine Mont Camps**

The 2025 season of Shrine Mont Camps was ably led by Ms. Mary Beth Abplanalp, Interim Director. Sincere thanks go to Mary Beth and all the camp team for their hard work in providing a safe, fun experience for campers. Mary Beth also serves as Director of Connections for Ministry Architects, and it is in that role that she and her team oversaw an overview of all systems and processes associated with our camping program. Serving as interim camp director allowed her to experience the camping program firsthand and thus make edits and refinements to her consulting work which will serve our incoming director, Mr. Greg Randall, well. Greg was able to be present at camp for a significant portion of the summer, and he has hit the road running as he plans for a successful 2026 Shrine Mont Camps experience.

A separate, comprehensive Shrine Mont Camps report can be found in the Convention Annual Report packet.

## **Shrine Mont Camps Reconciliation Process**

Led by the Rev. Richard Blackburn, Senior Consultant for Systems Thinking Ministry, a process for reconciliation among stakeholders of Shrine Mont Camps was offered over the past year.

The multi-step process involved:

- Telephone interviews
- Educational workshops
- Small group structure dialogue
- Final reconciliation session

Bishop Stevenson will share a communication with the diocese outlining in greater detail this process and next steps.

## **Communications**

The year 2025 was a season of transition and growth for Diocesan Communications. Even amid change, the Communications Team guided the Diocese of Virginia through an incredible year of creativity, innovation, and service. Our work focused on telling the story of the diocese and equipping congregations, ministries, and diocesan organizations with the tools they need to share the Gospel across digital communications platforms.

This report highlights our work in three key areas:

- **Storytelling**
- **Videography & Photography**
- **Resourcing**

### **Storytelling & News Releases**

- Published **27 feature stories** highlighting congregations, ministries, and diocesan staff
- Released **61 news updates** covering events, milestones, and diocesan announcements

### **Videography & Photography**

- Produced **17 videos** sharing stories and updates from across the diocese
- Completed **30 photography visits** to congregations, ministries, and diocesan services

### **Resourcing**

- Launched the **Diocesan Photography Project**, offering 24 annual slots for congregations and ministries to book professional photography
- Partnered with **10 congregations and ministries** to create modern, user-friendly websites
- Supported **6 congregations and ministries** with new or refreshed brand identities

- Produced the first **parish welcome video**, establishing a model for future use in 2026
- Hosted **12 expert-led communications workshops** through our partnership with *Caffeinated Church*

Sincere thanks go to Easton Davis and the entire Beloved Media LLC team for their leadership and oversight of our comprehensive communications program.

### **Registrar and Historiographer**

A separate, comprehensive report regarding the work of the registrar and historiographer can be found in your Convention Annual Report packet. I would especially like to thank Registrar and Historiographer Nathan Madison for his continued work in digitizing our diocesan records. Nathan has already overseen the digitization of thousands of pages of diocesan documents, and this work will continue for years to come.

Additionally, Nathan led an effort to install chronologically all portraits of our Bishops Diocesan on the second floor of our diocesan offices. With each portrait is a plaque with a QR code taking one to a full history of that bishop. Recently, a portrait was added of Bishop Susan Goff, who served as Ecclesiastical Authority from 2018 to 2022.

### **Stewardship and Development**

End of year giving (2024) through the Bishop's Appeal provided a strong turnout for our Bishop's Appeal grants raising over \$20,000.

Legacy giving continues to be a focus of our work with congregations as populations age and churches require diversified giving. Our bi-weekly [e-newsletter](#) continues to provide useful information in a timely manner.

This year's annual giving theme, *We Walk By Faith*, is taken from 2 Corinthians 5:7. It continues our focus on missional storytelling. It offers an opportunity to explicitly focus on ways in which congregations have deep trust in what cannot be seen yet provide courageous hope. The diocesan [webpage](#) is updated with the new curriculum and graphics.

### **Closing**

None of this good work gets done without the daily efforts of our diocesan staff. We are blessed to have a team of talented and hardworking individuals who strive daily to live into our mission: Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples.

Respectfully submitted by:

Mark Eastham  
Secretary and Chief of Staff