

Report of the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia to the 232nd Annual Convention

November 5-7, 2026

The 2026 year has been a time of convention planning, staff reorganization, communications growth, and personal discernment. Below are updates in each of these areas.

Annual Convention

The 231st Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia—“Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples. TELLING OUR STORIES. SHARING OUR GIFTS.”—laid the groundwork for the 232nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia, which will be held at the Fredericksburg Convention Center (FCC) in Fredericksburg, VA on November 5-7, 2026. This year’s theme is —“Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples. READ THE BOOK. TELL THE STORY.”

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 Fredericksburg Convention Center 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 232nd Annual Convention will be:

- an all-delegate reception Friday evening at the Virginia Credit Union Stadium to allow for more fellowship among attendees
- enhanced convention experience for youth delegates
- increased exhibitor participation

Diocesan Personnel

As was noted in communications sent to the diocese in late June, a number of current staff members have taken on new roles and responsibilities. The Rev’d Canon Dr. J. Lee Hill, Jr. has been called to be Canon to the Ordinary and simultaneously serves in the newly created role of Dean of the Diocesan Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing.

The Canon to the Ordinary is a primary advisor to the Bishop Diocesan in administrative, canonical, and pastoral matters relating to clergy and congregations. By assigning Dr. Hill a broader racial justice and healing role, Bishop Stevenson emphasized the diocese’s strong emphasis on these ministries.

Supporting Dr. Hill in this expanded ministry layout is the Rev’d Dr. Tammy Lewis, who transitioned from her role as administrative assistant to assume greater responsibilities as Minister for Justice and Repair. Additionally, Bishop Stevenson called the Rev’d Edgar Otero as Minister for Hispanic/Latino Communities. This position also reports to Dr. Hill.

The Rev’d Dr. Sarah Kye Price has been promoted to the position of Canon of Vocations and Clergy Wellness handling expanded responsibilities within the area of vocational development, including canonical matters of clergy conduct (Title IV) issues.

The Rev'd Shirley Smith Graham has been promoted to the position of Canon for Congregational Vitality, an expanded portfolio dedicated to helping local churches assess vitality and promote growth.

Finally, the Rev'd Will Dickinson has been promoted to the position of Canon for Clergy Transitions expanding his role in clergy transitions to include additional leadership formation for clergy. He guides clergy through crucial chapters of personal discernment and coordinates the Connecting in Ministry program, which anchors newly ordained clergy or those entering unfamiliar ministry settings.

This collaborative alignment of staff members ensures that crucial canonical and pastoral needs—from conflict resolution to empowering the work of congregations to continuing formation and education for clergy—have dedicated, expert managers.

Additionally, in the area of personnel, yearly evaluations were completed for all diocesan staff in 2025, and the process has continued into 2026. Based on evaluation results, raises and bonuses were assigned to individual staff members.

Salary bands, based on an analysis of similar position across the southeastern portion of the U.S., have been created for each position with a goal of getting all salaries to the 50th percentile or above within their salary band.

Communications

Sincere thanks go to Easton Davis and the entire Beloved Media LLC team for their leadership and oversight of our comprehensive communications program. The Communications Team tells the story of the Diocese of Virginia through modern communications channels. Today, the Church's "red front doors" are increasingly digital, calling us to adapt how we communicate and meet people where they are. Through thoughtful strategy and compelling storytelling, the communications team helps advance the Diocese's mission to love Jesus, embody justice, and be disciples.

The Communications Team brings together professional communicators with expertise in communications strategy, project management, graphic design, website development, videography, photography, and story writing. They lead external communications for the Office of the Bishop while partnering with congregations and diocesan ministries to amplify the meaningful work happening throughout the Diocese.

Their work includes news releases, feature stories, email campaigns, social media content, website development, photography, and audio and video production. They also provide strategic communications counsel to the Bishop's staff, diocesan ministries, and local churches, helping ensure our shared story is communicated clearly, consistently, and effectively.

The Communications Team oversees all communications for Annual Convention, including presentations, graphic design, audiovisual production, and video content.

Beyond diocesan-wide communications, they maintain regular office hours to provide consultation and hands-on support to congregations and ministries. A significant focus of this work is helping churches strengthen their digital presence and tell their stories through website development, rebranding, professional photography, and strategic communications guidance.

Since January 2026, the Communications Team has created:

- 38 feature stories
- 72 news releases
- 6 feature videos
- 88 email campaigns
- 21 church visits for photography
- 26 photography visits for other events
- Daily social media content
- Daily website updates
- Daily communications strategy and project management support for Bishop's Staff, diocesan ministries, and churches across the Diocese of Virginia

Through these efforts, the Communications Team works to strengthen connections across the diocese, equip local congregations and ministries, and ensure the story of God's work in the Diocese of Virginia reaches both our diocese and the world.

In Closing

It was with a heart full of gratitude for seven wonderful years of service to the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia that I offered my resignation as Secretary and Chief of Staff to Bishop Stevenson effective December 31, 2026. I cannot adequately express what an honor it has been to serve as Secretary and Chief of Staff of the diocese where I was confirmed over 40 years ago. It has been a privilege to work collaboratively with our dedicated staff in support of the true saints of God, the clergy and lay member of our churches who daily embody our mission to “Love Jesus. Embody justice. Be disciples.”

Finally, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to my assistant, Bill Martin, who will also be retiring at the end of the year. Bill's tenure on the diocesan staff far exceeds mine and his historical knowledge will be hard to replace. Bill has done his job with professionalism, kindness, and a heart for Jesus. I hope you will join me in offering thanks for his ministry in the Diocese of Virginia.

Respectfully submitted by:

Mark Eastham
Secretary and Chief of Staff