

Commission on Ministry

Charge of the Commission

It is the responsibility and charge of the Commission on Ministry (COM) to advise and assist the Bishop in the implementation of The Episcopal Church canons related to Lay and Ordained Ministry in the diocese; the determination of present and future opportunities and needs for the ministry of all baptized persons; and the design and oversight of the ongoing process for recruitment, discernment, formation for ministry, and assessment of readiness. (Title III.2.2)

In the past year, the COM has had the privilege and joy of working together to support those who are discerning their call to serve Christ and His church in both Lay and Ordained Ministry, and to make recommendations to the Bishop on behalf of those who seeking to take steps to serve in particular ministries.

Path Discernment Retreat

To help deepen our work, the COM held its annual *Path Discernment Retreat* at Trinity Center this past September. Eight participants prayerfully gathered to listen more deeply to how God may be calling them to a shift in their ministry. Those gathered listened to talks, and participated in small conversations about how God may be leading them. These conversations were rich and good. All will return to their parishes with renewed focus and interest in what next steps they will take. Several of those in the process towards ordination participated in past Path Retreats. It has been suggested that *Path* expand to two retreats (either concurrent or separate) to allow those discerning ordained and lay ministry calls to focus more clearly. This important program and work will continue to evolve.

Postulancy, Candidacy and Ordination

The COM monitors the process and progress of those who are discerning and being formed for a call to ordained ministry, making recommendations to the Bishop along the way. This included Postulancy Interviews held in November at Trinity Center.

Currently there are fourteen persons in process seeking ordained ministry in the Diocese of East Carolina. Ten are seeking ordination to the priesthood; and four are seeking the vocational diaconate. This is the most number of persons in the process in our diocese in anyone's memory. It is exciting to see how the Holy Spirit is working.

In addition to those currently in the process, four persons were ordained as deacons at St. Mary's Kinston this past Spring. Rhonda Thomas was ordained as Vocational Deacon. The other three, Ashley Simpson, Whit Stroud and Greg Smith, were subsequently ordained as Priests later in their local parishes. Congratulations to them all!

Formation

Nine of the persons in process now are actively involved in formation and education. All four of Diaconate Postulants and Candidates are participating in the "Alternative Clergy Training at Seawanee" (called ACTS). This is a "low residency" formation program using online/virtual courses, and on campus intensives. Two Candidates for the Priesthood are also participating in ACTS, with a focus in priestly ministry. All of these persons also meet regularly with the Diocesan

School for Ministry. Three others are attending full time residential seminary. There is one Candidate who has already graduated from seminary and is working through the remainder of the canonical requirements.

Gratitude

This is an exciting time to be on the Commission on Ministry. There is exciting work yet to be done. I would like to thank the current members of COM for their good and faithful work:

Rev'd Daniel Cenci

Rev'd Ralph Clark

Ms. Florence Ellen Cowden

Rev'd Nathan Finnin

Rev'd Jody Greenwood

Rev'd Caleb Lee

Ms. Ginger Powell

Mrs. Carla Richardson

Mr. Alex Russell

Rev'd Deacon Mary Shields

Rev'd Cindy Simpson

Rev'd Deacon Bobby Weatherly

Many thanks also to the Rev'd Canon Mollie Roberts, who sits *ex officio* to advise and support our work.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev'd Dr. John B. Pollock, Chair

December 22, 2022