Diocese of East Carolina
Executive Council
Meeting January 16,
2026 10:00 a.m.
Zoom

Those in attendance: Bishop Robert Skirving, Rev. Tammy Lee, Rev. Josiah Daniels, Rev. Tommy Drake, Rev. Gray Hodsdon, Rev. Tom Warren, Rev. Eric Grubb, Robert Adams, Barbara Crumbacker, Bob Riche, Richard Pearce, Ginger Powell, Mary Duane Hale, John Rozier, Debbie Luke, Tess Judge, Joan Geiszler-Ludlum, Mary Duane Hale, LaTonya Smith, Stephanie Allen, Christopher Williamson, April Caballero, John Koch

Welcome: Bishop Robert Skirving

Reflection & Prayer: Bishop Skirving reads and reflects on Acts 10:34-43 (NRSVue)

Topics of Discussion **:**

Bishop Transition Update (Bishop Rob Skirving and Mary Duane Hale)

a) Preparation for transition to Bishop-elect Fisher who will start mid-March.

b) Mary Duane Hale provided an update on the transition reporting that all consents for Bishop-elect Fisher are in. Ordination is scheduled for May 23rd at Riverfront Convention Center in New Bern at 10:00 a.m. Plans also include farewell events for Bishop Rob Skirving in each deanery during his last six weeks.

Diocesan Convention Review and Proposal (Bishop Rob Skirving)

a) The committee presented a review of the 2025 convention and proposed plans for 2026.

b) Bishop Rob Skirving noted that expenses were higher than budgeted but so was income. The cost to the diocese was about $11,000 versus the budgeted $6,000.

c) The council approved returning to Goldsboro for the 2026 Convention. A motion was made (Mary Duane Hale) and seconded (Robert Adams) to adopt the proposal with the removal of the fourth and fifth bullet points. The motion passed unanimously.

d) Bishop Rob Skirving shared that hotel reservations and convention center arrangements will be handled now, while remaining planning will be completed by a future committee, leaving major decisions to Bishop-elect Fisher.

Trinity Center Board of Managers Request (Terry Smith, Phillip Craig and John Koch)

a) The Trinity Center requested funding for a master plan and feasibility study for a potential capital campaign.

b) Phillip Craig reported that Trinity Center's programs are strong, but the aging facilities require major upgrades, and current funding models are not sustainable. He asked the Executive Council to partner in launching a capital campaign, beginning with $80,000 for a master plan and feasibility study. John Koch explained these studies

would assess needs and fundraising capacity, and Terry Smith requested council participation in forming a committee to lead the effort.

Treasurer's Report (Tess Judge)

a) Presented the Financial Report for 2025

b) Pledge income closed at 96.89% of the adjusted budget, and only $25,000 was needed from the Foreman Fund instead of the budgeted $50,000. Total expenses were 92.47% of budget, improved from 99% the previous year. The youth budget was fully spent due to higher-than-expected participation. The Bishop search and transition has used approximately $85,000 of its $223,000 budget. Overall, the diocese met its adjusted budget without using all designated resources, reflecting positive financial management.

c) Parish Pledging: It was reported that some parishes have been altering the pledge form and using their own calculation instead of the standard diocesan formula. La Sagrada Familia also requested permission to spread their pledge over three years due to receiving a large one-time donation. After discussion, the council agreed to ask the Assessment and Accountability SubCommittee to develop a process for addressing parishes that modify the standard formula, and will bring recommendations to the March meeting.

Staff Updates (LaTonya Smith)

a) LaTonya reported on staffing changes, including welcoming April Caballero as Executive Assistant to the Bishop. She noted that Sara Tavela has moved to long-term disability and is no longer employed, and that Fred Clarkson is now full-time Priest-in-Charge at La Sagrada Familia and no longer diocesan staff, though his email remains active. The diocese continues to operate with a smaller staff, with remaining team members adapting flexibly to meet needs.

Transition Ministry Updates (Stephanie Allen)

a) Stephanie reported several clergy transitions across the diocese. Rev. Justin Ivatts has been called as Rector of Christ Church, Elizabeth City, beginning mid-March, and Rev. Jeffrey Roy will begin as Rector at St. Andrew's, Morehead City, also in mid-March. Open positions remain at Trinity, Lumberton; St. Philip's, Southport; St. John's, Fayetteville; and in three assistant roles. She also noted upcoming leadership development gatherings for new wardens and vestry members scheduled for January and February

Bishop's Update (Bishop Rob Skirving)

a) Bishop Skirving reported that much of his recent focus since September has been on Convention planning. He noted that 15 individuals are currently in the ordination process, with up to **six** candidates expected for ordination this spring. He also shared that he will move out of his office by the end of January and out of Rosevear by Easter week in preparation for Bishop-elect Fisher's arrival

Action Items

1) **Joan Geiszler-Ludlum and Bishop Rob Skirving:** Draft a resolution regarding Trinity Center and committee formation.

Trinity Center Board of Managers: Executive Council would prefer Trinity Center to obtain multiple bids for master plan and feasibility study.

2) **Tammy Lee:** Contact Nathan to reconvene the committee on parish pledging formula.

Parish Pledging Committee:

a) Meet before March 6 th to serve on Trinity Center committee.

b) Develop a process for addressing parishes that modify the standard formula.

c) Draft a letter to congregations that have modified the formula. 3) **Executive Council Members:**

a) Consider volunteering to serve on the Trinity Center committee.
b) Hold March 6th for the next Executive Council meeting.
c) Hold April 16-17 for the Executive Council Retreat.

Next Meeting (*Tentative):* March 6th (via Zoom) 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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On January 20, 2026, an electronic vote was initiated regarding the Trinity Center Resolution. A majority of Executive Council members submitted affirmative votes, and the resolution was adopted via email on January 27, 2026.

RESOLUTION OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA
AUTHORIZING THE TRINITY CENTER BOARD OF MANAGERS
TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

RESOLVED, the Executive Council of the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina, in a duly convened meeting, authorizes the Trinity Center Board of Managers:

a. To spend up to $80,000 from the Foreman Fund to engage a consultant to develop a master plan for Trinity Center after soliciting at least two bids from qualified consultants, and a consultant to study the feasibility of a capital campaign to raise the funds to implement the master plan after soliciting at least two bids from qualified consultants ;

b. To work with designated members of the Executive Council in the review of the results of respective studies and report to Executive Council within six months.

Adopted this **27th** day of **January, 2026** .

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Clerk of Executive Council

Diocese of East Carolina
Executive Council
Meeting March 6, 2026
10:00 a.m.
Zoom

Those in attendance: Rob Skirving, Nathan Finnin, Robert Adams, Barbara Crumbacker, Bob Riche, Richard Pearce, Mary Duane Hale, John Rozier, Debbie Luke, Tess Judge, LaTonya Smith, April Caballero, John Koch, Tommy Drake

Welcome: Rob Skirving opened the meeting and provided updates on absences: Tammy Lee is on sabbatical, Josiah Daniels is on parental leave, Gray Hodsdon is attending a conference, and Tom Warren is attending a funeral.

Reflection & Prayer: The group reflected on *Mark 4: 35-41 NRSVue*

Topics of Discussion **:**

1) **Verification of Quorum and Acceptance of Agenda (Rob Skirving):**
   a) Rob announced that there was no quorum, with only two of the five priests present. The group could receive reports but could not vote; they could, however, formulate actions for future approval.

2) **Acceptance of Minutes (Rob Skirving)**
   a) Rob asked if there were any changes to the January 16, 2026 meeting minutes. No changes were offered, and he stated that the minutes will be posted.

3) **Reports and Discussions (Mary Duane Hale and Nathan Finnin)**
   a) Mary Duane presented the following topics:
      1. The Farewell to Bishop Rob Skirving is planned for May 16.
      2. The Ordination of Bishop-elect Sarah Fisher is planned for May 23.
      3. Volunteers and contributions are encouraged through the diocesan website.
   b) Nathan presented an overview of parish assessment categories from the Sub-Committee on Assessments & Accountability
      1. Meeting or exceeding the 10% pledge target
      2. Below 10% without a formula change
      3. Using a modified formula

      Nathan recommended the following communications:
      1. Thank-you letter for parishes contributing at or above 10%
      2. Thank-you letter for parishes contributing under 10%, with an invitation to discuss ways the Diocese can assist
      3. Thank-you letter for parishes using a modified formula, requesting clarification on how the number was determined and including a reminder of the covenant agreement

      Nathan also recommended in-person follow-up meetings involving Executive Council Staff, and Parish Leadership.

4) **Treasurer's Report (Tess Judge):**
   a) Tess shared that early projections for 2026 reflect a slight budget shortfall of approximately $29,616, with a potential offset of $25,000 from the Foreman Fund, leaving a remaining gap of about $4,900.
   b) Council agreed to publish a pledge update after March 31 for transparency.
   c) The annual audit will be initiated by Carr, Riggs & Ingram, P.L.L.C.

5) **Elections and Retreat Planning (Rob Skirving):**
   1) Proposal for the Election of Deputies to the 2027 General Convention
      a) Elections must occur in 2026, with a deadline of July 2026, per canons.
      b) Chris Williamson will prepare the nominations page on the diocesan website

   2) The proposed six-step process includes:
      a) Creating the website with information on how to submit nominations, and posting nominations as received.
      b) Widely inviting nominations through all communication channels.
      c) Extending invitations to those who served as deputies and alternates in 2024.
      d) Receiving nominations by midnight on Monday, April 13.
      e) Electing Deputies and Alternates during the Executive Council retreat on April 16-27, if a quorum is present; otherwise, conducting the election by email immediately afterward.
      f) Publicly communicating election results immediately following the election.
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   b) **Trinity Center Retreat (Rob Skirving):**
      1. April Caballero will coordinate with Trinity Center to ensure retreat can begin earlier on Thursday, April 16.
      2. Mary Duane Hale confirmed that Tammy Lee will be able to attend.

6) **Diocesan House Staff Reports (LaTonya Smith and Rob Skirving):**
   a) LaTonya reports Bishop-elect's office is being cleaned and repainted.
   b) Rob announced the following:
      - License renewal forms have been completed and received for both Licensed to Serve and Canonically Resident, Non-Parochial Clergy.
      - Invitations for Bishop-elect Fisher's ordination have been emailed to all clergy through Realm.
      - The Coordinator of Communications position will remain open until Bishop-elect Fisher's arrival so she may determine how she would like to staff that role.
      - This season includes several transitions in clergy formation (e.g., Postulant → Candidate, Candidate → Ordinand) and provided a brief overview of the process.
      - Bishop-elect Fisher is in the process of relocating to North Carolina. She will begin work on March 15, but will not be in the office until after the House of Bishops meeting (March 17-23). Her first day in the office will be March 25.

7) **Trinity Center Updates (John Koch):**
   a) John shared:
      - Completion of the new bungalow
      - Strong camp registration numbers

- Ongoing recruitment for full-time Administrative Assistant
- Scheduling of the first Capital Campaign Committee meeting is underway

8) Closing:

The meeting concluded with a prayer for the Diocese during this time of transition and gratitude for the council's collaborative work.

Next Meeting *:* Executive Council Retreat - Thursday, April 16th and Friday, 17th

Diocese of East Carolina
Executive Council Retreat
Meeting April 16, 2026 1:00 p.m.
Trinity Center, Pine Knoll Shores, NC

Those in attendance: Rob Skirving, Sarah Fisher, Tammy Lee, Tommy Drake, Nathan Finnin, Gray Hodsdon, Tom Warren, Bob Adams, Barbara Crumbacker, Bob Riche, Rick Pearce, Ginger Powell, Mary Duane Hale, John Rozier, Debbie Luke, Tess Judge, Joan Geiszler-Ludlum, Jordy Whichard, LaTonya Smith, Stephanie Allen, Chris Williamson, April Caballero, and John Koch

Welcome: Rob Skirving called the meeting to order and offered words of welcome, extending a special welcome to Bishop-elect Sarah Fisher. Rob Skirving outlined the flow of the retreat, noting the transition from formal business into retreat space later in the day.

Introductions: Participants introduced themselves, noting parish affiliation and voting status.

Reflection & Prayer: Rob Skirving led the Council in reflection, grounding the retreat in the propers for the Feast of Peter Williams Cassey and Anna Besant Cassey. He offered historical context on the life and ministry of Peter Williams Cassey, including his ties to St. Cyprian's, New Bern, and the broader legacy of African American Episcopal leadership. Scripture readings included:

- Collect for Peter Williams Cassey & Anna Besant Cassey
- Proverbs 22:1–9 (read by Ginger)
- Psalm 13 (read together)
- Matthew 5:13–16 (read by Tammy)

Topics of Discussion **:**

1) Verification of Quorum and Acceptance of Agenda (Rob Skirving):

a) Quorum: Confirmed

b) Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda was made and seconded; approved unanimously.

c) Minutes: Motion to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2026 Executive Council meeting was made and seconded; approved unanimously.

d) Bishop Skirving invited discussion for future consideration regarding making approved Executive Council minutes more publicly accessible.

2) Reports and Discussions (Mary Duane Hale and Nathan Finnin)

a) Mary Duane presented the following topics:

1. Bishop-elect Sarah Fisher has arrived; transition information is available on the diocesan website.
2. Farewell celebration for Bishop Skirving scheduled for Saturday, May 16, at Trinity Center.
3. Ordination of Bishop-elect Sarah Fisher is on May 23, to be held at the Riverfront Convention Center, New Bern (RSVPs via website).
4. Opportunities available for video tributes and gifts in honor of Bishop Skirving and Bishop-elect Fisher.

b) Nathan presented an overview of parish assessment categories from the Sub-Committee on Assessments & Accountability

1. Council had previously approved three assessment communication letters:
   - Parishes meeting or exceeding the 10% covenant
   - Parishes contributing less than 10%
   - Parishes using an altered formula
2. Intentions of Letters
   - Letters are intended as relationship-building and fact-finding, not punitive.
   - Nathan and Tess are finalizing distribution lists and clarity of forms.

3) Treasurer's Report (Tess Judge)

a) Tess provided an update on 2026 diocesan pledges received. A financial report was distributed. Discussion highlighted parishes with limited clergy or financial capacity. Bishop Skirving suggested moving the St. Cyprian's line item under Trustees. Discussion acknowledged the pastoral and financial tension faced by very small congregations in balancing diocesan assessments and clergy supply.

4) Capital Campaign and Trinity Center Report (Rob Skirving and John Koch)

a) Tom Warren gave the Capital Campaign Report: Initial joint meeting held between Executive Council and Trinity Center Board of Managers Capital campaign feasibility and potential consultants discussed (brainstorming ideas of who to engage in conversations.)

b) Executive Council Capital Campaign Representatives: Rob Skirving, Tom Warren, Tommy Drake, and Joan Geiszler-Ludlum.

c) John Koch gave the Trinity Center Report

a) RFP issued to capital campaign firms, including CapDev and the Gail Perry Group

b) Emphasis placed on the importance of a feasibility study Bishop Skirving also referenced the Foreman Fund and the original intent to reserve funds for staffing support linked to a future capital campaign.

5) Diocesan House Staff Reports (LaTonya Smith and Stephanie Allen):

a) LaTonya Smith reported staffing level currently appropriate with arrival of Bishop-elect

b) Stephanie Allen announced the following:

Clergy Transitions:

- *St. Andrew's on the Sound, Wilmington* : BJ Buracker (July)
- *St. Philip's, Southport* : Rev. Glenn Walton (July)
- *St. Andrew's, Morehead City* : Jeff Roy (March)
- *Christ Church / Elizabeth City* : Justin Ivatts (March)
- Other congregations remain in discernment or search phases

Ordinations Scheduled for Transitional Diaconate on May 2, 2026

- Stephen Thomas
- Gary Fetter
- Nick Kohlmann

Clergy Conference Scheduled for April 20 - 22, 2026

6) Other Business (Rob Skirving)

a) Rob Skirving announced the Executive Council Vacancies (until next Diocesan Convention):
Clergy — Pamlico Deanery
Clergy — Cape Fear Deanery
Lay — At Large

7) Election of Deputies to the 2027 General Convention (Rob Skirving)

a) Rob Skirving directed the Council to agenda materials outlining the election process: Election conducted by plurality, per Canon; Canonical residence to break ties (no objections); Travel arrangements to be coordinated through the Office of the Bishop and Executive Assistant;
Expenses to be processed through Chair of Deputation and Executive Assistant

b) Each member voted

Action: Executive Council elected Deputies and Alternates to the 82nd General Convention.

Election Results :
Clergy Deputies: Josiah Daniels, Tammy Lee, Caleb Lee, and Paul Canady
Alternate Clergy Deputies: Matt Overturf
Lay Deputies: Tess Judge, Joan Geiszler-Ludlum, Tom Tully, and Juniper LaNunziata
Alternate Late Deputies: Tyron Francis, Hannah Hutchens

8) Motion to Adjourn:

a) A motion to adjourn was made and carried unanimously. Adjourned: 3:22 p.m.

DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA
Executive Council Meeting
10:00am - Friday, July 24 , 2026
In Person

MINUTES

Those in Attendance: Bishop Sarah Fisher, Tammy Lee, Josiah Daniels, Tommy Drake, Nathan Finnin, Gray Hodsdon, Tom Warren, Bob Adams, Barbara Crumbacker, Bob Riche, Rick Pearce, Ginger Powell, Mary Duane Hale, John Rozier, Debbie Luke, Tess Judge, Joan Geiszler-Ludlum, Jordy Whichard, LaTonya Smith, Stephanie Allen, John Koch, and April Caballero.

Opening and Welcome
Bishop Sarah Fisher opened the meeting with prayer. The Sunday lectionary passage, Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52, was read by Ginger Powell, and Council members participated in discussion and reflection on the scripture.

Verification of Quorum and Approval of Agenda
A quorum was confirmed, and the agenda was accepted without objection.

Approval of Previous Minutes
The minutes of the April 16, 2026 Executive Council meeting were presented for approval. Rick Pearce moved to approve the minutes as presented. Tammy Lee seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Reports

Finance and Administration Report
LaTonya Smith, Director of Finance and Administration

Staffing Update: LaTonya Smith reported that Litisha has left her position as Administrative Assistant. Recruitment efforts are underway to fill the position. In addition, interviews are being conducted for a General Administrative Assistant who will support diocesan staff with data entry, correspondence, and other administrative functions.

Phone System Upgrade: Bishop Sarah reported that the Diocese's new phone system is expected to arrive soon. The upgraded system will provide greater automation and allow staff to access their office phone lines remotely, improving accessibility and communication while working away from the office.

Leadership Development Report
Canon Stephanie Allen, Canon for Leadership Development

Clergy Appointments: The following clergy have recently begun new ministry positions:

- Rev. BJ Buracker, Rector of St. Andrew's on the Sound, Wilmington, began in July.
- Rev. Lin Walton, Rector of St. Philip's, Southport, began in July.
- Rev. Nick Kohlmann, Curate/Associate at St. Paul's, Wilmington, began in June.
- Rev. Gary Fetter, Deacon-in-Charge/Priest-in-Charge at St. Paul's, Clinton, began in July.
- Stephen Thomas, Quarter-Time Deacon at St. James, Wilmington, began in July.
- Rev. Gretchen Ratterree will begin serving as Priest-in-Charge of Trinity, Lumberton during the first week of August.
- Rev. Dr. Jame Reho will begin serving as Rector of St. John's, Fayetteville in mid-September.

Canon Stephanie noted that Rev. Gary Fetter is seeking priests willing to celebrate Eucharist twice monthly at St. Paul's, Clinton. Council members were asked to share names of clergy who may be available to assist.

Stephen Thomas will serve in a bi-vocational ministry while continuing his full-time career as an engineer. He is being supervised by Rev. Elizabeth Phillips, whose experience in both diocesan and parish ministry brings significant gifts to the role.

Priest Ordination: A priest ordination is scheduled for Saturday, December 12, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. at St. Mary's Church, Kinston.

Assistant Priest Openings: T he Diocese currently has four openings for assistant priests:

- Christ Church, New Bern
- St. John's, Wilmington
- St. Mary's, Kinston
- Christ Church, Elizabeth City

Canon Stephanie is working with Chris on social media promotion for these positions and encouraged members to share postings through their networks.

Part-Time Clergy Opportunities:

Trinity, Chocowinity is currently interviewing a candidate for a part-time Priest-in-Charge position.

St. Thomas, Oriental is seeking a part-time Priest-in-Charge. A parish profile is expected to be released soon. Canon Stephanie noted the parish's location in a charming fishing village and shared that housing possibilities may be available.

Priests-in-Charge Called as Rectors:

- Rev. Fred Clarkson has been called as Rector of La Sagrada Familia.
- Rev. Samson Mamour has been called as Rector of St. Thomas, Ahoskie and St. Thomas, Windsor.

Stewardship and Lay Formation: The Diocese continues its membership in TENS (The Episcopal Network for Stewardship), which provides congregations access to stewardship resources and annual campaign materials.

A webinar featuring TENS Executive Director J.D. Gephardt will be held on September 1 at 6:30 p.m. Registration information will be distributed through diocesan communications. Additional updates included:

- Information regarding Project Resource stewardship training will be shared in upcoming communications.
- Development continues on a lay leadership initiative through the School for Ministry.
- A Lay Preaching Program is expected to launch in January.
- Volunteers are needed to teach Applied Theology (Systematic Theology) and Theological Ethics using the Iona Collaborative curriculum.

New Clergy Leadership Program: Bishop Sarah announced plans for a new clergy formation initiative tentatively entitled **"Call to Lead."** The program will be required for clergy entering the Diocese and for clergy beginning new calls, emphasizing leadership development, diocesan life, and peer support. The anticipated launch date is January 2027.

Treasurer's Report
Tess Judge, Treasurer

Income: Tess Judge reported that pledge income currently stands at 45% of budgeted expectations, slightly below the projected midyear benchmark of 50%. Prior-year pledges exceeded expectations, and Foundation support stands at 50% of budget.

Expenses: Total expenses are currently at 44.7% of budget. Several variances are attributable to timing issues and costs associated with diocesan transitions.

Notable Budget Variances: Significant budget variances include:

- Temporary overlap of bishop health and pension expenses during the episcopal transition.
- Additional travel expenses, including House of Bishops participation.
- Consultant support for Bishop Sarah.
- Technology purchases, including computers and laptops.
- Additional travel and photography expenses.
- Annual insurance premiums paid in full.
- Building maintenance and facility-related transition costs that exceeded projections.

Youth Ministry: Youth participation continues to be strong throughout the Diocese. Program expenditures total $47,149 against a budget of $65,000, while participant fee revenue has nearly met budget projections.

Bishop Search and Transition: Actual search and transition expenses remain significantly below budget. Current projections indicate that the process will conclude approximately $50,000 under the approved budget.

Appreciation was expressed to the Search and Transition Committee for its faithful stewardship and hospitality throughout the process.

Audit: The 2025 diocesan audit is underway and progressing well.

Property Improvements:

Rosevear

A facilities review found Rosevear generally to be in good condition, while identifying the need for several updates and improvements, including:

- Flooring replacement
- Interior painting
- Window treatments
- Kitchen renovations
- Bathroom updates
- General modernization

Estimated costs range between approximately $58,000 and $70,000, depending on contractor estimates.

Trinity Condo

The Executive Director's condominium requires foundation and crawlspace repairs and may be subject to future homeowners association special assessments.

Funding Proposal

A shared funding proposal was presented that would provide:

- $30,000 from Executive Council General Funds
- $30,000 from Foundation Undesignated Funds
- $30,000 from Trustees Discretionary Funds

Nathan Finnin moved that the Executive Council contribute $30,000 from General Funds toward renovations at Rosevear and the Executive Director's Trinity condominium. Tammy Lee seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Trinity Center Report

John Koch, Executive Director

Summer Camp: Summer Camp attendance is expected to exceed 700 campers, potentially establishing a new attendance record. John expressed appreciation for staff, volunteers, nurses, kitchen personnel, and all who contributed to a successful season.

Conference Center Operations: Conference business remains challenging due to the loss of several major recurring groups. Revenue currently trails the previous year by approximately $60,000. Rising operational costs include:

- Electricity
- Insurance
- Linen services
- Repairs and maintenance

The Trinity Center is projecting an operating loss of approximately $150,000 by year-end.

Fundraising and Capital Planning: Trinity Center plans to strengthen its annual appeal efforts, with goals ranging from $150,000 to $200,000. Capital campaign planning is also underway in partnership with the consulting firm Moss & Ross.

Sound to Sea: Sound to Sea programs continue to perform well, with strong demand, particularly for summer day programs.

Executive Director Transition: John announced his intention to retire in January 2027. Estimated search and transition expenses are projected at approximately $25,000.

Bob Adams moved that Executive Council allocate $10,000 from General Funds in 2026 to support the Executive Director search process, with remaining costs included in the 2027 budget. Tommy Drake seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Discussion Items

Annual Assessment Letters: Nathan Finnin and Tess Judge presented a report from the Assessment and Accountability Subcommittee. Findings included:

- 34 congregations pledged at or above the diocesan giving expectation of 10%.
- 6 congregations exceeded the 10% level.
- 18 congregations pledged below 10%.
- 4 congregations utilized alternative calculation methods.

Executive Council members volunteered to participate in follow-up conversations with congregational leaders to better understand financial challenges, encourage participation, and strengthen diocesan relationships.

Bishop Sarah reminded members that diocesan pledge cards will be distributed in September.

Bishop's Report

Vocations: Bishop Sarah reported that four individuals will soon begin discernment conversations regarding possible ordination.

St. Cyprian's Closure: A closing liturgy for St. Cyprian's will be held with Bishop Daniel participating.

Diocesan Staff Support: Vision of diocesan staff serving congregations through:

- Support for parish administrators
- Assistance with youth ministries
- Communications support
- Consultation during congregational transitions and ministry development initiatives

Clergy Formation: Future efforts will include:

- Monthly clergy Zoom gatherings
- Continuing education opportunities
- Advent preaching workshops
- Study days

Communications: Work is underway on diocesan website redevelopment and rebranding efforts. Bishop Sarah also reported that security concerns affecting the Trinity Center website have been successfully resolved.

Episcopal Leadership and Deaneries: Reflecting on her first two months as bishop, Bishop Sarah identified key priorities, including Trinity Center, vitality among smaller congregations, clergy development, and strengthening diocesan relationships. Deanery leaders have been asked to review deanery rosters and provide feedback regarding their responsibilities. The Bishop also expressed interest in future deanery gatherings and "Meet the Bishop" events throughout the Diocese.

Listening Sessions: Regional listening sessions will be held in October to:

- Review governance structures
- Clarify committee responsibilities
- Improve communication and workflow processes
- Explore organizational effectiveness

Property Review Committee: Discussion began regarding the creation of a diocesan property review group that would:

- Assess inactive properties
- Review maintenance and insurance needs
- Explore future uses, redevelopment opportunities, and possible sales

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Diocesan Convention: Planning continues for the Diocesan Convention at the Maxwell Center. Current preparations include hotel accommodations, vendor participation, and event logistics.

Convention plans include:

- A Friday evening diocesan dinner
- Fellowship opportunities
- A Saturday business session concluding before lunch

Nathan Finnin moved that the 2027 Diocesan Convention be held at the Maxwell Center. Josiah Daniels seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Executive Council Leadership: Tammy Lee moved that Bob Riche be elected Vice Chair of the Executive Council. Barbara Crumbacker seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at **12:58 p.m. on July 24, 2026.**

Next Meeting: September 18, 2026 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Diocesan House (In Person)

DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA
Executive Council Meeting
10:00 am - Friday, September 18, 2026
In Person

MINUTES

Those in Attendance: Bishop Sarah Fisher, Tammy Lee, Josiah Daniels, Tommy Drake, Nathan Finnin, Gray Hodsdon, Bob Adams, Barbara Crumbacker, Rick Pearce, Ginger Powell, John Rozier, Debbie Luke, Tess Judge, Joan Geiszler-Ludlum, Jordy Whichard, LaTonya Smith, Stephanie Allen, and April Caballero.

Opening and Welcome: The meeting was opened with prayer led by Josiah Daniels.

Verification of Quorum and Approval of Agenda: A quorum was declared by Bishop Sarah Fisher.

Approval of Previous Minutes: The minutes of the July 24, 2026 Executive Council meeting were approved. Rick Pearce moved to approve the minutes as presented. Josiah Daniels seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

Reports

Finance and Administration Report:
LaTonya Smith, *Director of Finance and Administration* :
No report

Leadership and Development Report:
Stephanie Allen, *Canon for Leadership Development*

Clergy Transitions

- St. Thomas, Oriental is seeking a part-time priest.
- St. Philip's, Southport is seeking an associate priest with a focus on pastoral care.

Trinity Center Executive Director Search

- Canon Allen is serving in a consulting role with the search process for a new Executive Director.

School for Ministry

- Five students are enrolled for the current semester.
- The current focus is theological ethics.
- A diocesan Lay Leadership Training Program is planned for launch in Fall 2027, with additional information expected at next year's Convention.

Clergy Formation and Vocational Trends

Council discussed:

- Ongoing clergy shortages throughout the Episcopal Church.

- Increasing numbers of part-time clergy positions.
- Challenges related to clergy mobility, retirement rates, and vocational sustainability.
- The importance of lay leadership development and formation programs as the Church adapts to changing ministry realities.

Bishop's Report
Sarah K. Fisher, *Bishop*

Trinity Center

Bishop Fisher reported on recent actions by the Trinity Center Board of Managers. Key updates included:

- Executive Director John Koch will retire at the end of January.
- A consultant is reviewing staffing structures and organizational needs to assist in developing an Executive Director search profile.
- The search committee remains active, but publication of the profile has been delayed pending consultant recommendations.
- Trinity Center faces an estimated $200,000 budget shortfall for the current year. An annual appeal campaign has been launched to address this need.
- Discussion included opportunities for stronger collaboration between the Diocese and Trinity Center, including potential shared staffing resources such as development, grant-writing, human resources, and administrative support.

Capital Campaign Planning

- The Diocese has engaged a consulting firm to conduct a campaign readiness study.
- Initial expectations are that a capital campaign remains approximately two years away.
- Work is underway to strengthen donor databases, annual appeal systems, and fundraising infrastructure.

Trinity Center Communications

- The Trinity Center website was recently restored following a security breach that redirected visitors to an external gambling site.
- A redesigned website and updated branding have now been launched.
- Council discussed utilizing photos, videos, and testimonials from campers and alumni to strengthen fundraising efforts.

Episcopal Visitations and Ministry

- Bishop Fisher reported completing several parish visitations and installations of new rectors.
- Work continues on the 2027 Episcopal Visitation Schedule, with the goal of visiting every parish at least once every two years.
- Bishop Fisher will attend both Stewardship Kaleidoscope and the House of Bishops in the coming weeks.

Budget Discussion
Tess Judge, *Treasurer*

Budget Discussion
Diocesan staff members temporarily exited the meeting while the budget discussion was conducted and later rejoined.

Stewardship and Pledge Communication
Council discussed making stewardship communications more concise and utilizing bullet points where appropriate. Bishop Fisher is preparing a pledge letter and requested feedback from Executive Council members.

Health Insurance Cost Increases
Council discussed anticipated increases in clergy health insurance costs and the potential impact on smaller congregations.
Discussion included:

- Possible use of discretionary assistance funds.
- Establishment of eligibility criteria.
- Consideration of whether assistance should be temporary or one-time in nature.

Bishop Fisher will continue discussions with clergy regarding the issue and assess emerging needs.

Diocesan Convention Planning - *Bishop Sarah K. Fisher*

Convention Theme
"A Living Story of the Love of Jesus."

Convention Schedule Highlights
Friday, November 13

- Registration, hospitality, and vendor exhibits.
- Opening Eucharist.
- First business session.
- Elections and budget presentation.
- Bishop's Address featuring storytelling, diocesan updates, and interactive conversation.
- Reception, dinner, and fellowship activities.

Saturday, November 14

- Youth-led worship.
- Resolution discussions and voting.
- Recognition of General Convention Deputies.
- Recognition of diocesan committee members and appointees.
- Courtesy resolutions and adjournment.

Service Project Discussion
Council discussed incorporating a diocesan service project into Convention activities.
Suggestions included support for military families, blessing bags, and other community-focused outreach opportunities.

Registration and Nominations

- Registration and nomination deadline: **October 15, 2026** .
- Late registrations will incur an additional $50.00 fee.

Resolutions and Pre-Convention Meetings ●

A Resolutions Committee has been formed.

- Pre-convention meetings will be held via Zoom.
- Budget presentations will also be conducted through Zoom prior to Convention.

Closing: Following final comments and discussion, Rev. Tammy Lee closed the meeting in prayer.

Adjournment: 1:30 PM.

Next Meeting: January 14, 2027 @ 10:00 AM (In-Person) at Diocesan House