

Amendments related to The Commission on Ministry

CANON 3.8 THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

Sec. 1. (a) A permanent Commission, consisting of no fewer than eight persons, appointed by the Bishop, subject to confirmation by the Convention, shall advise and assist the Bishop in the implementation of Title III of the Canons of the Episcopal Church. ~~and in guiding persons engaged in a process of ministry discernment to determine appropriate avenues for the expression of, and support of, their ministries, either lay or ordained.~~

(b) All members of the Commission shall serve three year terms. The Commission consists of persons assigned by the Bishop who shall affirm and develop the ministry of all the baptized. The Commission shall assist the Bishop in providing regular opportunities for discernment for the whole church; the development and support of lay ministries; in matters pertaining to the selection, examination, education, training, pastoral care, and continuing formation of Postulants and Candidates for Holy Orders, including conducting canonical examinations as necessary, interviewing each Candidate before ordination to the Diaconate, and at its discretion, before ordination to the Priesthood, to ascertain the Candidate's readiness for such ordination; and reporting in writing its recommendation to the Bishop and the Standing Committee according to the Policies and Procedures of the Commission and the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

Sec. 2. (a) ~~All members of the Commission shall serve three year terms on The Committee for Baptismal Ministry Development (COMB) and/or The Committee for Ordained Ministry Development (COMO).~~ Commission representation, lay and ordained, and terms of services are outlined in the Policies and Procedures of the Commission on Ministry. The entire Commission should meet regularly.

(b) ~~The Committee for Baptismal Ministry Development consist of persons assigned by the Bishop shall affirm and develop the ministry of all the baptized according to the Policies and Procedures of the Commission.~~

(c) ~~The Committee for Ordained Ministry Development, consisting of persons designated by the Bishop, shall assist the Bishop in matters pertaining to the selection, examination, education, training, pastoral care, and continuing development of Postulants and Candidates for Holy Orders, including conducting canonical examinations as necessary, interviewing each Candidate before ordination to the Diaconate, and at its discretion, before ordination to the Priesthood, to ascertain the Candidate's readiness for such ordination; and reporting in writing its recommendation to the Bishop and the Standing Committee according to the Policies and Procedures of the Commission.~~

Sec. 3. The Commission shall establish Policies and Procedures for its organization and governance subject to approval of the Bishop.

Sec. 4. Subject to the Canons of The Episcopal Church and of this Diocese, ~~Committees~~ of this Commission shall have authority to appoint such sub-committees from and beyond its membership as they may find necessary.

Sec. 5. The Commission shall make a written report to the annual Convention. ~~This report will include reports from both committees of the Commission.~~

Proposed by: the Constitutions and Canons Working Group

Rationale:

For many years the diocese has maintained a unique Commission on Ministry structure, a bifurcated Commission consisting of two committees, one intended to support lay formation and the other intended to support discernment and formation for ordained ministry. The primary purpose of this bifurcated structure was to guarantee that the Commission on Ministry was providing for the formation of lay ministry, recognizing that the work of forming people for ordained ministry often became the overwhelming focus of the work of the Commission on Ministry, at the expense of the development of lay ministry in our diocese.

In practice, this bifurcated structure has not led to a revitalization of support for lay ministry in our diocese. One of the effects of this structure is that each Committee tended to design and implement plans for formation independently from one another, which has discouraged rather than encouraged consistency and equity in formation for lay and ordained ministry. The Commission continues to invest most of its financial and people resources into formation for ordained ministry, with only a small amount being dedicated to formation for lay ministry each year. The intent of this bifurcated Commission has not been realized in its effects.

As the Commission communicated in its report to the Annual Meeting in 2022, we have been meeting and working as a single Commission since spring of 2022. This way of meeting has allowed us to develop and implement a new diocesan discernment practice that is designed for all discerners, and not only for those discerning for ordained ministry. It has also allowed us to have holistic conversations about how to approach formation and discernment *for everyone* in new ways as we respond to a rapidly changing church in a rapidly changing society.

A single Commission allows the Commission to design all together and responsively as our diocese continues to experience change, and as we continue to have a deep need for stronger formation for lay ministers. A single Commission still allows for the creation of subcommittees devoted to particular aspects of formation and discernment in our church. A single Commission allows for the team to work closely together to develop holistic strategies and practices for formation and discernment and to provide more consistent formation across the church in collaboration with diocesan staff.