

**The One Hundred and Fifteenth Convention
of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania**

October 24, 2025
Convention Minutes

The Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania's 115th Convention was held at the Christ the King Parish Hall in Houtzdale, Pennsylvania.

The Rev. Canon Brian Reid, as senior presbyter in the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania, pursuant to Article III.C.1.b of the Constitution and Canons, called the convention to order at 9:51am.

Morning Prayer was led by the Rev. Bill Ellis.

Canon Reid provided an orientation to Convention.

Adam Trambley was appointed as Dispatch of Business and Tom Tupitza as Parliamentarian.

Adam Trambley, the Secretary of Convention certified that a quorum was present since more than 1/3 of the canonically resident clergy entitled to seat, voice and vote in this Convention are registered and present and at least 12 congregations of this diocese that are entitled to seat, voice and vote in this Convention are registered and present.

Brian Reid declared that the 115th Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania is organized.

Adam Trambley moved the following persons be entitled to seat and voice but not to vote in the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

1. Clergy resident or licensed in the dioceses, but who do not meet requirements for membership in these conventions:

- The Rt. Rev. Larry Benfield
- The Rev. R. Richard Marchand
- The Rev. Randall Frenz

2. Our Search Consultant

- Mr. H. Walker Adams

Motion carried.

Canon Brian Reid opened nominations on for a President Pro-Tempore. Stacey Fussell nominated Canon Brian Reid. No other nominations were received. Fussell moved that nominations be closed and that the convention cast a unanimous ballot for the Rev. Canon Brian Reid. Motion carried.

Rev Canon Stacey Fussell, President of the Standing Committee addressed the Convention. She thanked Fr. Bill and Donna Ellis and the people of Houtzdale for making this Convention possible.

Bishop Larry Benfield addressed the Convention.

At about 3 p.m. on Saturday, February 17th, 2023, at the sound of a gavel against wood, I looked around a room of about two hundred Episcopalians in Little Rock, Arkansas, and said to myself, “No need to ever get anxious about another diocesan convention.” Well, as you can see, I am not very good at fortune-telling. I had no idea that I would now be standing in a room full of Episcopalians in Pennsylvania as a diocese does its collective work.

One great thing about this convention, other than getting to know many people whom I had not previously met, is that someone else has control of the gavel. Thank you, Brian. I can be among you to encourage and advise and be a pastoral and sacramental presence as you search for your next bishop diocesan.

In Pennsylvania, I had not been further north than Pittsburgh until this July. But the mountains feel familiar, like those in northwestern Arkansas and in East Tennessee where I grew up. You have been eager to make me feel welcomed as a member of the family. Every Sunday that I have been in a congregation, you have warmly greeted me and shared with me stories of your communities. I thank you. I look forward to visiting every congregation over the next several months to meet more people and hear even more stories.

Some of you know my background. I was the bishop of Arkansas for seventeen years, and during those years I visited congregations weekly, usually in small towns and rural areas that had seen economic decline. In the case of Arkansas, it was agricultural in nature rather than industrial. I have come to admire any congregation—and every person in them—that is trying to live as an active Christian community eager to share the news of God’s love in the face of twenty-first century challenges.

The Standing Committee has asked me to help you get ready for your next bishop. To do so, I will visit congregations to encourage you in your work. By the way, I love doing Baptisms and Confirmations, so find some new Christians for me. I will also work with the diocesan staff so that we try not to miss a beat in assisting you in carrying out your mission. I want to thank Cas and Deb and Jeff and Craig for their support and hard work. My hope is that

when the next bishop takes office, that person will be able to hit the ground running to lead you into what I hope will be an exciting new phase in the life of this diocese.

A moment ago, I mentioned that in Arkansas I was frequently in small congregations in challenging communities. Here is some of what I learned. Congregations in such places can be tenacious. They don’t simply sit around, waiting for something to happen. They find ways to keep their churches alive and active no matter what is going on in the communities in which they find themselves and no matter how prosperous or not-so-prosperous they find their situation. One of the healthiest congregations I had in Arkansas was a

rural congregation in a place with only six or so houses within a mile of the church, and a soybean field that came to within fifty feet of the church's back door. The congregation was led by lay people who knew that they had a mission. They consistently had thirty or so people in church, including several children. They called a priest in on most Sunday mornings, and after church told him that he could head on his way because they could handle it. And they did. Monday through Saturday they were the church, and they made in a difference in the place in which they had been planted a hundred years ago as farmers who had Anglicanism in their blood, so to speak. As they told me, they had been there a hundred years, and they would make certain that they were there for another hundred. They are there for the long haul.

We cannot forget that for much of the Episcopal Church's history, it has been lay people who have kept the doors open and the ministries active in towns across America. We got a bit dependent on church professionals in the mid-twentieth century, and we made what I might call a psychological error in comparing ourselves to the recent phenomenon of non-denominational mega churches. The result? Not feeling quite good enough when circumstances change. Perhaps what is going on right now is that we are learning how to revert to the norm, and the norm for Christian churches for two thousand years has been to hang in there through times both good and bad because we have a message that people need, a need not simply to hear, but to experience. Recently, I have begun to feel a bit more optimistic, feeling what might be a fresh wind starting to blow. For example, after years of stories about how young people are giving up on organized Christianity, it seems that that downward trend is flattening out. Young people are beginning to desire something more stable in their lives than continued exposure to a secular

scene that is increasingly chaotic and, I would add, unhinged. They are beginning to realize that the culmination of a life well lived is not likely going to be unbridled acquisition. They are wanting something more substantial and lasting and meaningful. Dare I say that what they want and need is radical tradition, and we have one of the best traditions to offer.

Another area in which the world's need meets our gift is in relationships. Loneliness is a sweeping epidemic across all ages. Just look at how we all go around more connected to our cell phones than to the people around us. Or how people are now dependent on artificial intelligence for friendship. Have we forgotten that Christian churches offer community? For millennia we have called people to be in the same room weekly to share something as elementary as a meal. That need is not going to go away, and in fact, will likely be more important as technology raises more barriers to relationship. One reason that Covid was so stressful for the church is because it hindered us from doing what we were meant to do, which is to gather people together. My guess is that if we can figure out how to make flesh-and-blood community appealing and be conscious of the truth that that is what we have to offer, then I think we will find more people who will decide to pitch their tent with us.

As I said earlier, one of my jobs is to encourage, to help you start thinking in new and creative ways. First, don't think you and the people back in your congregations are not qualified to help lead this diocese into the next phase of its life. Whether you know it or not, you have a wide pool of talent that the church needs for its future. Volunteer to be of service to your congregation and the diocese in ways that may have been hesitant to try; the church always needs injections of new ideas. And look around at others whose talent has not been tapped, or whose talents could be developed, and ask them. There are people out there waiting to be asked; that is part of community-building. Think differently. To kickstart some thinking about what is possible, here is one off-the-wall suggestion that might or might not work, but I plant the idea as an example of trying to be creative. What would happen if your congregation, yes, even the small congregations represented here, made a commitment to hire four young people as singers for Sunday worship? Where might you find the \$10,000 to \$15,000 to make it possible? Look at what this sort of experiment would do for you. It would be outreach in that it would put a bit of money in the hands, for example, of college students who might enjoy an extra \$50 or \$75 for a couple of hours of work and coffee hour afterwards.

It would improve the music, and, let's face it, people like and remember music more than sermons. It would improve average Sunday attendance, sometimes by 20%. Who wouldn't want that sort of increase? And most importantly, should a newcomer show up, that person would see four young faces and would feel that your congregation has hope for the future. People who are ready to be brave enough to visit a church are hungry to see others like themselves. There you have it: outreach, improved liturgy, higher attendance, and evangelism, all for a nominal investment.

As I also said earlier, one of my jobs is to advise. I have been here for four months, and I am learning a bit about the local Episcopal and secular culture and history, especially from the stories you tell me, as well as the stories you do not. It has been sobering to hear about the closure of companies and how those closures have affected local economies and your congregations. And it has been eye-opening to see closed store fronts in small-town main streets. At the same time, though, there have been heartwarming stories of how the Episcopal Church remains a beacon for many people who have been hurt by other religious experiences.

It is easy to feel forgotten, especially as the economy seems so different in other parts of the nation. But never forget that we are about resurrection. We are alive because we see beyond the superficial. Remember that parable about the Good Samaritan in Luke's gospel? Two people went to the other side of the road because they saw a dead man. The Samaritan walked straight into the midst of uncertainty and possible danger because he saw life. That is our call: to walk into and live in an uncertain mess because we see life there. That is what Christians do.

And thus, some advice. This diocese has been given the gift of significant

financial resources, much more so than what we had in Arkansas, and I wonder if you recognize the power of that resource to make transformative change throughout the diocese. To get you to start thinking about money, you may have noticed that three of my articles in the weekly email newsletter have been about stewardship. How willing have you been to have open and substantive talks around money, where it has come from, how it is being used, and how it might advance the work needed to revitalize congregations across the diocese and do a new thing?

I have mentioned the parable of the Good Samaritan. There are two more parables that I lay before you. The first is the parable in Luke's gospel of the rich man who built larger and larger barns to store all his grain, only to die and thus, not enjoy what it could do to feed people. The second is the parable in Matthew of the landowner who wonders why anyone would begrudge his generosity. Some serious talk about these two parables can lead to fruitful discussion about the ultimate outcome of hiding resources as a sign of security versus generosity as a sign of grace. And you thought my talk of hiring four young people as singers, even in small congregations without a priest, was pie in the sky.

My hope is simply to be your bishop for the next year: to proclaim resurrection, interpret the Gospel, offer the Church's sacraments, and be a faithful pastor among you. I hope to do so by visiting every congregation and working with the staff, standing committee, executive council, and anyone who comes to me with a concern. To encourage you as you go about being the church and to give some advice based on my years of work so far. To keep nudging you so that you are ready for the next phase of your life as a diocese. This diocese has a good future if we all keep in mind that resurrection is our message, a resurrection this is not focused on one event two thousand years ago, but is focused on how we are being resurrected now to new lives as we face the challenges of being a witness to God's love in this particular place and time, in a crazy world where all the old order has been overturned. I will do my best to walk with you over the next several months as you set out on that journey.

Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe provided video greetings to the Convention.

Canon Fussell reported on changes to the clergy:

Since the last convention, we had two (2) priests transfer residence to the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania:

The Rev. Dr. Joseph McGarry

The Rev. Christopher O'Connor

We had one (1) priest transfer residence from our diocese:

The Rev. Matthew Scott

We lost two beloved clergy to death since the last convention:
The Rev. Victor Kinnunen
The Rev. Robert McKay

Convention observed a moment of silence for Fathers Kinnunen and McKay.

Nominations were made for:

Standing Committee:

In the lay order: Joseph Croskey, Ittsey Tologo
In the clergy order: The Rev. Canon Martha Ishman

Diocesan Council:

In the lay order: Ed Palattella
In the clergy order: The Rev. Joseph McGarry

Constitution & Canons:

In the lay order: Anne Bardol, Laura Rudland
In the clergy order: The Rev. Rebecca Harris

Deputy to Province III Synod:

In the lay order: Anne Bardol, Cheryl Wild
In the clergy order: The Rev. Geoffrey Wild

Deputy to General Convention:

In the lay order: Anne Bardol, Kip Currier, Craig Dressler, Cheryl Mumford, Kaycee Reib
In the clergy order: The Rev. Canon Stacey Fussell, The Very Rev. Melinda Hall, The Rev. Timothy Kroh, The Rev. Joseph McGarry

A motion was made to close nominations. The motion was seconded. Motion carried.

A motion was made to elect those running unopposed by unanimous ballot. The following were elected.

Standing Committee:

In the clergy order: The Rev. Canon Martha Ishman

Diocesan Council:

In the lay order: Ed Palattella
In the clergy order: The Rev. Joseph McGarry

Constitution & Canons:

In the clergy order: The Rev. Rebecca Harris

Deputy to Province III Synod:

In the lay order: Anne Bardol Cheryl Wild
In the clergy order: The Rev. Geoffrey Wild

Deputy to General Convention:

In the clergy order: The Rev. Canon Stacey Fussell, The Very Rev. Melinda Hall, The Rev. Timothy Kroh, The Rev. Joseph McGarry

Jim Ivell led the balloting for the remaining offices, and the first vote was taken.

Trambley reported that Resolutions A-J have been received. No other resolutions were received.

Canon Fussell made the following nominations on behalf of the Ecclesiastical Authority:

- Secretary: Adam Trambley
- Treasurer: Tom Ryglinski
- Chancellor: Tom Tupitza
Credentials [1 cl., 1 l.]: Martha Ishman, Deb Dietrich
- Dispatch [1 or more]: Adam Trambley, Brian Reid, Anne Bardol
- Nominations [3 cl., 3l.]: Standing Committee (less the terms with one year remaining)
Judges of Elections [3]: James Ivell, Amy Ivell, Richard Reib
- Resolutions [2cl., 2 l.]: Adam Trambley, John Downey, Anne Bardol, Ed Palattella
- Historiographer: Bob Guerrein
- Joint Board of Examining Chaplains: Shawn Clerkin, Carol Carlson, John Wise
- Commission on Ministry: William McLean (Chair), Zach Irwin, Tim Kroh, Patricia Lavery, Joann Piatko, Kaycee Reib, Geoffrey Wild, Cheryl Wild (*liaison*)
- Joint Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination: Shawn Clerkin, Joseph Croskey, Stacey Fussell, Mark Elliston, Caleb Raught, John Ranney, Tracy Schliep (*liaison for Beloved Community*)

Those nominated were elected.

Canon Fussell announced that the Ecclesiastical Authority made the following appointments:

- Ecumenical Officer: John Downey
- Regional Deans: Mary Norton (NW), Adam Trambley (SW), Bill Ellis (SE), Stacey Fussell (NE)

The Convention took a brief recess.

Election results were reported

Standing Committee Lay Results:

Joseph Croskey 16 Clergy Votes

43 Lay Votes

Ittsey Tologo 7 Clergy Votes

13 Lay Votes

Joe Croskey was elected to the Standing Committee in the Lay Order.

Constitutions and Canons Lay Results:

Anne Bardol 38 Votes

Laura Rutland 40 Votes

Laura Rutland was elected to the Constitution and Canons Committee in the Lay Order

Deputy to General Convention Lay Results:

Anne Bardol- 15 Clergy Votes
41 Lay Votes

Kip Currier- 18 Clergy Votes
44 Lay votes

Craig Dressler- 20 Clergy Votes
45 Lay Votes

Cheryl Mumford- 14 Clergy Votes
44 Lay Votes

Kaycee Reib- 21 Clergy Votes
44 Lay Votes

Kaycee Reib, Craig Dressler, and Kip Currier were elected as Deputies to General Convention in the lay order.

A second ballot was taken for Lay Deputy to General Convention between Anne Bardol and Cheryl Mumford.

Treasurer Tom Ryglinski presented the Treasurer's Report.

The treasurer gave a quiz on current facts in our Diocese. He reported that currently there is \$49,788,734 in the co-mingled trust, of which \$19,816,610 belongs to the diocese and the rest to our congregations. PNC is ahead of the market benchmarks. Average Sunday Attendance in the diocese is currently 1,004. About \$4,400 is what it would take to run the diocese and its congregation. Our current average giving is about \$2,000. Ask "Why are you here?" and what can you do to move us forward?

The Treasurer moved the Resolution B -- 2026 Budget. The motion carries.

**Episcopal Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania
Summarized Adopted 2026 Budget - Operations, Program & Strategy**

<u>Accounts</u>	<u>2026 Adopted</u>
Revenue	
Total Assessments	704,661
Trust Funds - Operations	251,275
Trust Funds - Program	119,500
Trust Funds - Strategy	436,504
Miscellaneous Income	4,000
Total Revenue	<u>1,515,940</u>
Expenses - Operations	
Personnel	
Salaries / Housing Allowances	388,083
SECA & FICA	27,257
Pensions	28,154
Conferencing & Networking	6,000
Medical / Life Insurance	61,724
Worker's Compensation	3,000
Total Personnel	<u>514,217</u>
Diocesan Center Expenses	
Maintenance & Supplies	30,000
Utilities	9,000
Capital Expenditures	27,000
Property Taxes	3,000
Staff Travel	35,000
Staff Travel - Assisting Bishop	32,000
Telephone & Internet	29,200
Office Operating Expenses	55,063
Diocesan Convention	25,000
Professional Services	20,000
Bishop Search	88,000
Transition Expenses	-
Total Diocesan Center Expenses	<u>353,263</u>
Church-Wide Relations	
National Church Apportionment	87,456
Conferences & Convention	5,000
Total Church-Wide Relations	<u>92,456</u>
Total Expenses-Operations	<u>959,936</u>

Expenses - Program**Retiree's Benefits & Support**

Retirees Insurance Contribution	5,000
Surviving Spouse Insurance Contr.	2,500
Total Retiree's Benefits & Support	7,500

Mission Support

Youth & Young Adult Ministry	35,000
Leadership Development	40,000
Aspirants Retreat	6,000
Anti-Racism & Racial Reconciliation	10,000
Clergy Retreat	10,000
Diocesan Ministry Support	1,000
Total Mission Support	102,000

Ecumenical Relations/Community Services

PA Council of Churches	5,000
Campus Ministry	5,000
Total Ecumenical Relations	10,000

Total Expenses-Program **119,500**

Expenses - Strategy**Personnel**

Salaries / Housing Allowance	40,546
SECA & FICA	3,102
Pensions	7,857
Total Personnel	51,504

Strategic Initiatives

New Development	20,000
Erie Episcopal	200,000
Erie - St. Marks	50,000
Hermitage - Resurrection	60,000
New Castle - Trinity	30,000
Leadership Bishop Disc	25,000
Total Strategic Initiatives	385,000

Total Expenses-Strategy **436,504**

Total Expenses

1,515,940

Surplus/(Deficit) **(0)**

Ed Palatella moved Resolution A – the Clergy Minimum Stipend Resolution on behalf of Diocesan Council. Motion carried.

Resolution A

Originator: Diocesan Council

Subject: 2026 Minimum Stipend and Allowances for Parochial Clergy

Be it resolved, that pursuant to Title IV, Canon 2,c.v each member of the clergy serving in the Diocese in a full time pastoral ministry or other stipendiary ministry as approved by the Bishop, shall receive a minimum annual cash stipend according to the following scale:

Years of Ordained Service as of January 1, 2026:

Less than two (2) years	\$47,301
Two to four (2 to 4) years	\$52,777
Four to Six (4 to 6) years	\$59,205
Six to Eight (6 to 8) years	\$63,073
Eight (8) years or more	\$66,940

The above figures represent an estimated **2.7%** increase over the 2025 figures.

Resolved, that each cure shall provide for its clergy, whether full time or part time, a paid vacation of four weeks (including Sundays) each year; and be it further

Resolved, that when a federal holiday falls on the regular day off of a cleric or on a major Feast Day, that the clergyperson be encouraged to take another day that week as the day off. The federal holidays are: New Year's Day; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; President's Day; Memorial Day; Juneteenth; Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus Day; Veterans' Day; Thanksgiving Day; and Christmas Day; and be it further

Resolved, that clergy shall also receive an amount equal to at least one-half of their self-employment tax, fully paid premium for the Church Pension Fund, life insurance of \$25,000, and group health insurance coverage for the clergyperson and family; and be it further

Resolved, that each cure shall provide for its resident full-time clergy a reimbursement allowance for ordinary and necessary business and professional expense incurred on behalf of the cure; further that a reimbursement allowance worksheet is used by congregations, in establishing a fair value amount for these expenses. Ordinary and necessary expenses shall include, but not be limited to: the use of personal automobile, overnight travel including lodging and meals, books and subscriptions, vestments, and professional dues. Clergy will be reimbursed monthly for the professional use of their automobiles at the current IRS rate plus tolls and parking based upon monthly written record submitted to the treasurer of the congregation by the clergy. Reimbursement for the other expenses shall be pre-approved by the Vestry/Bishop's Committee and paid upon receipts submitted to the treasurer of the congregation; and be it further

Resolved, that any congregation that is financially unable to meet these minimum stipends and allowances shall, by February 1st of each year, consult with the Bishop. This consultation shall

include consideration of total clergy support, thus providing the congregation with some flexibility in structuring the overall clergy support package. This consultation may also include the phasing in over a maximum of three years of the minimum annual stipend; and be it further

Resolved, that each cure shall provide use of a suitable rectory, with utilities, except for personal toll calls; or else an adequate housing allowance. Where a clergyperson lives in a rectory, an adequate Equity Allowance shall be provided in the form of a tax sheltered annuity or other similar investments; and be it further

Resolved, that each cure shall encourage its Rector/Vicar to seek some kind of continuing education each year, and to that end shall provide a continuing education allowance of not less than \$1,500 and two weeks paid continuing education leave. If any portion thereof be unused, this money shall be deposited in a continuing education interest-bearing account for future use and up to six weeks leave may be accrued for use as a continuing education leave. In the event the cleric changes cures, the balance of funds in this account shall be retained for the use of the clergy of the cure and not diverted for any other purpose.

Canon Trambley moved Resolution C on behalf of the Constitution and Canons Committee.
Motion carried.

Resolution C

Originator: The NWPA Committee on Constitution and Canons

Subject: Resolution to Clarify Acquisition of Property and Congregational Incorporation

Resolved, that Diocesan Convention amend Title II, Canon 8, Section A) to read:

Section A)

~~Any Congregation or other institution holding or intending to hold title to real property shall be incorporated.~~ *A Congregation or other institution or entity belonging to the Diocese or any congregation of this Diocese shall not acquire title to real property without the prior consent of the Bishop Diocesan, if there is one, and the Standing Committee and the Diocesan Council. In such cases, the Congregation, institution, or entity shall be incorporated or obtain similar legal status.* Its form of incorporation shall be in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and in harmony with the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church and of this Diocese, and the directions of Diocesan Convention.

Explanation: This amendment makes the canons for acquiring property parallel to other canons regarding property decisions. It also removes the requirement present in the current canon that requires all current congregations owning property to be incorporated. This requirement is problematic since we recently discovered a number of our congregations both own property and are not incorporated, and there is no need at present for them to do the work to incorporate.

Canon Trambley moved Resolution D on behalf of the Constitution and Canons Committee.
Motion carried.

Resolution D

Originator: The NWPA Committee on Constitution and Canons
Subject: Resolution to Fix Typo in Canon Numbering

Resolved, that Diocesan Convention renumber “Title II. Of Diocesan Convention” to “Title III. of Diocesan Convention.

Explanation: This resolution fixes a typo made sometime between the 2021 and 2022 versions of the Diocesan Constitution and Canons.

Canon Trambley moved Resolution E on behalf of the Constitution and Canons Committee.
Motion carried.

Resolution E

Originator: The NWPA Committee on Constitution and Canons
Subject: Resolution to Amend the Constitution: Second Reading

To Allow the Calculation of Quorum at Diocesan Convention to be Determined by the Canons

Resolved, that Diocesan Convention approve the second reading to amend Article III.D.1 of the Diocesan Constitution to read:

1. **Quorum:** a quorum for the transaction of business shall be prescribed by the canon.

Previous Text:

~~1. **Quorum:** A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of one third of the clergy entitled to vote and at least one lay delegate from each of one third of the congregations in union with convention. In the absence of a quorum a majority of those present may adjourn the convention from time to time.~~

Explanation: During the past few Diocesan Conventions, we have been in danger of not meeting the quorum requirements for clergy, in part because of the large proportion of retired clergy in our diocese, many of whom are unable to attend Diocesan Convention. This change to the Constitution would allow us, after a second reading of this amendment at the next Diocesan Convention, to change the requirements for a quorum via our Canons which require only one Diocesan Convention to amend.

Canon Trambley moved Resolution F on behalf of the Constitution and Canons Committee.
Motion carried.

Resolution F

Originator: The NWPA Committee on Constitution and Canons
Subject: Resolution to Add Diocesan Convention Quorum to Canons in Accordance with Amendment to Constitution

Resolved, that Diocesan Convention create a new Title II, Canon 1, Section C) to read:

Section C) Quorum

A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of one third of the clergy entitled to vote and at least one lay delegate from each of one third of the congregations in union with convention. In the absence of a quorum a majority of those present may adjourn the convention.

Explanation: We have passed a first reading of a Constitutional change that moves the quorum requirements for Diocesan Convention from the Constitution to the Canons. If we pass the proposed second reading at this Convention, we need quorum language in our Canons. This resolution moves the language that had previously been in the Constitution to the Canons. The Constitution and Canons committee believes that this amendment, combined with the changes made in 2024 regarding the clergy entitled to vote, will allow our future conventions to meet the requirement for a quorum and ensure we have adequate representation for carrying out our business.

Canon Trambley moved Resolution G on behalf of the Constitution and Canons Committee.
Motion carried.

Resolution G

Originator: The NWPA Committee on Constitution and Canons
Subject: Resolution to Update the Canons on the Commission on Ministry

Resolved, that Diocesan Convention replace the current Title III, Canon 4, Section A with the following:

Canon 4 Of the Commission on Ministry

Section A) Composition

- i. The Commission on Ministry will have no less than five members and no more than nine members. The membership of the Commission on Ministry will have no less than two Priests in Good Standing, one Deacon in Good Standing, and two Lay Persons in Good Standing.*

- ii. *Each member of the Commission on Ministry will serve a one-year term, which may be renewed by the Ecclesiastical Authority.*
- iii. *The Ecclesiastical Authority will nominate members of the Commission on Ministry at each annual Diocesan Convention.*

Explanation: The current Canon relating the Commission on Ministry creates a joint CoM with the Diocese of Western New York. This change recreates our own CoM. The flexibility in the number of members and their terms is designed to help us through our current interim process. Once the CoM is up and running and we have a new bishop in place, the CoM can recommend changes in their structure.

Results of the second ballot were reported. There was no election in the election of Deputies in the Lay Order.

Anne Bardol- 16 Clergy Votes
28 Lay Votes

Cheryl Mumford- 6 Clergy Votes
30 Lay Votes

A third ballot was conducted.

The Rev. Sara Nesbitt led the Convention in Noonday Prayer.

Father Ellis welcomed Father Jonathan Schmolt, our Roman Catholic host.

The Conventions stood in recess at 11:58pm for lunch.
The Convention reconvened at 1:01pm.

Canon Fussell on behalf of the Ecclesiastical Authority presented a Petition to Change the Status of St. Laurence Church, Osceola Mills from Mission to Unorganized Congregation for the purpose of dissolution. Rev. Ellis reported that a number of items have been moved from Osceola Mills to Houtzdale to help create a welcoming environment for people moving from St. Laurence. He is also working on cataloguing things that could be passed on to other churches. He also asked prayers for that congregation's leaders as they battle illness. Canon Reid reported that there would be a concluding Eucharist and celebration at a future date.

The motion carried.

The Doxology was sung in gratitude for St. Laurence Church in Osceola Mills and their ministry for many years.

Canon Fussell moved Resolution H on behalf of the Standing Committee. A Special Convention for the election of a bishop will be on August 8, 2026. The resolution spells out specifics of how that election will take place.

Motion carried.

Resolution H

Originator: Standing Committee of Northwestern Pennsylvania
Subject: Resolution for Special Convention to Elect a Bishop Diocesan

Resolved, that the Convention adopt the following Special Rules for the Electing Convention of the Ninth Bishop of the Diocese:

Location, Time, and Business of the Special Convention. A Special Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania will convene at the Cathedral of St. Paul, Erie on August 8th, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. to elect the Ninth Bishop of Northwestern Pennsylvania as Bishop Diocesan.

No other business will be in order.

Officers of the Special Convention. The officers of the Special Convention will be the officers of the Convention elected at the Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania on October 24-25, 2025.

In Person Only. In accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania, only members of the Convention attending in person will be eligible to vote in the Special Convention. There will be no provision for proxy or remote voting.

Lay Delegates eligible to vote at the Special Convention. Lay delegates eligible to vote at the Special Convention and their alternates will be those duly elected according to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania and the bylaws of the electing congregations. Unless changes are duly reported between the Annual and Special Conventions, delegates and alternates for the Annual Convention will be the same delegates and alternates for the Special Convention. Any congregation, Vestry, or Bishop's Committee electing new delegates or alternates between the Annual and Special Conventions must report the names of their new delegates and alternates to the Secretary of the Convention no later than 30 days prior to the Special Convention, August 8, 2026. Up to and during the Special Convention, clerics in charge of congregations may replace any absent delegate with a duly elected alternate by submitting the change via email to the Secretary of the Convention. If there is no cleric in charge of a congregation, a warden, secretary, or clerk of the congregation may petition up to and during the Special Convention, to replace any absent delegate with a duly elected alternate by submitting the petition via email to the Secretary of the Convention. The Committee on Credentials must certify the replacement before any alternate is registered, seated, and eligible to vote as a delegate.

Clergy eligible to vote at the Special Convention. Clergy eligible to vote at the Special Convention will be determined according to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania. No more than 60 and no less than 30 calendar days before the Special Convention, August 8, 2026, the Ecclesiastical Authority will provide to the Secretary of the Convention and to the Standing Committee the list of clergy eligible to vote.

Quorum. A quorum for the Special Convention to elect a bishop requires a majority of all clergy

eligible to vote and at least two-thirds of all congregations represented by at least one lay delegate. The Committee on Credentials will certify the presence of a quorum at the opening of the Special Convention.

Nominations. Nominations for election as Bishop Diocesan will be made by the Diocese's Bishop Search and Transition Committee, which will nominate the candidates identified by the search process and approved by the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee will nominate any candidates identified by the petition process who are qualified under the standards established by the Bishop Search and Transition Committee and approved by the Standing Committee. Nominations will then be closed. Nominations from the floor will not be in order.

Ballot Preparation. The Standing Committee will prepare the ballot, combining nominees submitted by the Diocese's Search and Transition Committee and nominees by petition presented together as the slate of nominees. The order of names on the ballot will be determined by lot without distinguishing between search committee nominees and petition nominees.

Election Requirements. Each vote will be taken by orders, clergy and lay, and an election will require a concurrent majority of those present and voting in each order as required the Constitution. The Committee on Credentials will report the number of members present in each order before the first ballot. For each ballot cast, the number of members present in each order will be deemed equal to the number of ballots submitted, including all valid ballots for nominees, all blank ballots, and any ballots marked "none of the above."

Voting Process. The election of the bishop will be conducted by scantron electronic ballot. The Secretary of the Convention will prepare paper ballots as a backup in the event the electronic ballot system fails at any time during the Convention. At the conclusion of each vote, if there is no election, the Convention will receive new ballots and vote again until the Convention elects or adjourns under these rules.

Procedure for Certification of Votes. The Standing Committee will establish procedures for certifying the outcome of each vote and will supervise the counting and certification as necessary. The Secretary of the Standing Committee will report the certified results of each vote to the Secretary of the Convention.

Nominee Withdrawal. Except as provided in these rules, all nominees will remain on the ballot for each vote. A nominee may withdraw at any time. A withdrawal must be submitted in writing to the President of the Standing Committee, either in person or by email. Once a nominee has withdrawn, that name may not be reentered on the ballot.

Extension of the Special Convention. If the Special Convention does not elect a Bishop Diocesan by 6:00 p.m., August 8, 2026, the Convention will adjourn until 2:00 p.m. on the afternoon of Sunday, August 9, 2026, unless the Convention, by a two-thirds vote, sets a different time for adjournment.

Failure to Elect. If the Special Convention does not elect a Bishop Diocesan by the end of Sunday, August 9, 2026, and unless the Convention, by a two-thirds vote, sets another date and time to continue the election, the Convention will adjourn sine die, and there will be no election.

Signing the Attestation of a Due and Lawful Election. Immediately following the final ballot, and provided that a Bishop Diocesan is elected, while the Special Convention remains in session, the President of the Convention will arrange to gather the signatures of a constitutional majority of the Convention attesting to the due and lawful election of the Bishop Diocesan of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

Canon Fussell moved Resolution I on behalf of the Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination. Motion carried.

Resolution I

Originator: The Joint Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination of WNY & NWPA
Subject: Need for Diverse Staffing on All Levels

Resolved, that the newly reconstituted Diocese of NWPA live into the Gospel call of Becoming. Beloved Community by intentionally identifying and transitioning from practices in governance, operations, worship and community ministry that result in complicity with racism, discrimination or exclusion toward healing through loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with all God's children.

Resolved, that decision-makers, including the laity, clergy and diocesan staff, be mindful of and take steps to mitigate inequitable outcomes for people of color and those from indigenous, immigrant, LGBTQ+, women, differently abled, economically vulnerable and other marginalized communities who have been historically discouraged from full participation in the Church.

Resolved, that every effort be made to increase representation of people of color and those who have been historically discouraged from full participation in the Diocese of NWPA through hiring, staffing and appointment at all levels of diocesan church organizations, including clergy leadership and congregational staffing as well as appointment to committees, commissions and specialized taskforces, both paid and volunteer. Where selection is by election, steps should be taken to encourage a slate of diverse candidates.

Resolved, that those involved in recruitment, screening and/or selection processes for hiring, appointing and staffing at both diocesan and congregational levels be informed of The Episcopal Church's Model Practices for Racial Reconciliation and Healing, receive specialized training as called for in Resolution 2024-A035¹ and establish Model Policies for Anti/Racism/Racial Reconciliation Work. This training shall be conducted for members of the Bishop Search Committee, diocesan leadership, and all clergy, *as currently required by The Episcopal Church*.

Resolved, that members of The Joint Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination of WNY and NWPA be trained in The Episcopal Church's Model Practices for Racial Reconciliation and Healing and create a summary document for distribution across NWPA congregations.

Resolved, that The Joint Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination of WNY and NWPA, as well as The Union of Black Episcopalians (national) and The UBE Bishop James Theodore Holly Chapter (local) be utilized as resources for outreach and recruitment by the

Bishop Search Committee and other recruitment processes as appropriate.

Explanation: What is understood today as the ministry of Becoming Beloved Community and Racial Reconciliation has not always been endorsed by The Episcopal Church. The history of our Church reveals periods of participation in and of complicity with racism and discrimination in the Church's understanding of the Gospel and of the role of the Church in society. The struggle for inclusion and full participation for all of God's children within the Church has been long and slow and remains incomplete today, as documented in the most recent Racial Justice Audit².

All of us, regardless of our race, gender, cultural ethnicity, immigration status, economic standing, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, urban or rural background, etc., understand the world through the lens of our own unique experience and background. We have much diversity amongst us. But as a predominately white diocese, the legacy of our past continues to limit our capacity to understand how to move away from racism and discrimination. Becoming Beloved Community calls for healing through authentic relationship-building across differences, mutual learning, inclusive welcome and love.

Greater racial and cultural diversity within diocesan and congregational leadership is a resource. Inclusion strengthens our capacity for Becoming Beloved Community beyond the limitations of decision-making from a white-only perspective. Fairness and openness to learning from difference grows capacity to live in loving relationship with all God's children.

1. <https://www.vbinder.net/resolutions/481?house=HD&lang=en>
2. <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/racial-reconciliation/racial-justice-audit/>

Contact Person:

The Rev. Canon Helen Harper

Chair, The Joint Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination of WNY and NWPA
urbanpriest@gmail.com

Canon Trambley moved Resolution J on behalf of the Resolution Committee and reported that the Committee recommended rejection. Deacon Zach Irwin spoke on the resolution concurring with the Committee's recommendation and drew attention to the last paragraph of the resolution. Motion failed.

Resolution J

Originators: May Anne Anibaldi, Rebecca Babo, Sarah Brock, Carol Carlson, Joyce Gieza, Melinda Hall, Monica Irwin, Zach Irwin, Tim Kroh, Kelly McDonald, MaryAnn Robinson, Laura Rutland

Subject: Private Use of Worship Spaces

Whereas under the Obama administration houses of worship were previously considered "sensitive locations," with federal guidance indicating that immigration actions by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs

Enforcement (ICE), and other governmental agencies were to be avoided unless absolutely necessary;

Whereas the Trump administration sent an internal directive to DHS rescinding the designation of “sensitive locations” to houses of worship on January 20, 2025;

Whereas The Episcopal Church joined other faith groups in a lawsuit February 11, 2025 asserting violations of religious freedom as a result of the rescinded designation;

Whereas the gospel of Jesus tells to offer hospitality to the stranger and to care for the “least of these;”

Resolved, that the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania will comply with federal law and will seek to protect immigrants and foreigners where protection is warranted;

Resolved, that the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania urge its clergy and people to designate sacred space in buildings as “private;”

Resolved, that the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania urge its people and clergy to learn the difference in warrants and ensure that all proper procedures are followed by any arresting agency that may come into a church building;

Resolved, that the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania understands that by these actions, the people of this diocese are putting faith in action and attempting to embody the gospel of the one who called us to care for the stranger in our midst.

Explanation: Since the Mosaic law (e.g. Deuteronomy 10:18-9, Leviticus 19:33-34), followers of God have been asked to care for the stranger and foreigner in their lands. This reaches new expression in Jesus, who particularly welcomed the poor and marginalized, and explicitly told his disciple to show hospitality (e.g. Matthew 25:31-45). This call to care for the outside, the stranger, the wayfarer, and the ones needing help is repeated in numerous New Testament epistles (e.g. Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9). As Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe has written “immigrants and refugees are not at the edges, fearful and alone, but are the very center of God’s story” and as House of Deputies President Julia Ayla Harris said, “Welcoming the stranger is not a political act—it’s a sacred obligation.”¹ We cannot pretend or ignore the raids happening in our cities, boroughs, and neighborhoods, nor can we ignore our obligation to use our buildings to protect immigrants.

Designating spaces as “private” does not violate the law; by so designating a space, it makes that space subject to judicial warrants rather than administrative warrants. This adds a level of protection for the people in our sacred spaces. One need not designate the entire building or the sanctuary as private; rooms or offices can be designated private.

¹ Office of Public Affairs, The Episcopal Church, “Episcopal Church joins religious freedom lawsuit challenging ICE enforcement actions in churches,” February 11, 2025, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/publicaffairs/episcopal-church-joins-religious-freedom-lawsuit-challenging-ice-enforcement-actions-in-churches/>.

Anne Bardol presented the Courtesy Resolutions.

Rev. John Downey, the Ecumenical Officer, spoke on the installation of Bishop Kristen Papson, the new Lutheran Bishop of NWPA.

Courtesy Resolutions

115 th Annual Convention NWPA

BE IT RESOLVED, that this 115th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania extends its thanks and gratitude to members and staff of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity, Houtzdale and Christ the King Parish House, for their hospitality and their labors on behalf of this convention.

BE IT RESOLVED, that this 115th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania express thanks to Mr. Walker Adams for lending his expertise, guidance and good humor as our consultant as we engage in the work of our Bishop Search.

BE IT RESOLVED, that this 115th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania send greeting and congratulations to Bishop Kristen Papson, newly installed as Bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the 115th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania send greetings to the Ms. Julia Ayala Harris, President of the House of Deputies, and convey its appreciation for her commitment to equity and inclusivity in church governance.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the 115th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania send greetings to the Most Rev. Sean W. Rowe, a son of this diocese, and extend our support for his leadership of the Episcopal Church during turbulent times with his characteristic grace and humility.

BE IT RESOLVED, that this 115th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania extends its greetings to our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Western New York through their newly elected Bishop Provisional, the Rt. Rev. Stephen Lane. We convey our prayers for discernment as the Diocese of Western New York continues their process of calling a Bishop Diocesan and support for Bp. Lane's ministry. We give thanks for our time of Partnership and look forward to continuing to share with them in the work of the gospel.

The Courtesy Resolutions pass.

The report of the third ballot was made. Anne Bardol was elected as a Lay Deputy to General Convention and Cheryl Mumford was elected as a Lay Alternate to General Convention.

Anne Bardol- 16 Clergy Votes

29 Lay Votes

Cheryl Mumford- 6 Clergy Vote
28 Lay Votes

Canon Reid reported on the time and place for next year's Annual Diocesan Convention. Next year's conventions will be held on November 6-7, 2026, at the Ambassador Conference Center in Erie, PA at the intersection of Peach Street and I-90.

Canon Martha Ishman and the Search Committee for our next bishop provided Convention with information about the search process and facilitated a feedback process from those present, and passed out information for a diocesan survey.

Rev. Tim Kroh invited folks for a time of prayer and witness outside of the local I.C.E. Detention Facility on Saturday at 10:00am. The largest I.C.E. Detention Facility in the Northeast US is about 10 minutes from our Convention site. Canon Fussell added further information.

Canon Reid made some housekeeping and scheduling announcements.

Adam Trambley announced that there was no more business to come before the Convention of the Diocese of the Northwestern Pennsylvania and moved that we adjourn *sine die*. The motion is seconded. Convention adjourned at 3:18pm