

CANONS TO THE ORDINARY

Report to Diocesan Convention 2026

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We thought it would be helpful to provide a combined report. We'll begin with the Canon to the Ordinary for Mission, Vitality, and Administration (and Chief of Staff), followed by the Canon to the Ordinary for Clergy and Congregational Care & Transitions.

Canon Joann Saylor:

(Please see the Treasurer's Report for that part of my work.)

The Growth and Revitalization Committee has met semimonthly throughout the year. We have been defining the scope of our work as we go and are eager to continue helping congregations become more missional, vital, and sustainable.

- We prayed together, using the diocesan *lectio divina* offerings.
- We worked with four congregations doing assessments of vitality and/or discernments of core vocation.
- We added the Kim Karashin+, the Small Church Missioner, to the group due to the intersection of our work with smaller congregations.
- We reviewed applications for 2027 financial assistance from congregations and made recommendations. We also began developing a holistic strategy for working with congregations receiving financial assistance.
- We interviewed candidates for the diocesan campus missioner after revisions to the job description based on feedback from other campus missioners and transition ministers.
- We studied multiple books and received presentations on growth-related topics.

I have delighted in serving on the Bishop's Committee of Church of the Incarnation and the Founding Board of the Episcopal School of Pittsburgh. It is a great joy to see new initiatives flourish and support their missions.

I've stayed connected with the national Church's efforts in church planting and revitalization through participation in periodic calls and cohort group meetings. I was also a review of applications for New Communities grants from TEC. I've also engaged in conversations about the overall state of the Church and other denominations through lectures, webinars, and conversations.

I have visited a number of congregations, and I've had the privilege of preaching, presiding, encouraging and talking about congregational vitality throughout the year. Currently I am serving at the Cathedral monthly, visiting Incarnation roughly quarterly, supplying when asked, and occasionally just stopping by. Invitations to visit are always welcome!

It has been a year of transition for the diocesan staff:

- Dan Isadore+ left the diocesan staff as part of a refocus on building a campus mission community. The Campus Missions Strategy Board encouraged the Bishop to identify someone who could partner with congregations and other denominational campus missions to focus on discipleship and leadership as well as worship.
- We said goodbye to Canon Eric McIntosh and Shahnaz Alam-Denlinger as part of a reimagining BCI work through a congregational, rather than top-down, strategy. We are grateful for all of the good work they have done so far and are grateful for the wisdom they continue to share.
- We also said goodbye to Andrea Rath, the Bishop's Executive Assistant. In looking at the most important needs for a diocesan staff, we eliminated that position and created a Diocesan Event and Data Coordinator role.
- Miranda Russomano-Esmonde, who began in August, has already made an impact in helping plan and execute Clergy Conference, Diocesan Convention, and multiple smaller events, in addition to relieving some of Andy Muhl's workload with regard to data and reporting.
- Canon Wes Smedley, whose report follows, started July 1, and it has been wonderful to collaborate and help onboard him as he begins drinking from the fire hose that comes from serving the diocese.
- Kim Karashin+ has embraced the role of Small Church Missioner, shepherding our 21 smallest churches in a wide variety of ways, including coordinating clergy coverage, connecting the congregations with resources, launching a Small Church Matters newsletter, and holding monthly Small Church Chats. The newsletter has proven to be such a helpful resource that people from larger churches have subscribed as well. She juggles this work with her role in helping Canon Wes take the reins of transition ministry.

As a diocesan staff team we have also moved the Diocesan Archives to St. Stephen's, Wilkinsburg, supported the Cathedral congregation and staff, refreshed the diocesan website (<http://episcopalpgh.org>, if you haven't checked it out recently), offered pastoral care and coaching, and done all we could to support our congregations in their mission and ministry. Serving you, the congregations, is our core vocation, and we are blessed by all the ways you allow us to do so.

Faithfully,
Canon Joann+

Canon Walter (Wes) Smedley:

Areas of Responsibility

- Transition Ministry for congregations and clergy in leadership transitions
- Christian leadership formation for laity & clergy, including representing +Bishop Ketlen in the work of the Commission on Ministry
- Preaching, teaching, and/or celebrating in congregations 2-3X per month
- Pastoral support for all clergy of the diocese

- Coordinating fellowship opportunities
- Connecting clergy through communications: clergy listserv and *Clergy Matters* email
- Engaging racial justice efforts through the Commission on Race & Reconciliation, the Beloved Community Initiative, and the Social Justice Committee
- Diocesan staff team support and participation

Since arriving July 1, 2026, it has been a joy to work with and learn from the Rev. Kim Karashin in the work of Transition Ministry. Below are the congregations whose clergy and lay leaders Kim and I have had the pleasure of working with on some or many levels:

- 1) St. Thomas, Oakmont
- 2) Calvary, Shadyside
- 3) All Saints, Brighton Heights
- 4) Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh (Campus Missioner position)
- 5) Christ Church, Indiana
- 6) St. Francis in the Fields, Somerset
- 7) St. Mark's, Johnstown
- 8) St. Peter's, Blairsville
- 9) Trinity Cathedral, Downtown

While at the Transition Ministry Conference in Detroit, Michigan (September 21-24, 2026), I had the privilege of representing congregations and clergy in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. In addition to connecting with Transition Ministers from around the country, we also learned about leadership trends in the wider Episcopal Church.

The following clergy of the diocese have experienced a recent change of call: congratulations!

The Rev. Guy Brown: Curacy at St. Paul's, Mt. Lebanon

The Rev. Nicole Starr: Curacy at St. Thomas, Oakmont

The Rev. Dan Isadore: Rector of St. Luke & St. Peter Episcopal Church in St. Cloud, Florida

The Rev. Jeffrey Murph: Retired as Rector of St. Thomas, Oakmont

The Rev. James Shoucair: Interim Rector at St. Thomas, Oakmont

The Rev. Jonathon Jensen: Retired as Rector of Calvary, Shadyside

Regarding Christian leadership formation in the diocese, lay leaders Don Block and Gloria Trevino assisted in researching Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Stevenson School for Ministry, Episcopal Preaching Foundation, and the Iona Collaborative (Seminary of the Southwest). Our goal was to discern a Lay Preacher Training course which could possibly lead to future offerings for laity, deacons, bi-vocational priests, and full-time priests. With guidance from +Bishop Ketlen and Canon Joann Saylor+, we chose the Lay Preaching course offered by the Iona Collaborative, which happens to use the materials we like very much from the Episcopal Preaching Foundation. Kickoff of the Lay Preaching Course will likely start in January 2027, with registration details coming soon.

It was fun to coordinate a diocesan-wide Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game fellowship event on Roberto Clemente Day, September 15, 2026. There were over eighty fans from around the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh who participated! The Rev. Bill Geiger+ is helping to coordinate a lunch event for retired clergy this winter or early spring.

The work of the Clergy Conference Planning Committee with Brandon Cooper+, Annis Rogers+, and new diocesan staff member Miranda Russomano-Esmonde, went well. The folks at the Antiochian Village Conference Center in Bolivar, Pennsylvania were caring and attentive hosts. Our guest speaker, the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Wright, Professor of Old Testament & Biblical Hebrew at Sewanee, gave us good food for thought, prayer, and practice in ministry.

Most of all, I have enjoyed the opportunity to connect with many of you in person. Thank you, especially to my colleagues in the diocesan office, for your kind welcome and for putting up with my stumbles along the learning curve for this new role.

Peace & Joy,
The Rev. Canon Wes Smedley