

## **Commission on Ministry: Diocesan Convention 2025**

Dear Bishop Phil LaBelle, Clergy, and Delegates to the 115<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Diocese of Olympia,

Over the last year, the Commission on Ministry has continued to provide support, guidance, and pastoral support to individuals in the process of ordination in the Diocese of Olympia. On December 7, 2024, Adam Conley, Lynne Markova, Kelly Moody, McKenzi Roberson, Lia Shimada, and James Wyatt were ordained to the transitional diaconate. They were all ordained to the priesthood on June 14, 2025. On October 4, 2025, Laura Meyers was ordained to the diaconate, after being admitted for candidacy in June.

Due to a cancer diagnosis and concerns about travel at the time, Karla Koon did not return to Seattle to be ordained to the transitional diaconate with her cohort. She remained in Berkeley, California where she was receiving treatment and completing her work on her Master of Divinity at Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Karla developed health complications in late spring, and with the permission of The Rt. Rev. Austin K. Rios, Bishop of California, Bishop Phil agreed to travel to her to ordain her to the transitional diaconate on May 9, 2025. The Very Rev. Steven Thomason, The Ven. David Bishop, and The Rev. Nat Johnson accompanied Bp. Phil to Oakland, California, where the ordination took place. We received the sad news on May 12 that the Rev. Karla Koon died that morning. Her funeral was held at St. Mark's Cathedral on June 20, 2025.

In November 2024, the Commission on Ministry recommended Laura Meyers, Tamara Lamb, and Mirabella Maeve Wyatt to postulancy. In June 2025, we recommended Vince Booth, Alison Estep, Tina Francis Mutungu, Elizabeth Holland, and Gabriel Oaks for candidacy; God willing and the people consenting, they will be ordained to the transitional diaconate in December 2025.

The Commission on Ministry will be interviewing Melissa Simonsen, Laurel Tallent, and Stephanie Butler for Postulancy in November 2025.

Over the last year, the Commission on Ministry has been revising our discernment process to bring it into alignment with Bishop Phil's vision and the Commission's canonical responsibilities. With Bishop Phil, we committed to a process that would allow for the massive amount of work to be completed while minimizing the disruption of process for those who were discerning a call to ordained ministry. We are happy to report that while we've had some setbacks as to the initial timeline we'd hoped to meet, we will be launching new Diocesan Discernment committees this year, and we anticipate 19 individuals in our Diocese will engage in discernment for ordained ministry.

The Commission on Ministry has prayerfully and diligently worked to develop a process that better supports and resources our parishes, missions, and total common ministries for the ongoing work of community discernment, and to provide pathways of formation that help

support the identification and development of spiritual gifts and charisms that allow members of our diocese to live more deeply into their baptismal vocation. This will be reflected in the three new manuals that support the process, including: *Exploring Vocations: A Pathway of Discernment in the Diocese of Olympia; Diocesan Discernment Manual and Curriculum*; and *A Manual for Postulants, Candidates, and Ordinands*. These will be ready for publication in December 2025 or January 2026.

In addition to revising the discernment process and producing supporting materials for it, the Commission on Ministry has developed a preliminary handbook for Commission on Ministry members that includes roles and responsibilities of its members and their tasks as liaisons to those in process. The finalization of this resource will happen in 2026.

As Chair of the Commission on Ministry, I want to express my deepest gratitude for the careful and diligent work that our team has completed in such a short amount of time. I am aware from my colleagues' experiences in other dioceses that the changes to the discernment process that often accompanies a bishop transition can take two or three years, usually pausing all processes in that time. I'm grateful for Bishop Phil's commitment to mitigate that impact as much as possible and for his support in the work we've been able to complete since his ordination and consecration as our Bishop. All who have been involved in this process of revision have done so from a place of deep love for the people of our Diocese and with great care and discernment regarding how we can best fulfill our canonical duties. I am grateful for the gifts and talents represented by our current Commission membership, which include:

Tina Polf, Michael Perera, Maria Weber, Carole Loudenback (Standing Committee Liaison), the Rev. Jennifer King Daugherty, the Rev. Pat Grodt, the Rev. Ruth Anne Garcia, the Rev. Scott Deasy, and the Rev. Stephen Crippen (Standing Committee Liaison)

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Natalie "Nat" Johnson  
*Chair, Commission on Ministry*