

A Report of The Episcopal Election Committee to the 229th Annual Diocesan Convention
Good News in The Diocese of New Jersey

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”
(Philippians 1:2).

According to Canon 9, Section 1, “When a bishop is to be elected, there shall be an Episcopal Election Committee consisting of 16 Convocational Members and six Members-At-Large...” We can assure you that we have a faithful group of individuals who serve on the Episcopal Election Committee who love Jesus and the Church, especially here in the Diocese of New Jersey. We have been blessed with clergy and lay leaders alike who have engaged in a very thorough canonical process not only paying attention to the highly detailed components of this extensive work and ministry but to the fundamental mission that draws us further into communion with one another and highlight but one thing: Jesus ! There IS a Good News story going on in our Diocese of New Jersey and we are here to testify to this fact. We call upon every person, every parish, every mission to join together in sharing that we are raising up a new chief shepherd in our great Diocese of New Jersey. New things are happening. We can be very proud to be “The Diocese of New Jersey.” And we can testify to the fact that Jesus is working something new in us and through our beloved Diocese.

An Over-view: The Work and Ministry of The Episcopal Election Committee and what we continue to be about....

“An Episcopal Election Process is a community exercise in spiritual leadership discernment which takes several key issues into consideration:

First, it takes seriously the fact that there is an existing community (warts and all) that is doing the discerning. Therefore the questions ‘Who are we?’ and ‘What is our mission?’ are prior to ‘Who is our bishop going to be?’.....

Second, it is a spiritual process – one grounded in a relationship to Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, and accountable to God and to the Christian community – the church in and beyond the electing diocese....

Third, the issue is one of discernment – ‘acuteness of judgment, insight and understanding,’ as one dictionary puts it. It is not one of manipulation and coercion no matter how subtle, sincere or well-intended. It is a process that involves listening, speaking, mutual respect, personal and communal thought and prayer”

(The Rt. Rev. Harold A. Hopkins, Jr.).

We are pleased to report that we have found the community of people and churches in our diocese to have been open, sincere, honest and reflective, helping us all to take the next step toward “Who will be our next bishop ?” We have spent the time putting together an inventory of a “needs assessment,” and have engaged in a prayerful and mature discernment process that we believe will lead to long term resiliency.

We have spent time as a community in prayer. The Episcopal Election Committee, the Transition Committee and the Standing Committee have been away on retreat together, we have supported one another along the way, have set aside and have spent the extra time necessary to be sure that our process is about Jesus and not ourselves. The Episcopal Election Committee has a wonderful Chaplain in The Rev. Canon Terry Rosheuvel.

Discernment requires a certain level of maturity even when there are elements of anxiety and fear. Healthy and balanced leadership of the process has fostered maturity that considers the impact of what is being asked of all participants especially after the election has taken place.

The Transition Committee is under the fine leadership of The Rev. Greg Bezilla. The Rev. Terry Martin serves as a chaplain to the diocesan staff and will serve as the chaplain to the incoming bishop and his or her family. The Rev. Ronald N. Pollock serves as the chaplain to Bishop and Mrs. Councill.

We refer you to our web-site bishopsearchnj.org for details about process, structure, contact information, and important dates and events. It may also be found by going to our Diocesan web-site and clicking on the left side under The Search for the 12th Bishop.

Your Role in the Election of a Bishop and beyond

The election of a bishop is a Good News Story in the life of the Church. In order for the outcome to be beneficial for both our diocese and the “whole Church,” several things need to happen. First, there must be a healthy process in which, from beginning to end, attention is paid to individuals and details alike. Second, there must be a good match between the gifts of the nominees and those of our diocese. Third, prayer must be central and ongoing so that the process may be grounded in the Holy Spirit.

There is more to an election than the electing convention. The period between the announcement of the slate and the electing convention is the time for a full and honest exchange between the nominees and the people of our diocese. If this time is well spent, the presence of the Holy Spirit will be felt throughout our diocese.

All of us, lay and ordained, have a responsibility to lay before the nominees your hopes and concerns. At the same time, if you have concerns about any of the nominees, it is appropriate for you to share these concerns with the nominee and others in our diocese in a constructive way. In talking publicly with the nominees, where you have hopes, lift them up; where you have concerns, state them; and where you have questions, ask them.

Transition

When the election is complete, the work, in a most profound way, is just beginning. The bishop-elect and the diocese, clergy and lay alike, are beginning a transition which extends far beyond the ordination of a new bishop.

From the outset, test your own expectations for the new bishop. Remain open. Expect that your expectations will not all be met ! Do you meet all the expectations of those with whom you work ? Should you be expected to do so ? Remain open to hearing the expectations that the new bishop will have of you and of the other clergy and lay folks, keeping always in mind that a healthy relationship between bishop and people is a two-way street requiring much give and take. Many people have a tendency to overlook this fact.

Finally, during this time, constantly invoke the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Prayers of invocation, praying without ceasing, that is the most important thing you can offer to the process.

We ask your prayers for all of the nominees, for their families, spouses, partners, parishes, etc. We ask your prayers for Bishop George, Ruth, the Diocesan staff, the Cathedral Dean and staff, all the people, and all the clergy, and all the churches and missions in our diocese, for Deb Schmidt, our Chair, The Rev. Terry Rosheuvel, Chaplain, and for one another, for this process and the grace of Jesus to guide us and lead us along the way.

On behalf of the entire Episcopal Election Committee:

Faithfully Yours, in Jesus,
The Rev. Ronald N. Pollock, Co-chair