

Coadjutor's Corner, No. 3.

Bishop Coadjutor Search Committee Begins Work *Online Survey Set for Sept. 6-Oct. 4*

By Linda S. Comins

The Diocesan Bishop Coadjutor Search and Nominating Committee has begun its work, with a few modifications necessitated by pandemic-related restrictions.

During the 2019 diocesan convention held in Wheeling last October, Bishop W. Michie Klusmeyer announced that he was calling for the election of a bishop coadjutor to be his eventual successor in the Diocese of West Virginia.

A coadjutor holds the right of succession to become head of a diocese upon the diocesan bishop's retirement.

Bishop Klusmeyer has not announced a date for his retirement. He will retain ecclesiastical authority within the diocese until he steps down.

Under The Episcopal Church's canons, a diocesan bishop has up to three years to retire after a coadjutor's consecration. After Bishop Klusmeyer's retirement, the coadjutor will become the eighth bishop of West Virginia.

The diocese's Standing Committee, which is in charge of the selection process, named members of the search committee in March, after reviewing applications. The search committee is charged with identifying candidates for the bishop coadjutor's position.

As one of its first actions, the search committee has contracted with Holy Cow! Consulting to develop a survey open to everyone in the diocese. Results of the survey will be used to create a profile for potential candidates for the bishop coadjutor's position.

The survey will open on Sunday, Sept. 6, and will close on Sunday, Oct. 4. A link to the online survey will be shared through WVMission, the diocesan listserv. The link also will be posted on the coadjutor page of the diocesan website at www.wvdiocese.org. People who do not have online access may request a printed copy of the survey's questions.

Serving on the search committee are clergy and laity from parishes throughout the diocese. The Standing Committee has hired the Rev. Gary Butterworth of Andersonville, N.C., to serve as search consultant.

The Rev. Al Prichard is leading the search committee as its chair. The Rev. Stan Holmes is serving as chaplain to this committee. The Rev. Jordan Trumble is acting as the Standing Committee's non-voting liaison to the search committee.

Other members of the search committee are Sonya Armstrong, John Beall, the Rev. Marjorie Bevans, Andy Bird, John Canfield, Linda Comins, Diane Cormack, Ray Lowther, the Rev. Nancy Martin, Paul Miller, Greg Pennington, Susanne Pulse, Marti Steiner and the Rev. Kim Webster.

The search committee planned to launch its work with a two-day retreat in late March, but that event was canceled because of the statewide pandemic shutdown. As the closure extended, the group decided to open its process in June with three consecutive evening sessions conducted by using Zoom online technology. Since that time, the committee, its subcommittees and subcommittee chairs have continued to hold virtual Zoom meetings.

Members of the search committee have formed three subcommittees: survey, profile, and education-communication.

The survey subcommittee is working directly with Holy Cow! Consulting to prepare the diocesan-wide survey. Webster is chair of this subcommittee.

The profile subcommittee, led by Beall as chair, is creating a multimedia profile to show to potential applicants for the bishop coadjutor's position. The profile will include data gleaned from the survey, information about churches and ministries within the diocese and a brief history of the Diocese of West Virginia.

The education-communication subcommittee, with Comins as chair, is sharing a weekly series of reflections to help survey respondents in discernment for the diocese's next bishop. The subcommittee also plans to provide educational material concerning the role of a bishop coadjutor and the responsibilities of a bishop diocesan.

In addition, the education-communication subcommittee is making periodic announcements and releasing other information to the diocese regarding the search process.

After interviewing finalists for the coadjutor's position, the search committee will present a slate of candidates to the Standing Committee for its approval. After nominees have been introduced to the diocese, a bishop coadjutor will be elected by lay delegates and clergy during an annual diocesan convention or at a special convention. The Standing Committee has not set a date for the election.

This article was originally published in Dayspring. Linda S. Comins is the Dayspring editor and a member of St. Matthew's, Wheeling.