

Diocesan Staff Realignment and Organizational Updates

The Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts is pleased to announce several important staff realignments and organizational updates.

These developments reflect the Diocese's commitment to strengthening participation in God's mission through clear leadership structures, collaborative practices, cultural competency, healthy organizational systems, and faithful stewardship of human resources. The ongoing work of diocesan realignment seeks not only organizational effectiveness, but also the cultivation of a diocesan culture that is pastoral, responsive, collaborative, and mission focused.

The Bishop's Staff serves as a resource to the whole Diocese, supporting congregations, clergy, lay leaders, commissions, ministries, and diocesan initiatives with intentionality, care, and clarity of purpose.

Bishop Howell is deeply grateful to the Diocesan Council for their support and endorsement of this realignment and to Canon Steven Wilco and Canon Kim Foster for their collaboration in this process.

New Leadership Appointments

Beginning August 1, 2026, **The Rev. Heather Blais will serve as Canon to the Ordinary and Chief of Staff.** In this role, Canon Blais will serve as a senior advisor to the Bishop Diocesan and collaborator in diocesan operations, clergy transitions, congregational support, organizational leadership, and implementation of diocesan priorities and vision.

Canon Blais brings wisdom, pastoral sensitivity, organizational leadership, and deep knowledge of the Diocese to this new role. Reflecting on her appointment, she shared:

"This is a great Diocese, with incredible lay and clergy leaders. Bishop Howell's love of Christ and strategic vision is bringing us together as a Diocese in new ways that will help us grow in God's mission. It is a joy to support the mission and ministry of our Diocese in my new role, and I look forward to getting to know you during future parish visits and diocesan gatherings."

Also beginning August 1, 2026, **The Rev. Steven Wilco will serve as Canon for Discipleship and Vocations.** In this role, Canon Wilco will focus on leadership development, discipleship, and formation for lay and ordained leaders across the Diocese.

Canon Wilco shared:

"I have been so blessed by my time working with this Diocese, and I'm excited to continue in this new way with Bishop Howell. I have a deep passion for teaching and for empowering lay leaders, and I look forward to leaning more into that part of our shared work."

Additionally, **Kim Foster's title will transition from Chief Financial Officer to Canon for Finance and Operations**, reflecting the breadth of her leadership and the integration of financial stewardship with diocesan mission and ministry.

Staff Transitions and Celebrations

The Diocese also gives thanks for the faithful ministry of staff members who are concluding their service:

- **Susan Olbon will retire on August 30, 2026**, after many years of dedicated service to the Diocese. The Diocese gives thanks for her wisdom, professionalism, institutional knowledge, and faithful commitment to the Church. A diocesan-wide farewell celebration will take place on Thursday, September 10th, at the Cathedral and Diocesan House. Additional details will be shared in the coming weeks.

- Alison Gamache will conclude her ministry with the Diocese on June 18, 2026, as she pursues additional educational opportunities. The Diocese gives thanks for her contributions to diocesan communications and ministry support.

A new full-time position has been created to provide administrative assistance to Canons Blais and Wilco. This position is anticipated to start on August 1, 2026.

The Diocese is also pleased to announce the following staff promotions:

- **Lydia Rosado** has been promoted to Office Manager.
- **Melanie Stone** has been promoted to Payroll Manager and Finance Assistant.

Both Lydia and Melanie have demonstrated adaptability, dedication, and a strong commitment to the Diocese's shared ministry.

Updated Office Hours

Beginning August 1, 2026, diocesan office hours will be:

Monday through Thursday

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Friday

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

These adjustments are intended to support healthy organizational rhythms while ensuring continued responsiveness and support throughout the Diocese.

Looking Ahead

The Diocese asks for continued prayers for staff, clergy, and lay leaders as this season of transition and growth continues. Work remains ongoing to strengthen systems, clarify areas of responsibility, and support collaborative ministry across the Diocese.

Later this summer, visual materials and updated contact resources will be distributed to assist congregations and diocesan leaders in identifying the appropriate staff contact by ministry area and responsibility.

For additional information, please contact Canon Steven Wilco or Bishop Howell.