



The Episcopal Diocese of Western New York

July 7, 2025

Dear People of the Diocese of Western New York,

In our recent Listening Sessions at the Diocesan Center in Tonawanda, you expressed the desire for frequent and open communication. In that spirit, the Standing Committee wants to advise you of an important issue as we move forward in the process to discern and elect our next Bishop Diocesan. The Standing Committee, in consultation with the Chancellor and the Constitution and Canons Committee, has carefully reviewed the diocesan canons regarding the formation of the Search and Transition Committees. These canons call for the election of one lay and one clergy representative from each deanery to serve on each committee, with the Standing Committee appointing additional members as needed.

However, after prayerful reflection and honest assessment, we must acknowledge the current reality: our deanery structures have not functioned consistently for at least a decade. Most deaneries have not held regular meetings, elected official officers, or built the organizational capacity necessary to hold legitimate and representative elections. Given this, it is not presently possible to follow the strict canonical requirement for deanery-based elections in good faith.

In light of these circumstances, and in order to ensure a fair and transparent process that reflects the spirit of the canons, the Standing Committee will open a diocesan-wide online nomination process for individuals—lay and clergy—interested in serving on either the Search Committee or the Transition Committee.

In consultation with the Diocesan Council, the Deans, the Standing Committee will review all nominations and will ensure balanced geographic representation by deanery (in alignment with the canons). While this *method* differs procedurally from the canonical process, it honors the intent and is grounded in the same values: broad representation, transparency, and a shared commitment to discerning the Spirit's call in this season of episcopal transition.

We recognize that this is a departure from the letter of the canons, but believe it is the most faithful path forward under current conditions. Waiting until October to revise the canons to reflect our current reality would drastically delay the start of our Search and extend the time without a Bishop Diocesan. Our goal remains to form prayerful, capable, and representative committees to guide our diocese through this important process. To this end, we are offering a Zoom listening session to hear any concerns on [July 16th at 7pm](#).

More information, including the nomination form and timeline, will be shared in the coming weeks. We encourage clergy and lay leaders throughout the diocese to discern whether they or others might be called to serve. We are grateful for your understanding, your trust, and your prayers as we continue this journey together.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Luke Fodor".

The Rev. Luke Fodor

President, Standing Committee

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DIOCESE OF WESTERN NEW YORK PROPOSED PROCESS FOR FORMING THE SEARCH AND TRANSITION COMMITTEES

In Accordance with Diocesan Canons and Current Contextual Realities

Issued by the Standing Committee

Date: July 7, 2025

I. Canonical Foundation

In accordance with the **Canons of the Diocese of Western New York**, the formation of the Search and Transition Committees for the election of a Bishop Diocesan is governed by the following provisions:

Canon [19 §2. Committees. (2)(a) and (3)(a)]:

"The Search Committee and Transition Committee shall be composed of one Clerical Member and one Lay Member from each Deanery... The Clerical Member elected shall be canonically resident in the diocese and serving in the electing deanery. The Lay Member elected shall be an adult communicant in good standing of a parish or mission in the electing deanery."

Canon [19 §2. Committees. (1)]:

"The Standing Committee shall prepare, in consultation with the Bishop Diocesan, if there be one, both a process for the election of persons to the Search Committee and the Transition Committee and the qualifications sought for each committee..."

II. Present Circumstances

After reviewing these canonical directives, the Standing Committee finds that the **deanery structures within the Diocese have not functioned in a reliable or organized fashion for over a decade**, making canonical elections within deaneries impracticable.

- Many deaneries have not:
 - Held official or regular meetings
 - Maintained active rosters or leadership structures
 - Developed the organizational capacity needed to hold representative elections

In light of this, the Standing Committee deems it necessary to **deviate from the canonical election process**, while still honoring the **intent of the canons**, namely broad deanery representation, transparency, and faithful discernment.

III. Alternative Appointment Process (Canonically Grounded)

Pursuant to its authority under **Canon 19 §2. Committees (1)**—to prepare the process and qualifications for the Search and Transition Committees—the Standing Committee adopts the following interim process:

Step 1: Open Nominations

- The Standing Committee will launch a **diocesan-wide online nomination process** for both clergy and lay persons interested in serving on the:
 - **Search Committee** (per Canon 19 §2.2)
 - **Transition Committee** (per Canon 19 §2.3)
- Nominations may be **self-submitted** or submitted **on behalf of others with their consent**.

Step 2: Evaluation and Appointment

- The Standing Committee, **in consultation with the Diocesan Council** (Canon 19 §2.1), **and the Council of Deans**, will:
 - Review all nominations
 - Select members to ensure **geographic representation by deanery**
 - Appoint additional members as permitted:
 - **Up to five additional persons to the Search Committee** (Canon 19 §2.2(b))
 - **Up to three additional persons to the Transition Committee** (Canon 19 §2.3(c))

Step 3: Appointment of Chairs and Commissioning

- The Standing Committee will:
 - **Appoint the Chairs** of both committees (Canon 19 §2.4(a))
 - **Convene a joint session** of both committees to **commission and charge them** in their ministries (Canon 19 §2.4(b))

IV. Duration of Committee Service

Per Canon 19 §2.4(c):

- **Search Committee members** serve until the close of the electing convention or until discharged by that body.
- **Transition Committee members** serve for **at least six months following the ordination** of the bishop-elect or until discharged by the Standing Committee.

V. Public Communication and Transparency

- This process, and the qualifications sought, will be communicated **throughout the diocese** (Canon 19 §2.1).
- A **detailed timeline, nomination form, and criteria** will be distributed via diocesan communications.

VI. Conclusion

While this process deviates procedurally from the canonical expectation of deanery-based elections, it remains **faithful to the spirit and purpose of the canons**. The Standing Committee believes this course of action offers the most equitable and spiritually grounded path forward under current conditions.

We commend this process to the diocese and ask for your prayers, trust, and participation as we move forward in faithful discernment.