

Your Pledge Makes It Possible: Clergy Leadership Development

Support and development of the clergy in Southern Virginia is vital to the health of our congregations. The diocese provides a variety of opportunities for development and educational funding to our clergy.



The diocese holds two clergy conferences each year. In the fall we have a two-day gathering (with an optional quiet day to begin), where we explore vocational questions or specific issues within the church's life and

ministry. In the spring, we have a one-day time of discussion and the chance to hear updates on our shared diocesan life.

Another component for clergy self-care is their continuing education, which they are encouraged to take annually, funded in part by their congregation as a benefit. To support and enhance their motivation for ongoing study and spiritual growth, clergy may apply for a continuing education grant. Those engaged in advanced study or a Doctor of Ministry program may apply each year of their participation, and all funds are distributed according to availability.

- "I'm very grateful for the support I've received for four years as I've pursued my D.Min. at Sewanee. The program not only benefits me, it benefits the congregations I serve. Each year there is not only the academic challenge, but the challenge to ask myself, 'How will I share this?' And I think the congregation would say that I return from my time away renewed and reinvigorated." — The Rev. Susan Grimm, St. Timothy's Clarksville.
- "I was fortunate enough to receive a Continuing Education grant from the Diocese in support of my plans to visit the Holy Land and Turkey. Visiting holy sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ephesus, and Galilee gave me a perspective that I have never gotten from books and videos. Experiencing the places that Jesus walked was very moving. I am grateful to the Church of the Ascension and to the Diocese for making this sabbatical experience such a terrific one which has enriched my ministry as a priest and as a Christian." - The Rev. David Davenport, Ascension Norfolk.

Perhaps one of the most effective and important programs provided for clergy is Fresh Start. This is a two-year program for newly ordained clergy, those entering Southern Virginia from another diocese, and

those who are making a major transition from one form of leadership to another, such as from assistant rector to rector, or even from a smaller church to a large church.

The main goals for the program are to build collegial relationships, create a safe and supportive place for clergy to share their experiences, to

reflect on their ministry, and, when necessary, seek advice from others. Ongoing spiritual and leadership development are at the heart of the program. There is a curriculum based on common issues that arise during the transition of leadership in a congregation, including issues of role clarity, wellness and self-care, how to lead effective change, and coming to understand the complexities of organizational and financial leadership to name a few.



Because it is a required commitment, the diocese subsidizes this program heavily, so as not to be a burden to either the parish or the clergy. This coming term we will have 21 participants and 3 faculty. Bishop Hollerith has said that Fresh Start is "one of the best things we do for our clergy," and most clergy seem to agree:

- "Coming out of seminary, I was used to the camaraderie of my peers, and now I am in small town with few colleagues close by. I am looking forward to having this group as friends."
- "I am taking a new position in this diocese, so this will help me get acquainted with your traditions and history."
- "I learn so much from these colleagues, both the newly ordained and more experienced ones."

