

From the Standing Committee- March 2014

When Bishop Baxter requested last July that we should begin seeking a successor, we began a search process that is now expected to lead to an election in **March of 2015** with consecration of our new bishop in September. In mid January he announced to the diocese that he would end his visitation schedule at Easter and retire effective **May 31**. Until that time he will retain the ecclesiastical authority, but thereafter the Standing Committee has that responsibility. However, we believe that it is in the best interests of the diocese to elect a provisional bishop who would exercise both Episcopal and ecclesiastical authority during the months between Bishop Baxter's retirement and the consecration of his successor.

The position of provisional bishop is provided for in the Canons of the Episcopal Church (III.13.Sec.1) to serve in a diocese that does not have a Diocesan Bishop. The individual serves for a defined period of time of transition until a diocesan bishop is elected and consecrated. Thus the role of provisional bishop is analogous to that of an interim rector. There is no inherent implication that the diocese requesting a provisional bishop is in any trouble or disarray. Although several provisional bishops at present serve in dioceses that have broken away from The Episcopal Church and are in turmoil, others serve during an orderly time of transition. For example, Bishop Lee, retired from the Diocese of Virginia, is serving as provisional bishop for the Diocese of East Carolina.

The process of choosing a provisional bishop is a joint effort of the diocese and the Presiding Bishop's office. When the Standing Committee sends a request for names to the Presiding Bishop's office, they contact bishops to solicit individuals who would be interested in serving our diocese. These names and materials about the individuals are provided to the Standing Committee for their review. The committee will then interview the candidates and select one whom they will present to the convention to accept or reject. The approval by the convention is required because the provisional bishop has the full authority of a diocesan bishop.

It is our hope that we will select as candidate for provisional bishop one whom Bishop Baxter will appoint as an assisting bishop, to begin work as soon as possible in order to pick up some of the load being borne by Bishop Baxter and his reduced staff. We will then elect that person as provisional bishop in June.