



Diocese of Southern Ohio

Diocesan Mutual Ministry Review: The Diocese of Southern Ohio

Executive Summary

July 23, 2025 - The Most Rev. Melissa M. Skelton

A Mutual Ministry Review is a process by which leaders of a congregation, a diocese, or a ministry review their mutual ministry together over a past period of time, identifying appreciations, learnings, and potential areas to improve or strengthen. Based on this, leaders then identify priorities for the next period of their mutual ministry together. To clarify, a Mutual Ministry Review is not a “performance review” for a specific leader. Rather, it is a collaborative process that is built on the belief that ministry within the Body of Christ is, itself, collaborative.

Background

On June 25, 2025, the Rt. Rev. Kristin White and a group of leaders representing the Diocese of Southern Ohio’s governing bodies gathered at St. Patrick’s, Lebanon, Ohio, for the first Mutual Ministry Review during Bishop White’s episcopacy.

The leaders who participated were: the Rt. Rev. Kristin White; the Rev. Jed Dearing and Dr. James Allsop (Standing Committee); the Rev. Jack Koepke (Diocesan Trustees); and the Rev. Jason Emerson (Diocesan Council). The Hon. Tyrone Yates (Diocesan Trustees) and Ms. Spencer Izor (Diocesan Council) were not able to attend but sent their notes via other members of the group or through email. No one in the meeting could recall such a review being conducted in earlier episcopacies.

The following was the preparation done by those attending the meeting:

- First, participants were to attend an orientation conference call via Zoom to orient participants, to introduce Archbishop Melissa Skelton as facilitator of the review, and to answer any questions about preparing for the in-person June meeting.



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- Secondly, all participants were invited to prepare their responses to the following questions (in regard both to the governing body/entity they represent and to the other governing bodies/entities).
 1. What are three specific things the Standing Committee/Trustees/Diocesan Council/bishop have each done particularly effectively in the past year?
 2. What are one or two specific changes the Standing Committee/Trustees/Diocesan Council/bishop could make, in order for your/their ministry to be more fruitful in the year ahead?
 3. What is the single most important matter for the Diocese of Southern Ohio to focus on in 2025-2026?

Outcomes

Representatives of the governing bodies of the diocese (Diocesan Trustees, Diocesan Council, Standing Committee) together with Bishop Kristin White agreed that the Diocese of Southern Ohio has over the past 15 months experienced a time of exciting and hopeful transition and renewal. This time has included:

- A bishop who is had been present to and has engaged with the people of the diocese and with numerous pressing issues needing attention (diocesan staffing, strengthened financial clarity, delicate Title IV cases, congregations both in crisis and ripe for development, the support of the Procter Center, etc.), and
- Governing bodies who, in collaboration with Bishop White, have each been exercising their canonically-required roles while striving to establish new and healthier ways of working, processes that are more responsive to the needs of the congregations of the diocese, and stronger, more collaborative relationships with one another and with their new bishop.

Overall, then, the tone among these diocesan leaders was one of deep appreciation of the work (volume and quality) completed over the last 15 months and strong hopefulness about the next



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three years. Bishop White and these representatives understand that this transition and renewal will be hard work, and they are committed to continue this work together going forward.

More specifically, the following is a selection of important discussion points, mostly focused on the next three years:

1. Given that the past 15 months have been a period of great and needed change, the bishop and governing bodies' representatives expressed a desire to focus on a time of greater stability and to focus energy on delivering on the priorities and plans that have already been identified. Connected to this, both the bishop and the diocesan staff will continue to work on work lives that are sustainable for the long term. The sense was this: let's breathe and execute.
2. The bishop and governing bodies' representatives are committed, with God's help, to continuing engagement with and assisting congregational leaders to create healthy, faithful and fruitful congregations which are local expressions of the Body of Christ. All the resources, programs, and staffing are about helping people at the congregational level to know and follow Jesus, as this (Episcopal) Church has understood him. There was a strong belief that Episcopal evangelism should be a priority in the times in which we are living. The sense was this: let's equip our congregational leaders and our congregations to be the Body of Christ for the sake of today's world.
3. The bishop and the governing bodies' representatives commit to continuing to work on clarifying, making even more transparent, and serving as good stewards of the financial resources of the diocese. This will be particularly important as a new canon for finance and operations joins the diocesan staff. The sense was this: let's persist through the complexity of our finances and take steps so that the financial resources are best used for the diocese and its people of today.
4. The bishop and governing bodies' representatives were unified in their commitment to making the Procter Center a spiritual gathering place for the people of the diocese and potentially for The Episcopal Church beyond the diocese. The sense was this: let's support the Procter Center to fulfill its calling to be for all the people of the diocese and beyond.



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5. All the governing bodies' representatives, together with the bishop, commit to continue to work together via the Joint Governing Bodies Retreat and through reflecting and fine-tuning their work using the "Ways of Working" created by each governing body at the first Joint Governing Bodies Retreat, toward fulfillment of the diocesan mission. The sense was this: let's continue to focus in a disciplined way on healthy ways of working together.
6. Finally, the bishop and the governing bodies' representatives all stated that it will be important over the next three years to continue to identify areas of diocesan life and leadership that need renewal and to address those areas together. The sense was this: let's continue to identify any unhealthy patterns and change them.