

# Diocesan Discernment Day

Saturday, February 25, 2023  
Grace Episcopal Church, Wilmington



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*by the Rev. Charles Lane Cowen*

On Saturday, February 25 the Commission on Ministry (COM) hosted a lay leadership discernment day at Grace Church in Wilmington. Bishop Brown, the Commission on Ministry, and Dr. Sarah Stonesifer Boylan, Dean of the Stevenson School for Ministry, presented information about how the Episcopal Church in Delaware will equip lay leaders to engage in ministry across our diocese.

Bishop Brown began by sharing that since the beginning of his episcopacy he has asked the Commission on Ministry to live more fully into their canonical role of empowering the laity to utilize their spiritual gifts for the glory of God and in service of the Gospel of Jesus. The Commission on Ministry over the past few years has developed a number of tools that have culminated in a partnership with the Stevenson School for Ministry. Working with local parishes, regional cohorts, and the Stevenson School, the COM hopes to train lay leaders to serve as licensed Lay Worship Leaders and Lay Preachers.

During the course of the conversation, Ms. Peggy Boyd shared her experience of serving as a lay worship leader at her church. Many of our Delaware Churches do not have clergy serving every Sunday, so gifted lay leaders who can preach the word and lead services such as Morning Prayer are a tremendous gift. The group also discussed how churches with full-time clergy also might benefit from trained lay leaders who can offer sermons as well as officiating services of the Daily Office.

Dr. Stonesifer Boylan, the Dean of the Stevenson School for Ministry, then laid out how the Stevenson School equips lay leaders with practical training. Offering courses that meet online once a week in the evening for ten weeks along with online written forums, the Stevenson School specifically hopes to meet the needs of lay leaders who will study remotely while also managing work and family obligations. Courses include studying the Old and New Testament, the Book of Common Prayer, and Homiletics (preaching). One gift the Stevenson School for Ministry brings is coursework that brings together many dioceses as well as those discerning calls both to lay and ordained ministry. The COM particularly is excited that any coursework done for lay leadership can apply to required coursework for those discerning a call to the vocational diaconate.

The Rev. Jeffrey Ross, the chairman of the Commission on Ministry, further explained how the Episcopal Church in Delaware will be working to put those seeking lay licensure into cohort groups for prayer, study, and mutual support. The diocese will help those seeking lay licensure find spiritual directors and keep a life of prayer and continuing discernment.

Anyone who feels called to lay leadership should begin by having a conversation with their priest and will need a letter of support from their priest and Senior Warden. More information may be found on the COM webpage at [delaware.church/ministry](http://delaware.church/ministry).