

**Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee**  
**Episcopal Mutual Ministry Review**  
**Summary Report – January 2022**

On October 22, 2021, a West Tennessee Diocese Episcopal Mutual Ministry Review (EMMR) was facilitated during a half-day retreat at BRIDGES Inc. (Memphis) by Consultant Diane B. Pollard (Episcopal Diocese of New York) for Bishop Phoebe and nine senior leadership persons. Pursuant to Bishop Phoebe's letter-of-agreement (2019) and a newer expectation for all bishops of The Episcopal Church to engage regularly in an EMMR, this was the first for West Tennessee.

EMMR Participants: The Rt. Rev. Phoebe A. Roaf, Bishop; The Rev. Ollie V. Rencher, Standing Committee President; Ms. Ardelle Walters, Commission on Ministry Chair; Ms. Robbie McKinney, Finance Committee Chair; Mr. Josh Shipley, Diocesan Treasurer; Mr. Andy Cobb, Diocesan Chancellor; Mr. John Owen, West Tennessee Endowment Corporation Chair; Ms. Blair Evans, St. Columba Board Chair; The Rev. Gayle McCarty, Bishop Search Committee Co-Chair; Ms. Lavonnie Perry Claybon, Bishop Search Committee Co-Chair

Episcopal Mutual Ministry Reviews (EMMR) are a way for dioceses (like all faith communities) to ask, "How are we doing?" Each is an intentional time to celebrate what has been done well and to understand what might be done better, as a diocese and its respective bishop collaborate to practice common ministry in the best possible ways. The MMR intends to nurture environments where responsibilities are discussed and reviewed regularly for communities and individuals to understand what is expected of them. The time and energy center on what is important to improve diocesan health and leadership for the good of all. Throughout the MMR process of reflection questions, answers, and conversations, it is important for participants to remember that the intent seeks to improve effective ministry versus a performance evaluation of its bishop. The MMR focus is on means of shared ministry improvement rather than on reasons why something was not done. Within the pastoral context of the process, the emphasis is on celebrating successes and resolving challenges to foster sound and healthy stewardship and leadership ministry. MMR objectives primarily are to celebrate what is going well and to identify what needs attention/change; give clear and reliable feedback; identify lay and episcopate leadership development needs; minimize unrealistic expectations; renew and/or establish certain goals and priorities for the next period; deepen bishop-diocesan relationships; and enhance communication for the building up of the diocesan community.

Bishop Phoebe Roaf was elected in November 2018, consecrated in May 2019, and requested that an EMMR be conducted after a two-year period. A questionnaire was developed by the consultant, circulated to the bishop and certain diocesan leaders in September 2021, and returned to the consultant for review and in-person discussion with the group on October 22, 2021.

The process was open, clear, positive, and reflective of opportunities based on the following highlights from questionnaire responses and conversation.

- Bishop Phoebe, diocesan clergy, and lay leadership are working well together.
- Bishop Phoebe was elected and called based on the Search Profile and apparently is a solid match. The Search Profile’s “Holy Listening Sessions and Diocesan-Wide Survey” indicates that we sought a Bishop who: “prays – regularly – for us and with us; proclaims the Gospel in word and action and helps us do so also; welcomes all seekers of Christ; honors our diversity in theology, culture, thought, personality and person; articulates our unique Episcopal identity and mission and helps us establish a vision for this diocese; equips us to carry out that mission and vision in our local communities; builds trust and collegiality among clergy and laity through honest dialogue; connects us to others across the diocese, the nation, and the world; communicates clearly and regularly with transparency; commits to diocesan-wide youth ministries; engages in issues of social justice in the community; leads by both experience and example, and by both listening and teaching.” It was shared by questionnaire responses and conversation that in one way or another the Bishop and diocese are responding to what was sought, and learning new things along the way.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bishop has exercised pastoral gifts, described as “deeply pastoral and caring,” been engaged in supporting and responding to ordained and lay leaders and the ever-changing needs of faith communities, and practiced sound financial stewardship and “nimbleness” to the benefit of the diocese.
- Highlights of 2019-2021 include the renovation and evolution of programs at Barth House Episcopal Center; increased communications and the employment of a diocesan Minister of Communication; start of a weekly community radio show (“Faithfully Memphis” beginning in October 2020); and two online/hybrid diocesan conventions.
- Major priorities for the coming year include increased finance and human resources support for smaller congregations, enhanced programs for youth and children, and the development of programs and conversations associated with the baptismal call for racial reconciliation.
- Sourcing and training of volunteers in addition to paid diocesan staff should be developed to increase engagement of all who will benefit from attention to these major priorities.

While the Churchwide norm during the COVID-19 pandemic has been one of stopping activities, the fact that the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee activities continued is significant. Successful examples, such as the completion of the Barth House renovation project, revitalization of Church of the Good Shepherd, and the building and renovation of cabins at Saint Columba Episcopal Camp and Retreat Center in a difficult season are impressive. In countless ways, the diocese is thriving and always has room to improve and deepen commitments to mission and ministries.