



Diocese of Southern Ohio

**Nominees for the
Tenth Bishop of
Southern Ohio**

With thanks to God, the Standing Committee is pleased to present to you the slate of nominees to be the Tenth Bishop of Southern Ohio: The Rev. Canon Whitney Rice, the Rev. Dr. José Rodríguez, the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, the Rev. Dr. Elaine Ellis Thomas, and the Rev. Canon Kristin Uffelman White.

The election for the Tenth Bishop of Southern Ohio will take place at a special in-person electing convention on September 30 at Christ Church Cathedral.

The Standing Committee of the Diocese of Southern Ohio

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The Rev. Jason Emerson, St. Patrick's, Dublin	Ms. Hannah Teetor, Redeemer, Cincinnati
The Rev. George Glazier, Trinity, London	The Very Rev. Owen Thompson, Christ Church Cathedral
The Rev. Gia Hayes-Martin (Chair), St. John's, Worthington	Mr. Gayland Trim, All Saints, New Albany
Mr. Thomas Jones, St. Patrick's, Dublin	Chaplain: The Rev. Sallie Schisler, River Cities Churches
Ms. Miriam McKenney, Calvary, Cincinnati	
Mr. Wendell Mulford, St. Paul's, Chillicothe	

The Rev. Canon Whitney Rice

Biography

The Rev. Canon Whitney Rice (she/her/hers) serves as the Canon for Evangelism & Discipleship Development for the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri. She is a graduate of Yale Divinity School where she won the Yale University Charles S. Mersick Prize for Public Address and Preaching and the Yale University E. William Muehl Award for Excellence in Preaching. She has served as a researcher and community ministry grant consultant for the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, is currently a staff writer for the Episcopal Digital Network's Sermons That Work, is a member of the national Episcopal Church Evangelism Council of Advice, and is an active participant in the clergy community working for racial and economic justice in St. Louis.



Passionate about building connections between people and helping faith communities live into their gifts, she has pioneered church planting and missional community work in her diocese along with winning a Roanridge Grant for her groundbreaking Requiem or Renaissance congregational revitalization program. When she's not thinking about the changing church, particularly the intersection of evangelism and justice work (which is all the time, seriously), you'll find her swing dancing. Find more of her work at her website Roof Crashers & Hem Grabbers (www.roofcrashersandhemgrabbers.com).

“What I love most about the gospel accounts of call is that healing and evangelism are always intimately connected. Jesus heals someone and then immediately calls them to follow him on The Way so that they too may spread the Good News he has just awakened within them. This is a pattern I have experienced over and over in my own life, and I sense it is a journey the Diocese of Southern Ohio is walking as well.

“The aftermath of addiction, the struggle to articulate a unifying theology of money and power, the paradox of needing revitalization despite an abundance of ministry gifts and material resources, and the deep desire for ongoing growth as Beloved Community call for a partner in ministry who is wholeheartedly committed to the work of trust-building, truth telling, and the gentle yet fierce art of presence that points toward hope.”

The Rev. Dr. José Rodríguez

Biography

The Rev. Dr. José Rodríguez is the Rector and Vicar of the Episcopal Churches of Christ the King and Jesús de Nazaret, co-located in Orlando, Florida. Born in Puerto Rico, his own migration experience became his doctoral dissertation focused on the pastoral care of migrants.

He served as a university chaplain for a decade. In 2017 he was assigned to Jesús de Nazaret months before Hurricane María and oversaw a major disaster response. During the pandemic, he partnered with a Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Central Florida Black Nurses Association, and others to launch major community health initiatives. In 2022 he was called to serve as co-Rector and then Rector of Christ the King.

He is passionate about promoting the Gospel in Kingdom work that isn't performative but upholds human dignity in tangible ways. He believes religious communities have a unique role in developing Christ-like communities that are just, healthy, and have a shared duty of care to others.

He was the 2019 Heart of Florida Changemaker of the Year for Advocacy and a 2020 Orlando Sentinel's Central Floridian of the Year Finalist. He was recognized as a 2020 Distinguished Leader in Florida by the U.S. House of Representatives.



"... I was contacted by a group of clergy in the Diocese of Southern Ohio to ask me into a conversation and mutual discernment to be your next bishop. As a Christian dedicated to inclusion and justice, I was moved by how broadly representative of your diocese this group is: from your urban area to Appalachia, men and women, straight and queer, of all ethnicities, and representing all ministers – laity, deacons, and priests. I have never experienced such a blessed community gathering of strangers who have become my friends. In a short time, we visioned and dreamed together, and I can see myself serving the people of Southern Ohio as your tenth bishop diocesan.

"Southern Ohio is a diocese with diverse persons that reflect God's fullness in Jesus Christ. If this group is just a hint of the beautiful tapestry of your diocese, then I yearn to discern more fully with the wider Body of Christ, the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio."

The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers

Biography

The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers is a Canon to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and spearheads Episcopal efforts around evangelism, racial reconciliation and creation care. She also serves on the clergy team at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in New York City. Prior to her current ministry, she served as Chaplain to the Episcopal House of Bishops, directed and taught mission and evangelism at General Theological Seminary, and served as Canon for Missional Vitality in the Diocese of Long Island.

Her professional ministry began at St. Paul's Cathedral in Boston, where she acted as the cathedral's Minister for Radical Welcome and founded The Crossing, a groundbreaking church now in its 17th year. The author of *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline and New Hope for Beloved Community*, an updated edition of *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other and the Spirit of Transformation*, and *The Episcopal Way* (with Eric Law), she has led numerous church-wide and ecumenical renewal and justice efforts.

A native of Frankfort, Kentucky, she holds master's degrees from both Episcopal Divinity School and Harvard Divinity School and an honorary doctorate from General Theological Seminary. She and her husband Albert deGrasse make their home in New York's Harlem neighborhood.



“Throughout the antebellum South, my enslaved ancestors dreamt and sang of a place where they would at last know dignity and liberation. ‘Lord Jesus,’ they prayed, ‘deliver us across the river to Freedom Land.’ While they surely pictured the Israelites crossing the River Jordan to enter the Promised Land, their prayers were also deeply practical and earthy. Freedom was not an abstract; it was a destination. Racism didn’t magically evaporate as they crossed over the Ohio River, but they knew new life was possible on the other side. This was Freedom Land.

“When I consider the palpable call to enter into discernment with the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio, this is what I see. You are more than your nearly 150-year history of service and witness. You are more than your abundant financial resources, and more than the deep wedges between haves and have nots. You are more than your experience as a dysfunctional system seeking recovery and restoration, though I know well how consuming that journey can be.”

The Rev. Dr. Elaine Ellis Thomas

Biography

The Rev. Dr. Elaine Ellis Thomas is rector of All Saints, Hoboken, in the Diocese of Newark, NJ. A passionate preacher and follower of Jesus, and with skill in organization management, conflict mediation, and global reconciliation ministries, she is excited about leading the Church into the future to which God invites us.

Elaine served at St. Paul's Memorial Church in Charlottesville, Virginia and was an organizing figure in the clergy response to the white supremacist events in the summer of 2017. She attended Berkeley Divinity School at Yale and was ordained in the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, prior to which she was the director of Human Resources for Episcopal Community Services in Philadelphia, managing roughly half of the \$10-million budget and serving as a member of the strategic leadership team. She was also an accomplished organist and choirmaster.



As a public theologian, Elaine convenes the Hoboken Clergy Coalition, is chaplain of the Hoboken Fire Department, and a member of the boards of the Hoboken Shelter and the Jubilee Center. She recently completed her term as president of the Standing Committee, attended the 80th General Convention in Baltimore, and was a member of the Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth-Telling, Reckoning, and Healing.

She and Tim, a leadership consultant, have been married for almost 24 years. Her daughter Rachel lives in the Philadelphia suburbs, and Seth, her son, died by suicide in 2009. She and Tim share the rectory with their Great Pyrenees, Ella, and 19-year old cat, Cocoa, and both enjoy baseball, traveling, and going on adventures together.

"The state of Ohio holds a special place in my heart: it is where my spouse, my partner in life, was born and grew up and went to college. We have made countless trips over the course of our relationship and marriage to visit family in northeast Ohio, to witness the pageantry that is a Buckeyes game at The Shoe, and to enjoy an afternoon of baseball at Great American Ballpark. Our deep roots in Ohio led me to participate in the bishop search in the Diocese of Ohio, an experience that continues to draw me into further exploration of where my gifts might best serve God and God's people.

"What you seek in your next bishop resonates with me as one committed to building relationships, to strengthening communities, to truly know and love those with whom I serve so that we can carry out God's mission in this world, sharing the healing love of Christ with all people. My experience and abilities as an enthusiastic teacher and preacher with pastoral sensitivity and boundless courage to go where God leads are all characteristic of the kind of bishop your profile imagines."

The Rev. Canon Kristin Uffelman White

Biography

I grew up in a small town, where St. Andrew's Church felt like my second home. My faith was formed through the prayers I knew by heart before I could read them on the page. As a priest, I was a member of the clergy staff of a large congregation, and then Rector of a mid-sized, growing parish. Currently, I am grateful to serve at a different church almost every Sunday.

As Canon to the Ordinary for Congregational Development and Leadership in the Diocese of Indianapolis, I connect leaders throughout the diocese and beyond, equipping them for ministry that helps the church, its people, and our communities, to flourish. My goal is to align diocesan mission with practice in the areas of discernment and transition, youth and campus ministry, racial justice, communications, and collaborative leadership – all toward building up the Body of Christ.



I find God in the daily prayer that grounds me, in the relationships that sustain me, and in the encounters with creation that inspire me. My husband John and I met in college. Our adult daughter, Katherine Grace, is married and lives in Germany. John and I live in Indianapolis with our two dogs, Lula and Lily.

"I give thanks for this opportunity to enter into discernment with you, as you search for the person who will serve as the Tenth Bishop of Southern Ohio.

"Your profile details a clear-eyed hope for your future as a diocese, as well as an honesty and a sense of longing that took my breath away. You recognize disparate accomplishments in the diocese, as well as the challenges you face, while seeking a coherent mission to frame who you are called to be as the Body of Christ throughout Southern Ohio. You name the desire for a bishop who will be present with you, particularly, in this time and place. These are the reasons – both in the work that you name and in the ways in which you articulate it – that I am compelled to explore this calling with you.

"I believe and trust that God is at work in our midst: right here, right now. That is the lens through which I view the ministry I am privileged to practice, together with the people of God."