

DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE RESOLUTION #5 FOR THE 157TH CONVENTION OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTON

Submitted by the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Easton

January 9, 2025

Revised January 3, 2025

Dr. James Cockey, President

The Rev. Dr. Darcy Williams, Secretary

The Very Rev. David Michaud

Ms. Diane Freestate

The Rev. Steve Mosher

Ms. Linda Hurley

Resolved, that the Diocese of Easton undertake a year of discernment following the announcement of the Rt. Rev. Santosh Marray's resignation effective the fall of 2026; and be it further

Resolved, that this 157th Convention of the Diocese of Easton endorse the Standing Committee's creation of a Diocesan Discernment Committee for the purpose in this year of discernment of leading the Diocese of Easton in discerning our diocese's future mission strategy, including whether our participation in God's mission could be strengthened by collaborating or partnering with another nearby diocese; and be it further

Resolved, that the Discernment Committee present its findings and recommendations for action to the 158th Convention of the Diocese of Easton for the purpose of deciding the preferred structure and mission strategy for the diocese after the completion of the episcopate of the Rt. Rev. Santosh Marray in the fall of 2026; and be it further

Resolved, that the Discernment Committee produce the following:

- a) Resources to encourage and support the members of the diocese in praying for the diocese's discernment about its future ministry;
- b) Development and oversight of a process by which the entire diocese can provide input into our future mission strategy;
- c) Regular reports to the Standing Committee about the committee's work;
- d) A profile of the Diocese of Easton's history, ministry, challenges and strengths; and
- e) Recommendations to the Standing Committee to present to the 158th Convention about the diocese's preferred structure and mission strategy, including, if appropriate, possible next steps for exploring collaboration with nearby dioceses.

Explanation: *Ten years ago, the Diocese of Easton considered how we could best organize ourselves to carry out the mission of God in the Episcopal Church here on Maryland's Eastern Shore. At that time, we decided to move forward as an independent diocese, and in 2016, we elected Bishop Santosh Marray to serve with us for a season.*

Bishop Marray has announced that he will retire in the fall of 2025, and with that news, the Diocese of Easton has entered another leadership transition. In the Episcopal Church, standing committees of dioceses are charged with oversight of and responsibility for bishop search and transitions (Canon III.11.1 (a)).

With thanks for Bishop Marray's ministry, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Easton, understanding that the search and installation of a diocesan bishop will likely cost the diocese around \$200,000, believes it is prudent and good stewardship to first enter into another diocesan-wide discernment process to determine the diocese's vision for its ministry in the coming years after Bishop Marray's retirement. In particular, the Standing Committee has created a Discernment Committee to help determine whether our participation in God's mission could be strengthened by collaborating or partnering with another nearby diocese and asks for the endorsement of this convention for the work of the Discernment Committee and a commitment to consider the findings and recommendations of the committee at the 158th Diocesan Convention.

Although the Diocese of Easton considered the alternative of joining with another diocese in 2014-15 and decided against it, the Standing Committee believes that the seismic changes we have experienced in the last decade—which include significant shifts in the religious landscape of the United States and a global pandemic—mean that we need once again to examine creative options for our future ministry. This is in line with the thinking of, and supported by, our new Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Sean Rowe.

Funding Implications: *Some funds may be needed for traveling expenses to neighboring dioceses, the purchase of online opinion surveying tools and miscellaneous office and printing costs. The majority of the expenses -- consulting costs -- would be borne by the Presiding Bishop's Office. Up to \$3,000 funding for the implementation of this resolution would come from the 2025 Operating Budget as determined by the Department of Finance and overseen by the Diocesan Council. While that funding should be sufficient, because a discernment process has undetermined outcomes, should additional funding be needed the Discernment Committee would request any additional funds be approved by Diocesan Council.*

*The Committee on Resolutions for Debate could **NOT RECOMMEND** approval. See the accompanying report for more information.*