DIOCESE of CHRIST our HOPE

Response to the 2026 Proposed Canonical Amendment on Transfer and Permission to Serve
Diocese of Christ Our Hope College of Bishops
June 26, 2026

2026.4 Title III, Canon 5, Section 2, RE: Clarify Transfer and Permission

Introduction

Our diocesan position on Holy Orders is clearly stated in Article X of our Constitution. However, our Canons are currently silent on the matter of whether a female presbyter from a different jurisdiction may be licensed to serve in our diocese. Though our Canons are silent, our Licensure Policy currently states that female presbyters from other jurisdictions who are licensed in our diocese must serve as deacons. If approved, this proposed amendment would make that policy Canon law.

The DCOH College of Bishops is of one mind regarding our position on Holy Orders. However, we are not in complete agreement regarding the practice of licensure. We are firmly committed to adherence to the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese. We believe our diocesan position on Holy Orders is clear, justifiable, and within the bounds of biblical practice. Nevertheless, not everyone in the Diocese (both clergy and laity) agrees fully with our stated position on Holy Orders. That diversity of opinion and conviction is a cultural feature of our diocese that we desire to preserve, while maintaining high clarity on our position.

What follows are two responses from the DCOH College of Bishops, one in favor of this amendment, and one opposed, each with its own rationale.

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*Response **in favor** of amendment 2026.4 Title III, Canon 5, Section 2, RE: Clarify Transfer and Permission*

Some of our bishops support this amendment and commend it to the Synod for adoption.

Our diocesan canons speak clearly to the ordination of deacons and presbyters within the Diocese of Christ Our Hope. What our canons have not addressed is a distinct but consequential question: what roles may clergy canonically domiciled in other dioceses — including women ordained as presbyters elsewhere — serve when they transfer into or receive permission to serve here? The current silence is not neutral. It invites inconsistency, leaves parishes and bishops without canonical footing, and places visiting clergy in an unfair position of uncertainty. In this instance, clarity is charity.

The Diocese of Christ Our Hope does not ordain women to the presbyterate. This is a settled conviction rooted in Scripture and the received Anglican tradition. It follows that our standards for who may serve as a presbyter here should reflect the same convictions as our standards for who may be ordained here. To hold otherwise would create an incoherence at the heart of our polity — affirming a conviction in our ordination canons while leaving a side door open through our transfer and licensure canons.

We are aware that within our own diocese there are faithful clergy and laity who do not personally share this conviction yet have graciously submitted themselves to our diocesan position. We honor that submission. It is itself an act of charity, and it deserves to be met with honesty about where we stand — not vagueness that leaves everyone guessing.

We hold this position with genuine respect for those within the ACNA who reach different conclusions — this amendment does not adjudicate that broader conversation; it simply ensures our own house is in order.

We commend it to the Synod.

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*Response **opposed to** amendment 2026.4 Title III, Canon 5, Section 2, RE: Clarify Transfer and Permission*

Though we are not currently proposing a different amendment on the matter of licensure, the following arguments are based on a position on licensure that would allow for the licensure of female presbyters from other jurisdictions to serve as presbyters in our diocese.

Policy Background and Context

As bishops, we adhere to a Bene Esse understanding of the episcopate[1]. Therefore, there is freedom given to rectors, as the spiritual leaders of their congregations, regarding the application of Holy Orders based on differing biblical convictions. In our diocese, some churches do not allow for female deacons or lay male and female preachers, while others do. We wholeheartedly respect and protect this freedom for each local church, with the Rector as its spiritual leader.

Some of our bishops also believe that the licensure of female presbyters gives a local church, through the leadership of its Rector, permission to use this valid canonical mechanism to best serve its local church while adhering to the diocesan practice and posture regarding canonically resident clergy.

Subscription and Submission

[1] The term *bene esse* (Latin for "well-being") applied to episcopacy refers to the theological viewpoint that the episcopacy is a historically rich, practical, and highly beneficial form of church government, but is not strictly essential for the church to exist. This view espouses a more decentralized form of power, granting greater freedom to Rectors in their local churches. For more information, visit (https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/esse-bene-esse-plene-esse/)

The posture and practice of the Diocese of Christ Our Hope should remain clear: our clergy must be wholeheartedly *subscribed* (in full agreement) to the Constitution and Canons of the Province, the Anglican Church in North America, and *submitted* (full agreement not required) to the position on Holy Orders of the Diocese of Christ Our Hope, as stated in our Constitution.

The following is taken from the ordination vows in our Provincial Book of Common Prayer 2019, pp. 473–474:

> The Canons require that no one may be ordained a Deacon [or a Priest] in the Church before subscribing without reservation to the Oath of Conformity. It is also required that each Ordinand subscribe without reservation to the Oath of Canonical Obedience. In the presence of this Congregation, I now charge you to make your solemn declaration of these oaths.
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> Each Ordinand then declares the following Oaths of Conformity and Canonical Obedience:
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> *I, N.N., do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and to contain all things necessary to salvation, and I consequently hold myself bound to conform my life and ministry thereto, and therefore I do solemnly engage to conform to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of Christ as this Church has received them.*
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> *And I do promise, here in the presence of Almighty God and of the Church, that I will pay true and canonical obedience in all things lawful and honest to the Bishop of _____, and his successors, so help me God.*

All clergy are to be subscribed without reservation to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of Christ as this Church has received them. The "Church" in this context is our Province, the Anglican Church in North America.[2] However, as clergy we are to be submitted to the Bishop in all things lawful and canonical. The above oaths are quoted as requirements for ordination in both our Provincial (III.3.2 and III.4.3) and Diocesan Canons (III.3.2 and III.4.3).

At its founding, the ACNA codified diocesan choice on the matter of Holy Orders into the Constitution and Canons of the Province (Constitution Article VIII.1 and Canon III.1.4). Some dioceses ordain only men to Holy Orders, while others ordain both men and women as deacons and presbyters. In our Canons, we respectfully disagree with those positions. Our disagreement is open and honest, but loving, and gracious. We encourage everyone in this Diocese to practice loving disagreement with those within and outside our Diocese who hold a different position on these and other matters.

Not everyone in the Diocese of Christ Our Hope agrees with our position on Holy Orders as stated in our Constitution (Article X). However, as bishops we firmly believe we should not require

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[2] This usage of the term "Church" is standard throughout Provincial and Diocesan Constitution & Canons language, and Anglican polity in general. Note: though each ACNA diocese has the responsibility and freedom to determine its own position on Holy Orders, the ecclesiastical authority to ordain clergy is granted to bishops by the Province, via the College of Bishops. In addition, the rites of ordination are established by the Province, via the College of Bishops.

complete subscription from everyone on matters such as our position on Holy Orders. Our diocesan position is a godly and valid position that stands as a "middle way" between positions such as the prohibition of women in Holy Orders on the one hand, and the complete adoption of women's ordination to the diaconate and presbyterate on the other. Our middle position will understandably stretch those within DCOH who hold to either of the above extremes. Since the beginning of our life together there have been disagreements and, sadly, sometimes hurtful things have been said. We call all the people of this diocese to be clear, honest, thoughtful, and gracious in this matter, being submitted to our diocesan policy on holy orders without being subversive, adversarial, or inauthentic. We desire our clergy and laity to be forthright about their convictions while "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

On Licensure: Rationale for Opposing the Amendment (Sub-headings needed)
The bishops that oppose this amendment do so for reasons of subsidiarity, already existing policy language on licensure, canonical best practice, and pastoral sensitivity and hospitality within our Province.

Subsidiarity
Allowing female presbyters to be licensed in our diocese balances diocesan convictions with pastoral flexibility. It allows a rector, exercising spiritual authority within a congregation, to invite a qualified cleric from outside the Diocese to serve that church in a specific and limited capacity for a particular season of ministry. This discretion would serve our churches well and respect both episcopal oversight and local pastoral leadership.

This amendment narrows the useful and time-tested tool of licensure. It could restrict the ability of congregations and rectors to benefit from ministry partnerships that are already subject to significant oversight and limitation.

Already Existing Policy Language on Licensure
The Diocese of Christ Our Hope already has a clear policy and well-established practice regarding clergy transfers and permission to serve, including licensure. Our Licensure Policy document states:

> It is the policy of the Diocese that, in keeping with Article X of the Diocesan Constitution, called and gifted women who serve as either a Presbyter or Deacon in the originating Diocese may serve as a Deacon in this Diocese. Called and gifted men who serve as either a Presbyter or Deacon in the originating Diocese may serve in the corresponding role in this Diocese.
> This policy shall not affect clergy initially licensed by the Bishop Ordinary prior to the year 2022 provided such licensed individuals continue to serve in the cure for which the license was issued.
> Further, it is the policy of DCOH that any woman licensed to serve in this Diocese under the above provision may not serve (even temporarily) as the Rector or any other role functioning as the overseeing clergy of any congregation of this Diocese.

The proposed amendment seeks to codify a limitation that is unnecessary since the Diocese already has a policy statement that accomplishes the same goal.

Importantly, licensure is not equivalent to canonical residence or transfer. Licensed clergy serve under significant limitations. A license is temporary and must be renewed annually. Licensed clergy

require permission to serve and may not exercise ministry independently within the Diocese. They do not have voice or vote in diocesan governance, cannot hold leadership roles outside their local setting within the Diocese, and remain accountable both to their own bishop and to the bishop granting the license. These limitations ensure that licensure functions as a carefully controlled exception rather than as a means of altering diocesan identity or practice.

Furthermore, in the Diocese of Christ Our Hope, a female priest who transfers canonically into the Diocese may serve only as a deacon. This existing practice demonstrates that the Diocese already has established, workable policies governing ministry roles without the need for additional canonical restrictions. The amendment therefore addresses a problem that, in practice, does not exist.

Canonical Best Practice
We acknowledge that this proposed amendment seeks to provide clarity. However, it is very important that our Canons not be amended to include language that constrains the freedom of our clergy and churches to adhere to practices that do not violate conscience. For example, approving this proposed amendment could set a precedent for other similar unhelpful restrictions, such as making the practice of lay deaconesses impermissible, or mandating specific liturgical practices, such as the use of vestments.

There is a danger of making the Canons a battle ground for a legalistic approach to policy enforcement. This is a slippery slope and not canonical best practice. Some of our bishops believe that "freedom within fences" on this matter is the best way forward. The fences are the aforementioned limitations on clergy who are licensed, regardless of order.

Pastoral Sensitivity and Hospitality within our Province
Licensure is an invaluable pastoral and administrative tool. It allows rectors and congregations to benefit from the gifts, experience, and ministry of clergy from outside the Diocese when those gifts are particularly suited to a congregation or ministry context. Licensure in the ACNA provides flexibility while maintaining diocesan order and oversight. In addition, rather than creating ambiguity, having a more flexible licensure policy would enable bishops and rectors to exercise prudent judgment in determining how a licensed cleric could serve for the good of the local church.

It is worth noting the broader mix of positions and practices in the ACNA that are not always clear to everyone, and we understand that some might experience such a licensure policy as adding to that confusion. However, we believe the need for charity and hospitality toward one another in our diocese and province is a greater need. Rather than restricting and reducing inter-diocesan relationships, we believe our diocese and the ACNA would be better served by policies that offer greater flexibility, openness and collegiality, while still honoring the variety of positions on holy orders throughout our Province. A thoughtful, more flexible position on licensure can serve for greater provincial unity. We interact in our geographic footprint with other dioceses that have different positions on this matter, and that presents difficult discussions. A gracious and more flexible position on licensure gives us opportunities for healthy conversations and encourages everyone to move toward greater maturity and clarity in our diocese and province. In the long run, clarity can also be achieved through this same relational knowledge and understanding.

Conclusion
As bishops we are all equally committed to remain united in this Diocese with clear discussions of the position, posture, and practices of DCOH. This unity is costly because it calls us to recommit

ourselves to an understanding of subscription and submission, as well as a recognition of and freedom for rectors to be the spiritual leaders, while giving bishops the prerogative to serve the churches in their theological and practical diversity. We will gladly and enthusiastically teach and discuss our diocesan position on Holy Orders. We will defend it and uphold it. We will gladly and enthusiastically endorse both women and men in ministry with differentiation on the nature of Holy Orders.

For all these reasons, some of the bishops in our diocesan College believe the Diocesan Synod should reject the proposed amendment to Title III, Canon 5, Section 2 on licensure and remain open to a system of permission to serve through licensure granted by episcopal oversight and local discernment. This openness would provide clarity, accountability, flexibility, and fidelity to our diocesan convictions without imposing additional canonical restrictions.

By adopting a more open and flexible policy on licensure, the Bishop Ordinary, together with the rector of a local church, could one day make reasoned decisions about licensure that remain consistent with the Constitution and Canons of the ACNA and submitted to the practice of the Diocese of Christ Our Hope. This would allow the Bishop Ordinary and Rector to exercise their proper authority in matters of licensure while further enabling the Diocese work through divisions that continue to trouble the ACNA. In doing so, our Diocese can act with clarity, appropriate freedom, and fidelity to its consensus and convictions. And our Diocese will faithfully guard and protect its original convictions on the matter of Holy Orders.