DIOCESE of CHRIST our HOPE

2026.5. Title IV

RE: Title IV

Proposed by the Constitution and Canons Committee

Proposed Language along with redlines from earlier proposals and the provincial Title IV are attached separately

Rationale:

The Provincial Title IV has been amended extensively. Amending our Diocesan Title IV line by line to match would have been confusing and would likely have produced a cluttered, disorganized result. The Committee, with the support and agreement of the Bishop, therefore drafted a new Diocesan Title IV. It is based on the Provincial Title IV and was prepared in conversation with our current Diocesan Title IV.

The Provincial Canons require each diocese to have a disciplinary process for receiving and investigating Reports of clergy misconduct. The Diocesan Council, acting as the Standing Committee, must certify to the Provincial Executive Committee by December 1, 2026, that the Diocese has complied (new Canon IV.7.6).

Plain Language Summary of How the New Title IV Process Works:

1. Report. Anyone with knowledge of possible clergy misconduct may submit a written Report to the Diocesan Reports Receivers (IV.7.2.1). There must be at least two Receivers, at least one of them lay. They must be trained in caring for and responding to people who report misconduct. The Chancellor may not serve as a Receiver (IV.5.1).
2. Initial review. The Receivers and the bishop decide together whether the Report discloses reasonable grounds to believe a canonical offense was committed (IV.7.2.2).
3. Dismissal check. A Report may be dismissed only if the bishop and the Receivers agree unanimously and the lay Vice-Chair of the Diocesan Council approves in writing (IV.7.2.3–.4). The Receivers keep a confidential record of every Report, including dismissed ones (IV.7.2.6).
4. Pastoral resolution. If a Report is not dismissed, the bishop may attempt pastoral resolution. If that is not appropriate, or is not reached within 42 days, the Report goes to the Diocesan Reports Investigation Committee. The bishop may extend the 42 days, but not beyond 180 days in total (IV.7.2.5).
5. Investigation and Presentment. The Investigation Committee investigates. It may refer a Presentment (formal charges) to the Ecclesiastical Trial Court of the Diocese and appoint a Presenting Proctor to present the case (IV.7.3).
6. Resolution. A matter may be resolved by consent order (IV.7.4) or by a hearing before the Court (IV.7.5). Sentences are pronounced under Canon IV.8, and appeals proceed under

Canon IV.9.

7. Throughout. The clergy member is presumed innocent (IV.1.8). Each side may have an Advisor (IV.5.3–5.4). Pastoral care is available to all involved (IV.1.2). Abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult is reported to civil authorities (IV.1.6).

Summary of Changes from May Draft:

1. Advisors. The "Reporting Party Advocate" becomes a Reporting Party Advisor, and a Respondent Advisor is added for the clergy member (IV.5.3–5.4). *(Fr. Lovejoy)*
2. Optional rotation of bishops. The Bishop may set up a rotation among the Bishop and the Suffragan and Assistant Bishops, so that a different bishop oversees each successive Report. The overseeing bishop is designated in writing. He does not give pastoral care in that matter, but the other bishops may (IV.1.2). *(Fr. Lovejoy)*
3. Presumption of innocence. New Canon IV.1.8. It does not limit inhibition, public notice, mandatory reporting, or pastoral care for the Reporting Party. *(Fr. Lovejoy; Governance Working Group)*
4. One intake office. The "Reports Administrators" and "Reports Receivers" are merged into a single office, the Diocesan Reports Receivers. The Ethics and Safeguarding Committee no longer serves as Reports Receivers. Anyone serving the Diocese who receives an allegation must refer it to the Receivers (IV.5.1). *(Governance Working Group; Fr. Lovejoy)*
5. Independent check on dismissal. The provincial model requires written approval from the "chair of the Standing Committee" before a Report is dismissed. Our Diocesan Council serves as the Standing Committee, and the Bishop chairs it, so the Bishop would be approving his own decision. The draft therefore substitutes the lay Vice-Chair of the Diocesan Council (IV.7.2.3–.4).
6. Record of all Reports, including dismissed ones (IV.7.2.6). *(Deacon Jan Buchanan)*
7. Two-thirds vote to remove a Reports Receiver, which restores the earlier threshold (IV.5.1.1). *(College of Laity)*
8. Tracking the final Provincial text. The draft now tracks the Provincial text on verbal misconduct (IV.3.1(c)(ii)). It also gives the Diocesan Council notice of a prima facie finding (IV.7.3), requires Diocesan Council approval to extend an inhibition (IV.10.2.3(b)), and drops the separate diocesan list of clergy, which duplicated the Provincial list (former IV.12.2).
9. Prosecutor. The Investigation Committee's Presenting Proctor presents the case to the Court in place of a bishop-appointed "Trial Attorney." This keeps the Bishop out of the prosecutorial role (IV.4.9).
10. Transitional provisions. New Canon IV.13.4 sets the effective date, preserves pending matters, bars retroactive offenses and sentences, and provides interim Investigation Committee appointments.
11. Cleanup. Cross-references were confirmed, numbering corrected (notably IV.7.5 and Canon 10), and "Disciplinary Tribunal" replaced with "Ecclesiastical Trial Court." The draft also removes duplicated sentencing language (Canon 8), rewrites Canon 6, defines

"Standing Committee" as the Diocesan Council, and conforms formatting.

Feedback from Colleges

College of Bishops
The College of Bishops offered no comments on Title IV.

College of Presbyters
Feedback was generally supportive. One respondent called the revision a significant improvement and recommended (1) a plain-language summary or flowchart for Synod delegates, (2) greater clarity about confidentiality, and (3) a formal review of the new Title IV after one or two years. A second respondent submitted specific comments and typographical corrections. A third offered prayers and encouragement.
*Response***:** (1) A plain-language summary appears above. (2) The confidentiality provisions now point to a single standard in IV.7.3.9 (see IV.5.1.10 and IV.11.4). (3) [State the Committee's position, e.g., "The Committee intends to review Title IV's operation and report to the 2028 Synod."] The typographical corrections [were incorporated / will be considered with the 2027 amendments].

College of Deacons
The College asked that any abuse of a minor be reported to civil authorities "regardless of the state's mandatory reporting laws," because "in DCOH all clergy are mandatory reporters." It asked for the same change to Canon 5, Section 1.1, and asked that "appropriate confidence" (Canon 5.1.6) be defined.
*Response***:** IV.1.6 now provides that "[n]othing in this section limits any broader reporting obligation imposed by the policies of the Diocese." The diocesan policy itself therefore remains fully in force. The Committee did not write a new canonical reporting duty, which would have reached beyond the Provincial text. IV.5.1.5 now cross-references IV.1.6. "Appropriate confidence" is Provincial language and is now tied to the confidentiality provision in IV.7.3.9 (IV.5.1.10).

College of Laity
The College asked (1) why the bar on clergy serving as Reports Administrators was removed, and (2) why the removal threshold changed from two-thirds to a simple majority.
Response: (1) The draft follows the final Provincial text, which requires that at least one Receiver be lay and that the Chancellor not serve (IV.5.1.1). (2) The two-thirds threshold is restored.

Diocesan Council (Governance Working Group)
The Working Group identified "contradiction and confusion" among the Reports Receivers, the Reports Administrators, and the Ethics and Safeguarding Committee. It recommended that the Committee consult Katherine Heidenthal before finalizing the draft. It also commented on the

draft itself, on verbal misconduct, notice to the Diocesan Council, the presumption of innocence, Investigation Committee qualifications, vacancy appointments, and public proceedings.
Response: Canon 5 was rewritten to create one intake office on the Provincial model (see Principal Changes 4 and 5). [State whether Katherine Heidenthal was consulted.] The Working Group's comments on verbal misconduct, notice to the Diocesan Council, and "every appropriate step" in the presumption of innocence were adopted. Comments not adopted are listed below.

Other Feedback:
The Rev. Elijah Lovejoy: three amendments (Advisors, the rotation of bishops, and the presumption of innocence), all adopted with conforming edits, plus commentary on the intake and dismissal provisions, which shaped the rewrite of Canon 5.
Deacon Jan Buchanan: a record of dismissed Reports. Adopted (IV.7.2.6).
Committee members: cross-reference checks, the definition of "Standing Committee," the "Ecclesiastical Trial Court" terminology, and removal of the duplicative diocesan list.

Feedback Considered but Not Adopted

Suggestion	*Source*	*Reason*
Add reporter-care qualifications for Investigation Committee members	Governance Working Group	Deferred to the 2027 amendment cycle.
Require Synod to confirm vacancy appointments to the Investigation Committee	Governance Working Group	Vacancy appointments are generally not confirmed by Synod.
Make trial proceedings public, as in the Provincial canons (Appendix A)	Governance Working Group	Deferred to the 2027 amendment cycle.
Make all abuse of minors reportable regardless of state law	College of Deacons	Addressed by preserving diocesan policy (IV.1.6) rather than by a new canonical duty.
Define "appropriate confidence"	College of Deacons	Provincial language; tied to IV.7.3.9.