

Highland

Episcopalian



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THIS ISSUE:

ELECTING THE NEXT

BISHOP

June 2016



Bishop's Corner

On June 25 the lay delegates and the canonically resident clergy will gather at Trinity Church, Asheville to elect the seventh bishop of our diocese. Assuming we have a

quorum in both orders, the election requires a simple majority for both clergy and lay. The election will also be enfolded by the Eucharist with the ministry of the word preceding the election and the ministry of the table following.

This will be the fourth episcopal election for a diocesan bishop in which I have been a voting participant. Truthfully, all of them have been surprises. We don't have any polls; there are no talking heads making predictions. At each of the three previous elections, there is a holy pause before the first ballot takes place. It's a time when the church world is going to shift. Honestly, the only election I have ever been able to predict was Michael Curry, but that was hardly a normative event. I think everyone knew he would get elected.

I am so grateful to the Nominating Committee for their care in discerning these four persons. I am confident any one of them would be an excellent 7th Bishop. I am also grateful to the Transition Committee for their care in organizing the Walkabout, the election and the consecration, plus all the details of moving a family.

If you look at the liturgy for the ordination of a bishop, you'll see that the new bishop makes promises about the governance of the Church; about being a pastor to the people of the diocese; about the new bishop's personal life of devotion; and about engaging the issues of the world. Of course, there is no one way to do this. The four persons are so different that each would bring a distinct approach to this office, which is a blessing.

It's important in voting that each lay delegate and clergy person remember that we are electing someone to care for this diocese, but also to represent us in the wider church. This person will go to the Lambeth Conference in 2020. He or she will be part of the House of Bishops' meetings as well as General

Convention. Therefore, we have not only to think, "Will this person support my favorite activity in the diocese?" but also, "Will this person represent our diocese in the larger contexts?"

Most of all, we must be responsive to the Holy Spirit. God knows who the next bishop will be, but none of *us* do. We have to find that out by talking to one another, by praying, and by listening for where the divine wind blows on June 25.

I am truly not worried, and that isn't because I am retiring. It's because we have done our work. Now it's time for the Holy Spirit to do her work. These days before June 25 give space to be attentive to what God is doing around this election. This is a time to pay attention to our prayers and to listen for what stirs in our hearts.

I would also ask that you keep Cyndi, Hannah, José and Thomas in your prayers both before and after the election. Being a nominee in such a public election is a very vulnerable place and much too often once the election is over, everyone forgets those nominees not elected. However, these persons are now part of our lives and we must honor that.

I am looking forward to June 25 but not for the reasons that you might think. I am excited about God doing a new thing in this diocese with the wonderful souls here. There is a time for everything and the time for new vision and new leadership has come.

The good news is there is no one way of performing this office. Some bishops focus on administration; some on justice work; some on pastoral concerns; some on teaching and on and on. The key is to do the work that must be done; to find ways to engage the wider diocese in the corporate tasks; and to make room for what delights one's soul.

So for these days before June 25 let us be in discernment and say our prayers. Let us give thanks for God's Church and for this diocese and rest easy since God's in charge and we are not.

+G. Porter Taylor
Bishop, Diocese of WNC

The Election of our next Bishop

By members of the Transition Committee

The Special Convention to elect the 7th Bishop of the Diocese of Western North Carolina will take place on Saturday, June 25, at Trinity Episcopal Church, Asheville. Trinity Church has been the historic place for the election of all the bishops of Western North Carolina.

The Convention will convene at 10 a.m., and the proceedings of the Convention will be available to all by live stream on the diocesan web site at www.diocesewnc.org. The Convention will remain in session until the new bishop is elected. Bishop Taylor will preside, and the delegates to the November 2015 Diocesan Convention will be the same representatives with voice and vote at the Special Convention. All clergy canonically resident in the diocese and physically present at the Convention (both active and retired), as well as all ordained ministers serving in a parish, chapel or other recognized worshipping community of the diocese will also be entitled to vote. Any retired bishop of the diocese may also vote. An approximate number of electors is 160 in the clerical order and 126 in the lay order, with 286 electors overall.

The gathering opens with the Holy Eucharist, with Bishop Taylor presiding and the Rt. Rev. Anne E. Hodges-Copple, Bishop Diocesan Pro Tempore of the Diocese of North Carolina, preaching. After the Peace, the Convention is convened and called to order. The nominees will be officially nominated, and the balloting will begin.

Voting takes place separately and concurrently by both the clerical and lay orders. Prayer will precede each ballot, and consecutive ballots will be cast until a single nominee receives a majority of votes cast on the same ballot within both orders. All the candidates remain on successive ballots until a candidate elects to withdraw. Unless canonically resident, candidates will not be present at the Convention. A liaison for each candidate keeps them informed as the balloting progresses. Once an



Trinity Episcopal Church, Asheville

election is achieved, the liturgy resumes with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Once the Bishop-elect is informed by the President of the Standing Committee and the electors have confirmed the election by individually signing the Canonical Testimonials, the Convention is adjourned.

Subsequent to the Convention, the diocese will eagerly await the first official communication from our new Bishop-elect.

Alternates are welcome to watch the election at Trinity in the undercroft where live video will be streamed. Everyone else is encouraged to stream it at home via a link that will be available through the Diocesan website.

Reminiscing about his own election day, Bishop Taylor recently wrote:

“I was elected to be the sixth bishop of Western North Carolina on May 1, 2004. Around one o’clock I was standing in the flower garden in front of our house in Athens, Georgia when my daughter yelled from the front door, ‘Dad, there’s a call for you from a Bishop Johnson.’ When I answered, a voice said, ‘Porter you’ve been elected as the sixth bishop of WNC. Will you accept?’ ‘Yes,’ I said and then my head went blank. In the next five hours our phone rang and rang until the battery went out. About 2 p.m. I got a call from Frank Griswold, the Presiding Bishop and it was like getting a call from Elvis. I was barely verbal.

“That evening Jo and I sat at the dinner table with Marie and tried to think about our lives. Marie wanted to know where her school would be. Jo and I were looking around our house wondering how we would move. After awhile I rewrote my sermon for Sunday and prepared to say goodbye to St. Gregory’s, even as I wondered who and what I would say hello to.”

Meet the Candidates for Bishop



The Rev. Hannah E. Atkins
Rector, Trinity, Houston,
Diocese of Texas

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The Rev. Cynthia Banks
Rector, St. Luke's, Boone,
Diocese of Western North
Carolina

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The Rev. Thomas Brown
Rector, Parish of the Epiphany,
Winchester, Diocese of
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**The Rev. Canon José A.
McLoughlin**
Canon to the Ordinary, Diocese
of Oklahoma

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The Rev. Hannah E. Atkins

Rector, Trinity, Houston, Diocese of Texas



The Rev. Hannah E. Atkins became the fifteenth Rector of Trinity, Houston in September of 2007. Highlights of her ministry include deepening partnerships with homeless and immigrant populations, developing quality programming for children and youth, welcoming new Christians to the faith, heightening the connection between the church and the arts, and community building across opinions and through conflict while sharing Christ's life-changing love. Before joining Trinity, Hannah served as Senior Assistant Rector at St. John's Church, Lafayette Square, Washington, D.C.; Director of

Theological and Christian Education in the Diocese of the Episcopal/Anglican Church of El Salvador; Associate Priest at St. John the Evangelist San Salvador; Priest-in-Charge at Holy Trinity Church Santa Teresa in San Martin; and as Interim Priest-in-Charge at St. Andrew's Church in Soyapango, El Salvador.

A third generation Episcopal priest, Hannah was ordained in 1996, the first women ordained in El Salvador. She earned a Masters of Divinity from General Theological Seminary in addition to pursuing studies in theology at Universidad Centroamericana in El Salvador. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in history from Douglass College, Rutgers University.

Hannah is married to Elmer Romero. She enjoys parenting their two sons, Samuel, 13, and Daniel, 10, and two step-daughters Magaly, 21, and Sara, 18. Her interests include supporting adult education in immigrant communities, Latin American literature, photography, music, swimming, and walking with her dog, Paco.

How do you in your ordained ministry help congregations grow through struggles, including struggles related to the size of the congregation and/or the ability of the membership to support ministries?

Ordained ministry's calm currents, low tides, cross

continued on next page

winds and striking sunrises have found me and the communities I have served in all manner of struggle. Struggle to express gratitude, to trust God and each other, to learn, to forgive, to speak truth, to say enough, to let go, to love, to show up, and to share our faith. Throughout, I have remembered these parables of extraordinary yet everyday faith and have been sustained:

He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." And again he said, "To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." Luke 13:18-21

As the first woman ordained a priest in El Salvador, the charge was intense: to expand the understanding of the ministry of women in the church to include roles in the diaconate and priesthood— in my case as "Padra"— grow a street mission into a larger community, then buy land, build and move them into a church building; and to develop a program for theological education for the Diocese. The strategies employed throughout my tenure there were to use experience based knowledge to inform, adapt and apply tried, true and culturally based congregational development practices, develop a multi-phase plan with designated local leaders, create popular education materials, and commit to a steady presence, listening, courage, prayer and perseverance.

In 1999, St. John's, Lafayette Square, DC, under the leadership of its Rector, committed to housing the struggling Spanish language diocesan mission, la Iglesia San Juan. St. John's invited San Juan, with support from the Diocese, to become members of St. John's. Once called to St. John's, my priority was to help that Diocesan Mission move from being graciously hosted guests to full decision making members of an historic, wealthy parish. I was to translate culturally, linguistically, theologically for the success of the integration and manage that transition. The struggles there were over resources, independence, autonomy and identity. Also work needed to be done towards an acceptance that San Juan was not necessarily going to grow much numerically, but its message and mission offered a vision of a multicultural, bilingual parish that became a model for the Diocese of Washington. Its mission mattered more than its numbers. The same skills employed in El Salvador applied here though the context was extremely different. A good sense of humor and history served us well in that situation at St. John's/San Juan.

After a two-year honeymoon period as rector of Trinity, Houston, a conflict brewed that developed into a perfect storm. Tensions grew in the aftermath of the 2008 economic collapse, anxiety after Hurricane IKE, and grief at a series of significant members' deaths which signaled the end of an era. Margaret Meade's wonderful quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has," can be applied both positively and negatively to groups in parishes who set their mind on a goal as well. Rebuilding occurred within the church community through prayer, commitment and a reconciliation process we crafted using the resources within the Diocese and the parish. The formalizing of structures, decision-making processes and administrative transparency were necessary for the parish to move from a program sized parish that was run on a family size model, i.e., a few people making decisions, to a program parish administrative model with consistent application of best practices, adherence to the by-laws, and open communication. We are now a healthy, growing, creative parish set for mission in this new era.

The ministries of deacons are a vital, active part of our diocesan and congregational life. What experiences do you have in encouraging the ministries of deacons, and of persons in discernment toward possible ordination to the diaconate?

My prayer for all vocations comes from Romans 8:28 *"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."* (NRSV)

I have supported the vocational diaconate in every diocese I have been a part of in my twenty years of ordained ministry. Of the six affirmed call processes toward ordained ministry during my time at Trinity, three have been to the priesthood, two have been to the bi-vocational priesthood, and one to the diaconate.

Deacons play a vital, active role in the Diocese of Texas. Our Archdeacon is a prominent leader in liturgical, pastoral and outreach ministries here and in educating parishes on the role and call of the diaconate. There have been three diocesan wide outreach initiatives Trinity has participated in where deacons from many congregations took active, effective leadership roles that lead to better understanding, especially amongst the newer Episcopalians in our group, of this specific order of ministry. Those initiatives were in Galveston after Hurricane Ike, in MacAllen during the child migrant border crisis and weekly in our own parish as some come with their congregations to serve the homeless at the Lord of the

The Rev. Hannah E. Atkins

Streets worship service and the Trinity breakfast served immediately afterwards to around 250 homeless men and women every Sunday.

The ministry of deacons is very much encouraged in this diocese. The Diocese of Texas created the IONA School of Formation with much support throughout the congregations in the diocese, including Trinity. I have collaborated with IONA and benefited from being a placement site for three years for one of the deacons. While she was here, she fulfilled her liturgical responsibilities beautifully and graciously. She was a trusted colleague in ministry, worked with our Evening Prayer officiants to help them incorporate reflections into the services we have every weekday night, and taught classes on Benedictine Spirituality and Recovery programs.

While a different historical context, my great-grandmother on my mother's side was one of the first women ordained into the order of deaconesses in the Episcopal Church. She eventually left the order to get married, for in those days to be a deaconess involved taking a vow of poverty and chastity as well as obedience. I have a gold cross she used while she was still a deaconess and serving at the Blue Ridge Industrial School in western Virginia. It has teeth marks on the southern point of the cross where she let someone bite down on it to bear the burden of pain while they were enduring a medical procedure without anesthesia. She used to say, "that is the best use for gold, to take a bite out of suffering and pain." The work of deacons relieves the suffering and pain in our world and brings the Good News of God in Christ to those who will hear it.

Describe your vision of the ministry of bishop. What would be your top five goals as bishop? What would you want your legacy to be?

The scriptural context in which I dare to set any goals for a vision of leadership in the church is one that is pervasive and compelling to many of us. These are Jesus' words from the gospel of John, *"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* John 13:34-35

As Bishop my vision for the Diocese of Western North Carolina will be shaped in prayer and collaboration with the faithful people of the Diocese. I will listen to and love the people of the diocese as openly and courageously as I know how. Entering this initial phase of the discernment process, based on a thorough reading of your profile, praying with the liturgy of the Ordination

of a Bishop as outlined in the Book of Common Prayer, rooted in the baptismal covenant we all share and in holy conversation with trusted friends and faithful colleagues, my top five priorities as Bishop would look like these:

- 1. Foster Connection and Inclusive Community:** Work with great care and intentionality throughout the Diocese to foster connection and build community with each other and our neighbors in diverse settings, through among other things, shared ministry, small meetings, community gatherings and increased use of social media for prayer and resource sharing
- 2. Build on and Strengthen Initiatives in Identified Priority Areas:** Continue and deepen the important ongoing work of the Diocese in the areas of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Spanish Language Ministries, Support of Mission, Dismantling Racism, Global Efforts and LGBTQ ministries.
- 3. Support Congregational Vitality, Growth and Health:** Affirm and support areas of vitality and health in congregations of all sizes, encourage growth and new expressions of church by collaborations between churches, implement missional practices of worship and outreach where possible, be joyful and affirming in the proclamations of the Gospel of Jesus.
- 4. Growth in Spiritual Formation and Creative Evangelism:** To personally stay rooted in a life of prayer and discernment, support vital education and renewal ministries, live the Christian faith humbly and courageously, to bring together creativity and worship, word and wonder in traditional, inspiring and transformative ways that witness to the Good News of God in Christ Jesus.
- 5. Pray for, discern and realize the presence of God's kingdom among us:** Embody and proclaim the values of the Kingdom, work for justice, freedom and peace, intentional work against discrimination based on distinctions or contrivances which are an affront to the body of Christ; engage in solidarity with the poor, isolated, oppressed and marginalized, care for God's creation with reverence.

My hope for a lasting legacy is to shepherd a church that embraces twenty-first century realities with our traditional deep faith, joy, solidarity, justice and love. This tenacious, trusting witness will nurture and form a new generation of disciples committed to witnessing to the love, mercy and grace of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reconciling us to our God and to each other. Together, we will show the world what God's love looks like.

The Rev. Cynthia Banks

Rector, St. Luke's, Boone, Diocese of Western North Carolina



The Rev. Cynthia Banks has served as Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Boone, NC since 2004. In this capacity, Cyndi demonstrates a passion for leading communities of faith to cultivate courage and creativity. She has a special interest in innovative liturgy, civil civic discourse, and helping congregations engage social justice as they live within the prophetic-pastoral tension of their baptismal vows. From 2008 to 2011, Cyndi was Chair to the Fiscal Ministries Committee in the Diocese of Western North Carolina. Previously, she served as Clergy Associate at Christ Church Cathedral, Louisville, KY; Mission Developer, Campbellsville, KY; Assistant Rector/Episcopal Chaplain at Western Kentucky University at Christ Episcopal Church, Bowling Green, KY.

Ordained in 1994, Cyndi holds a M.Div. from The General Theological Seminary and a B.S.B.A. in accounting from The University of Louisville. She is a Certified Darling Way Facilitator based upon the research of Dr. Brené Brown. Prior to seminary, Cyndi worked as an accountant for Ernst and Young.

Cyndi lives in Boone with her husband, Jim, and daughter, Julia. A life long athlete, Cyndi renews her spirit by playing golf. She is an avid reader and enjoys movies with her family. Cyndi loves to travel but is equally content sitting on her deck swing gazing at the mountains.

How do you in your ordained ministry help congregations grow through struggles, including struggles related to the size of the congregation and/or the ability of the membership to support ministries?

Struggles related to size and capacity can be oppor-

tunities for new life when a congregation can trust the paschal rhythm of death and resurrection in their communal life. In 2013, St. Luke's, Boone, was faced with a decision about combining the 9:00 and 11:15 services—we did not have the people or financial resources to sustain three services on Sunday morning. Though resistant at first, as this had been a source of conflict earlier in the life of St. Luke's, it became clear to me that we needed to open ourselves to a conversation about this possibility. As the leader, my role was to help the community manage the anxiety of considering change and to establish a process of discernment that would be thoughtful, intentional, and highly participatory. We used a narrative survey, followed by conversations after each service, culminating in a congregation-wide conversation. Along the way, we dispelled several damaging myths that we had cultivated about ourselves. We discovered that our older people do love our children, and that our children need the modeling of our elders. We learned that our children do love the organ, and that we all enjoy a wider range of music than we first thought. As a community, we have cultivated several core values that have continued to serve us well. We helped people move beyond a personal preference (i.e., musical tastes) to a deeper value—loving something that may not be your thing, but loving it because your brother or sister loves it. We have discovered what it means to be truly intergenerational and to honor the gifts of all the generations. We have learned the value of trying things as an experiment. When we let the third service go, energy was set free. We gained a critical mass on Sunday morning which enlivened our worship, and we had energy to create monthly experimental services on Sunday evening. What could have felt like failure and death in our congregation actually issued forth in new life. My role as the ordained leader was to pastor the system, create and facilitate safe processes for discernment, speak truth as it emerged, and help our community discern where energy was waning and where it was growing.

Recently, I was asked to consult with the vestry of a neighboring congregation who was trying to discern whether or not to increase the time of their part-time priest. I helped them frame the question before them as follows: *"Given the core values that are central to us at St. xxxx, what configuration of ordained and lay leadership do we need to live more deeply into those values?"* I then used a set of questions that I have developed called A Different Set of Metrics that examines congregational life and vitality through the lens of courage, trust, vulnerability, and transformation. These questions push leaders to name where they have seen the way of Jesus made manifest, and where they have experienced creativity, joy, playfulness, mystery, wonder, and holy

ground. It asks explicitly where the congregation experimented, and where they fell short, how they circled back, and what they learned in the process. Looking forward, it asks where they need to risk greater vulnerability, act with greater courage, and what experiment the Spirit is nudging them to try. Through wrestling with these questions, the leadership was able to see clearly that, in all the ways that matter, they are deeply alive and vital. In the numbers-driven metrics of the parochial report, it is so easy for smaller congregations to feel less than, but asking these new questions helped the leadership of this congregation see themselves anew. Yes, they have some work to do, but now they can address the concerns before them from a place of strength and confidence. Ultimately, they did decide to increase the time of their priest, but they could have just as easily determined that a different configuration would also have served them well. What mattered was that they made their decision with clarity about their core values that fuel their life together. What mattered even more is that they could celebrate and lay claim to the life and vitality that was present in their community.

The ministries of deacons are a vital, active part of our diocesan and congregational life. What experiences do you have in encouraging the ministries of deacons, and of persons in discernment toward possible ordination to the diaconate?

All ministry derives its power from baptism. As followers of Jesus, our baptismal vows form the basis of our rule of life. What we agree to do as deacons, priests, and bishops is to live our baptismal vows in a really public way to remind people what life lived in Christ looks like. Deacons icon what it means to “persevere in resisting evil” and what it means “to repent and return to God” when we have lost our way. Deacons icon what it means “to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ” in the most godforsaken and broken places of life. Deacons icon what it means “to seek and serve Christ in all persons” always pointing us to the neighbor whom we’d like to leave on the side of the road in a ditch, and deacons icon the never-ending struggle for “justice and peace,” reminding us that “the dignity of every human being” commands our respect. We need diaconal icons that call us to servanthood and priestly icons that show us how to consecrate life and episcopal icons that draw us toward union. All the orders of ministry have their role to play in building up the Body of Christ.

We are blessed at St. Luke’s with a wonderful deacon, the Rev. Deacon Greg Erickson. Greg icons diaconal energy beautifully. Our congregation is best served when Greg and I are living into our roles with clarity,

respect, mutuality, and appreciation of our different gifts. We embody this liturgically fulfilling our different roles in the service, and we embody this in our work and interactions outside of the liturgy. If my work as priest and rector is tending St. Luke’s as base-camp, our deacon helps us move out into the world. Our deacon reminds us that our ministry at the margins is hands-on ministry. It is our custom for the deacon to preach Maundy Thursday, thus reminding us that washing feet is the work of every follower of Jesus.

As the rector, I understand that the deacon serves under a dual authority—first, under the direction of the bishop; second, under the direction of the rector. As with all my staff, I work in a very collegial manner, drawing upon their wisdom, gifts, and skills, but on occasion, a decision needs to be made that falls to the rector. Greg and I are clear about where those places are, and we move through them well. Our capacity to navigate our different roles is enhanced by the deep trust that we have of one another—we know that the other has our back. We also set aside both time and financial resources to enable our deacon to obtain continuing education and training to enable him to strengthen his diaconal ministry.

I have helped two members of St. Luke’s discern calls to the priesthood. In both instances, questions were posed to help them tease out whether their call was to the priesthood or to the diaconate. This question is always central to discernment conversations.

In serving on the Commission on Ministry, I have been an active partner in discerning diaconal call for aspirants. In my time on the COM, we have said “yes,” and we have said “no.” When aspirants for the diaconate come before us, I am looking for diaconal energy. Deacons, like priests, come in all shapes and sizes, but what is the energy that is animating their call? Is there prophetic energy? Is there a heart for those at the margins? Can this person lead in such a way that others will join them in ministry at the edges? Does this person embody servant leadership? Is this person willing to address issues of structure and power, as well as care for those who suffer at the hands of structure and power? Is this person grounded in spiritual practices that will sustain their passion for justice? Does this person understand that, sometimes, in our current culture, standing still and holding space is a prophetic act in and of itself?

As more and more people are left behind, and as the structures of our society themselves reveal injustice, we will need powerful diaconal icons if the church is to be faithful to our baptismal vows.

Describe your vision of the ministry of bishop. What would be your top five goals as bishop? What would you want your legacy to be?

The vision of the ministry of bishop that has been stirring within me and that excites me includes these qualities:

- Bishop as passionate follower of Jesus and his way, holding that way ever before our eyes.
- Bishop as encourager of ordained and lay leadership, as well as congregations as a whole, helping leaders across the diocese act with courage in the face of institutional and societal stress and anxiety.
- Bishop as bless-er, blessing experiments, blessing courage, blessing successes, blessing failures.
- Bishop as cheerleader, helping congregations and ministries celebrate all that is alive, instead of focusing on what we lack.
- Bishop as overseer, with emphasis on seer — bishop sensing where energy is and where it isn't, sensing what needs a good and holy death and what needs midwifing to bring new life to birth.
- Bishop as presence, connecting us to the Presence and connecting communities of faith to one another across time and space.
- Bishop as mirror, reflecting communities of faith back to themselves so they can see themselves more clearly and act with greater confidence, power, and joy.
- Bishop as nurturer and guardian of the faith steeped in the spirit of John 10, remembering that guardians aren't gatekeepers when the gate is Jesus—our role is to help the faith go in and out and find pasture that it may grow, trusting that what goes in and out is passing always through Jesus.

My top five goals as bishop are as follows:

- That clergy, lay leaders, and congregations/diocesan ministries feel supported, encouraged, and loved as they live the way of Jesus in their specific contexts.
- That we, as a diocese, come to a common understanding of our ecclesiology of the diocese, and that we understand the purpose of the diocese in terms of scripture, historical tradition, Episcopal ethos, emerging church, and current cultural and societal context, and that this common understanding would shape our common life and the structures that support that life.
- That our congregations and ministries act with courage, and that we equip them to understand and move through the barriers that prevent us from

acting with courage.

- That we create a culture where experimentation is encouraged, success is redefined in terms of life and vitality, failure is celebrated for what we can learn from it, and accountability moves from a regulatory stance to a relational one.
- That we grow our capacity to discern where and when we need to give a ministry a holy death, as well as attending to that which is yearning to be born.
- I want my legacy to be courageous, healthy, vibrant, deeply alive communities of faith passionate about following Jesus in their place and time. I want a diocese filled with clergy who know they are loved and appreciated, and who have the support they need to be joyful, playful, creative, and passionate about their leadership and ministry, even as the world around them grows increasingly anxious. I want a culture shift that will enable all of our congregations and ministries to claim their gifts, exercise them fully, venture much for the kingdom, and sometimes fail gloriously without shame. I want us to live the paschal mystery of death and resurrection, not as a doctrine, but as the rhythm of our life together as the Diocese of Western North Carolina.

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The Rev. Thomas Brown

Rector, Parish of the Epiphany, Winchester, Diocese of Massachusetts



The Rev. Thomas Brown has served as Rector at the Parish of the Epiphany in Winchester, Massachusetts since 2009. In this role, he has a special emphasis on liturgy and preaching and has developed innovative practices in the area of lay ministries, congregational development, and stewardship. Faithful as a pastor and dedicated to growing the Episcopal Church, Thomas readily shares the Good News of Christ as a servant leader who strives for justice among all people. Previously Thomas served as Rector at St. Michael Church in Brattleboro, Vermont; and Director of Alumni/ae & Church Relations at Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, California, while serving concurrently at the Church of St. John the Evangelist in San Francisco.

Ordained in 1998, Thomas earned his M.Div. from Church Divinity School of the Pacific. He holds a Bachelor in Science from Western Michigan University and received a Certificate of Family Life Education/Non-profit Leadership from Ohio State University.

Thomas grew up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, in the bustling hamlet of Bruce Crossing, where there were two Lutheran churches, four bars, a funeral home, a post office, a couple of restaurants, a hardware store, and a few houses. Thomas is a lover of hymns, a passionate disciple of Jesus Christ, and blessed beyond measure to be married to the Reverend Thomas Mousin, an Episcopal priest.

How do you in your ordained ministry help congregations grow through struggles, including struggles related to the size of the congregation and/or the ability of the membership to support ministries?

First, we must always consider that growth often comes following a time of struggle. St. Paul's words might be a scriptural sign that *"he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 1:6). At St. John the Evangelist in San Francisco we grew because of the number of mornings each month we walked through the garden's gates to find a dead body; the ravage of heroin addiction was our daily reality in the late 1990s. The growth occurred when we began welcoming people with addictions; in fact, we thrived. Some people recovered, others didn't, but we became a community. At St. Michael's in Brattleboro our struggle was moving from pastoral-sized to program-sized; how would we welcome the next 50 people into our community? This was a struggle, especially for those who valued, above all else, knowing everybody.

The Parish of the Epiphany (where I currently serve) once had over two hundred children in Sunday School. Last year we considered it a good Sunday if there were thirty children in our 9:00 formation program. Our current struggle, and that of many other congregations, is to look forward, rather than backward. Putting on a pedestal the good 'ol days gets us nowhere fast because we can't feel or see or hear the Spirit of God leading us into a future! I lead communities toward the future, as mutually discerned, and we work hard to resist joining the nostalgia parade.

The best leadership antidote for struggle is to equip the church to cultivate a desire for faith. I'm not sure belief is as necessary for the living of these days, as is a desire, a yearning for the Risen Christ to dwell richly in our hearts. When parents lament about soccer schedules conflicting with Sunday mornings at church, I try to respond with gentle inquiries about their own faith. *Are you getting time for quiet, for meditation; have you been to the intercessory prayer group? Maybe the yoga studio or the hall where your 12-step group meets will suffice for church this week.* One can smell judgmentalism a mile away, but sometimes simply naming the problem of insufficient time can be a liberating word. Still, we need lay and ordained leaders who will inspire us to be disciples who make disciples.

For me, this means speaking and preaching about Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, while reclaiming old and discovering new ways, to tell the good news of God in Christ. The invitation to discipleship, like God's mercies, is new every morning. I'm not always as bold in living this vision, but when I am, the Spirit of God blesses my church and our mutual ministries.

The noted stewardship speaker, Bruce Rockwell, claims

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that, “If you’re not talking about Jesus, you’re not teaching about stewardship.” Yet on a practical level we’ll have to let go of buildings, or at least partner with other Christian communities, to share physical resources. If we claim that our faith is rooted in the God of the future then how will there ever be anything except an incalculable abundance? Standing on that promise every struggle will be, ultimately, a blessing.

The ministries of deacons are a vital, active part of our diocesan and congregational life. What experiences do you have in encouraging the ministries of deacons, and of persons in discernment toward possible ordination to the diaconate?

Her name was Joel Goodrich Hill. When introduced to people, if they were nonplussed by her name, she’d say, “like the prophet Joel!” She showed up one Ash Wednesday, stayed afterwards to speak to me and said, “My husband and I live off the grid, and I’m a deacon. Do you know anything about deacons around here?” I responded correctly but not convincingly. She replied, “Well if you’re so committed to deacons why don’t you have a deacon here?”

Letters Dismissory from Maryland were sent, then received in Vermont, and Joel was assigned to be the deacon at St. Michael Church. It was a stretch for the congregation, understandably. Suddenly we had a new clergy person who vested differently, who claimed her prerogative to proclaim the gospel, to prepare the altar, and to say the dismissal. Joel was the epitome of what the Prayer Book envisages for the diaconate: always making the needs of the world known to the church and always leading us to respond.

Joel became a member of staff. She had an office with regular office hours, and she taught us about the diaconate. Before too long she took her place in the counsels of the church, and while doing all this, she connected the dots of Christian formation with our parish’s mission and outreach ministries. Within a year we were serving food at the homeless shelter and spending the night with the homeless. Within two years we were starting every meeting with gospel-based discipleship (reflecting on the upcoming Sunday’s gospel).

I do worry that in some congregations and dioceses we identify lay ministers to become deacons in order to have a free staff person. This stance is not intended in our canons or in the Prayer Book, but it’s not uncommon. I have also noticed that in some places persons whose call to priesthood has not been affirmed have been encouraged to “think about the diaconate.” If every

congregation had a “real” deacon these patterns would disappear.

The late Bishop of New Hampshire used to say “Deacons should be 10% in the parish and 90% in the community.” There’s wisdom in his adage, but his theology reflects a 1990s understanding. We need deacons in the same way we need priests and bishops and lay people: to reflect the diversity of God’s mission for God’s church. Not every congregation’s deacon will minister as does the deacon at the neighboring parish, and such difference in style and content ought to be celebrated and affirmed.

My experience of identifying and encouraging new deacons is limited. In my current parish we have an aspiring vocational deacon, but the daunting and laborious discernment and ordination process has led her to say, “I don’t have time.” If the structures in many of our dioceses don’t allow people to step more easily into the diaconate we’ll continue to have fewer deacons and too many priests.

Describe your vision of the ministry of bishop. What would be your top five goals as bishop? What would you want your legacy to be?

A former spiritual director once said, “Thomas, a bishop has to stand tall, and you’re short in stature!” He’s right! But others have noticed something else: I can be tall in courage, perspective, and vision. That same former spiritual director (who was just with me to lead a quiet day and to preach), as well as others, are saying to me, through this discernment process with you, “Pay attention to your height too.” Bishops stand, sometimes tall, and sometimes at 5’7”.

Yet bishops are also seated. They listen to the word of God, interpreting it within the current context and teaching it so that the Spirit fills us. Bishops must also work to stabilize systems, center God’s people, and focus them on God’s mission; boots on the ground, sleeves rolled up, she or he works alongside God’s people in every community. I believe bishops must be willing and able to raise money. This doesn’t mean that a bishop is called to be solely a fundraiser, but look at the dioceses in our church where ministry and mission are thriving: chances are the bishop isn’t afraid to ask people with generous hearts and deep pockets to transform the world into the shape of a cross and a rolled away stone.

The bishop must listen and lead. The listening comes for me through prayer, listening to God, but also listening to

The Rev. Thomas Brown

God's people within and beyond the church. The bishop listens to the signs of the times. And from all that listening God gives a vision, a way forward. In other words, God gives leadership. The Prayer Book states that the bishop has a prophetic role in our church and in our society: bishops must "stir up the conscience of [God's] people." Bishops lead the church into the public square, and they find more and more ways to befriend the poor, and in doing so, they shepherd dioceses to encounter Jesus in the breaking of the bread, in the prayers, in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship; in seeking and serving him in every person, while respecting the dignity of every human being.

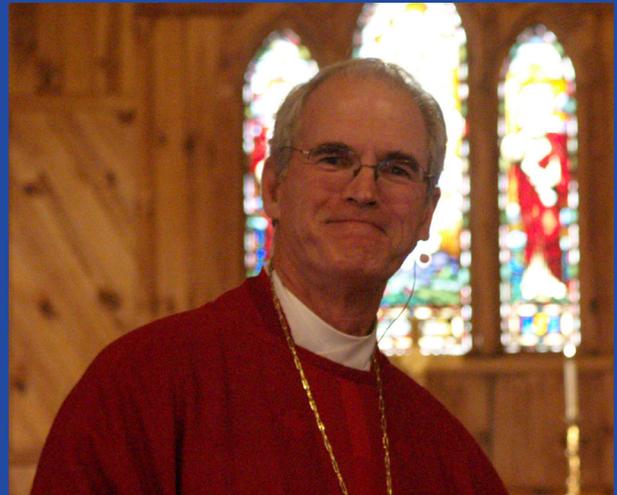
My top five goals, at least for the first five to seven years, would look something like this:

1. a diocese who leads communities in dismantling racism; who works for justice, and who seeks and loves the poor. This will not be universally embraced or celebrated, but it's the call of the gospel of Christ as I hear it.
2. a diocese who is known throughout the region, by other Christians as well as non-Christians, as made up of joyous, prayer-centered people who don't take themselves too seriously, who use technology and media well, and who laugh and pray at every turn.
3. a diocese who understands the primary mission of God is to make disciples who make disciples of Jesus Christ. In every faith community formation programs, outreach projects, and spiritual endeavors will reflect this value.
4. a diocese who embraces children and youth, and who puts resources of time and money into ensuring their full participation in our common life. The bishop is a friend and colleague to young people in the community, and is known as one who respects and honors their ministry.
5. a diocese who extends hospitality to neighbors in the radiant mountains of Western North Carolina, and who also looks forward to working alongside neighbors around the world: global mission becomes as valuable as the local soup kitchen.

After about a decade together, at the farewell celebration, people will return to their local faith communities (maybe in cars that drive automatically) being able to say, "He helped us listen to the Spirit of the Risen Christ, and now we're a stronger community."

Save the Date: Honoring the Rt. Rev. G. Porter Taylor

- Saturday, August 13
- 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- Christ Episcopal School in Arden, NC



Bishop Taylor's retirement event will be on August 13 at Christ School, south of Asheville in Arden. It will run from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. and will feature barbecue at a very nominal cost, entertainment for the children, and music. There will be a photo presentation showcasing Bishop Taylor's years as our bishop, a scrapbook with cards for folks to write their memories of him, and the unveiling of his portrait.

Full details will follow in the next issue of the *Highland Episcopalian* and in our e-news.

The Rev. Canon José A. McLoughlin

Canon to the Ordinary, Diocese of Oklahoma



The Rev. Canon José A. McLoughlin has served as the Canon to the Ordinary and Chief-of-Staff for the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma since 2008. In this capacity, José assumes responsibilities for the day-to-day operations of the diocese; works with congregations in transition and those in conflict; assists vestries in strategic planning; oversees the diocesan Holy Orders Process, the diocesan IONA School of Formation and the Fresh Start program; and assists the Bishop in providing pastoral support. José is committed to youth ministry. Previously, José served congregations in the Dioceses of Southeast Florida and Virginia.

Ordained in 2005, José earned his Masters in Divinity from Virginia Theological Seminary and Bachelor of Arts from the University of Central Florida. Prior to his call to the priesthood, José worked in the Criminal Justice field serving in the State of Florida as a Police Officer and in the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. in various capacities, most recently as the Special Assistant/Senior Advisor to the Assistant Attorney General.

José and his wife Laurel have been married for 23 years, and together have two children, Alexander, 17, and Alyson, 14. Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, José is bilingual, enjoys music, playing the drums, and studying 18th century American history.

How do you in your ordained ministry help congregations grow through struggles, including struggles related to the size of the congregation and/or the ability of the membership to support ministries?

I have had the privilege of working with the 70 congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma over the past eight years. I have worked with churches that have been in conflict; churches searching for their next rector/vicar; churches looking to find the resources to do ministry in their communities; and churches looking to create a new vision of ministry. In all of these situations, one theme has been consistent: the need to clearly identify the congregation's identity.

That lack of identity translates into struggle. Sometimes a congregation is so eager to attract new members that it spends its time trying to be just like every other church, instead of realizing and claiming its own gifts and those of its members. If its heart is not involved, the community will not succeed. Congregations need to focus on what they do well and their members' unique gifts.

God has given us everything we need to do the work of Jesus Christ in the world. The first step is to operate from a standpoint of abundance, not scarcity. We spend more time talking about what we don't have, rather than what we do have. What we see as a liability – for example, our buildings, which stand empty most of the week – other organizations view as assets. Our congregations have opened their buildings for a county program providing services to single mothers, classes for teaching English as a second language, and not-for-profit after-school mentoring and tutoring programs.

That being said, there are times in which systematic issues are the cause of a congregation's struggles. These must be addressed directly. I've walked into congregations where the immediate cause of dissension and anger was just a mask for deep-seated dysfunction that had gone unaddressed for years: power struggles, alcoholism, codependent behavior, financial or sexual misconduct. In one congregation I worked with, it was clear that as we began the search process there was a tremendous amount of hurt. There had been some misconduct with the previous rector. We put the search process on hold and spent six months intentionally working to heal wounds within the community.

In the end, we must understand that we offer something people are starving to find: communities that are grounded in the love of Jesus Christ and are open to all without conditions. If we create environments that are centered on the spiritual health and growth of those in our congregations and in our communities, I believe financial and numerical growth will happen. If we look inwardly and always approach our ministry from the perspective of scarcity, we will always struggle, and

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there is no program that can address that problem.

The ministries of deacons are a vital, active part of our diocesan and congregational life. What experiences do you have in encouraging the ministries of deacons, and of persons in discernment toward possible ordination to the diaconate?

When the newly consecrated Bishop of Oklahoma called me as his Canon to the Ordinary, he asked me to make three areas priorities: a new Holy Orders Process for the diocese; a new Search Process for the calling of clergy to our congregations; and new ways to improve and enhance the raising and formation of clergy.

Two of these initiatives have had a direct impact on where the vocation of the diaconate stands today in the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma. The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma has had a long history of the diaconate. There has always been an emphasis on the importance of this ministry and its impact in the mission and ministry of the Church. However, over a period of years, the diaconate, along with the vocation of priest, began to get blurred a bit. Specifically, a deacon's customary was developed that permitted deacons to perform liturgical functions contrary to the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer and the Canons of the Church.

The original explanation for this customary was to help provide clergy to congregations that did not have the ability to call a priest. Unfortunately, the result was confusion among congregations. They began to see deacons no differently than priests. On several occasions, the bishop and I met with leaders of several congregations that had the financial means to call a priest. But when asked why they had not, the reply was, "Our deacon does everything a priest would do." It was clear that there was a lack of understanding among our lay leadership of the vocations of the Church.

The first step was to work with our current deacons to develop a better understanding of their vocation, and to work together to draft a new customary. The bishop initiated an Annual Deacon's Retreat to allow us the opportunity to not only get to know each other better, but to begin the process of exploring their vocation more deeply. Over a period of two years, I worked with a handful of deacons to draft a customary that would emphasize the importance of their ministry, clarify their responsibilities, and to more clearly explain to all clergy and laity about the roles of deacons. To this day, we continue to use the Annual Deacon's Retreat as an opportunity to encourage, support and provide new learning opportunities for our deacons.

The process of exploring the role of deacon also had an impact on creating a greater dialogue in our diocese about all vocations – lay, deacon, priest and bishop. The dialogue created the opportunity to address the notion that the work of ministry is exclusively the work of the clergy. This was very important in our work, especially with the majority of congregations in Oklahoma averaging a Sunday attendance of 50 or fewer people. The understanding of each of our vocations helped to empower lay leadership to claim their ministry and to find new ways to call others into discipleship. It helped churches understand that clergy may come and go, but the ministry of their church and in their community continues.

The revision of the Holy Orders Process also allowed us another opportunity to enhance the diaconate in Oklahoma. One of the key steps in our work was to look at the vocations of priest, deacon and bi-vocational priest in depth to better understand their call and the expectations of these vocations in the 21st century Church. Through conversations with current deacons, those in deacon formation and those in the early stages of discerning a call to the diaconate we were able to begin shaping a clearer identity of the diaconate in Oklahoma, not only in its current form, but also in the potential of the vocation to serve the Church of the future.

Describe your vision of the ministry of bishop. What would be your top five goals as bishop? What would you want your legacy to be?

The Book of Common Prayer describes the ministry of Bishop as follows:

"Represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry." BCP, page 855

In my work as Canon to the Ordinary and Chief-of-Staff, I have witnessed first-hand the ministry of the bishop in our Church. I have had a front-row seat to what can be a very rewarding, challenging and sometimes lonely vocation. I have sat with the bishop and provided him counsel and reassurance as he ventured toward changing philosophy and vision with potential risks.

While I take the charge described in the BCP very seriously, I think the Church today longs for a new type of bishop. A bishop who is truly engaged in the minis-

The Rev. Canon José A. McLoughlin

try and lives of people within the diocese; engaged in mission and evangelism; a bishop willing to sit with the people of the diocese and explore new ways to be disciples of Christ.

Reflecting on my understanding of the vocation of bishop and my sense of call to be the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina, I would work toward the following goals:

1. Create a diocese that is centered on the mission of Jesus Christ to develop spiritual health and vitality.
2. Devote myself to understanding the needs, concerns, hopes and dreams of the diocese. Spend intentional time traveling the diocese in order to get to know the laity, clergy, congregations and institutions.
3. Develop a transparent diocesan structure based on the needs of the people, congregations and institutions of the diocese. Ensure that it is ultimately focused on encouraging, developing and sustaining vibrant ministries within the diocese and helping people to claim their gifts. The diocese should exist to serve congregations, not vice versa.
4. Use innovative programming and technology to engage the diocese, particularly among youth, minorities and underserved populations.
5. Empower lay leadership and develop a Holy Orders Process that looks to develop clergy more in line with the needs of today's Church. Specifically, I would look at recruiting ordained leaders with entrepreneurial spirit, growing the number of bi-vocational priests and minority clergy.

I would want my legacy to be that of a bishop who not only proclaimed the Gospel in words, but also in actions. I would be the bishop who would not only be preaching and celebrating in congregations throughout the diocese, but would also be standing side-by-side as

we serve those in need and together explore new and innovative ways to serve and grow as disciples. I would want my legacy to be that I was the bishop who walked the walk and brought others along with me.

Save the Date: Consecration of the 7th Bishop of the Diocese of Western North Carolina

- Saturday, October 1
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Consecration will be at 11 a.m. on October 1 at the University of North Carolina-Asheville Kimmel Arena located at 227 Campus Dr, Asheville, NC 28804.



About the *Highland Episcopalian*

The *Highland Episcopalian* is a quarterly publication of the Diocese of Western North Carolina. It is published in February, May, August, and November. The magazine is sent to anyone who wishes to receive it within the boundaries of the Diocese. Those outside the area may subscribe to the magazine for \$5 per issue. Donations to support the cost of mailing the magazine are welcome, and may be made online or sent to our office.

If you would prefer to receive it electronically, please email Alice Keenan at akeenan@diocesewnc.org.

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Indicia

Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina
Calendar for June 23 through December 6

- June 23: Deerfield Board Meeting,
Deerfield, 3 p.m.
- June 25: Bishop Election Convention,
Trinity, Asheville
- June 27: Diocesan Office Closed
- July 4: Diocesan Office Closed
- July 21: Deerfield Board Meeting,
Deerfield, 3 p.m.
- August 9: Fiscal Ministries Meeting,
*Bishop Henry Center,
10 a.m.*
- August 9: Trustees Meeting, *Bishop
Henry Center, 4 p.m.*
- August 11: Executive Council
Meeting, *Bishop Henry Center, 10 a.m.*
- August 16: COM Meeting, *Bishop
Henry Center, 1 p.m.*
- August 16: Standing Committee
Meeting, *Bishop Henry Center, 3 p.m.*
- August 18: Deerfield Board Meeting,
Deerfield, 3 p.m.
- September 1: Bishop VII Begins
- September 1: Parish Audits Due at
Bishop Henry Center
- September 15: Clergy Ember Day,
Location TBA, 10 a.m.
- October 1: Ordination of the Seventh
Bishop, *UNCA Kimmel Arena, 11 a.m.*
- October 4: Fiscal Ministries Meeting,
Bishop Henry Center, 10 a.m.
- October 4: Episcopal Foundation
Meeting, *Bishop Henry Center, 2 p.m.*
- October 4: Trustees Meeting, *Bishop
Henry Center, 4 p.m.*
- October 8: Executive Council
Meeting, *Bishop Henry Center, 10 a.m.*
- October 10-12: Clergy Overnight,
Lake Logan
- October 17-18: Staff Overnight,
Bishop Henry Center closed
- October 20: Deerfield Board
Meeting, *Deerfield, 3 p.m.*
- October 21-22: Commission on
Ministry & Standing Committee
Overnight, *Kanuga*
- November 11-13: Diocesan
Convention, *Kanuga*
- November 14-15: Diocesan Office
Closed
- November 23 Diocesan Office Closed
at 12 p.m.
- November 24-25: Diocesan Office
Closed
- December 1: Clergy Ember Day,
Location TBA
- December 1: Deans Meeting, *Location
TBA*
- December 6: Fiscal Ministries
Meeting, *Bishop Henry Center, 10 a.m.*
- December 6: Episcopal Foundation
Meeting, *Bishop Henry Center, 2 p.m.*
- December 6: Trustees Meeting,
Bishop Henry Center, 4 p.m.