

The Reverend J. Scott Barker

Biography

I am a life-long Episcopalian, born and raised in Nebraska. I received my BA in Religious Studies at Yale College, and earned my MDIV at Berkeley Divinity School at Yale. I was ordained in 1992 by Bishop James Krotz, and served as Assistant to the Dean, and later Canon Vicar, at Trinity Cathedral. At Trinity I primarily led youth, young adult and outreach ministries. Beginning in 1996, I served Church of the Resurrection, where I helped restore the church from mission to parish status and founded Resurrection House. Diocesan leadership included serving on the Standing Committee and Ecclesiastical Court.

In 2002 I was called to be Rector of Christ Church in Warwick, NY. During my tenure, Christ Church has grown from a pastoral to a program sized parish. We have added two new worship services, hired a full time assisting priest, established TV and Internet video ministries and founded a church-based community youth choir. Diocesan leadership includes serving on Diocesan Council, chairing the Congregational Development Commission and attending two General Conventions as an Alternate Deputy.

I have been married to Annie for 23 years. My daughter, Emily, is a college sophomore; my son, Sam, is a high school senior.

Vision for the Diocese of Nebraska

I believe the Diocese of Nebraska is called to celebrate the presence and power of God in our midst through joyful worship, deep nurture and prophetic mission.

- We boldly proclaim the power of Christ's love and forgiveness to a broken and hurting world.
- We trust the Holy Spirit is with us as we courageously confront our challenges.
- We rest in the eternal promises of God as we cope with the day's uncertainties and look to the future with hope.

The diocesan bishop, staff and structures will model healthy church behavior by establishing a trustworthy and reliable presence; by acting with honesty and transparency in our personal and economic interactions; and by embracing change and planning for the long term in creative and entrepreneurial ways.

Answers to Questions Posed by the Search Committee

1. In our ever changing world of glut and scarcity, what does it mean to be a good steward? What evidence can you provide that you live such a life?

There is nothing in the challenges set before us as present day citizens of the U.S. - and members of a denomination declining in many places - that is unanticipated in the teachings of Jesus or unprecedented in our salvation history. Jesus addresses it all: our blindness to the abundance of God's creation, the fear that turns us inward and selfish, the corrupting influence of worldly power and wealth, and our deep, deep need for a savior to deliver us from this mess of our own creation, and to show us how to live. The definition of stewardship I find most compelling is this: Stewardship is what you do after you say, "I believe." As a believer, I am interested in putting Christ first in my life, which plays out (though imperfectly) in many aspects of my daily living.

In my personal relationships, being a good steward means staying faithful to my spouse and meaningfully present in the lives of my own children. It means looking for the best in other people and being as honest and transparent as possible in my personal interactions. It means always being ready to forgive ... and always being ready to ask for forgiveness.

In my vocational life, being a good steward means listening for the call of the Spirit, and following this call even to places and ministries that have not always made sense to me. I am a genius at discernment in retrospect, able when I look back over my life to see God's encouragement and help all over the place. I find when I am actually in the midst of life's challenges and trials, I am not always so smart! Over time I have learned to trust in the Spirit despite my limited ability to understand God's will in any given moment.

In terms of managing natural resources and being a citizen of the earth, being a good steward means endeavoring to live lightly, and appreciate, respect and manage the natural resources God entrusts to our care. Being a good steward means trusting that small daily actions really matter over the long haul, and not letting cynicism blind me from remembering the generations yet to come. In terms of my personal finances, being a good steward means surrendering as best I can the power money has in my life by giving generously to others, living within my means, avoiding investments that exploit others, and trying to show my appreciation for all that God gives me by giving love and service freely back to others. Until very recently, 10% of my income went to charity (5% to the Church and 5% to other charities.) College tuition payments have caused a slight retreat in this arena, but Annie and I still give 5% of our pre-tax income to the Church.

2. Given the small number of diocesan staff, our bishop must be skilled at many things. Tell us about your strengths and the parts of your present position that give you joy and delight. Tell us how you deal with the mundane, the confrontational, and less joyous aspects of your vocation.

I have a strong relationship with Jesus, a disciplined prayer life, many life-long friends and a great family. I am organized, efficient and driven by priority rather than urgency. It's my style to take on hard things first in my day and my week, and to later reward myself by going after the

tasks that really fire me up. I lead a balanced life, tending to my body, mind and spirit. All these strengths sustain me at all times, and will travel with me wherever God calls me next.

In my work life, I love preaching. I take real delight in writing - whether a sermon, a song, personal correspondence or a grant application. I enjoy facilitating worshipful meetings, that is, meetings that include meaningful time for prayer, spiritual reflection and discernment, especially if the topic at hand is a "problem" to be solved. I appreciate the opportunity to be creative, whether in liturgical planning, event preparation, educational event coordination, or the like. I love working with people and especially the young. I am fed by all manner of Christian worship, and feel particularly blessed that "going to church" is a part of my work.

I've never experienced ministry in the Church as mundane. I rather experience the routines of ministry - including daily prayer and a job driven by a seasonal calendar that is somewhat relentless and unchanging - as grounding and life-giving. In fact the reliable way I experience the presence of God in Christ in all that routine is probably the very thing that equips me for the really challenging parts of my job. If I know where I stand and whose I am because those things are set deep in my bones from the prayerful rhythms of my life's routine, then I can better take on the tough parts of ministry.

I do not like confrontation, but I have learned over the years as a priest that you cannot please everybody, and that to attempt to do so often does more harm than good. I've learned to tell the truth, and I try to take care of hard stuff immediately and in person. I am good at apologizing and admitting when I am wrong. I am very good at staying calm - and so also nurturing calm in others. It helps immeasurably when I find myself in conflict to know that Jesus loves me.

Of course my ministry has not always been joyful, but I am rarely clearer about how important my work is than in those moments when I am required to be present to deep human pain and sadness. There has hardly been a day in my eighteen years of priestly ministry that I have not been psyched to go to work, and have not known with certain assurance at the end of the day that, by God's grace I made a real difference in somebody's life.

3. We know you can't do everything yourself. In the past, how have you delegated authority and empowered others to assume leadership while maintaining appropriate responsibility for the quality of outcome?

In the Good to Great books, Jim Collins writes that one of the keys to success in great businesses is "getting the right people on the bus." If you recruit smart, energetic, committed and kind people (for church work I'd add "faithful") then no challenge is insurmountable. This is one principle of supervision I've worked hard to embody. Rather than focus too much on skill sets when hiring and recruiting, I have focused on finding great people to serve the Church. I know Nebraska well enough to be certain there are plenty of faithful and smart Episcopalians out there who can assist in meeting virtually any challenge set before the diocese.

I am big on clear, frequent and honest communication. I am not a micromanager but I do like to be kept "in the loop." I am as comfortable in being part of a team where my contributions are but a small part of a larger whole, as I am a mentor or committee head who has particular knowledge and experience to share. In the latter role I try, whenever possible, to help people learn their own lessons and find their own ways to get a job done. I work hard enough myself, and have sufficient self-confidence, that I am not threatened when people around me do superior work. In

fact, it gives me particular delight to celebrate when people under my supervision or authority do something better than I ever could have.

As a leader, I believe it's my job to see that certain foundational pieces are set well in place, but then to leave much of the rest up to God. I do my level best to say "yes" when people come to me with an idea for doing church-based ministry. It is clear to me that growth results when people get to do what the Spirit is calling them to do, rather than being assigned church jobs deemed necessary by the leadership (including me) but that are ill-fitting for a particular church servant.

4. Based on your knowledge of the Diocese of Nebraska, including what you have read in our profile, what question do you wish we had asked, and what is your response?

When I interview men and women for leadership positions in church ministries, I always ask people to tell me about their relationship with Jesus. I am looking for reassurance of a lively faith, which is absolutely critical to success in ministry. In Nebraska particularly, because it is a smaller diocese, I know that personal relationships and personal stories are really important.

I am a life long Episcopalian, and grew up in a devout Episcopal family. Though my parents did not talk much about Christ, I have come to appreciate their faith more and more, especially as evidenced in how our family life was ordered around the church calendar, church events, and simple home devotions. It was prayers before bed, grace before meals, and every Sunday of my life (plus holidays) at All Saints Episcopal Church in Omaha. I experienced the love of Jesus early and often in relationships with church folk who really knew me and cared for me, even when - as during adolescence for instance - I am sure I was not easy to love.

My mother was an alcoholic and died suddenly and unexpectedly of an overdose of alcohol and barbiturates when I was fifteen years old. That trauma shaped me in many ways. In particular, I experienced an almost overwhelming outpouring of care and concern from close family friends by which God's grace was manifest in my life, including notably from the people and priests of All Saints. My mother's death also set profound questions about ontology and theodicy before me, which soon lead me to the study of religion at Yale College.

After a brief flirtation with law school and the legal profession (where I was deeply unhappy and now see evidence the Holy Spirit was urging me strongly to get out!) I began a serious engagement with the question of whether I might be called to the priesthood. I joined a fantastic, large Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia, where a kind, young priest mentored me. I engaged in the first serious church-based Bible study of my life, encountering Jesus as Word under the instruction of an irreverent but evangelical mentor. I worked for a year in a historically black parish in Alexandria under the tutelage of a radical senior priest who was a great inspiration. I also married Annie at this time. It was an incredibly rich period that culminated in re-connecting with All Saints and entering the process of formation under Bishop Warner in the Diocese of Nebraska.

My encounters with Jesus in seminary were profound. I was with him as the wounded one in the Adult Children of Alcoholics group Bishop Krotz required I seek out (a life giving order for which I am deeply grateful) and too, in the daily rhythms of worship and prayer that were such a beautiful part of the seminary experience. I met Jesus the Teacher in the world-class Yale professors who were my mentors, and I encountered the mystical Christ in the sublime liturgies

of Christ Church New Haven, a renowned Anglo-Catholic parish where I served two full years as staff seminarian.

As a deacon and priest, I have come to more and more appreciate the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion, especially in the beautiful and deeply sincere way the people of the Church present themselves to that encounter on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. I also shared in the profound experience of Jesus the reconciling one as Rector of the multi-racial community of the Church of the Resurrection in Omaha.

The most challenging spiritual experience of my adult life was living through my younger brother's suicide, which happened just after moving away from Nebraska and my extended family in the summer of 2002. Jesus was present as always - this time through the kindness of old friends who made heroic efforts to love and care for me even at great distance and, wonderfully, in the caring of a new church community, who extended themselves with extraordinary grace though I was a virtual stranger in their midst.

Finally, Jesus is for me quite simply, my savior. I have led a sufficiently full life that I am well in touch with my own sin - all the ways "I do the very thing I hate." I work hard to be a good disciple and to live righteously, but it is clear to me I don't have the stuff to be all that God created and calls me to be on my own. Jesus is my friend, mentor, teacher and guide. But at the end of the day, Jesus is savior to me most and best of all.

Resume

THE REV. J. SCOTT BARKER

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Date of Birth – June 11, 1963 (47)

Married – October 1, 1988 – Anne E. Barker

Priested – December 21, 1992 – Bp. James E. Krotz

Children – Emily (19) & Sam (17)

EDUCATION

Berkeley Divinity School at Yale (New Haven, CT)

1992 – Master of Divinity, Anglican Studies

Tweedy Prize (awarded to senior demonstrating exceptional promise for pastoral leadership)

Yale College (New Haven, CT)

1985 - Bachelor of Arts, Religious Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Christ Church (Warwick, NY)

Rector, 2002-Present

Small Town Parish – 500 members, annual budget - \$375,000, 7 staff – broad church. Guided parish through transition from pastoral to program sized congregation. Implemented strategies for comprehensive church growth. Grew ASA from 120 to 175. Stewardship focus increased pledging from \$90,000 to \$261,000. Hired and retained parish's first-ever full time assisting priest. Added 2 additional worship services. Established church video ministry and mission-based parish outreach program (Dominican Republic, Mexico & domestic.)

Jubilate: The Community Youth Choir of Warwick (Warwick, NY)

Founder & Board Chair, 2004-Present

Select treble choir - 4 part-time professional staff. Founded church based community youth choir which has grown from a single chorus of 12 children to 3 choirs of over 40 members. Performances at Carnegie Hall and the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine (among others.) Coordinated fundraising through grant writing and special event planning.

Church of the Resurrection (Omaha, NE)

Rector, 1996-2002

Urban Parish - 150 members, annual budget - \$100,000, 5 staff – racially and ethnically diverse, broad church. Responsible for all aspects of priestly ministry and administration in the diocese' fastest growing mission. Established nationally recognized young adult discernment community. Implemented comprehensive program for church renewal and growth. Attendance, pledging and giving tripled in five years. Restored church from mission to parish status.

Resurrection House (Omaha, NE)

Founder & Program Director, 2000-2002

Residential Urban Internship – 3 interns, 2 staff members. Created program for young adult vocational discernment in a residential Christian community. Procured funding through grant writing. Restored church vicarage for dorm use. Coordinated recruiting and orientation. Responsible for ongoing supervision of interns, staff and all program administration.

Brownell Talbot School (Omaha, NE)

Chaplain, 1999-2002

Private Day School – grades K-12. President and homilist at 3 weekly chapel services for all age groups. Various additional sacramental and pastoral duties. Developed comprehensive values curriculum for chapel use.

Trinity Cathedral (Omaha, NE)

Canon, Assistant to the Dean, 1992-1998

Urban Parish - 850 members, annual budget – \$300,000, 7 staff - high church. Assisted in all aspects of priestly ministry including pastoral care, Christian education for all ages and urban outreach. Administrative duties included professional and volunteer staff supervision. Established young adult, AIDS, and soup kitchen ministries. Regular president and homilist in Cathedral liturgies.

Brownell Talbot School (Omaha, NE)

Chaplain, 1999-2002

Private Day School – grades K-12. President and homilist at 3 weekly chapel services for all age groups. Developed comprehensive values curriculum for chapel use.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Diocesan (New York)

Diocesan Council, 2006-Present

Congregational Development Commission Chair, 2006-Present

Alternate Deputy to ECUSA General Convention, 2005-Present

Diocesan Disaster Response Chaplain, 2004-2007

Diocesan (Nebraska)

Ecclesiastical Court, 2000-2002

Standing Committee, 1995-1998

Eastern Region Youth Ministry Coordinator, 1997-2000

Commission on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse, 1995-1999

Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty, Faith Committee, 1997-1998

National

Episcopal Service Corps, Board of Directors, 2009

Incarnation Center, Board of Directors, Ivoryton, CT, 2007-2008

Gathering the NeXt Generation Core Team, Episcopal Church USA, 1998-2002

GTNG National Gathering Leadership Team, Indianapolis, IN, 2002

RELATED LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

PREACHING

Frequent guest preacher, including: Battell Chapel, Yale University, 2010; Doing Church Conference, Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, 2008; Gathering the NeXt Generation Conference, Virginia Theological Seminary, 1999; Annual Council, Diocese of Nebraska, 2000

Two sermons published in the *Sermons that Work* series. Roger Alling & David Schlafer (Eds.), Morehouse Publishing
Winner 1992 Yale Divinity School Mersick Prize (awarded to senior demonstrating exceptional preaching skills)

CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Congregational Development Committee Chair, Diocese of NY, 2006-Present

Established and oversee twin church growth grant programs for the Diocese of NY – First Steps (small grants for parish growth initiatives) and Next Steps (large grants for medium sized church to hire assisting clergy)

Published, "I Want My Church to Grow," Forward Movement Publications, 2008

CLERGY FORMATION AND SUPPORT

Supervised and mentored more than 20 priests, deacons, postulants, aspirants and summer seminarians

Published in, "The Future of our Generation in the Church," *Gathering the Next Generation: Essays on the Formation and Ministry of Gen-X Priests*, N.A. Humphrey (Ed.), Morehouse Publishing

Established and facilitated Gen-X Clergy Colleague Support Group, 2003-Present

Founder & Program Director, Resurrection House – residential young adult urban internship program, 2000-2002

CIVIC & CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Jubilate: The Community Youth Choir of Warwick, Founder, Board Chair, 2006-Present

Historical Society Docent, Village of Warwick, 2004-Present

Ethics Board, Village of Warwick, Board Chair, 2003-Present

Yale College Alumni Schools Committee, Interviewer, 1987-Present

Dundee School PTA (Omaha), Vice President, Treasurer, 1998-2002

Omaha Theater Company for Young People, Board of Dirs., 1998-2001

Planned Parenthood of Omaha & Council Bluffs, Board of Dirs., 1996-1999

Voices for Children in Nebraska, Board of Dirs., 1993-1998

Cathedral AIDS Prayer Project (Omaha), Founding Member, 1993-1996

Leadership Omaha Class #17, 1995

St. Francis House, Soup Kitchen (Omaha), Volunteer, 1992-1996

Downtown Community Soup Kitchen (New Haven), Volunteer, 1990-1992

PASTORAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Gathering of Episcopal Leaders, Trinity Conference Center, 2010

Sabbatical Grant & Pastoral Leadership Consultation, Louisville Institute, 2010

Listening & Seeing in Sacred Time, Stony Point Center, 2006

Television Studio Workshop, Cablevision, 2006

Orientation & Training for *Via Media* (an Episcopal spiritual growth curriculum), Diocese of New York, 2005

Disaster Response Chaplains Training, DSCS - NY, 2004

CREDO #56 (clergy reflection and discernment conference), Credo Institute, 2004

Fresh Start, Diocese of New York, 2002-2003

EFM Basic Mentor Training, Diocese of NE, Level One certified, 2001

GTNG Think Tank (reflection on the future of the church with Gen-X clergy), Trinity Conference Center, 2000

National Resource Seminar, Youth Specialties Inc., 1993, 97, 98, 99

Sexual Exploitation Prevention, Diocese of Nebraska, 1994

HONORS & AWARDS

Louisville Institute Sabbatical Grant for Pastoral Leaders, 2010

Yale Centennial Medal for lifetime achievement in religion, Yale Club of Omaha, 2001