

# the nebraska episcopalian

## A Special Election Edition

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### *Collect for the Bishop Search and Transition Process*

**O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, abundant giver of every good gift: Look graciously upon this your Diocese, and through your Spirit, give wisdom to those who will choose our next bishop; and to those who will consider a call to this office, grant discernment; that we may, through pastoral and faithful leadership, be equipped to minister as the Church you are calling us to be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

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**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.

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**The Reverend Margaret Duncan  
Holt Sammons**

#### Biography

I was born in Chicago, and grew up in Butte, Montana, and Kalamazoo, Michigan. After college, I entered the Peace Corps, and spent three challenging and formative years in Liberia, West Africa, teaching elementary school, and helping start a junior high. When I returned, I entered the Episcopal Divinity School, as the first woman candidate from the Diocese of Western Michigan.

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**The Reverend Canon Sarah J.  
Shofstall**

#### Biography

I was born in Presque Isle, Maine, the home of my mother's family and after my first year of life moved to Kearney, Nebraska, the home of my father's family. Growing up, my family life, social life and spiritual life all centered around St. Luke's Church. As an adolescent and young adult I was active in all of the youth programs of the Diocese and then served for many

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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

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I served St. Luke's in Worcester, Massachusetts as interim deacon-in-charge; and St. John's in Northampton, Massachusetts, as curate and college worker, before accepting a call with my husband, the Rev. Gregory Sammons to Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan, as associates.

We're currently Co-Rectors of St. Michael's in the Hills, Toledo, Ohio. It's been a joy to see the parish grow both in activity and in the depth of our connection with Christ. The youth program has been reborn, and grown into three active groups, which take annual mission trips; the budget has doubled; and St. Michael's has become deeply involved in the wider community.

In the Diocese of Ohio I've served on the Commission on Ministry, Episcopal Community Services, and the Standing Committee. In Toledo, I helped found a school drug and alcohol prevention group, and am on the board of FOCUS Homeless Services. We are blessed with two grown daughters and their wonderful spouses: Jenny (Jo) and Elizabeth (Richard). I relax by gardening, swimming, and attempting to play the cello.

#### **Vision for the Diocese of Nebraska**

My vision and prayer is that the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska will become well known as a community which "proclaims and shares the faith of Jesus Christ in worship and service." People of all ages, cultures and backgrounds will find welcome and nourishment for their journeys. Young families will be especially attracted by the engaging worship and thoughtful education offered by our parishes; and by their transforming work in the community.

As bishop, I'll be physically resident in each deanery for three or more weeks a year, ministering with you, offering resources and continuing education; and helping connect parts of our diocesan family with one another. A "bishop's blog" will offer weekly spiritual reflections, and our services will be broadcast on local television and radio. Special events in one parish will be made accessible to all, by web-casting.

Shared Ministry parishes will help us all re-vision parish life; and every parish near a college campus will have a welcoming student ministry, helping young adults find Christian community and continue to grow in their relationship with Christ, at this important stage in their lives.

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years on the Youth Commission, Executive Council and Commission on Ministry. A call to priesthood might have seemed an obvious thing, but when I was ready for my adult vocation, the Diocese of Nebraska was not ready to ordain women as priests. After graduating from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I taught school in Beatrice for three years and then returned to the University to earn a law degree. I practiced law in Kearney for fifteen years. In 1990 I was ordained to the priesthood, with the intention of continuing my vocation as a lawyer. I served as an assisting priest at St. Luke's and provided long-term supply during transitions at St. Peter's in the Valley in Lexington and for the Church in Norton, Kansas. I left the law practice to work full-time in the Church in 1994, moving to Iowa to be the Chaplain at Iowa State University and Vicar of Grace Church in Boone. In 1997 I was called to be Rector of Grace Church in Amherst, Massachusetts, following the trauma of sexual misconduct that rocked both the parish and the diocese. I then joined the Bishop's staff as Canon to the Ordinary, where I have served for the past ten years.

I maintain my spiritual health with daily prayer, meditation, and the study of Scripture, monthly spiritual direction and silent retreats once or twice a year. My spiritual life and health have been greatly enhanced by working in an office where prayer is an essential part of every decision and activity and where the staff regularly asks prayers of one another.

I was divorced in 2002 and have lived alone since that time. Although I have not been given children biologically, I am blessed with family and close friends who have provided close attachments to the next two generations. Since moving to Springfield, a young single mother has adopted me as a substitute for the mother she has lost, so I have experienced the daily challenges, blessings and drama of a struggling family.

My favorite pass-times are cooking, traveling, movies and visiting art galleries.

#### **Vision for the Diocese of Nebraska**

If I were blessed to be the Eleventh Bishop of Nebraska I would intend the hallmarks of that Episcopate to be

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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

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The Nebraska School for Ministry will make internet courses available for both lay and clergy, and will also provide in-person classes in all our deaneries. Newly ordained priests and deacons will be carefully mentored and supported, as they grow into their new ministries.

Hispanic ministry will grow, and Native American peoples will find us to be a church which respects the spiritual insights they bring us. Our young people will speak of their "new best friend" in the Dominican Republic or Twic East as we all give thanks to God for meeting us in these global friends.

#### 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?**

My view of stewardship is summed up in Psalm 24:1:

*The earth is the Lord's and  
all that is in it, the world  
and all who dwell therein*

Everything I have; everything on this "fragile earth, our island home", including the dirt in my backyard, is God's. My responsibility is to treat it accordingly. A few ways I try to do this:

Stewardship of time: I begin every morning with a walk and with prayer. I'm sometimes very tempted to skip both of these – "There's too much to do," my mind whispers; "don't you think an early start at the office would be better?" But that time is like a down-payment on the rest of the day. Things I'm worried about slide into perspective; I become more aware of God's companionship and help

My husband, who is also ordained, and I take the same day off, and I'm very protective of that Sabbath time. We relinquish it for a death or other pastoral crisis, but all routine things wait until the next day. Puttering around the house or garden, doing the maintenance chores of life, refreshes me for the rest of the week.

Sometimes being a good steward of time means investing it lavishly, and then slowing down for a bit to recover. This Advent season is a good example. I thoroughly enjoy immersing myself in all the services and preparations. But during Christmas week, we will take several days to simply rest and visit family.

Stewardship of health: The greatest enemy to effective ministry, I find, is stress; and the greatest remedies are prayer and exercise. As

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discernment, mission and relationships.

I would hope to lead with passionate spirituality which has been nurtured by holy women and men, inside and outside of the Diocese of Nebraska. Through genuine discernment we would follow with joy and enthusiasm the path God sets for us.

Real discernment is not top-down. It depends on the faithful prayers of everyone. It depends on powerful bonds connecting east and west, old and young, urban and rural. To meet the challenges of our future will take the gifts of all and will take the willingness of all to listen deeply and prayerfully to each other. It will take all the great new technologies to build connections with others. When we come together across differences it generates incredible new energy and ideas.

There are compelling reasons to undertake creative mission projects in every region of the Diocese and I would hope to convene regional summits to discern what God is calling us to do in each region of the Diocese.

Growing up, the best part of every year was the week I spent at church camp. I was blessed with close relationships with friends from Omaha, Valentine, Chadron, McCook, Rushville, Lincoln....Each relationship helped me grow closer to Christ. Each relationship helped me understand the world better. Relationships with one another in Christ, will move the Diocese ever closer to God's Kingdom

#### 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?**

My good friend, Bruce Rockwell, who served for many years as President of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, has a sign in his office that reads: "Stewardship: All that I am, all that I have, all of the time." A good steward understands that everything, from the breath in her body, to every minute of her time, to all material possessions, along with the splendor of creation and the resources of the earth belong to God. Managing all of those things in a way that builds up the body of Christ, does God's work in the world and

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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

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well as walking, and sitting with God in the morning, I try to get to the Y at least twice a week, and find that time amazingly relaxing. This fall I took my cello, untouched for 39 years, out of the closet. I have a lot to re-learn; my efforts currently sound like a cat in great pain, but I find playing for even a few minutes a calming way to end the day.

Last January, I underwent deep brain stimulation surgery, to deal with an inherited tremor in my hands. This was a very difficult decision to make; I was motivated more than anything else by the desire to continue to be a good steward of God's calling -- to continue to serve effectively as a priest. The procedure was very successful, thanks be to God.

Our culture encourages us to pamper our bodies just for the sake of pampering them. I hear Christ calling us to care for them, so that they are available for his service, which is a very different thing.

Stewardship of money: In preaching and in living, I'm increasingly trying to lift up the idea of "enough." Most of our Christmas gifts this year will be from our alternative shopping event in the parish. We give away, on average, about 17% of our income, to the church and to other groups; as well as paying school fees for the children of one of my former students in Liberia.

Stewardship of the earth: When our 12 year old car gave up the ghost, two years ago, my husband and I bought a hybrid. We have a small vegetable garden - although the local deer seem to see it as their salad bar - and we are trying to eat local produce as much as possible. Our parish is currently considering new lighting for the nave; the committee is including LED lights as one of the options.

Stewardship of family: God has given me great gifts, in my husband and daughters. When our elder child was born, we were serving in separate parishes in Massachusetts. But we felt the strain of that, and had what seemed at the time a very irrational desire to work together. It was, I believe, the Holy Spirit's work, for just then a friend was called to a new parish, and invited us to become his associates. We have found challenge, but even more grace, in working together.

While the children were young, I decided to work part-time. It was a privilege to be available to the children when they came home from school, and to be involved in PTO, Girl Scouts, and other activities. Those years were an investment in their well-being, but they also made me a better priest.

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sustains resources for those who come after us is good stewardship. Stewardship is a spiritual practice that draws us closer to Christ, not an accounting system.

The glut of material wealth and worldly power that is concentrated in the United States makes it challenging for 21st Century Americans to be good stewards. My own materialism and love of comforts make it challenging for me to be a good steward.

Thirty-some years ago I took a spiritual gifts inventory. One of the questions asked if, when you receive more money, do you rejoice that you have more to give away. At the time I could not imagine having that reaction. When I began to tithe, I did so because I was supposed to, because it was my duty. It was many years before I turned that corner to a place where giving is a joy. Now, when a consulting check arrives my first thought is: How wonderful! Where can I give this? Unfortunately, my second thought is: I want to go clothes shopping. I cannot call myself a good steward, but there is evidence that I am moving along that road.

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.**

As Canon to the Ordinary in a small diocese, with limited staff, I wear many hats-transition officer, conflict mediator, mentor to new clergy, liaison to the Commission on Ministry, trouble shooter, facilitator, trainer, maker of soup and general advisor to the bishop.

I find great joy in presenting training and workshops for clergy and laity that help them develop their gifts to lead the Church. The Diocese has designed regular leadership development days that bring together about three hundred of our lay leaders. Encouraging people to try new things and seeing the passion and enthusiasm that is generated energizes me.

I have learned over the years that the most important gift we are given to do God's work in a diocese is the relationships we build. Building connections filled with trust and understanding equip us to help when

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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

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**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'm told I listen well. At least I try to.

- I vision collaboratively, and then articulate that vision persuasively. When we arrived at St. Michael's, the vestry had a strong desire to have a more active ministry with children and youth. We spent a year reading and reflecting together about the ways faith develops; at the end the vestry decided to change the Sunday schedule, so that everyone would have an opportunity to both worship and learn. I preached about the reasons for it, and brought in other voices to help. Now, 16 years later, we have thriving education for all ages, and lively worshippers of all ages, as well.

- I have a sense of perspective, and a sense of humor. When things don't work out, I try to remember that this is God's mission, not mine.

**Joys:** I enjoy every aspect of ministry that involves being with other people. From visiting new families and the homebound, to listening to someone working through a problem or heartache; to planning an youth event -- I come away energized and so often awed by the privilege of getting to know that child of God, and of meeting Christ in him or her.

I also enjoy the ministries of teaching and preaching -- with all ages. Helping adults explore the mysteries of the Christian faith, and our heritage in the Episcopal Church, is particularly satisfying.

**The Mundane:** I deal with the mundane aspects of parish priesthood by making regular time for them. This parish staff is not large, but we meet weekly; by making decisions and plans there, it keeps them from popping up unexpectedly the rest of the week. We also have an annual planning retreat.

The Vestry decided a year ago to have prayer partners, and to begin each meeting with a spiritual reflective exercise. Those meetings have become a graced time I look forward to.

**The Confrontational:** I take difficult relationships frequently to prayer, and try to remember that when someone speaks in a hurtful way, it is often because they have been deeply hurt themselves. At all times, I try to

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help is needed and to encourage. Years ago I attended an ecumenical convention for church leaders, mostly from non-denomination mega churches. One of the speakers told us that Wayne Gretzky said that the most important thing in hockey is not to skate where the puck is, but skate where it is going to be. I have had the privilege of spending a concentrated amount of time in several parishes where we could see problems on the horizon, so that when a crisis came I was no longer an outsider. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus came along side and walked with people. I know how to walk with people and to wait for clarity in discernment instead of following conventional wisdom in difficult times.

I have also come to know that times of conflict are times of great opportunity. When things become bad enough there is often a willingness to consider healthy change that has not been seen before. At the same time, a renewed commitment to mission will often help those in conflict to remember why they need each other. I embrace the newer language of "conflict transformation" as a hopeful affirmation that all things work together for good for those who know the Lord. I have a gift of discernment that has allowed me to be helpful in getting congregations to see a preferred future and develop an eagerness to head there.

Jim Collins writes about "getting the right people in the right seats on the bus" in human organizations. Recruiting clergy and helping gifted lay people discover how to use their gifts for the hastening of the coming of the Kingdom gives me great joy. Watching a new idea flourish because someone has felt empowered to run with it is exhilarating.

I am not a fan of the mundane, but the David Allen method of workflow management has been an enormous help. One of my colleagues in the Diocese of Connecticut has adapted his work for special use in the Church and it is surprising how easy and how energizing it is. One of the great benefits is that every annoying, mundane, energy-draining thing that has to be done can be easily related to larger goal of building up the body, so it acquires some meaning.

The mission statement of my diocese is to help build healthy, mission-focused Christians and congregations... In times of

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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.

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remember that that person may have a truth I need to hear.

In 1993, as in many parishes, some were upset with the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson's election. With the support of the Vestry, we offered education, looking at homosexuality in the light of Scripture, reason and tradition; and also provided evening listening sessions. We reached out to every person who decided to leave the parish, to part on as good terms as possible. I'm delighted that we weathered that storm together, and that the experience helped St. Michael's become more accepting and inclusive; a place that welcomes diverse views.

**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?**

St. Michael's has, since its founding, given away all of its Christmas and Easter offerings; but when we arrived, there was no hands-on outreach. I formed a committee, and was blessed to find a very knowledgeable chair, who recruited wonderful members. Each chair since has been equally dedicated and gifted. I attend most meetings, but do not lead them. My role is to support, encourage, and to thank them.

Some years ago we created a part-time position of Director of Children's Ministries. Each time someone begins that position, I meet with her weekly for the first year; and also with her parent support group. By the second year, she has grown into that responsibility, and has become much more creative and confident. The supervisory meetings drop to about once every six weeks, although I connect with her at weekly staff meetings, and other times as needed.

I also recruit and train volunteer youth leaders, and help plan joint activities. It's a humbling experience - their instincts with teenagers are something that can't be taught. All these experiences have given me a deep interest in Total Ministry. The Holy Spirit truly works through us all, and thank God for that.

**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?**

Question: Given the cultural diversity of the Diocese of Nebraska, what experience do you have of multi-cultural life and ministry? What learnings would you bring to us?"

I've been blessed to live and work in a variety of

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controversy and stress we are in the practice of reminding ourselves to focus on the mission. Having built healthy relationships helps keep controversies contained so that we can be hard on issues and soft on people.

**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?**

As a transition officer, I delegate most of the responsibility of calling a new rector to a search committee. When doing that the committee is given a general outline of the process and told that they have tremendous authority to do things as seems best to them, with some limited exceptions. I usually say, "There are a few mistakes I will not let you make." In the past ten years I have facilitated about sixty searches and that system of delegation has worked well.

For the past year I have been the leader of a CREDO team. In leading the gifted faculty entrusted to me, I have learned to let each member of the team exercise his or her own judgment about presentations. That seems to have sparked great creativity and joy. I believe that fully empowering others to use their gifts requires some risk and some deep breaths.

I try to provide excellent training for those who have been delegated some responsibility, give them a few clear parameters and then support them in being creative and taking risks. Church Innovations consultants talk about "excellent failures," those from which we learn.

**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?**

I wish that you had asked what I think about the date of the Consecration.

The scheduling of the Consecration of the Eleventh Bishop of Nebraska on the same day as the Nebraska-Ohio State football game is a challenge. I would hope that it could be embraced as an opportunity to engage our culture in a positive way.

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(Barker— Continued from page 6)*

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.

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*(Sammons— Continued from page 6)*

settings. I grew up in a mining town in Montana, where my father was the rector. Poverty was a daily, neighborhood, reality, yet there were in that town no social service agencies. I learned the importance of the church's ministry of compassion, and became aware of the devastating impact of the disease of substance abuse.

My teenage years were in Kalamazoo, Michigan. During my first summer job, in 1967, Detroit rioted, and I was appalled at the racist thoughts and fears expressed by my coworkers. I was also proud of my father, who set the standard for ministry in challenging times. He preached courageously, but equally important, he gave people the biblical and theological tools to make their own courageous decisions.

After college, I entered the Peace Corps, and spent three very formative years in Liberia, West Africa. It was a tremendous privilege to be immersed in the Kpelle culture, but heartbreaking to see the number of infants and children who died in my village for lack of immunizations and mosquito netting. It opened my eyes to the reality of systemic poverty.

Those years also deepened my spiritual life. In my neighbors' reverence for ancestor spirits, for example, I came to a new appreciation for the Christian belief in the Communion of Saints.

Each summer our young people go on mission trips. In 2006 I was privileged to accompany some of them to Good Shepherd Episcopal Mission, Ft. Defiance, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation. It was particularly moving to celebrate the Eucharist there, and to experience the way that they integrate Navajo customs into the Episcopal liturgy; and their stories into Christian education.

As your bishop, I would offer an awareness of the wonderful diversity of God's family, and of our mutual interdependence; a commitment to respect and celebrate Native American heritage and culture, and to help all people become active participants in the life and ministry of Christ in our Diocese.

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*(Shofstall— Continued from page 6)*

Because I think that there is always an opportunity in such challenges, I would hope that the Diocese would engage the celebrations surrounding the Consecration of the Eleventh Bishop in a light hearted way. The Church has always asked clergy to wear red stoles at a consecration. The Diocese could make it clear that it is appropriate for the laity to wear red to the Consecration and, in fact, could invite everyone in the state to wear red that day to join in the celebration. I would hope that the scheduling of events could permit St. Mark's on the Campus to host a tailgate party in the courtyard so that people attending the game could stop by and meet the new Bishop.

Building relationships outside of the Church is an important part of our mission. If we are seen as out of touch or irrelevant to those outside the Church, we make it harder to evangelize, harder to be taken seriously about important issues. I can understand an argument that says that an important moment in the life of the Diocese should be more important to Episcopalians than a football game. But a consecration is an opportunity to reach a much larger audience, to touch those who are skeptical about the Church, even those who have left the Church. That opportunity does not come along every day or even every year. I would hate to miss that opportunity.



## THE REV. J. SCOTT BARKER

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

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

*The Rev. Margaret Holt Sammons*  
*Toledo, Ohio 43615*

**Current Position**

Co-Rector, St. Michael's in the Hills Episcopal Church, Toledo, Ohio                      2003 –

**Previous Pastoral Positions**

Associate Rector, St. Michael's in the Hills Episcopal Church, Toledo, Ohio	1993 – 2003
Associate Rector, Christ Episcopal Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan	1983 – 1993
Assistant, St. John's Episcopal Church, Northampton, Massachusetts	1979 – 1983
Advisor to Episcopal Students, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts	1979 – 1983
Interim Deacon-in-charge, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Worcester, Massachusetts	1977 - 1978

**Education**

B.A., Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, 1971  
M.Div., Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1977  
Certificate in Pastoral Counseling, Worcester Pastoral Counseling Center, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1978

**Ordained**

Deacon: June 5, 1977, by the Bishop of Western Michigan  
Priest: May 19, 1978, by the Bishop of Western Michigan,  
in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts

**Other**

Peace Corps Volunteer, Liberia, West Africa taught elementary school, and helped found a junior high school	1971 – 1974
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**Pastoral Specialties**

**Preaching**

Sermons which connect the scripture with everyday life  
Spiritual guidance and leadership  
Christian education, for all ages.  
Providing opportunities for children through adults to connect issues of life with faith, and grow into our baptismal covenant  
Liturgical worship as a formative experience for all ages  
Youth ministry: helping teens build community, and find their role in Christ's mission  
Outreach: helping a parish find effective ways to serve in Christ's name  
Newcomer welcome and incorporation  
Pastoral counseling

**Community and Diocesan Involvement****Current**

FOCUS Homeless Services  
Friends of Liberia

**Previous**

Standing Committee, Diocese of Ohio  
Episcopal Community Services Foundation Development Council, Diocese of Ohio  
Christian Education Commission, Dioceses of Western Massachusetts and Ohio  
Commission on Ministry, Diocese of Ohio  
Community Drug and Alcohol Prevention Committee  
Volunteer tutor and writing mentor  
Girl Scout troop leader  
P.T.O. board member

**Recreation**

Walking, swimming, vegetable gardening, sewing, reading, music  
Beginning quilter and cellist

**Family**

Married to the Rev. Gregory P. Sammons, September 10, 1977  
Two daughters, ages 31 and 26

## RESUMÉ

### **The Rev. Sarah J. Shofstall**

**PRESENT POSITION** (since 2000): Canon to the Ordinary, Deployment Officer  
Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts

#### **PROFESSIONAL HISTORY**

Rector, Grace Episcopal Church, Amherst, MA, 1997-2000  
Chaplain, Iowa State University/Vicar, Grace Church, Boone, IA, 1994-1997  
Priest Associate, St. Luke's Church, Kearney, NE, 1990-1994  
Adjunct Professor, Criminal Justice Department, University of Nebraska at  
Kearney, 1991-1993  
Partner, Sidwell & Shofstall Law Firm, Kearney, NE 1979-1994  
Teacher, Beatrice High School, Beatrice, NE, 1974-1976

#### **ACTIVITIES IN THE CHURCH**

"Strength for the Journey," a CREDO program working with clergy in the  
dioceses of San Joaquin and Quincy, 2010  
CREDO Vocational Faculty, 2005-2009, Conference Leader, 2010 to present  
Episcopal Search Consultant, 2007 to present, trained to assist Dioceses during  
the election of bishops  
Presenter, Bishops' Executive Secretaries Together, National Conference 2008  
Designer and presenter, Safe Church Training for Diocesan Staff, Dioceses of  
Connecticut and Western Massachusetts 2007  
Core group member, Reconcilers.net, 2004-2007  
Organizer and presenter, Basic Reconciliation Seminar for dioceses of Western  
Massachusetts, Los Angeles, Northern Indiana, and Ohio, April, 2005  
"Weathering the Storms," faculty, Conference for Gulf Coast clergy,  
January 2006  
Transition Ministry Conference, Convener 2004 to 2006, Executive Committee  
Member 2002-2006, Member 2000 to present.  
Member, Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross, 1986 to present  
Deputy to General Convention, 2003, 2006  
Dean, Franklin-Hampshire Deanery, Diocese of Western Massachusetts,  
1998-2000  
Province I Safe Church Network, 2000 to present  
  
Designer and presenter at Safe Church Advanced Training for Episcopalians,  
A national conference for professionals dealing with misconduct issues.  
2003, 2004  
Safe Church Officer, Diocese of Western Massachusetts, 2000 to present



Safe Church Officer, Diocese of Iowa, 1994-1997  
Clergy Family Committee, Diocese of Iowa, 1994-1997  
Campus Ministry Committee, Diocese of Iowa, 1994-1997  
Designer and Presenter of safe church training events in nine dioceses,  
1990 to present  
Spiritual Director, Via de Cristo Weekends, Women's Maximum Security Prison,  
York, Nebraska, 1993-1995  
Consultant to the Episcopal Bishop of Nebraska, 1990-1997  
Consultant to the United Methodist Bishop of Nebraska, 1990-1997  
Executive Commission, Diocese of Nebraska, 1992-1994  
Youth Commission, Diocese of Nebraska, 1979-1985

#### **ACTIVITIES IN THE LARGER COMMUNITY**

Volunteer, Teen Living Program, shelter for homeless, teenage  
mothers and their children, 2002-2003  
Habitat for Humanity, Boone County, Iowa, Organizing Member, Vice President,  
President, 1995-1997  
Coordinator, Bar/Bench/ADR Project, funded by the National Institute for  
Dispute Resolution, 1992-1993  
Founding President, Central Nebraska Mediation Center, 1992-1993  
Nebraska Sentencing Review Committee (gubernatorial appointment), 1982-1986  
Board of Directors, Western Nebraska Legal Services, 1980-1984  
Chair of Communications Committee, Nebraska State Bar Association,  
1980-1982  
Board of Directors, Nebraska Bar Foundation, 1980-1981  
Political activities including county and state party offices and delegate to three  
national conventions of my party 1979-1990. Since ordination I have not  
held any position in any party or partisan campaign.

#### **EDUCATION**

Certificate of Anglican Studies, The General Theological Seminary, 1990  
J.D., University of Nebraska College of Law, 1979  
B.S., University of Nebraska, 1974

#### **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

"Getting Things Done," In the Church, 2009, 2010  
Church Innovations, "Think Tank," 2009  
Mediation Training, Lombard Mennonite Center 2008  
CREDO faculty training, 2006, 2008, 2010  
Church Innovations, training for Listening Leaders and  
Church Future Finders 2008  
Episcopal Election Consultants Training 2007  
David Allen Seminar, "Getting Things Done" Boston, 2005  
Eastern Mennonite University, Summer Peace Institute 2005  
Hands in Healing, Reconciliation Conference,  
Presented by Diocese of Los Angeles, 2004



Nathan Network National Conference, San Diego, 2004  
 National Deployment Conference, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2008  
 Camp Improv, Church Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Dallas, TX, 2003  
 Episcopal Communicators Conference, Los Angeles, 2003  
 Esaum & Bandy, NetResults workshop, 2003  
 CREDO, 2002  
 National Conference on Pastoral Standards, Chicago, 2001  
 Conflict Management for Judicatory Executives, Alban Institute, 2001  
 Anti-racism Training, 2001  
 Church Deployment Training, 2000  
 Clear Visions Conference, Camp Allen, 2000  
 Stewardship and Evangelism Conference, Province I, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003  
 Worshipful Work, 2000  
 Instruments of Thy Peace, National Conference on responding to clergy  
     sexual misconduct, Minneapolis, 1995  
 Women Proclaiming: Research, Issues and Resources, College of Preachers, 1994  
 Sexual Misconduct: Issues and Answers, The Church Insurance Company, 1993  
 Second National Conference on Sexual Exploitation by Clergy, Therapists and  
     Medical Professionals, Minneapolis, 1992  
 Family Mediation, Advanced Training, 1992  
 Reconciliation Conference, Pepperdine University, 1992  
 Office of Pastoral Development, Training for Bishops and their designates on  
     handling sexual misconduct by clergy, 1991

# Introduction and Invitation to the Walkabout

## May 15-21

(with revised times)

The following is a brief explanation of the “walkabouts” to be held at various parishes in the Diocese of Nebraska during the week of May 15 – 21. We hope you will attend one of these “walkabout” gatherings near you to meet the nominees and become an active part of the process of discerning who will be the next Bishop for the Diocese of Nebraska.

The purpose of the walkabout is to discover the will of God concerning a new bishop for our diocese through the introduction of the people of the diocese to the candidates; and the candidates to the diocese.

The goals of the walkabout are:

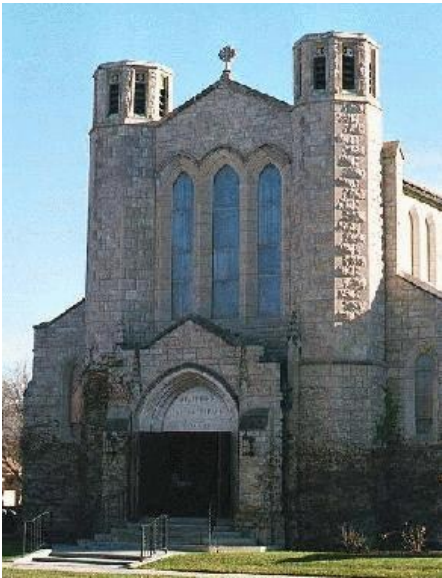
- To have at least two visits with formal question & answer sessions within each deanery;
- To accommodate the desires of the nominees to visit as many parishes as possible;
- To give as many people as possible the opportunity to meet the nominees;
- To honor the process by having an opening worship;
- To put an appropriate time limit to each day’s activities;
- To allow every individual a moment each day to decompress and contact their loved ones, or work, back home.

You are invited to find the time and location that you can attend and participate in this stage of the discernment process. Because the completed route and schedule is limited by the same constraints of time and space that we deal with every day in our diocese, we are incorporating video replays on the Bishop Search & Transition website <http://bishopsearch.episcopal-ne.org/> in the days following the presentations.

Remember that the candidates and their spouses are here to assist us in this discernment process. They are cooperating with us. Much hard work has been done to accomplish these goals and meet the purpose to enable you and our guests to help discern the will of God and our next Bishop in the Diocese of Nebraska.

Following are the **revised** dates, times, and locations for each presentation:

Date	Time	Church	Address	Phone
<b>May 15<sup>th</sup></b>	6:30pm-9:00pm	St Matthew’s Church, Alliance	312 W 16 <sup>th</sup> St	308-762-1965
<b>May 16<sup>th</sup></b>	11:00am-1:30pm	Christ Church, Sidney	1205 Tenth Ave	308-254-2166
	6:00pm-8:30pm	Church of Our Savior, North Platte	203 W 4 <sup>th</sup> St	308-532-0151
<b>May 17<sup>th</sup></b>	11:00am-1:30pm	St Stephen’s Church, Grand Island	410 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> St	308-382-4961
	6:00pm-8:30pm	Grace Church, Columbus	2053 23 <sup>rd</sup> Ave	402-564-0116
<b>May 18<sup>th</sup></b>	11:00am-1:30pm	Trinity Church, Norfolk	111 S Ninth St	402-371-3080
	6:00pm-8:30pm	St Andrew’s Church, Seward	1014 N 6 <sup>th</sup> St	402-643-3829
<b>May 19<sup>th</sup></b>	11:00am-1:30pm	St David’s Church, Lincoln	8800 Holdrege	402-489-2772
	<b>6:45pm-9:15pm</b>	Church of the Holy Trinity, Lincoln	6001 A St	402-488-7139
<b>May 20<sup>th</sup></b>	11:00am-1:30pm	St Augustine’s Church, Elkhorn	285 S 208 <sup>th</sup>	402-289-4058
	<b>6:45pm-9:15pm</b>	St Martha’s Church, Papillion	780 Pinnacle Dr	402-331-1564
<b>May 21<sup>st</sup></b>	8:30am-11:00am	Trinity Cathedral, Omaha	113 N 18 St	402-342-7010



# Special Electing Council June 4, 2011

## St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral

Hastings, Nebraska

The Special Council to elect the XI Bishop of the Diocese of Nebraska will be held on Saturday, June 4, 2011 at historic St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral in Hastings, Nebraska. The Special Rules adopted for the Council may be found online at the Bishop Search and Transition website [www.bishopsearch.episcopal-ne.org](http://www.bishopsearch.episcopal-ne.org).

## Agenda

The following is the agenda for the events to be held at The Special Council at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral in Hastings, Nebraska to elect our next bishop:

### Friday, June 3

7:30 p.m. – Evening Liturgy at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral

8:15 p.m. – Social Hour at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral

(Early Registration will be open from 8:15 – 9:00 p.m. at St. Mark's following the evening liturgy)

### Saturday, June 4

Registration: 8:00 – 10:30 a.m. at St. Mark's

9:00 – Eucharist at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral

10:30 – Call to Order for Council Business Session to elect the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Nebraska.

(all times Central Time)

Voting will continue until the required majorities in each order (clergy and lay) are obtained to elect a diocesan bishop for the Diocese of Nebraska.

All delegates **must** register online **and** must register and obtain their credentials at the Council at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral, Hastings, Nebraska.



## Consecration

## XI Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska

11:00 a.m.

(Reception to Follow)

October 8, 2011

### *Embassy Suites Omaha-LaVista/Hotel and Conference Center*

Saturday, October 8, 2011 at 11:00 a.m. the Consecration of the XI Bishop of the Diocese of Nebraska will be held at the Embassy Suites Omaha-LaVista/Hotel Conference Center. The Conference center is located at the intersection of I-80 and Giles road just 20 minutes from downtown Omaha and 40 minutes from Lincoln. The Most Reverend Katherine Jefferts-Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, will be the chief consecrator.

# Calling and Electing a Bishop

Bishop Joe Burnett announced his intended departure from our midst a little over a year ago. Our diocese has come a long way since that announcement in the task of calling our next bishop.

## The Search Process

The Search process for the Eleventh Bishop of Nebraska has been rapidly and prayerfully moving forward under the guidance of the national and diocesan church canons and “best practices” procedures since the Standing Committee selected the co-chairs, Mr. Richard Kauders and the Reverend Ruth Tomlinson, in mid July 2010. The members of the Search Committee were selected from a group of applicants that were received by the Standing Committee. Attention to providing a balance of lay and clergy, men and women, and geographical locations was deliberate.

The members of the Search Committee are:

Ruth Tomlinson(Co-chair), retired, Omaha  
Richard Kauders(Co-chair), St. Luke’s, Kearney  
Betsy Blake Bennett, St. Stephen’s, Grand Island  
Kelsey Hogue, St. Francis, Scottsbluff  
Thomas Jones, Church of the Holy Spirit, Bellevue  
Ernesto Medina, St. Martha’s, Papillion  
Tom O’Dell, All Saints, Omaha  
Beth Huber, St. Matthew’s, Alliance  
Michael L. Kinsel, Trinity Cathedral, Omaha  
Raymond Lowther, St. Mark’s On-the-Campus, Lincoln  
Karen Park, St. Luke’s, Kearney  
Richard K. Spencer, Holy Trinity, Lincoln  
Leslie Stramel, St. Alban’s, McCook  
Paul Van Dyne, St. Augustine’s, Elkhorn  
Patricia Sheldon (Chaplain), St. Augustine’s, Elkhorn  
Woody Bradford, Diocesan Chancellor (Ex-Officio)  
Todd Engle, Diocesan Treasurer (Ex-Officio)

The Standing, Search and Transition Committees met in retreat August 13 and 14, 2010, for commissioning and organization.

To aid in communication while efficiently and effectively accomplishing their task, and in the interests of good financial stewardship, the Search Committee used video-conferencing for its semi-monthly meetings during the search process. Other than the August retreat and a breakfast meeting at

Annual Council, the committee only met in person twice in February to select semi-finalists and finalists. The use of technology plus completing the search and presenting the finalists in eight months versus the average 18 month process has attracted the positive attention of the wider Episcopal Church.

Early last fall as the search process was being organized the Standing Committee charged the Search Committee with certain “expectations,” among which were the following:

- To discern prayerfully the presence of the Holy Spirit expressed in your heart and in the voices of your sisters and brothers in Christ in the Diocese of Nebraska regarding our call to God's mission in this place and time.
- To discern prayerfully the spiritual gifts, personal qualities and leadership skills needed by the XI Bishop for the Diocese of Nebraska to lead us in effectively engaging in that mission.
- To establish an open "application" process allowing all interested persons to submit their applications for consideration for nomination to be elected the XI Bishop for the Diocese of Nebraska.
- To present the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Nebraska with at least (3) nominees from those who apply whom the Search Committee considers qualified for the Episcopal Office.
- To maintain appropriate confidentiality at all times throughout this discernment process.

The Search Committee as part of their August 14<sup>th</sup> deliberations made a unanimous commitment to each other that they would only propose candidates that they felt they could stand behind, support fully and who they were comfortable would lead the diocese into the future. The entire Search Committee process of selecting nominees has been one of prayerfully seeking consensus. At each step of the process, the Search Committee has sought and achieved consensus in the selections made.

During late August and early September, focus groups were held in each deanery to gather input from the people of the

diocese as to what they discerned was needed in their next Bishop. A sixth focus group for the youth of the diocese was held at Happening during the Labor Day weekend. The questions that were asked included:

- In your congregation, deanery, and diocese what gives you hope?
- What challenges do we face in our congregations, deaneries and diocese?
- What makes our part of the Diocese of Nebraska unique?
- How can the bishop support our ministry?
- How can we support the ministry of our bishop?
- What qualities would we desire in the next bishop of the diocese?

All of the information was synthesized, compiled, and edited to produce an electronic profile.

In late October, 2010 the Search Committee posted a profile of the Diocese on the Bishop Search website and began accepting applications from candidates to become the next bishop for Nebraska.

Over fifty priests expressed an interest (either through telephone or e-mail contact with a member of the Search Committee or by filing a candidacy form).

By the December 10 deadline for “applications” the Search Committee had received 35 completed expressions of candidacy from priests living in 21 states and two non-US locations.

In late December the Committee, guided by the Holy Spirit, filtered the list to 10 candidates. During January they conducted tele-video interviews with these ten. These interviews were conducted by an interview team (representing a mix of genders and at least one priest) who asked questions while the rest of the committee was able to view and listen. There were three separate teams of interviewers.

In early February the Search Committee met in retreat to continue their discernment. They identified six “semifinalists” who along with their spouses (if available) were invited to meet with the Search Committee in Omaha on February 23-25.

The Search Committee’s time together with these “semifinalists” and their spouses in Omaha was marked by prayer, worship, and opportunities to get to know each other

better over the breaking of bread. Each candidate had an in depth interview and led the Committee in an interactive discussion and reflection on a selection from the Gospel (each candidate chose in advance one of four pre-selected passages). With their spouses, the candidates in turn heard about the Diocese’s financial and legal status and had presentations on our major initiatives: Resurrection House, Shared Ministries, the Tri-Faith Initiative and Global Missions. On Friday the candidates and the Committee members engaged in two creative problem-solving sessions.

The Search Committee continued and finalized their discernment in retreat Friday evening and all day Saturday, February 25 and 26. Following further reference checks of the candidates, the Search Committee met on March 7 and formally approved the nomination of The Reverend J. Scott Barker, The Reverend Margaret Holt Sammons and the Reverend Canon Sarah Shofstall to stand for election to become the Eleventh Bishop of Nebraska.

From the time of their first meeting last August 14 the work of the Search Committee has indeed been marked by prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as well as a deep pastoral sensitivity, as they have sought to discern through consensus within the committee who they would present as nominees for election as the Eleventh Bishop of Nebraska.

After the Search Committee nominees were announced on March 15, a period was allowed for nominations to be made by petition. Nomination forms were provided online for anyone interested in proposing a nominee other than those nominees proposed by the Search Committee. This petition nomination period closed on March 31 without any nomination petitions having been received.

### **Transition Process**

In addition to the Search Committee, a Transition Committee was selected by the Standing Committee. Ms. Janice Seldon and the Venerable Jim Visger, Archdeacon were appointed Co-chairs and committee members appointed from applications made. The Transition Committee joined the Standing Committee and the Search Committee in retreat at St. Luke’s in Kearney last August 13-14.

The members of the Transition Committee selected are:

Janice Seldon (Co-Chair), Church of the Resurrection, Omaha  
Jim Visger (Co-Chair), Holy Trinity, Lincoln  
Hank Austin, St. Andrew’s, Omaha  
Liz Easton, All Saints, Omaha

Rich Kelly, St. Matthew's, Lincoln  
 Randy Goeke, St. Mary's, Bassett  
 Ellie Thober, Trinity, Norfolk  
 Elle Ross, Trinity Cathedral, Omaha  
 Nancy Kirk, St. Andrew's, Omaha  
 Sammy Reagan, St. Augustine, Elkhorn  
 Janet Squires, St. Matthew's, Lincoln  
 David Halsted, St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral, Hastings.

This committee is charged with overseeing the transition period between Bishop Burnett's departure and our next Bishop's arrival, including the conduct of the Special Election on June 4 and the consecration of our next Bishop on October 8. Like the Search Committee, the Transition Committee has utilized internet technologies to tele-conference regularly as they plan the events of the transition from Bishop Burnett's episcopacy to our next Bishop's consecration. They will also work closely with our bishop-elect and her/his family to ensure a positive transition process during the summer and fall of this year.

To begin this process of "transition" the committee held farewell dinners in both Scottsbluff and Omaha early this year for Bishop Burnett. These were well attended and wonderful events. The Transition Committee is now intimately engaged in the logistics and preparation of the Special Electing Council to be held June 4 at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral, Hastings, and work continues in organizing the events surrounding and including the consecration of our next Bishop to be held at the Papillion LaVista Conference Center on October 8.

### **Overall Coordination**

This entire process, both search and transition, has been a daunting undertaking involving the work and gifts of many individuals throughout our diocese. In order to ensure that this process was successfully coordinated and that problems or required tasks were addressed as rapidly as possible, the Standing Committee made the decision to create a "Steering

Committee" to oversee the entire process. This committee which consists of the co-chairs of both the Search and Transition Committees and the President of the Standing Committee has met each Wednesday since the beginning of last October via tele-conference to share with each other the progress being made by each committee and the tasks to be addressed. This "innovation" in the search and transition process has been invaluable in fulfilling the responsibilities involved in selecting our next Bishop in a timely and efficient manner.

In addition to making a commitment to internal communication among the committees involved in the process itself, an effort has also been made throughout the process to keep everyone in the Diocese informed by email and postings on the special "Bishop Search and Transition" website.

### **Going Forward**

We now move toward the election of our next bishop on June 4. Information regarding each of the three nominees and the events leading up to the Special Electing Council on June 4<sup>th</sup> has been posted online. Included in the information posted have been the written responses to four "essay" questions posed to each nominee, as well as each nominees' proposed "vision statement" for the Diocese of Nebraska. In addition, this special electronic edition of the Nebraska Episcopalian is being published to provide the entire diocese with information on each nominee, the upcoming "walk-about" visits throughout Nebraska that all nominees will participate in during the week of May 15-25, and the Special Electing Council to be held on June 4 at St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral in Hastings, Nebraska.

We ask that you join in our continuing prayers for our search and transition process, for the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek to discern God's will for us, for our nominees and their families.



*Pictures of participants at the Eastern Deanery Focus Group meeting in late August 2010  
 Hosted by St. Andrew's, Omaha*