

The Reverend Karin L. MacPhail

MINISTRY OBJECTIVE

To nurture, encourage, and lead diocesan and parish communities into greater discipleship, life-giving transformation, deeper relationships, Spirit-filled vitality, and spiritual growth, as we follow Jesus Christ and serve the world in his name.

AT THE CORE

I have strong gifts for pastoral care, community building, encouragement, preaching and teaching, and effective collaborative leadership skills, specifically in congregational health and revitalization. I believe in the transforming love of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe that the Holy Spirit forms us into disciples as we live, struggle, and love one another in community within the Body of Christ and that God uses our transformed lives to love, serve, and change the world.

PARISH EXPERIENCE

September 2017 – present **St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Roanoke, Virginia**

Rector, September 2018 – present

Priest-in-Charge, September 2017 - August 2018

July 2010 – June 2015 **Christ Church, Millwood, Virginia**

Rector, June 2014 – June 2015

Priest-in-Charge, September 2011 - June 2014

Supply Priest, July 2010 - September 2011

2006 – 2010 **Ministry in the Diocese of Virginia**

Camp Chaplain at Diocese of Virginia summer camps

Retreat Leader for parish and diocesan groups

Trainer for Prevention of Sexual Misconduct workshops

Supply Priest

July 2004 - December 2005 **St. Paul's Memorial Church, Charlottesville, Virginia**

Associate Rector and Campus Chaplain to the Canterbury Fellowship at the University of Virginia

CURRENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Member of Roanoke Justice Project Clergy Caucus

(ecumenical network working to end poverty and racism in the Roanoke Valley)

Member of Grandin Road clergy group

(neighborhood-based ecumenical ministerial association providing opportunities for shared worship and outreach ministries)

Member of Roanoke Women in Ministry (ecumenical clergy group)

LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA

Commission on Ministry (January 2019 to present. Currently serving as Chair of the COM)

Small Church Rector cohort facilitator (2024 to present)

Youth@Convention Celebrant (2024)

Trustees of the Funds (Trustee: January 2019 to 2023, including terms as Vice President in 2021 and President in 2022)

Chaplain for Spring Youth Event (2019)

Southwest Virginia Episcopal Fund board member (January 2018 to 2021)

LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA

Congregations Think Tank member (March – June 2015)

Prevention of Sexual Misconduct Trainer (2009 – 2011)

Windsor Listening Group Facilitator (dialogue sessions on human sexuality, 2006)

Chair of Diocesan Committee on Higher Education (2004-2005)

EDUCATION

Master in Divinity, *cum laude*, 2004, Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Virginia

Bachelor of Arts, 1994, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas

English—major; Anthropology—minor

INTERNSHIPS

St. James', Alexandria, Virginia

Seminary Intern, 2002 – 2004

Christ Church, Spotsylvania, Virginia

Seminary Intern, Summer 2003

North Carolina Baptist Hospital

Chaplain Intern, Summer 2002

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Women at the Wellsprings (Part of Lilly Endowment's Thriving in Ministry, 2020 – 2024)

Backstory Preaching Sermon Camp (2023)

Allyship training with Whitney Parnell (Service Never Sleeps, 2020)

Invite Welcome Connect Summit at Sewanee (June 2019)

Enneagram Training Workshop at Kanuga (June 2018)

Prepare/Enrich Training in Marriage Preparation Counseling

(Virginia Theological Seminary, May 2015)

Stephen Ministry Leader's Training Course (2014)

Interim Ministry for Today's Church (Center for Congregational Health, 2011)

Episcopal Campus Ministry Conference (The Episcopal Church, 2004)

Why are you an Episcopalian, and what does The Episcopal Church have to offer the world that's unique?

I am a cradle Episcopalian, baptized in an Episcopal Church before I was five months old. I have *stayed* in The Episcopal Church for many reasons. One of the primary reasons is how our church talks about Jesus and lives out our identity as the Body of Christ.

Jesus is the center of my faith, and two pictures of Jesus that I encountered in church formed deep impressions on me when I was young. One is a drawing commonly called “Laughing Jesus,” which is about the same age I am and was created by an artist working for the United Church of Canada, who titled the sketch “Jesus Christ, Liberator.” When I was a teenager, someone at church introduced me to Laughing/Liberating Jesus, transforming how I saw Jesus, and helping me more deeply open my life and my heart to him.

The second image was on a poster produced for General Convention in 2000, which I saw in my church as a young adult. The poster shows the face of Jesus, formed by a collage of many faces of all kinds of people from around the world. The words underneath read, “Behold the Face of God.” Both images shaped my understanding of Jesus and what it means to follow him. Both images continue to be fundamentally connected to my experience of The Episcopal Church as welcoming, inclusive, and joyfully centered in Jesus Christ, offering a unique witness to the world by challenging assumptions about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

The Episcopal Church offers the world many other gifts, of course. Our sacramental theology and the transcendent mystery and beauty of our worship, both in our traditional forms of liturgy and in newer liturgical expressions, consistently draw seekers to the church. Scripture, tradition, and reason guide us, keeping us flexible without being formless, and rooted without being stuck.

The open-minded, open-hearted welcome we offer all people, and our valuing the ministry of all the baptized (with discernment toward ordination notably *open* to all the baptized), are powerful signs of the breadth of God’s love and God’s work in the world. These are just a few of the unique gifts we share. Finally, The Episcopal Church continues to offer a gift to the world when we are a church engaged *with* the world, loving our neighbors as ourselves and working for justice and mercy in our communities and beyond. And when, despite our differences, we are able to listen to one another with love and respect and remain united in mission, we show that diversity within unity is itself a gift, and one that is desperately needed right now.

When fully living into our identity—sharing the joyful, reconciling, inclusive love of Jesus Christ with the world—The Episcopal Church has a unique role in God’s renewal and redemption of all creation. Through worship, service, proclamation, and invitation, The Episcopal Church celebrates and shares the gift of our unique way of being Jesus-followers with the whole world.

What is your theology of scripture? What is your favorite bible verse and how does it shape your theology of ministry?

The Holy Spirit inspired the authors of scripture and continues to inspire us today through the words of scripture. Our truest lens for interpreting the Word of God in scripture is the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. To lead us into all truth, the Spirit guides our interpretation of scripture and the scholarship that informs our understanding, helping us see God's work in the world and in our lives, and giving us wisdom to faithfully discern the will and movement of God today.

The story of Zaccheus in Luke 19 is one of my favorite bible stories and has been enormously meaningful in my life, vocation, and theology of ministry. When I have felt like an outsider, I've been moved by Jesus' noticing and reaching out to Zaccheus. When I have felt unremarkable, the delight Jesus takes in Zaccheus has touched my heart. When I have worried that I am unworthy, the honor Jesus shows Zaccheus, despite the grumbling of the crowd, has encouraged me.

I also find in this story a rich theology of ministry as Jesus and Zaccheus show us how invitation, relationship, and mutual hospitality lead to expanded community, transformation, and new life. Jesus seeks the lost and notices and values someone on the margins, teaching us to notice those who are trying to see Jesus and to make sure we are not blocking the view. Jesus loves Zaccheus where he is, but Jesus is not content to leave Zaccheus where he finds him. Instead, Jesus casts a vision for Zaccheus of who Zaccheus *can* be—not just a despised tax collector in a tree, but a generous, welcoming, faithful host to the Son of God.

I imagine that Jesus says, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today!" (Luke 19:5) with a twinkle in his eye and an enormous smile. What a gift we share with others when we similarly delight in and honor their God-seeking curiosity and their vulnerability when they "go out on a limb" to see Jesus! What a gift we share when we allow ourselves to be equally vulnerable and bold in our invitation and hospitality to them! Jesus shows us how to approach the spreading of the Good News of God's Kingdom with a playful, joyful, adventurous spirit, that's not too bothered if some folks grumble. As in much of his ministry, Jesus challenges our preferences for where ministry happens and where Jesus meets people. Jesus encounters Zaccheus out on the road, among the people, where they are. Jesus finds Zaccheus (and vice versa) because Jesus is engaging with people outside of his group. It's also worth noting that Jesus invites himself to Zaccheus's house—a place where Zaccheus will feel comfortable in their transformative encounter.

This story subverts our assumptions about ministry by blurring the boundaries between guests and hosts and between seeker and sought—Jesus and Zaccheus each are all of these things, which is a transformative way to understand ministry.

Bishops are called in their ordination vows to guard the unity of the church. How do you imagine guarding the unity of the diocese in a polarized and divided world?

The words from the hymn “I come with joy,” speak to our unity in Jesus Christ: “As Christ breaks bread and bids us share, each proud division ends. That love that made us makes us one, and strangers now are friends.”

To guard the unity of the church, I would always point to Jesus Christ, God’s Love Made Flesh, the Love who made us and who makes us one. In The Examination portion in The Ordination of a Bishop, we are taught how a bishop points to Jesus, the Love who makes us one—by proclaiming the Resurrection, interpreting the Gospel, testifying to the sovereignty of Christ, celebrating and providing for the administration of the sacraments, and by being a faithful pastor and wholesome example to the flock of Christ.

Through faithful preaching, teaching, and sacramental and pastoral leadership, bishops remind the church that we are united as the Body of Christ. Always clear about the One who unites us, a bishop is an icon of unity, gathering and connecting to the many baptized souls throughout a diocese. Through the faithful presence and practice of a ministry focused on Jesus Christ, I would guard the unity of the diocese.

Perhaps what needs more attention in our divided and polarized world is the pastoral aspect of a bishop’s unifying ministry. In our diocese, I believe it is reasonable and possible for most active parishioners to feel connected to their bishop—to feel they know and are known by their bishop, and therefore to feel connected to the diocese.

I would build those relationships across our diocese with people of all ages, certain that work would bear fruit in trust and connectedness, providing a powerful protection against polarization and division. If I were called as bishop, I would build and sustain those connections both in-person and through a robust and engaging diocesan communications strategy.

Unity must be able to contain diversity. With our farmlands and small towns, mountains and downtowns, there is rich diversity to celebrate here. Perhaps the challenge before us in this time of polarization is to go deeper than just what is easy to celebrate about each part of our diocese. I would foster opportunities for deeper listening to one another’s stories, especially stories of loss and heartbreak—stories that can lead to separation and suspicion when they are not understood.

We can provide opportunities around our diocese where our people can listen with respect and compassion to the unique needs and concerns of our siblings in Christ, whose circumstances may look very different from ours. I would lead us in exploring creative ways for more frequent story-sharing, both in-person and virtually, so that our bonds of understanding and affection grow deeper.

Unity is not only possible, it is our identity in Christ, and a powerful witness to God’s love in a divided and polarized world. May we show throughout our diocese that “the love that made us makes us one, and strangers now are friends.”

What opportunities and challenges do you see for the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia, and how would you lead us into the next chapter of our story?

One clear storyline in our diocesan profile is a longing for connection and for a bishop who will lead our diocese in strengthening relationships. The challenge I see is discovering what might actually build those connections and strengthen those relationships. We will only know through listening—to one another and to the Holy Spirit. While I have lots of ideas for what we *could* try, what is *first* required to lead in this area, as in most areas, is listening.

Based on the listening I've done, and my experience serving in this diocese, I see need and potential for strengthening relationships among clergy, among youth, and within convocations.

Annual diocesan retreats offering clergy a few days of rest, refreshment, and sharing are necessary for clergy well-being, collegiality, and formation. Other opportunities for clergy to connect with one another and care for themselves through clergy support groups, spiritual direction, and private retreats are also important. Clergy struggle to feed their flocks when they are not themselves fed, and clergy and parishes are healthier when clergy are well cared for. I would work with others to offer and support these and other clergy wellness initiatives.

Youth attend church and participate in parish and diocesan youth ministry in decreasing numbers. I would lead by listening to youth and youth leaders, using their feedback and working with others to support experiences that engage youth in new ways.

Convocations provide opportunities for connection between bishop and people, among youth, and among member parishes. Convocations offer a natural, geographically proximate network of community and support for justice work, outreach, retreats, fellowship, formation, and leadership training. I would lead our diocese by exploring what is already happening, where there could be new initiatives and experiments, and where convocations might learn from each other. I would especially prioritize being present in all the convocations to build and grow relationships and offer pastoral support and encouragement.

In addition to a longing for community and relationships, our diocese yearns to be a faithful witness for compassion, justice, and mercy for all people, following the Way of Jesus. Clarity about how best to love our neighbors as ourselves comes when we listen to our neighbors' stories and listen for how the Holy Spirit might be leading us to engage.

As someone who has worked alongside a vocational deacon and as the Chair of our Commission on Ministry, I know that deacons are gifted and ordained to interpret "to the church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world," leading the people in serving the world in Christ's name. I would work closely with our vocational deacons to deepen their ministry in this area.

I would also listen to our vocational deacons to understand where and how they feel called and where they need more support, so that we can discern together a clear path forward that honors each of them, welcomes and honors their ministry and leadership, and invites others to discern a call to the vocational diaconate, when appropriate.

As our next bishop, what skills and gifts for ministry would you bring to our diocese?

Our diocese is longing for a bishop who is pastoral and relational, with gifts to lead this diocese and encourage all of our parishes and people toward greater connection, growth, and vitality. We need a bishop who loves this place and the people who live here and who will lead us faithfully and creatively both now and into the next chapter of our story, as we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our words, our ministries, and our relationships with one another and with our neighbors.

With a good sense of humor and gifts for encouragement and empathy, I am warm, enthusiastic, and extroverted. Twenty-one years in ordained ministry have given me the gifts needed to be an effective “chief pastor” and “pastor to pastors”—gifts honed on the Commission on Ministry and in facilitating a small church clergy colleague group.

After a lifetime spent in Episcopal churches of all sizes, I know that parishes large and small have gifts and stories to share. Every parish, regardless of size, has what it needs to share the love of Jesus and grow disciples. With over thirteen years of experience serving in and growing small parishes, I especially love helping parishes who feel “less than” celebrate their particular identities and flourish. Having grown St. Elizabeth’s from averaging fewer than forty worshippers on a Sunday to almost seventy, I understand the encouragement that churches and clergy need. I am good at and enjoy that work.

My love for the theology and tradition of the Episcopal Church inspires me to engage creatively with our rich heritage, while meeting our present moment and moving into the future. The church today needs leaders with a hopeful, adventurous spirit and a willingness to take risks and innovate, while “boldly proclaiming and interpreting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of the people.” People want to be loved, inspired, encouraged, and appropriately challenged by their bishop. I am gifted at preaching, teaching, and communicating and possess the gifts to fulfill this call.

Finally, the call I’ve felt to serve as your bishop is entirely rooted in this place and comes from my experience and understanding of who we are and Whose we are. I have lived in this diocese for ten years, raised my children here, and served eight years as Rector of St. Elizabeth’s, Roanoke, and in diocesan ministries and leadership. The beauty, history, authenticity, and faith that embody the spirit of Southwestern Virginia nourish and bless me. I love this diocese and want to serve the people here, helping our diocese flourish as we follow the Way of Jesus.