

The Very Reverend Molly Payne-Hardin

| Ministry Objective

To lead parishes by lifting the gifts of others, naming Christ present among us, and seeking the spiritual depth of common prayer.

| Experience

Rector

June 2019-Present

Trinity Church Watertown, NY

Diocese Central New York

Leading a parish into deeper connection, transparency, and spiritual growth. Aligned a staff team six to support the parish's ministries. Developed practical ways to deepen the faith and equip lay leaders.

- Led parish through pandemic with stable and increased levels of giving and membership.
- Increased participation in parish ministries, particularly outreach/mission and ecumenism.
- Developed practical ways to deepen faith and revived adult formational offerings.
- Integrated children's participation in worship and at church, particularly for families serving at nearby U.S. Army Fort Drum.
- Empowered lay ministries to explore new horizons, particularly participation in Pridfest.
- Initiated parish-wide discussion of strategic planning for our building and the way it supports our ministries, including endowment planning.

Associate Rector and Curate

July 2017-June 2019

St. Andrew's Panama City, FL

Dio. Central Gulf Coast

Led a parish into deeper connection and a sense of their missional future. Bridged well into an established team of leaders. Revived adult formation. Shared leadership of cohort for youth ministry.

- Initiated Laundry Love ministry, collaborating with neighboring Episcopal Church.
- Revived adult formational offerings, including Education for Ministry.
- Led parish's immediate response to catastrophic hurricane and during rector's sabbatical.
- Initiated intentional digital evangelism (e.g., website, Facebook).

Disaster Preparedness for Public Health

2004-2014

Fl. Department of Health

Statewide, Regional

- Developed and implemented a public information and crisis communications program, for a 67 county state public health system, which succeeded through the H1N1 pandemic.
- Built bridges and relationships with 13 county health department professionals for the establishment of basic public information capabilities both routinely and during crises.
- Developed and facilitated 200 person trainings for medical and public health professionals.
- Responded to more than 20 major disasters (e.g., Hurricane Katrina) to lead the public communications and information teams from 1992-2014.

Marketing Communications & Public Affairs

1991-2003

Fl. Governor's Office, Dept. of Community Affairs, NGO/College

Capital, Regional, Statewide

- Managed communications teams handling public relations and media services for a political administration and Florida’s disaster response agency.
- Improved communications and publicity of Florida’s response to major disasters, urban planning, affordable housing, public health, and community redevelopment.
- Event planner for large, statewide events commonly attended by hundreds.
- Developed advocacy campaigns and communications strategy statewide.

| Diocesan and Churchwide Service (recent)

- Dean, North Country District, Dio. of Central New York, March 2026-present
- Deputy to General Convention, 2022 (elected for 2024 GC)
- Diocesan Disciplinary Board, 2025-present
- Diocesan Board (Trustees of the Diocese), 2019-2025, vice-president and chair, 2023-2024
- Fresh Start (“Adventures in Ministry”) organizer/leader, 2023-2025
- “Speak Faith” (faith formation program), start-up team, presenter, 2021

| Parish-based lay leadership

- Co-created young marrieds/families ministry. Co-led large ministry team, integrating 30-50 couples into parish life. Reinvigorated the ministry 5 years later during transition.
- Reinvigorated and created programmatic structure for new member welcome, connection, and incorporation as part of a leadership team at a resource-sized parish.
- Co-created contemplative prayer ministries network for our diocese. Led weekly prayer groups.

| Education, Ordination, Certificates

M.Div.	2017	U. of the South, School of Theology	Sewanee, TN
Field Education	2016	Christ Church Cathedral, Nashville; St. Thomas,	Greenville, AL
M.S. (Higher Educ.)	2000	Florida State University	Tallahassee, FL
B.A. (English)	1991	Florida State University	Tallahassee, FL

Ordained Deacon	December 3, 2016 (Dio. Central Gulf Coast)		
Ordained Priest	August 19, 2017 (Dio. Central Gulf Coast, St. Andrew’s, Panama City, FL)		
Certificate	2022	College for Congregational Development	Rochester, NY
D.Min. <i>Enrolled</i>	2023	U. of the South, School of Theology	Sewanee, TN

| Personal

Born and raised in Miami, Florida, I’m an Episcopalian who cherishes our common prayer and sacraments. Growing up, if the doors of our parish were open, my family was there to cook a meal, serve as acolytes, or welcome a visitor. My first calling and ministry was through government, for the common good, communicating policy and initiatives that benefited the marginalized or resource-limited. No sooner did I start my first professional job than I found a nearby Episcopal Church and began serving as a minister through youth Sunday School and on EYC Mission Trips. Further into my adult ministry, I served in worship, participated and led Bible studies, and formed contemplative prayer groups and retreats. My husband, Michael Hardin, and I have been married since 2000 and he also ministers through the Episcopal Church. He’s often connected to a feeding ministry, handbell choir, or as a

verger/acolyte/livestreamer. Together, we enjoy being in fellowship with the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (Boston/Cambridge). I enjoy yoga, playing with our dog, and a good book club or museum trip. Michael and I enjoy traveling either to explore new places or to be with family and friends.

Please describe your sense of call to the ministry of bishop and particularly, why you feel called to this diocese. What charisms and skills would you bring to ministry in our context?

In praying with this sense of call, I'm drawn to the Scriptures of a bishop's ordination which are scenes of Jesus' resurrection and prayers for unity. Particularly that Jesus comes to his apostles and remembers the gifts of his time among them: forgiveness, unity, and peace. I've found those to be gifts drawn out through relational trust-building and encouragement. Who hasn't appreciated an encouraging word when working through a difficult time of peacemaking, or building unity, or living into forgiveness? I have the sense, through prayer and the affirmation of others, that my gifts for encouragement, pastoral connection, and bridge building could serve the wider church well.

Scripture also leads us through the teaching that there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit. God created me with gifts of a joyful expression for Christ, skills as a bridge builder, and as one who lifts others up. In times of conflict, I lean on skills built around those gifts. Skills such as being curious as a group seeks common understanding (trusting in Christ's unity). I was formed as a Christian through our Book of Common Prayer so, for many years, those prayers were most familiar to me. Over the past decade, in seminary and Central New York, I've grown to appreciate the full range of Christian prayers and that was an aspect of your diocesan experience that drew me.

Prior to seminary, working in mass communications and public health, sharing resources was often the key to our success. This transferred easily to ordained ministry: if my parish developed a good tool for "Welcome to our church", I shared it with our deanery in a simple, helpful template; on a diocesan council for youth ministry, I helped develop electronic tools and event outlines that could be tailored to any parish. I offer those by way of saying that Northwestern Pennsylvania's experience in sharing resources and trying out new partnerships stirred a similar experience and passion within me. Professionally, I often built new regional programs or supported a department/program that was expanding and desired organizational focus. Much of that professional work incorporated long recovery from catastrophic disasters, which is often a time in which the landscape of need is large and our resources (though plentiful) are slow to make it to the impacted areas. I recognized in your diocesan DNA of resilience, perseverance, and bridge building, my own Gospel-driven professional skills. As an approachable leader, I work hard to meet people where they are. My parish and our newest members tell me that this has been a key thread in our growth over the post-pandemic years. Living a rule of life alongside a monastic community (Society of Saint John the Evangelist) has been a grounding teacher in this regard. I also serve in a region of the country (northern New York) where the Episcopal Church works to be a voice of inclusion, peace, and joy in a part of the country where those strands of the Christian tradition are less familiar.

What opportunities and challenges do you see in the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania, and how do you envision exercising leadership among us?

I see a diocese well-resourced through its committed people, authenticity, and passion for building up God's Kingdom. Meeting an opportunity well is always possible with experience like yours of sharing resources, building bridges, and trying things for the sake of the Gospel. Yours is a beacon to the whole church! I envision my skills for communication and encouragement enabling me to hold up your success for the wider church, even in simple ways. I serve in a rural area and creation care ministries are ones that we continue to explore. I envision the work of the diocese, and a bishop, in lifting up those stories for the good of the whole body. There are deep stories and riches of wisdom in our pews and parishes – I exercise leadership by learning from those stories and amplifying that wisdom. Your profile tells of a diocese deeply in touch with the church's missional heart, expressed in their local context. I aim to be a unifier, encourager, and spokesperson as we tackle opportunities together.

I sense Northwestern Pennsylvania to be a place that understands the Gospel-infused understanding that there are no quick fixes. Challenges are common. How else to best be grateful for "tasks which demand our best efforts" (to borrow a word of thanksgiving from the prayer book). You name the challenges of funding and aging demographics; I envision exercising leadership by focusing funds toward the missional work of your parishes. As an approachable leader, I aim to be as open and honest as possible. This includes naming the challenges that we're focused on in any given year. That type of transparency can be a support when we are spread out geographically. Our Gospel story includes the promise that God has given us what we need. My natural strengths for connecting with others, undergirded by my prayers for them, enables us to embrace who we are. There is strength in being authentically who we are while continuing to lean into the gift of trying new things and taking risks (as your diocese models so well).

The size of your diocese is a strength in that your bishop can easily be in relationship to your local, missional work. A benefit of the pandemic is our experience with hybrid interactions (which has been a growing edge for us in Central New York). I envision exercising leadership by being connected to parishes beyond Sunday mornings to include a parish picnic or a camp/ graduation ceremony, or maybe even benefit from the gift of a weekday prayer service. Even in the face of challenges, I draw energy from the Christ-centered, missional presence that Episcopalians exercise in our communities.

Please explain your understanding of the purpose of the church and how that purpose shapes the church's future.

I understand the church as one that works, prays, and gathers to sense the Holy Spirit's presence among us through our Gospel proclamation, Christian study, and peacemaking. We are meant to be an authentic expression of Christian love as we meet Christ in our own communities. Key to our future, and based on my experience, we must sense that we remain active and alive (gifts of the Holy Spirit) to this purpose by naming the ways we've pivoted when we needed to, attending to our mature practitioners, sharing resources (even when it was hard), and leaning into those unspoken areas of Gospel proclamation alive in our own communities. In my parish, that has looked like hosting an adult day respite program with the Office for the Aging, and accepting the invitation to be the location for the county's annual Transgender Day of Remembrance. It has also looked like continuing to take small steps toward living within our means, financially. All three of those examples have a community-shaped sense about them.

A gift of the Episcopal Church is that there are myriad ways to live into the purpose that I named above. Our work on the ground (whether as bishop, laity, or clergy) is in naming the authentic ways we live into that purpose, being brave enough to consider the impact we're having, and trusting that part of being baptized into Christ's death and resurrection is that the natural end to a particular ministry never means the end to the Holy Spirit's work among us. Your diocese was a real help to me, more than ten years' ago, through the Episcopal Church Building Fund. Bishop Rowe presented on work happening in your diocese and it enabled me to support a couple of parishes all the way down in Florida (who were recovering from catastrophic hurricanes). I'd say the NWPA Episcopal spirit was carried pretty far and did some pretty exceptional work with just a simple YouTube video circa 2012.

Two of the descriptions that I loved in talking with your leaders were that the Holy Spirit was so clearly on the move when you elected your previous bishop and that you're a people who draw strength from gathering together. Couple that with your profile's enthusiastic proclamation that you have gifts for trying new things, serving needs in your local communities, and prayerfully bringing other missional efforts to an end, and I hear a diocese that lives fully into the purpose of being the church. It sounds a lot like those who devoted themselves "to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers" (Acts 2:42, CEB). Sensing the Holy Spirit at work takes commitment and devoted hearts. It's no easy effort and our church needs gifted leaders like we have in your diocese.