

The Rev. Stacey Fussell

EDUCATION

- May 1998 **VIRGINIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY** Alexandria, VA
Master of Divinity cum laude, concentration in Sacred Theology, Stages of Faith Development
- Honors Thesis: “The Doctrine of the Image of God and Persons with Disabilities”
 - Harris Award for Academic Excellence
 - Tachau-Bray Biblical Languages Award
 - President, Seminary Missionary Society
- May 1995 **UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology summa cum laude, minor in Theology
- Outstanding Psychology Graduate
 - Internship, Houston ISD Adventure Play Program

EXPERIENCE

- 2010-present **EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION** Bradford, PA
Rector
- Guide visioning, structuring and implementation of church growth and outreach initiatives for declining historic congregation in depopulating region
 - Provide liturgical, operational and pastoral leadership through reversal of decline for church that has grown to 100+ active members
 - Lead congregation through successful major capital project to address deferred maintenance issues
 - Solicit and secure major and legacy gifts to ensure long-term viability of congregation’s ministries
 - Develop program and staff for church sponsored Preschool
 - Provide community leadership through local ministerial alliance, assistance agencies, service organizations, Bradford Area School District and McKean County Dept. of Human Services
 - Encourage and equip clergy and lay leaders as President of Standing Committee, regional dean, instructor in Diocesan School for Ministry and presenter at diocesan conferences and clergy retreats
- 2001-2010 **ST. CATHERINE OF SIENNA EPISCOPAL CHURCH** Missouri City, TX
Vicar
- Guide re-visioning, re-focusing and establishing impetus for restart of new congregation
 - Lead congregation through successful capital campaign and first building project
 - Provide liturgical, operational and pastoral leadership for diverse and rapidly growing church family of 300+ active members
 - Develop program and staff for church sponsored Mother’s Day Out & Day School Program
 - Build and supervise staff of 14 church and school employees
 - Recruit, equip and train volunteer leadership for 40 active church ministries
 - Provide community leadership through pastoral association, Sienna Residential Association, City of Missouri City and Ft. Bend County ISD
- 2000-2001 **TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH** Baytown, TX
Priest Locum Tenens
- Lead parish through the work of the interim period – healthy closure, conflict resolution, healing of divisions, discernment of future vision, preparing for next called rector
 - Provide liturgical, operational and pastoral leadership for diverse church family of 850 members
 - Build and supervise staff of 7 church employees
 - Recruit, equip and train volunteer leadership for 70 active church ministries
 - Provide community leadership through pastoral association and City of Baytown
- 1998-2000 *Associate Rector* Baytown, TX
- Assist in providing liturgical, operational and pastoral leadership for church family
 - Plan and lead 3-day parish retreats and numerous Bible studies and discussion groups

- Implement church partnership with San Jacinto Elementary School including mentoring, tutoring and summer involvement programs
- Recruit and develop volunteers from area faith community for the start-up and ongoing ministry of Baytown's America's Promise venture including a resource and referral center to serve working poor

PASSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- CPS adoptive mother to 23 year old, Christina, and 20 year old, Catherine
- Deputy to 2018, 2022 and 2024 General Conventions
- Past President of Diocese of NWPA Standing Committee
- Past Instructor NWPA School for Ministry
- President of Bradford Ministerium
- Past President of Kiwanis Club of Bradford
- Member of McKean County Department of Human Services Advisory Board
- Member of the University of Pittsburgh @ Bradford LGBTQ-A Advisory Board
- Founding Board Member of Destinations-Bradford – ecumenical assistance ministry
- Head of Secretariat Section for Lambeth 1998 and Lambeth 2008
- Speaker, retreat leader and spiritual director for diocesan programs (Cursillo, Singles, ECW, etc.)
- Member of the Order of the Daughters of the King

REFERENCES

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 the Book of Common Prayer 1979, in the Ordination of a Bishop, one promises to be obedient to Christ; to be faithful in prayer and study; to boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel; to serve as chief priest and pastor; to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church; to share in the government of the Church and sustain and guide priests, deacons and lay ministers; and to be merciful to all, especially showing compassion to the poor, strangers and helpless. It is evident why such a call is affirmed as only to be undertaken relying on the help, grace and power of God and with the motivation of obeying, serving and loving God for Christ's sake. I believe that I would undertake episcopal ministry with such reliance and motivation.

For me, discernment of being 'a bishop' cannot be done in abstract but must be done specific to a certain people, place and time. So, I have been prayerfully considering what we need in our next bishop and whether I have the charisms, skills and experience to meet those needs. I believe the profile, in summarizing what we would like in our next bishop, gives a clear indication of what we need, too.

We are a relational diocese and need a bishop who will love us, believe in us and equip us in our ministries. We need a bishop who will build trust and collaboration among us and help us strengthen our relationships with one another and the diocesan staff. I have the rare privilege of having experienced ministry in another diocese before finding my way to NWPA and finding a true home here. I have spent 15 years serving here both as a local priest and in a variety of diocesan roles. I know and love folks and believe that I can build upon the trust and collegiality that we already enjoy.

We are a diocese that wants to make a difference in our communities and share the Good News of Christ with others in a compelling way. We need a bishop who will help us really believe that God has a purpose and a mission for us, here and now, and that together, with God's help, we can accomplish it – because God has promised to work infinitely more than we can ask or imagine in us and through us. I am familiar with our diocesan culture and the context in which we minister. Our folks know how to 'be church' and I believe my experience and my heart for evangelism will be effective in helping us increase our witness.

We are a diocese who are eager to discern where God is calling us next with a bishop who can articulate a clear vision and help to make it a reality. We need a bishop who will discern with us; who is able to confirm, articulate, and help manifest the vision that God is calling us to participate in. I have a proven track record of ministering successfully in our context and offering leadership on a diocesan level. I am committed to discovering God's preferred future for us and working together to make it a reality.

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

Like the Church in all times and in all places, the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania faces both opportunities and challenges in this present moment. I think it is always easiest to enumerate the challenges we face rather than the opportunities, but considering them together can be instructive and a reminder that both can be seen as blessings.

The diocesan profile does a good job of succinctly naming our challenges: declining economic base, depopulating region, aging demographics. This is part of our regional reality that is born out in many of our congregations – we are smaller, poorer and older than we once were. And, that is not our whole story. As noted, our region and our diocese is known for our resilience. Our towns and our people are ready to try new things, new ways of being in this moment while still maintaining the values and culture that make us ‘who we are.’ We can figure out how to be ‘good Episcopalians’ in new ways. Just as necessity is the mother of invention, the challenges we face are amplifying our willingness for innovation.

This willingness to innovate led to experiments for the sake of the Gospel, like our recent Partnership with the Diocese of Western New York. We had the opportunity to learn much about ourselves and gain a clearer picture of what meaningful collaboration looks like for us as a diocese. The challenge that remains is restructuring our diocesan staff and institutions going forward and renewing and strengthening the bonds between them and our congregations.

We have resources to contribute to innovative efforts. Even in our depopulating region, the harvest is plentiful – on average 40% of folks in our communities have no religious affiliation. The Episcopal Church is uniquely positioned to reach many of them with the Good News of God’s love. Our senior saints know the Lord and the church and are ideally suited to disciple a new generation in the faith. Thanks to the generosity of our ancestors and faithful financial management, we do have resources available for strategic investment to assist our congregations in ministry.

We’ve had the blessing of enjoying a long and vital episcopacy with Bishop Sean and seeing him called to be our Presiding Bishop. We are not trying to call a bishop to fill Bishop Sean’s shoes. And we need to be mindful that just as with long rectorships, long episcopacies can be followed by “unintentional interims.” If called to be bishop here I would view my priorities as leading us in discerning a long-term vision for the future and securing a firm foundation to build that future on. That would entail exploring internal collaborations to strengthen our diocesan and congregational ministries – including the raising up and formation of lay and clergy leaders; exploring collaborations between congregations and diocesan institutions; and resourcing initiatives for local outreach and evangelism.

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

In the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, the Catechism states: The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God in Christ (page 855). Striving in all times and in all places to live out that mission is the purpose of the church. Obviously that vision will incarnate differently in specific times and places and among specific people.

A sustaining vision of ministry for me is living out and bearing witness to the truth that the angel proclaimed to the shepherds in Luke 2:10 – bringing good news of great joy to all people. Our vision as individual Christians, as lay and ordained leaders in our congregations and diocese, and as members of the wider church is to bear witness to the Good News of Christ. We are called to bring that Good News in a variety of ways: through worship, discipleship, outreach and witness. Both our former and current Presiding Bishops have called the Episcopal Church to embrace anew the emphasis on sharing our faith stories and inviting others to 'come and see.' That is the Gospel way – over and over in scripture the disciples and others who had encountered Jesus invited others to come and see him for themselves, knowing that encountering Jesus leads to transformation. And particularly in recent days, we've increasingly been called to seek to bring the transforming love of Jesus to bear on larger societal issues, too.

A parishioner once told me that he thought the Episcopal Church was one of the best-kept secrets in town. I tend to agree with him. I am a passionate Episcopalian! When I consider the beauty of our worship, the grace of our sacraments, the inclusiveness of our theology, the devotion of our scripture reading, the egalitarianism of our polity – I can't imagine why everyone isn't an Episcopalian. I believe we have incredible gifts to offer the world and that we have somehow hidden our light under a bushel for too long.

The Episcopal Church offers a compelling version of Christianity that can be unique in the communities where we live and worship, a version that I believe many are hungry for in these fractured and frightening times. I believe that focusing on excellence in worship, faithfulness in prayer, authenticity in relationships, generosity in outreach and charity in witness will position our congregations to be effective outposts of the Kingdom of God.

Specifically for our diocese, I believe that it is imperative that we bring resources to bear on equipping our local congregations to do the work of reconciliation to which they are called. This includes formation and support of clergy and lay leaders; providing tools, resources and training to equip the saints to succeed in ministry.