

The Rev. Canon Jean Baptiste Ntagengwa, Th.D.

March 15, 2024

*Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a bishop for this diocese, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Dear people of God, members of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts:

I am pleased to introduce myself to you as a candidate for your seventeenth Bishop Diocesan.

I was born and raised Presbyterian until 1992 when I was received into the *Eglise Episcopale au Rwanda*. However, I was connected to and served in the *Eglise Episcopale au Rwanda* since I was in secondary school. Even when I was working in the secular world, during my free time I was involved in the ministry of the *Eglise Episcopale au Rwanda* as choir member, outreach volunteer, etc. I got married in August 1993 and my wife and I went to Kenya for a short intensive English course in January of 1994 with the aid of the *Eglise Episcopale*. This opportunity saved our lives big time because a few days before going back to Rwanda, the presidential aircraft was shot down which triggered the genocide that started on April 6<sup>th</sup>. From that time on, we became refugees, first in Kenya, then in a refugee camp in Zaïre. I was ordained Transition Deacon when I was in that Refugee Camp in September of 1995.

In September of 1995, my wife, our first born, and I left the camp and went to Kenya for formal theological education. I continued to serve God and God's people in Kenya while I was also going to school. In Kenya, I got ordained into the priesthood in January of 1997. After my graduation from St. Paul's United Theological College (currently St. Paul's University), Limuru, I was blessed to be awarded a full scholarship by Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts. I left Kenya in September of 1999 to come to Harvard Divinity School.

When I got here, this diocese welcomed and supported me in many ways. I came to fall in love with this diocese, the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. This love was fully displayed last year when my wife, Christine, got diagnosed with Gallbladder cancer in December 2022. When our diocesan community was informed about this, everyone came in support. Prayers were organized around the diocese. When ultimately, she left us, the entire community of this diocese came to her funeral despite it being one of the coldest days in February of 2023. That touched my heart, and I will never forget it.

According to our *Book of Common Prayer*, the bishop is "to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry." A bishop stands in the apostolic succession, maintaining continuity in the present with the ministry of the Apostles. According to your profile, this diocese hopes to be "the Hands and Feet of Jesus" and to speak the truth. Those have been and are my goals as well. I feel called to act in Christ's name in furthering reconciliation here in Massachusetts and beyond.

The Rev. Canon Jean Baptiste Ntagengwa, Th.D.

From both my experiences, and my more than two-decades of living and serving in this Diocese, I believe that I am equipped to be the bishop you are looking for. I bring an exclusive combination of relational, pastoral, strategic, organizational, and collaborative skills to the apostolic succession ministry. Specifically, this role would be well served by my experience as a long-term parish priest, transition minister and Canon for Immigration and Multicultural Ministries in this diocese. As your Transition Minister, I coordinated the clergy transition process for congregations within our Diocese and in this process, I worked with search consultants, search committees, discernment committees, and vestries of more than 100 congregations during their search and transition processes. I was a pastor who listened to people who were in transition and made things happen. My personality as both a relationship builder and a creative leader as demonstrated throughout my ministry and as a collaborator across gender, age, country-of-origin, and racial differences were useful during this time and will be useful to this position of bishop if you give me that chance.

As the Canon for Immigration and Multicultural Ministries, I support the development of ministries in congregations with communities of color and immigrants. I work in collaboration with the regional canons and other diocesan staff and local leaders to facilitate our response to wider immigration concerns. I also organize educational and liturgical events across the diocese on different immigration and multicultural topics and issues as we lift up many cultures and languages that are present in the pews of our Diocese. This is made possible by my skills as a pastor, colleague, good administrator, visionary and as a staunch believer in the priesthood of all believers. These skills will continue to be in my toolkit should I be honored to become your bishop.

As a parish priest (both stipendiary and non-stipendiary), I oversaw the spiritual life and day-to-day activities of the parish, especially when I was a Priest-in-Charge. I preached, celebrated Eucharist, did pastoral care, baptisms, funerals, etc. I initiated structural, administrative, and leadership changes. I know how it feels to lead parishes with old buildings and deferred maintenance, especially when one is part time. I know how a well-structured stewardship is important in congregations that don't have many resources and how to collaborate with others in order to be able to do the work that God has called us to do. I know how to run stewardship campaigns as I did in my parish ministry.

Dear people of God, I know that this diocese has some challenges and I welcome the opportunity to help us overcome them. I also appreciate all those organizations, partnerships and other mission initiatives and ministries that are springing up here. I would look forward to leading this diocese as we "soar on wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31) together and take those ministries to a higher level. I can work with those with physical, mental, and spiritual challenges, as well as young and old alike. I am particularly aware of the weariness that some of our congregations feel when it comes to financial matters and lay leadership burnout. I know how many of our clergy members are tired due to the pandemic and the demands of part time parish ministry. I also know that there is an increased demand for deacons and the need to better align their ministry within the current state of the church. I am committed to taking the lead as we address all these matters that are current in the state of our church. I find joy in pastoring all types of people and walking with them on their journeys of faith. I look forward to discerning with you how we might

minister together in this diocese seeking justice for all, taking care of God's creation, and sharing God's love with the world as your bishop. Thank you.

Yours fraternally in the Lord,

*Jean Baptiste Ntagengwa*  
Jean Baptiste Ntagengwa

## Who is Jesus to you?

The first denomination that sent missionaries to Rwanda, my home country, were from the Roman Catholic Church. Shortly after that the protestants came and this was followed by evangelicals and their revival conferences conducted to change “regular church goers” into *abarokore* (saved ones). This was the East African Revival Movement and it was through this movement that I first came to really develop a sense of who Jesus is, to me and in me.

Before the summer of 1984, I was a regular church goer like many other people. Although at that time I was baptized and confirmed, I did not have any personal experience with Jesus as *abarokore* explained it. Yet, Jesus knew me and took care of me even then. For example, when I was in high school, my parents were unable to pay for my school fees. Jesus showed up for me at a time I did not really know him; he used my school principal to connect me, a Presbyterian child, with Caritas Rwanda, a Roman Catholic organization. The organization paid for my school fees. However, during that summer of 1984, my personal experience with Jesus changed. I attended a revival conference and, in that conference, the preacher shared his own testimony and preached on Romans 2:11: God does not show favoritism. In a way that I cannot explain, that message transformed me. Yes, I was a Presbyterian member, but I did not see any difference between me and those who did not go to church. However, on that day, when I heard about what Jesus had done for people who were like me, I decided to accept him as my Lord and Savior. I received his forgiveness and started following him like other *abarokore* did. From that time on, my life was transformed completely.

I came to know and feel that Jesus is love and gives love to his real followers. The love that existed among the *abarokore* movement was palpable, something I never thought could be attainable. For example, when I was growing up my family was very poor. Eating three meals per day was a dream and sometimes we were lucky to eat once. But, when I met with Jesus that summer, the love I experienced among *abarokore* was touching. These people had a special love that I believe came from Jesus. Even though most of them were not that rich, they put together what they had to feed the hungry. They gave us food when we were hungry just because of that love. When I met Jesus and joined this movement, not only was I fed spiritually, I was also fed physically, food. I was also fed emotionally. Therefore, in addition to Jesus being love for me, he is also my provider and sustainer through the loving actions of his followers. I completed all my theological education up to a doctoral level on a full scholarship. Jesus is my provider indeed.

Not only is Jesus the provider for me, but he is also my Savior/Rescuer/Protector. My late wife (who was from a different ethnic group from mine: I am Hutu and she was Tutsi), and I got married in August 1993, and shortly thereafter, I received a scholarship through The Episcopal Diocese of Kigeme to go for a three-month English intensive course in Kenya. My wife and I left in January 1994 and were supposed to come back on April the 10<sup>th</sup> of the same year. The Rwandan president’s plane was shot down on April the 6<sup>th</sup> which triggered the start of the

genocide. If we had been in Rwanda during that period, both of us would have been killed. Jesus rescued us. Jesus is my rescuer.

Since the scholarship was just for three months and we had no money left, Jesus provided again by using the friends of our bishop who were in Kenya. They hosted us until July, 1994 when the bishop came for us. He then took us into a refugee camp in Bukavu, Zaire. At that time my wife was pregnant and gave birth to our first child there on August 19, 1994. In other words, we had no money and the responsibility of caring for my pregnant wife weighed heavily on me. But the friends of the bishop and then the camp saved us. When I thought that there was no way, Jesus provided. We lived in that refugee camp between July 1994 - September 1995, and by the grace of God we did not lack basic necessities.

Not only is Jesus my Rescuer, he also helps me to prove that biases and prejudice are wrong. Jesus is the Son of God who came into this world as a human to reconcile us with God and to break all barriers. Like the Scripture says, *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28). In the real world, he proves that he doesn't show favoritism. When I was being interviewed to be licensed to officiate in this Diocese, I was told that since I was African, I had to know that I wouldn't be able to compete with Americans for jobs. I did not understand what this person meant at that time but as I stayed longer, I came to understand that they said it because of the systemic racism and nativism embedded in many places throughout the church. However, I, an African who was with American students in the same classes, got my doctoral degree from an American university. Later on, Jesus made it possible for me to be your Transition Minister (definitely after a competition) and ended up serving among and with Americans. The Jesus that I know does not show favoritism.

He tends to the sick and shows his presence through the community of his followers during times of need. I saw this towards the end of 2022 when my wife was diagnosed with gallbladder cancer. When our diocesan community was informed about this, everyone came in support. Prayers were organized around the diocese. When ultimately, she left us, the entire community of this diocese came to her funeral despite it being one of the coldest days in February of 2023.

Jesus is my All in all. He is the love of God that I felt existed among *abarokore*, a love, warmth, and true fellowship. He is the love, provider, supporter, and comforter that I feel in this community of Massachusetts. To me, Jesus is the Son of God and fully God who touched my life during the summer of 1984, full of love and who gives the same love to his followers. His unchangeable and unconditional love welcomes everyone regardless of their background, class, race, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and any other distinction. I allowed him into my life and acknowledged him as the Messiah, the way, the truth and the life. I am who I am because of Jesus.

## What calls you to discern being a Bishop? Why now? Why with the Diocese of Massachusetts?

I am excited to discern a call to be a bishop during this particular time because I prayed and felt that I am called as I will elaborate below. It has never been my goal to go after a purple shirt and a miter in my life. However, when many people approached me asking that I should consider submitting my name, I took time to pray and to discern. I feel that this is God's call. Unlike most of the other different types and positions of work I occupied since my graduation from *Ecole d'Economie et de Commerce de Jaja* where I was either tapped or prompted to take them only to realize later on that, that was the call of God...I know that this is God's call.

A bishop is called to be the leader and pastor of God's people following the lead of the Holy Spirit, and like I just said, throughout my unexpected life journey, I have been richly blessed by the Holy Spirit's lead. So, the acceptance to become a bishop is me obeying the Holy Spirit. Throughout my life and my travels, spending time in different places and parts of the world: from farms, villages, to Roman Catholic boarding school, to refugee camps, universities, and to different countries; I have developed an inner freedom and intuition which doesn't tie me to a particular set of expectations or a particular work. It has opened me to listening to what the Holy Spirit is telling me in each particular context. I have learnt much but one thing stands out: I have learnt that all baptized are called and have gifts from the Holy Spirit. I have come to learn that, if strategically and ethically led well, all those baptized can achieve together many good things. As a leader, I have seen this firsthand. I have also come to learn that when there is poor and unethical leadership, those hard-earned good things can be lost in a blink of an eye.

Currently, our Church is split and needs ethical leaders who are humble and conversant with different cultures and dynamics to bridge the divisions. I am acquainted with more than one culture and have worked tirelessly towards reconciliation of different communities, both where I was born and raised and here in Massachusetts. Back home, fights among Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda led me to develop the sense of fostering reconciliation and I have seen firsthand this happening. My late wife and I have hosted people of different ethnic groups in our home. I have hosted reconciliation conferences aiming at building bridges. Here in our diocese, I have been involved in building bridges between some of our African congregations and clergy and The Episcopal Church. As a strategic, loving, and patient leader, I was able to bring them more fully into the life of our diocese with the help of my colleagues of the African Clergy Caucus. A bishop should be a humble and courageous leader who is willing to take risks for the sake of Jesus' love and mission. Inhabiting this leadership is what is calling me into this position of apostolic succession in our Church, Episcopal/Anglican Church.

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, too, is at a critical juncture nowadays. Some things, like our work towards racial reckoning as mentioned in the profile, is just now beginning to bear fruit; while other things, such as intensified decline of our congregations, communication and

connections and better care for clergy to name a few, need bold, and creative revisioning. Over the 24 years I've been here, I have come to love this diocese and want to see us successfully navigate these waters towards transformation.

Also, I would like to posit that, in a country where secularization is rapidly rising, in a State that “is less religious than the country overall” as observed in the profile, conspiracies and lies are taken as fact, and where racism, sexism, other isms, homophobia and transphobia are no longer subtle but out in the open, some church leaders see lack of civility as central to the country’s future and The Episcopal Church is no different. As I mentioned in my Ministry Portfolio, statistics show that baptized membership drastically dropped between 2011 and 2017, and average Sunday attendance declined by 15 percent, according to data from The Episcopal Church’s General Convention. Apparently, statistics are worse in Massachusetts as “only 15% look to religion as a source of guidance on right or wrong” as shown in the profile. During the last 24 years here, I have seen some parishes closing, others becoming missions or consolidated with other worshiping communities. It is no-brainer to know that many churches have struggled and continue to struggle to afford clergy. A proven, strategic, and ethical leader who transcends races, classes, gender, etc. and is willing to embrace other cultures and methods is needed to lead this Diocese during this time.

I just celebrated my 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary as your diocesan staff member. I have been to almost all the parishes, missions, and Episcopal organizations of our Diocese. I no longer see things from my own limited perspective. My interaction with many and diverse people I serve with, meet, get to know, and the contact I have with those very people in their joys and sufferings, have opened my eyes. I have come to feel like I am both an outsider and an insider in this Diocese. This situation puts me in a unique position to lead this Diocese. I also believe that this unique position, coupled with the love I have for this Diocese and the yearning to give back to this Diocese that has given me so much are the reasons why I am requesting an opportunity to lead you as we continue the good work we are involved in; while at the same time adjusting and/or changing what needs to be changed.

## When was a time that you faced a challenge or opportunity that called forth your gifts as a strategic leader? Tell us this story.

From my humble beginnings in a war-torn country to my successful ministry in this great Diocese, throughout my life, my gifts have been called for in the midst of challenges more times than I can count. I believe that, because of my gifts as a strategic and ethical leader, I was successful in all my undertakings. I efficiently directed transitions in our Diocese for six plus years during my time as the transition minister. I was able to successfully organize this newly created position, Canon for Immigration and Multicultural Ministries, and so, it is tough for me to decide about a single story to share. However, to cite a few examples of the use of such gifts, I will mention one story that occurred in the 80s, and two that happened recently to illustrate that I have been consistent in utilizing my gifts as a strategic leader and mobilizer.

When I went to a boarding school for secondary education in Rwanda (that was run by the Roman Catholic Church), one of the courses that was required was religion. The plan was that this course would be solely offered within the context of the Roman Catholic tradition. There was no alternative for those who were not members of the Roman Catholic Church. This was going to be my first encounter with this religious tradition as I grew up Presbyterian. It was the same for some of my fellow Protestant classmates. I did not feel ready and comfortable to take that course unless the course was going to be offered within the context that we were familiar with: the Protestant tradition. I felt like if we were to take that course, our own religious traditions/denominations were going to be forgotten all together during the duration of our studies at that school. It goes without saying that I also thought that I wasn't going to do well in that course, and I don't like failures if I could avoid them, and, who does anyway? I politely told the Roman Catholic Priest who was going to teach the course that I was not going to take it and gave reasons. Fortunately, he allowed my fellow Protestant classmates and me to opt out of the class. Afterwards, I coordinated talks with the school leadership, and eventually, the school engaged an Episcopal priest from the closest parish to come and teach us the course of religion. Ultimately, this act led to an opportunity to start a campus ministry for the Protestant students, of which I was the leader until I graduated in 1988. As time went by throughout this period, my fellow students started calling me "pastor" and that kindled in me the call to the ordained ministry which came into fruition twelve years later.

This ministry that we had at our school impressed the Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Shyira (our school was in his See) who invited me to his residence to discuss how to start the same ministry in all boarding schools that were in our region. After graduation, I was honored to be invited by this Bishop to work for him to organize the accounting system of a department called *Service d'Approvisionnement de Ruhengeri* that he had created in order to supply different materials (especially construction materials) to Episcopal organizations and worshipping communities in his diocese. I did very well in this position.



My gifts as a strategic leader continued to grow and expand. Because of that and after the Bishop appointed me as Canon for Immigration and Multicultural Ministries, I was able to successfully establish and organize this office. Various programs and events that I have run are testimonies of this successful leadership. The recent Vigil for Peace in the Land of the Holy one that I called, organized, and successfully coordinated is one of such events. Also, thank you to those who joined us on March 7, 2024, at the pilgrimage to the land of Pocasset Wampanoag Tribe of MA and RI.

Another event that I cannot forget to mention here is the Black Churches Leadership Initiative Conference conducted by the African Descent Ministries of The Episcopal Church that we held here in our Diocese on October 30-November 2, 2023. As I was speaking with The Episcopal Church Canon Missioner for these ministries on a non-related subject in August 2023, he informed me that his office was planning to have this conference starting on October 30. He had several options of dioceses that were considering hosting it. Although I was aware that we would conclude our diocesan convention on October 28, just two days prior, I requested that this conference be held in our diocese as I knew that our black churches would benefit from it greatly. He said that he was willing to explore that idea. He agreed to meet with leaders of those churches virtually as soon as possible so he could explain what the conference would look like and its benefits, and to invite them to see if they would be interested. I secured a date and time for this meeting and the Canon met with us. After that meeting, those black leaders agreed that it was a very important conference and would appreciate having it held here. Our own bishops supported the idea and accepted to sponsor the conference. In a short notice, my team worked closely with the ADM (African Descent Ministries) team to make such a dream become a reality. Our black churches benefited from this effort and will continue to reap the fruits for the next several months as coaches will be assigned to them to further the work they started during the conference.

In summary, I would like to say that when I read the profile, I got the sense that the people of this diocese need a bishop who will help them follow God's dream to become a new thing—not to reclaim the old thing nor to build a more sustainable version of what is there now. Reading between the lines of the profile and knowing this diocese, we need a combination of gifts—strategic and some other gifts. We need a leader who is not only strategic, but also, a leader with vision combined with humility who sees an opportunity, then gathers others around them to build something. This is my Village-building process. Together we will listen and follow God's dream for us to become that new thing that God is creating.

The Diocese of Massachusetts works against sexism, racism, and homophobia, and toward diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Can you describe an experience articulating the social, economic, and political dimensions of the Gospel? In that experience, how did you engage with people with differing views?

The positions I have occupied in this Diocese have exposed me to a number of cases of people and leaders who held differing views from these goals of our Diocese. When working with congregations in transition, our practice is to give a worshipping community one candidate at a time when assisting with the appointment of Priests-in-Charge, Vicars, and Interim Priests. When I served as transition minister, there were times I encountered some resistance in appointing LGBTQ+ priests, women priests, priests of color, and priests of African descent. There have been a multitude of incidence where churches didn't want a priest suggested to them because of their sexual orientation, skin color, sex/gender, and simply how they looked. It was difficult to maneuver in these kinds of situations because I felt I was sending the best candidate over and I also did not want both the priest and congregation to feel uncomfortable and as if they did not have any other choice.

I must admit that throughout my ministry, I encountered many of such cases. I responded differently depending on the situation. Sometimes I succeeded in reaching a good outcome; some other times I did not. For example, there have been cases where I engaged in dialogue with the leader of the congregation, I have had opportunities to explain to them why the diocesan leadership team and I believed that the priest we chose was a very good candidate and that they should interview them and see it for themselves. I've also had to explain in some cases that what they were doing was against the policy of our Diocese. I had also developed some notes for myself about the theological rationale about our policy that I would use whenever a congregation entered into transition. I used those notes during my dialogue with different congregation leaders and, eventually, some accepted to interview the priest. In most cases they would like the candidate and accept the appointment. Patience, listening, persuasion and developing deeper relationships led by the presence of Jesus Christ always help in such situations. Of course it is safe to say that in some other cases the leadership of a congregation would either split about the decision at hand or band together to refuse the appointment and we would agree to disagree and move on.

As Canon for Immigration and Multicultural Ministries, last year I was involved in putting together teams of clergy of color who would serve as panelists to share their experiences of microaggression during clergy development days. I made sure that I had different members at each session to show that this is happening to almost all and not a few. Little did I know that it was going to be an opportunity to engage both clergy of color and white colleagues to learn from

each other and to share their stories and hard truths. We still have a long way to go but I believe the space created in these panels helped us progress.

Having said this, I am honored and privileged to be a member of this diocese which made it possible for me to witness firsthand its work in this area as the diocesan staff since November 2011. I do believe that our commitment to diversity, equity, and equality for that matter, inclusion and belonging is grounded in our commitment to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, our work against sexism, racism, nativism, and homophobia and our desire to become a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community originates from our desire to be faithful to the God who was “reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (*2 Corinthians 5:19*). I have, therefore, developed a strategic way of responding to those differing views. Like I mentioned above, when I was the transition minister, I would speak about this to congregations even before they start the actual transitional work. I would remind them that it was Jesus’ ministry throughout his earthly life. Jesus welcomed strangers (Matthew 25:31-40), he welcomed people right where they were, never belittled, shamed, or degraded people, especially those who seemed to be a mess. He is our example as we join “the movement” he started during his earthly ministry. This has been my message throughout my ministry.

In my day-to-day ministry as Canon for Immigration and Multicultural Ministries and as staff liaison to the Racial Justice Commission, I work with minorities and marginalized communities. I also work with entitled and privileged communities. Throughout this work, it has become clear to me that, although our Diocese is committed to this noble effort, not everyone in the diocese is committed to this vision. When I encounter such views, I consistently speak the truth in love with them. I remind them that the triune God that we serve is Love who freely created the world as God’s outpouring of love. God’s creation is intensely diverse, and God loves everything in it. Even as humanity turns against God and against neighbors, God’s love remains constant. In God’s economy, God’s love surpasses everything. Everyone is invited to Christ.

In my conversation and ministry within the framework of racial justice and multicultural ministries, I am reminded that the gospel resists every form of ideological thinking that blends the will of God with our own interests and agendas. In this context, barriers are broken and politics that divide us are transcended by God’s social contract based on God’s love of all. Indeed, in my daily work, my message to those who hold differing views to our diocesan vision is that the sovereign love of God frees us to confess our complicity in structures of injustice and oppression, to become generous conversation partners, to welcome and learn from those who are different from us, and to take comfort in the knowledge that we love because God first loved us.

## Please share an experience serving in a multicultural and/or multilingual context

When I got to this country, I joined St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Cambridge and was Associate Priest there. This was a completely different culture from where I was coming from and the way of doing church was different. The welcome I received and the acceptance and acknowledgement of all different nationalities that were represented there did not only make me feel comfortable, but it was also very informative for me. Later, when I got licensed and was allowed to officiate in this diocese, I was privileged to be able to supply at many congregations. In some of those congregations, I realized that because I did not speak standard American English and spoke many other different languages, some people were interested to learn more about my culture and my languages. In addition to this interest that some people showed, some other people were, for lack of better words, put off or frustrated with me that they could not always understand my accent. These two types of responses impacted me greatly and were the driving force of me incorporating other cultures in my ministry. By both my exclusion and my inclusion, I caught fire for inclusion.

In 2016 our diocese adopted a new Mission Strategy that included a commitment to "investing in ministries with communities of color and immigrant communities, drawing upon their unique strengths and supporting their health." In response, the diocesan staff position of Canon for Immigration and Multicultural ministries was created. In January 2019, I was honored to be appointed to that position. Since then, I've been enjoying doing this very important and special ministry within the multicultural and multilingual context. I've been privileged to get acquainted with different languages and cultures that are present in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. I vividly remember our first virtual multicultural and liturgical celebration of Epiphany in 2021. My team and I invited people from different backgrounds and cultures to share their experiences of Epiphany in their own contexts and it was very moving. I have made it a mission to figure out how diverse our Diocese is and so far, I have identified more than 15 languages that are spoken by people in our pews in our Diocese. At every event I organize, I try to lift up different languages. When it comes to saying the Creed, I invite audience members to unmute themselves and say it in their vernaculars. It gives the picture of what happened in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost.

All our diocesan events that are organized by the Office of Immigration and Multicultural Ministries, my office, are done within the multicultural and multilingual context. I feel fortunate to be at the helm of these events. Under my leadership, the Ministry of Immigration Partnership (the team that I have carefully put together), crafts beautiful and multicultural liturgies wherein everyone feels that they belong and could express themselves.

In addition to these events and conferences, I also go to different churches every Sunday, and I was honored to serve our Chinese congregation from the COVID-19 outbreak up until June of

2023. Although I speak very few words in Mandarin or Cantonese, I enjoyed serving this congregation. I tried my best to learn a few words to try to connect and understand the congregation; luckily, I had two women interpret for me so as to never fall short. I celebrated Eucharist with them, did pastoral care, and occasionally accompanied some of them to immigration court. I went to their wakes and funerals, and they were there for me when my wife was sick and passed away. We did not speak the same language and grew up on different continents, but because we were all open to each other's culture; we were ready to learn and accommodate. Despite the language barrier we grew to have a relationship and enjoyed the ministry together.

In a nutshell, I would like to conclude by saying that I served in multicultural and/or multicultural context all my time here in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. As described above, the cultural differences while serving in this context added to rather than impeded developing relationships because Christ was in the midst of all.

**THE REV. JEAN BAPTISTE NTAGENGWA, Th.D.**

**Ordained Deacon: 09/17/1995**  
**Ordained into priesthood: 01/12/1997**

**My Personal Ministry Statement**

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My Personal Mission is that of a shared ministry. My objectives are to identify God's people to serve with, and then to resource and develop them as much as I can and support them for our success together. I believe that this type of ministerial approach brings a sense of freedom, creativity, enthusiasm, and ownership of the shared work of growing the Christian community. I believe that, despite many challenges and surprises along the way, through collaboration and communal and prayerful discernment, good risks should be taken as we become more faithful followers of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. We need to protect systems and structures less and engage more in the ministry of reconciliation that Jesus of Nazareth has entrusted to us. In doing so, we need to step out of the boat as Peter did since Jesus is right next to us to reach out His hand and catch us if needed (Matthew 14:29-31).

**EDUCATION**

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY** **Boston, MA**  
 Class of 2008. Doctor of Theology in Philosophy, Theology, & Ethics with major: Ethics and minor: Missions. Dissertation title: "Overcoming Cycles of Oppressions and Violence: A Proposal for Ethical Leadership in Rwanda," published by ProQuest in 2008.

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY DIVINITY SCHOOL** **Cambridge, MA**  
 Class of 2001. Master of Theological Studies (MTS) concentrating in Ethics (Religion and Culture)

**ST. PAUL'S UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE** **Limuru, Kenya**  
 Class of 1998. B.D. Second Class Upper Division Honors, 3% top of my class. Wrote a thesis on "The Role of Traditional –Cum–Christian Religion in The Making of a Rwandese Family."

**ECOLE D'ECONOMIE ET DE COMMERCE DE JANJA** **Ruhengeri, Rwanda**  
 Class of 1988. Certificate/Diploma in Accounting and Economics with an emphasis on Economics.

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

**A. PARISH MINISTRY RELATED EXPERIENCE**

**CANON FOR IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL MINISTRIES** **Episcopal Diocese of MA**  
 January 2019-Present **Boston, MA**  
 Support the development of ministries in congregations with communities of color and with immigrant communities. Work in collaboration with the Regional Canons and other diocesan staff and local leaders to

facilitate our response to wider immigration concerns. Work with Regional Canons in transition matters, especially, among worshipping communities of color. Go to different congregations on Sundays to preach and celebrate Eucharist together. Organize workshops, educational events across the diocese on different immigration and multicultural topics and issues. Work with different attorneys retained by our clerics to assemble files for nonimmigrant religious worker visas for the bishop's signature. Serve on the Compensation and Benefit Committee of the Diocese since 2012. Serve as staff liaison for our Racial Justice Commission since its inception. Report to the Assistant Bishop.

**DIRECTOR OF TRANSITION MINISTRY**

**Episcopal Diocese of MA  
Boston, MA**

November 2012-December 2018

Worked with the Leadership Team of our Diocese and the Canon for Congregations to develop strategies for clergy placement and congregational leadership within the Diocese. Coordinated the clergy transition process for congregations within our Diocese. Oversaw the administrative processes for clergy entering or leaving work in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. Interfaced with the Episcopal Church and with transition ministers from Province I, and around the country for the good of God's ministry in our Diocese and beyond. Worked with different attorneys retained by our clerics to gather files for nonimmigrant religious worker visas for the bishop's signature. Organized educational workshops on Immigration and Church. We invited community members, organizers, lawyers as well as professors to address the audience. Reported to the Canon for Congregations.

**PRIEST-IN-CHARGE**

**St. John's/St. James Episcopal Church  
Roxbury, MA**

August 2011-November 2012

Oversaw the spiritual life and day-to-day activities of the parish. Preached, Celebrated Eucharist, Did pastoral care, baptisms, funerals, etc. Initiated structural, administrative and leadership changes to the extent that, before I left, the parish was in compliance with the diocesan policy in many ways, something which was not the case when I got there. Was Boston Harbor Deanery Assembly Co-convener.

**ASSISTANT PRIEST**

**Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit  
Mattapan, MA**

April 2006-July 31, 2011

Assisted in worship, preaching, pastoral visitations and other priestly duties. Oversaw Confirmation preparations, New Membership Ministry, Pastoral Care Ministry, etc. and attended all meetings at the parish, in the deanery and at the diocesan level. Served on the Diocesan Immigration Task Force. Reported to the Parish Rector.

**PRIEST ASSOCIATE**

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Brockton, MA**

January 2002-April 2006

Assisted in worship and celebrated Eucharist every Sunday until the Vicar was ordained into priesthood (he was a transitional deacon for a few months). Preached, Assisted in Pastoral visitations, and other priestly activities. Started a ministry for the East African Descent community and attended all meetings. Reported to the Vicar.

**PRIEST ASSOCIATE**

**St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
Cambridge, MA**

October 1999-December 2002

Assisted in worship, preaching, pastoral visitations, and other priestly activities. Attended all the meetings and all my children were baptized there. Reported to the Parish Rector.

**ASSISTANT PRIEST/FIELD ED.**

**Church of the Province (Anglican) of Kenya**

1996-July 1999.

**St. Joseph's Ngara Parish-- Nairobi, Kenya**

Led worship services, preached, assisted in pastoral visitations, and participated in social justice advocacy activities. Reported to the Parish Vicar and the College Principal.

**B. NON-PARISH MINISTRY RELATED EXPERIENCE**

**DOJ-ACCREDITED REPRESENTATIVE  
Massachusetts****The Protestant Episcopal Diocese of**

January 8, 2021-Present

**Boston, MA**

Authorized to practice immigration law before the Department of Homeland Security for The Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts and help clients to go through immigration applications. Organize workshops and immigration educational events around the Diocese.

**CO-FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT****Umunara, Inc.**

June 2005-Present

**Chelsea, MA**

Strive not only for the spiritual wellbeing of members of Umunara (phone conference prayer ministry), but also serve as an advocating voice to immigrants. This is done through all possible means, including but not limited to teaching English as a second language and providing orientation to newcomers about the new culture and principles of cultural integration. We also offer them all kinds of help they would need to improve their way of living. Serve as the corporate CEO.

**CASE MANAGER****Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM)**

September 2010-November 2012

**Malden, MA**

Worked with clients to assess their needs and make appropriate referrals for legal services, cash and food assistance, and health care. RIM, an affiliate to Episcopal Migration Ministries, helped resettle refugees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and as a case manager, it was my duty to make this happen. Reported to RIM Executive Director.

**STUDENT ASSISTANT TO THE CIRCULATION DESK****Harvard Divinity School Library**

Oct. 1999-Sept. 2001

**Cambridge, MA**

Assisted patrons with finding materials on computer database. Charged and discharged library materials. Answered questions relating to library policies. Prepared responses to interlibrary loan requests written in French. Reported to the shift supervisor.

**REFUGEE CAMP COORDINATOR.****Anglican Church of Zaïre**

July 1994-Sept 1995

**Bukavu, Zaïre.**

Acted as the spokesperson of refugees to the Zaïrian civil, military, and ecclesiastical authorities. Directed the Kinyarwanda Church activities. Strived for the socio-spiritual welfare of the inhabitants of that camp. Coordinated food distribution, water supply, and other utilities in the Rwandese refugee camp. Reported to the local ecclesiastical authorities and the Bishop Diocesan of Kigeme Diocese, Rwanda.

**FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR.****Episcopal Church of Rwanda**

1992-April 1994

**Kigeme Diocese, Rwanda.**

Strengthened the accounting records of a hospital that had a major debt before I got there due to embezzlement. Balanced the books of that hospital by the time I left. Supervised 15 paramedical staff. Reported to the medical hospital director and to the Bishop Diocesan of Kigeme Diocese, Rwanda.

**BUTARE PROVINCE REGIONAL DELEGATE****Banques Populaire du Rwanda**

1990-1992

**Butare, Rwanda**

Served as customer representative and loan officer in the region. Supervised loan issuance committees of 20 local banks and followed up on loan payments. Chaired meetings of Conseil d'Administration and Conseil de Surveillance of each of the 20 local banks. Supervised 20 managers of local banks. Reported to the regional coordinator and the corporate director.

**ACCOUNTANT****Episcopal Church of Rwanda**

July 1988-March 1989

**Shyira Diocese, Rwanda.**



Initiated and strengthened the accounting system of the Service d'Approvisionnement de Ruhengeri of the diocese. Purchased the hardware and the materials to use in the workshop, supervised the work up to the finishing production, and acted as the salesperson of the final product. Managed the cash of both this service and the diocesan bookstore. Maintained the bookkeeping. Reported to the head of the Service d'Approvisionnement and to the Bishop Diocesan of Shyira Diocese, Rwanda.

**LAY CHAPLAIN AND TEACHER OF PROTESTANT RELIGION** **Republic of Rwanda,**  
**Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education**

Jan. 1989-Aug. 1990

**Musanze, Ruhengeri, Rwanda**

Taught religion and morality in a secondary school: Ecole des Science de Musanze. Reported to the school authorities, the diocesan office of education, and the Director of Education at the National Council of Protestant Churches. Served as a lay chaplain.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

- Helped to organize the African Clergy Caucus Family in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, a voluntary association of which I am currently the Chair.
- Volunteered with the Refugee Immigration Ministry (Malden, MA) for 4 years before I was hired as a case manager. I visited ICE detainees and assisted refugees who speak French. Reported to RIM's Executive Director.
- Volunteered with many other community organizing initiatives in the name of diversity, equity and inclusion.

**SKILLS/PERSONAL/CONTINUING EDUCATION**

**Languages.** Fluent in English, French, Swahili, Kirundi, and Kinyarwanda. Took Intensive Spanish Language Program at Intercultura Centro de Idiomas in Heredia, Costa Rica in January 2019 and took Episcopal Latino Ministries Competency Course at Claremont School of Theology, CA in 2018.

**Computer Proficiency: COMPUSALES SYSTEMS & SERVICES**

**Nairobi, Kenya**

Feb. 1999-May 1999, Certificate in Computer training with a concentration in MS-Windows 95, MS-Word 97, MS-Excel 97, Introduction to Microsoft Access 97 and PageMaker 6.0.

**PUBLICATIONS AND AWARDS**

November 12, 2023: Founder Award from Refugee Immigration Ministry due to the work done for refugees and immigrants.

Author, *Overcoming Cycles of Violence in Rwanda: Ethical Leadership and Ethnic Justice*, Edwin Mellen Press, 2010

**REFERENCES (please see a different page).**