



THE REV. GIDEON LIAM KAVANAUGH POLLACH

March 14, 2024

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts
138 Tremont St
Boston, MA 02111

Dear People of the Diocese of Massachusetts,

Something holy is happening.

Throughout the church, but particularly in your diocese, something new is breaking open in the midst of our church. The Holy Spirit is revitalizing our communities and inviting us into renewed life. Each of us is being called into deeper trust, into deeper fellowship, into deeper discipleship, into deeper faith.

Call it what you will: “pushing out into deeper water,” “casting our nets on the other side,” or “being opened,” all of us are being invited into closer companionship and trust in God. It’s good news, and it’s a beautiful thing.

I am so excited for you, and I’m honored to join you in your mission to follow Jesus, care for creation, and dismantle oppressive systems that keep us from living as Beloved Community while building the future church as we go. As we come to know each other more fully over the coming weeks, I am excited to be a witness with you to all that Christ is doing in our lives and in our church.

Until then, this is what motivates me: I am a father of 3 school-age kids (15, 12, and 10). I am married to my camp sweetheart, Sarah Broaddus Pollach. Our family was incomplete without our beloved Abigael, who came to us from Kenya as a child and, now an adult, has returned to Nairobi. We miss her. I came to our church as a child through my ministry as a church and cathedral chorister. I owe my faith, my life, and my career to the Christ I met through this church. I’ve been a priest for 18 years and I have never been more hopeful and optimistic about what God can do through our communities of faith - because I’ve seen it. I’m a very practical believer committed to living a courageous faith through visible acts of love and service.

Thank you for the honor of accompanying you as a candidate for Bishop in this moment of opportunity. My family and I are praying for you, and I ask your prayers for us as we all discern together what God is up to.

“Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.” (*Eph. 3.20*)

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. Gideon L. K. Pollach

1. Who is Jesus to you?

Jesus is my companion, my prayer partner, and my Lord. Jesus leads me into restored life - the life of the kingdom with the quality of eternity within it. Centering my life on Jesus has been a true and generous gift to me. It inspires me to share the good news of this life with all those around me.

Over the whole course of my life, I have felt myself accompanied by God through Jesus Christ. In times of desperation and fear, I have felt Christ's presence. In times of celebration, I feel Christ alongside me celebrating with me. In grief and loneliness, when I center down into prayer, I find Christ waiting for me - his loving presence a source of restoration, peace, and courage.

I have been a student of Jesus from the earliest days through participation in church - a lot of it- and through dedicated study in adolescence and adulthood. From childhood I knew that Sundays were "the day the Lord hath made," and I duly "rejoiced and was glad in them." As I aged, my participation and awareness in Sunday worship became a source of strength, meaning, and identity in my life. I am buoyed by my identity as a child of God and a citizen of Christ's kingdom. In my daily prayer, I find myself resting in Jesus' company through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' companionship is reassuring and challenging.

Jesus is reassuring because Christ regularly reminds me that I am a beloved child of God, and heir of God's promises through grace without additional perfection or merit of my own. Jesus' companionship is challenging because, resting in God's grace, I am reminded that my life, as every life this side of the Kingdom, still has unredeemed, unhealed, unbalanced parts within an unredeemed imperfect society.

Jesus' healing and restorative invitation invites me to courageously journey onward in practices of humble discipleship, particularly through habits of generosity, compassion, hospitality, and service. Humility reminds me of the unearned privileges I enjoy within society through my identity as a straight cisgender white man and invites me to use those privileges in service of the kingdom. A posture of humility dependably awakens me to the lives and experiences of others, deepening my awareness of our interdependence. This awareness is a gift that consistently leads to greater compassion and solidarity.

Generosity shows itself in my life through giving time, attention, and finances to advancing the reign of God through the church and our partnerships within our community. Service manifests in a particular desire to address the structural and systemic inequities of our society through organized and

strategic action. I find myself inspired by Jesus to address the structural issues of injustice alongside the symptoms of injustice through the habits of faith-based organizing and action.

This life with God in and through Jesus Christ is a gift that consistently leads me to a deeper life, deeper fellowship with others, and an expansive and more generous sense of self-in-community, which is itself modeled on the triune inner life of God.

To call Jesus my Lord, and myself a disciple, is a constant reminder that I am not Jesus, not even a discount Jesus. I am, like all who are made in the image of God, a disciple with particular gifts to offer and graces to enjoy alongside everyone else. Calling Jesus “my Lord and my God” is an act of voluntary humility and submission in the company of the saints to God’s vision of the reign of God that is promised in the fullness of time. Living in this way I have enjoyed glimpses of Christ’s coming Kingdom even amid this present age.

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

I engage with prayerful discernment as an ongoing spiritual discipline, and that has led me to offer myself to ministry as a Bishop within our church. That discernment has been affirmed in a prior search. I have been inspired by strong Bishops in my life who have led the church to a more faithful witness to Christ’s love, and I feel called to join in that ministry of leadership, encouragement, and witness. And, I strongly believe the church needs more good bishops to lead us into a new era of confident growth in mission and discipleship.

Good Episcopal ministry consists of boldly proclaiming the message of God’s grace, collaborating with and convening diocesan governance, witnessing boldly to God’s redeeming work in their diocese, supporting the ambitious work and reconciliation being done in Jesus’ name, and preparing for the future of the church by planting it in the present. Episcopal ministry is not a hierarchy of power but an order to promote collaborative mission in community that promotes agency. The church desperately needs this courageous witness in this moment of deep anxiety as you express so clearly in your profile.

Good bishops encourage. God’s love for us and God’s amazing grace are good news and should inspire joy in the present and hope for the future. Bishops are called to encourage the whole body of the faithful in their vocations and ministries. Bishops are particularly called to care for their clergy so that the clergy can care for their communities and for the welfare of all. I believe I have the experience

of being a positive and generous colleague in ministry and would offer that to the Diocese of Massachusetts.

Positive Episcopal ministry is collaborative. As the primary convenor of diocesan structures, a bishop should model habits of listening, inviting, and amplifying the voice of the Spirit discerned in shared governance. Bishops do not have a singular grasp on the Holy Spirit. They may have an expanded view of the challenges and assets of a diocese, but wisdom and direction are discerned in community by the community with their bishop. I am committed to collaborative leadership in the community - which is a value you say you are seeking in your profile.

Bishops live in continuity with the past and are its trustees and fiduciaries. Bishops are called to keep faith with the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the church as they have received it. They are called to care for the institutional life of the church, to shape it for mission, and to move it onward, to be honest about the church's past sins, but not be paralyzed by the past in the present. Confession, repentance, and amendment of life are part of the vocation of the whole church – bishops included. Bishops need a deep sense of history and a greater hope in God's future promises. I believe I possess both and I believe that your diocese is particularly eager and ready to live into an exciting future for the sake of God's reign.

Bishops are on mission for the future church and called to be apostles of God's future. This includes raising up new leaders, teaching prophetically; promoting new ways of being the church; supporting efforts to build a just, equitable, and fruitful future for the whole of creation; and equipping the baptized for ministry that has an impact in the present and for the future. Massachusetts has a long record of effective and organized ministry in all of these areas. It is a rare diocese with a legacy of impactful ministry in the world that is shaped by our baptismal identity. Similarly, my faith is lived out through concrete actions that make an impact in positive ways. I can imagine that together, with continued guidance from the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of community, the next era of ministry might be transformative. I have witnessed work like this led by transformative bishops in our communion, have practiced these skills in my ministry, and offer them to you.

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

Shortly after arriving on Long Island, I became aware through pastoral experience that the two counties on Long Island lead the state of New York in opioid overdose deaths. Suffolk County has the

most overdose deaths in the state, followed closely by Nassau. Together, the annual number of deaths due to overdoses is staggering.

In partnership with our local Industrial Areas Foundation chapter, Long Island CAN, many clergy and lay leaders decided to do something about it.

We began with a listening campaign. We invited our parishioners to share their stories of encounters with overdose. Some led to death, some led to the hospital, and some were successfully reversed. As we listened, we took note of the many holes in the treatment of and response to opioid overdose on Long Island.

We then met with experts in the field, including experts in the prevention and treatment of opioid dependence, to understand the many and varied pathways to opioid dependence and looked again for places in that cycle where effective intervention was missing.

We then broke into teams to do a strategic analysis of what we had heard. I chaired the intervention and treatment team.

Together with the medical community, our team advocated for changes in the way the state of New York treats opioid dependence, encouraging a balanced behavioral health, mental health, and medical approach that followed the most effective evidence-based practice. This led us to work with our partners in the medical community to advocate for better treatment practices in emergency departments, to train non-medical professionals on overdose reversal using Narcan, and to train clinicians to earn their “X-waiver” needed to treat opioid dependence medically.

A pivotal moment came when our governor at the time was running for re-election. Governor Cuomo wanted to speak in a prominent historically black congregation in Brooklyn. Thanks to our partnerships within that community, and the courageous leadership of our Brooklyn IAF chairs, the Governor was blocked from speaking without first meeting with many leaders to hear our concerns. These included access to affordable owner-occupied housing in New York City, the documented failures of public housing in the downstate region, and our concerns about opioid overdose deaths. That meeting was private.

In that meeting, each of us was invited to raise our concerns with the Governor. It was unnerving.

I raised our concerns about opioid overdose deaths on Long Island and the governor responded dismissively: “Well, pastor, I think we are doing a good job on that.” I don’t know where I got the courage, but I responded: “If you think 1,000 deaths a year per county on Long Island is a good job, Governor, you should think again.” He was thrown. It was clear he didn’t appreciate being stood up to, and yet, somehow, that remark earned his attention and gained some respect.

A relationship was formed. Thanks to pressing the strength of that relationship, our coalition was able to force needed changes in the way the State of New York licenses treatment centers, regulates addiction service providers, makes overdose reversal drugs available, and has led to the establishment of regional 24 crisis centers for response to mental health crises and overdose.

Additionally, the strength of those relationships meant that when COVID-19 descended on the downstate region, our coalition was able to help the governor direct resources to the most impacted regions and establish testing sites in trusted houses of worship. As the pandemic deepened, our coalition was able to influence PPP legislation in the congress to specifically include houses of worship in PPP funding, opening lending windows to churches and nonprofits in the principle banks, and helping to create free wireless broadband internet in public housing projects.

I cannot take singular credit for any of this. But, I was a part of all of it. And, the strategic listening, thinking, planning, and coalition-building skills I developed in those processes continue to serve me well in smaller struggles in the congregation and the Diocese. Using these same skills I have been an important part of founding our diocesan Creation Care Community, our Diocesan reparations efforts, and the establishment of a diocesan Sacred Ground initiative. In the parish, the same approaches have been profitably used to build a meditation garden, renew our stewardship efforts, rebuild our music program, and renew our historic cemetery.

4. 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?

I am a practical theologian. I believe that doing something positive and in relationship with others is a powerful way to expand our understanding of the impacts of sexism, racism, and homophobia. Abstracted from the lives of real people and without reference to experience it is, sadly, too easy for many people to dismiss and diminish the real lived experiences of others. Advocacy, preaching, and speaking out are important, but speech is not action. Whenever it is possible, I work to build strong

inter and cross-cultural relationships of mutuality to broaden my own perspective and the perspective of those in my community that is grounded in practice.

Shortly after I arrived at St. John's in Cold Spring Harbor, I helped to recover and begin to restore a long-neglected burying ground for people of color that the church has owned for over a century.

This burying ground is likely the final resting place to over 200 people of color whose burials there may pre-date the foundation of the church in 1835. However, many of the burials may be associated with the founding families of the church through employment and enslavement. Still, other interments may date to the pre-colonial period as there is evidence that at least one indigenous person may be interred in the burying ground. These details may never be fully known as the graves are uniformly laid out, but informally marked by broken field stones. And, in the case of the suspected indigenous sites, the graves are marked with mounded field stones.

I was sensitive to this burying area as soon as I learned about it. I had previously been a trustee of the African American Cemetery at Fort Ward Park in Alexandria, Virginia, while serving as the chaplain at the Episcopal High School. That work made me aware of the care and trust required to successfully build a coalition to honor these long-neglected and vitally important historic sites.

The recovery of our burying area was a gift from God to the church and to the wider community because it allows us to look deeply at the long history of race in our region and our church's role in that history from the particular perspective as care-takers of the physical evidence of that challenging history. This is a project that otherwise might not be of natural interest to our community given how polarizing and difficult this topic of race and racial history is nationally.

Our work in caring for the burying ground began simply with a clean-up of the trash and leaves that had been dumped on that site for many years. We then built a team of local stakeholders including members of the community descended from those suspected to be buried in the burying ground, local historians and archeologists, principles of the local historical societies, and key leaders of the African-American Historic Designation Council of our town.

As we began this research, we learned that issues of racism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and economic segregation are not theoretical to our community. Rather, by studying our history and becoming aware of the benefits we have received as a congregation through systems of racism and exclusion, we are awakened to our part in the long-standing issues that pervade Long Island and our community in particular. As a result of our work with the burying ground and the community of descendants, we

now actively wrestle with the legacy of historical erasure in which we have participated through our neglect of that sacred site, and we do so because we have the archeological evidence in sight and our relationships with the descendent community makes these concerns real, concrete, and pressing.

These issues can become academic, theoretical, and divorced from reality when discussed as theories or ideas by pundits and academics. As they become more distant, it can get easier and easier for communities like ours to disavow any culpability in them or to ignore the economic barriers to inclusion, diversity, and justice in which we participate and from which we benefit every day. However, because of our stewardship interest in the burying ground, we have already been in relationship with a more diverse community as partners than might naturally occur in our region who share with us their lived experiences. These experiences are not theoretical and cannot be denied. As a result, we have not had significant push-back from our community, but rather, a gradual growth in appreciating the importance of our care in this area.

As recent history continues to prove, it is only a matter of time until issues like systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, and economic inequality are forced into the foreground again and again as systemic as they manifest themselves in the news regularly. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the growth in the Movement for Black Lives, our church was more willing than I might have imagined to participate in widespread conversations about white privilege and systemic racism, largely, I believe, because of the work we had already begun in caring for our burying ground.

Our work as a community in this area continues, and it continues to be a gift from God to us.

5. Please share an experience serving in a multicultural and/or multilingual context:

I have served my whole ministry in multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and diverse contexts - even when the language of worship has not always been multi-lingual.

As a priest associate at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City, I served in a very diverse congregation and on a diverse clergy team. When I began working at Episcopal High School as both the Head Chaplain and the head of service learning, I worked closely with students from around the world. I was the first chaplain in the school's institutional memory to invite expressions of prayer from other faith traditions and other languages to be offered in chapel by adherents and practitioners of non-European and non-Christian traditions.

It was also while I was at the Episcopal High School that I began a relationship with the Churches in Kenya, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti, all of which have been formative for me. I have led worship in remote places around the world in Swahili, Bukusu, Spanish, Kreyol, French, and Hindi - although I am not fluent in any of them.

Now, serving in one of the most diverse dioceses of the Episcopal Church, my work is actively shaped by the gift of diverse languages and cultures present in Long Island. This diversity has been a singular gift to our community.

I have found that the keys to successful multicultural work have been building trusting and trustworthy relationships, and practicing modesty, humility, and careful listening. Whether in Deslandes, Haiti, or Westbury, New York, these postures and practices continue to be an asset.

Here is an example: In the wake of the American withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, many in our community were motivated to find ways to respond to the growing refugee crisis. Together with partners in local synagogues and convened by our dear and close friends at the Islamic Center in Westbury, New York, the largest Muslim house of worship on Long Island, we began an intentional interfaith resettlement effort called "Project Upholding Humanity." Together we resettled hundreds of refugees from around the world into our region including refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Central and South America. This would have been impossible without strong relationships with our ministry partners who come from very different cultures and speak in many languages.

Those same partners have been part of our Lenten study series at St. John's. And, together, we continue to wrestle with the complicated, painful, and emotional reality of the war in Israel and Gaza. Our relationships have broadened our perspectives, and I have learned what it means to be a trusted friend, no matter the situation. That trust is earned through intentional effort: By showing up when called. By following when invited to act. By listening before I speak. By giving when I am asked. By giving what is requested. By never making assumptions.

We cannot learn what it means to be a good partner in multicultural ministry without humility. Humility makes itself known in listening first, acting when asked, and letting others lead.



THE VERY REV. GIDEON LIAM KAVANAUGH POLLACH

CANONICAL
STATUS

Priest, canonically resident in the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island
Licensed to officiate in the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire
Bishop: The Rt. Rev. Lawrence Provenzano

EDUCATION

2003–2006 **The General Theological Seminary** **New York, NY**
M. Div. Cum Laude 2006.

1996–1997 **Thomas J. Watson Foundation** **Providence, RI**
Fellow

Awarded a fellowship to study the practices of English cathedral and college choirs as a visiting scholar at Cambridge University.

1992–1996 **Trinity College** **Hartford, CT**
BA: Music

Completed an independent study on the history and development of English sacred music. Awarded the Helen Loveland Morris Prize for outstanding academic achievement.

1986–1992 **St. Albans School for Boys** **Washington, DC**
Diploma

PROFESSIONAL
EXPERIENCE

2016–Present **St. John's Church** **Cold Spring Harbor, NY**
Rector

Responsible for the pastoral care and liturgical life of a 1,300+ member congregation. Dean of the North Nassau region of the Diocese of Long Island, and leader in ecumenical and interfaith communities as well as community organizing efforts. Reintroduced the church to the life of the diocese, increased stewardship participation, rebuilt Sunday School, reorganized Outreach Ministries, developed online ministries, reduced deficit spending, and aligned governance with best practices.

2008–Present **Episcopal High School** **Alexandria, VA**
Head Chaplain, Department Chair, Theology

Responsible for school-wide chapel services three days a week and Sunday Eucharists, as well as regular Monday evening vespers services. Supervised the work of two assistant chaplains and music team. Coordinated the work of the student vestry, student Service Council, regular Bible Study groups. Organized all community service efforts for the school including international service trips to the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua and Kenya as well as the other various and sundry duties of boarding school life. Redesigned and developed Sophomore Biblical Theology Survey, and 4 new courses in the theology and history departments. Honored with a Faculty Mastership 2009-10, 2011-12, and 2014-15

2013–Present **Emmanuel Church** **Dublin, NH**
Priest in Charge: July

Priest responsible for the worship, mission and education of this summer only parish in the Diocese of New Hampshire for one month each summer.

2006–2008 **St. Bartholomew's Church** **New York, NY**
Associate: Missioner for Young Adults

2005–2006 The Episcopal Church Center New York, NY
Intern, Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
Support for the office of the Presiding Bishop's Deputy for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations.

1999–2003 St. Stephen's Church Richmond, VA
Director of Youth Ministries
Webmaster
Planned and implemented education, outreach, and fellowship programs for middle and high school students for a 3,200-member parish. Designed and published the parish internet presence.

1998–1999 Christ Church Alexandria, VA
Director of Christian Education
Responsible for planning and execution of educational programs for the children, youth and adults of 2,500-member parish.

1997–1998 The Diocese of Virginia Richmond, VA
Bishop's Clerk
Traveling assistant to the Rt. Rev. Peter James Lee, the XIIBishop of Virginia.

FIELD WORK

Chaplain to the Rt. Rev. Catherine Roskam, Bishop Suffragan, Episcopal Diocese of New York
Seminarian, Christ Church, Pelham & Grace, City Island, New York
Seminarian, Christ Church, Manhasset, New York

ACADEMIC HONORS

Bishop Hamilton H. Kellogg Scholar, General Theological Seminary
Awarded to a single candidate within each class with "a history of excellent academic achievement and outstanding demonstrated potential as a theologian or as a leader in parish ministry."

Canterbury Scholar, International Study Centre, Canterbury Cathedral, Summer 2005
The Canterbury Scholars Program attempts to foster relationships between future leaders of the constituent members of the Anglican communion through a common experience of shared prayer, Bible study, and formational events during three shared weeks in the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral. Participants are selected after recommendation by their Bishops and seminary deans and by invitation of the Dean, Chapter and Canons of Canterbury Cathedral.

Participant: "Preaching Excellence Conference," Summer 2005
The Preaching Excellence Program provides opportunities for seminarians nominated by their seminaries for their promising preaching to attend an intensive weeklong course in the summer between their second and third years in order to hone their homiletical skills.

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Member, Chapter of the Cathedral of the Incarnation, Garden City, New York, Member of the Board of the Outreach Initiative Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Provider, Queens, New York, Board Member, Friends of Canterbury Cathedral in the United States; Member, Board of Trustees, Elewana Education Project (Kenya); Former Member, Board of Trustees of the Mercer School of Theology, Former Member Board of Trustees of the East Woods School, Oyster Bay Cove, New York. Chair, Long Island Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods. Presenter, NAES Biennial Conference, Member Association of Anglican Musicians, Member "Gathering of Leaders;" Former Board Member, Mid-Atlantic Episcopal Schools Association; Former Member, Community Advisory Board, WNYC; New York Public Radio; Former Coordinator, The General Convention of the Episcopal Church; Past Chair, Commission on Lay Ministry, Member, Task Force on Ministry, The Diocese of Virginia.