

THE REVEREND JULIA E. WHITWORTH

Rector, Trinity Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

March 12, 2024

Greetings, Beloved of God in the Diocese of Massachusetts!

I am deeply honored to be nominated for election as your 17th bishop.

It is clear that you are a diocese rich with diversity, beauty, faithfulness, and passion for justice. I love that your breadth allows many points of access to the Holy: through parishes, chaplaincies, and schools; mission initiatives, ministries, and partnerships; and religious and intentional communities. As I get to know you, I notice your candor and your vision, your pragmatism and your optimism—qualities which I share. I am excited by the possibility of joining you in the work of equipping congregations for leadership, partnership, and innovation, caring for clergy and laity alike with a sense of God's grace and abundance. Together, we can cultivate the resilience and imagination necessary to be the Church not just of today, but of tomorrow.

My path to this moment was an unusual one, via the theatre and academia as well as church leadership. Rehearsal rooms and classrooms nurtured my creative and collaborative leadership and taught me how to set vision, strategy, and boundaries for the work ahead. As a cathedral canon, I created large, joyful consecrations, confirmations, and diocesan celebrations. This work clarified for me the significant role a bishop and cathedral can play in bringing together a whole diocese to encourage and celebrate common mission, connections, and support. As we face an increasingly cynical secular society, those bonds are more important than ever to strengthen.

As rector of Trinity Church in Indianapolis I now lead a staff, pastor a congregation, and manage a campus with two independent schools and four secular not-for-profits which serve our neighbors lacking food, educational equity, and legal representation. Under my leadership we incubated a new intentional community for young adults and Trinity Haven, the first dedicated residence for LGBTQ+ youth in Indiana. I am passionate about bringing people and institutions together to dream, strategize, and implement new ways to serve our community, as well as identifying and encouraging new leaders, ordained and lay, for the Church.

I was raised in the Diocese of Virginia, in parishes where my parents still worship. There I developed a love for our liturgy and for building community, which undergirded my theatre studies at Dartmouth College and NYU. My experience of 9/11 while in New York City turned my heart back to an earlier call to ordination, and I entered Union Theological Seminary in 2007. I have been married to artist-designer Ray Neufeld for 25 years, and we have three children—Liam (17), Gregory (15), and Grace (12). We have been blessed to raise them in Episcopal churches, schools, and camps where they have been nurtured in the knowledge of the unconditional love of God in Christ.

The Episcopal Church, and the Diocese of Massachusetts specifically, has singular gifts to bring to our world today. Using our charisms of liturgical grace, intellectual inquiry, and deep hospitality, we can offer the Gospel of reconciliation, justice, love, and hope to a world that desperately needs it. We can work on congregational development through intentional strategies of evangelism and invitation—being more visible, telling our stories better— and by showing up

in public arenas as advocates for justice. As a priest here, I regularly work with advocacy groups to support and, if asked, speak up for the marginalized, who are often rendered voiceless in Indiana. I would consider this a privilege and responsibility as bishop in Massachusetts as well.

I am passionate about the Church and about living out the Great Commission of Jesus in joyful community. The people, history, diversity, and beauty of your diocese are thrilling to me. If elected, I would love and lead you well. While there are challenges ahead, through collaboration, prayer, and strategy, with deep listening for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we could do amazing God-filled work together.

I pray for the Diocese of Massachusetts daily and look forward to meeting you soon to see where the Spirit leads us.

Faithfully, with gratitude,

The Rev'd Julia Whitworth

The Reverend Julia E. Whitworth
Essay Questions - Diocese of Massachusetts

1. Who is Jesus to you?

One of my favorite prayers in the Book of Common Prayer is a collect following the prayers of the people, which refers to our Lord God as a compassionate lover of our souls. I understand Jesus to be the expression of that intimate love, of my soul and of every soul. When I ponder ways that I understand, experience, and preach about Jesus, I find that my every expression of Jesus circles back to his love.

Jesus Immanuel, Jesus-with-us, is the one who became incarnate to be closer, ever present to his beloved people. In the incarnation, Jesus makes holy all of human experience, including our suffering. I experience Jesus as a present companion in my times of grief and pain, as the ultimate empath, the ultimate wounded healer. Through his incarnation, he is with us in the fullness of love. Jesus the Redeemer redeems, restores, and revives me from my brokenness through that very love.

Jesus is also my Teacher. He teaches me about forgiveness, freedom from hatred, and he models reconciliation and grace. Regularly I give thanks that Jesus is Jesus, and not me, for I fall short of his example, again and again. But inspired by his love, I will try again, faithfully.

Jesus is our Liberator. He liberates me from sin and liberates us from all oppression. In the fullness of time, I believe that death, evil, and the sin-sick powers of this world will never have the last word, for the last word will always be the Love of God in Jesus Christ. As Jesus is the lover, restorer, redeemer of my soul, my teacher and our liberator, I give this life to him, and all that I have for his mission in the world. Jesus is with me, and in me, and I will serve him and his beloved people all my days.

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

I have been pondering whether the episcopate might be my call for some years. I thrive in big systems, where opportunities to be a servant-leader, problem solver, bridge builder, and instigator for innovation and creativity abound. I also care passionately about the future of the Episcopal Church in this highly divided, vulnerable post-Covid time. I understand that faithful, capable, and adaptive leaders will be necessary for its survival and flourishing. Perhaps, I have wondered, I am among those?

It was not until I encountered the profile for the Diocese of Massachusetts that I felt compelled to discern this question further. I am gladdened by your many strengths and inspired by your diversity, scale, and decentralized model of leadership and resource sharing. The creative organization of your deaneries evokes your and my own deep reverence and care for God's Creation, especially water. And your vast array of ministries, missions, communities, justice initiatives, and interfaith commitments resonates with my passion for a Church which expresses its call to follow Jesus through many different institutional forms and relationships.

After almost eight years as rector of a very complex system, and also service at the diocesan and national church level, I feel well prepared by my primary work: setting strategy, calling and caring for a staff, equipping and empowering leadership bodies to do transformative ministry. I feel my passions align well to your own as a diocese. I too understand the Church as our greatest expression of Christ's Body—we are, indeed, the hands and feet of Christ. I think a lot about how to care for people—clergy and laity alike—in this post-covid moment so we can be rejuvenated for ministry and inspired to live into the Great Commission. I am very interested in mentorship and leadership development for the Church of the future, as well as creative models for partnership in order to ensure our sustainability.

While I have never lived in Eastern Massachusetts, I have spent several beloved seasons of my life in New England. Despite my current address, I am a Northeasterner at heart. I love the history, dynamism, and natural beauty of your region. I am intrigued and inspired by the possibility of so many different parishes and ministries in such a small geographic areas— the likelihood of generative tension and opportunity for collaboration. With the great diversity of your diocese and your congregationalist roots, I understand the role of bishop as, Godwilling, an expression of your unity rather than its instrument. I look forward to learning more about all aspects of your great diocese and exploring whether indeed I might be called to serve with and for you in that role.

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.

The founding of Trinity Haven, the first dedicated residence for unhoused LGBTQ+ youth in our state, was a tremendous achievement for me and my parish. The story of that achievement, however, was complex and called upon significant strategic leadership. Trinity Haven began as an idea for a large, empty house on our church/school campus. Soon after my arrival I assembled a discernment team to determine a mission-aligned use for it, and after a year of engaging with potential secular partners, we determined that our parish was called to meet an under-acknowledged need of unhoused LGBTQ+ youth in our community.

Over that time, I communicated regularly with administrators and board members at our partner school, but adequate attention was not being paid to the parent community and how they might react. After two years of careful research and planning, a small but highly organized group of parents raised concerns about safety for their children. Consciously or not, they voiced their objections using painful stereotypes and dramatic strategies that have long been used against the LGBTQ+ community and other minority groups. Caught back footed by an ensuing mêlée, school leaders informed us that they anticipated devastating financial and relational damage if the project continued on campus. They asked that we cancel or move it. The parish executive committee and I were brokenhearted, but we agreed.

This is where my strengths as a strategic leader became vitally important. The announcement of the change stirred up many emotions on our campus, both at the parish and the school. People were angry, confused, ill informed, disappointed. We were in a crisis. In this fraught moment, it might have been tempting to shut down communications and build walls. Instead, we leaned into relational work. To build trust and transparency, parish leaders and I scheduled listening sessions with parishioners who needed space for emotions and clear truth-telling. We worked with the school to jointly hire a mediator for conversations between school and church constituents. I issued extensive written communications. Additionally, along with other parish and diocesan leaders, I remained present as the church and school worked on our institutional relationship. Throughout it all, I coached parishioners to grow into new roles of leadership—and in turn, I grew by listening to their counsel. Soon, it became clear that incubating Trinity Haven was still a call for our parish, although we no longer had a location for it.

The Spirit was moving. Within months, a large house came on the market, perfectly suited for Trinity Haven's needs. Our church financed its purchase. Soon after, the Lilly Endowment came forward with a significant grant to offset the loan. After several more years of fundraising, renovation, preparation, and pandemic, more than 100 Trinity parishioners, community leaders, and school supporters gathered in 2021 to celebrate the opening of not just one but *two* housing programs for LGBTQ+ youth. The first is the Trinity Haven home, where nine teens and young adults now live in loving community. The second is our Host Homes program, in which local families open their homes to young people in short-term need. I

continue to sit on the board of Trinity Haven, along with several parish and diocesan representatives and LGBTQ+ community members. Through the grace of God and some significant strategic leadership, our parish community grew stronger through this crisis, and church-school harmony has been restored. And every evening, on my way home from church, I pass Trinity Haven and know that young people will sleep there safely each night. Thanks be to God!

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?

Your profile indicates that you seek a Bishop who will work alongside you towards racial justice and who will participate in difficult truth-telling about our Church's complicity in unjust systems. I am not shy about saying what needs to be said, especially when preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

On my very first Sunday I arrived at Trinity Indy, in July 2016, I framed my sermon to respond to two incidents of police brutality against Black victims in Tulsa and Baton Rouge, as well as a riot in Dallas. By looking unflinchingly at the brokenness of the world, I sought to provoke this community I had just joined to understand our call to love God and to love our neighbor as a call to be justice bearers. I went on that summer to ask homiletical questions about White privilege and fragility and preached a sermon entitled "White Church Silent," based on critiques I was witnessing on social media. Several parishioners indicated that they had never heard such messages at this parish, and together we began a Working Group for Social Justice and Racial Reconciliation that continues still. Over the years we have coordinated study groups, participated in Sacred Ground, hosted guest speakers, engaged in advocacy and demonstrations, and organized a Civil Rights Pilgrimage. Through that work, I have been reminded that, as a White cis woman, listening to others with humility and penitence is even more important than speaking in the work of justice building and reconciliation.

During my first years at Trinity, I knew that this primarily progressive church does have members who identify as conservative. When complaints arose that I was "too political" in church, or that they felt left out because "all we talk about is racism," I have often invited them to meet personally, often over coffee or a meal, so they could feel heard, respected, and loved, even through disagreement. To be honest, this dynamic has gotten harder since the murder of George Floyd, the January 6 insurrection, increased gun violence all around us, and of course the Covid-19 pandemic. I have found that those inclined to be divided have stayed divided. Some have left Trinity. However, some have returned as well, which gives me great joy. When I have asked them why, they say it is because Trinity was their home, where they are loved. If I can do nothing else, I pray it is to create a community where people are held to account by the Gospel which calls us to serve and stand for justice AND where people understand that they are loved unconditionally, by Jesus Christ and by me.

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

At St. John the Divine my experience in multilingual contexts revolved particularly around creating multilingual liturgies for a diocese—incorporating Spanish, Mandarin, French, Korean, and ASL in our services. At Trinity Indy the multicultural/multilingual context I have most encountered has been with African families in our congregation. For some time, Trinity has been home to several multigenerational Liberian families, who immigrated to the US decades ago. In recent years I have worked to incorporate them more fully into life at Trinity, serving on vestry, ushering, chalice ministering,

and serving as lectors. There is great beauty hearing the Holy Scriptures read with accents other than very plain Midwestern “American standard” speech. We are the richer for it.

More recently, Trinity has engaged in an intense refugee ministry through Exodus International, a resettlement agency. Our Refugee Welcoming Team has companioned multiple newly arrived families in their immigration journey, including a family of eight from Afghanistan, and a family of six from the Central African Republic (CAR). Although we were careful to let the latter know that they had no obligation to worship with us to receive our support, ultimately they decided to become parishioners at Trinity. My parishioners have surrounded them with care, and I was privileged to baptize all five children (one came along later). Because the parents do not speak English, I conducted the service bilingually, incorporating French so they could be more involved. It was a joyful and loving day.

Whether working with this family, or the one from Afghanistan, the experience has required me and my predominantly White, privileged parishioners to examine carefully our American cultural assumptions in order to better understand the nuanced line between supporter and self-appointed “White savior,” between welcome and assimilation. This has been a careful balance to maintain so that the families can have the independence and self-determination they deserve—the dignity of every human being which we promise to promote at our baptisms. Gained humility, grace, humor, and a broadening set of perspectives on all sides have been the very present fruits of this multicultural/multilingual experience.

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MINISTRY

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH, Indianapolis, IN

Rector

Current

Responsibilities: primary liturgical leadership and preaching; oversight of 19-person staff; development of stewardship, planned giving, and other campaigns; & overall management of complex parish, with campus school and outreach center. Cofounder, Trinity Haven and Trinity Service Corps.

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, New York, NY

Canon for Liturgy and the Arts

2013-2016

Responsibilities: implementing Cathedral and Diocese of NY liturgies; collaborating on Cathedral arts programming; coordinating 65+ volunteers; oversight of LGBTQ justice programs; preaching/pastoral.

ST. JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, West Hartford, CT

2010-2012

Assistant Rector

Responsibilities: Adult and high school formation; pastoral care; shared preaching/pastoral/outreach.

CHURCH OF ST. LUKE-IN-THE-FIELDS, New York, NY

Seminarian

2008-2010

Adult education and catechumenate formation, Sunday School teacher, homilist, Deacon, acolyte.

ST. LUKE'S ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL/THE HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY, New York, NY

Clinical Pastoral Education/Hospital Chaplain

2008

EPISCOPAL RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT, New York, NY

Copywriter, Lenten Devotional Booklet

2006-07

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, New York, NY

2000-2006

Interim Assistant General Manager

2002

Lay ministries: Christmas Play and Passion Drama director; adult formation leader; Prayer Team; lector; Evening Prayer officiant; Benedictine Cell member; 20s/30s Ministry Planning Committee

SEPTEMBER 11 VOLUNTEER

Red Cross 9/11 Victims and Family Services, St. Paul's Chapel Relief Center

2001-2002

GOVERNANCE

GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH, Deputy

2022, 2024

Appointed, 2024 Prayer Book, Liturgy & Music Legislative Committee

DIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS, Executive Council, Comm. for Canons & Constitution

2022-present

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH, Vestry, Chair

2016-present

ST. RICHARD'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Indianapolis, Board of Trustees, Exec. Comm.

2016-present

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EPISCOPAL SCHOOLS, Governing Board

2018-present

TRINITY HAVEN, Indianapolis, Board of Directors

2019-present

SHELLY'S VOICE, LGBTQ+Youth Advocacy Org.

2023-present

ACADEMIA

TISCH SCHOOL OF THE ARTS/NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Associate Teacher — Department of Undergraduate Drama 2005-2006
Adjunct Instructor — Department of Undergraduate Drama 1998-2003, 2007-2008
Directing Mentor — Playwrights Horizons Studio 1998-2003

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE, South Hadley, MA

Visiting Lecturer and Guest Director — Department of Theatre Arts 2003-2005
Symposium Organizer — “Staging Black Femininity,” campus-wide series on race & representation

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS/AMHERST

Visiting Artist/Instructor — Graduate Directing Studio Winter 2005

TDR: THE DRAMA REVIEW

Managing Editor, Assistant Editor 1995-1998

THEATRE

(Selected. Full list available upon request.)

STAGE DIRECTOR

1994-2016

The Fantasticks; Cymbeline; A Midsummer Night's Dream; The Taming of the Shrew; Hamlet; A Winter's Tale; The Tempest; Twelfth Night Opera House Arts, Stonington, ME
Venus (Suzan Lori Parks); *TopGirls* (Carol Churchill) Mount Holyoke College
Belly (Alva Rogers) New Georges Theatre, NYC
A Winter's Tale Shakespeare Project, NYC
bobrauschenbergamerica (Asst. Dir., A. Bogart Dir.) Actors Theatre of Louisville
The Seagull (Asst. Director, M Grief Dir.) Williamstown Theatre Festival

AFFILIATIONS AND TRAININGS: Artistic Advisory Board, Opera House Arts (Stonington, ME); Double Edge Theatre (Ashfield, MA); Gardzienice Theatre Company (Poland); NYC: New Georges Theatre, Women's Project Directors Lab, New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspects, SITI Company

PANELS, PUBLICATIONS, PAPERS (Selected. Full list available upon request.)

- Moderator, Women Bishops & Women Clergy Panels, Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes/ Episcopal Parish Network, 2021, 2022
- Keynote Interview with Ford Foundation CEO Darren Walker, CEEP/EPN, 2021
- Rectors' Pre Conference Gathering, Keynote Response Panel, CEEP/EPN, 2020
- “Translating Theologies of the Body: Physical Theatre Training and Corporate Ideology,” Performance Research, Vol. 8, No.2, 2003
- “‘The Culture is the Body’: Suzuki Training and ‘American Aesthetics’ of Anne Bogart’s SITI Company.” The Journal of American Drama and Theatre, Vol. 14, No. 2, Winter 2002
- “Searching for the Energy of Ancient Greek Theater: Theater Gardzienice Comes to LaMama,” The New York Times, Sunday, January 21, 2001
- “Performing ‘The Rule’: Discipline and Community in Monasticism, in Ensembles” ATHE Conference, July 2004, Toronto, ON
- “Addicted to Exaltation: The Director as Demiurge in the Avantgarde,” Performance Studies International Conference, March 2000, Tempe, AZ

CONTINUING EDUCATION

THRIVING IN MINISTRY/VTS: Clergy Cohort—Rectors with Episcopal Schools, 2020-22

CONSORTIUM FOR ENDOWED EPISCOPAL PARISH/ EPISCOPAL PARISH NETWORK

Large Church Rectors Cohort, 2017-22; Women Clergy Cohort 2017-23 (Co-convener 2021, 2022)

FAITH IN ACTION, Christian Theological Seminary: Conferences 2017, 2018, 2019, Grantee 2019

CENTER FOR CONGREGATIONS, Indianapolis: Models for New Leadership, 2016

TRINITY INSTITUTE, 2015, 2016

EPISCOPAL CHURCH FOUNDATION: *The Barnabas Project*, 2012

YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM: *The Spiritual Vitality Project*, 2012

EDUCATION

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Masters in Divinity, 2010

Recipient, Auburn Theological Seminary Award for Graduate Best Suited for Parish Ministry

Recipient, Armour/Lewis Family Foundation Scholarship (for ordination-bound Episcopalian students)

Member, Resource Team for Spiritual and Ministerial Formation

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY/ TISCH SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

M.A., 1997; M.Phil., 2001; Performance Studies

James M. Amankulour Award for Academic Excellence

MA Thesis: “Word Made Flesh/Flesh Made Word: Of the Body, Gender, and the Sacrament”

Research and Coursework Areas: Ritual Theory/Practice; Religion and Performance; Feminist and

Queer Theory/Performance; Political Theatre and Performance of Identity; Directing Theory, History, and Practice; Historical and Contemporary Avant Garde Theatre/Performance

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, Hanover, NH

A.B., Magna cum Laude, 1993

Majors: Drama (High Honors). English (Honors), Women’s Studies Modified. Education Certificate.

Member, Fire and Skoal Senior Society

Recipient, Barbara Ehrlich Award for Dramatic Excellence, Dartmouth Book Award, National Merit

Scholarship, Tucker Fellowship for Community Service