

## **Mariann Edgar Budde: Answers to Questions**

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***Explain why you feel called to be a bishop, including your discernment process and what you have learned from it. What special gifts underscore your call to the Diocese of Minnesota specifically?***

It would be presumptuous to assert that I feel called to be a bishop. I am confident, however, in the call to enter this intentional stage of discernment.

My experience of call has always involved an internal component of prayer and self-reflection. It also involves listening to the voices of trusted colleagues and friends, as well as taking note of the doors that open and close along the way. The path of discernment is not quick, but I have come to trust the Spirit's way of working in my life.

The internal process of discernment regarding the episcopate began several years ago, as I began to claim my gifts and passion for leadership, the love I have for the Episcopal Church, and the sense of urgency that I feel for its future. I have been consistently drawn to the study of leadership development, spiritual formation, and congregational renewal, and I am inspired by the example of great leaders in many fields.

The external process of discernment also began years ago. I have been invited on more than one occasion to enter a bishop's search process. Clergy often call me for counsel and support. Many have encouraged me to submit an application to the Bishop's Search Committee. I am humbled by their affirmation, and grateful.

Regarding my special gifts for this particular episcopate, I offer my deep love for this Diocese and understanding of its strengths and challenges, yet I have no illusions regarding the nature and the risks of the work ahead. I am a strong leader, and able to encourage the leadership of others. I am passionate about preaching the Gospel and confident in Christ. I bring joy to my work. I am not afraid of change, and I know how to lead people through change. If called, I would give my best vocational years to the spiritual renewal and structural transformation of the Diocese of Minnesota.

***The diaconate is a major pillar of the Diocese of Minnesota. What has been your experience in supporting, encouraging, and making use of the diaconate?***

All of my experience with the permanent diaconate has been in the Diocese of Minnesota. For ten years, I worked with the Rev. Barbara Mraz who first served as deacon for three Region 8 congregations and then exclusively at St. John's. St. John's also supported the Rev. Rex McKee in his discernment to the diaconate, and I was his sponsoring priest. St. John's was an internship site for the Rev. Jill Tollefson. At this time, another member of St. John's is in active discernment regarding the diaconate.

In the diocese, most recently on the Bishop's Advisory Commission on Mission and the Mission Strategy Network, I have worked alongside the Revs. Phil Schaffner, Rex McKee, and Steven Judd. Through Region 8, I have shared ministry with the Revs. Jan Dougherty and Sandra Obarski. What I have learned from our deacons is that while they are called to the same order, each one is utterly unique in how he or she experiences and lives out that call.

Most deacons are notably confident in their call as bridge persons between our church communities and the needs of the larger world.

The diaconal vocation is not easy, in part because of the particular constraints placed upon it. While sacrifice is required in any vocation, I wonder if our current processes serve present and future deacons well. As bishop, I would listen to our deacons and solicit their suggestions. With the Commission on Ministry, I would explore ways for the formation process to be more flexible and accessible for postulants. I would support the possibility for deacons to serve in the congregation from which they were discerned, if that is a mutually affirmed call. In these ways and more, my goal would be to make it possible for more people to hear and respond to the courageous and joyful call to serve as deacon in Christ's church.

***Presently 38 congregations have embraced Total Ministry. What experience have you had with Total Ministry parishes? What would be your ideas to support and strengthen that movement in Minnesota?***

I spent my teenage years in a small Episcopal church where I was taught that all baptized members make up the body of Christ and that each has particular gifts for ministry. In my twenties, I was part of a Catholic Worker Community, a group that lived alongside and served homeless people. While there was a priest among us, we all served as partners in ministry. Working in Honduras for a year during my seminary studies, I was introduced to the concept of locally ordained priests as part of the mission strategy of that diocese. Thus, while I have never served in a Total Ministry congregation, I have felt a kinship to Total Ministry's spiritual philosophy and organizational principles, for they are, at heart, those of Christian discipleship and discernment of gifts.

As rector of St. John's, I needed an approach to ministry that would allow the congregation to grow beyond what I, as one priest, could do or provide. The approach that has served St. John's transformation best, which I learned through studying large congregations, has a great deal in common with Total Ministry, most notably its emphasis on equipping the baptized to assume the core ministries of the church.

As a member of BCMS, I have visited Total Ministry congregations and learned from their leaders. My initial idea to strengthen and support the TM movement in Minnesota is to continue to listen and heed those at the center of it. It's clear that the church canons need to be revised to better serve Total Ministry congregations. Investing in technology and training would facilitate communication across the diocese. As bishop, I would dedicate diocesan staff and resources to Total Ministry and personally facilitate conversations across the dioceses on the similarities between Total Ministry and ministry models that serve large congregations well.

***Our diocese has varied ethnic and cultural components: American Indian, African American, Hmong American, Spanish Speaking Americans, and GLBT. What has been your experience working with these groups? What is your vision to strengthen and support these ministries?***

I have had significant ministries among Spanish speakers and GLBT persons. I helped provide sanctuary for Central American refugees and spent a year doing mission work in

Honduras. I served as a consultant to the diocesan Spanish-speaking mission (El Santo Nino Jesus) and was spiritual director for its former priest. St. John's is a welcoming congregation for gays and lesbians. We offer sacramental blessings of relationships, support gay and lesbian candidates for ordination, and GLBT members exercise ministry throughout the congregation. I am a life-long student of African American history and spirituality. I preach an annual Martin Luther King sermon, highlighting the spiritual lessons of the Civil Rights era, and I was an early supporter of the PEACE Foundation in North Minneapolis. I am a Partner of Holy Apostles, our Hmong congregation. I am inspired by the Native American leaders of this diocese, as they sustain resilient spiritual communities in the harshest of economic environments.

Our ethnic ministries need strong, consistent leadership, sufficient resources, and a healthy relationship to the diocese. Instability and neglect are particularly devastating to ethnic congregations. Our pride in them must be coupled with sustained commitment and different measurements for success than for congregations in the predominant culture. Our GLBT ministries must likewise be sustained and clear, so that there is no doubt we are a church that welcomes all. As bishop, I would actively promote congregational and leadership development in varied ethnic and cultural settings. I would be a steady presence of support, promote relationships between congregations of different cultures, and encourage emerging multi-cultural congregations.

***Describe a previous conflict between several parties that you had been personally involved in and how you went about resolving it? What was the ultimate outcome?***

Midway through a stalled capital campaign, I realized that I needed to assume a greater role among the leadership; simultaneously, a member sought to galvanize opposition to the proposed building expansion. Our parallel efforts came to a head the week prior to that year's annual meeting, when he wrote a letter to the congregation urging them to vote the proposals down and I prepared my sermon for that important day.

I sensed that the congregation was moving from tepid interest to increasing support for the building plans, and momentum was building. Thus, I made the strongest case I could, giving voice to the aspirations of all who felt called to move forward and gently challenged the fears of those in opposition. Later that day, the congregation overwhelmingly approved the building plans. My sermon infuriated the person who had written the letter, and he later accused me of abusing the pulpit to push forward "my agenda." His anger, once directed at all the leadership, was now focused on me.

I did my best to reconcile with him. I asked to meet with him; he refused unless I apologized from the pulpit for my abuse of leadership. Others tried to broker reconciliation between us, but he insisted on the same terms. He remains a member, but to this day, he refuses to acknowledge my presence. When I rise to preach, he leaves the sanctuary. He does not receive the sacraments from my hand. Periodically I try to engage him, but thus far to no avail. I considered a public apology for the sake of reconciliation but realized that it wouldn't be honest. Thus, we have not reconciled, but I do my best to keep the door open. I encourage others to stay in relationship with him. It isn't the outcome I hope for, but the congregation has moved on. I have learned to accept the brokenness of a relationship that is beyond my power alone to heal.

**How would you define the realities facing the Episcopal Church today, and how would you lead the diocese in responding to them?**

The Episcopal Church is one of the great treasures of Christianity, with theological, liturgical, and spiritual gifts of special significance at this juncture in human history. Those who discover the Episcopal Church often say that it restored their faith or even saved their lives, with its message of God's love incarnate in Christ, its appreciation of mystery, celebration of differences, and openness to the truths of other traditions.

What the Episcopal Church lacks in many places, tragically, is the capacity to offer those gifts in a meaningful way. The Diocese of Minnesota is not alone in its precipitous membership decline. Many congregations are stressed and poorly equipped for mission. Our ministry structures and models no longer serve us well. Our resources are dwindling. And many of our members are understandably resistant to change.

Thus, I believe the main issue facing the Episcopal Church today is the need for spiritual renewal and structural transformation of our existing congregations, and the planting of new congregations where the Episcopal Church is under-represented, so that we might unleash the great spiritual potential that is ours. I would lead the diocese in a multi-faceted approach to our challenges, using a wide variety of ministry models (e.g., Total Ministry, Emergent Congregations, Missional Church, Purpose-Driven Church), redirecting resources and energy toward congregational renewal.

The Episcopal Church is not lacking in vision; what we lack are leaders that can transform vision into reality. My role as bishop would be as such a leader and equipper of leaders throughout the Diocese. In this critical work, I would lead close to the ground, working alongside congregations, guiding people through slow, steady processes of change.