

Seeking a Shepherd for the Diocese of Oregon

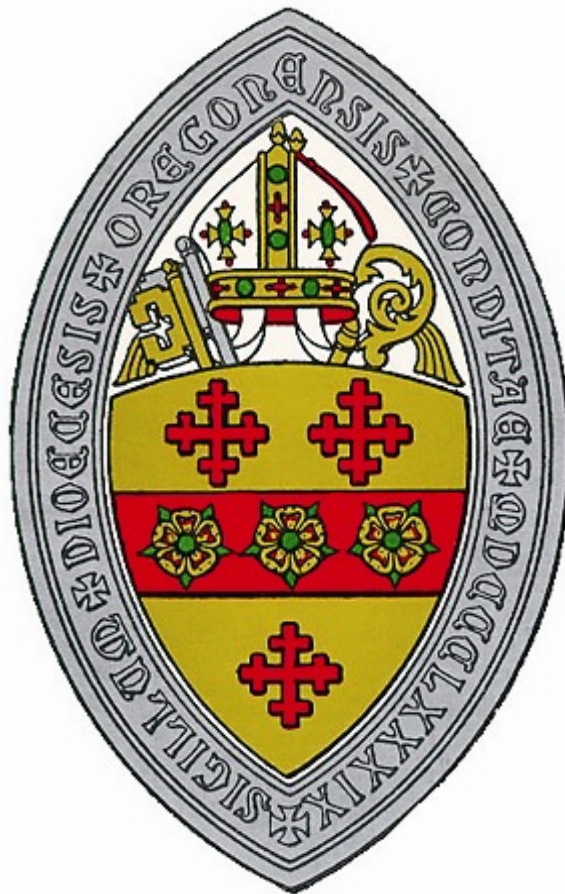


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Oregon Education Sub-Committee Bishop's Search Committee

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We are indebted to the Diocese of California, the Diocese of Virginia, and the Diocese of Southern Virginia for use of their materials, which have been adapted for use in the Diocese of Oregon. If you have any questions or need assistance in implementing this curriculum in your congregation, please do not hesitate to contact Barbara Ross (Missioner for Christian Education and Lifelong Formation) at 503-636-5613 or barbarar@diocese-oregon.org.

Revisions made May 29, 2009

Overview

The search for a new bishop offers the Diocese of Oregon a unique opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a bishop in this time and place. This curriculum is intended to equip delegates, and those who elect them, to make wise and informed decisions. It is an invitation for all to study, learn, and pray together about what we desire in a bishop, and to consider what issues might engage us and our new bishop in the future. The following aspects of our suggested curriculum support this overview:

- The curriculum is designed to be delivered in four sessions; however, each session is designed to stand alone.
- Opening prayers are taken from the Book of Common Prayer (BCP).
- The closing prayers are written by the chaplain to the Search Committee Diocese of Southern Virginia.
- For the lessons for the Ordination of a Bishop, the prayers are taken from the Book of Common Prayer and are reflective of the task of seeking a new bishop.
- Enrichment materials and resources are included at the end of each session. The use of these materials will require additional preparation and discussion time, and is left to the discretion of the congregational leadership.
- Inserts are provided for use in the Sunday bulletin. They may be used in any sequence at any time and might be helpful in encouraging conversation and attendance at the sessions.
- Lessons for children are designed for ages 6 to 12 and may be adapted to suit individual parish settings. Children's curriculum and intergenerational curriculum are offered in separate documents.

We encourage every congregation to convene a meeting of the delegates to review these materials, the Diocesan Profile, and the relevant canons before the Diocese assembles on November 20, 2009, for its episcopal election.

Each of the four sessions follows a similar suggested format, as follows. Some Bibles and copies of the Book of Common Prayer should be provided. Each session contains a "Leader's Guide" and the "Session" for participants. The session should be reproduced and distributed to participants. Times are approximate and must be adjusted to allow for gathering, housekeeping, etc.

Session Format

1. Theme and Overview
Each session has a theme, drawn from Scripture, which is chosen to illuminate the lessons and learning objectives as outlined in the session overview.
2. Opening Collect (< 5 minutes)
Each session opens with a collect or prayer from the Book of Common Prayer that highlights the issues in which we hope people will engage. The collects are taken from the Propers for Various Occasions for a Pastor, a Missionary, a Teacher, and a Theologian. For the lessons for the Ordination of a Bishop, the prayers are taken from the Ordination of a Bishop.
3. Icebreaker (10 minutes)
Each session includes an opportunity for the participants to introduce themselves and respond briefly to a question that brings them into personal dialogue with the session theme.
4. Scripture Selections (5 minutes)
Each lesson uses readings from the lectionary for Various Occasions from the Book of Common Prayer. The lessons chosen are of a Missionary, of a Pastor, of a Teacher, and of a Theologian, and the ordination service for a bishop. Each set of readings highlights verses that encourage biblical reflection on the themes of the session. The readings should be read aloud slowly. If time permits, parishes are urged to reflect upon the complete lessons appointed for each session.
5. Optional elements. Since parishes may have limited time for these sessions, one or both of the following options may be used:
 - A. Encountering Saints (15 minutes)
Each session includes two biographies of bishops drawn from *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (LFF). One is an historic bishop and one is an American bishop, selected because their ministries—within the constraints of their time and place—deepen our understanding of the episcopacy and the theme of the session. Facilitators or group members may read the LFF biographies and discuss them, using the included questions as a beginning point. The final session includes a mock election with these eight saints as “candidates”.
 - B. Recognizing Choices (15 minutes)
Each session includes content materials drawn from historic and contemporary sources designed to deepen the knowledge of members of the Diocese about the episcopacy itself, about our selection process, about what spiritual work lies underneath the calling of a bishop, and about what reflection all members of the Diocese should do in the time of expectation.
6. Insights and Implications (10 minutes)
Each session includes summary discussion questions that can be used to help the delegates in framing their particular discernment as the time for the election draws near. Newsprint easels at each session would be helpful in recording these insights, and this information should be passed on to the delegates. The Missioner for Christian Education and Lifelong Formation and the Education Sub-Committee of the Bishop’s Search Committee also seek feedback on this curriculum and any views, concerns, and hopes that might grow out of these discussions.
7. Closing Prayers (< 5 minutes)

Resource for Worship: Bulletin Inserts

Reprint any or all of the inserts in your Sunday bulletin or as a special mailing, with a reminder to attend the class at the scheduled time or simply as a way to encourage awareness of and prayer for the bishop search process, whether or not the session will be offered as a stand-alone class. Bulletin Inserts begin on page 30.

1

Leader's Guide for Session One

When God Makes All Things New, Will We Be Ready?

Overview

Change very often begins with anxiety. History is full of diverse bishops who have guided the Church through both tranquil and troubled times. Often beginning times are also ending times. When things are changing all around us, the natural response is the wish to be saved. As we seek a new bishop, we are invited to first face our anxieties about change before being called forth to construct a positive response.

Opening Collect

Prayer 12 For a Church Convention or Meeting (BCP, p. 818)

Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Icebreaker

For a small group (fewer than 12): Each person introduces him/herself by name and mentions one thing he/she does to prepare mind, body, or spirit for a change.

For a large group (12 or more): Ask people to form pairs, introduce themselves to each other, and mention one thing they do when they are preparing themselves for change. As time permits, ask the whole group to debrief any themes they identify in common.

Scripture Selections

Isaiah 52:7-10

Focus: verse 9: “Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.”

Psalm 96

Focus: verse 10: “Tell it out among the nations: ‘The Lord is King! He has made the world so firm that it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.’”

Acts 1:1-9

Focus: verse 8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to all the ends of the Earth.”

Luke 10:1-9

Focus: verse 3: “Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.”

Questions for Discussion

In what ways do these readings acknowledge the anxiety that God's people have associated with change?

In what ways do the readings suggest that God equips us to embrace change?

Option A: Encountering Saints

This week we meet two bishops whose ministries were to maintain the center in times of conflict:

Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 397 (LFF, p. 98; see Session One)

Phillips Brooks, Bishop of Massachusetts, 1893 (LFF, p. 138; see Session One)

Questions for Discussion

What, in your view, are the qualities that set these men apart as leaders?

What qualities would be helpful to a bishop doing this work in the Diocese of Oregon today?

The word “orthodoxy” is used all the time. What does this word mean to you?

Option B: Recognizing Choices

Read the questions for The Examination of a bishop (BCP, pp. 517-18; see Session One).

Ask participants to underline the tasks that they think are most important.

What does it mean to “guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church”?

How have you experienced a bishop as a teacher? As a provider of sacraments? As a leader in the councils of the Church?

What place would you say the bishop takes in your faith community? In the larger community?

Insights and Implications

What have we learned that we would like the clergy and lay delegates who will elect the next bishop to know? This information should be compiled and distributed to the parish delegates at the end of all sessions.

Closing Prayer

O God our strength, you set before us opportunities and challenges and give us a variety of gifts with which to meet them: Open our eyes to see your will for the ordering of our common life as we seek a new Bishop; grant us patience and a listening heart; fill us with your peace; and lead us together as one people to a shepherd who will guide us on a path of healing and renewal till we and all the world reflect your love. *Amen.*

Additional Resources for Session 1

Read the biographies of Ambrose and Phillips Brooks in *Brightest and Best* by Sam Portaro (Cowley, 2001).

Both Ambrose and Brooks were renowned preachers. Ambrose worked with Scriptural characters to weave contemporary stories and questions of faith. Brooks used Scripture to help his hearers understand how to recognize such good things as peace. Read about Ambrose at <http://www2.evansville.edu/ecoleweb/articles/ambrose.html> and Brooks at <http://www.sermonmall.com/SampleMall/98/dec98/120698r.html>. (requires user setup and password)

Do they speak to you?

Turn to the Catechism (BCP, p. 855) and read the paragraph on the ministry of a bishop.

1

Session One

When God Makes All Things New, Will We Be Ready?

Encountering Saints

Ambrose

Bishop of Milan, 397

(Lesser Feasts and Fasts, p. 98)

Ambrose was the son of a Roman governor in Gaul, and in 373 he himself was governor in Upper Italy. Though brought up in a Christian family, Ambrose had not been baptized. He became involved in the election of a bishop of Milan only as mediator between the battling factions of Arians and orthodox Christians. The election was important, because the victorious party would control the powerful see of Milan. Ambrose exhorted the nearly riotous mob to keep the peace and to obey the law. Suddenly both sides raised the cry, “Ambrose shall be our bishop!” He protested, but the people persisted. Hastily baptized, he was ordained bishop on December 7, 373. Ambrose rapidly won renown as a defender of orthodoxy against Arianism and as a statesman of the Church. He was also a skillful hymnodist. He introduced antiphonal chanting to enrich the liturgy, and wrote straightforward, practical discourses to educate his people in such matters of doctrine as Baptism, the Trinity, the Eucharist, and the Person of Christ. His persuasive preaching was an important factor in the conversion of Augustine of Hippo.

Ambrose did not fear to rebuke emperors, including the hotheaded Theodosius, whom he forced to do public penance for the slaughter of several thousand citizens of Salonkia. About baptism, Ambrose wrote: “after the font (of baptism), the Holy Spirit is poured on you, 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and strength, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, and the spirit of holy fear’” (De Sacramentis 3.8).

A meditation attributed to him includes these words: “Lord Jesus Christ, you are for me medicine when I am sick; you are my strength when I need help; you are life itself when I fear death; you are the way I long for heaven; you are the light when all is dark; you are my food when I need nourishment.”

Among hymns attributed to Ambrose are “The eternal gifts to Christ the King,” “O Splendor of God's glory bright,” and a series of hymns for the Little Hours.

Phillips Brooks
Bishop of Massachusetts, 1893
(LFF, p. 138)

Writing about Phillips Brooks in 1930, William Lawrence, who was a young man who had known him, began, "Phillips Brooks was a leader of youth...; his was the spirit of adventure, in thought, life, and faith." To many who know him only as the author of "O little town of Bethlehem," this part of Brooks' life and influence is little known.

Born in Boston in 1835, Phillips Brooks began his ministry in Philadelphia. His impressive personality and his eloquence immediately attracted attention. After ten years in Philadelphia, he returned to Boston as rector of Trinity Church, which was destroyed in the Boston fire three years later. It's a tribute to Brooks' preaching, character, and leadership that in four years of worshiping in temporary and bare surroundings, the congregation grew and flourished. The new Trinity Church was a daring architectural enterprise for its day, with its altar placed in the center of the chancel, "a symbol of unity; God and man and all of God's creation," and was a symbol of Brooks' vision, a fitting setting for the greatest preacher of the century.

This reputation has never been challenged. His sermons have passages that still grasp the reader, though they do not convey the warmth and vitality which so impressed his hearers. James Bryce wrote, "There was no sign of art about his preaching, no touch of self-consciousness. He spoke to the audience as a man might speak to his friend, pouring forth with swift, yet quiet and seldom impassioned earnestness, the thoughts of his singularly pure and loft spirit."

Brooks ministered with tenderness, understanding, and warm friendliness. He inspired men to enter the ministry, and taught many of them the art of preaching. He was conservative and orthodox in his theology, but his generosity of heart led him to be regarded as the leader of the liberal circles of the Church.

In 1891, he was elected Bishop of Massachusetts. The force of his personality and preaching, together with his deep devotion and loyalty, provided the spiritual leadership needed for the time. His constant concern was to turn his hearers' thoughts to the revelations of God. "Whatever happens," he wrote, "always remember the mysterious richness of human nature and the nearness of God to each one of us."

The Examination

At the Ordination of a Bishop

(Book of Common Prayer, pp. 517-518)

My sister/brother, the people have chosen you and have affirmed their trust in you by acclaiming your election. A bishop in God's holy Church is called to be one with the apostles in proclaiming Christ's resurrection and interpreting the Gospel, and to testify to Christ's sovereignty as Lord of lords and King of kings.

You are called to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church; to celebrate and to provide for the administration of the sacraments of the New Covenant; to ordain priests and deacons and to join in ordaining bishops; and to be in all things a faithful pastor and wholesome example for the entire flock of Christ.

With your fellow bishops you will share in the leadership of the Church throughout the world. Your heritage is the faith of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and those of every generation who have looked to God in hope. Your joy will be to follow him who came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. Are you persuaded that God has called you to the office of bishop?

Answer: I am so persuaded.

The following questions are then addressed to the bishop-elect by one or more of the other bishops.

Bishop: Will you accept this call and fulfill this trust in obedience to Christ?

Answer: I will obey Christ, and will serve in his name.

Bishop: Will you be faithful in prayer, and in the study of Holy Scripture, that you may have the mind of Christ?

Answer: I will, for he is my help.

Bishop: Will you boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people?

Answer: I will, in the power of the Spirit.

Bishop: As a chief priest and pastor, will you encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries, nourish them from the riches of God's grace, pray for them without ceasing, and celebrate with them the sacraments of our redemption?

Answer: I will, in the name of Christ, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

Bishop: Will you guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church?

Answer: I will, for the love of God.

Bishop: Will you share with your fellow bishops in the government of the whole Church; will you sustain your fellow presbyters and take counsel with them; will you guide and strengthen the deacons and all others who minister in the Church?

Answer: I will, by the grace given me.

Bishop: Will you be merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper?

Answer: I will, for the sake of Christ Jesus.

Closing Prayer

O God our strength, you set before us opportunities and challenges and give us a variety of gifts with which to meet them: Open our eyes to see your will for the ordering of our common life as we seek a new Bishop; grant us patience and a listening heart; fill us with your peace; and lead us together as one people to a shepherd who will guide us on a path of healing and renewal till we and all the world reflect your love. *Amen.*

Going Deeper: Optional Homework for Session One

Read the biographies of Ambrose and Phillips Brooks in *Brightest and Best* by Sam Portaro (Cowley, 2001).

Both Ambrose and Brooks were renowned preachers. Ambrose worked with Scriptural characters to weave contemporary stories and questions of faith. Brooks used Scripture to help his hearers understand how to recognize such good things as peace. Read about Ambrose at <http://www2.evansville.edu/ecoleweb/articles/ambrose.html> and Brooks at <http://www.sermonmall.com/SampleMall/98/dec98/120698r.html> (requires user setup and password)

Do they speak to you?

Turn to the Catechism (BCP, p. 855) and read the paragraph on the ministry of a bishop.

2

Leader's Guide for Session Two

When God Calls, Will We be Listening?

Overview

Prophets in the Bible were believed to be inspired by the Word of God. They appeared when people needed divine help to navigate the often unknown paths of change. The search for the new bishop involves an articulation of what we are looking for and how we will recognize what we are looking for when we see it. Calling a religious leader involves a whole community in listening for the voice of God. In this session we will explore the call to Christian leadership, and consider its implications for the vocation of a bishop in our community of faith. We ground our learning in the themes of pastor and shepherding, [*meet two bishops whose exercise of ministry took place within a context of political upheaval and change*], and consider what our tradition tells us about the role and responsibilities of a bishop.

Opening Collect

Collect of a Pastor (BCP, p. 248)

O God, our heavenly Father, who raised up your faithful servant to be a (bishop and) pastor in your Church and to feed your flock: Give abundantly to all pastors the gifts of your Holy Spirit, that they may minister in your household as true servants of Christ and stewards of your divine mysteries; through Jesus Christ your Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

-or-

Collect for the Consecration of Samuel Seabury (LFF, Nov. 14)

We give you thanks, O Lord our God, for your goodness in bestowing upon this Church the gift of the episcopate, which we celebrate in the remembrance of the consecration of Samuel Seabury; and we pray that, joined together in unity with our bishops, and nourished by your holy Sacraments, we may proclaim the Gospel of redemption with apostolic zeal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Icebreaker

For a small group (fewer than 12): Each person introduces him/herself by name and names a person who has been a messenger or played a prophetic role in his/her life.

For a larger group (12 or more): Ask people to form pairs, introduce themselves to each other, and name a person who has played a prophetic role in their lives.

Scripture Selections

Ezekiel 34:11-16

Focus: verse 16a: “I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.”

Psalms 23

Focus: verse 3: “He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his name’s sake.”

1 Peter 5:1-4

Focus: verse 2: “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.”

John 21:15-17

Focus: verse 16: “Again Jesus said, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me?’ He answered, ‘Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.’ Jesus said, ‘Take care of my sheep.’”

Questions for Discussion

How do these passages relate to us as we seek to discern Christian leaders?

How do these passages relate to the bishop we seek?

Option A: Encountering Saints

This week we meet two bishops whose ministries held the Church together in the face of possible dissolution:

Leo the Great (LFF, p. 424; see Session Two)

Samuel Seabury (LFF, p. 431; see Session Two)

Questions for Discussion

What, in your view, are the qualities that set these men apart as leaders?

Both of these bishops worked during times of political upheaval when the Church and State, though separate, clearly had a great deal of interaction. How did these bishops interact with the state/society/other churches? What does that teach us about how a bishop might function for our diocese today?

Option B: Recognizing Choices

Read and consider the following definitions of a bishop: (see Session Two)

From *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*, ed. D. S. Armentrout and R. B. Slocum (2000)

From *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. E. A. Livingstone (1997)

From the Catechism (BCP, p. 855)

Questions for Discussion

On newsprint, list the qualities in these definitions that seem most relevant.

In what ways do these definitions of bishop match your experience of bishops in the Church? In what ways do they not match your experience?

If you were new to the Church, what questions might these definitions raise? (Record on newsprint.)

Insights and Implications

What have we learned that we would like those who will elect the next bishop to know?

Closing Prayers

O God, the source of love and light, you guide us through narrow places, teaching us through your Son to return good for evil and to love and serve you by loving and serving our neighbor. Grant us, as we seek a Bishop for this diocese, a vision of your kingdom, that with clarity of purpose and singleness of heart we may welcome a shepherd who will lead us towards its fulfillment. As we journey together, deepen our charity towards one another, empower our forgiveness, and increase our joy, for your tender mercy's sake. *Amen.*

Conclude by reading together the Collect for Ordinations (BCP), p. 515; (see Session Two).

Additional Resources

Read the biographies of Leo the Great and Samuel Seabury in *Brightest and Best*, by Sam Portaro (Cowley, 2001).

Read the definition of “episcopate” in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings et al. (2000).

Read the Diocesan Profile at <http://www.diocese-oregon.org>

2

Session Two

When God Calls, Will We Be Listening?

Encountering Saints

Leo the Great
Bishop of Rome, 461
(LFF, p. 424)

When Leo was born, around the year 400, the Western Roman Empire was almost in shambles. Weakened by barbarian invasions and by a totally inefficient economic and political system, the structure that had been carefully built by Augustus had become a chaos of internal warfare, subversion, and corruption.

The social and political situation notwithstanding, Leo received a good education, and was ordained deacon, with the responsibility of looking after Church possessions, managing the grain dole, and generally administering finances. He won considerable respect for his abilities, and a contemporary officer, Cassian, described him as “the ornament of the Roman Church and the divine ministry.”

In 440, Leo was unanimously elected Pope, despite the fact that he was absent at the time on a mission in Gaul. His ability as a preacher shows clearly in the 96 sermons still extant, in which he expounds doctrine, encourages almsgiving, and deals with various heresies, including the Pelagian and the Manichean systems.

In Gaul, Africa, and Spain, Leo's strong hand was felt as he issued orders to limit the powers of one over-presumptuous bishop, confirmed the rights of another bishop over his vicars, and selected candidates for holy orders. Leo's letter to the Council of Chalcedon in 451 dealt so effectively with the doctrine of the human and divine natures of the One Person of Christ that the assembled bishops declared, “Peter has spoken by Leo,” and affirmed his definition as orthodox teaching. (See p. 864 of the Prayer Book.)

With similar strength of spirit and wisdom, Leo negotiated with Attila when the Huns were about to sack Rome. He persuaded them to withdraw from Italy and to accept an annual tribute. Three years later, Genseric led the Vandals against Rome. Again, Leo negotiated. Unable to prevent pillaging by the barbarians, he did dissuade them from burning the city and slaughtering its inhabitants. Thereafter, he worked to repair the damage, to replace the holy vessels in the desecrated churches, and to restore the morale of the Roman people.

Samuel Seabury
First American Bishop, 1784
(LFF, p. 430)

Samuel Seabury, the first Bishop of the Episcopal Church, was born in Groton, Connecticut, on November 30, 1729. After ordination in England in 1753, he was assigned, as a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, to Christ Church, New Brunswick, New Jersey. In 1757, he became rector of Grace Church, Jamaica, Long Island, and rector of St. Peter's, Westchester County in 1766. During the American Revolution, he remained loyal to the British Crown, and served as a chaplain in the British army.

After the Revolution, a secret meeting of Connecticut clergymen in Woodbury on March 25, 1783, named Seabury or the Rev. Jeremiah Leaming, whoever would be able or willing, to seek episcopal consecration in England. Leaming declined; Seabury accepted, and sailed for England. After a year of negotiation, Seabury found it impossible to obtain episcopal orders from the Church of England because, as an American citizen, he could not swear allegiance to the Crown. He then turned to the non-juring bishops of the Episcopal Church in Scotland. On November 14, 1784, in Aberdeen, he was consecrated by the Bishop and the Bishop Coadjutor of Aberdeen and the Bishop of Ross and Caithness in the presence of a number of the clergy and laity.

On his return home, Seabury was recognized as Bishop of Connecticut in Convocation on August 3, 1785, at Middletown. With Bishop William White, he was active in the organization of the Episcopal Church at the General Convention of 1789. With the support of William Smith of Maryland, William Smith of Rhode Island, William White of Pennsylvania, and Samuel Parker of Boston, Seabury kept his promise, made in a concordat with the Scottish bishops, to persuade the American Church to adopt the Scottish form for the celebration of the Eucharist. In 1790, Seabury became responsible for episcopal oversight of the churches in Rhode Island; and at the General Convention of 1792, he participated in the first consecration of a bishop on American soil, that of John Claggett of Maryland. Seabury died on February 25, 1796, and is buried beneath St. James' Church, New London.

Defining “Bishop”

An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, ed. D. S. Armentrout and R.B. Slocum (2000)

Bishop. One of the three orders of ordained ministers in the Church, bishops are charged with the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the Church. Bishops represent Christ and his Church, and they are called to provide Christian leadership for their dioceses. Diocesan bishops hold jurisdiction in their dioceses, with particular responsibility for the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the church. Bishops serve as the focus of diocesan unity and for the unity of their dioceses with the wider Church.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed E. A. Livingstone (1997)

Bishop. The highest order of ministers in the Christian Church. The word is an Anglo- Saxon corruption of episcopos. In Catholic Christendom (including the Anglican Communion) bishops are the chief pastors of the Church, who individually form a center of unity in their dioceses, and together, by their sharing in the episcopal college, embody the unity of the Church, and by their consecration and power to confer Orders, witness to the succession of the Church throughout the ages.

The chief duties of a modern bishop in the western Church consist of the general oversight of (his/her) diocese, the leadership of (his/her) clergy and laity in the proclamation of the Gospel, and administering those Sacraments which (he/she) alone is competent to confer (Confirmation and Ordination). The beginnings of the episcopate in early times have long been debated, partly because of the inconclusiveness of the New Testament evidence by itself, partly on account of its relevance to the many contemporary forms of Church government. It seems at first that the terms “episcopos” and “presbyter” were used interchangeably (cf., e.g., Acts 20:17 and 20:28). But for St. Ignatius (early second century), bishops, presbyters, and deacons are already quite distinct. On the other hand, elsewhere, notably in Egypt, the threefold ministry does not seem to have established itself until considerably later. By the middle of the second century all the leading centers of Christianity would appear to have had their bishops, and from then on until the Reformation, Christianity was organized on an episcopal basis everywhere.

From the Catechism (BCP, p. 855)

Q. What is the ministry of a bishop?

A. The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; 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.

Closing Prayer

O God, the source of love and light, you guide us through narrow places, teaching us through your Son to return good for evil and to love and serve you by loving and serving our neighbor: Grant us, as we seek a Bishop for this diocese, a vision of your kingdom, that with clarity of purpose and singleness of heart we may welcome a shepherd who will lead us towards its fulfillment. As we journey together, deepen our charity towards one another, empower our forgiveness, and increase our joy, for your tender mercy's sake. *Amen.*

Going Deeper: Optional Homework for Session Two

Read the biographies of Leo the Great and Samuel Seabury in *Brightest and Best*, by Sam Portaro (Cowley, 2001).

Read the definition of “episcopate” in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings et al. (2000).

Read the Diocesan Profile at <http://www.diocese-oregon.org>

3

Leader's Guide for Session Three

Are We Open to New Possibilities?

Overview

When the anxiety of change has been named and the direction that change might take has been explored, all kinds of things can happen.

New possibilities arise.

New ways of being together suddenly seem possible.

This is the time to begin to imagine what life under a new bishop might really look like.

Opening Collect

Collect of a Theologian and Teacher (BCP, p. 248)

O God, by your Holy Spirit you give to some the word of wisdom, to others the word of knowledge, and to others the word of faith: We praise your Name for the gifts of grace manifested in your servants called to be theologians and teachers, and we pray that your Church may never be destitute of such gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

-or-

For the Ministry (BCP, p. 256)

O God, you led your holy apostles to ordain ministers in every place; Grant that your Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may choose suitable persons for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and may uphold them in their work for the extension of your kingdom; through him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Icebreaker

For a small group (fewer than 12): Each person introduces him/herself by name and states a dream or vision he/she has for the Church.

For a larger group (12 or more): Ask people to form pairs, introduce themselves to each other, state a dream or vision they have for the Church, and/or recall a time when they were inspired or changed.

Scripture Selections

Proverbs 3:1-7

Focus: verse 5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge God and he will make your paths straight.”

Psalms 119: 89-96

Focus: verse 90: “Your faithfulness remains from one generation to another; you established the earth, and it abides.”

1 Corinthians 3:5-11

Focus: verse 6-7: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”

John 17:18-23

Focus: verse 20-21: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Questions for Discussion

How do these passages relate to us as we seek to discern Christian leaders?

How do these passages relate to the bishop we seek?

Option A: Encountering Saints

This week we meet two bishops whose ministries were distinguished by their pastoral skills:

Gregory the Great (LFF, p. 183; see Session Three)

William White (LFF, p. 291; see Session Three)

Questions for Discussion

What, in your view, are the qualities that set these men apart as leaders?

What visions of Church might have been the guiding inspiration for their episcopacies?

Option B: Recognizing Choices

Read the biographies of Gregory the Great and William White in *Brightest and Best*, by Sam Portaro (Cowley, 2001).

Read Diocesan Profile portion on page 20: What Sort of Bishop Are We Seeking?

Read the definition of an apostle (see Session Three).

Questions for Discussion

What sort of apostle does our profile invite?

What does “Your faithfulness remains from one generation to another” mean? (Psalm 119)
Is this important for our bishop?

What are the implications for apostolic leadership?

Insights and Implications

What have we learned that we would like those who will elect the next bishop to know?
(Record on newsprint.)

Closing Prayer

Patient God, whose wisdom unsettles our certitudes and whose love challenges our prejudices: Open our hearts to be attentive to your Christ as together we seek a new Bishop for this diocese. Grant us so to see that we may perceive, so to hear that we may understand, and so to understand that, together with our leader, we may be drawn more and more into your mission of healing and transforming this world, through Jesus Christ, our teacher and our Lord. *Amen.*

Further Reading

Read the biographies of Gregory the Great and William White in *Brightest and Best*, by Sam Portaro (Cowley, 2001).

Read the Episcopate Primer at www.diocese-oregon.org

3

Session Three

Are We Open to New Possibilities?

Encountering Saints

Gregory the Great
Bishop of Rome, 604
(LFF, p. 182)

Only two Popes, Leo the First and Gregory the First, have been given the popular title of “the Great.” Both served in the difficult times of the barbarian invasions of Italy. Gregory also knew the horrors of “plague, pestilence, and famine.” He was born of a patrician family around 540, and became Prefect of Rome in 573. Shortly thereafter he retired to a monastic life in a community which he founded in his ancestral home on the Coelian Hill. Pope Pelagius the Second made him Ambassador to Constantinople in 579, where he learned much about the larger affairs of the Church. Not long after his return home, Pope Pelagius died of the plague, and in 590 Gregory was elected as his successor.

Gregory's pontificate was one of strenuous activity. He organized the defense of Rome against the attacks of the Lombards, and fed its populace from papal granaries in Sicily. In this as in other matters, he administered “the patrimony of St. Peter” with energy and efficiency. His ordering of the Church's liturgy and chant has molded the spirituality of the Western Church until the present day. Though unoriginal in theology, his writings provided succeeding generations with basic texts, especially the *Pastoral Care*, a classic on the work of the ministry.

In the midst of all his cares and duties, Gregory prepared and fostered the evangelizing mission to the Anglo-Saxons under Augustine and other monks from his own monastery. The Venerable Bede justly called Gregory the Apostle of the English.

Gregory died on March 12, 604, and was buried in St. Peter's basilica. His life was a true witness to the title he assumed for his office: “Servant of the servants of God.”

William White
Bishop of Pennsylvania, 1836
(LFF, p. 290)

William White was born in Philadelphia on March 24, 1747, and was educated at the college of that city, graduating in 1765. In 1770 he went to England, was ordained deacon on December 23, and priest on April 25, 1772. On his return home, he became assistant minister of Christ and St. Peter's, 1772—1779, and rector from that year until his death, July 17, 1836. He also served as chaplain of the United States Senate until 1800. Chosen unanimously as first Bishop of Pennsylvania, September 14, 1786, he went to England again, with Samuel Provoost, Bishop-Elect of New York; and the two men were consecrated in Lambeth Chapel on Septuagesima Sunday, February 4, 1787, by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishops of Bath and Wells and of Peterborough.

Bishop White was the chief architect of the Constitution of the American Episcopal Church and the wise overseer of its life during the first generation of its history. He was the Presiding Bishop at its organizing General Convention in 1789 and again from 1795 until his death. He was a theologian of no mean ability, and among his protégés, in whose formation he had a large hand, were such leaders of a new generation as John Henry Hobart, Jackson Kemper, and William Augustus Muhlenberg. White's gifts of statesmanship and reconciling moderation steered the American Church through the first decades of its independent life. His influence in his native city made him its "first citizen." To few men has the epithet "venerable" been more aptly applied.

Defining "Apostle"

From <http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/apostle.html>

Apostle. Greek: "apostolos" / a person sent by another; a messenger; envoy. This word is once used as a descriptive designation of Jesus Christ, the Sent of the Father (Heb. 3:1; John 20:21). It is, however, generally used as designating the body of disciples to whom he entrusted the organization of his Church and the dissemination of his gospel, "the twelve," as they are called (Matthew 10:1-5; Mark 3:14, 6:7; Luke 6:13, 9:1).

Closing Prayer

Patient God, whose wisdom unsettles our certitudes and whose love challenges our prejudices: Open our hearts to be attentive to your Christ as together we seek a new Bishop for this diocese. Grant us so to see that we may perceive, so to hear that we may understand, and so to understand that, together with our leader, we may be drawn more and more into your mission of healing and transforming this world, through Jesus Christ, our teacher and our Lord. *Amen.*

Going Deeper: Optional Homework for Session Three

Read the biographies of Gregory the Great and William White in *Brightest and Best*, by Sam Portaro (Cowley, 2001).

4

Leader's Guide for Session Four

Making Choices

Overview

Dreaming ends in awakening. Spiritual ideas take physical form. As we bring our journey of study and discernment to closure, we acknowledge that the choice we make to commit ourselves—to a person or a place, a project or a prayer—is also a beginning. With the leadership of a new bishop, our relationships with each other will be renewed, and our household of faith will assume a new form. The Lord will indeed make us a house. In this session, we will engage with Scripture, [*meet an historical abbess (the equivalent of a bishop) and a twentieth century bishop whose ministries required that they make historically significant choices*], and practice the discipline of making leadership choices within the context of our own particular time and place.

Opening Collect

Collect for the Ordination of a Bishop (BCP, p. 515)

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Icebreaker

For a small group (fewer than 12): Each person introduces him/herself by name and mentions a time he/she had to make a choice from among several good things.

For a larger group (12 or more): Ask people to form pairs, introduce themselves to each other, and mention a time when they had to make a choice from among several good things, and—as time permits—ask the whole group to debrief any themes they identify in common.

Scripture Selections

Isaiah 42:1-9

Focus: verse 4: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.”

Psalm 40:1-14

Focus: verse 5: “Great things are they that you have done, O Lord my God! How great your wonders and your plans for us! There is none who can be compared with you.”

Hebrews 5:1-10

Focus: verse 1-3: “Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.”

Luke 24:44-49a

Focus: verse 47-48: “Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Questions for Discussion

How do these passages relate to us as we seek to discern Christian leaders?

How do these passages relate to the bishop we seek?

Option A: Encountering Saints

This week we meet two bishops who gave up their positions of power because of faithfulness to a greater truth.

Hilda of Whitby, Abbess; equivalent to a bishop (LFF, p. 436)

Paul Jones, Bishop of Utah (LFF, p. 352)

Questions for Discussion

How did each of these episcopal leaders engage and respond to the issues and challenges of their times? Compare and contrast.

What can their stories tell us about the person being called to be the next Bishop of Oregon?

Final Exercise for Option A: Encountering Saints

Conduct a mock election. Pass out “ballots” with the following instructions: (see Session Four)

All of the “candidates” lives may be found in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*. This means that all were so qualified for the ministries to which they were called that all were canonized. Yet, you can choose only one. This may well be the case when the three to five finalists are presented, as well as any candidates nominated by petition. All may be qualified, but the Diocese of Oregon can call only one. Therefore, as delegates, we are called to discern those qualities of leadership we believe are most needed in our own time.

Collect ballots and announce results.

Ask participants:

Why the winner?

What did others see in those for whom they voted?

What might this exercise teach the delegates from our congregation?

Option B: Recognizing Choices

In brainstorming mode—that is, recording all responses without comment, editorializing or discussion—ask participants:

For this bishop of the Diocese of Oregon to be elected in the twenty-first century—in the Episcopal Church in the USA, in the worldwide Anglican Communion— what will be the most pressing, most serious, most defining issues he or she will face?

Re-read section from the Diocesan Profile, “What Sort of Bishop Are We Seeking?” Ask participants:

How will the qualities we seek in a bishop enable that person to engage and respond to the issues and challenges we have identified?

Insights and Implications

What have we learned that we would like those who will elect the next bishop to know?

Closing Prayer

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, you call us each by name, both comforting us and challenging us: Be with us as we seek a Bishop for this diocese. Heal our wounds – and make us healers. Teach us, when we hurt each other, to seek forgiveness – and to forgive. Give us open and discerning hearts. Help us to find you in one another and to see others as you see us – with compassion and hope for all good things to come. Quicken in us a sense of your purpose, that with joy and courage we may carry our task forward to your glory, and in the fellowship of your Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

4

Session Four

Making Choices

Encountering Saints

Hilda

Abbess of Whitby, 680

(LFF, p. 436)

“Hilda's career falls into two equal parts,” says the Venerable Bede, “for she spent thirty-three years nobly in secular habit, while she dedicated an equal number of years still more nobly to the Lord, in the monastic life.”

Hilda, born in 614, was the grandniece of King Edwin. She was instructed by Paulinus (one of the companions of Augustine of Canterbury) in the doctrines of Christianity in preparation for her baptism at the age of 13. She lived, chaste and respected, at the King's court for 20 years, and then decided to enter the monastic life. She had hoped to join the convent of Chelles in Gaul, but Bishop Aidan was so impressed by her holiness of life that he recalled her to her home country, in East Anglia, to live in a small monastic settlement.

One year after her return, Aidan appointed her Abbess of Hartlepool. There, Hilda established the rule of life that she had been taught by Paulinus and Aidan. She became renowned for her wisdom, eagerness for learning, and devotion to God's service.

Some years later, she founded the abbey at Whitby, where both nuns and monks lived in strict obedience to Hilda's rule of justice, devotion, chastity, peace, and charity. Known for her prudence and good sense, Hilda was sought out by kings and other public men for advice and counsel. Those living under her rule devoted so much time to the study of Scripture and to works of righteousness that many were found qualified for ordination. Several of her monks became bishops; at least one pursued further studies in Rome. She encouraged the poet Caedmon, a servant at Whitby, to become a monk and to continue his inspired writing. All who were her subjects or knew her, Bede remarks, called her “mother.”

In 663, Whitby was the site of the famous synod convened to decide divisive questions involved in the differing traditions of the Celtic Christians and the followers of Roman order. Hilda favored the Celtic position, but when the Roman position prevailed she was obedient to the synod's decision. Hilda died on November 17, 680, surrounded by her monastics, whom, in her last hour, she urged to preserve the gospel of peace.

Paul Jones
Bishop and Peace Advocate, 1941
(LFF, p. 352)

Paul Jones was born in 1880 in the rectory of St. Stephen's Church, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Yale University and the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he accepted a call to serve a mission in Logan, Utah. In 1914 Paul Jones was appointed Archdeacon of the Missionary District of Utah and, later that year, was elected its Bishop. Meanwhile, World War I had begun.

As Bishop of Utah, Paul Jones did much to expand the Church's mission stations and to strengthen diocesan institutions. At the same time he spoke openly about his opposition to war. With the United States' entry into the war, the Bishop of Utah's views became increasingly controversial. At a meeting of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Los Angeles in 1917, Bishop Jones expressed his belief that "war is unchristian" for which he was attacked with banner headlines in the Utah press.

As a result of the speech and the reaction it caused in Utah, a commission of the House of Bishops was appointed to investigate the situation. In their report, the commission concluded that "The underlying contention of the Bishop of Utah seems to be that war is unchristian. With this general statement the Commission cannot agree...." The report went on to recommend that "The Bishop of Utah ought to resign his office," thus rejecting Paul Jones' right to object to war on grounds of faith and conscience.

In the spring of 1918, Bishop Jones, yielding to pressure, resigned as Bishop of Utah. For the next 23 years, until his death on September 4, 1941, he continued a ministry within the Church dedicated to peace and conscience, speaking always with a conviction and gentleness rooted in the Gospel. In his farewell to the Missionary District of Utah in 1918, Bishop Jones said: "Where I serve the Church is of small importance, so long as I can make my life count in the cause of Christ. ...Expediency may make necessary the resignation of a Bishop at this time, but no expedience can ever justify the degradation of the ideals of the episcopate which these conclusions seem to involve."

Closing Prayer

From The Consecration of a Bishop (BCP, p. 521)

To you, O Father, all hearts are open; fill, we pray, the heart of this your servant whom you have chosen to be a bishop in your Church, with such love of you and of all the people, that he/she may feed and tend the flock of Christ, and exercise without reproach the high priesthood to which you have called him/her, serving before you day and night in the ministry of reconciliation, declaring pardon in your Name, offering the holy gifts, and wisely overseeing the life and work of the Church. In all things may he/she present before you the acceptable offering of a pure, and gentle, and holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and power and glory in the Church, now and forever. *Amen.*

Sample Ballot

Ambrose

“...became involved in the election of a bishop of Milan only as mediator between the battling factions of Arians and orthodox Christians. Ambrose exhorted the nearly riotous mob to keep the peace and to obey the law. Suddenly both sides raised the cry, ‘Ambrose shall be our bishop!’ He protested, but the people persisted.”

Phillips Brooks

“...ministered with tenderness, understanding, and warm friendliness. He inspired men to enter the ministry, and taught many of them the art of preaching. He was conservative and orthodox in his theology, but his generosity of heart led him to be regarded as the leader of the liberal circles of the Church.”

Leo the Great

“... the Western Roman Empire was almost in shambles. With strength of spirit and wisdom, Leo negotiated with Attila when the Huns were about to sack Rome. He persuaded them to withdraw from Italy and to accept an annual tribute.”

Samuel Seabury

“During the American Revolution, he remained loyal to the British Crown, and served as a chaplain in the British army. After the Revolution, Seabury found it impossible to obtain episcopal orders from the Church of England because, as an American citizen, he could not swear allegiance to the Crown.”

Gregory the Great

“Gregory's pontificate was one of strenuous activity. His ordering of the Church's liturgy and chant has molded the spirituality of the Western Church until the present day. In the midst of all his cares and duties, Gregory prepared and fostered the evangelizing mission to the Anglo-Saxons under Augustine and other monks from his own monastery.”

William White

“Bishop White was the chief architect of the Constitution of the American Episcopal Church and the wise overseer of its life during the first generation of its history. White's gifts of statesmanship and reconciling moderation steered the American Church through the first decades of its independent life.”

Hilda

“...founded the abbey at Whitby, where both nuns and monks lived in strict obedience to Hilda's rule of justice, devotion, chastity, peace, and charity. Known for her prudence and good sense, Hilda was sought out by kings and other public men for advice and counsel.”

Paul Jones

“Where I serve the Church is of small importance, so long as I can make my life count in the cause of Christ. ...Expediency may make necessary the resignation of a Bishop at this time, but no expedience can ever justify the degradation of the ideals of the episcopate which these conclusions seem to involve.”

Resource for Worship: Bulletin Inserts

Week 1: WHAT IS A BISHOP?

Week 2: WHAT IS THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF A BISHOP?

Week 3: WHY ARE BISHOPS IMPORTANT?

Week 4: HOW ARE BISHOPS CREATED IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH?

The inserts are formatted to fit on a 8-1/2 by 5-1/2 sheet of paper.

Episcopal Diocese of Oregon

Bishop Search

WHAT IS A BISHOP?

Bishops as we know them in the Episcopal Church emerged in New Testament times. They were called by the title “*episkopos*,” a Greek word that means “overseer.” The Anglican Communion today teaches that we can trace a direct line from these earliest overseers of the church to today’s bishops. The original overseers in the church were the Apostles chosen by Jesus, whom he called to follow him, to whom he taught his message, and whom he prepared for leadership.

As we know, the earliest followers of Jesus were his fellow Jews. But as the gospel message quickly began to touch more and more lives, especially through the ministry of St. Paul, the Apostles to the Gentiles, people from a variety of backgrounds and expanding geographical areas became attracted to the new faith. This growth not only added organizational problems and theological complexity, it also expanded the responsibilities of the Christian community and created a need for more leadership. Persons deemed worthy of leadership positions were chosen to assist the Apostles and their successors in passing on the faith to new generations. By the 2nd century, however, fewer women were being ordained to positions of leadership in the church. That exclusion lasted in the Episcopal Church until the late 20th century, but women are now welcomed to all orders of the clergy in our church, including the office of bishop.

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WHAT IS A BISHOP?

The church has taught from the beginning that the Apostles and those leaders who came after them are to serve as the chief shepherds of the Christian community, the church's chief teachers, and the guardians of the unity of the church. We have bishops in the Episcopal Church today because we believe it is important to govern and administer OUR affairs as a church according to the norms and traditions inaugurated by Christ himself.

Today the office of bishop carries with it a wide range of responsibilities, including defending the integrity of the faith, confirming and receiving new members into the church, ordaining and providing pastoral care for priests and deacons in their charge, providing community leadership, administering the business affairs of their dioceses, and participating in the affairs of the Anglican Communion, both nationally and worldwide.

*Almighty God, we pray that the power of Christ's love may be present in our lives as we, the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, enter a time of prayerful discernment and transition to new leadership. May the Holy Spirit illumine the hearts and minds of those who have the responsibility to lead us as we prepare to build on the vision that is before us. Let not the prospect of change be an occasion for fear and confusion, but rather a time to build trust and increase understanding that Christ's love may be made known between us and among us that your will may be done. **Amen.***

Adapted for use in the Diocese of Oregon

Episcopal Diocese of Oregon

Bishop Search

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF BISHOPS TODAY?

THE BISHOP IS AN APOSTLE. The word “apostle” literally means “one who is sent forth.” Jesus created the first Apostles by sending forth his disciples to preach the Kingdom and enact his ministry of compassion and justice. As leader of the diocesan community, the bishop functions as an apostolic teacher whose job is to bring his people to maturity in their Christian faith.

THE BISHOP HAS A PROPHETIC ROLE. The role and office of prophet go back to ancient Israel, when God called people to speak out on God’s behalf, to stand for the poor, and to decry injustice. In this same vein, our new bishop will commit to “enlighten the minds and stir the conscience of [God’s] people” (BCP, 518) and “to show all compassion to the poor and stranger and defend those who have no helper” (BCP, 518).

THE BISHOP IS THE CHIEF PRIEST. A priest is one called to mediate the grace of God to the people in word, sacrament, and service. As chief priest, the bishop is called to safeguard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church, to celebrate and provide for the ministry of the sacraments, to ordain priests and deacons, to join in the ordination of other bishops, to be a faithful pastor, and to set a wholesome example.

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WHAT IS THE ROLE OF BISHOPS TODAY?

THE BISHOP IS A PASTOR. The bishop's role as pastor is to encourage, nourish, strengthen, and challenge the ministry of all the baptized and to support them in their Christian life with sound teaching and with a pastor's heart for their difficulties. The bishop of Oregon, like all bishops, has a special pastoral responsibility for all the priests and deacons who labor in the vineyard of this diocese.

THE BISHOP IS A TEACHER. As a steward for the message and teaching of the Apostles, the bishop is joined to them not only in the proclamation of Christ's resurrection, but in manifesting it. He or she is called on to take to heart the words of St. Paul: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may obtain the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11, NRSV).

*Almighty God, we pray that the power of Christ's love may be present in our lives as we, the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, enter a time of prayerful discernment and transition to new leadership. May the Holy Spirit illumine the hearts and minds of those who have the responsibility to lead us as we prepare to build on the vision that is before us. Let not the prospect of change be an occasion for fear and confusion, but rather a time to build trust and increase understanding that Christ's love may be made known between us and among us that your will may be done. **Amen.***

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Episcopal Diocese of Oregon

Bishop Search

WHY ARE BISHOPS IMPORTANT?

One of the most important answers to this question lies in the symbolic passing of teaching authority from one generation to another by the “laying on of hands”, signifying the Church’s continuing commitment to the teaching of Scripture and of the Apostles, as preserved by the whole Church. Bishops declare, in their ordination vows (as do priests and deacons), that they believe the “Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation” (BCP, 513).

Another reason lies in how the governing authority and leadership of the office of the bishop are reinforced. The bishop’s vow to “conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church (BCP, 513) is strengthened throughout the Church by the vows of obedience that priests and deacons make with respect to their bishops at their own ordinations (BCP, 526, 538). Bishops are thus the lynchpin in an interlocking system constructed from several elements: a declaration of belief, a commitment to Scripture, and conformity to a shared tradition. All these work in concert to hold the whole Church together.

A third aspect of the importance of bishops lies in giving strategic oversight to God’s flock and serving as shepherds to diocesan clergy.

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WHY ARE BISHOPS IMPORTANT?

This oversight is provided in many ways: through episcopal visitations to parishes and missions throughout the year, in instruction, and in other forms of communication.

Fourth, from the Church's earliest days bishops have been the chief missionaries for the faith. We see this in the remarkable witness of the first Bishop of Oregon, Thomas Fielding Scott, whose episcopate covered what is today Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and western Montana. This outward orientation is both our heritage from Bishop Scott and the exciting future that awaits us in partnership with the Tenth Bishop of Oregon.

Finally, episcopal continuity aids in the continuing struggle to find and live out the truth of the Christian faith in the face of often militant opposition, not only in the New Testament times, but throughout the ages. Already in the second century, for example, Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon in France (c.125 - c.202), saw in the Church's bishops the repository of the truth entrusted to it. His tenacious insistence has been a foundation of the Church's thinking ever since.

*Almighty God, we pray that the power of Christ's love may be present in our lives as we, the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, enter a time of prayerful discernment and transition to new leadership. May the Holy Spirit illumine the hearts and minds of those who have the responsibility to lead us as we prepare to build on the vision that is before us. Let not the prospect of change be an occasion for fear and confusion, but rather a time to build trust and increase understanding that Christ's love may be made known between us and among us that your will may be done. **Amen.***

Adapted for use in the Diocese of Oregon

Episcopal Diocese of Oregon Bishop Search

HOW ARE BISHOPS CREATED IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH?

The worldwide Anglican Communion, and thus the Episcopal Church, creates bishops by the “laying on of hands” of other bishops. This practice goes back to the New Testament Church, in which the apostles of Jesus used this practice to set aside individuals to perform specific tasks and assume authority and responsibilities in and for the whole community of Christians (Acts 6:5-6).

In the earliest Church, we know that this practice was used in Ordinations, and it is still used today in a wide variety of worship contexts and ceremonies, including services of Confirmation, healing, and commissioning of people for specific tasks or vocations. The laying on of hands is an invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the person being ordained; it reenacts the reception of the Holy Spirit by the apostles at the first Pentecost.

The line of bishops going back to the original apostles is called the “apostolic succession.” In the Anglican tradition, by canon law, it takes a minimum of three bishops who have themselves been ordained by the laying on of hands, to make a new bishop. This requirement ensures that the line of transmission of episcopal authority, which goes all the way back to the apostles themselves, is preserved.

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Episcopal Diocese of Oregon



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HOW ARE BISHOPS CREATED IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH?

The laying on of hands is especially important in the Ordination of bishops because it reinforces two significant roles that bishops play in the life of the Church:

First, that through each succeeding generation, bishops keep alive and intact the line of leadership and authority that goes back to Christ and his Apostles; and

Second, that bishops maintain the doctrinal continuity that goes back to Christ as well, by way of the Apostles and their teaching. It is the task of a bishop to both preserve and defend that teaching.

The teaching that the bishop is bound to preserve and defend arises out of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament - witnesses to the faithfulness of God that describe who we are as the people of God. These sacred writings have shaped the life of the Church and its mission ever since. The Tenth Bishop of Oregon will help us to discover the intersection between the Word, our life together in Christ, and the needs of the world around us.

*Almighty God, we pray that the power of Christ's love may be present in our lives as we, the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, enter a time of prayerful discernment and transition to new leadership. May the Holy Spirit illumine the hearts and minds of those who have the responsibility to lead us as we prepare to build on the vision that is before us. Let not the prospect of change be an occasion for fear and confusion, but rather a time to build trust and increase understanding that Christ's love may be made known between us and among us that your will may be done. **Amen.***

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