

BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

Sunday Circle
January 29, 2023

During the Apostolic era, 33 AD- ca. 100AD, titles and roles for leaders in the church were being defined. What a bishop or a presbyter/priest was and did could vary from place to place.

The term for bishop, *episcopos* (“overseer”), could mean

- The overseer of an individual congregation (the priest)
- The person who was the overseer of all the congregations in a city or area (the bishop)

BISHOPS AND PRIEST IN THE EARLY CHURCH

BISHOPS AND PRIESTS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

- By the 2nd century the roles of bishops, priests, and deacons were more defined.
- As Christianity expanded bishops began to oversee a province and the need for priests to oversee churches within the province grew so that it became rarer for bishops to oversee a particular church.
- The bishops of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch in the 3rd century were accorded some authority beyond their own provinces, in part because the first bishop of each of those cities was thought to have been one of the Apostles. Along with Jerusalem and Constantinople (founded in 330), these three sees (seats of episcopal authority) became the five patriarchates.
- By the end of the 3rd century, the bishop of the provincial capital was acquiring authority over his colleagues. The metropolitan and from the 4th century on, often called the archbishop was chief consecrator of his episcopal colleagues.

An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide, featuring overlapping, curved shapes in vibrant red and a muted green. The shapes create a sense of depth and movement, resembling stylized petals or architectural elements.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

- Apostolic succession is the belief that bishops are the successors to the apostles and that episcopal authority is derived from the apostles by an unbroken succession in the ministry.
- This authority is specifically derived through the laying on of hands for the ordination of bishops in lineal sequence from the apostles, through their performing the ministry of the apostles, and through their succession in episcopal sees traced back to the apostles.
- The apostolic succession is continued in the bishops of the Episcopal Church, who seek to “carry on the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the Church” (BCP, p. 510).
- The apostolic succession may also be understood as a continuity in doctrinal teaching from the time of the apostles to the present. The apostolic succession is said to be a “sign, though not a guarantee” of the church's basic continuity with the apostles and their time.



Opposite page, clockwise from left: The Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman greets the crowd for the first time as bishop. Attending bishops lay hands on Bishop Rodman as part of the ordination service. Bishop Rodman with his wife, Debbie, and friends David Cruthers, Jak Cruthers and Amy Kennedy. The Most Rev. Michael Curry and the Rt. Rev. Anne Hodge Copley wait to enter Duke Chapel for the ordination service. The Rt. Rev. Gary Gustier adopts a creative approach to staying cool outside the chapel. Above: Attending bishops stand with the Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman after the ordination and consecration. Photos 1, 2 and 3 ©Brian Mullins; photos 4 and 5 by Summerlee Walter; above photo by Christine McTaggart

BISHOPS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH



THE BISHOP

- Since the bishop's ministry is a ministry of oversight, the term “episcopal” (derived from the Greek episcopos, “overseer”) is applied to matters pertaining to bishops. An “episcopal” church is a church governed by bishops, and “episcopal” services are led by bishops.
- Episcopal services in the BCP include the services for the Ordination and Consecration of Bishops, Ordination of Priests, Ordination of Deacons, the Celebration of a New Ministry, and the Consecration of a Church or Chapel.
- Bishops also preside at services of Confirmation, Reception, or Reaffirmation. Bishops bless altars and fonts, and the blessing of chalices and patens and church bells are traditionally reserved for the bishop.



FOUR TYPES OF BISHOPS

- **Diocesan Bishop** - the primary bishop of a diocese; sometimes referred to as “The Diocesan.” Diocesan bishops hold jurisdiction in their dioceses, with particular responsibility for the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the church. Bishops serve as the focus for diocesan unity and for the unity of their dioceses with the wider church.
- **Bishop Coadjutor** - A bishop elected to succeed the Diocesan Bishop. An ordained person consecrated to become the next bishop of a diocese when the diocesan bishop retires; when the bishop retires or resigns, the Co-adjutor becomes the Diocesan and the term Co-adjutor is dropped. Suffragan bishops do not automatically become diocesan bishops.



FOUR TYPES OF BISHOPS

- **Bishop Suffragan** - A bishop elected to assist the Diocesan Bishop and to serve under the Diocesan's direction. A working co-bishop in a diocese but without inherent right of succession when the diocesan bishop retires or resigns. Suffragan bishops are sometimes called by another diocese to become their Diocesan bishop.
- **Assistant Bishop** - A bishop appointed by the Diocesan Bishop with the consent of the Standing Committee to assist the Diocesan and to serve under the Diocesan's direction, creation of the post having been approved by the Diocesan Convention. A specially ordained or otherwise specially designated person who has the spiritual and liturgical rank of a bishop and who usually assists the Bishop of a diocese; some retired diocesan bishops become assistants to other bishops; some assistant bishops are specially ordained for their work. Assistant Bishops can perform most functions performed by other bishops.

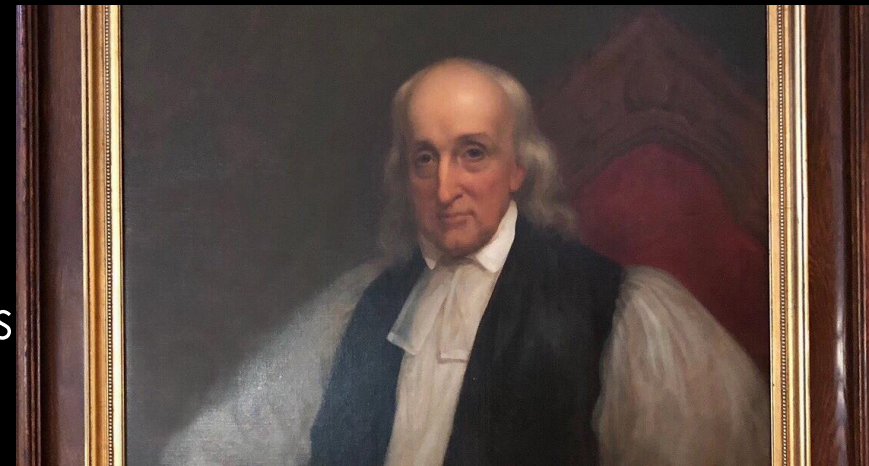
- In the Episcopal Church, diocesan and suffragan bishops are elected by Diocesan Convention.
- Bishops-elect are ordained and consecrated after consents to the election have been received from a majority of the diocesan standing committees and from a majority of the bishops exercising jurisdiction in the Episcopal Church.
- If the episcopal election takes place within three months before General Convention, the consent of the House of Deputies is required instead of a majority of the standing committees.
- Three bishops are required to participate in the ordination and consecration of a bishop.
- To date there have been 1,152 bishops in the Episcopal Church.

BISHOPS

THE PRESIDING BISHOP

- The Presiding Bishop is the Chief Pastor and Primate of the Episcopal Church.
- The office evolved originally from a rule of the House of Bishops in 1789 making its presiding officer the senior member in terms of date of consecration.
- As a result of increased duties, the office was incorporated into the Constitution of the Church in 1901 and styled Presiding Bishop of the Church.
- In 1919 the office was made elective and invested with executive responsibility for all departments of the church's work.
- As "Chief Pastor," the Presiding Bishop is charged with initiating and developing church policy and strategy, speaking God's Word to the church and the world, and visiting every diocese of the church.
- The present term of office for the Presiding Bishop is nine years

Source: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/presiding-bishop>





PRIESTS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH



PRIESTS

- Derived from the Greek *presbyteros*, “elder” or “old man”, the term is used as a synonym for presbyter.
- Presbyters constituted a collegiate ruling body of institutions in Judaism.
- The Catechism notes that “the ministry of a priest or presbyter” is “to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to proclaim the gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God” (BCP, p. 856).
- The term “priest” is more frequently used than “presbyter” in the Episcopal Church.

From The Examination in the Ordination Service

- Now you are called **to work as pastor, priest, and teacher**, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.
- As a priest, it will be your task to **proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ**, and to **fashion your life in accordance with its precepts**.
- You are to **love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor**.
- You are to **preach, to declare God's forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God's blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you**.
- In all that you do, **you are to nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come**.

PRIESTS

Rectors

PRIESTS SERVE IN CHURCHES AS...

- Typically, a rector is the priest in charge of a self-supporting parish, and a vicar is the priest in charge of a supported mission. The rector is the ecclesiastical authority of the parish. The term is derived from the Latin for “rule.” The rector has authority and responsibility for worship and the spiritual jurisdiction of the parish, subject to the rubrics of the BCP, the constitution and canons of the church, and the pastoral direction of the bishop. The rector is responsible for selection of all assistant clergy, and they serve at the discretion of the rector. The church and parish buildings and furnishings are under the rector's control. The rector or a member of the vestry designated by the rector presides at all vestry meetings.

Priests-in-Charge

- After consultation with the Vestry, the Bishop may appoint a Priest to serve as Priest-in-Charge of any congregation in which there is no Rector. In such congregations, the Priest-in-Charge shall exercise the duties of Rector outlined in Canon III.9.6 subject to the authority of the Bishop. A Priest-in-Charge can be called by the Vestry to be the rector with the approval of the Bishop.

PRIESTS SERVE IN CHURCHES AS...

Associate or Assistant Priests

- A Priest serving as an assistant in a Parish, by whatever title designated, shall be selected by the Rector, and when required by the Canons of the Diocese, subject to the approval of the Vestry, and shall serve under the authority and direction of the Rector. Before the selection Election of a Rector. Written notice to Ecclesiastical Authority. Agreement. Priests-in Charge. Rector to select assistants. CANON III.9.3.a.2 - III.9.3.c TITLE III 124 CANONS of an assistant the name of the Priest proposed for selection shall be made known to the Bishop and a time, not exceeding sixty days, given for the Bishop to communicate with the Rector and Vestry on the proposed selection. Upon resignation by the Rector, death of the Rector, or in the event of the dissolution of a pastoral relationship between the Rector and the Vestry, an assistant may continue in the service of the Parish if requested to do so by the Vestry under such conditions as the Bishop and Vestry shall determine. An assistant may continue to serve at the request of a new Rector. Assistants may have a letter of agreement with the Rector and the Vestry setting forth mutual responsibilities and containing a clearly articulated dissolution clause, subject to the Bishop's approval.

PRIESTS SERVE IN CHURCHES AS...

- **Vicars**

- In the Episcopal Church, the title generally applies to the priest in charge of a mission congregation. The diocesan bishop is the rector, and the priest representing the bishop is the vicar. The term is derived from the Latin vicarius, "substitute." Historically, as early as the twelfth century in England, clergy known as vicars were appointed to act as substitutes or vicarious representatives of the bishop to serve congregations. The use of terms such as vicar, priest in charge, and rector is not consistent in the dioceses of the Episcopal Church.

- **Interim Priests**

- The Interim Priest is a priest trained to assist parishes during a time of transition, especially during the period between the leave-taking of one rector and the calling of another rector. It is an intentional ministry of sustaining the direction and ministry of a congregation as defined by the Vestry; reviewing the past, assessing the present, and evaluating the future. The major goal of the Interim Priest's ministry is to prepare the congregation for the coming of the next rector.

MINISTRIES OF A PRIEST IN THE CHURCH

NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST

- Absolution
- Administration
- Baptizing
- Blessing
- Celebrating the Eucharist
- Leading the vestry
- Leading worship
- Pastoral care
- Perform marriages and funerals
- Perform the Reconciliation of a Penitent
- Planning
- Preaching
- Teaching





PRIESTS ALSO SERVE AS

Canons and other Diocesan staff

School Chaplains

Hospital Chaplains

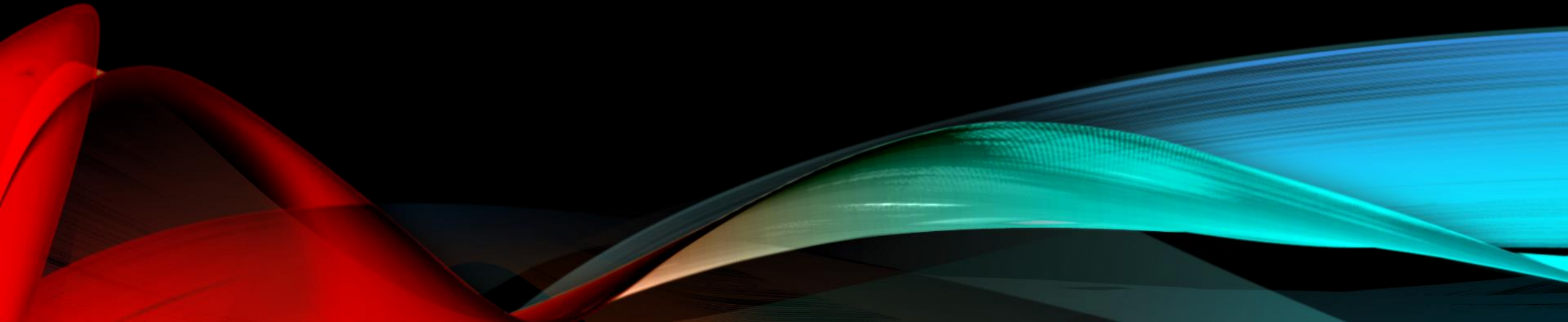
Teachers

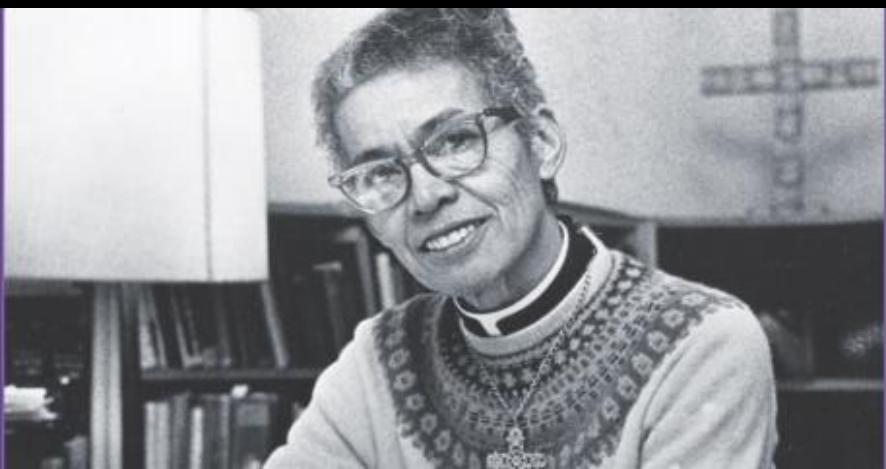
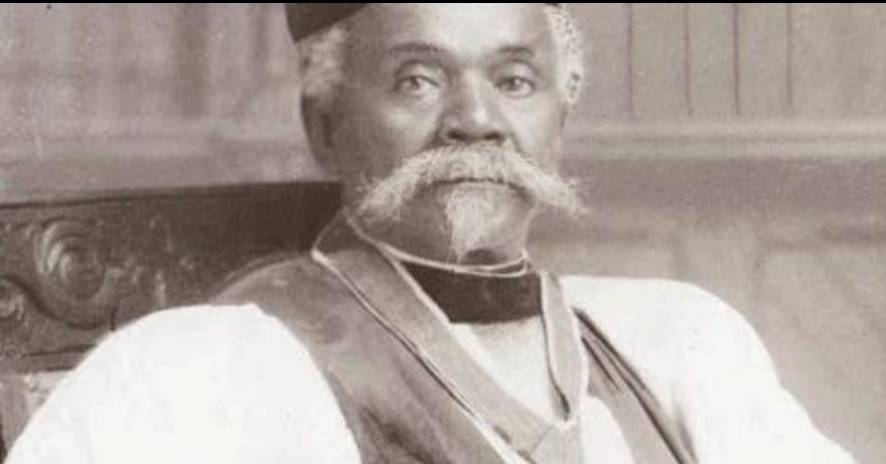
Supply Priests

And more

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD AND BISHOPRICS

Inclusion of African-Americans, Women, and LGBTQ+ Persons





AFRICAN AMERICANS AS BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

- Absalom Jones, 1746-1818, was the first African American ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church.
- James Holly was the first African American bishop in the Episcopal Church. In 1861, he led 110 followers to Haiti. In 1865 he was consecrated as missionary bishop of Haiti by the American Church Missionary Society.
- Pauli Murray was the first African-American woman to be ordained in 1977.

AFRICAN AMERICANS AS BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

- Barbara Harris was the first woman elected bishop in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion on September 24, 1988. She was consecrated on February 11, 1989.
- Eugene Taylor Sutton is the first African-American Bishop of the Diocese of Maryland.
- Michael Curry is the first African-American to be elected as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church



THE PHILADELPHIA ELEVEN

THE FIRST WOMEN PRIESTS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- Merrill Bittner
- Alla Bozarth-Campbell
- Alison Cheek
- Emily Hewitt
- Carter Heyward
- Suzanne Hiatt
- Marie Moorefield
- Jeanette Piccard
- Betty Schiess
- Katrina Swanson
- Nancy Wittig



THE PHILADELPHIA ELEVEN

THE FIRST WOMEN PRIESTS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- Throughout its history the canons of the Episcopal Church related to ordination to the priesthood did not explicitly exclude women from the priesthood. But because no Diocesan Standing Committee or Diocesan Bishop would agree to ordain women who had completed the process for ordination to the priesthood, by practice, if not canon, women could not be ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church.
- By the 1960s though there were active discussions in the Episcopal Church about whether women should be ordained to the priesthood. In 1966 the Episcopal Church received a report supporting the ordination of women.
- Resolutions to approve the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate had been narrowly defeated at General Conventions in 1970 and 1973.

THE PHILADELPHIA ELEVEN

THE FIRST WOMEN PRIESTS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- On July 29, 1974, St. Mary and St. Martha's Day, eleven women were ordained at the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia by retired bishops Daniel Corrigan, Robert DeWitt, and Edward Welles II in defiance of the Episcopal Church.
- The next day some of the 11 were inhibited by their bishops from priestly functions, some from deacon's service; others agreed voluntarily to refrain from priestly ministry.
- A contentious emergency meeting of the House of Bishops on August 15, 1974, denounced the ordinations and declared that "the necessary conditions for valid ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church were not fulfilled."
- The General Convention of 1976 approved the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate. The canon now read: "The provisions of these canons for the admission of Candidates, and for the Ordination to the three Orders: Bishops, Priests and Deacons shall be equally applicable to men and women."

THE INCLUSION OF LGBTQ+ PERSONS IN THE CHURCH AND AS CLERGY AND BISHOPS

- The General Convention in 1976 adopted resolutions stating that “homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church” (1976-A069), and that they “are entitled to equal protection of the laws with all other citizens” (1976-A071).
- Over the years, General Convention and Executive Council reaffirmed these resolutions, as well as calling the church to greater understanding, awareness, and inclusion of LGBTQ persons in the life of the church.
- In 1994, General Convention amended the church’s canons to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, providing equal access to the rites and worship of The Episcopal Church, including ordination.
- In 2005 the Diocese of New Hampshire elected the first openly-gay bishop in The Episcopal Church, the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson.



QUESTIONS?



Upcoming Sunday Circles

Feb. 5-26 The Immigrant Experience

March 5-26 The Meaning of Sin and
What Other Faith Traditions Can Teach
Us

April 16 The Resurrection in Matthew
Ch. 28

April 23 The Resurrection in Mark Ch. 16

April 30 The Resurrection in Luke Ch. 24

May 7 The Resurrection in John Ch. 20

May 14 The Resurrection in John Ch. 21

May 21 Exploring Pentecost - Acts of
the Apostles Ch. 2

THANK YOU!