

Application for the Bishop of Maine

The Rev. Canon Anne Mallonee

What are the points in your vocation that direct you toward the Episcopate?

The Episcopal Church has a well-honed process for discerning a vocation to the priesthood or to the diaconate. We do not have a parallel process for the episcopate. Therefore, I asked a group of friends and colleagues in the Church, whom I could trust to be spiritually honest with me, to help discern whether I had a call to serve as a bishop. They took an approach similar to your question, as they identified how I had functioned in a “bishop-like manner” in my ministry to date. I will answer this question drawing on my discernment group’s feedback.

Diocesan Overview: From my first ministry out of seminary as Diocesan Communication Officer and Campus Chaplain (Kansas), to leading two cathedrals where I worked closely with the diocesan bishop (Minnesota and Connecticut), to my current role with the Church Pension Group where I am responsible to help ensure a good relationship with the Episcopal Church (especially the Office of the Presiding Bishop and the offices of diocesan bishops across the nine provinces and beyond), I have needed to have a broad, high-level view of the Church and a good understanding of the tension implicit in pursuing a vision while handling the immediate pressures of the episcopate.

Oversight of complex systems: A bishop has oversight of a diversity of parishes and missions, clergy and lay leadership, and many worthy ministries and partnerships that compete for attention and resources. I have had oversight of several highly complex systems that ran smoothly under my leadership, especially ten years as vicar of Trinity Wall Street.

Spiritual grounding: A bishop must be grounded spiritually, strong and calm in the midst of competing needs and anxiety. This has been a hallmark of my ministry in every setting.

Pastoral but firm: A bishop must be loving and kind, but she also must exert the kind of leadership that holds people accountable for the sake of the Kingdom. I am a compassionate Christian who knows when tough love is required for the good of the whole. This has been evident in how I have handled difficult situations in various settings.

Conflict: A bishop has to know how to manage conflict. I do not like conflict but I do not avoid it when it arises. I will ask difficult questions, not because I want to provoke conflict, but in order to address uncomfortable truths that may be holding a

community back. I also recognize how conflict can help build trust in a community when members are willing to work through situations respectfully and lovingly, arriving at a better place.

Creative and visionary: A bishop, now more than ever, must maintain the tradition while creatively re-interpreting that tradition for a new day. My approach to ministry, even in the most conventional and well-established contexts, has been missional and entrepreneurial. For example, in one congregation, I helped to shift a passive, clergy-centric mindset to an active embrace of the ministry of the baptized. Such empowered lay leadership is especially relevant in the life of the Church right now given the changing demographics of the priesthood.

Leadership Development: A common thread throughout my ministry, from smallest community to largest resourced parish, has been my ability to spot and develop leadership. If the people around me – whether colleagues, parishioners or employees – are thriving and growing more fully into the people God created them to be, then I am doing what I have been called to do. For this reason, some who have worked most closely with me call my style of leadership “catalytic.”

What attracts you to the idea of being the 10th Bishop of Maine?

I have dreamed of living in Maine since I was four years old, when my family first came to visit relatives. That initial visit was followed by other summer trips with the whole family, and then it was an annual pattern for me through my college years. My brother and his wife made their home in Bangor in the 1980s and the center of gravity for the family shifted to Maine completely when my mother joined them there in the 2000s. I’ve lost track of how many Thanksgivings and Christmases we have gathered in Maine. So curiously, while I have never been a permanent resident, Maine feels like home to me. I have explored serving in Maine a few times, but it has never worked out. Perhaps now is the time.

I am excited by your attitude as it comes through in your profile. You know that the Church is changing but you do not seem discouraged by this. Instead, you see the possibilities for mission in a new day, functioning in a new way. I do not hear you reconciling yourselves to a future “less than” you would hope, but articulating a sense of mission and a creative commitment to “more than” you can even ask or imagine.

You have not given up on the 50% of Maine residents who do not attend any church. Instead, you are exploring ways to reach them because you are confident that you have something (Someone) to share. You express a willingness to experiment. With that comes the possibility of failure, but that doesn’t daunt you either. You are the leading edge in the Episcopal Church when you go outside the doors of your buildings to see what God is already doing in your communities. This approach increases your

visibility, lifting your engagement and unleashing hope, mercy and love into communities yearning for a better world. You recognize the potential in addressing the greater needs of the geographic areas where you are, through partnerships with other organizations and denominations.

You may not see the future clearly, but you have faith that it will become clear. You seek a new paradigm from which to witness to the love of God and to be the much-needed light in a dark world.

Most importantly, it is this future you envision for the diocese where every Maine Episcopalian is a faithful force for good wherever they are, that attracts me to the idea of being the 10th Bishop of Maine. I believe I have the experience and gifts to help you on that journey.

As your bishop, I would share your excitement and optimism. I would tap the strong network of the House of Bishops to learn from colleagues how they and their dioceses are reimagining mission for the 21st century, and I would proudly take back the stories of how we are doing it in Maine. I would delight in making visitations to your communities. I want to hear your stories of how God is present in your lives. I want to see how you have responded to God's call. I want to encourage and support you in your discipleship. I want to get to know and to love you.

One of my favorite prayers in the Book of Common Prayer captures the awesome renewing power of the Spirit that I see all across the Episcopal Church right now, and that I see reflected in your profile:

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. (Book of Common Prayer, page 280)

What does being the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement mean to you and your ministry?

It seems that after some time of internal focus as a denomination, we have awakened to the fact that we are part of something much greater than ourselves: The Jesus Movement, the ongoing transformative work of Jesus of Nazareth in a hurting world. Out of this awareness we have begun to reach out in mission to our brothers and

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sisters in other denominations. We are the *Episcopal branch* of the Jesus Movement: *loving, life-giving, liberating.*

My current position with the Church Pension Group has allowed me to attend many of the Jesus Movement revivals that Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and his team have been organizing these past three years, in order to keep a finger on the pulse of the Church. I would love to invite Bishop Curry to lead a revival in Maine. The highlight is always, of course, Bishop Curry's preaching (as the whole world discovered at the royal wedding in May, 2018). However, I believe that the real transformative power of the revivals comes from the fact that each event is designed at the grass roots level. One size does not fit all. I have seen how the Spirit is moving in the Episcopal Church and it is exhilarating.

The advance work for a revival involves exactly what you have been doing in Maine, which is to identify how God is working already in the community and then join God in that work. So, for each revival I have attended, the three threads of the Jesus Movement have been customized. Evangelism, Reconciliation, and Creation Care are the consistent themes, but how the good news is articulated, which relationships need to be reconciled, and how stewardship of God's creation needs to be cultivated locally, these arise organically from each diocesan context.

An important element in the design of the Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement is the nurturing of the Beloved Community. This, too, looks different diocese by diocese. Nevertheless, there is a common denominator in the intentionality to do the hard work required.

I agree with Bishop Curry when he says that Christianity is easy to describe but very difficult to do. It takes practice. At last summer's General Convention, he introduced the Way of Love, a new take on an ancient rule of life. How transformative it would be if every Episcopalian in Maine were to embrace the seven practices of a Jesus-centered life: *Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go and Rest.* What a wonderful adventure and joy it would be to embark together with you on this great journey for the Diocese of Maine.