



The Episcopal Diocese of Nevada  
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Bishop

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## Ordination to the Priesthood

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." (Genesis 22.1)

All Christians are called to ministry by the Holy Spirit who calls us and empowers us to serve.

One ministry, among many, in The Episcopal Church is priesthood. Because of the unique role of a priest, every Diocese is given the responsibility to discern and support those called into this ministry. There is a desire to create a discernment process that is flexible, nimble, and balanced in its response to an individual's sense of call and The Episcopal Church's leadership needs.

Certainly the ministry of priests has changed, and clergy need new skills and qualities to serve our congregations well. The central focus of the discernment process for ordination to the priesthood is not whether an individual is called to ministry, since by baptism God has called all of us to minister. Rather, the principal focus of discernment concerns how closely an individual's gifts and experience match the unique challenges of priestly ministry in this time and place. We pray for the Spirit's guidance in all phases of this process, and trust the process will continue to evolve over time.

### The Changing Landscape

The landscape of Christianity in America has changed dramatically in the last fifty years and the rate of change continues apace. Models of pastoral leadership that previously served God's people well are less effective now; new times require new skills and aptitudes. We believe God is calling The Episcopal Church to mission and ministry in the midst of change so that the richness of our spiritual tradition may serve the needs of our time. Every congregation, from the Cathedral to the smallest church, faces new challenges and opportunities. The Diocese of Nevada needs ordained leaders able to equip our current congregations to adapt to our new realities, sing the Lord's song in new lands, and

proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in ways that speak to the varied contexts and cultures of our communities. We seek leaders with the skills and capacities to plant new congregations and worshiping communities. Through our conversations with small groups at various churches, diocesan committees, and the clergy of the diocese, the Spirit is calling for particular qualities in our priests for the Diocese of Nevada.

The following will be our guide in discerning new priests for ordination in the diocese at this time.

### **Qualities We Seek in a Priest**

Our ordained leaders must reflect the breadth of humanity represented in our Diocese. They will be mission-focused, entrepreneurial, collaborative, and adaptive. The qualities described here are not exhaustive -- nor are these qualities exclusive to priestly ministry. They are the result of much discernment and many conversations amidst clergy, lay leaders, congregations, and other dioceses. We do not expect every candidate to have all of these qualities, but we do expect them to exhibit most of them. Our discernment process will focus on noticing the presence, or the seeds of presence, of these qualities and abilities in each candidate.

**Compelling spiritual life and a passion for the Gospel:** There is great spiritual hunger in the culture and in our congregations. The Diocese seeks clergy who love God with heart, mind, and soul, and who know Christ and seek to make Christ known. Our clergy will have a vision for The Episcopal Church's ministry and how to guide our people to greater faithfulness and spiritual depth. They will have both a deep reverence for the sacraments at the heart of our liturgical life and a sacramental worldview in which *outward and visible things reveal inward and invisible truths*.

### **Ability to communicate the Gospel in ways people and communities find engaging and relevant to their lives:**

Communication is multi-faceted. Today's clergy need to speak several "languages," both human and technological, from the pulpit, in personal conversation, and in social media. They are called to minister in a wide variety of contexts, among all sorts of people. There is a particular, urgent need to reach younger generations—families raising children, teenagers and young

adults—as well as the ability to be an effective spiritual presence among our fastest growing demographic, those over the age of 75.

**Spiritual maturity, self-awareness, and authenticity:** The work of an Episcopal priest is challenging. It requires a strong spiritual center, physical and mental stamina, healthy personal boundaries, and a willingness to grow and learn alongside others. Effective clergy must be able to persevere in challenging circumstances, recognize their personal growth edges, and be willing to learn new skills and ask for help.

**Ability to lead, organize, and equip others in ministry:** Many people are drawn to the priesthood for the love of ministry — pastoral care, teaching, service, and speaking out for justice. The predominant model of ministry in most Episcopal churches is that of one minister (the priest) ministering to all the people, or at the center of the Church's ministry. We seek a new paradigm, of clergy able to equip others for meaningful Christian lives and vocations, inviting others into the life of Christian community and ministry. It will require community organizing skills and the ability to identify and mentor new leaders.

**Entrepreneurial leadership:** We seek individuals who are able to take risks and try new things in ministry. Today's clergy need creativity, the capacity to discern new paths, and the willingness to make mistakes and learn from them. Entrepreneurial leaders see opportunities where others see decline; possibilities where others see insurmountable challenges.

**The ability to lead congregations through change:** The majority of our congregations face significant adaptive challenges. This generation of clergy will lead our congregations through the wilderness of life as it has been to the Promised Land to which God calls us. As with our spiritual ancestors, there is a process of transformation required of us on the journey, as well as the ability to adapt to new ways of being the Church. Our clergy will lead the way, in faithfulness to God's call and in the challenging work of change.

**A willingness and ability to be vocationally flexible:** Our churches are in a variety of contexts in a variety of locations with a variety of needs. Our clergy will need to respond to this with flexibility. Few are likely to serve in one role at one type of church in one city for their entire vocation. In addition, a growing number of congregations require clergy leaders that do not depend on them

for their entire livelihood. Thus, we need some priests who can offer their presence and their gifts as priests in a part-time or non-stipendiary capacity. Our clergy will demonstrate flexibility in their vision of professional ministry in order to respond to God's call to them and the church in our world.

Much of this is taken from the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, the Rt. Rev'd Mariann Edgar Budde, Bishop. Used with permission.

Notes and Questions for Bishop Elizabeth