

IX 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.

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

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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 Ninth Bishop of Minnesota will help us to discover the intersection between the Word, our life together in Christ, and the needs of the world around us.

Gracious God, you give light and life to your people. You guide us in pathways of renewal and transformation. Light the way before us now, as we discern and choose the ninth bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota. May we find a pastor who will lead us in hope, challenge us to ever greater faithfulness, and equip us with love for mission and ministry in the church and in the world. We pray in thanksgiving for your guiding presence and your grace, in the Name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

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