

The Rev. Canon Victoria Heard

-Sense of Call-

My current sense of call begins with my belief that even as a child God called me to follow Him and to love and believe in Jesus. My call to be a priest came before my baptism, which for family reasons I delayed until adulthood. Later, preparing for ordination to the priesthood, while I was thanking God for His love and for my vocation, I was suddenly startled by an additional sense that I was called to be a bishop. It seemed crazy. There were no women bishops. I have often tried to dismiss that call, but it has never entirely gone away and I have never been entirely able to deny it.

I am a priest shaped by Virginia churchmanship; still, it was as I served my first colonial parish and loved its history, that I found a passion for starting new churches and for taking risks as those who planted the first churches did. I know how dioceses function and how they can grow: I watched the Diocese of Virginia's Bishop Peter Lee turn around an unhappy, dysfunctional diocese toward growth and unity through clear visionary actions. He was fierce about how the staff should engage with the diocese both in the office and in the field. Bishop Jones taught me how to love and be with people while still maintaining needed oversight. I have worked in and loved urban, rural and suburban parishes, working with all ages, especially young people. Recently, I spent the weekend with teens from my parish at the diocesan confirmation retreat. I have started or grown youth ministries in every parish I have served.

You speak of the need for a bishop who will be with the clergy of the diocese. I have had excellent relationships across the range of Dallas's clergy as an encourager, pastor and friend –even to priests who would not acknowledge my priesthood but still sought my advice and counsel. I place a very high value on the unity of a diocese. I fought for that unity in Virginia and, more subtly, in Dallas. A bishop is called to have no favorites but to find ways to unite a diocese in both established and new missional activity.

Your profile states you seek a bishop who loves our Lord Jesus and loves the Scriptures. More than anything else, that is why I feel called to you. I know how to create good diocesan structures; but at the heart of the health of any diocese is confidence that its bishop, as the focus of the unity of that diocese, finds his or her own focus in the risen Christ. I believe in the power of the Spirit through Scripture and Sacraments to transform both individuals and communities. Evangelism is, as missionary T.D. Niles once said, “just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” I found that Bread as a child and I have never found the Word to grow stale.