

The Diocese of Virginia

BISHOP SUFFRAGAN SEARCH

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF BISHOPS TODAY?

From the Education Subcommittee of the Bishop Suffragan Nominating Committee

The bishop is an apostle. The word “apostle” literally means “one who is sent forth.” Jesus created the first Apostles by sending forth his disciples to preach the Kingdom and enact his ministry of compassion and justice. As leader of the diocesan community, the bishop functions as an apostolic teacher whose job is to bring his people to maturity in their Christian faith.

The bishop has a prophetic role. The role and office of prophet go back to ancient Israel, when God called people to speak out on God’s behalf, to stand for the poor, and to decry injustice. In this same vein, our new Bishop will commit to “enlighten the minds and stir the conscience of [God’s] people” (BCP, 518) and “to show all compassion to the poor and stranger and defend those who have no helper” (BCP, 518).

The bishop is the chief priest. A priest is one called to mediate the grace of God to the people in word, sacrament and service. As chief priest, the bishop is called to safeguard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church, to celebrate and provide for the ministry of the sacraments, to ordain priests and deacons, to join in the ordination of other bishops, to be a faithful pastor, and to set a wholesome example.



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WHAT IS THE ROLE OF BISHOPS TODAY?

The bishop is a pastor. The bishop's role as pastor is to encourage, nourish, strengthen and challenge the ministry of all the baptized and to support them in their Christian life with sound teaching and with a pastor's heart for their difficulties. The bishop of Virginia, like all bishops, has a special pastoral responsibility for all the priests and deacons who labor in the vineyard of this diocese.

The bishop is a teacher. As a steward for the message and teaching of the Apostles, the bishop is joined to them not only in the proclamation of Christ's resurrection, but in manifesting it. He or she is called on to take to heart the words of St. Paul: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may obtain the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11, NRSV).

Produced as one in a series of bulletin inserts by the Education Subcommittee of the Bishop Suffragan Nominating Committee. Special thanks to the Education Task Group of the Bishop Coadjutor Nominating Committee, 2006.



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