

**Name:** Karen Cuffie

**Order:** Clergy

**Congregation:** St. John the Divine/St. Stephen's in-the-Field

**Nominated for:** Commission on Ministry

**Please tell us why you feel called to serve and what you can contribute to this particular body.**

I have had the pleasure of serving on the Commission on Ministry for three years and would love to continue serving the diocese and ultimately all people who feel called to leadership in a particular ministry. God gives us gifts and we are called to use them as we are able. I am dedicated to helping others discern that call. I can contribute my past experience working collaboratively and faithfully with my colleagues on the Commission. We have made good changes to the process for ordination and other ministry leadership formation and I would be thankful for the opportunity to continue that work as we seek to recruit and support all who feel called.

**Please give some brief background on your church activities.**

I have served in parish ministry as an interim rector and now rector of two parishes since being ordained in 2016. The last three years have been particularly challenging. Adapting to the pastoral, administrative, and worship needs of both congregations in the midst of a pandemic hasn't been easy but it has also opened up new ideas and possibilities for ministry. I have attended to the growing need for pastoral ministry and learned how to lead meaningful worship without being able to gather in person. I have also learned new skills required to hold vestry meetings and Bible studies virtually, as well as live-streaming services. We did a blessing for our St. Stephen's Rainbow Community Garden and had a beautiful pot-luck focused on the diversity of the LGBTQIA community. Finding opportunities for both churches to worship and fellowship together has been fun. We continued our Bible and book studies throughout the pandemic and now meet in person weekly.

**What is the most pressing issue facing the diocese in the next 5 years and how would you work to address it if elected?**

"Growing the church" is a popular theme these days but understanding what 'growth' means is changing. The shift to focus on numbers (attendance) is moving toward focusing on mission and ministry, and that's a good thing! Changing that mindset isn't easy when expenses exceed income and churches need more funds to be fiscally self-sustaining. It, in some cases, brings us to our knees before God - also a good thing, as we realize we don't do the work of mission and ministry alone. We need to encourage and support clergy and non-clergy leadership who are passionate about learning and engaging in new ways of 'being church'. Serving on the COM has helped me grow and learn in my own calling, as I seek to help others do the same - again, a good thing!