

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENTS OF NEW NOMINEES

(those who are currently serving on committees are not included)

The Rev. Michele Adamo-Delegate to Province I

The Rev. Michele Adamo was ordained to the diaconate in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Deacon Michele currently serves two churches in Barrington: St. John's and Sts. Matthew & Mark. Her service in those parishes continues to evolve as each church's needs change and as our community transitions to the endemic-phase of the COVID-19 experience. Her daytime job also is in a church: she works as the Office & Communications Manager for Beneficent Congregational Church in downtown Providence. In that space, Michele finds more opportunities to use her diaconal energy and support this community as they re-imagine their church life and mission and find ways to engage church members in a post-COVID world. In her spare time, Deacon Michele visits family in Pennsylvania and Maryland, binge-watches Netflix, and takes walks with her husband Al.

Mr. Adejuwon Aikulola-Deputy to General Convention

My name is Adejuwon Aikulola. I currently live in Johnston, RI with my wife Amanda and our three children. I have attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Pawtucket for the past 21 years. Prior to living in Rhode Island, I lived in New York for about 10 years after emigrating from Nigeria where I was raised in an Anglican church in the Ijebu Anglican Diocese.

At St. Paul's Church, I have served as a Sunday school teacher for many years and led many youth programs including the "Journey to Adulthood" and the "Rite 13" program. I have also served a number of terms on the Vestry and currently serve as the Junior Warden of the Parish.

Mr. Scott Avedisian- Deputy to General Convention

Scott Avedisian, Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, was born in Warwick and educated in the public schools of Warwick and Washington, DC. He was graduated from Providence College, completed the State and Local program, the Driving Government Performance program, the Leadership in Crises program, and the Innovations in Governance program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, received his Masters in Public Administration from Roger Williams University, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from the New England Institute of Technology. Prior to heading up RIPTA, Scott was Mayor of the City of Warwick for 18 years and a member of the Warwick City Council for nine years.

A lifelong Episcopalian, Scott served for three years as the President of The Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island. He served for a year as a member before becoming President. In this position, he helped lead the Diocese during the election of Bishop W. Nicholas Knisely. He currently serves as a member of the Cathedral Chapter. Avedisian has also served as the Chancellor of the Diocese and as the Parliamentarian of Diocesan Convention. He previously was appointed by Bishop Geralyn Wolf to Diocesan Council. He has also served as a Judge on the Ecclesiastical Trial Court and a member of the Committee on Resolutions. He has been a delegate to Diocesan Convention for more than a decade.

He served as the Honorary Chairman and Vice President of the Episcopal Charities Fund. He served 30 years as a member of the Board of Directors of St. Mary's Home for Children and has also served on the boards of other diocesan missions: St. Elizabeth Home and the Episcopal Conference Center.

Avedisian was elected as a Deputy to the 2015, 2018 and 2022 General Conventions, and was appointed as a first-time Deputy to the Dispatch of Business Committee. A lifelong member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Pawtuxet Village, Avedisian also served two different stints on the vestry at Trinity – for a total of 12 years. He also served as Senior Warden for an additional three years.

The Rev. Kevin D. Beesley-Standing Committee

I came to the diocese in 2021 where I was called to serve at Saint John the Evangelist in Newport. Prior to coming to Rhode Island, I served in the Diocese of Southern Ohio where I was ordained in 2016. It was my pleasure to have the opportunity to return to New England and to serve our Lord with such wonderful people.

While in the Diocese of Southern Ohio, I served as a member of the Commission on Congregational Life where I was appointed chair as well as a member of the Diocesan Disciplinary Board. I also was appointed to serve as the Transition Coordinator for the Central Ohio region (Columbus area) where I worked closely with the Diocesan Transition Officer. I look forward to the possibility of serving with the Bishop and doing my part to ensure that the message of Christ and his love for all progress with intention, order and that our diocese continues to serve with a heart of service and commitment to living into our baptismal covenant while being the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement.

The Rev. Sunil Chandy-Deputy to General Convention

Fr. Sunil Chandy is Rector of Christ Church Westerly, an active, creative, multi-staff, program church. In our diocese he has served as Deputy to General Convention, on the Commission on Congregational Development and is active in the Narragansett Deanery. Before Rhode Island, he served two dioceses (Newark and NJ) where he served as President of Standing Committee, was on the Commission on Ministry and Congregational Development and was a Deputy to General Convention. He loves his vocation and is especially fond of evangelism. Sunil is a recent "empty nester." Although he enjoys binge watching TV shows, he craves work that is important and meaningful! He seeks to serve again as a Deputy to General Convention.

Ms. Laura E. Clark-Deputy to General Convention

Since my baptism at St. Matthew's, Jamestown, I have served as a church school teacher, confirmation class mentor, vestry member and currently as a thrift shop volunteer and choir member. Outside of St. Matthew's, my main connection to the Diocese is through the Episcopal Conference Center (ECC). I co-led a parenting conference last fall and am a visiting staff member in the summer. As an ECC committee member, I was involved in the recent Rise Together 70th anniversary celebration. In my "day job" as a licensed mental health counselor at Thompson Middle School in Newport, I have the opportunity to positively impact students as well as the honor of holding their pain when life gets complicated. This fills me daily with gratitude. (Laura served as a deputy to the 2022 General Convention.)

The Rev. Canon Dr. Dena Cleaver-Bartholomew-Deputy to General Convention

The Rev. Canon Dr. Dena Cleaver-Bartholomew is the Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Rhode Island. She serves as Bishop Knisely's Chief of Staff and assists him with the management, oversight, and operations of the Diocese, and in the support of clergy and congregations.

Canon Dena earned a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School, as well as a Master of Theology and a Doctor of Ministry from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. She has served congregations in the Dioceses of Atlanta, Los Angeles, Michigan, Ohio, and Central New York prior to being called to Rhode Island in August 2019. Before being ordained, Canon Dena was a legislative assistant for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, where she drafted and analyzed bills and amendments, wrote committee reports, and presented information to the Representatives in caucus. Canon Dena is married to the Rev. Dr. David Cleaver-Bartholomew. They have two adult daughters; Audrey is a lawyer, and Lydia works for a public charter school.

Ms. Margaret Clifton-Diocesan Council

I am a registered nurse. I was baptized, confirmed and married in St. Mark's, Warren. At St. Mark's, I attended Sunday school, sang in the choir and served on the altar guild. I have been a member of St. Luke's, East Greenwich since I was married. At St. Luke's, I have served on the following committees: vestry, new rector search committee, usher team leader, COVID-19 committee, Cursillo teams. Since I retired in the Spring of 2022, I have joined these committees: prayer shawl committee, pastoral care committee, Mobile Loaves and Fishes, Lunch on the Hill. I am a retired Colonel in the U.S. Army and I serve as a mentor at the RI Veterans' Court. I am a member and president of the Military Officers Association of America, Narragansett Bay Chapter. As a citizen of Exeter, I serve on the Exeter Library building committee. I also serve on the Pollination Pathways Garden Club.

Mr. Stephen L. Croteau-Disciplinary Committee

I am a life-long Episcopalian and Rhode Island resident. With my parents, Reverend Duncan McQueen (my second priest), Martin Luther and Thomas Cranmer serving as my mentors, I have developed a moral and ethical Christian way of thinking. I have been the Senior Warden and President of the Bishop's Committee at two different parishes, have volunteered in fire, EMS and boy scouts, have been President and Senior Handler of a volunteer search and rescue dog team and have served on a Juvenile Board for the State of Rhode Island for the last 22 years. I feel I have a good moral and ethical value system which will guide me to make valid judgements using Title IV of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church.

Ms. Victoria Escalera-Treasurer of the Diocese

Vicki Escalera retired in 2019 from a career in university administration and internal auditing, with brief stints in public accounting and banking. A graduate of Wellesley College, she moved to Newport in 1974 and attained master's degrees in human development (Salve Regina University) and accounting (URI) while working full-time and starting a family. In the 27 years she led the internal audit functions at Brown University and then the University System of New Hampshire, she earned and maintained certifications as an internal auditor, public accountant (CPA), and fraud examiner, and was active in local and national professional organizations. Since her first visit to Trinity Church-Newport, she has felt welcomed by Rhode Island's Episcopal community and been tapped to serve as assistant treasurer at Trinity, audit committee member at St. John's-Barrington and Church of the Holy Spirit-Charlestown, and treasurer of St. Augustine's in Kingston. Her Diocesan service started with an appointment by Bishop Hunt to the former Cathedral Corporation and has included terms on the Commission on Finance, the College Commission, and more recently, the Commission on Investments and the search committee for the new chief financial officer. Diocesan Council elected Vicki earlier this year to fill the remainder of Jay Candon's term as treasurer.

The Rev. Patrick Greene-Deputy to General Convention

I am a thirty-eight year old priest born and raised in Rhode Island. I currently live in Barrington with my wife Carmen, our children Jackson and Hazel, and our dog Tucker. I graduated Summa Cum Laude with a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Rhode Island in 2006 and from Virginia Theological Seminary with my M.Div in 2010. I was ordained to the diaconate in May of 2010 and to the priesthood in December of 2010. I served as the Assistant to the Rector at St. Paul's Wickford from 2010 to 2014. From 2014 through 2018 I served as the Priest-in-Charge and then Rector of Saints Matthew & Mark in Barrington. In November of 2018, I began serving as the Rector of St. John's in Barrington. In our diocese I have served on the leadership team for Happening, as the Dean of the Narragansett Deanery, as a member of Diocesan Council, as a Deputy to General Convention in 2015, 2018 and 2022, serving as the Chair of our Deputation in 2018, and as a member and president of the Standing Committee. I am currently a member of the Congregational Development Commission.

The Venerable Janice L. Grinnell-Deputy to General Convention

Jan Grinnell is Archdeacon and has been ordained Deacon for 31 years, and has served liturgically at St. Michael's, Bristol; Trinity Church, Newport; St. Paul's, Wickford; and St. Augustine's at URI, where she was Chaplain to the campus. She has served a formation director for the Province 1 School for Deacon, the Board of Directors for the Association for Episcopal Deacons (AED), and the Center for Reconciliation. She has also served as a Province 1 deputy and a member of the Commission on Ministry. She had been a clergy deputy to General Convention (GC) in 2015, 2018, and 2022; and, served on three Legislative Committees. Jan's secular employment has focused on IT consulting. She is the founder and owner of Grinnell Appreciative Consulting, LLC since 2008, a certified Woman Owned Enterprise (WBE). Jan is married to Ann Hamm, and they have four children and four grandchildren.

Mr. John Hines-Disciplinary Committee

My professional career was that of a civil defense attorney. My role was to defend clients from the time they were sued, through trial, if necessary. (I tried hundreds of cases, mainly in front of juries.)

My nearly forty-six years of doing so enabled me to not only seek the truth but to have a keen sense of finding it. Lastly, I was respected by my fellow colleagues and jurists such that I was selected to be an arbitrator or mediator on many occasions. All the above, I believe, qualifies me to sit as a member of the disciplinary panel.

(John is a member of St. Peter's by the Sea, Narragansett.)

Mr. Kinte Howie-Deputy to General Convention

My name is Kinte Howie. I am the Senior Warden at Saint James Episcopal Church in North Providence RI. I have been a Christian since childhood, and I became an Episcopalian through the sacrament of confirmation at 15. Currently, as Senior Warden, I am supporting my parish by facilitating our transition and discernment as we search for a new priest. In addition, I lead my parish in public worship as a worship leader, leading the services of the daily office. I am in the process of receiving my preaching license. I do all these things because I believe in the Gospel of Christ. I have a love and passion for the church and I want to bring that message out to the world.

Ms. Allison Martin-Commission on Congregational Development

I have been an Episcopalian for over 40 years. I have served as a volunteer when I worked in Japan as a Lay Associate in Charge. I was a civilian working with the Air Force and when we lost our Chaplain, I did all the services for almost three years. I have served in several churches in Christian Education, as Eucharistic Minister, Lector, Vestry member and Pastoral Care. Currently I am a volunteer Coordinator for Pastoral Care, Compline Leader at St Michael's in Bristol.

Mr. Donald Peach-Commission on Ministry

I am eager to serve on the Commission on Ministry. An educator for over forty years, I have held various positions in Catholic and independent schools: English teacher, Department Head, Upper School Head, and Director of College Guidance. Faculty development has been a special interest. A lifelong Episcopalian and native Rhode Islander, I have co-taught Sunday School, served on the Vestries of two local churches, served as a lector and greeter, co-chaired Episcopal Charities at the parochial level, and served as an Episcopal Charities site visitor. In addition, I have served on the Steering Committee of a church's Capital Campaign and presently serve on a church-sponsored college scholarship committee. Three times I have served as a Lay Delegate to Diocesan Convention. In my community, I have coached and volunteered in local food pantries.

The Rev. Beth Sherman-Delegate to Province 1

The Rev. Beth Sherman is Vicar of St. Augustine's Church in Kingston and St. Augustine's Chaplain to the University of Rhode Island. She is a member of Diocesan Council, on the board of ECC, and is Clergy Dean of the Narragansett Deanery. Beth is particularly excited by the deanery's current work of creating a deeper connection to the Narragansett Nation. Beth is part of the Mindfulness Meditation group at URI, which is committed to making mindfulness meditation available to students, faculty and staff. She especially enjoys her work with students on campus. Beth and her parishioners are working to make their beautiful acre of land, which includes a labyrinth, more accessible to the URI community, as well as having it mirror the parish's commitment to sustainability.

The Rev. Maryalice Sullivan-Commission on Ministry

I am married and have four children and 12 grandchildren. I have been ordained for over thirty years and served several parishes. For a time, I served in Tanzania with now Archbishop Maimbo. It was an exciting time and life changing experience. In 2004, I studied to be a spiritual director and I continue to have directees, as well as my own spiritual director. This ministry is an important part of my life. It informs my life as a parish priest and calls me to be still and listen to those around me as well as my own calling. Currently I am serving the community of St. Peter's & St. Andrew's, Providence. We have a food pantry and now serve 100 plus families each week.

Ms. Olive Swinski-Deputy to General Convention

Hello, my name is Olive Swinski and I am a parishioner at Church of the Redeemer in Providence. At my congregation, I am the convener of the Flower Guild. On the diocesan level, I am a current member of Diocesan Council and I have served on CDC. At the Provincial level, I am the current Vice President of Province One and also sit on the Advisory Council for the Province One School for Deacons. Outside of the church, I am a community based Social Worker in Woonsocket, where I provide mental health services to young adults. Additionally, I volunteer at a rescue for senior and hospice dogs. This past year I was fortunate enough to be a Deputy to General Convention and I hope to be able to return. I feel as though my positions at the diocesan and provincial levels give me a unique perspective that can help the National Church move forward.

The Rev. Dante Tavolaro-Deputy to General Convention

My name is Dante Tavolaro and I have the pleasure of serving as the Rector of St. Thomas Church, Greenville. I have a passion and enthusiasm for church governance and structures both on the local and national level. I serve on the board of ECC and the diocesan resolutions committee; and previously served on diocesan council, Jonathan Daniels House board, Environmental Stewardship Task Force, deputy to General Convention (2009, 2012, 2015, 2022), and was a member of the Joint Nominating Committee for the Election of the Presiding Bishop (2012-2015). I am eager to continue serving our diocese and the wider church as we imagine how God is calling us in this moment and beyond. In my free time I love to read, cook, and play in the Providence Gay Flag Football League.

The Rev. Peter Tierney-Diocesan Council

Peter Tierney has been a priest of the Diocese since coming to Rhode Island from Massachusetts in 2010, currently serving as Vicar of St. James Episcopal Church as well as Pastor for St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church, both located in Woonsocket. He is concluding five years as chair of the Commission on Finance, and previously chaired the Program & Budget committee for two years as well as the 2015 Strategic Planning Task Force from 2011-2015. His work in these roles has been aimed at increasing the efficiency and availability of Diocesan resources for congregations as well as our shared Diocesan ministries, a project he wants to continue by joining Diocesan Council. He is also the presbyteral representative on the Deacons' Council. Peter resides in Woonsocket with his wife, the Rev. Dr. Veronica Tierney—who is also a priest of the Diocese—and their two Portuguese Water Dogs, Cruz and Liza.

The Rev. Dr. Veronica Tierney-Deputy to General Convention, Commission on Investments

Veronica Tierney is Principal of FourTwelve, LLC, a consulting practice she founded in early 2021 focused on equipping congregations in the business aspects of their ministries. She has previously served as Priest-in-Charge at Saints Matthew and Mark Church, Barrington and at Christ Church, Lincoln; Long-term Supply Priest at Holy Cross, Middletown and St. Columba's, Middletown; and Assistant Chaplain at St. George's School, Middletown. She currently serves on the Commission on Finance and the Compensation and Benefits Committee, and was Clergy Alternate to General Convention in Baltimore. Veronica is a past chair of the Program and Budget Committee, and of the Commission on Finance's Task Force on Congregational Support. She is a past member of the ECC Advisory Board and ECC Strategic Planning Team, and the Parochial Report Review Committee. In 2018, Veronica completed a PhD in Early Christian Theology at Boston College. Prior to ordination, she worked for ten years in the investment management industry. Veronica is married to Peter Tierney, and they live in Woonsocket with their two Portuguese Water Dogs, Cruz and Liza.

Mr. W. Grant Willis-Standing Committee

Received by the Episcopal Church 21 years ago, I am influenced by Hooker's metaphor of a three-legged stool: Scripture, Tradition, and especially Reason. Educated in making decisions based on defensible information, this suits my former vocation as university professor well and portends my interest in serving God on the Diocese's Standing Committee.

I served three terms as Senior Warden of The Church of the Redeemer, Providence. I also am concluding my service as a member of the Diocese's Commission on Ministry. I served on many Parish committees include a Task Force on Reopening (during COVID-19), a discernment committee, the nomination committee for our Vestry, audit committees and in other roles such as Junior Warden, Vestry member, acolyte, reader, chalice bearer and offering counter. I prayerfully have discerned this commitment, and I am eager, God willing, to serve with this group.

The Rev. Jennifer Zogg-Disciplinary Board

The Rev. Jennifer Zogg serves as Rector of Church of the Epiphany in Rumford/East Providence. She recently served as Vice-Chair of Diocesan Council from 2019-2021 and as a member of the Diocesan Investment Trust. She has mentored a diocesan deacon candidate and served on various diocesan task forces. She provides chaplaincy services at nursing homes in East Providence and is active on the East Providence Ecumenical Food Pantry board.