

GOVERNANCE NOMINEES | BOARD OF TRUSTEES



The Rev. Karen Freeman

Clergy Nominee | Board of Trustees

Grace Church | Fairfield

Nominated by: The Rev. Amy Denney Zuniga

Born and raised in Sacramento, I attended Sac State for two years, then moved to San Diego, receiving my BSc in Biology from SDSU. I worked in biotech in S.D., then met Andy, my English husband-to-be, who was a professional yachtsman. I then worked with him as crew on a couple of yachts, sailing the Atlantic and Pacific. An amazing experience! We married and moved to England where I lived for 26 years, working in Veterinary Science for 17 years. After having two children, I began the journey to ordained ministry. I was ordained as a transitional deacon in 2009 and priest in 2010 in Chester Cathedral, then served two parishes in the Church of England (CofE), on the Wirral peninsula. I moved back to California in 2018 and was called to serve as priest in charge, and recently rector, of Grace, Fairfield.

I have not held any diocesan level offices in the EDNC, but while in England, I held the following positions: member of the Chester Diocese and Birkenhead Deanery Synods; member of the Board of Governors for a primary school; executive committee member of a village conservation society; trustee for a town youth club; planning team for deanery-wide mission with Archbishop of York, the Most Rev. Dr. John Sentamu; organizing committee for a cathedral service, 25th anniversary of the ordination of women priests in the CofE; worship planning team for Chester Diocesan Clergy Conference.

I'm excited by the potential opportunity to serve the Episcopal Diocese of Northern California!

GOVERNANCE NOMINEES | SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1:

Where have you seen our mission statement “Making Disciples, Raising up Saints, and Transforming Communities for Christ” in action, and how could your governance body support them for the Diocese as a whole?

Mental health is a subject dear to my heart, as long ago I suffered from post-natal depression. I think it's vital for churches to care about the mental health of their members and their communities. Over the past two years, our men's group (Grace Episcopal Men, or GEM) has built a relationship with our local branch of the National Alliance for Mental Illness, NAMI Solano County, as they recognize the importance of mental health as foundational to a healthy life and community. Grace Church has been supporting NAMI for several years through annual financial contributions. GEM wanted this relationship to grow deeper, in more practical ways. GEM invited NAMI's volunteer coordinator, Sunny Bradford, to speak to the group, and asked how they could be of help to NAMI. GEM have agreed to take on the role of “Materials Distribution” for NAMI, whereby GEM members deliver informational brochures about NAMI services to clinics, residential homes, and hospitals, all over Solano County. GEM now also coordinate with NAMI to collect donations for their annual Holiday Gift Bag initiative, and Grace Church has provided space to pack over 500 gift bags which are given to people all over the county who are experiencing mental health conditions. For some of the recipients, we are told by NAMI, it's the only holiday gift they will receive.

NAMI California has branches in at least 10 counties across our Diocese. Perhaps some of our parishes are already working with their local NAMI branch, or with another mental health organization. For GEM, it's a discipleship opportunity. Perhaps, as a diocese, we could have a forum at some point for sharing ideas and resources, to bring awareness and practical solutions to our care for those struggling with mental health issues.

QUESTION 2:

As we enter the post-pandemic world, how do you see the diocese and its governance structures moving forward?

Prior to the pandemic, Grace Church had never livestreamed anything before. By the grace of God, somehow we started online services right away, using my iPhone and laptop computer from the living room, with help from my housemates (mom and asister!). I can't remember which came first, Facebook Live or Zoom, but both were a learning experience, to say the least. Our music director sent piano music files to play through our Bluetooth speaker. We learned how to stream directly from Zoom to Facebook. Eventually we moved from the house to the empty church, with the wonderful help of a tech-savvy church member. We bought new cameras, sound equipment and lighting. How wonderful it was to hear the organ again! Now we are a “hybrid” church with in-person services, plus livestreaming online.

As we enter the post-pandemic world (please, God), I recognize the exhaustion that many of us are feeling... clergy, laity - the whole society. Conflicts have surfaced in our churches and communities - disagreements about masking, vaccinating, gathering. I see the need for heroic levels of prayer, gentle encouragement, and the sharing of resources.

Although we have missed meeting together in person as a diocese, I don't mind attending online meetings because then we don't have to travel, saving time and CO2 emissions! I hope the Board of Trustees will continue to meet online as much as possible, for the sake of those who live far from meeting venues. I strongly believe we need to embrace digital technology, streaming, and social media engagement, and am glad to know there are grants available to help parishes to do this. This will need to continue to be strategic and budgetary considerations for the Board of Trustees.