



SARAH FISHER

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Describe your relationship with Jesus Christ and tell us where you find abiding joy in the Gospel, as well as the basis for your passion for its proclamation.

As a child, before I knew the words to the liturgy or sang hymns with delight, my eyes focused on a stained-glass image of Jesus above the altar: welcome, love, joy.

I grew, life changed. Amid my parents' divorce and remarriages, the awkwardness of adolescence, Jesus remained. Entry into adulthood was hard. I ran from myself and from God. I was lost and afraid. Despite fear of rejection, I made my way back to church, that stained glass image still proclaiming welcome, joy and love. Returning to the church meant returning to the One who had been patiently waiting for me to remember who and whose I was. This began my continuing adult journey of discovering the transformational power of Jesus' love.

The image from the window, though challenged and expanded over the years, remains etched in my heart. My love of Jesus has grown through story, sacraments, and community. It is personal, rooted in the Gospels, amplified by study, made known in the breaking of the bread and through God's people. In this broken and divided world, the Risen Christ invites us to live another way; a way of hope, joy and promise to unveil God's dream of heaven on earth. The church welcomed me home, to the community, to God, to the truest version of myself. I hope that in everything I do and say as a priest, yes, but also as friend, neighbor and even stranger, I make the same journey accessible to others.

Describe your approach to ministry in a divided nation and world? How do you go about respecting the dignity of every human being when the understanding of our humanity can be deeply different?

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh...Ephesians 6:12

A friend offered this definition of conflict: two or more conflicting ideas trying to inhabit the same space.

Paul's wisdom, paired with this definition, helps navigate division, especially in the church. Paul reminds the Ephesians (and us) that flesh and blood, people, aren't the enemy; the struggle is conflicting ideas inhabiting the same space. This does not mean we're called to uniformity or complete alignment. It does mean that flesh and blood aren't the enemy.

I serve a very purple congregation. We are not unanimous in politics, or in how much noise children should make in church, or what brand of coffee to serve. We are united in our desire to see, know and serve the Risen Christ.

My approach is to dive into relationship—relationship with Christ, relationship with one another. Getting proximate to those who differ from us is vital to seeing the inherent dignity and divinity that dwells in every person. It is easy to hate an idea or a stereotype or a strongly held belief. It is harder to hate the neighbor you know, when you can recognize the light of Christ within them.

I also recognize that we can't get proximate to everyone. Words matter. Teaching matters. I use my voice, both in the pulpit and in my daily ministry, to offer a lens through which the world might be imagined as God dreams it, to imagine another way we might be.

Why this diocese? Explain what excites you about the Diocese of East Carolina.

Two ministry gifts I carry are skills for Congregational Development and a heart that can sit with people in times of both joy and heartbreak. East Carolina seeks a Bishop who can help her people and her churches dream, grow, redevelop, and thrive. What I hear in this profile is a strong desire for a pastor and leader who can speak with passion, joy and hope, while partnering and discerning with communities where God is leading them. I believe I can help in this strategic and pastoral work.

In February of this year, the Pew Research Center reported that Church decline, one of omnipresent facts of church life in the 21st Century, has slowed and may have leveled off. The Diocese of East Carolina is home to some of the fastest growing communities in the nation. Churches of all sizes are offering places for people to combat the pandemic of loneliness, to reimagine what church life can be, and to grow as disciples and friends of Jesus. Every congregation, of every size, has the ability to grow in health, vitality and faithfulness.

This is a moment in the life of the Church, and the life of the Diocese of East Carolina that is exciting and full of possibilities. I would be honored to be part of a conversation about how God's work in the world might continue to grow and flourish throughout the Diocese.