



# Nominee Profile



**The Revd.  
Russell E. J. Martin  
M.S.W., MDiv**

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A LETTER FROM

# THE BISHOP AND DIOCESAN COUNCIL

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Over the past two months, the Diocesan Council has received thoughtful and concerned feedback from clergy and lay leaders across our diocese following our December 2025 announcement that we would proceed with one candidate for the election of our next bishop. We are grateful for those who shared their perspectives. Honest and charitable conversation is essential in a season of discernment such as this.

In response to this feedback, the Council has met regularly for prayerful discussion and reflection, seeking the Lord's wisdom and unity for our diocese.

Today, we write to inform you of our unanimous decision to present two candidates for election as our next Bishop. We are pleased to announce that **Fr. Russell Martin** and **Fr. Ben Sharpe** will stand for election. These priests were both vetted and interviewed in-person by the Episcopal Nominations Team (ENT). Both are men of integrity, pastoral zeal, and godly leadership.

Enclosed you will find candidate profiles. We encourage you to read them carefully and to begin praying intentionally for both men, for our diocese, and for the election process in the weeks ahead.

The revised schedule leading to the consecration of our next Bishop is as follows:

## Walkabouts

- April 23 – Holy Cross, Baton Rouge, LA
- April 24 – St. Timothy's, Spring, TX
- April 25 – Christ Our King, New Braunfels, TX

## Electing Synod

- Saturday, May 16 – St. Timothy Anglican Church, Spring, TX

## **Consent by the College of Bishops**

- June 15–17 – Tulsa, OK

## **Celebration of the Bishop's Ministry**

- August 14 – Houston, TX (location TBD)

## **Consecration of the New Bishop**

- August 15 – Houston, TX (location TBD)

In light of these adjustments, the Episcopal Transition Team (ETT) has extended the deadline for submitting walkabout questions to **March 13, 2026**. The walkabouts are regional gatherings (approximately four hours each) designed to allow the candidates to meet and engage with members of the diocese. All are welcome to attend, and delegate participation is especially encouraged. If you would like to submit a question for consideration, please [click here](#).

On behalf of the Diocesan Council, thank you for your patience, grace, and prayers during this important season. We remain committed to walking together in unity and trust, confident in the Lord's faithful guidance.

With our prayers,

Your Bishop and Council

# THE REVD. RUSSELL MARTIN

## NOMINEE PROFILE

### A Legacy of Ministry: The Track Record



#### 25+ Years of Ordained Leadership

Extensive experience as a Rector, Area Dean, and member of the ACNA Provincial Executive Committee.



#### Frontline Chaplaincy Specialist

Years of service in high-intensity prison environments, including death row, providing pastoral care in spiritual battlegrounds.



#### The "Social Worker" Priest

Combines clinical social work training with pastoral ministry to non-anxiously navigate complex, messy congregational conflicts.

### A Vision for the Future: Strategic Priorities



#### \$5M - \$8M Kingdom War Chest

A three-tiered financial plan to stabilize existing parishes, fund church planting, and build diocesan infrastructure.



#### Spiritual Warfare Protocols

Plans to implement diocesan-wide training in deliverance and establish a DWGC Center for Healing.



#### Youth as "Leaders of Today"

Moving beyond traditional youth groups to coach and deploy students as full members and leaders in training.

## 1.0 Introduction

This document provides a comprehensive overview of The Rev. Russell E. J. Martin, a priest, chaplain, and seasoned leader whose ministry is marked by a unique fusion of pastoral care and professional social work. With over 25 years of ordained ministry and a prior decade in the correctional probation system, Fr. Russell seeks to bring a "non-anxious" presence to complex, "messy" situations. His vocation is defined by a commitment to spiritual warfare, a passion for the "least, the last, and the lost," and a "Nathan Anointing" that enables him to speak hard truths with love. This profile explores the formative trials, leadership style, and strategic vision that shape his candidacy for Bishop Ordinary.

## 2.0 Formative Journey

Understanding Fr. Russell's character requires looking at a life shaped by a fourth-generation pastoral heritage and a "crucible of failure, obstacles, and challenges" that have forged his resilience. His spiritual autobiography does not reflect a sudden conversion but a lifelong walk with God, beginning with childhood memories of speaking with angels and an acute longing for the things of God.

The initial "whisper" of his call to the priesthood occurred as a young boy; when illness prevented his family from attending church, he conducted a makeshift communion service for his sister using Roman Meal bread and grape juice. However, his journey was not without internal opposition. A learning disability diagnosis in grade school created a season of shame and stigma that he reflects on as a time when the "enemy exploited" his confidence. Through the help of a godly speech therapist, he learned the foundational Gospel lesson of asking for and receiving help, a realization that would later inform his calm but resolute approach to pastoral care.

Fr. Russell's transition from a ten-year career as a Correctional Probation Officer to ordained ministry was precipitated by a near-fatal event. On August 8, 1992, his car rolled five times in a violent accident. Amidst the screeching metal, he heard God's voice clearly say, "Russell, I love you and today is not your day." This experience resulted in a "profound spiritual deluge" of peace and a subsequent baptism in the Holy Spirit that fundamentally reoriented his life toward the priesthood. During this season, he was mentored by Fr. Alan MacKillop in the ministries of healing and deliverance, affirming his charism for spiritual warfare.

His character was further refined through two significant trials of "costly righteousness." The first involved a difficult intervention with a senior Bishop incapacitated by dementia; despite being vilified for his actions, Fr. Russell felt a divine mandate to "stay the course" for the health of the Church. This experience solidified his "Nathan Anointing"—the ability to speak hard truths in love.

The most profound crucible, however, was the twelve-year journey as the primary caretaker for his first wife, Molly, during her battle with cancer. This season taught him a "depth of humility" and the reality of walking through the "valley of the shadow of death." Following her death in 2020, he found himself "lost and adrift" until the Lord spoke a promise of restoration: "Russell, you are Job! But Job being restored!" This promise was fulfilled through his marriage to Lindy in 2021, a union he describes as a "lavish love" from God that has prepared him for the "frontlines" of diocesan leadership.

### **3.0 Pastoral & Missionary Experience**

Fr. Russell's extensive professional history demonstrates a consistent pattern of leading through transition, a commitment to frontline evangelism, and significant service at every level of the Church. His career is marked by a progression from foundational parish ministry to high-level provincial leadership and specialized chaplaincy in high-stakes environments.

### 3.1 Church Planting and Parish Leadership

Fr. Russell's pastoral appointments reveal a narrative of resilience and a persistent focus on following God's timing, a philosophy he describes as "moving when the pillar moves."

- **Early Ministry (St. Dunstan's Episcopal):** Serving as Associate Pastor (2000–2004), Fr. Russell developed his passion for youth ministry and his advocacy for "all-member ministries," a conviction that every baptized person is called to active service.
- **St. Timothy's and Christ the King (2004–2020):** Elected Rector of St. Timothy's in 2004, he led the congregation through the complex and painful process of disaffiliating from the Episcopal Church. This marked the birth of Christ the King Anglican Church in San Diego, where he served for 14 years. During this tenure, he also established and led a new Anglican youth ministry for 11 years.
- **International Missions:** Fr. Russell has a deep heart for cross-cultural evangelism, particularly in East Africa. He has led or participated in multiple SOMA mission trips to Uganda and Kenya (2009, 2011, 2016), focusing on life in the Holy Spirit and evangelizing in areas with significant Islamic influence. His 2009 trip to Mbale, Uganda, resulted in an altar call where over 30 people received Christ.

### 3.2 Diocesan and Denominational Service

Beyond the local parish, Fr. Russell has invested heavily in the structural integrity and health of the broader Anglican movement through service in several key provincial and diocesan appointments.

- **Provincial Leadership (ACNA):** Fr. Russell brought his strategic thinking and collaborative style to the highest levels of the province, serving on the ACNA Provincial Council and the Executive Committee for seven years (2009–2016). Prior to this, he served on the Executive Board of the Anglican Communion Network (2006–2009) during the foundational years of the current Anglican movement in North America.
- **Diocesan Leadership (Area Dean):** As Area Dean for San Diego (2011–2018), he coordinated the mission and vision for nine churches, assisted the Bishop in clergy care, and developed regional strategies for church planting. He has also held various leadership positions within the Diocese of San Diego and the Diocese of Western Anglicans.

- **Specialized Chaplaincy and Evangelism:** His vocational journey includes a unique focus on "the least, the last, and the lost". He served as a Protestant Chaplain at R. J. Donovan State Prison and currently serves at the Polunsky Unit, which houses Texas's death row. His excellence in this field was recognized when he was named the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Chaplain of the Year in 2022.
- **Leadership Development:** Fr. Russell has a long-term commitment to forming leaders, having served as a Spiritual Director for Anglican Youth Ministries (2006–2013) and as an Executive Board member of the San Diego Sheriff's Chaplain Corps. He also participated in a spiritual support group with fellow Anglican priests for 15 years to maintain health and accountability in ministry.

This record of practical, on-the-ground experience in building, shepherding, and institutional leadership is animated by a clear and coherent "Nathan Anointing"—the ability to speak truth in love for the health of the Church.

#### 4.0 Leadership Philosophy and Approach

Fr. Russell describes himself as a collaborative yet decisive leader who prefers consensus but is willing to take calculated risks. His leadership is characterized by a "direct and forthright" style that prioritizes transparency and the imitation of Christ's servant heart. He explicitly rejects micromanagement, preferring to empower others to "live into the fullness of God's call" while maintaining a "Nathan Anointing"—the ability to speak hard truths in a loving, constructive manner.

- **Humility and Adaptability:** A defining moment in his professional development occurred while serving as a curate at St. Dunstan's. After a parishioner critiqued his sermons as "repetitive" and "condescending," Fr. Russell sought honest feedback from trusted peers and radically altered his homiletical style. This experience fostered a "culture of honest positive critique" that he carries into his leadership today.
- **First 100 Days Strategy:** If elected, Fr. Russell intends to spend his first 100 days on a listening tour across the deaneries. He believes one cannot truly understand a context until they "see it" and perform a thorough audit of the local culture and needs.
- **Conflict and Chaos Management:** Trained in Family Systems, Fr. Russell views himself as a "non-anxious" leader who addresses complex, "messy" situations objectively and with love. In times of chaos, he advocates for stepping back to "discern the problem from the symptoms" and waiting for God's timing—a philosophy he calls "moving when the pillar moves."

- **Collaborative Consensus:** While he is a decisive leader capable of making unilateral decisions when necessary, he prefers to lead through consensus. Fr. Russell is committed to building teams based on individual gifts, not micromanaging, but supporting and encouraging for success.

## 5.0 Theological Framework and Episcopal Vision

Fr. Russell's vision for the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast is one of fortification and expansion, moving from a "refuge" for disillusioned Anglicans to a mission-focused movement.

- **The "Kingdom War Chest":** To catalyze the diocese, Fr. Russell proposes raising \$5–8 million to be split into three equal allocations:
  - **Stability:** One-third to stabilize existing congregations and provide health benefits to clergy families.
  - **Mission:** One-third to underwrite church plants in traditional and non-traditional settings, such as prisons, universities, and military communities.
  - **Infrastructure:** One-third to develop the diocesan and deanery-level infrastructure required to support growth.
- **Systematic Spiritual Warfare:** Fr. Russell seeks to integrate his charism for spiritual warfare into the diocesan fabric by establishing a protocol for deliverance. His vision includes an annual conference, a mandatory course for ordination candidates, and the establishment of a Diocesan Center for Healing and Deliverance to address the "growing demonic influence" in modern culture.
- **Women in Ministry:** Fr. Russell's perspective on women's roles is both personal and theological. While he grew up with a mother who was an Episcopal priest, his own study of Scripture and Catholic tradition led him to adhere to a male-only priesthood. However, he is a passionate advocate for the Permanent Diaconate for women, believing that if the Church properly celebrated this order and the vocation of the laity, much of the "angst" surrounding women's ordination would be resolved.
- **The Five Chief Images of a Bishop:** He understands his role through five biblical lenses:
  - **Shepherd:** Pastoring and protecting the clergy and flock.
  - **Teacher:** Helping the Church wisely apply the "faith once delivered."
  - **Guardian:** Protecting the Church from false doctrine with temperate authority.

- **Equipper:** Helping all the "baptized faithful" answer their call to ministry.
  - **Lover of Souls:** Mirroring Christ's heart for the "least, the last, and the lost".
- **Five-Year Roadmap:** Within five years, he envisions a diocese that has planted 4–5 new churches, established a succession plan, and created a robust pipeline for future clergy.

## 6.0 Team Martin

Fr. Russell and his wife, Lindy, married in 2021. Lindy is described as a "gifted intercessor" with a heart for clergy spouses. As a teacher, she brings a burden for children's ministry and supporting the women of the diocese. They currently host monthly fellowship and worship gatherings in their home to build Christian community. While Fr. Russell does not have biological children, he views his role as a "spiritual father" to many through his years of ministry.

## 7.0 Spiritual Disciplines

Fr. Russell's leadership is sustained by a structured rhythm of prayer and "spiritual fortification."

- **Daily Prayer:** He practices Morning and Evening Prayer, often "soaking prayer," and prays nightly with Lindy.
- **The "Fortified Commute":** He utilizes his long commute to the prison for intercession and spiritual preparation.
- **Fasting & Confession:** He honors a weekly Sunday morning fast and engages in auricular confession at least twice a year to maintain perspective.
- **Study & Recreation:** An avid fan of audiobooks (3–4 per month), he stays conversant with culture to better bridge the Gospel. His hobbies include gardening, artisanal baking, and shooting sports.

# APPENDIX

Hyperlinks (click to view)

- [Original Candidate Profile](#)
- [DWGC Survey Results](#) \*
- [Diocesan Leadership](#)
- [List of Parishes](#)
- [DWGC Constitution & Canons](#)
- [Episcopal Transition Webpage](#)

\* From June 26 to July 3, 2025, the Episcopal Nominations Team conducted a survey to gather insight for the bishop search process. A total of 64 individuals participated, including priests, deacons, and lay leaders from across the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast.