



Nominee Profile



**The Revd. Dr.
Benjamin S. Sharpe, Jr.
BA, MDiv, DMin**

dwgc.org/episcopal-transition



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. DR. BEN SHARPE

NOMINEE PROFILE

A LIFETIME OF MINISTRY: THE TRACK RECORD		A VISION FOR THE FUTURE: EPISCOPAL PRIORITIES	
38+ YEARS of Pastoral Experience A career spanning Methodist and Anglican traditions since 1987		#1 PRIORITY Church Planting Proposes that funding, staffing, and organization should reflect this primary emphasis.	
 Proven Church Planter Planted multiple churches and mentored clergy who went on to plant others.	 Developer of Future Leaders Believes his most enduring impact is mentoring and deploying faithful clergy.	 A 'Prayer Book Bishop' Model Views the role as a shepherd and teacher, not a CEO or micromanager.	 Champion for Christian Catechesis Sees systematic, lifelong discipleship as essential for the church's health.

1.0 Introduction

This document provides a comprehensive overview of The Revd. Dr. Benjamin S. Sharpe, Jr., a seasoned pastor, church planter, and diocesan leader. His nearly four decades of ministry are defined by a deep commitment to orthodox Anglicanism, a missionary zeal for evangelism and church planting, and a proven passion for mentoring and deploying new generations of clergy. This profile will explore the formative experiences, professional accomplishments, leadership philosophy, and theological convictions that shape his vocation.

Revd. Sharpe is a pastor whose identity has been forged through 38 years of diverse ministerial experiences. His work is characterized by a strategic focus on church planting and a deep conviction that robust Christian catechesis is the bedrock of a durable church. His journey from the UMC to the AMiA in 2004 was a deliberate response to a clear call, culminating in a self-described identity as a "Prayer Book missionary." This profile details the ministerial career of a leader who has demonstrated a consistent ability to build healthy congregations, develop robust institutional structures, and equip others for faithful gospel ministry.

2.0 Formative Journey

Understanding a leader's personal history is essential to comprehending their character, convictions, and approach to ministry. Formative experiences, both successful and challenging, serve as a crucible, refining conviction and building resilience. For Revd. Sharpe, key moments of conversion, mentorship, and trial have been instrumental in forging a durable and deeply considered vocation.

His spiritual autobiography begins with a dramatic conversion experience at age 16, which he describes as a "total transformation" of his character, followed just weeks later by a sense of calling to ordained ministry. This call was affirmed and nurtured by early mentors who taught him foundational spiritual disciplines. His time at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was marked by deep involvement with Campus Crusade for Christ, where a structured discipleship program further equipped him for Christian service. After years of pastoral ministry, he and his wife, Lisa, experienced a "very clear call" to leave the United Methodist Church, leading to his ordination in the Anglican Mission in America in 2004.

A pivotal, character-shaping challenge occurred between 2004 and 2007 with an unsuccessful church plant in Durham, North Carolina. The eventual decision to close the mission precipitated an "acute crisis of calling" and a period of unemployment at age 46. Rev. Sharpe, however, frames this failure not as a final verdict but as a profound learning experience. He recounts a conscious turning away from cynicism, writing, "One of the most important things I re-learned was that faith really is a choice, a decision." He reflects on how God used this time to renounce cynicism, a "toxic" poison, and cultivate gratitude. The most profound lesson was theological; as he recorded, "I clearly remember God telling me that when I am speaking negatively about life in general, I am essentially saying that God is not good. His specific word to me was, 'Tell the truth about God. Negativity does not tell the truth about God.'"

These foundational events—from the zeal of a teenage convert to the chastening lessons of ministerial failure—provided the resilience and theological clarity that have undergirded nearly four decades of pastoral work.

3.0 Pastoral & Missionary Experience

Revd. Sharpe's extensive professional history demonstrates a consistent pattern of church planting, parish revitalization, and the development of clergy leaders. His career is marked by a progression from foundational pastoral roles to significant leadership in parish, diocesan, and missionary contexts.

3.1 Church Planting and Parish Leadership

Revd. Sharpe's pastoral appointments reveal a narrative of increasing responsibility and a persistent focus on mission.

- **Early Ministry (Phillips Chapel UMC, Atlantic UMC):** His first appointments at Phillips Chapel (1987-1991) and Atlantic UMC (1991-1995) served as foundational experiences. Phillips Chapel was a supportive environment for a "rookie" pastor, while the more challenging context of Atlantic, an isolated fishing village, helped him develop pastoral toughness and resilience.
- **Cornerstone UMC (1995-2004):** As the planter of Cornerstone UMC in Fayetteville, NC, he led a "cold-start" mission in a military community. Over nine years, he grew the congregation from its inception to approximately 200 members and oversaw the entire process of its first building project, from land acquisition and design to financing and construction.
- **Christ Church, Winston-Salem (2007-2023):** This sixteen-year tenure represents the culmination of his parish ministry. As the Planting Priest and Rector, he guided Christ Church from its initial stages to become a healthy, mission-focused parish. A key indicator of its health and his commitment to developing leaders is that during his rectorship, Christ Church planted three other congregations: Church of the Good Shepherd (Bermuda Run, NC) and Church of the Resurrection (Lewisville, NC), both led by pastors who served as his curates, and Christ the King Church (Beckley, WV), whose rector was also formed and sent out by Christ Church in a cooperative effort.

In addition to his domestic work, Revd. Sharpe engaged in international missionary service in Armenia in 1995. He provided humanitarian aid in the war-torn region of Nagorno Karabagh, ministering in the war zone between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In cooperation with the Armenian Apostolic Church, he preached, taught, and baptized 119 new converts over a two-week period.

3.2 Diocesan and Denominational Service

Beyond the local parish, Revd. Sharpe has consistently invested in building robust and durable institutions through diocesan and denominational service. His commitment to institutional health and the broader Church is evidenced by his service in several key appointments:

- **Canon Missioner for West Virginia:** In his role as Canon Missioner, he has successfully facilitated the planting of Wellspring Anglican Church in Morgantown and Good Shepherd Anglican Church in Summersville.
- **Diocesan Leadership (Diocese of Christ Our Hope):** His service includes appointments to the Ecclesiastical Court, the Constitution and Canons Committee, and a term as the Dean of the Triad Deanery.

- **Clergy Development:** He has demonstrated a long-term commitment to forming new leaders, serving as a Church Planter Coach with the Always Forward network (ACNA), the Coordinator of Clergy Credentialing for the Anglican Mission in America (2004-2010), and a supervisor for Duke Divinity School interns for over two decades.

This record of practical, on-the-ground experience in building and equipping is animated by a clear and coherent leadership philosophy.

4.0 Leadership Philosophy and Approach

A leader's effectiveness is directly tied to their underlying philosophy of authority, teamwork, and decision-making. Revd. Sharpe's stated principles provide a clear picture of how he leads, makes decisions, and shepherds those under his care, revealing a style that is both directional and collaborative.

His leadership style is best described as inspirational and motivational, centered on leading by personal example. He aims to model the qualities of sacrifice, courage, and humility that he sees in Jesus Christ, the saints, and the martyrs. This approach is not based on positional authority but on earning trust through integrity and service.

Revd. Sharpe explicitly rejects a "monarchical understanding of the episcopacy." He is deeply committed to the principle of subsidiarity, stating his intention to "not micromanage priests or parishes." His goal is to empower local leaders, both clergy and lay, expressing a desire for rectors to "outshine their bishop." This philosophy extends to how he manages parishioner concerns, refusing to be "triangulated" and instead upholding the rector as the biblical overseer of their local congregation.

He demonstrates significant self-awareness and a commitment to team-based leadership. Acknowledging his own weakness as a "big picture thinker" who can be impatient with minutia, he intentionally surrounds himself with people "smarter and holier than me" to compensate. This approach to leading people—marked by humility, trust in others, and patient resolve—is a direct outworking of his theological convictions.

5.0 Theological Framework and Episcopal Vision

Revd. Sharpe's profile reveals a well-defined theological identity that directly informs his vision for diocesan health, mission, and growth.

5.1 Core Theological Identity

Revd. Sharpe articulates his core identity through a four-fold commitment that places him squarely within the Great Tradition of orthodox, missionary Anglicanism.

- **A Bible Bishop:** He aims to reflect the qualities of an overseer as revealed in Holy Scripture, making the Word of God the ultimate standard for his life and ministry.
- **A Patristic (Catholic) Bishop:** His pastoral disposition is deeply rooted in the ethos and teachings of Christian antiquity and the Early Church Fathers.
- **A Reformed Bishop:** He values the conservative nature of the English Reformation and holds that the episcopacy is for the *fullness* of the church (*plene esse*), not essential to its very *being* (*esse*), affirming the validity of other forms of church governance while upholding the Anglican way.
- **A Prayer Book Bishop:** He is committed to living out the role and character of a bishop as defined in the Ordinal, prioritizing the pastoral and teaching functions of the office over the expectations of a corporate CEO.

5.2 Key Doctrinal Commitments and Priorities

Revd. Sharpe affirms a "complete and convictional agreement" with the formularies of the ACNA and the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast regarding marriage, sexuality, and sexual morality. He notes a preference for the term "sex" over "gender" to ground human identity in the material body as created by God.

Regarding women in ministry, he is in wholehearted agreement with the practice of ordaining women to the Permanent Diaconate while reserving the priesthood for qualified men. He emphasizes the need for a more robust appreciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a primary model for Christian ministry, seeing her sacrificial, servant-hearted discipleship as a critical example for the entire Church.

His foremost pastoral and theological priority is Christian Catechesis. Believing it is essential for the preservation and health of the Church, he quotes John Calvin: "the Church of God will never be preserved without catechesis." He has put this conviction into practice by developing *The Foundations Course*, a 14-session catechesis program used by his parish and other congregations to form disciples grounded in the core doctrines of the faith.

5.3 Vision for Diocesan Mission and Health

Revd. Sharpe's vision for our diocese is centered on evangelism, church planting, leadership development, and fostering a culture of doctrinal faithfulness and radical generosity. He believes the most effective way to reach the lost is by planting new churches and envisions a diocese where this is the primary strategic emphasis.

His proposed diocesan priorities flow directly from this vision. He places the highest emphasis on recruiting and equipping clergy, operating from the principle that "as go your rectors, so goes your church." His goal is to make the diocese a "destination" for holy, motivated church planters by focusing on intensive mentorship, apprenticeship, and formation. This focus on clergy health is paired with a commitment to build a stable financial foundation for mission through teaching and practicing radical generosity at every level.

In addition, the equipping of the laity is a critical priority under Fr. Ben's vision, as he views the orders of bishop, priest, and deacon as fundamentally existing to "equip the saints for the work of ministry." He stresses that the laity is the "bedrock order of ministry" and that their ministry is vital for the church to function properly and engage in ministry to the world. To fulfill this, he intends to emphasize systematic Christian catechesis and formation in every parish, believing that a failure to systematically form Christian disciples is the root of almost every internal difficulty the church faces today. This catechesis aims to produce durable Christians who are saturated with the Word of God and grounded in core doctrines and practices. Recognizing and equipping lay leaders is seen as vital to the overall health and growth of the church.

5.4 Team Sharpe

Ben and Lisa Sharpe share a long-standing marriage, having been sweethearts since the third grade and recently celebrating their 45th wedding anniversary. Hospitality is a significant part of their family's spiritual rhythm, particularly offering welcome and encouragement to clergy and those preparing for ordination. Lisa brings a strong set of spiritual gifts to diocesan ministry. Her most powerful spiritual gift is discernment, alongside teaching, mentoring, and intercession. She views the role of the bishop's wife as an opportunity to love pastors' wives and focus on building community.

6.0 Spiritual Disciplines

Rev. Sharpe's leadership is sustained by a structured rule of life and a commitment to consistent spiritual disciplines. These practices form the bedrock of his vocational endurance.

- Daily Prayer: Adherence to the ACNA Daily Office, often praying with his wife using the Book of Common Prayer.
- Weekly Rhythms: A 5- to 10-mile "prayer hike," which he describes as his most fruitful time of prayer, and observance of the ancient Friday fast.
- Sacramental Life: Essential, weekly reception of the Lord's Supper.
- Accountability: A 38-year relationship with an accountability partner and periodic spiritual direction from the Rt. Rev. Thad Barnum.
- Generosity: A family practice of annually giving over 15 percent of their income to the Church and other ministries.
- Recreation: To maintain personal balance, he pursues hobbies that include backpacking, gardening, shooting sports, reading, and homebrewing.

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.