

Denise Donato  
Statement of Intent  
Oct 20, 2017

As I understand it, the purpose of this Statement of Intent is to share with you my thoughts about the office I have been nominated for and the qualifications and gifts that I bring with me.

Let me begin by saying that, as I stated at the end of my spiritual autobiography, becoming a bishop has never been my goal. I have been a part of the ECC since its inception, and through the years people have repeatedly told me I would make a good bishop, or that I should consider becoming a bishop. My answer was always adamantly “No way, No how!” But the Holy Spirit began working on me about a year and ½ ago when I was invited, at the request of Bishop Frank, to be a part of a team to talk about women in the ECC at the 2016 synod in Dallas. I often identify with the “reluctant prophets” of old, especially Moses and Jeremiah. I resist God’s urges, argue with God and try to convince God that someone else would be better qualified. Just as I’ve done many times before I tried to talk God out of this one too, but God is very persistent. This Statement of Intent represents what the Holy Spirit has been trying to show me and why I am now open to this call.

Having been with the ECC from the start, I understand not only what the words of the constitution say, but the intention with which they were written. I believe this is important. Language is limited and even the best crafted document can have some ambiguity. It is important to understand the intention behind a given canon and what the hope was behind it. In addition, having been with the ECC from the beginning I bring knowledge of our history and how that history has shaped us.

In addition, I’ve been a part of the formation of three different churches. In my autobiography I talked about Spiritus Christi and Mary Magdalene Church, but when I was a teenager, Fairport (my hometown) was growing and the Diocese of Rochester was adding another church. We lived within the area this church was meant to serve, and we began attending the Mass the new priest was offering right from the beginning. I was fifteen years old at the time and the priest invited me to attend a youth retreat called “Search.” After the retreat a friend and I started a youth choir, a fellowship group and we helped organize various youth events. Having been a part of each of these communities as they began, I know what it’s like to begin a new community and nurture it from the very beginning.

As a priest I’ve worked in a very large church, but I also know what it’s like to be chief cook, bottle washer, custodian, and pastoral leader all at the same time! I’ve been in the position of full-time staff as well as volunteer pastor who must earn income from other means. I’ve held church in my home, an office building and have even purchased a church of our own. I can relate to communities of all sizes and configurations.

As a woman I believe I will bring a different voice into the Episcopal Council. As a Communion we’ve come a long way. Being inclusive and welcoming are very important tenets for us and I’m very proud to be a part of the ECC! I also know that our treasured sacraments and traditions have come from patriarchal origins. I believe upholding our

traditions is extremely important, but I also believe we can breathe life into them in subtle ways that maintain their integrity and essence while also making them more accessible and relevant to today's Christians.

Finally, I believe that the role of bishop is not limited to working just within the ECC. I've been involved in Roman Catholic reform movements and have connections there. But also as a woman priest I have connections with other organizations with women priests. In fact, when it comes to the ordination of women I believe that the Holy Spirit opened up different paths for different women to achieve the same end. Each of those different paths has distinct characteristics and "cultures," not unlike the consequences of the apostles and early Christians bringing the Good News to different regions and countries. It is my understanding that the term catholic was first used to indicate that, although these churches looked very different from one another, they were all under the same umbrella and were all "one." In like fashion, I think I can help the ECC to integrate more fully with others of like mind and heart in ways that can increase our visibility, our credibility and our connections.

If I am chosen to serve as a bishop, my prayer will be the same prayer I pray every time I'm preparing to preach, or visiting someone on hospice care, or even needing to listen to someone who might be angry with me or upset about something. "Loving God, help me to remember that this is not about ME. Help me to get out of the way and let you shine through. Help me to say and do what you would have me say and do."