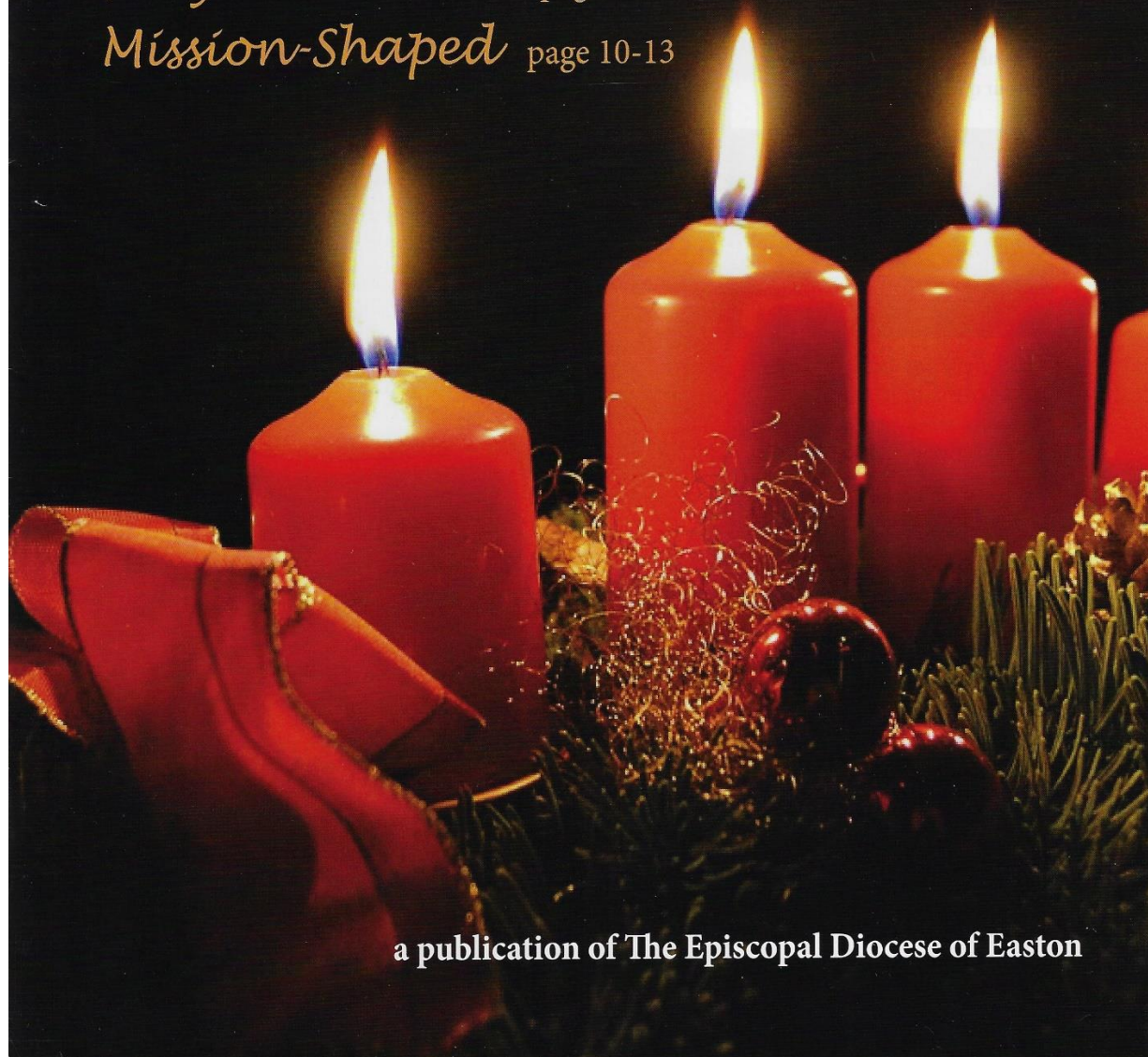


eastern shore **EPISCOPALIAN**

CHRISTMAS 2017

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a publication of The Episcopal Diocese of Easton

The Restoration of the Year the Locusts Ate

By The Rev. Dr. Barbara Anne Fisher, Deacon

"I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the other locusts and the locust swarm.... Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed."

(Joel 2: 25, 27)

A number of years ago, at a time when I doubted I ever would be found worthy to be ordained in the Episcopal Church, I received a "prophetic word" from the pastor who was a founder of the group by which I was originally ordained. It was the promise of God, given through Joel to Judah, that the years of hardship would not only come to an end – but that there would be restoration of that which was lost. What has always been difficult for me is to believe that prophetic words are the fore-telling of God's actions in the future, and that means one must watch – and wait – for them to come to fruition. I had been waiting almost fifteen years at that time, but little did I suspect then there would be another seventeen to go!

At the time that the Philadelphia Eleven and the Washington Four women were being "irregularly" ordained, I was in the throes of wrestling with my own call to ministry. It became a call that was to be denied in the mid-80s when I was "outed" during seminary. I ended up graduating with a Masters of Christian Education degree instead of a Master of Divinity degree. It would be another

fourteen years before I would once again pursue an ordained call to ministry, and it would be a calling recognized by an LGBTQIA ministry that had no problem that I was either woman or same-gendered.

It was a query by my Dad in June of 2008, that would once again light the Episcopal-fired calling within me. As he looked deeply into my eyes he asked, "And when are you going to do what you KNOW you are supposed to be doing?" That piercing question moved me to retire from teaching, accept a lay ministry position and move to the Eastern Shore, and be accepted into the Doctor of Ministry in Educational Leadership program at Virginia Theological Seminary. It was also my Dad's query which would lead to the most important conversation of my life: It was the initial conversation with Bishop Henry Parsley, at the reception of the Rev. Mary Garner for her Installation at St. Paul's, Centreville, that he was establishing a discernment process by which to assess my calling to the priesthood.

In June 2015, I began the formal discernment process with a wonderfully prayerful and sincere team. I completed my Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) during the winter/spring of 2016, and began my year of Anglican Studies at Virginia Theological Seminary in August 2016. While there, I moved through the postulancy and candidacy process for

Holy Orders. After graduating with the Anglican Studies Diploma on May 18, I was ordained to the transitional diaconate June 24, 2017. Even that moment in time had its own wrinkles: Due to Bishop Santosh's health issues which surfaced just the week before my ordination, I was ordained by Bishop Chilton Knudsen, Diocese of Maryland.

October 26, 2017, the knowledge the prophecy finally was coming to fruition was confirmed when the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Easton gave their letter to Bishop Santosh Marray which supported my ordination to the priesthood. Awaking in the wee hours each morning since that date, I breathe deeply in humbleness and awe the reality granted me: God willing, and the people assenting, on Saturday, December 16, 2017, at 11:00 a.m., in Trinity Cathedral, Easton, Maryland, I will be ordained to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church by Bishop Santosh Marray. And, in the true depth of restoring the years the locusts ate, it will be the Rev. Carter Heyward, one of the Philadelphia Eleven, who will be preaching at my ordination to the priesthood.

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Fisher currently serves as Assistant to the Rector at St. Alban's Episcopal Church – Salisbury, Maryland. Her ordination to the priesthood will be held on December 16th at Trinity Cathedral.

