

The Rev. Dr. Hillary D. Raining

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ! I am honored and delighted to be a part of the discernment process for the Episcopal Church in Vermont. From a very young age, I felt called to the priesthood. In fact, my “call moment” is my earliest memory. When I was about three or four, I was sitting on the floor of my baby sister’s bedroom watching dust particles float on a sunbeam. I distinctly remember having the thought that the dust was the Holy Spirit and that I should catch it and give it to other people, because that was what priests **did** and that’s what God wanted me to do. Ever since, I have been striving to do just that!

I grew up in the small rural town of Tunkhannock, PA where I attended St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. It was there that I learned my love of nature--a love that I feel compelled to live out in the Church as we strive to be stewards of God’s creation. At the same time, my parish valued me and affirmed my call even though I was young and a girl. I was even allowed to preach my first sermon at age nine on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. It was mostly about dogs and Jesus. I like to think I’ve improved a bit since then, but I still think a good dog story always preaches well.

Currently, I’m living out that call as the rector of [St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church](#) in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania. This role is a great source of joy for me as I serve as priest, pastor, and teacher to the congregation. During my tenure, we have grown in membership and with the Holy Spirit. This growth has been through a series of initiatives that have intentionally reached out to the community and fostered discipleship formation. St. Christopher’s has grown into such an innovative and welcoming parish that we were picked to join with The Episcopal Church’s Digital Evangelism team to produce and appear in several projects including ["Holy Week: St. Christopher's Church, Gladwyne, PA"](#). This was an exciting live-streaming video project that shared our Holy Week services to hundreds of thousands of viewers worldwide in Lent 2018.

I am also blessed to serve The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Pennsylvania in several ways, including as the President of the Standing Committee, member of the Commission on Ministry, General Convention Deputy, and a member of The Way of Love Committee. My most recent contribution was called, [“Life Transformed: The Way of Love in Lent”](#). This is a series of adult forums and a quiet day retreat model for The Episcopal Church which served as the 2019 Lenten offering world-wide. These teachings tie the Easter Vigil readings to the seven practices of The Way of Love and includes a series of videos and podcasts. A great blessing for me has been the opportunity to travel extensively while preaching and teaching on a variety of topics all over our great church. I truly enjoy Diocesan and wider Episcopal Church work and have been serving in these kinds of roles since I was a teenager.

In addition to parish and Episcopal Church ministry, I am also a published writer in both church and academic fields. I received my seminary education at Yale and The Institute of Sacred Music. My doctorate in ministry is from Drew University which included a concentration on worship, preaching, and reconciliation. Following a research project exploring the Rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent, I wrote my first book, *Joy in Confession*. It was designed to help clergy, congregations, and individuals find the peace and joy that comes from being ambassadors of reconciliation to this world. My second book, *Faith with a Twist*, grew out of my love of yoga as a spiritual practice and will be turned into a video series later this year.

The project that I am currently most excited about is called “[The Hive](#)”. Before the creation of “The Hive,” I was looking for a place that could speak to deep and meaningful wellness and spirituality topics in a way that fostered conversation and community. I found a lot of great stuff—wellness blogs, lifestyle gurus, theological research— but nothing that blended it all together. So, I do what I always do when I get stuck—I meditated and waited. One such session ended with a bolt of inspiration and “The Hive” was formed! Based on a model of community and support found in the hive of the honey bee, this wellness and spirituality digital community is growing every day.

I am a yoga instructor, bee keeper, and musician and have many varied hobbies, including skiing, hiking, gardening, and leading my daughter’s girl scout troop. I am married to Ken Raining, a reference librarian and circulation desk administrator at The University of Pennsylvania’s Van Pelt Library. We are blessed to be raising our daughter, Delia who is our light and joy!

Ever since that little girl saw the Holy Spirit in the dust, I have tried to bring the beauty and transforming love of Jesus to the world. My faith comes from the joy of knowing and loving God to my core and I am grateful for this chance to share that with you. May the Holy Trinity bless us all in this time of discernment as we look for the Holy Spirit's light in this moment!