

Dear Search Committee:

I write to apply for the position of Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota.

Attached you will find my credentials, experiences and accomplishments which I believe align with what you are looking for in your next Bishop. But the main reason I feel called to apply to this ministry is that reading your profile filled me with joy, with hope, with the desire to see your hopes realized. It made me cry.

I have certain qualifications and experiences that I think would make me a great Bishop for North Dakota. Over the course of my life in ministry, I have served in big, endowed parishes, revitalized a small town church, and served a country church with no running water. I have lived and loved the ministries that you describe with such authenticity and hope.

I also have insight into the nature and importance of the context. For the last four years I have served in a diocese that has a great deal in common with North Dakota. The economic drivers are similar, the political and societal influences are comparable, as is the rural/urban mix. I respect and admire the western and rural culture that pervades both of our dioceses and I know how important it is to offer a progressive theology in that traditionally conservative context. I feel uniquely called to work in dioceses like Western Kansas and North Dakota, because I am able to create and hold those spaces, to straddle seeming polarities, to live into the commonalities and to respect and hold the differences.

I have seen in my congregations and region how the Episcopal church in particular is an oasis of welcome and compassion for a diverse population seeking a different expression of their faith. But I am a systems thinker, and I desire to be part of that kind of change and growth on the diocesan level. By training, experience and inclination, I feel called to serve that wider frame and to see the Episcopal Church work its special magic across an entire diocese.

All of the above are reasons that my brain tells me to discern a call to be your Bishop. My heart, however, reasons in a completely different way. Your profile describes a diocese that is honest about itself, its history, its hard work and its prospects. And your response to that is joy! Your profile describes worshipping communities that embrace both their unique gifts and their challenges and have responded with creativity, tenacity and boldness. Speaking as a person who has dedicated her life to rural ministry, I felt hopeful. I really want to walk with you on that journey, in North Dakota.

I hope you will prayerfully consider my application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Shay Craig', followed by a small asterisk.

Shay Craig+



Office for
Transition
Ministry

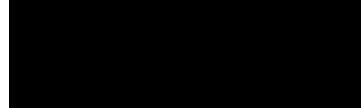
Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio (last updated Mar 4, 2025)

The Very Rev. Shay Craig, Western Kansas

Priest, Since Jun 16, 2018

Preferred Contact Information



As an ordained leader in the church, I seek to model, in word and action, the unconditional love of God and help to discern and realize for each diocese, congregation, group and individual ,the dreams that God holds for them.

Current Compensation



Required for New Position



Negotiable

Yes

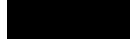
Healthcare Needed

Clergy+1

Housing/Rectory

Housing Allowance

Housing/Rectory Detail



Housing Required for

2

Education

2009-2013 Master of Theological Studies, Hebrew Bible, Garrett-Evangelical Theologic

1982-1986 BA, English, University of Illinois - Cham

2018 Certified, Congregational Development, College for Congregational De

2017 Trainer, Conflict Resolution, Fierce Conversations

2017 Community Wellness Advocate, Practical Ministry and Self C, Living Compass

2016 CAT Interpreter, Church Assessment Tool and in, Holy Cow Church Assessment To

Position Preferences

Bishop Diocesan

Open to Consider New Position

Full time

The Very Rev. Shay Craig, Western Kansas

Priest, Since Jun 16, 2018

Work History and Skills

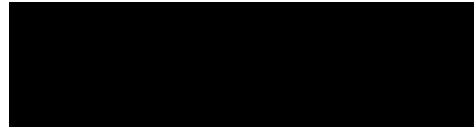
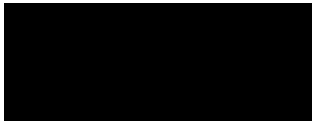
Dean	Jan 2023	Christ Cathedral	
<p>Pastoral care, administration, community engagement, liturgical leadership</p> <p><i>As Rector of the Diocesan Cathedral, I lead a pastoral sized parish functioning as a program parish in our diocese. With a staff of 8-12, two additional clergy and an occasional curate, I direct all pastoral care, outreach, administration, formation, and liturgy. I sit on various local, regional and national boards and advisory bodies. As Dean, I am a professional and pastoral presence for fellow clergy in the diocese and an executive team advisor to the Bishop.</i></p>			
Canon for Congregational Development	Jun 2018	Diocese of Western Kansas	Hutchinson, Kansas
<p>Canon for congregational vitality: teaching congregational development</p> <p><i>As Canon for Congregational Development, I work creatively with congregations across the Diocese to promote contextual vitality practices including stewardship, community engagement, asset mapping, leadership development, and liaise with Bishop's staff. I am a member of the Bishop's leadership team, President of Trustees of the Diocese (Standing Committee), a delegate to general convention, and a member of General Counsel.</i></p>			
Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	Jul 2020 to Jan 2023	St. Michael's Episcopal Church	Hays, Kansas
<p>Preaching, pastoral care, administration, & Administration; liturgy;</p> <p><i>As part of a 2-year Diocesan revitalization program, serving as bi-vocational Vicar of St. Michaels/Diocesan Staff. Sunday worship attendance grew from 6 in 2020 to 35 in 2023, weekly engagement in formation, fellowship and pastoral care from 0 to 45. As a progressive Christian presence in a conservative Catholic college town, we learned to speak across difference, and created a safe space for those who have been hurt by the church. In 2023 the congregation as 50% 30yo and young, 25% LGBTQIA+.</i></p>			
Cathedral Staff	Jul 2018 to Jul 2020	Christ Cathedral	Salina, Kansas
Diocesan/Regional Staff	Sep 2015 to Jul 2018	Diocese of Chicago	Chicago, Illinois
Administrative Staff	Sep 2011 to Aug 2015	Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary	EVanston, Illinois



The Very Rev. Shay Craig, Western Kansas

Priest, Since Jun 16, 2018

Other Contact Information



Date of Last Background Check

Mar 27, 2015

Company performing check

SecurSearch

Diocese requesting

Chicago

Sermons Preached:

> <https://soundcloud.com/shay-craig-246615939/proper-18c-kints>

Resources Created:

> <https://soundcloud.com/shay-craig-246615939/chrism-mass-202>

Online References:

> <https://www.facebook.com/shay.robertson.92/>

> <https://www.facebook.com/christcathedralsalina>

What Others Have Written:

Groups and Associations:

> <https://www.facebook.com/p/Women-Helping-Women-A-Fairy-Godmother-Fund-100069130669068/>

Languages Written

English

Languages Spoken

English

Languages in which you are able to Lead Worship

English

The Very Rev. Shay Craig, Western Kansas

Priest, Since Jun 16, 2018

Describe a moment in your recent ministry that you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

Early in my current tenure, our leadership prioritized the need for a brand refresh in order to reflect our orientation toward service to our neighbors. The previous logo with two lovely red doors was modified so that one door was open (and in some cases, a rainbow) and we altered our motto to reflect our new orientation as well. I incorporated the new motto into our service at the Peace. I would stand and say "Welcome to Christ Cathedral, the church in the heart of the city, with a heart for the city," and then report on something that happened in the last week that demonstrated that heart. In the second year of this practice, in the middle of that announcement, I lost my voice. I said, "The church in the heart of the city..." and lost my voice, but the congregation responded, "...with a heart for the city." What had been aspirational in our early weeks had become so ingrained in our culture that it has become a call and response.

Describe your liturgical style and practice.

Contextual. Our book of Common Prayers creates a solid form on which to place a variety of prayers and worship styles. I am quite comfortable outdoors on the plains celebrating Eucharist with what is at hand, and just as able to chant Rite One in a zucchetto for High Mass. I have written liturgies using prayer traditions from a variety of cultures and countries. I greatly value diversity in liturgy. Unfamiliarity invites us to pay attention to our words and feel them more deeply. Familiarity at times like funerals and other particular occasions invites us to be supported by the Communion of Saints, past, present and future. Both familiarity and unfamiliarity have a place in our liturgy.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

Invitations to ministry are personal, they require individual conversations and holy imagination.. Jesus didn't walk through Galilee with a sign-up Sheet. He placed his hand on a friend's shoulder and said, "Put down your net and come with me." Getting to know any person invites conversation about what gives them joy and opens the door for them to imagine their own way to become more integrated into the life of a congregation, or a diocese. Historically, hosting the Diocesan Convention in Western Kansas was open only to the three or four congregations in towns large enough and with enough volunteer capacity. I suggested that we hold the convention in the same centrally located conference center every year, so that any size congregation could "host" - that is, lead the religious service, plan the theme and decor with their own signature style. Initially, only the big churches volunteered. It took active invitation and discussion with smaller congregations for them to be able to imagine how they could lead this wider ministry for the Diocese. The result is a convention that reflects a much wider spectrum of congregational life in our Diocese.

The Very Rev. Shay Craig, Western Kansas

Priest, Since Jun 16, 2018

How do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

I have a well established morning routine of prayer, reflection and contemplation that relies on digital materials, so it travels with me. I practice yoga and rarely fail to get 10K steps in a day- in large part because I have a very demanding dog. And I am very careful with my diet, I don't smoke or drink or eat sugar. I am a cancer survivor and I am fierce in the protection and preservation of my mental and physical health. That is what I do, but this is why: In my youth, I flew gliders (a plane with long wings and no engine) and I learned to respect and care for the aircraft as the vehicle that protects me. But I also learned to listen to myself, to feel the air rising beneath me, to be aware when I was out of position or out of sync and make corrections, to quiet my mind and simply let myself fly. I respect and take good care of my body as the vehicle that protects me. But it is the care of my soul, the companionship of my loved ones and the quiet time with my Creator, that enables me to fly.

Describe your involvement in either the wider Church or geographical community.

My involvement with the wider church is noted elsewhere. Here, I offer some examples of my involvement with the geographical community. 1) When rural Ellis County experienced a catastrophic fire, it reduced the properties and livelihood of a number of families to ash. My two churches went to McDonalds and bought all the sandwiches, drove to the site and handed out the sandwiches and coffee to the farm hands and firefighters there. 2) The Cathedral's food ministry depends on donated protein, which is often game meat and birds, generously donated by local hunters. I have become adept at removing buckshot from duck and pheasant meat so that it can be served up as pheasant enchiladas. 3) The White family runs a large herd of bison on their property in Ellsworth County. When they calved last spring, the cows would not let us close enough to count or check the calves. I drove across the pasture in an ATV, tossing "bison treats" to draw the cows away from their calves long enough for the Whites to get a look at them. We look to our church leadership to be inspirational and transformational. In the context of rural ministry, they also need to make themselves useful.

How do you engage in pastoral care for others?

I was ordained a priest when Bishop Lee placed his hands on me at my ordination. I became a priest when I served as a hospital chaplain in training in the Emergency Department of a major urban hospital. A patient came into the Emergency Department actively dying, surrounded by their family and very frightened. It was a very loud and chaotic scene. I leaned down and spoke to the patient's face, "What would it take for you to be ready?" I asked this question over and over again. The patient's lips were moving, but I could not hear them. In the morning, I was told by their family that they felt so much easier because of that time with me. But here is the thing: I could not hear a word that person said. They spoke to God. The healing they felt came from God. The grace and peace of that experience, it was from God. As a pastor, it is not my love or grace or healing that I share. I am the instrument through whom God blesses others, and I am blessed by the process as well.

The Very Rev. Shay Craig, Western Kansas

Priest, Since Jun 16, 2018

Tell about a ministry project that exists because of your leadership. What was your role in its creation? Who can be contacted?

Blue Christmas is a tradition used in many places to lift up and honor loss and sorrow during the winter holidays. Although I did not create this tradition, I did adapt it for use in the Diocese of Western Kansas. I began the service in 2020 in Hays where the COVID19 lockdown had taken many lives and had a brutal impact on local farming. I invited the Lutheran and Presbyterian congregations to participate and designed a service that was very specific to the experience of our small, rural context. It was the first Blue Christmas in Hays. The following year, the Episcopal Church in Great Bend prepared to sell their church and convene in another space. They modified my Blue Christmas service to honor difficult emotions around that context. The service has been adopted and modified to suit contexts across the diocese in churches in Hutchinson, Liberal and Salina. In dioceses with small and distant congregations, it is essential to generously share resources that can be modified to meet the unique needs of each individual community. This article is a retrospective on that ministry in Hays. Rev. Brenda Rodger can speak to it in Hays: (785) 625-2044

How are you preparing yourself for the Church of the future?

With humility. In my time as a lay and ordained leader in the church, I have been privileged to serve in small and large congregations, in urban and rural contexts, the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, and as a church renovator in one of the smallest dioceses in the country. In every one of those contexts – without exception – I have been blessed by listening to, watching, and learning from the experience of people of color, indigenous, LGBTQIA+, neurodivergent, differently abled and all non-dominant populations within our church. We are a rich, abundant and gorgeous world, made in the image of our God of infinite possibilities. We let privilege, patriarchy, paternalism, colonialism, apathy and ignorance rule our culture to our cost. We will never live in the Kingdom until we have co-created and can fiercely protect spaces where the brilliant diversity of humanity can be expressed and experienced in safety, with integrity and full and genuine love. I prepare for that future by seeking out and being enriched by the wondrous variety of my siblings in Christ.

What is your personal practice of stewardship and how do you utilize it to influence your ministry in your worshipping community?

I tithe 10% of the gross of all my personal income and have led my congregations to do the same, but that model is passing away. People born after 1990 will live and die with unprecedented debt which makes tithing unrealistic. People who work day-labor or in agriculture cannot reliably predict their future income, so they can't pledge. Single-parent families or those who support families elsewhere cannot pledge without damaging the welfare of their dependents. Stewardship of financial resources (and there are myriad other kinds of stewardship) has to change. Where large, well-resourced churches can survive, they should. But I have seen under-resourced congregations thrive by imagining what the church looks like with innovative funding and without the burden of maintaining buildings, or the mandate of full-time clergy leadership. We are not called to fill churches, we are called to feed sheep. When we can keep that focus and respond to the needs of our unique contexts, we are faithful stewards. I have helped to form and reform congregations in vital and sustainable ways, but it takes courage, candor and faith that we are, individually and collectively, an Easter people.

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What is your experience of conflict involving the church? And what is your experience in addressing it?

When I came to St. Michael's church in Hays, it was a congregation made up of a handful of very conservative older, established white people, "the First Five." After considerable conversation with the people who were NOT going to that church, we determined that it needed to be a "church for people who had been hurt by the church." The congregation grew as LGBTQIA+ persons and people recovering from church trauma began to attend church. With each new member, the chemistry in the congregation changed and the First Five were not pleased with the progress. When the organist retired, I hired a trans person to be our musician and one of the First Five declared that he was leaving. The next day, we needed help with our supper ministry and the musician stepped in. Three hours together preparing and serving meals resulted in a profound reduction in hostility. It took a long time, but today both of these people would describe the other as a friend. There is wisdom in knowing what to address conflict head on, and when to sidle up beside it and build connections which break down walls which divide us.

What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

In the summer of 2024, I visited every congregation in our Diocese. I conducted an appreciative inquiry, preached, presided or broke bread in 16 of 18 locations. The purpose of these visits was to "see how the Spirit is manifesting across the Diocese." I presented a report about each church to the Bishop. Each congregation is a vivid expression of its context. Many have returned to lay-led Morning Prayer as their regular service - most remember the 1928 prayer book which prioritized that service. And they are willing to drive a little further for a monthly Holy Eucharist. What really matters is not the form of their Sunday service, but pastoral care. They crave the ministry of presence. Just having a member of the Bishop's staff visit, spend time and care had a huge impact on morale and inspired hope for the future. It went well because they felt heard and my love and passion for rural ministry grew. It went poorly because we have not acted on what was shared. The results of this listening tour have taught me that I want to be in a position to be able to listen, support, and activate needed change requested by faithful leaders throughout the church.