

The Rev. Canon Heather Cook
Autobiographical Statement

I was born in Syracuse, NY, the third of six children in a clergy family. We moved to Maryland when my father was called to serve on Bishop Doll's staff. When he became rector of Old St. Paul's, we moved downtown into the rectory, a notable witness while Baltimore was undergoing urban renewal. On weekdays, we kids travelled to Brooklandville to the St. Paul's Schools, and mom taught religious studies at St. Timothy's School.

The themes of my childhood were this inner city experience, balanced by barefoot summers in the Canadian Thousand Islands, where we had a tiny house; litters of golden retriever puppies; and my father reading the Chronicles of Narnia aloud before bedtime. These shaped me, and remain important to this day.

I loved school, and participated in sports and extra-curricular activities enthusiastically. One of the profound learnings of my young life came when I was not elected president of the student council, which I coveted. Instead, I was chosen to edit the yearbook. Looking back, this was part of a consistent life theme: being placed, over and over again, in situations where a dedicated communicator was needed. Whether through public speaking, print, film, or graphic art, opportunities came to convey my passion for deeply held values and beliefs.

Curiosity about the world prompted me to pursue university studies in Canada and England, and work as an au pair in Spain, on a kibbutz in Israel, and as a grape-picker in France and vegetable-harvester in England.

Back in Baltimore, working as a redactor at Waverly Press, I was re-introduced to faith as a young adult and discerned there was something else calling me. I realized I needed to find my own identity, and not wait for it to come through marriage. This, coupled with a spiritual awakening that was encouraged through EfM at Epiphany, Timonium, and an introduction to contemplative life through silent retreats, opened the way for me to hear God's invitation to seminary. At first I was uncertain about being a priest, having experienced the ups and downs of clergy family life. But I was faithful to this call, and on the day I was ordained, at last it felt right. Bishop Eastman ordained me to the diaconate, and my father vested me for this office, removing the stole from around his own neck and placing it over mine.

Since ordination, I've served as a boarding school chaplain in Virginia, assistant at a large parish outside New York City, rector of a growing parish in York, Pennsylvania, and a member of two diocesan staffs. These varied ministries have taught much and broadened and matured my perspective of the fullness of the Church.

Supporting me in my vocation is my steady companion, Mark, a passionate Anglican. After having dated in our twenties, life took us different ways, but we found each other again two years ago, and it has been a great blessing.

Through the ups and downs of ministry, I remain convinced that the Spirit equips us with all we need to make the Good News known in our time. I'm unconvinced by the naysayers who say the day of the Church is over. I believe a new Church is just beginning, and feel called to help lead in the discovery.