



# Episcopal Diocese

— OF CENTRAL FLORIDA —

## **Announcement of Part-Time Assisting Bishop** **From the Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin S. Holcomb**

November 17, 2023

Dear Diocesan Family,

According to Canon III.12.3.a of the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, “A Bishop Diocesan, Bishop Coadjutor, Bishop Suffragan, or Assistant Bishop of the Diocese shall visit the Congregations within the Diocese at least once in three years.” That’s a minimum, and I want to do a lot better for our churches.

Serving at confirmations, receptions and reaffirmations is one of the most amazing things I have experienced in ordained ministry. It is an unbelievable joy to celebrate that God is a promise-making and promise-keeping God as we lift high the covenant that he makes with his people in baptism. It’s a retelling of God’s faithfulness and a privilege to proclaim. As much as I want to be a part of every single episcopal visitation, it’s not about me.

Further, with House of Bishops and Province IV meetings, Anglican Communion responsibilities, ordinations and celebrations of new ministry, my schedule will generally allow visitations to 40 of our 81 churches per year. That’s still not enough to serve all of those who are waiting to be confirmed and received, much less provide attentive and timely pastoral care for our clergy and their families.

As such, I extended an offer to the Rt. Rev. Dr. Dabney Smith to join my staff as part-time assisting bishop with the goal of enhancing what my office can offer in terms of pastoral care and ministry. I’m thrilled to announce that Bishop Smith has agreed to begin visitations in January, 2024, and he plans on approximately 20 visits per year.

Before his retirement in December, 2022, Bishop Smith served as the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Southwest Florida, where he and his wife, Mary, became known for gifted clergy care, a major part of their legacy there.

Bishop Smith is no stranger to the Diocese of Central Florida. He was ordained to both the diaconate and the priesthood by Bishop Folwell in 1987. His father was rector of St. James, Ormond Beach, where Bishop Smith was ordained to the diaconate and where he will make his first visitation as part-time assisting bishop in our diocese. Bishop Smith also served as assistant at Grace, Port Orange, from 1987-1989 and as rector at Holy Trinity, Melbourne, from 1998-2005. He is a cradle Episcopalian, raised in Florida.

As Bishop Smith joins me in episcopal ministry to our diocese, I want to assure you that this is normal for a diocese of our size. Just as a church can be too large for one clergyperson, and at a certain point they need to bring on an assistant rector so discipleship and pastoral care are handled with excellence, our diocese requires an assisting bishop to provide more frequent visitations as well as robust clergy care.

I firmly believe that the health of an organization is tied to the health of its leaders. As canon for vocations, my focus on leadership development resulted in a large number of new clergy, and as bishop I'm called to provide for the pastoral care of these leaders. Pastoral care is simply continued leadership development, and Bishop Smith will increase my staff's capacity in this regard.

Please join me in welcoming Bishop Smith. He is a seasoned, experienced bishop from our diocese who has returned. He is currently living in College Park; a great blessing and opportunity for our diocese. His willingness to serve here is a gift and an answer to prayer. Contact Archdeacon Julie Altenbach at [jaltenbach@cfdiocese.org](mailto:jaltenbach@cfdiocese.org) to request a visitation by Bishop Smith.

In Christ,  
+Justin Holcomb