

General & Jurisdictional Leadership Roles:

- General Conference Delegate, 2004, 2016
- Jurisdictional Delegate, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016
- Board Member, General Council of Finance and Administration, 2016-present
- Member, Western Jurisdiction Council of Finance and Administration, 2012-Present
- Trained coach for the Lead Women Pastor Project (GBHEM), 2010-Present
- Member, Lead Women Pastor Project, (GBHEM), 2008-2009

Community and Ecumenical Involvement:

- Throughout my vocation, I have engaged in ministry in the public square. This includes working with activist communities (homelessness, economic justice, and LGBTQ rights as well as with communities of color through immigration and civil rights work). I am currently the vice chair of the SF Interfaith Council and co-chair the annual Thanksgiving Prayer breakfast, which brings together interfaith leaders, civic leaders, and federal, state, and city politicians to honor religious communities for their civic engagements. My ministry extends beyond San Francisco through articles, books, lectures, preaching, and teaching opportunities across the US and internationally.

Organizational Endorsements:

- Annual Conference Endorsement: Yes.

Why have you responded to this call?

- I have long resisted this call. But at General Conference, I began to hear that still small voice of God, speaking through those I respect in our church. I also had many late night wrestling sessions with God. The call to the episcopacy finally crystallized in recent weeks. I realize that my experiences and skills—as senior pastor of a large church, scholar of UMC Studies, and ministry with and for marginalized communities—would serve the denomination well at this particular time.

Tell about a time when your leadership made a difference.

- I was asked if Bethany UMC would be a medicinal marijuana distribution site at a time when the attorney general had shut down all the sites. A paper reported I had agreed to it before I discussed it with the church. I apologized to the members, gave them all the information I had, provided a theological framework for reflection, & asked them to be in prayer. We gathered for discernment & I was struck by the conviction of the community. Folks realized that by agreeing to it, we would be breaking the law. But folks kept saying, “But what would Jesus do for people who are sick?” It was a unanimous decision to host it. For years, the church pointed to that decision as pivotal in their growth as Jesus followers. I learned that when the Gospel takes hold, folks live into radical discipleship.

What are your strongest spiritual gifts for ministry and how will they apply to the episcopacy?

- My daily prayer is: Dear God, please help me check my ego at the door. I realized my ego has been very invested in my ministry and caused a blurring of boundaries around where my ministry ended & laity's began. Often I would default to "I can do it more efficiently," blocking the spiritual & leadership growth of others. As a result, I have moved from being ego-driven to being Spirit-led. Being Spirit-led, discernment has taken a center role in my decision-making, congregational development, & leadership empowerment. It's no longer about me, but instead how God's moving in the community, what opportunities for faithful discipleship God's offering, & who God's lifting up as new leaders. My job is to listen, plan, implement, & empower. I believe this would serve me well in the episcopacy.

General Statement:

- Old ways & structures aren't working. That is plainly evident not only from the stalemate experienced at GC but by the list of church closures that grows at a faster rate than new church plants. It's time for us listen for the whispers of the Spirit & to collectively dream dreams & see visions. It's time to unleash our imaginations to allow the Spirit to lead our church in a direction we never thought possible. We have within our denominational DNA the stuff of schism but also the profound depth of spirituality found in the Wesleyan way. I believe the best of our heritage can assist as we dream our church anew, so that we will bear witness to the God we know through Christ Jesus, who stands with the outcast, defends the vulnerable, challenges the powerful, & invites us to beloved community.

Recommendations for: Karen Oliveto

Rev. Dr. Joretta L Marshall • Executive VP and Dean; Brite Divinity School • Rocky Mountain Conference

Rev. Dr. Karen Oliveto brings to the episcopal candidacy at least three qualities that are essential in this work. First, she loves the gospel, the church that embodies it, and the people who inhabit the institution we know as the church. This is not a simple love, but one which compels her to depth of passion, wisdom, and compassion in all that she does. Rev. Oliveto is steadfast to the call of the gospel and to the church. Second, Rev. Oliveto brings a vision that empowers her to see a United Methodist Church that embraces the most inclusive, diverse, and powerful presence of God in the world. She stands faithfully in the church, believing that it has something profound to offer the world. Third, Rev. Dr. Oliveto knows the United Methodist Church, in particular. She is not simply familiar intellectually with its history; rather, her life and ministry point toward the best vision for what we, in the Wesleyan tradition, can bring to the challenges and possibilities that surround us.

Joan E. Carter-Rimbach • Senior Pastor - Mt. Zion UMC • Baltimore-Washington Conference

I have been a friend and colleague with Rev. Dr. Oliveto for almost three decades. She is a leader with a vital spirit and prophetic voice for justice, who seeks reconciliation and unity with a vision of a future Church. This fellow Christian exercises exceptional integrity, intelligence, and commitment to ministry; one who sees greatness in people while being compassionate about human frailty. As the only clergywoman serving in the top 100 largest UMC churches, she has demonstrated a servant leadership style through inspiring and equipping ministry for the marginalized. She has exhibited gifts of general oversight and supervision as a large church lead pastor, dean of a graduate school, and chair of different boards and committees. As a scholar activist, she teaches the importance of guarding the doctrine and discipline of the Church and its relevancy of the time. I believe Rev. Dr. Oliveto to hold qualities that would make her an outstanding episcopal leader of the UMC.

Howard J. Parker • Lay member of annual conference, Glide Memorial UMC • California-Nevada Conference

As a member of Pastor Karen's congregation, I know her as an inspiring preacher who speaks eloquently and powerfully. I know her as a skilled administrator of a large and strongly growing local church. ... Karen has embraced the challenges at Glide with consummate grace. She has worked hard, worked well with others, and provided leadership in a highly complex and conflicted organization -- not unlike our denomination! ... She has developed disciples. The churches she has served have become agents of transformation. ... As the senior pastor of Glide, Karen broke the stained glass ceiling, becoming the first woman to serve as lead pastor in one of the denomination's 100 largest churches. ... I know that she also works in theological education at the Pacific School of Religion. She is highly regarded as a coach and mentor to those considering ministry, mentoring 15 from her churches who have gone on to seminary. ... I proudly endorse her Episcopal candidacy. It's time!