

## MCC 2024 New Board Members



**The Rev. Catharine Cummings:** Rev. Catharine Cummings is a proud daughter, sister, martial arts enthusiast, friend, and cat lover. Raised in Memphis, TN, she worshipped with her family at St. Anne Catholic Church. There she was encouraged to live a life that is pleasing to God. Catharine earned her Masters of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School in 2011. Upon graduation, Rev. Cummings became ordained at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). That fall Rev. Cummings took a leap of faith from nonprofit work to become a Pastoral Resident in the Transition into Ministry Program at Union United Methodist Church in Boston. Within two months, Rev. Cummings was

appointed on February 1, 2011, to serve as senior pastor of [Wesley United Methodist Church](#) (Springfield). Pastor Catharine is thankful for God's abiding grace in her life and in Wesley UMC where she is affectionally called "Rev." She has served in various ministry settings including at Christ United Methodist Church (Northampton), the Western Massachusetts Regional Women's Correctional Center (Chicopee), and now as a chaplain in the Office of Spiritual Life at Springfield College. Rev. Catharine Cummings is the immediate past president of the Pastors' Council of Greater Springfield. Currently, she is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree in Womanist Preaching at Memphis Theological Seminary. She is the daughter of Evelyn and John Cummings, and sister of Constance and Carolyn.



**Ms. Laura B. Purutyan:** Laura B. Purutyan is Workforce Development and Community Relations Specialist for the McAuliffe Center for Integrated Science Learning and the [MetroWest STEM Education Network](#), at Framingham State University. Laura's education includes: B.A from Tufts University; M.Ed from Clark University; TESOL Certificate from the School for International Training; and Systems Thinking & Dynamic Modeling for K12 Education from the Creative Learning Exchange. Laura's experience in education involves teaching English and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at the high school level, ESOL to adult learners, K-12 special needs tutoring, and Christian education to middle and high school students in the Armenian Orthodox Church. Laura assisted undergraduates as Associate Director of

Financial Aid at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Prior to her current role, she was the STEM Career Specialist and Director of Youth Programs for the MassHire MSW Workforce Board. Laura serves as a Board member with Girls Inc. of Worcester, and as an advisor to the Mental Health Awareness Initiative of Armenia.



**The Rev. George C. Woodruff:** Reverend George C. Woodruff, Jr. was born in Dallas, Texas to the Reverend & Mrs. George C. Woodruff, Sr. (both deceased). Reverend Woodruff was educated in the Indianapolis Public School System and attended the Howard University in Washington, DC. Reverend Woodruff accepted the call to the preaching ministry in October 1989 at the Jones Tabernacle AME Zion Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. Reverend Woodruff began his Pastoral career at the Campbell Chapel AME Zion Church, Indianapolis, Indiana. Following the two years at Campbell Chapel, Pastor Woodruff was assigned to the St. John AME Zion Church, Bardstown, Kentucky. While serving in Bardstown, Kentucky, Pastor Woodruff was a member of the Board of Directors for the Big

Brothers/Big Sisters Organization of Nelson County. Pastor Woodruff, while at the St. John Church, had the distinction of becoming the first African-American President of the Nelson County Ministerial Association. Also, while at St. John Church, Pastor Woodruff led the congregation in an interior renovation program of the church. The membership grew numerically and new ministries were developed. In January 2001, Pastor Woodruff was assigned to the First AME Zion Church, San Francisco, California. While at First Church, Pastor Woodruff led the congregation in purchasing and fully furnishing a parsonage while others repairs were made on the church. In 2002, the First AME Zion celebrated its 150th Church Anniversary making it the oldest AME Zion Church west of the Mississippi River. While in San Francisco, Pastor Woodruff was very involved in Civic and Religious Organizations including President of the Fellowship Academy Board of Directors and the Lenten Tabernacle Ministerial Group. In 2006, Pastor Woodruff was one of the AME Zion delegates to attend the World Methodist Council in Seoul, Korea. In August 2009, Pastor Woodruff was assigned to the Durham Memorial AME Zion Church in Buffalo, New York. Durham is committed to “serving the present age” with a Daily Soup Kitchen, Day Care Facilities, a Music School and a Gymnasium all of which are housed in the Durham Memorial Outreach Center. July 2019, Pastor Woodruff was appointed to the [Columbus Avenue A.M.E. Zion Church in Boston](#), Massachusetts. Pastor Woodruff desires to “Glorify God” in ALL he does.



**The Very Rev Aileen E. DiBenedetto:** serves as Rector of Rector, [St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Leominster MA](#) in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts. I am a native of Central Massachusetts. Although I have traveled and lived away from my hometown, Massachusetts has consistently called me back. Now I’m serving a Church in the hometown of Johnny Appleseed (St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Leominster) while living in Worcester.

Although I have been ordained to the priesthood for only eight years now, it seems I have been in ministry

my whole adult life. Whether it was volunteering on a hospital pediatric floor, leading a retreat, teaching high school religion, or simply being present for friends, my life has been about serving God. I first heard the Spirit calling while leading a retreat in college. “Walk with people on their journey with God” was the clear call. As a Roman Catholic woman, I wasn’t quite sure how to live that out, yet I was determined to follow God. I entered the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, spent time in a Catholic Worker community, and attended a Jesuit seminary. In time, I no longer felt home in the church in which I had been raised and found my way to The Episcopal Church.

Within the Episcopal Church, I have directed summer camps, served as camp chaplain, led children & youth ministry, served as an assistant and rector of congregations and provided pastoral support to my colleagues as dean. I have served a broad range of church communities: affluent, thriving, struggling, multicultural, homogeneous, liberal, conservative, urban, suburban and semi-rural. I have a passion for children’s ministry yet find most of my time is well spent with elders within these congregations. In addition to looking for ways to adjust children’s formation to fit contemporary life, I have been focused on pastoral support of clergy colleagues. This inevitably leads to imagining ways to adapt clerical life and church structures to today’s society.

To know my family, is to know me even more fully. Although I first met my husband Anthony in high school, it wasn’t until 17 years later that we were married. Nicholas, now 9, was born just 7 weeks before taking my ordination exams. He was by my side as I practiced leading worship and was present at my ordination. Francesco, 6, has only known his mom as a priest. As we hunkered at home during Covid, I mentioned to Anthony how much I like big dogs. Much to our surprise, and the detriment of our furniture, he brought home a Great Dane. I would like to say that my free-time is spent in various arts and crafts projects, something I have always enjoyed; but the truth is, I’m in a season of life where most of my free time is spent in enjoyment of my family.

It was in my years with the Jesuits that I first learned to cherish good friendships with multi-faith partners, then to dive in and embrace the breadth of God’s church across the Christian spectrum. I was introduced to the work of the Massachusetts Council of Churches years before ordination. Time and again I have turned to this group for education, advocacy, and community. It would be an honor to serve the Council as a board member.