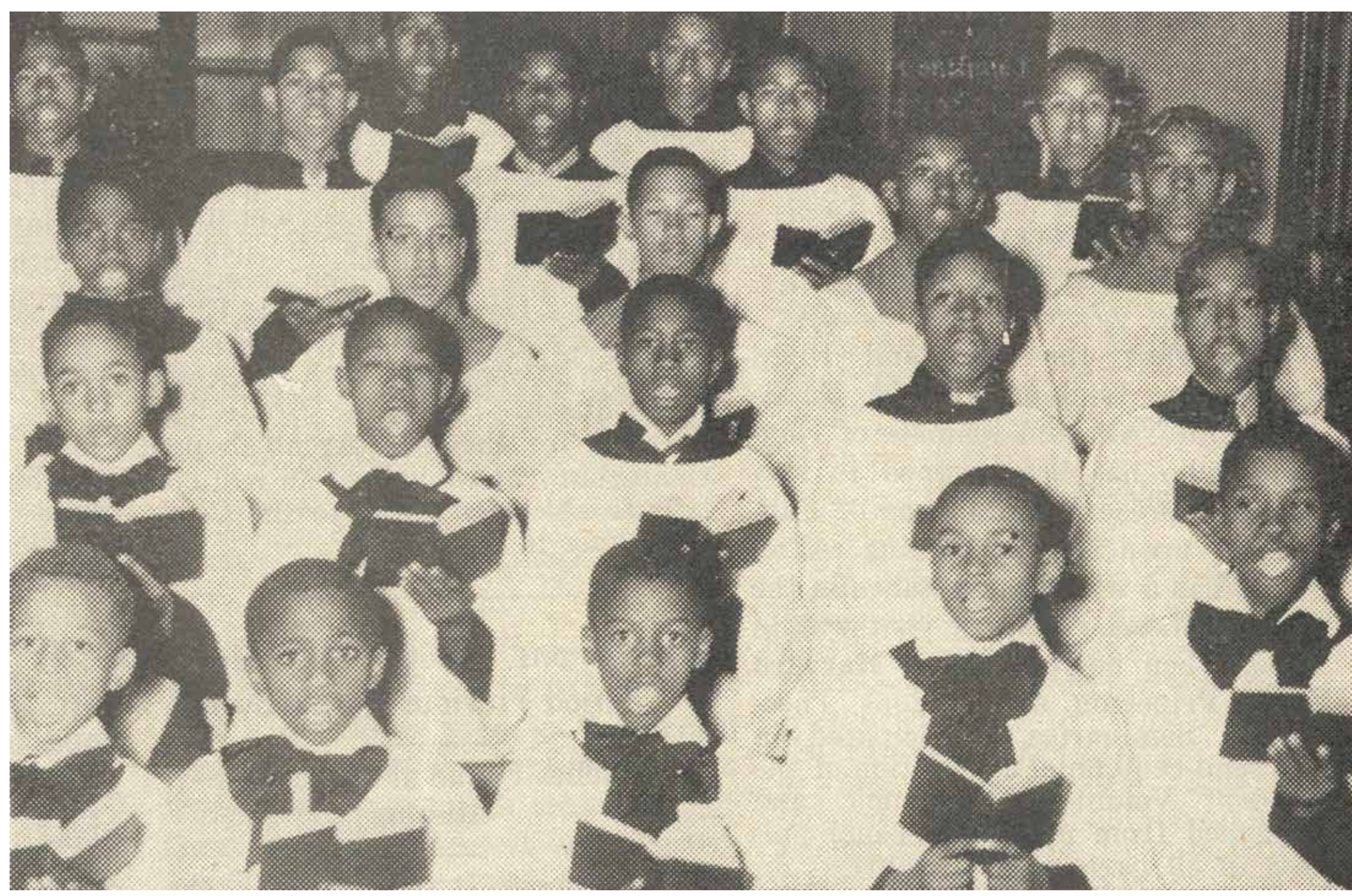


Telling Our Stories

Black Congregations Amidst Demographic and Social Changes 1950s-Present



(From top) The boy choir at St. Michael and All Angels, Charlotte, was a vibrant ministry until the church was forced to relocate. The congregation processed to their new location in 1968. In 2000, St. Mark's and Gualaupana celebrated their new partnership with a procession through downtown Wilson.

Discriminatory housing practices have had a profound impact on Black congregations. In the Jim Crow era, “color lines” forced the relocation of St. Ambrose, Raleigh, and All Saints’, Warrenton. As Raleigh continued to grow after WWII, development pressure compelled another relocation of St. Ambrose to Rochester Heights.

In Charlotte, St. Michael & All Angels was at the heart of the prosperous and progressive Black neighborhood nicknamed “Brooklyn.” But with the advent of “urban renewal” in the 1950s, this downtown neighborhood was decimated. St. Michael & All Angels sold its property in 1968, and the congregation spent the next several decades in search of a permanent home.

From 1968 to 1984, the St. Michael’s congregation worshiped at the Chapel of Hope, a former all-white mill church in the rapidly changing Optimist Park neighborhood, before moving to an available property near Johnson C. Smith University. That property, too, proved unsatisfactory, but there are now plans to build a new permanent home for St. Michael & All Angels.

The 1984 departure of St. Michael and All Angels was not the end of the story for our church’s ministry in Optimist Park. A new predominantly African American mission congregation was started in 1984, which led to the formal creation of the Chapel of Christ the King in 1990.

Elsewhere, historically Black congregations have embraced multicultural identities. St. Cyprian’s in Oxford responded to the influx of Latino neighbors by offering bilingual services and incorporating new religious and cultural practices. In 2000, St. Mark’s in Wilson became home to a second congregation, La Iglesia de Guadalupeana.

Embracing Heritage and Addressing History

We also see renewed appreciation for the heritage of the Black church. For the first time since 1974, the Diocese has a staff position for Black ministries. All Saints’, Warrenton, closed in 2016, has been reorganized as a special diocesan mission, and a revisioning committee is at work to honor its unique significance and bring it to new life and purpose.

The national church is also undertaking a bold initiative around racial issues for the first time since the late 1960s: Becoming Beloved Community. This new initiative focuses upon broad-based education and engagement around systemic racism as well as the strengthening of existing Black institutions. This has brought welcome attention and support to St. Augustine’s University, and recognition to pioneering priest, poet and advocate for human rights, Blessed Pauli Murray. Their feast day in the Calendar of Saints is July 1.

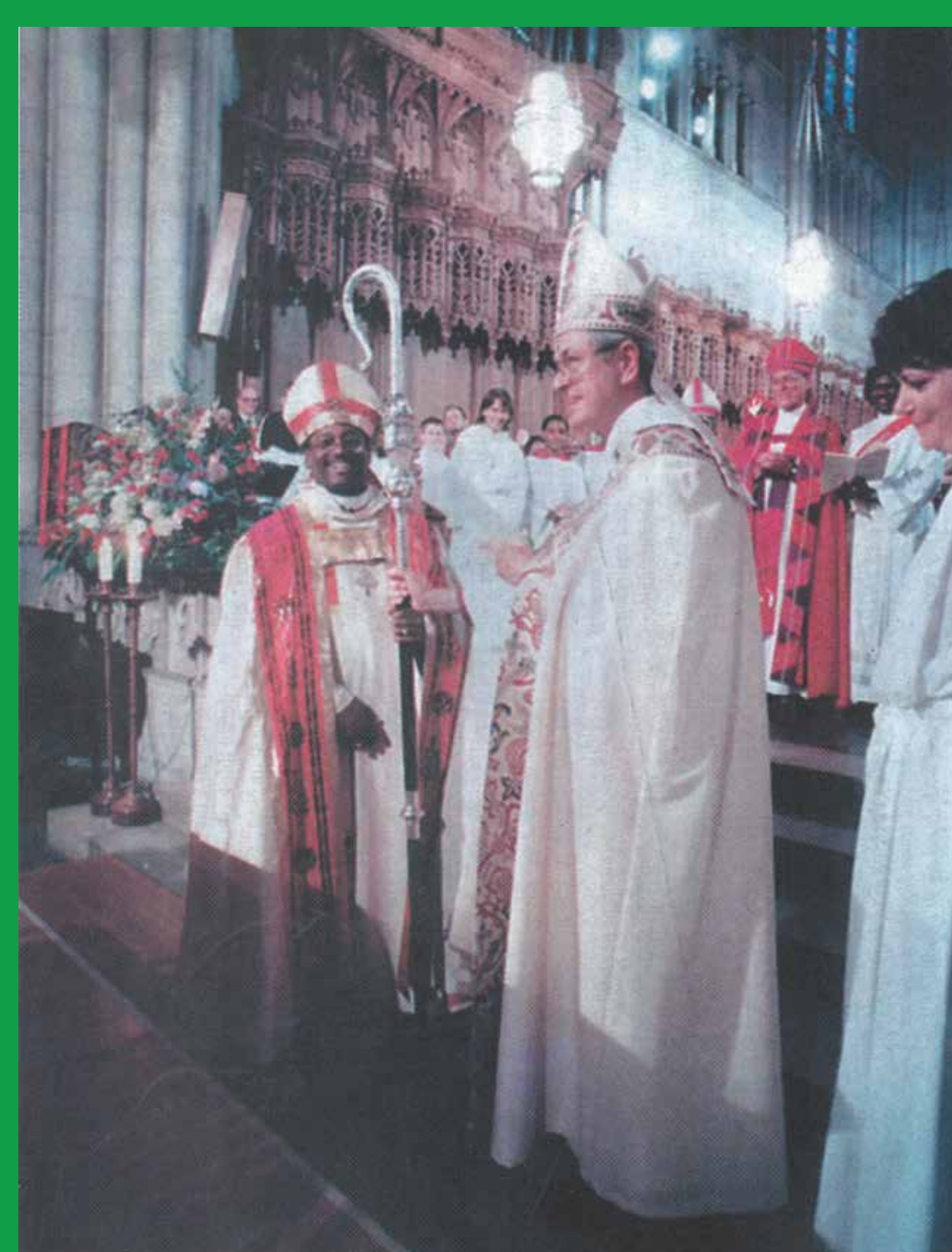
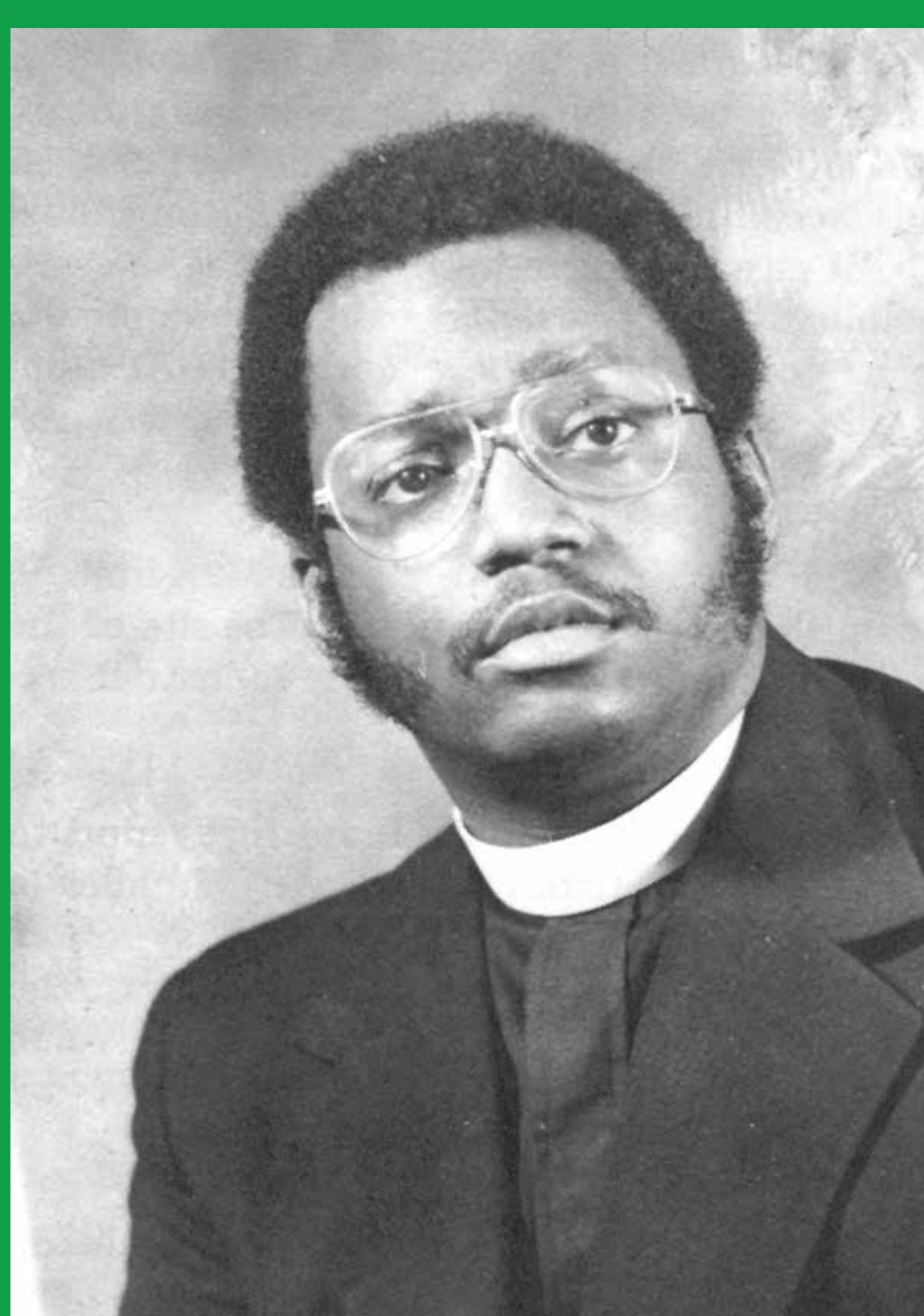


All Saints’, Warrenton, has been reorganized as a special diocesan mission, with plans for its future use taking shape, as in the architectural image above.



Blessed Pauli Murray

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry



The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, during his tenure at St. Stephen’s, Winston-Salem (left) and at his consecration as bishop of North Carolina on June 17, 2000 (right).

No single action has been more profound than the election and consecration of the Most Rev. Michael Curry to be our diocesan bishop in 2000. Bishop Curry was the first Black diocesan bishop in the South, and our first African American bishop in this diocese since the Rt. Rev. Henry Beard Delany. But Bishop Curry was no stranger to this diocese when he was elected in 2000. He began his ordained ministry at St. Stephen’s, Winston-Salem, in 1978. In 2015, the national church recognized Bishop Curry’s remarkable gifts for ministry by choosing him to be our presiding bishop.