

Bonnie Perry Bio

The Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry comes from a Marine family and has lived in California, Hawaii, Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and most recently, Chicago.

Perry earned a Bachelor's degree in Biology from the College of the Holy Cross, a Jesuit college in Worcester, Massachusetts. After graduation, she served in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in West Oakland and Skid Row, Los Angeles. Feeling called to ordained ministry and wrestling with being a Roman Catholic woman, she followed her call to ministry by matriculating at Union Theological Seminary in New York City where she met her spouse, Susan Harlow. In her final year in seminary, Perry was received into the Episcopal Church. In addition to her Masters of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary, Perry also has a Doctor of Ministry (specializing in Congregational Development) from Seabury Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL.

Following her ordination as deacon and then as priest in 1990 in the Diocese of Newark, Perry served three churches in New Jersey: Christ Church, Hackensack, Christ Church, Ridgewood and St. Peter's Clifton. In 1992, she moved to Chicago to follow her spouse, who had accepted a seminary faculty position.

For the next 27 years, Perry led the congregation of All Saints', Chicago, growing the community from 35 people, to one of the largest and the most active congregations in the Diocese of Chicago. All Saints' is blessed with a diverse and youthful congregation, with an average age of 38. All Saints' has served its community in many ways, including the creation of Ravenswood Community Services, a ministry that offers a weekly family style dinner for 125 neighbors and groceries for another 200 + neighbors living on the North side of the city of Chicago. In addition, the congregation is deeply involved in community organizing, advocacy for access to quality public education for all children, full inclusion for LGBT people around the world and access to education and medical care for the people living in the diocese of Renk in South Sudan.

Perry teaches a class at Bexley-Seabury Seminary on Reimagining Congregations in Mission, which addresses the paradigms for effective ministry in the 21st century. She is also a frequent contributor to the Huffington Post.

On June 1, 2019, Perry was elected Bishop of the Diocese of Michigan by the lay people and the clergy of the diocese at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Detroit. She is the first woman and first lesbian priest to be elected bishop in the diocese's 185-year history.

In addition to her work as a clergy person, Perry is also an internationally recognized sea kayak coach and guide, holding top coaching and guiding credentials in both the British Canoe Union (BCU) and the American Canoe Association (ACA).

Perry coaches and guides regularly around the world in such places as Baja, Mexico, the Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands, the West coast of Scotland, the Inner and Outer Hebrides'; as well as New Zealand and Canada. She is sponsored by Kokatat, Werner Paddles, Seals Spray Skirts and Riverside Kayak Connection, located in Wyandotte, MI.

Perry is one of a handful of women in North America to hold the British Canoe Union's: Advanced Sea Kayak Leader, Advanced Water Coach, and Advanced Water Provider/Assessor.

Perry resides in the city of Detroit and is married to The Rev. Dr. M. Susan Harlow, a United Church of Christ Pastor. Together, they have an Australian Shepherd named Tali and a long-haired, miniature dachshund named Owen.