
On the Election of a Bishop of Atlanta

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
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From time to time, the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta gathers to elect a new bishop; and we will do so again on Saturday, June 2, 2012. There is no established time period between these events; bishops' tenures vary. However, generally speaking, enough time has gone by, such that every nomination and election process has been different.

And our bishops have been different, too. Most of us do not remember the first bishops of Atlanta: Cleland Kinloch Nelson, or Henry Judah Mikell (who had our longest tenure as bishop, 25 years, from 1917 to 1942), or John Moore Walker, or John B. Walthour (who served the shortest tenure, only nine months, in 1952).

I actually do remember Randolph R. Claiborne, Jr. (who became diocesan bishop in 1953); in fact, he was the bishop who confirmed me. And I remember his successor, Bennett J. Sims (1972), with great fondness, for it was Bishop Sims who ordained me deacon and priest. Perhaps all of us remember the jovial C. Judson Child, Jr., who was first called as Canon Pastor of this Cathedral of St. Philip, before he was then elected Bishop Suffragan and then Diocesan Bishop (1983). It is he, of course, for whom Child Hall is named. (Mikell Chapel is named for our second bishop, and Walthour Library is named for our fourth bishop, who was actually serving as dean of the cathedral when he was elected.)

More recently, we have certainly known and loved both Frank Kellogg Allan, who became diocesan bishop in 1989, and J. Neil Alexander, who became diocesan bishop in 2001. And we have enjoyed various assistant and suffragan bishops, from Milton Wood to Onell Soto to Keith Whitmore. All these bishops, whatever their tenure, have served faithfully and well.

Now, the time comes to elect a tenth diocesan bishop of Atlanta. However, times have changed. Our culture and our church, and our challenges, are different from what they have been before. Six candidates have officially been nominated to lead the diocese through these new challenges, and I am honored to be among that group. I grew up in the Diocese of Atlanta, serving its variety of faithful people, walking in its woods, canoeing down its rivers, praying in its churches; it would be a true honor to serve as bishop.

As I have said before, the Cathedral Parish of St. Philip has delighted and loved me, and I love you. But I am open to the possibility that God might widen my ministry in some manner. In fact, God will widen my ministry no matter who is elected in June; for, as dean of the Cathedral, I will gladly work with whomever is elected!

Please do pray for all six of us who are formal candidates. It can be a hard thing to have one's name tossed around publicly in so many ways. Please look for the best in us; and then look for what would be best in the Diocese of Atlanta. My candidate colleagues and I seek to serve God and the world in the best way we can.

Sam Candler signature



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The Very Reverend Sam Candler



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