

### Courtesy Resolution #3

#### Honoring the Life and Legacy of the Reverend Janet K. Brown

RESOLVED, That the 193<sup>rd</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont express deep gratitude for the life and legacy of the Reverend Janet K. Brown, the first woman to be ordained to the priesthood in this diocese (January 6, 1977), who died April 5, 2025; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention remember Janet's long-time service to this diocese in 11 congregations, various commissions and committees, and give thanks for her quiet and steadying wisdom and counsel, her deep pastoral accompaniment for those entrusted to her care and her great joy in following Jesus; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Convention communicate its heartfelt condolences and affection to Janet's family and her beloved spouse, Jean Townsend.

#### EXPLANATION

Janet was ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests on the Feast of the Epiphany 1977, having been ordained to the diaconate in 1974. The first woman in this country ordained to the priesthood with the approval of the Church was ordained on the first permissible date, January 1, 1977. Five days later, Janet was the first woman ordained a priest in Vermont, and roughly the 16<sup>th</sup> overall since 1974. She truly was a pioneer on whose shoulders women priests today stand.

Those early days were rough for any woman as a priest, and her experience was no exception. Despite the opposition, Janet served our diocesan household for 48 years following her ordination as priest. Bishop Kerr, her ordaining bishop, said, "If it is of God, you can never defeat it." Indeed. She served in one capacity or another in 11 congregations in this diocese, from one end of the state to the other. Dearest to her heart were Saint James', Essex Junction, and Grace, Sheldon. She started to attend Saint James' in 1971, and that congregation sponsored her for ordination. She happily returned there when she retired. Janet served Grace Church, Sheldon, for more than 20 years, including a supply period from 1987 to 1994. These two congregations formed her and sustained her.

In addition to her ordained ministry, Janet was a psychologist, practicing in Milton and Burlington for 29 years. Her two vocations melded well in her exceptional pastoral care and empathy for those who sought her spiritual wisdom and guidance and for those coming before the Commission on Ministry. Her gentleness of being always brought a centering calm to the work before her.

Janet said in a sermon in 2021 during the pandemic: "We need to remember that God has called us together, that God is with us, God is guiding us. We are called to move forward in faith, not give way to fear. We are called to seek and do God's will, and God will give us the grace to carry that out. We are kingdom people, shalom people. We have been made new, thanks to the grace of our Lord Jesus. 'Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things.'"

Janet loved the church, she loved her work, she loved Jean, her friends and family, and she loved Vermont. May we carry out Janet's rich legacy of love in our lives as we move fearlessly forward in faith.