



Bishop Karen P. Oliveto

Karen P. Oliveto was consecrated as a bishop of The United Methodist Church on July 16, 2016 in Scottsdale, Ariz., and assigned for the 2016-2020 quadrennium to the Mountain Sky Episcopal Area, which includes the Rocky Mountain, and Yellowstone annual (regional) conferences. It includes 400 congregations in Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and a small section of Idaho.



Bishop Oliveto was elected to the episcopacy after serving as the first woman pastor of the 12,000-member Glide Memorial United Methodist Church in San Francisco, Calif. She is the first woman to serve as senior pastor of one of The United Methodist Church's 100 largest congregations. She served Glide from 2008 until her election as bishop.

Born on Good Friday in 1958, in the aptly named community of Babylon, N.Y. Bishop Oliveto grew up in her local United Methodist Church, being active in Sunday School and the youth group, believing from an early age that God was calling her into ministry. She preached her first sermon as 16-year-old in 1974 at the invitation of the Rev. Jack Savage, pastor of Babylon United Methodist Church. It was on "Warm Fuzzies and Cold Pricklies," focusing on how love rooted in God warms people from the inside out. She is the oldest of three daughters of Richard and Nellie Oliveto. Mr. Oliveto died in January 2016.

Bishop Oliveto earned her B.A. in Psychology, cum laude, from Drew University, Madison, N.J., in 1980. She earned her Master in Divinity from Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, Calif., in 1983, a Master in Philosophy from Drew University in 1991, and a PhD in the Sociology of Religion from Drew University in 2002.

She was ordained as an Elder in the New York Conference of The United Methodist Church in 1985. She transferred her clergy membership to the California-Nevada Annual Conference in July 1997.

Bishop Oliveto's early pastoral experience occurred in rural, Bloomville, N.Y., population, 250, in New York State's Catskill Mountains, where she was pastor of Bloomville United Methodist Church from 1983-1986. Feeling called to campus ministry, she became the United Ministry campus minister at the nearby State University of New York College at Delhi, serving there from 1984-89.

She returned to California in 1989 to become campus minister at the Ecumenical House Campus Ministry at San Francisco State University. She served there until she was appointed pastor of

Bethany United Methodist Church in the city's Noe Valley neighborhood in July 1992. She served as Bethany's pastor for 12 years.

Bishop Oliveto moved from the local church to academia in August 2004 when she was named Associate Dean of Academic Affairs/Director of Contextual Education at the Pacific School of Religion in San Francisco.

In 2008, as the Rev. Cecil Williams, the long-serving senior pastor of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church was preparing to retire, Bishop Oliveto was named as his successor. A San Francisco institution, Glide has been on the cutting edge of urban ministry for decades, serving thousands of people every week. Under her leadership, congregational life flourished through empowered lay involvement. She served as vice chair of the San Francisco Interfaith Council, and was active in speaking out and taking action on issues related to homelessness, economic justice, immigration, civil rights, and LGBTQ rights.

Bishop Oliveto has the distinction of being the first openly lesbian bishop in The United Methodist Church. She and her wife, Robin Ridenour, a nurse anesthetist and United Methodist deaconess, were married in 2014.

Bishop Oliveto was twice elected as a delegate, in 2004 and 2016 to The United Methodist Church's General Conference, its top legislative body. She was elected as a delegate to the Western Jurisdictional Conference in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016. She has been a part of the denomination's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Lead Women Pastor Project, and has been a mentor to other clergywomen believing they are called to pastor large churches.

Initially she was among nine candidates for the episcopacy at the July, 2016 Western Jurisdictional Conference. As the voting moved from ballot to ballot, other candidates withdrew. Before the 17th ballot, the other remaining candidate withdrew, allowing the conference to unanimously elect her.

Bishop Oliveto has been the adjunct professor of United Methodist Studies at Pacific School of Religion from 2004 to 2016. She has also been an adjunct professor in Prophetic Leadership for the Doctor of Ministry program at Drew University and was adjunct professor in Evangelism and Mission at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas.