

Washington National Cathedral to install new dean

by [Celeste Kennel-Shank](#) in the [October 12, 2016](#) issue

Growing up in Alexandria, Virginia, Randolph Marshall Hollerith recalls visiting the Washington National Cathedral as it was being built, especially watching the stone carvers work. Now he is the cathedral's dean.

"I have powerful memories of that sacred space as a child," Hollerith said. "It was my first experience I had of the numinous, in the nave of the cathedral."

With his installation service planned for October 23, Hollerith begins his work as he would in any size of parish, he said.

"I'm very much in a listen-and-learn mode," he said. "I'm not someone who comes in with a preordained sense of vision. . . . You have to lead from the heart of the community."

The previous dean of the cathedral, which is part of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, [retired two years before the end of his contract](#), at the end of 2015. Gary Hall said the cathedral was on solid financial ground, and he hoped for a successor who could commit to at least a decade as dean, including overseeing a major capital campaign.

Of the cathedral's annual budget of \$13-15 million, \$1 million comes from its 1,400 members, according to the Episcopal Diocese of Washington staff. The rest comes from major donors, tourists, and grants. The cathedral sustained damage during a 2011 earthquake.

Hollerith said that there were no immediate plans for a capital campaign, though in his role in fund-raising and stewardship, he is building relationships "with all kinds of people," both those with financial resources and those with "time and talent" to offer, as well as making partnerships.

The cathedral is closing out the books for the 2016 financial year, which looks to have been a great year, Hollerith said.

Among the programs of the cathedral, Hollerith would like to expand work with veterans. And he sees its interfaith and racial justice work as crucial.

Kelly Brown Douglas, the cathedral's canon theologian, spearheads many racial justice efforts. An event September 21 on spirituals and the struggle for freedom celebrated the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Conversations on racial justice have been stimulated in part by the [debates around stained-glass windows depicting Confederate generals](#) Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. In August the cathedral replaced the smaller panes showing the battle flag with solid-color glass.

"Instead of simply taking the windows down and going on with business as usual, the cathedral recognizes that, for now, they provide an opportunity for us to begin to write a new narrative on race and racial justice at the cathedral and perhaps for our nation," Brown Douglas said in a statement.