News
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Presiding Bishop-elect Sean Rowe speaks following his election during the Episcopal Church General Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, June 26, 2024. (RNS/Randall Gornowich)

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Bishop Sean Rowe, elected June 26 to be the Episcopal Church's next presiding bishop, has decided to be installed in New York in a reduced version of the traditionally elaborate ceremony for the denomination's transition of power.

In an announcement issued June 28, Rowe said his Nov. 2 installation will take place in the chapel of the church's headquarters on Second Avenue in Manhattan instead of under the gothic arches of the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

"With gratitude to all involved, I have decided to begin this ministry in a new way," Rowe said in his announcement. "With a simple service at the Church Center that will include everyone via livestream, we can care for God's creation by reducing our collective carbon footprint."

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Rowe, 49, whose nine-year term succeeding Bishop Michael Curry officially begins Nov. 1, said he and the committees involved in the planning determined that he will be seated in later months at the cathedral.

"We in the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and Washington National Cathedral wholeheartedly support Presiding Bishop-elect Rowe in his desire for an installation experience that is accessible to all and wisely stewards technologies that are available to us," said Washington Episcopal Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, in a statement in response. "We look forward to the day of his seating at the cathedral, and we will celebrate that occasion with great joy."

For decades, both parts of the transitions in Episcopal Church leadership, the installation and the seating of the new presiding bishop, have occurred at the cathedral. Curry was seated on the same day as his installation in 2015, and nine years earlier the ceremonies of his predecessor, Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, were held on the same weekend, said Kevin Eckstrom, chief public affairs officer for

Washington National Cathedral.



Presiding Bishop-elect Sean Rowe, left, and Presiding Bishop Michael Curry address the media at the Episcopal Church General Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, June 26, 2024. (RNS/Randall Gornowich)

The cathedral has been the seat of the presiding bishops since 1941, said Amanda Skofstad, spokesperson for the Episcopal Church.

"Bishop Henry St. George Tucker had his installation there in 1938 and all subsequent presiding bishops have had their installation there as well," she said.

Skofstad said the proximity of Election Day, on Nov. 5, was among the reasons for the simpler installation at a new site, but Rowe, in one of his first comments speaking as presiding bishop-elect, talked about needing to do things differently in the coming years of the Episcopal Church.

"If we're honest with each other and ourselves, we know that we cannot continue to be the Episcopal Church in the same way, no matter where we live," he said to the House of Deputies just after that body confirmed his election by the church's House of Bishops.



Presiding Bishop-elect Sean Rowe delivers a sermon at the closing Eucharist service of the Episcopal Church General Convention, June 28, 2024, in Louisville, Kentucky. (RNS/Randall Gornowich)

He also told the deputies he will be committed to expanding on Curry's commitments to "creation care," as well as evangelism and racial reconciliation.

"(W)hat about our idolatry of structures and practices that exclude and diminish our witness?" he asked during his sermon at the closing Eucharist service of the Episcopal Church General Convention on June 28 in Louisville, Kentucky. "We have to get it together. That's going to mean laying some things down. The struggle ahead will require a tolerance for uncertainty, a willingness to make real sacrifices."