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**Title**

Rev. Jamie Samilio Oral History Interview Webpage

**Date**

August 2, 2023

**Extant**

1 webpage, (1:20:27 minute interview), 1 transcript

**Abstract**

Virginia Theological Seminary Archivist Joshua Waits interviews Jamie Samilio, for the Called and Holy: Virginia Theological Seminary LGBTQIA+ Oral History Project. Jamie talks about being raised Roman Catholic and finding the Episcopal church. She also discusses her time within the VTS community as a student in the Master in Christian Education (MACE) program.

**Biographical**

When Jamie was a child, she attended a private, Catholic school for girls. The standards for education were high, and the religious education and Christian culture of the Sisters of St. Joseph gave her a sense of what it meant to be part of a caring Christian community. By the time she was nine years old, Jamie knew that God was calling her to be a priest. Odd thoughts for a Catholic girl, but she could never seem to shake the idea that she was called by God to say something that would help people understand that we are all a community God loves – even people who do not believe in God.

Jamie attended Mercyhurst University where she fell in love with her best friend Sylvia, who was already in love with Jamie. Until that time, Jamie had no idea she was gay. She had gone out with a couple of guys, but their goodnight kisses had made her think such unexciting physical exchange between men and women accounted for the high

divorce rate. Jamie considers herself gay because when she came out, both men and women were referred to as gay. She refuses to be labeled with the "L" word, because it is the nastiest thing they called you in an all-girls' grade school.

Jeffrey Hamblin, a gay priest doing campus ministry at Mercyhurst, met Jamie and her wife in the early 1980s, and they latched onto each other. Sylvia and Jamie introduced him to dozens of people who gathered at the gay haunts in town. This enabled Jeffrey to reach out to the gay community and invite them into the parishes that he oversaw. He told Jamie she should consider the priesthood, but she realized, in her case, in order to become an Episcopal priest in those days, she had to lie about who God created her to be, which is something Jamie could not do. The good sisters told her that to lie was a sin. Her mother always said that if Jamie did something wrong and lied about it, she would be punished twice: once for what she did wrong and a second time for lying.

Around 1993 Jamie applied to Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) and her application was denied because she was open about being gay. She felt that lying about who God created her to be to attend seminary, where words hung on the library wall proclaiming Jesus as the truth, the life, and the way, seemed wrong. Jesus said we should love each other just as Jesus loved us. Instead, Jamie heard that VTS felt openly gay people would be a bad influence on the seminary. Jamie was not going to lie; she would wait. She was barred from attending seminary because she was coerced by a psychiatrist to let him note her long-term, monogamous relationship with Sylvia on the seminary application. She told him "No" four times but she finally believed him when he said it would help. Only later was she told that she was set up by a priest -- who she thought was her dear friend -- to keep her out of school. Jamie came to realize that this priest thought it was best for Jamie to realize that being gay was a choice she was making to sin.

Tom Petty said it best, "The waiting is the hardest part." During the next thirty-two years, Jamie and her wife endured death threats and discrimination. Jamie was once legally fired from a job for being gay. Jamie waited for the Episcopal Church, the seminary, and the people at all levels of the Christian community to wake up and start practicing Christianity -- accepting people just as God created them. What Jamie knew and understood in her mind, body and spirit was that God had called her to ministry, and it was the church that could not figure out what to do with her. During these years Jamie continued to follow God's call to ministry and she faithfully attended church and served on the altar, and worked for the Diocese of Washington.

In 1999, the Rev. Martha Horne and The Rt. Rev. Jane Dixon worked to change the culture and policies of VTS and Jamie began a MACE degree part-time and graduated in 2005. In 2014 the Diocese of Virginia accepted her as a postulant and she attended

the Anglican Studies program at VTS, graduating a second time in 2015. She was ordained to the Priesthood on December 12, 2015, graduated from seminary with a Christian Education degree (once their rules were changed). Then, God called Jamie to ordination again. This time she answered yes and navigated the ordination process as the person God created her to be. All the doors flew open, and Jamie was ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church after waiting almost thirty-two years.

Jamie has a strong desire to walk with others as they discover their spiritual gifts and journey toward a deeper understanding of their own call to ministry. Jamie has a passion for Christian Formation and Outreach, but her first love is engaging in the creative process, through art, worship design, or almost any task or program in which space exists for imagination. Jamie believes that God wants us to experience joy in life, and little brings her more joy than helping someone unlock their inner creativity. Jamie's passion for fine arts, combined with her call to ministry, led her to create the Art-n-Soul program that walks participants – especially non-artists – through the creative process to produce a painting that is then donated to Pathways to Housing as housewarming gifts for clients who are moving from being unhoused into permanent homes. ([www.art-n-soul.net](http://www.art-n-soul.net)) The art program is currently being reconfigured as Jamie's ministry unfolds in new ways.

Jamie enjoys painting, playing the piano, and being in or on the water!

Biography submitted by Jamie Samilo and edited by Doris Malkmus.

Biography Date: November 2025

### **Scope and Content**

Oral History of the Rev. Jamie Samilio, for the Called and Holy: Virginia Theological Seminary LGBTQIA+ Oral History Project. Jamie talks about being raised Roman Catholic and finding the Episcopal church. She also discusses her time within the VTS community as a student in the Master in Christian Education (MACE) program.

### **Source**

This interview was conducted by VTS Archivist Joshua Waits for the project, Called and Holy: Virginia Theological Seminary LGBTQIA+ Oral History Project available online at <https://vtsbpl.omeka.net/items/show/504>.

### **Access**

Open to all researchers at <https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/jamie-samilio>

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Collection material is in English

## **Cite as**

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**Digital finding aid created by Doris Malkmus, 2026**

## **Tags**

Episcopal Church, Washington D.C., ordination/clergy, artist/musician/poet