

Barbie gets ordained, and she has the wardrobe to match

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—With her careers as veterinarian, astronaut and U.S. president behind her, Barbie has at last found her true calling—as an Episcopal priest.

The 11.5-inch-tall fictional graduate of Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif., has donned a cassock and surplice and is rector at St. Barbara's-by-the-Sea in (where else?) Malibu, Calif.

Julie Blake Fisher, an Episcopal priest in Kent, Ohio, created Episcopal Priest Barbie High Church Edition for a friend, Dena Cleaver-Bartholomew, when she got her first pulpit assignment in Manlius, N.Y. (RNS PHOTO/Courtesy Julie Blake Fisher)

She arrived at the church fully accessorized, as is Barbie's custom. Her impeccably tailored ecclesiastical vestments include various colored chasubles (the sleeveless vestments worn at Mass) for every liturgical season, black clergy shirt with white collar, neat skirt and heels, a laptop

with prepared sermon and a miniature, genuine Bible.

“The Rev. Barbie,” who in less than a week had drawn nearly 3,000 friends on her Facebook page, spends most of her time in the office of Dena Cleaver-Bartholomew, rector of Christ (Episcopal) Church, in Manlius, N.Y., near Syracuse.

The doll, her wardrobe and portable sacristy were a gift from Cleaver-Bartholomew’s friend, Julie Blake Fisher, a priest in Kent, Ohio.

“I got a phone call from my husband who said a large package had arrived. Julie had told me that she was making something for me. She used to be a dressmaker, and she makes gorgeous stoles, so I thought she was making me a stole,” Cleaver-Bartholomew said. “When I came home and there was this enormous box, I knew it wasn’t just a stole.”

Fisher had made Episcopal Priest Barbie and a few vestments two years ago for the children in her parish to dress.

“I thought the children would like to practice playing with the vestments and learning what they are,” said Fisher. The Rev. Barbie was a hit with both the children and a local group of women clergy, including Cleaver-Bartholomew.

When Cleaver-Bartholomew later got called to her parish in New York, Fisher knew the perfect gift for her friend.

“I thought: ‘I don’t have time to make her one of her own. I’ll just send her Episcopal Priest Barbie for her farewell gift,’” said Fisher.

“But then, when I sat down to start to package everything up, I thought: ‘What if I added this? What if I added that? What if I made this? It would just take one more day.’”

One more day turned into 100 hours of painstaking labor, and “before I

knew it, it was Episcopal Church Barbie—High Church Edition,” Fisher said.

A [“Friends of Episcopal Priest Barbie” Facebook group](#) has grown exponentially since its March 31 inception. Many of the Rev. Barbie’s online admirers asked about her career aspirations.

“How long ’til she is Bishop Barbie?” one asked.