

Part A – Describe your Faith Story, including your call to ministry.

It has been said that God prepares us for what He has prepared for us to do. I believe my entire life has been one of preparation. The Burwells are Anglican by heritage (originating in the town of Burwell, near Cambridge, in England) and the Burwells in America were Episcopalian until my grandfather married the daughter of a Presbyterian missionary who died in the mission field in Brazil. I was, therefore, baptized as a Presbyterian with Episcopal cousins. My mother died when I was eight, and my father remarried a wonderful Southern Baptist who introduced me to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ when I was nine. I remember coming in the house and running to tell my father. I said, “Dad, I just accepted Jesus as my Savior, and when I die I’m going to go to heaven and I’m going to live with Him forever. Isn’t that great?” My father who was quite reserved and private with his faith, said, “Martha, what did you do to that boy?!” What she did was instill in me a rock-solid faith that would stand the test of time.

In my 10th grade year I began dating one of the Reverend William Lumpkin’s daughters. Father Lumpkin was the rector of the Episcopal Church of Our Savior in my home town of Rock Hill and Mr. Lumpkin (as I called him) was a tremendous influence in my spiritual life. I found I adored the Episcopal liturgy and by my college years I became grounded in Morning Prayer and Eucharist.

While in college at the University of South Carolina I had a philosophy minor, and being overly influenced by the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, I attempted a little more than a year of life without God. After graduation, the God who had adopted me into his family at baptism and introduced me to Himself at age 9 allowed a personal crisis to bring me to my knees. In my despair I prayed, “I don’t even know if you exist, but if you do, I’m at the end of my rope and I need you.” God met me where I was with grace and restored me.

While dating my future wife, Sylvia Fender, I was content with a personal belief but no public expression of my faith. I remember walking through the graveyard of St. Phillip’s, Charleston and the topic of religion came up. I told Sylvia, “I believe in God and all that, but I have no use for organized religion. I believe one can worship just as well in nature or on a boat in the harbor. I don’t go to church services.” After we were married, Sylvia decided she wanted us to spend Sunday mornings in worship. I protested, but she was more than persuasive. She allowed me to pick the church, and since I had been an Episcopalian, I deduced that if I had to be miserable, at least I could be familiar in my misery, so we visited the Episcopal Church that was the closest to our home. Having been away from the Church for a few years, I was surprised at just how much I had missed it. Sylvia and I became immersed in parish life, teaching Sunday school and leading the teenage youth group. Over a period of years I began to find that I was enjoying my time spent with the Church even more than I enjoyed my time at my chosen career in radio.

One Sunday morning in 1979 (during Morning Prayer), I heard God call me to the priesthood. The call made no sense to me, as I was very successful, fairly prosperous and quite happy in my work. I prayed for a month before I told anyone. When I finally told Sylvia she confirmed the call with joy.

After seminary my bishop placed me in Orangeburg, South Carolina under a rector who was a traditionalist in every good sense of the word and who taught me a love for the Church and a love for parishioners and grace and joy that I had never known. I also found that my previous career in broadcasting had prepared me quite well to preach life-oriented sermons and to understand the culture of the society into which God called me to minister.

My three years at the Church of the Redeemer were a wonderful training ground for what God had prepared for me at the Church of the Holy Cross, where I have remained and thrived for the past 21 years. Over those 21 years at Holy Cross we’ve gone from a divided and contentious congregation of 75 to a united and influential parish of over 1800, and we’ve gone from a budget of \$55,000 to one of well over two million dollars. God has been, and continues to be very good to Holy Cross.

I am grateful that God saw fit to prepare me for this incredible ministry that He had prepared for me. I don’t know what lies ahead, but I do know that He will continue to lead me, and I am prepared to serve my Lord and my Savior in whatever way He wants. To God be the Glory and honor, now and forever.

Part B – Discuss your management style including resolving conflict

To begin with, I believe there is a major distinction to be made between management and leadership. I would hope that EDUSC would want me to lead the diocese in the next several decades, and not simply manage diocesan affairs. That having been said, I would say that my current leadership responsibilities include discerning and focusing our God-given vision and translating the vision to our parish, while encouraging and empowering parish leaders and staff, equipping saints for the work of ministry, and serving our five priests and our deacon as their front-line pastor. I am collaborative by nature and well-trained in Systems Theory and in all aspects of resolving conflict.

Conflict is a normal part of life and when dealt with appropriately, conflict can strengthen all concerned. We are sinners and we all make mistakes, but we live in a culture permeated by divorce, by ego, by consumerism which believes that the customer is always right. Consequently, we love to resign, to withdraw pledges and rise high above those terrible people who do the things that we would never do.

When we have grievances with someone, we need to immediately go to the person whose behavior has impacted us and talk to them directly. More often than not, those hurt or offended talk to a multitude of people who have no means of settling the conflict. The multitude then talks to others. Some of this is often done under the seal of confidentiality, which then makes the matter irresolvable. Bishop Edward Salmon was fond of saying that gossip is a form of terrorism. He would remind us that we have terrorists in the Church. They are the people who gossip without any intent of reconciliation.

Within the Church we each need to be held accountable for our speech. When people have been wronged, we need to set the matter straight on both sides of the fence as soon as is humanly possible. We all need to assume the responsibility and burden of resolving conflict as Christ on the cross assumed the burden of bridging our separation from God.

I practice several relational principles that I learned from my mentors over the years and they do work well.

First of all, I will not receive a confidence about a third party, only about the person speaking. A main rule I pass on to all new staff members is that we talk to a person, and not about them.

Secondly, if I do receive information about a third party, I will make the information known to that party, as well as the source of the information. No anonymity is allowed.

Thirdly, I do my best to listen to all conflict from a non-judgmental perspective and I commit to make it as safe as possible to deal with the issues being raised. I do my best not to be defensive when I am responsible for a disappointment that is brought to my attention.

Part C – How would you counsel a rector on blessing a same gender relationship and how would you lead us forward beyond our divisions?

I would begin by reminding the clergyperson that we are in a Church structure that has (and I believe rightly has) retained catholic ecclesiology. As a direct consequence, the actions of some can and do affect the lives of all. Regardless of where one stands on same gender blessings we need first ask ourselves if it is appropriate for a clergyperson, a bishop, or even for the entire Episcopal Church to offer a blessing of a same gender relationship without at least giving serious and further consideration to the impact of such an unilateral action on the body of faithful people in our parishes and dioceses and in the rest of the Communion. At present, the Mind of the Communion is against such an action as reflected in Lambeth 1.10, the Windsor Report, Dar Es Salaam and all recent Anglican Communion gatherings.

Secondly, as the Bishop of Dallas recently reminded his diocese, the Christian faith is something we receive, not legislate. Our own wedding service in our prayer book recognizes that the bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored by all people. To change the Church's blessings from a man and a woman in Holy Matrimony to something else, or to give the Church's blessings to any other form of covenanted relationship outside of marriage would be to do away with both Scripture and Tradition, and in a catholic ecclesiology that can not be a matter for a General Convention to decide with a majority vote. We must find other and better ways to be pastoral and to love to our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters without tinkering with the sanctity of Holy Matrimony.

As to the second part of the question; as to how I would lead us forward beyond our divisions, I do not believe that we can simply hide away and pretend that issues in the wider church really have nothing to do with us. The fact that I am part of a Communion means that other people have the power to decide for me where my time and energy will be spent. For example, if, God forbid, I go home this evening and my wife of 33 years tells me that she is moving out and filing for divorce then her actions would, unavoidably, decide where I spend my resources. Split, schism, and realignment would most likely result in open legal warfare and all the wind would be out of our ministry sails for a long time. I believe that whatever can be done to avoid such a war, short of sin, should be done.

What could be done, and what I would do is to commit our resources to being outward-focused and missional, instead of being inward-focused and simply trying to survive. Archbishop William Temple once said that the Church is the one organization that should exist for those who are not yet members. My parish made that statement our First Premise and we do indeed thrive, adding an average of ten family units a month. A number of these new adult members are unchurched and are baptized at our parish. My present diocese grew by 15% last year and was the only diocese in America to show such growth. If we make a firm commitment to devote the resources of the Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina to missional efforts we will, as a result, focus on the important (Matthew 28:16f) and be less inclined to be seduced by what is known as the tyranny of the urgent. That is how we move forward and move past our divisions.

I have what I believe are specific and practical methods by which we could accomplish this work for our Lord. The vision for this way forward is based on the fact that we are catholic in structure and as St. Paul says, the Body of Christ. I know we can do this work to the glory of God and for His Church.

Part D - Some of the first steps I would take to get started

I believe the fundamental responsibility of the administration of any diocese is to exist for, build up, strengthen and empower the congregations so that they can be effective instruments of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In short, I believe the diocesan office exists to build up the congregations. I would be an itinerant bishop from the first day, spending far more time with the clergy and congregations than in the diocesan office.

My vision would not be primarily about evangelism, outreach, pastoral care or missionary work – it would be about developing the parishes and missions within the Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina so that they would be more effective at evangelism, outreach, pastoral care and missionary work.

Recognizing that the diocesan budget must not be a drain on resources critically needed for local parish and mission ministry, I would examine all diocesan expenses with a goal of gradual reduction.

At the same I would offer proven stewardship teaching methods to any parish or mission wanting to dramatically increase their congregation's vitality and spiritual depth.

I would gather the top “go-to” women and men in the most active congregations and immediately begin work on creating what will become the finest youth and young adult resource network in the Episcopal Church.

I would hope to resolve any existing conflict and instruct and inspire willing vestries in authentic spiritual leadership.

I believe a bishop can and must love, respect and honor all of his or her clergy and the kind of endearment I would seek with priests and vicars could only be achieved through shared intimacy and trust. I have this kind of relationship with all of my associates at Holy Cross and a priority would be creating the same agape with all of the clergy of EDUSC regardless of theological alignment. Additionally, our associates at Holy Cross are among the highest compensated and longest tenured in my diocese and EDUSC clergy would find me to be a tireless advocate for them from our very first day together.

Attendance and budgets do not have to decline. The average congregational age does not have to increase. Every parish and mission can nurture children and teens in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Each and every church in the Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina can be a place that compels and sets the agenda for their community. I would hope to develop world-class lay leadership in every parish and mission and actually empower them to take on the challenges mentioned in the diocesan profile while being a true pastor, mentor and encourager to all of the clergy. In doing so, we can together live into the EDUSC vision of being one Body with one mission: changing lives.

The Very Reverend John Beckett Burwell

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PERSONAL INFORMATION

Date of Birth - 09/06/1951
Home Town (through 1969) - Rock Hill, S.C.
Marital Status - Married, 33 years
Spouse's Name - Sylvia Fender Burwell
Children - Mary Elizabeth Burwell (21), Suzanne Beckett Burwell (16)

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

1971-1974 - WNOK Radio, Columbia, S.C.

Began as weekend announcer while in college, became morning drive announcer (top position) by 1973.

1971-1972 - WIS-TV, Columbia, S.C.

Began as cameraman, graduated to control room before leaving to full-time work at WNOK Radio

1974-1981 - WTMA Radio, Charleston, S.C.

Began on all-night shift, became overall Operations Manager for WTMA and WPXI Radio.

1984 -1987 - Church of the Redeemer, Orangeburg, S.C.

Placed as curate by Bishop Allison in 1984. Enjoyed fruitful ministry as the Associate Rector until call to Sullivan's Island

1987 to present - The Church of the Holy Cross, Sullivan's Island, South Carolina

Position: Rector, Dean of the Charleston Deanery

June, 2005 to December, 2006 - The Episcopal Church of St. Peter and St. John, Charleston S.C.

Position: Rector, as requested by Bishop Salmon.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Rector of a parish (21 years) that has grown from 75 active members to 1800+; from a budget of \$55,000 to 2.2 million; from a staff consisting of a part-time secretary to a paid staff of 27, including four full-time and one part-time priests, a priest intern, a deacon, two youth ministers and a youth intern, two Christian education directors, two music directors and a large support staff.
- Rector of a parish that built and paid for a \$700,000 parish hall/education building in 1992, and outgrew it in five years. Completed a 6.7 million-dollar expansion of our Sullivan's Island facilities in 2003.
- Opened a 2.4 million-dollar second location of Holy Cross on Daniel Island in mid-2006. Now have almost 350 regular worshipers at our Daniel Island Location, and 99% have joined since the location opened.

- Served on almost every South Carolina diocesan committee available, including several terms on Diocesan Council and Standing Committee. President of Standing Committee in 2008. Served on the Commission on Ministry since 1996; Chair since 2002.
- Served as chair of the South Carolina Delegation to the Episcopal Church General Conventions in 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2009.
- Serve as Dean of the Charleston Deanery (since 1995).
- Attended Cursillo in South Carolina #6 (1980), and served on many Cursillo staffs since 1981.
- Served as Spiritual Director for Happening in South Carolina (the teenage version of Cursillo) for six years.
- Wrote and helped develop *A More Excellent Way*, which became the bishop's leadership program for the Diocese of South Carolina.
- Held (and still hold) vestry training weekends for numerous vestries and parish councils throughout South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Pennsylvania.
- Taught (and still teach) theology of Stewardship in dozens of parishes and missions since 1991. Last year's stewardship teachings (2008) included multiple sessions at St. Matthews, Darlington, Church of the Redeemer, Orangeburg, and St. Michael's, Charleston.
- Taught homiletics to aspiring deacons since the inception of the Diaconate program in South Carolina. Scheduled to teach the current class in 2010.
- Co-leader (with my wife) of the 2007 South Carolina ECW Retreat Weekend
- Asked by Bishop Salmon in 2005 to additionally become the Rector of the Parish of St. Peter and St. John in Charleston in order to reverse a decade of decline and to revitalize the congregation by infusing Holy Cross principles. In 18 months, we completely transformed the parish doubling their ASA, increasing their stewardship giving by \$150,000 and completing a \$100,000 renovation of their facilities. After we called a new rector for them, the congregation voted to celebrate their rebirth with a new name. They are now thriving as The Church of the Good Shepherd. (<http://www.goodshepherd.sc>)
- President of the Mt. Pleasant Rotary Club, 1993-1994.
- Profiled by the *Charleston Post and Courier* for their Saturday High Profile feature, October, 2007. (http://www.charleston.net/news/2007/oct/13/dj_turned_rector_shepherds_growing_flock18875/)