

Faith Story

My call to ministry is a call that has evolved over time and one that I pray will never stop evolving. Where I am now in the ordained ministry is far different from where I was a child.

I encountered God in the fields and the forests of my birthplace where the presence of God seemed as natural to me as the sun, the wind, and the rain. There was never a time when I didn't know that God was present and real. This realization was strengthened with my involvement in the local Episcopal congregation through which my innate faith was strengthened and enlarged by hearing the faith stories of others. My story and their stories were all undergirded by the traditional faith of the Church. Just as I knew that God's existence was real, I also knew that I would be involved in ministry whether ordained or not.

I tested this call in college where I deeply enjoyed my exposure to other thoughts and disciplines respecting them for the truth that they revealed. It was very hard for me to turn my back on academic disciplines that I deeply loved in order to go to seminary. But I felt called even though the institutional church was suspicious of my age declaring over and over again that I was too young. I was one of the three people chosen to become a postulant from my diocese and attended seminary in New York City at General.

General was a stimulating environment in which I was exposed to a rich urban environment as well as a deeply disturbing community experience. I say disturbing because all my stereotypes of a harmonious, loving seminary where smashed within the first month. I encountered half-truths, age prejudice, faculty factions, not to mention rabid discussions about gender and sexuality. Clinical Pastor Education was a blessed relief because it encouraged deeper honesty within the group and within me. My worship, intellectual, and spiritual life was formed at seminary. Despite my frustrations, it was a learning place encouraging spiritual growth and mental maturity.

Following seven years of ministry, I returned to seminary to earn a STM and found that experience to be one of my most rewarding. It allowed for time to reflect upon ministry in an academic setting and fostered an even deeper spiritual awareness. As I worked upon my thesis which was about racism in the 19th Century Episcopal Church, I had a spiritual renewal that lives with me today. It occurred as I researched the old *Spirit of Missions* journals of the 19th/20th Centuries and saw the faces of the women and men who ventured abroad as well as across this country sowing the Gospel of Christ as well as the influence of the Episcopal Church. I learned that a great faith is always shared.

My parish experiences have built upon my earlier ones, and I have discovered that my spiritual life is always deepened by the community. I need times alone but I also need times in which I can be in the midst of others in order to test my spiritual understanding as well as to deepen it. I know that I cannot be a Christian in isolation. The best thing that can be said about my spiritual life is that I am a Trinitarian who strives to grow in faith. My God and my faith are not abstract realities.

Management Style

My leadership style is open and cooperative. I like to bring people together to establish a vision and supporting goals for the faith community. I believe that it is very important for the governing board to highlight and embody the most important goals for the faith community and then work hard to accomplish the goals. The highest level of accountability and involvement is to be expected of the staff and the leadership. This means that the leadership must work as a team and the staff is challenged to achieve the goals in a cooperative manner. The staff should expect to receive both praise and criticism in real time and not just once a year. A yearly review by the board should take place to assess whether the goals were accomplished. The yearly budget or SOM should be based upon the highest priorities or visions that the board establishes for the coming year.

My twenty-eight years as a rector have taught me that conflict is part of ministry and not something that is to be feared or avoided. It is rather a source of opportunity and fertile ground for the work of the Holy Spirit. Ministry is not about engaging in safe activities for the Church is called to take risks as the Church is always ministering to the people who are not within its doors. Ministry is about leadership that encourages and invites people along on the journey. In order to accomplish something new, the majority of the congregation's expectations have to be met in order for the congregation to trust the leadership provided by the vestry and clergy. I believe that true ministry is not just the leadership of the clergy or the vestry or patriarchs/matriarchs but is a cooperative effort. Leadership takes the congregation beyond the current accepted norms into new areas of engagement.

I would approach a vestry/ rector conflict with these things in mind:

1. Initial understanding. How do the rector and vestry describe the problem? Do they describe it in the same way? How do they agree and differ? Is it a conflict between the vestry and congregation, congregation and rector, or vestry/congregation and rector?
2. Pray. I would pray about the situation and for the people.
3. Gather information. What is the history of the congregation, what has it accomplished in the past, and what does it hope to accomplish in the future? What is experience of the rector?
4. Establish a level of trust with both the rector and the vestry. The bishop's influence in helping to resolve the dispute will not occur if there isn't trust. I would not make hasty judgments, comments, or commitments.
5. Attend the meeting with an open heart and mind. Listen to the people and ask them to carefully state what is happening without rancor and accusations expressing both facts and feelings. Continue to establish trust.
6. Attempt to have the group, not me, resolve their differences. True resolution of conflict has to come from the people who are in the midst of the conflict. A resolution cannot be forced upon them.
7. If the conflict is not settled at this meeting but there is progress, I would ask them, depending upon the amount of progress achieved, to either continue working on the issues themselves or to return and complete the work.
8. An outside consultant may need to be considered. Also, there are times in which the conflict may not be resolved and then discussions about how to terminate the relationship must take place.

Same Gender Relationships

The decisions that have and have not been made by General Convention have placed the Church in an awkward position. While approving the election of a bishop who is living with a partner, it has not approved the blessing of same-gender relationships. It is my understanding that this matter will not be reviewed by the upcoming General Convention.

This would be my position. I would advise the rector not to go forward with the blessing because it has not been approved by the General Convention or endorsed by the Diocesan Executive Council. Whether I agree or disagree with the actions of General Convention, I believe it would be my responsibility to live under the guidelines established by this body. If the rector went forward with the blessing, I would consult with the Standing Committee and other leaders as to the best way in which to respond to the action. I would remind the clergy and communicants that we are called to live in community and that our actions do affect one another.

I also believe that the same-gender issue is not an issue of salvation and should not be at the center of the diocese's focus or ministry. Our disagreements about this issue have deep roots and are not easily resolved. To get beyond this point, we need to concentrate upon what binds us together, and I hope that would be the furthering of God's kingdom through the strengthening of our congregations and the planting of new ones. Our Church should seek ways to minister to the people with the love, understanding, and compassion of the Christian Gospel. We cannot ignore or run away from the culture but rather need to pool our collective wisdom and faith to discern where God is calling us and how in faith we should minister to the needs of the community. How and why our different congregations minister to the community will be as different and diverse as the congregations and community--this is the genius of Anglicanism and why I love the Anglican tradition and its emphasis on unity. Uniformity is not the key for the future but rather understanding that diversity is a good thing and reflects the creative goodness of the God who is revealed through the diversity of the Trinity.

With regard to sexual orientation my personal opinion is this. Based upon my understanding of scientific and psychological evidence and upon personal experience, I do not believe that anyone chooses his/her sexuality. I believe that eventually a same gender blessing will be passed by the General Convention and that the Diocese will have to deal with this reality. If this were to occur, I would consult with the leadership of the Diocese and do what is best for all concerned.

If elected bishop, I would.....

Visit with all the clergy and congregations and listen.

Bring together formal and informal leaders to ask them what they would like to see happen in the diocese. What is it that the congregations need? Tap into the institutional memory to understand where we have been in order to plot a course for the future.

Begin together experts in the field of technology so we can use our technology to strengthen the diocesan bonds through more interaction and connectivity.

Develop an aggressive ministry to attract youth and young adults to the Episcopal Church through the development and empowerment of youth and young adult leadership.

Taking into consideration the report generated by the diocesan Committee on Property and Insurance entitled "Clergy and Lay Employee Compensation Study," implement some of the suggestions such as authorizing a task force to study the viability of the congregations. Do some need to be closed? How will the diocese strengthen the others?

Review the financial and staff needs of the diocese. What staff members are needed to meet the vision and strategy of the diocese? How much staff can the diocese afford?

Develop a strategy for planting new missions. I would not be interested in building buildings or buying property until a viable, healthy growing congregation is formed. Talk to successful Episcopal and non-Episcopal congregations which have been formed in the last five years to gather information. When a site is chosen for mission development, involve the local congregations and/or Episcopalians.

What kind of leadership is needed in the congregations and among the clergy? Help to develop that leadership with practical "how" information. Encourage the congregation to create strategies that make sense to them and to use resources that they trust.

Transform the DEC into a board that helps develop and reviews the strategy thus becoming more a part of the creative process and not just a repository for reports.

Be in contact with ecumenical consultants who understand the trends affecting the Christian church in America and lay the foundation for the church of the future.

Raise endowments, so the diocese may be seen as a true resource for the congregations.

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Ministry Objective

Bishop of a diocese whose communicants desire visionary leadership, sensitive people skills, and the ability to bring about a cohesive, energetic ministry.

Ministerial Strengths and Interests

Vision

I believe that our Church needs vision and should encourage its members to dream dreams for their congregations and dioceses. I enjoy getting to know people as individuals and as the unique people that God has created them to be while encouraging them to share with me their dreams for the Church. My style of ministry is “low-key” allowing me to establish relationships with people of all ages and with differing viewpoints. Establishing and articulating a common vision is essential for the work of the Church.

Spirituality

People should be inspired to work on their relationship with God. This can be a neglected area in the Church’s life, yet the community cries out to understand God and to learn how God interacts with individuals and groups. I have served on the faculty of the Sursum Corda Spiritual Directors' Program based in South Carolina, and have found this ministry to be very rewarding. Dioceses cannot grow unless the clergy and people have deep roots in their spirituality and the Church's historic spirituality.

Worship

The Church exists for worship. It is from this activity that all the other activities of the larger Church receive their energy and their deepest meaning. I believe that worship should reflect the special identity of the congregation and should allow people to be touched by God. There should be opportunities for new expressions of worship to arise from the congregation, so that the community may continually prepare for the needs and the concerns of future generations. My sermons are typically based upon the lectionary and are contemporary; often, they are delivered without notes.

Administration

I am a capable administrator who enjoys including others in the planning and implementation of parish goals. I greatly value the importance of planning events, parish meetings, and staff/vestry/committee suggestions which highlight needs and give birth to new vision. During my time at St. Bartholomew's our ministry budget has nearly doubled, our staff has doubled, and we have built a new church and added new Sunday School and parish hall space as well as purchased property.

Professional Experience

August 1985 to Present

St. Bartholomew's Church

North Augusta, South Carolina

Rector

Special attention has been given to the healing of division, development of stewardship, improvement of worship, and strengthening of educational, youth and newcomer ministries.

November 1978 to
July 1983

St. Matthias' Church

Baltimore, Maryland

Rector

I followed a priest who had been rector for 26 years, so I endeavored to help the parish grieve their loss and to embrace new ministries. This was a small, city church which needed to believe that it had something to offer to the Episcopal Church and to the community. I left to earn my master's degree in sacred theology.

June 1976 to
October 1978

St. Margaret's Church

Annapolis, Maryland

Curate

I began my ministry here as a transitional deacon. I was responsible for assisting in the areas of youth, children's Christian education, and acolyte training.

Education

1983 to 1985

The General Theological Seminary

New York, New York

STM in Church History

1973 to 1976

The General Theological Seminary

New York, New York

MDiv

1969 to 1973

Salisbury State University

Salisbury, Maryland

BA in English & Psychology

Personal

I was born in Cumberland, Maryland, on 3 April 1951. I am married and the father of four children. My health is excellent. I am a caring, honest person, and I am comfortable being “myself” with all people.

Diocesan Responsibilities

Cursillo Council

Served on the Council for approximately 2 years, resigned because of additional diocesan responsibilities.

Diocesan Executive Committee

The Council and Standing Committee are combined into the Diocesan Executive Council in this diocese. I have been elected three times to serve on the DEC.

Chair of the Great Commission Commission

Served in this capacity for approximately 4 years with the responsibility of overseeing all evangelism activities and stressing mission planting.

Chair of the Great Gathering

Coordinated the planning of this event for over a year culminating in three thousand Episcopalians gathering together to learn and to celebrate their rich heritage.

Member of the Youth Task Force

Task force was comprised of Episcopalians across the diocese with the charge of redefining youth ministry. The results of the task force was the realignment of youth ministries and the hiring of a full time Canon for Youth Ministries.

Diocesan Examining Chaplains

Served approximately three to four years charged with examining candidates in the area of church history.

Bishop Interview and Discernment Committee

Presently serving in this capacity and charged with the responsibility to help discern whether individuals seeking the ordained ministry are called to this area of ministry.

Interim Dean of the Gravatt Convocation

Asked by the bishop to serve in this capacity in 2008 when the dean resigned.

Deputy to General Convention

Served in 2006 and will be serving in 2009.

