

FAITH STORY AND CALL TO MINISTRY – ANDREW WALDO

In Montgomery, Alabama where I grew up, I was by all accounts considered the least likely of the six children in my family to follow in my father's footsteps and become a priest in the Episcopal Church. Though I loved and was loved unconditionally by the parish community my father served as Rector for 28 years, I was a challenging Sunday School student. At home, I was the prosecuting attorney at the dinner table—questioning, probing, and challenging everything my parents believed. But I knew this: I wouldn't be able to budge them one inch. Their faith was deeply grounded on the rock of Jesus Christ.

By the time I got to college, I had become aggressively anti-Christian, and sometimes treated persons of faith whom I encountered with disdain. What I didn't know or understand at the time was that God was pressing upon me behind and before; God was laying a hand on me, and I was trying to tuck and dodge, to escape that hand. Something deeper and more purposeful was going on. Indeed, a couple of years ago, I had a reflective stretch of time with my parents during which I made a repentant reminiscence about my behaviors. "Well," I said to them, "I certainly wasn't very spiritual in those years." My father instantly and passionately replied, "Oh, but you *were*." It was obvious to both of us that God had a hand on you." I could only look back at him silently, with strange mixture of gratitude for his graciousness and astonishment at his observation.

An unwanted, soul-crushing separation and divorce from my first wife at the tender age of twenty-five assured me that I was not as in control of my life as I thought. In the chaos of despair, I realized I could no longer flee from the presence of God. I didn't *want* to run any more. I turned to contemplative prayer and engagement with scripture with guidance from members of the Cowley Fathers—the Society of St. John the Evangelist—in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

At the time, I was a graduate student at New England Conservatory of Music studying Renaissance, Baroque and Avant-garde recorder and choral music. Shortly thereafter, I became director of the Early Music Program at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There, I formed a choir of singers devoted to 16th *a capella* polyphony, combining my new-found faith with some of the most exquisite music ever written. My instrumental specialty was 16th century improvisation, though I also played and coached much 17th and 18th and late 20th century music. Coincidentally one fall, all my private students, student ensembles and professional groups worked simultaneously on music from the late 16th century. I was literally *immersed* in music from one historical style. Immersion in that musical language allowed me to hear a call from God.

At the time, my *choir* was preparing a program of 16th century Spanish and Mexican colonial music. A Mexican *Magnificat* by Hernando Franco was spiritually compelling, subtle and ravishingly beautiful. At rehearsal one night, I heard far more than the music. I was confronted with the text of the *Magnificat* as a personal mandate from God—and the realization that everything in my life up to that point had been preparation. Preparation to be in the midst of the reversals in others' lives, places that had gone topsy-turvy, places where things that had become old were being made new. Ordination was *not* the first response that came to mind—but for the first time in my life, I became aware that *God* was asking something of me. Both panic and peace overwhelmed me. And in the panic, I could hear the apostles' cry to Jesus, "Increase our faith!" when much was asked of them.

—*I had no idea what was next.* I loved my work as a musician, but this call to a new life was coherent. The *Magnificat* resonated with my experience of the topsy-turvy world in which I had grown up during the 1960's in Montgomery, Alabama.

*He has shown strength... scattered the proud... cast down the mighty...and lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry...and sent the rich away empty.*

But I needed every ounce of faith I could muster to trust that God really was calling me to something new. I looked at every vocational possibility that I could think of as a response, but ordination was not yet among them. My history of resisting the church had been a source of an obstinate pride, and God had gently to pry my heart open from this last vestige of resistance. After many months, in quiet and prayer, I finally said "yes". I called home and said to my father, "Dad, I think God is calling me to the priesthood." I can barely express what that moment meant to us as father and son. But the deepest insight was realizing how all that had gone before in my

life had led to this new sense of purpose and call, now grounded in faith in Jesus Christ as my lord and savior. It had all been boot camp for a new life. Our past seems often to be God's gift to our future.

I still value rigorous questioning, only now through the eyes of faith. I still listen for God's voice in prayer and in music. And I still recognize that in the reversals of life—for better and for worse—we especially discern God's presence and love.

MANAGEMENT/CONFLICT RESOLUTION

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit...”

Good management means getting the right people in the right places and trusting them to do their work, even while holding one another accountable for accomplishing what needs to be done. I do not like to micro-manage, but over the years I have increasingly come to recognize that effective ministry requires dependable and substantive processes for communication and evaluation in working towards a shared vision. Good management thrives in an atmosphere of transparency in all aspects of our common life: financial information, including budgets, audits, salaries, and investment funds—both sources and uses—needs to be an open book. Personnel policies need to be just, fair and published, with clear job descriptions and established processes for mutual ministry reviews in order to create and maintain a trusting ministry environment.

While shared vision is necessary to move forward, I get excited when leaders bring their own innovation and creativity to the discipline of working toward a common project. Scripture wonderfully assures us that we need each others’ gifts to be whole as the Body of Christ. We have a particular and persistent call to discern and raise up gifts throughout the Body—for healing to be sure, but especially for thriving. This past June, I was a key initiator of an eight-parish collaborative effort to put on a fund-raising event for Habitat for Humanity. Though organizers first looked to me to take charge of the overall planning and organization, I instead worked with other rectors and wardens to identify the right people within their congregations for the right jobs to make the event successful. My own job was ultimately to cook the pork, organize the pullers, and make the sauce (Alabama style—I *do* understand that this could be controversial in South Carolina...) and to let go of overall control so that others with particular gifts could offer them. Six of the eight parishes provided critical leadership. Our bi-weekly, highly collaborative and results-oriented meetings led to a very successful event that netted over \$11,000, even though our primary purpose this first time was to test our organizational prowess, and build community among our various parishes. And that we did: the group, which we named “EpiscoBuilders”, is already eagerly planning the next event and creating teams for building our first house.

In our home life as we raised our three sons, my wife, Mary, led us in an approach to conflict that has been critical for me in parish ministry. Early in the conflict—whatever it was—Mary would ask our boys, “What’s at stake?” in moments of dissonance. In parish life, discerning answers to versions of that question has often led us—whether in vestry or other parish contexts—into the deeper waters of understanding what really matters in a given situation. Reconciliation is of course not always possible when conflict comes, but discerning what is truly at stake—in prayer and listening—makes for better decisions in moving ahead. Getting at the deeper issues can sometimes reduce stress around less important issues around which a conflict might first have presented itself. In my own rector-vestry relationships at Trinity Church, we have kept the question “What’s at stake” before us even when addressing relatively minor areas of disagreement, an approach that has both “trained us” to work together constructively and freed us even to have fun in dealing with harder issues.

SAME GENDER RELATIONSHIPS

Leading us forward in our divisions

That the issue of same-gender relationships continues to be an issue is no surprise: good people of faith stand on both sides of the issue, all of them bolstered by scripture, tradition and reason. I don't know how the Church will ultimately articulate—in liturgy or in canon law—the status of same-gender relationships without some division.

So the deeper question is *who we will be* along the journey of discernment. I serve a congregation that encompasses a broad diversity of opinions on the blessing of same-gender relationships—from being firmly against such blessings for some members to its being a complete non-issue for other members. Same-gender couples attend my parish and are fully integrated into community life and ministry. We have not however performed any same-gender blessings at Trinity Church because neither the vestry nor the larger parish community has come to one mind. At the same time, we are attentive to the issues of sexual orientation and inclusion and have had public discussions, especially around the time of the 2003 General Convention in Minneapolis. Movements at this year's General Convention will lead us to additional dialogue. The guiding principle for such dialogue at Trinity has long been that “It is more important for us to stand or kneel together as brothers and sisters around a common table receiving the Body and Blood of Christ than it is to be ‘right’ on a matter of doctrine.” This practice has enabled us to deal graciously and hospitably with one another even when we disagree, and to stay both in relationship and conversation on this and other issues without judgment or condemnation. We have succeeded in not fracturing over the issue of same-gender blessings by maintaining a balance between not acting hastily and not sweeping difficult subjects under the carpet. Before us at all times is St. Paul's call to us as brothers and sisters in Christ to be ambassadors of reconciliation. It is our first value in these larger matters.

My approach as bishop would continue to follow this pattern—not permitting blessings until the Church has come to one mind, but neither glossing over the depth and authenticity of the questions that are before us and the pain that brothers and sisters in Christ experience. I trust the Holy Spirit to guide us, and that we will find a way forward within the bounds of the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church.

Counseling a rector who's been asked to bless a same-gender relationship

The answer here must follow from what I've said above: that because our Church is not of one mind on this issue we cannot act unilaterally, and I would not therefore sanction such blessings in the Diocese until we have, through General Convention, reached a decision. Even if/when that time comes, I believe that a priest and the congregation he or she serves should have the pastoral freedom to address such changes constructively over time. That being said, a rector nonetheless has a pastoral obligation to lead *all* persons in their pastoral care—whatever their sexual orientation—to lead lives worthy of Christ, respectful of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, and grounded in the promises of Holy Baptism.

FIRST STEPS...

I would begin in two key directions: galvanizing the staff in retreat so that we can become a team and by making as many opportunities around the diocese as possible to hear your story and for you to come to know me.

Early on, I would want to know something of the gifts, skills and vocational passions of staff members and how they get lived out in service to the parishes, people and clergy of the Diocese. I would want to know staff members individually and as members of a larger team. Scheduling a retreat with key program and administrative staff members early in the episcopate would be a high priority for me, followed up by regularly scheduled staff meetings. That retreat would hopefully begin to ground us in common prayer, healthy working relationships, and help me begin to identify strengths and challenges within the diocese and work with the staff to establish priorities.

I would also want to get the physical ‘lay of the land’—traveling to each of the five convocations to hear how the Holy Spirit is working among you, what you are excited about, how you engage your concerns and challenges. I would schedule meetings with key leaders among your youth, young adults, mission leaders and spiritual formation and renewal ministries. I would want to hear from persons who have participated in the School for Ministry and how it has changed your life and ministry in Christ.

I would also want a substantive stretch of time to engage key governing groups, especially Diocesan Council, in discussions about the opportunities and challenges you face and how you are living into the diocesan vision in places both large and small, in parishes and schools, at Gravatt Conference Center and in your mission initiatives. I would want to understand the financial challenges of parish and diocese, how you have addressed them to date, and what the trends are.

I would want to eat, pray and worship with you, and begin learning your names. Indeed, learning names is among the most important first tasks I can imagine. And, should I be elected, I fervently pray that some good (South Carolina) barbecue will come my way as I learn those names.

- Led parish team in development of an innovative Adolescent Formation Program for faith development and incorporation into the life, ministry and governance of the parish.
- Increased parish revenue from \$156,600 in 1994 to \$624,000 in 2008. For 2009 recession budget, reduced expenses to \$533,300 while retaining most programming. Increased parish contribution to diocesan ministries from \$15,000 in 1994 to \$112,464 in 2008, a figure reduced in 2009 at Trinity as throughout the diocese.
- Led congregation through a \$1.5M Capital Campaign for new office and fellowship space (1998-1999).
- Led congregation through an additional \$700K capital project to redesign main sanctuary and the \$400K installation of a new Hendrickson Organ Co. tracker organ (due October 2009). Designed font, altar and hanging cross for new space.
- Expanded program offerings and increased staff from 1 full-time/3 part-time to 3 full-time/5 part-time, including full-time clergy associate.
- Promoted significant social and outreach ministries:
 - Instigated a collaborative fund-raising effort to a) form deeper relationships among 8 congregations, b) raise funds for Habitat for Humanity (\$11,000), and c) identify leaders for construction, fund-raising, and fellowship teams
 - congregation has resettled 70+ Bosnian and Moldovan refugees in past 14 years
 - led 2 of 4 parish Katrina Relief trips to the Gulf Coast and New Orleans
 - led 1 of 2 parish mission trips to Honduras
 - developed partner relationship with Native American congregation within diocese
 - congregation began and developed *Ready for Success*, a metro-wide holistic support program for unemployed, abused, impoverished, or divorced women re-entering the workforce. Now spun off from Trinity Church and fully incorporated as a major program component of Episcopal Community Services in the Twin Cities. A *Ready for Success for Men* pilot project began in 2008. The executive directors of both programs are members of Trinity Church.
 - incorporated social service ministries into parish Adolescent Formation Program
- Education for Ministry (EFM) Mentor since 1988. 29 graduates from Trinity Church
- Served as chaplain/spiritual guide on trips to Holy Land and to Early Church sites in the Mediterranean.
- Have served twice as President of local ecumenical ministerial association.

1990–1994

ST. MARK’S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

LaGrange, GA

Rector

- Increased stewardship and Sunday attendance.
- Led interracial ecumenical reconciliation efforts among local congregations.
- Reinvented music, worship, and youth ministry.

1988–1990

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Manchester, NH

Curate

- Built new and strong youth ministry program
- Introduced Education for Ministry (EFM) to adult formation program.
- Instituted and led new parish outreach and social justice ministries.

FAMILY

- Wife: Mary Halverson Waldo – musician, teacher at MacPhail Center for Music, Minneapolis, MN; one of two registered Suzuki Recorder Method teacher trainers worldwide.
- Son: Jonathan, 26 – information security analyst for Bremer Bank, St. Paul, MN; daughter-in-law, Amber Houck Waldo – accountant with Wipfli CPAs and Consultants, both graduates of UW–La Crosse, in management and accounting/finance, respectively. Viola player.
- Son: James, 24 – in graduate cello studies with Timothy Eddy at Mannes College: The New School of Music—Manhattan; graduate of UW–Madison, B.A. Cello Performance. Also plays bouzouki (Celtic mandolin) and recorder.
- Son: Benjamin, 20 – sophomore, College of Design, University of Minnesota—Twin Cities, planning a career in architecture. Kentucky mandolin, viola, banjo and recorder player.

