

a. Describe your Faith Story, including your call to the ministry.

The roots of my faith story and call begin in childhood. I grew up in a family of Methodists, for whom church was very important. Our Senior Pastor for much of those years was a close family friend. My uncle, Daniel Day Williams, was a theologian who taught at Union Seminary in New York City. As I grew into adolescence, I assumed I was a good Christian because I had good, Southern manners (mostly), said “yes ma’am” and “no sir,” brushed my teeth twice a day, and (mostly) got along well with teachers. I do remember asking our pastor once at youth group, “Why is it good to be good?” (My armor must have been cracking.) He gave me the right answers (not to earn God’s favor, but because of his prior grace, love for us, etc.), but it did not really make sense, except sort of intellectually. Of course God loves me, but why not? God loves everybody.

Then in May of my senior year in High School, I had a profound experience of God’s grace through Jesus Christ and his Spirit. One night I was reading the Sermon on the Mount (some sort of Sunday School assignment), and it suddenly hit me: this is all about motives and I am so far away from where God wants me to be. I mostly did the right things outwardly, but it was always for my reasons: my good grades, my popularity, my achievement, my being in good standing with teachers, my, my, my. Although I did not think of it this way at the time, I was a Pharisee.

I was immediately convicted by the gap between who God wants me to be and who I am. Somehow through Christ’s Spirit I was led right into Paul’s Letter to the Romans, and everything clicked. Suddenly I knew, not just intellectually but deep in my heart, that I was not so lovable in God’s eyes, but he loved me nonetheless, and even died on the cross for me.

I was a changed person, and could barely contain my newfound joy and energy in the faith. I went off to college and, still excited about the faith, majored in Religion. But by the end of the four years in cold, gray New England, I was ready to come back home to Texas and to Law School. With God’s guiding hand, I fell into a prayer group almost at the start of the first year of law school, and was in that group for the next several years.

I enjoyed the practice of law, but slowly had this nagging feeling that somehow I was supposed to take an increased role in the church. I had married Leslie by now and had become Episcopalian. At only 28 years old and a very new member and new Episcopalian, I was elected to the Vestry at 3,000-member St. David’s Church, Austin. Yet I quickly discerned that Vestry was not the answer. I was not even sure about the nature of the question.

In the late summer of 1982, I kept having a strong sense that something was wrong. I figured I needed a vacation, so Leslie and I went to Mexico City and Taxco, and had a wonderful time. The next Monday after a day in the office I told Leslie that was it: I just needed a vacation. Two days later, on Wednesday, “all hell broke loose.” I went crazy for about two days, telling God that he really needed Christian lawyers a heckuva lot more than Episcopal priests (I still agree with that, by the way). But by Friday evening a calm and peace came over me and I realized simply that this was what God was calling me to do. Monday I went in to see my Rector and I was at Virginia Seminary the following September (a year later).

The shape of my call came three years later. During the fall of my senior year in seminary, I was struggling in my prayer time to discern why I was called to the ordained ministry. One night I was forcing myself to pray Evening Prayer, just out of a sense of duty, and suddenly some words from Cantic 9, The First Song of Isaiah, were just shy of audible and spoken in the first person: “Make my deeds known among the peoples; see that they remember that my name is exalted.” God spoke to me, though I cannot swear that you would have heard anything had you been in the room.

Instantly, I knew the “shape” of my call, told Leslie, and she made a stole for me with those words on it. I still wear that stole a lot. And at every church I have served, I have told the congregation that they can always “call me” on that calling. In other words, if they perceive that I am losing sight of that calling, or drifting away from it through all sorts of other busy-ness, they may always tell me and pull me back toward it.

That is why God called me from serving as a lawyer to serving as a priest. That is what I try to do in every place that I have served. God still needs Christian lawyers, but my personal mission is: **Make God’s deeds known among the people; see that they remember that his name is exalted!**

b. Discuss your management style, including resolving conflict....

The phrase that my current Associate Rector most often uses to describe my leadership/management style is “high energy.” He and his predecessors would also tell you that I do not have a controlling leadership style, but encourage associates to take initiative. My current Christian Education Director, for example, is an idea-woman, and she expresses gratitude that I am willing to let her try almost anything. I encourage her to come up with new ideas, and I let her run with them. She does check with me along the way to make sure we do not go too far off base.

I do have some actual data about this answer because in April, 2005, I attended the national church program, CREDO. My associate clergy and lay leaders (from two parishes) filled out evaluations of me, concluding with anonymous comments. Perhaps my biggest personal surprise in the evaluations was that they rated me higher on the areas of “visioning,” “managing change,” and “managing conflict,” than I rated myself. Not a surprise was that they collectively rated my three highest areas as “preaching,” “teaching,” and “pastoral care.”

Some of their written comments include, “He has a clear picture of where he is and what needs to be done at all levels.” Another wrote, “He has good humor and looks at the bright side of everything. Even when things get chaotic, he keeps his composure. He has dignity and style.” One wrote, “very approachable.” Finally, “His genuine love of people and his nurturing of us sets him apart from so many.” (Obviously, you have just received a sampling of some of my favorites).

Communication is key, even without conflict. Messages must be stated clearly and repeated often and opportunity given for clarification. One thing I have done in all the parishes I have served is host periodic sessions of “Rector on the Hot Seat.” These take place in the parish hall during the main Sunday School hour. I sit on a stool and then people fire questions at me about anything they want. The questions do not even have to be about parish matters. One session came during a very tense time in the parish. I was concerned when I noticed a young couple who had just started attending that parish appear at the Rector on the Hot Seat. Afterwards, I found them and apologized, but they said, “We want to be part of a church that is so open and transparent even with its dirty linen. That is so healthy and refreshing. We’re ready to join.”

When conflict arises, it is helpful first is to deal with any basic, immediate issues that could escalate the underlying conflict. The second and even more important task is to create a surrounding environment where all sides feel supported, and heard. My purpose is to seek resolution and reconciliation between the parties involved. It has been my experience that often the solution emerges from the parties themselves.

For example, upon arrival in one of the parishes I served, a major conflict broke out that actually had begun before I arrived. The two sides were adamantly opposed and neither could see any resolution but total victory. Things got so intense that the Bishop heard about it and attempted to get involved because he was afraid “it would ruin [my] entire ministry in that parish.” I reassured him that it would all work out, and it did.

I sought to build consensus toward a solution. Even though when we started out I had no idea what the solution would be, and even though it was at times a painful process, the solution came in time. My role was to be sympathetic and closely involved with both sides, make sure everyone kept the conversation civil and without rancor, and keep people talking and brainstorming. True enough, the solution emerged in time. The surprise to us all was that there was a way to keep everyone happy. We finally found the proverbial win-win solution.

Thinking specifically of the Rector/Vestry situation posed in the question, depending on the type or intensity of the conflict, it will be sometimes necessary to include third parties in the discussion and investigation of the conflict. This is nothing to be afraid of, and in one parish where at one point there were some Vestry concerns about several issues, I invited a skilled friend to be present and moderate the discussion. In the situations where the conflict is the result of some clear policy or other violation, it may be necessary for the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, after careful listening and fact-finding, to discern the appropriate resolution. This should and can be done with Christian charity and respect for all of the parties or sides.

Of course, all of this is surrounded with love and constant prayer for the Spirit's presence.

c. If you were elected bishop of EDUSC how would you counsel a rector who was asked to bless a same gender relationship in his/her parish, and how would you lead us forward beyond our divisions?

I am convinced that the best way forward out of our divisions is a two-fold focus on doing mission and ministry (including worship!), and supporting the Windsor/covenant process. I have demonstrated that conviction by helping found the Communion Partner Rectors, which are in support of our Communion Partner Bishops and Primates. We all stand transparently for working within the Episcopal Church, and also for supporting the Windsor process. That process has included observing three moratoria: two the “left” does not like (no same-gender blessings and no bishops in active same-gender relationships) and one the “right” doesn’t like (no bishops crossing diocesan boundaries). I also favor the development of an Anglican covenant. To that end, I signed the Communion Partner Rector statement following General Convention that is in support of the bishops’ Anaheim Statement, dissenting from the General Convention vote.

Unfortunately, the recent General Convention decided to follow no longer the first two moratoria. Granted, no same-gender blessings were expressly authorized, but the Convention did vote to collect and develop liturgies for same-gender blessings, with a view toward approving them (or some of them) at a later date. Nevertheless, it is clear that even after General Convention 2009, same-gender blessings are not authorized in the Episcopal Church and so I would tell the local Rector to refrain from doing so.

Of course, that begs the question of what I would do had General Convention clearly authorized same-gender blessings and my answer would still be the same. The Anglican Communion is clear about its stand refusing same sex blessings in church. I am convinced that the three moratoria serve the benevolent purpose of giving us space for healing, and for the difficult theological work of studying and listening together, as the worldwide Anglican Communion, toward deeper understanding. All four “instruments of communion” have asked that we follow the moratoria.

At the time of the 2003 General Convention, our Suffragan Bishop, Robert Hibbs, served on the Theology Committee of the House of Bishops. He stated that one of the saddest aspects of the approval of the ordination to the episcopate of a divorced man engaged in homosexual behavior, is that it suddenly and dramatically ended the good, deep work that the House of Bishops Theology Committee was doing. The “facts on the ground” negated all of their efforts, and they simply stopped their work.

Asking the Rector to refrain from the same-gender blessing would not be the end of my counsel, however. He is the pastor of the same-gender couple and needs to show them God’s love for them. As the Windsor Report itself said, any ill treatment of homosexual persons “is totally against Christian charity and basic principles of pastoral care” (#146). The Lambeth Resolution on Human Sexuality of 1998, reaffirmed in 2008, asks us to reassure homosexual persons that “they are loved by God and...full members of the Body of Christ.” Our refraining from same-gender blessings in church does not mean that we consider the persons requesting the blessing not children of God, nor does it mean they do not have the fullness of God’s love. The Rector should make certain the couple is welcomed in the parish and provide Christian love and support.

The other part of the focus, of course, is on mission and ministry. We in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina would continue and expand all the wonderful and important work already undertaken. There is so much exciting work for the Gospel in Upper South Carolina! As we focus together on what Jesus calls us to do in terms of worship, ministry and mission, we can work together and realize that the Jesus that unites us as a Diocese is much greater than specific issues that may divide us. Your own Diocesan Profile notes, p. 31, that although there is disagreement over these issues regarding sexuality, “we are primarily concerned with building up the Body of Christ.”
AMEN!

d. If I were the bishop of EDUSC, some of the first steps I would take to get started are....

Listen, Listen, Listen. Then listen some more.

I would have a big learning curve to get to know the Diocese of Upper South Carolina, though I do feel at home in the Carolinas and Virginia, thanks to Seminary and the years my sister and her family lived in North Carolina. I have a great start with the excellent diocesan profile, which shows an overall very healthy, Christ-centered Diocese. But obviously I would have a great deal to learn. My purpose in listening, besides building relationships, would be to discern, together with you all, who we are as the Diocese of Upper South Carolina, and decide who we want to be. Then we will together do those things that help us work toward that vision.

I have a special heart for the clergy and would want to be in contact with them early on and learn how best I can serve them; what I can do for them. In the three parishes I have served as Rector, two of which had over 1000 members, I phoned each and every man, woman, and child (age 3 and over) on their birthdays. This was not to make birthdays a huge deal, but was a systematic way to be in regular contact with each and every household of the parish. I could not do that for the whole Diocese, but would want to do that with the clergy and spouses, or at least find some way to be in regular, direct contact with them apart from meetings, clergy conferences, and parish issues.

The clergy and lay leadership together would be crucial resources for me in learning about you all and discerning best where we need and want to go. I do not arrive in new places with a worked-out agenda of my own, but instead listen and learn and then lead. For example, when I arrived at Holy Trinity, Midland, it was at that time the largest parish in the Diocese of Northwest Texas, and was basically healthy. However, it had become somewhat complacent, as a parish, and even stagnant. I knew we had to do something to get off center and grow. After listening and assessing the situation for nine months, I appointed a Long-Range Planning Committee and shepherded them through a three-year process of study, reflection, surveys, and brainstorming. We had regular Town Hall meetings so that everyone who wanted could have input. In the end, they decided on constructing increased education and office space, and an addition to the nave. So we then developed a Project Committee that spent another two years developing ideas and plans. At the end of that, we had a capital campaign that raised more than we asked. We were all very pleased with the results, though it had taken years of slowly working through issues and inertia to arrive at it.

A little different was the process in Kerrville. St. Peter's had tried since the late 1980's to build a new parish hall, and it never seemed to get done, although some good additions were made in other areas. So when I arrived I did not need to work them through such a lengthy process. Indeed, I was called to St. Peter's in part because they already knew they wanted a new parish hall and office building, and wanted a Rector they felt could help them attain it.

The point is that although I have my views and visions of what a place can be, I never start out with my views and visions all worked out. I always encourage the vision-casting to come from all the leaders, and, to an extent, from the parish (and in this case, the Diocese) at large.

Particularly considering the unsettled times we are experiencing in the Episcopal Church, it will also be my purpose to keep us focused on mission and ministry, right from the start. Also, even as I listen and learn, I would be letting people get to know me. I have learned a lot from the late Rabbi Edwin Friedman about the application of family-systems theory to churches and dioceses. An important learning is the need for the leader/bishop to a person who defines him or herself clearly, but in a way that invites others to be whom they need to be. Friedman also encourages leaders to be a "non-anxious presence" in conflict and emotional contexts. I never found that quite attainable, and was happy to attend a Con. Ed. conference several years ago in which they coached us to stop trying to be a "non-anxious presence," but instead to be a "less-anxious presence." That I can do, and have done well. I am naturally optimistic, and I am always hopeful because of the resurrection, and can work to convey that optimism and hopefulness to the whole Diocese early on.

My mission as ordained leadership in the church is to **make God's deeds known among the people; see that they remember that his name is exalted.** That will be key to my task from day one in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina.

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Objective

“Make God’s deeds known among the peoples; see that they remember that his name is exalted” in the context of The Episcopal Church, through preaching, teaching, pastoral care, worship, leadership, and presence. Encourage and enable parishioners to do the same in the world.

Education

M.Div., with Honors, Virginia Theological Seminary, May, 1986

Field work at All Saints’ Episcopal Church, Chevy Chase, Maryland, 1984-1986

National Church, Evangelism Intern at All Saints’ Church, Summer, 1985

Clinical Pastoral Education at Washington Hospital Center and Children’s Hospital, D.C.

J.D., with Honors, the University of Texas School of Law, May, 1976

Associate Editor, Texas Law Review

B.A., *cum laude*, Amherst College, (Major: Religion and American Studies), May, 1973

Sabbatical studies: Ridley Hall, Cambridge, England, summer, 2000

Current Position

Rector, St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, Kerrville, Texas, January, 2002 to present

Led the parish in capital campaign and construction of new Parish Hall and Church Offices, which had been desired since late 1980’s (completion: February, 2006)

Started new programming, including Alpha, Daughters of the King, full-time Youth Ministry, enhanced Music ministry (Royal School of Church Music), return of kindergarten class to parish preschool

National Church activities: Happening National Board

Diocesan activities: Dean (former) of the Northern Convocation, Diocese of West Texas; Diocesan Spiritual Director for Happening (currently my favorite ministry); Cursillo Secretariat; Lay Ministry Committee of the Commission on Ministry; Nominating Committee; Chaplain at summer camps and Dean of Mid-Winter Camps at Camp Capers; Board Member, Bishop Elliott Society; Evangelism Committee; Committee on Bishop’s Address, 2009 Diocesan Council

Other activities: Men’s Emmaus teams; Secretary of the Central Kerrville Development Corporation; Board Member of Kerrville Rotary, and Paul Harris Fellow; Chaplain, Hill Country Chapter, Order of St. Luke the Physician; Preschool Chaplain and Board Member; President, Christian Assistance Ministries of Kerrville; President, Kerrville Ministerial Alliance; Leader and Co-leader (with Leslie) of Retreats at Laity Lodge for St. Martin’s Church-Houston, St. Paul’s Church-Waco, and others.

Previous Ministry Positions

Rector, Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity, Midland, Texas, May, 1994-December, 2001

Led the parish through lengthy process of discernment and long-range planning, and then capital campaign and construction of expanded nave, and new offices and Christian Education space; oversaw substantial increase in operating pledges over the seven-year period

Started new programming, including Alpha, “Rock the Desert” (Christian rock concert now much larger and off campus), Bethel Bible, revived Daughters of the King.

Diocesan activities: Dean of the Permian Basin Deanery of the Diocese of Northwest TX
Chairman of the Board of the Bishop Quarterman Conference Center, Amarillo;
General Convention Alternate; Executive Board; Chaplain at diocesan summer
camps most summers

Other activities: Secretary then President of the Midland Rape Crisis Center; Leadership
Midland; Board Member, Trinity School (preschool through 12th grade);
President, Midland Ministerial Alliance

Vicar, then Rector, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Cypress, Texas, March, 1989-April, 1994

At Bishop's request, led deeply conflicted mission to parish status

New programming included Bethel Bible Study and Mother's Day Out

Diocesan activities: Chaplain at summer camps every summer; Clergy Pastoral Care
Committee; Delegate to Provincial Synod; Chair, Supervisors and Tellers;
Committee on Constitution and Canons; Stewardship Committee;
Cursillo and Kairos (prison ministry) teams; Ecumenical Relations Committee

Assistant Rector, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas, June, 1986-February, 1989

The Rt. Rev. Rayford B. High, Jr., was Rector

In charge of Christian Education, youth and young adult ministries, Middlescents,
Chaplain of St. Paul's School (pre-school through 6th grade)

Diocesan activities (see above under St. Mary's, Cypress)

Other activities: Secretary of the Board of Evangelia Settlement; Board, American
Cancer Society; Leadership Waco; Rotary; United Way, Chair of Ministers and
Churches Division

Work Experience Before Seminary

Attorney with Stubbeman, McRae, Sealy, Laughlin & Browder, 1977-1983; emphasized
business litigation and appellate work in the Austin, Texas, office

Secretary then Chair of the Community Development Commission of Austin

First Class, 1979-80, Leadership Austin

Board member, Austin Jaycees; Vice-President, Young Men's Business League

Clerk for Judge Homer Thornberry, U.S. Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit, 1976-77

Summer employment included Dorm Supervisor and American History and Government teacher
at St. Stephen's Episcopal School, Austin; Camp Counselor, Camp Stewart, Hunt, TX;
Congressional Intern and part-time elevator operator, House Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

Personal

Born September 9, 1951, in Austin, Texas

Married Leslie Winfield Miller, Ph.D., on December 30, 1978

Two children: Jerre Stockton Williams III, 22; Caroline Winfield Williams, 19

Personal interests include hiking, working out, hunting, fantasy football, travel, meteorology,
and Texana

