

The Very Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely

Reflections

First Reflection:

We ask you to provide your narrative providing some details of the Work History and Ministry Specialties sections of your Profile. Given the limitations of the CDO's Personal Profile's format, the Committee requests that you provide a narrative detailing the sections headed [1] Work History and [2] Ranked Ministry Specialties and Supporting Skill/Experience, and including references to related Continuing Education.

My work has been primarily that of parish ministry. I had the opportunity to serve a traditional curacy under a wise priest (now mentor) and learned the basics of parish ministry and the special skills needed to help congregations in crisis to overcome their internal difficulties and begin sustained and sustainable growth. I have applied these lessons throughout my ministry. In my first parish as rector we were able to grow from an average attendance of 50 a week to something over 175 a week in a five year period. In my second parish that growth was from about 75 a week to more than 250 a week over the eight years I served. Here at the Cathedral we have grown from an average of about 200 to nearly 450+ at present. All of that has been accomplished through thoughtful and intentional preaching, good music appropriate to the community, prayerbook centered liturgies and an ability to discern the existing obstacles to growth. The fact that this sort of growth has happened in blue-collar, suburban, college town and large urban settings has convinced me that the methodology has wide application. At the moment, working with Bishop Smith, we are in the process of recruiting urban leaders to the ministry and training them in these basic techniques to lay the groundwork for additional growth in Diocese of Arizona.

Over the past ten years I've been involved in national church programs primarily in the area of Communications and Ecumenism. Chairing the Standing Commission on Communications and Technology and serving on the Moravian-Episcopal Dialogue has helped me to learn of the breadth of Episcopal Church as well as the challenges to all churches in the 21st century. My formal Continuing Education over the past decade has centered in these two areas. I would add that when I was asked to resume teaching Physics and Astronomy at Lehigh University after a 20 year absence from the field, I spent a few years of focused study getting myself current. That particular experience has led me to actively working on a book, directed toward a popular audience, that will try to explain how science and religion might best be in conversation.

I've focused my work in parish ministry, but I've been very involved in Diocesan work as well. I'm the past finance chair of the Diocese of Bethlehem as well as past Diocesan Council Vice Chair (the Bishop of Bethlehem is the Chair by canon). I've served on most every diocesan body there is

between my three dioceses of residence, and I've spent a great deal of my time in that setting helping to construct, balance and fund diocesan budgets. My wife was elected to the Trustees of the Diocese of Pittsburgh (after serving as my immediate predecessor in the office of Diocesan Council President) and I followed her lead serving as a Trustee in the Diocese of Bethlehem. It was an excellent opportunity to learn how to oversee property and the trust funds at a diocesan level. At present in Arizona, I serve a diocesan cathedral so that I am a member of the Bishop's staff, attend weekly staff meetings and am part of the council of advice. Serving as such has allowed me to see the inner workings of a diocesan staff and has been a chance to gain experience in diocesan management issues and methods for caring for clergy leadership.

If I was to characterize the primary lens through which my sense of vocation should be viewed, it would be that of evangelism. My interest has always been inviting people to life changing encounters with Jesus whether that happens online, in parish ministry, in a college classroom or in everyday life. My interest in communications grew out of my desire to share the love of Jesus with as many people as possible. My willingness to begin teaching again came from my desire to be able to interact with young people in such a way that they could encounter a believing Christian who was a science professor. My focus on preaching, on liturgy and on parish vitality has been an outgrowth of my belief that parish ministry is the most effective way to incarnate the reality of God's reign on earth.

Second Reflection:

The Committee requests that you provide a reflection on the opportunities you see for the Diocese of Kentucky in relation to your personal strengths and interests. We would like to know what opportunities for this Diocese stand out in relation to what you are good at and what you would enjoy doing in your ministry during the next decade.

I was born in Central Pennsylvania, a region placed between two very different urban settings. It is a region where the east coast culture of Philadelphia transitions to the Appalachian and midwest culture of Pittsburgh. Because of my time in that environment I've been fascinated with the ways we reconcile differing cultures and ideas. I suppose my backgrounds in science, religion and now communications reflects that. What I frankly find most compelling about Kentucky is its description as the "northernmost southern state". (Or southernmost northern state). The idea of bringing the genius of Anglican compromise and comprehensiveness to a place where reconciliation between differing world views is a daily occurrence is very attractive to me. Such work would obviously also inform multi-cultural ministry just as it is doing so here in Phoenix.

I notice that it appears to have been a while since the last new congregation was founded in the diocese. I think it would be a fine thing to work with existing congregations to help them achieve the resources and self-confidence it would take for them to join in planting and/or restarting congregations in the areas where shifting population warrants.

Working in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Bethlehem I became very interested in the challenges inherent in creating sustainable models for rural ministry. I have a number of ideas, based on what we are doing here in Arizona and what we tried in Bethlehem and Pittsburgh about ways to make this happen. Kentucky seems to have a desire to strengthen the rural ministry done within the diocese. Working with clergy and the people of existing rural congregations, I think it would be an exciting challenge to try to find appropriate solutions.

I was a YMCA counselor as a young man and probably learned more at Camp Conrad Weiser about how to do ministry than I learned in seminary. I am delighted to see the strength of the camping program in the Diocese of Kentucky. I'd be very interested to make sure that the program not only continues, but becomes a regional resource for inspiring and equipping young Christian leaders.

It's not obvious from either the diocesan profile or the website, but I wonder how strong the peer support system is within the diocese between the clergy and their families. I have found that when clergy are emotionally and physically healthy, and their families are not resenting their shared ministry, wonderful things happen in parish and diocesan settings. I've had some ideas about how to formalize this sort of peer support system between clergy, how I'd like to see a bishop engage and support clergy and I'd be very interested trying to implement some of these over the next ten years.

As rector of Trinity Church in Bethlehem I helped to found the Center for Spiritual Growth. It served as both a clearing house for matching people from the community with spiritual director and as source of regular programs about maintaining a healthy spiritual life. I think the creation of such a resource in Western Kentucky (if such a thing doesn't exist) would be very helpful to the laity in the diocese. I'd also be interested in creating a Bishop's Academy for the Laity to provide regular lectures and bible teaching in a short course format within the diocese. It would be interesting to marry both of these programs to modern communications technology to enable as many people as possible to participate, both in the diocese itself and within the Episcopal Church at large. Such a thing is needed, but not being broadly done. Kentucky, being at the convergence of numerous cultural divides might be a uniquely qualified place to learn how to provide this to a large and varied audience.

Finally, I have found that dioceses and congregations which have relied too heavily on endowment money to fund their ministry have suffered greatly recently as the economic situation has reduced what we can responsibly expect to draw down as income. I'm not sure that we'll ever get back to the "easy" money of the '90s with high interest rates or the early years of the past decade with a high flying market. Working together to create sustainable financial models would

be a key part of what I would imagine needs to be done in the diocese. Finding ways to create endowments where none exist, learning to pool resources so that they can be professionally managed and caring for the physical assets of the Diocese would be early goals in my ministry in Kentucky should I be called. I would wonder too about whether Kentucky might be well served by the creation of Diocesan Credit Union and a Community Services Foundation to provide additional resources for mission and outreach ministry.

Ordinal Reflections:

In selecting a bishop, as in all things, the Church is guided by The Book of Common Prayer. In its liturgy for the Ordination of a Bishop, one finds questions reflecting specific beliefs and commitments required of a bishop-elect (BCP pp. 513, 517-518). Please provide a reflection on each of four themes found in these pages.

Theme I - Hearing and Accepting your Call as Bishop

Ordinal Questions: Are you persuaded that God has called you as bishop? Will you accept this call and fulfill this trust in obedience to Christ Jesus?

Please include: a description of when and how you became aware of your call to the office of bishop. If you feel especially called to this diocese, please write about that. Please also describe an experience in the past in which you sensed that you were being obedient to Christ Jesus' call. Who is Christ Jesus?

Once upon a time I imagined that I was called to the office of bishop. Now I'm not so sure. Perhaps that means that I am finally ready to discern.

So I want to clearly state that I've not heard a definitive call to the office of Bishop in the Episcopal Church. I'm aware today of the possibility that I might be called. I am participating in this process with all of you in that spirit of discernment.

I'm doing so because a number of people inside and outside the Diocese of Kentucky invited me to do this. I'm taking their invitation seriously. I have been asked about entering the discernment process for bishop in a number of dioceses lately. Kentucky has been the only diocese whose vision statement for their next bishop described roles that I believed I have the potential of fulfilling.

I believe that one called to be bishop should be willing to follow the examples of the 19th century missionaries who shipped their possessions to their new home in their coffins, fully expecting that they were going there to stay. While I have no desire to do anything so dramatic, if I were to accept a call as bishop to any place, it would have to be a place that I believed I was called to spend the rest of my ministry. Kentucky, with its cultural cross roads makes me think that this would be an option for me. It's not by accident that I entitled my book "Entangled States". The name reflects my sense of call to the ministry of reconciliation. I'm also particularly attracted to Kentucky because of the wonderful mix of rural parishes in with urban and suburban ones. Given my "Common Prayer

Episcopalian” leanings within the Church, I couldn’t imagine doing ministry in a monocultural setting.

My sense of how God called me away from the study of the natural world into a deeper relationship with people in my service to the Episcopal Church is probably the best example of being obedient to Christ. I did not go willingly at first. I was nervous about what it would mean to walk away from everything. Looking back I see that whatever I thought I would lose, I have in fact gained and much more beyond. It’s the experience that undergirds my present willingness to follow Jesus today where ever he would have me follow.

I do that because Jesus is the Lord of my life and my Savior. I believe that he is Lord and Savior of the whole world and, as such, all Christians have a fundamental responsibility to share the good news that Jesus loves us. I believe that Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit who is actively transforming us and the world individually and corporately. And, that in the full revelation of the Godhead that we have in the person of Jesus, we see the definitive triumph of Good over all the centrifugal forces lead us to rebel against God.

Theme II – Faith in and Faithfulness to Holy Scripture

Ordinal Questions: Do you believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation? Will you be faithful in prayer, and in the study of Holy Scripture, that you may have the mind of Christ? Will you boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people? Will you be merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper?

Please include: a description of the spiritual practices or disciplines that sustain you. How does Holy Scripture inform your faith? How do you expect to be fed spiritually as bishop? Please write about a time in which you showed compassion to the poor and strangers or defended those who have no helper.

By trial and error searching for a sustainable daily prayer routine, I recognized that daily Morning Prayer in a gathered community works best for me. Upon arrival in a new ministry, I share that I will be reading Morning Prayer at 9 AM every weekday morning and invite anyone interested to join me. As a result, I’ve been blessed by regular companions in prayer and deeper engagement with the texts because of conversations following the service. In whatever community I am called to serve, I recognize that gathering such a community is crucial to finding my spiritual sea-legs.

To this I add a peer support group, often in the form of a regular clergy breakfast, sometimes as retreats with my fellow presbyters. Both have enriched me, though none so much as a small bible study group that I was part of during my time in the diocese of Pittsburgh. It was a time of tragedy in our family. I can’t imagine making it through that experience with my faith intact if it hadn’t been for that support. Our membership, which included my bishop at the time (Alden Hathaway) studied and prayed our way through many a crisis. I lost a child. One of us lost his father. Another’s marriage broke

apart. Another was asked to leave his parish. All of us found support and that 7 AM meeting became a critically important lifeline. Just as I would want to strongly encourage the clergy in Kentucky to find such groups for themselves, I would expect that I would be following my own advice from the get-go.

That group was so effective in large part because it was centered on the weekly engagement of the word of God as written in the Bible. The Bible is the written word of God because it points reliably to the Word of God, Jesus. It is in my regular reading, in my study in preparation for preaching, I am most often fed. The best part of my week is the time when I am able to open the Bible and delve deeply into a passage whether in preparation to preach or to teach.

My most recent experience of being a help for the helpless was in the creation of our Latino congregation at the Cathedral. The local sheriff set up an immigration enforcement command post next door to a neighboring Spanish language Episcopal parish. People there were afraid to come to their church for fear of arrest. I invited those that were afraid to come to the Cathedral. We would stand up for them and their right to assemble in worship. In spite of initial controversy at the Cathedral, we have. Because of this stand, children who never had their own new shoes before, received them for Christmas. Children who had to go to bed hungry. Parents who could not afford to bury their children were able to do that and more with honor, surrounded by love. The congregation I serve has been astonishingly generous and hospitable to their neighbors and we have all be enriched as a result.

Theme III – Supporting Lay and Ordained Ministry

Ordinal Questions: As a chief priest and pastor, will you encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries, nourish them from the riches of God’s grace, pray for them without ceasing, and celebrate with them the sacraments of our redemption? Will you sustain your fellow presbyters and take counsel with them; will you guide and strengthen the deacons and all others who minister in the Church?

Please include: a description of the ways you have gone about developing relationships with, and perhaps pastoring, the clergy with whom you serve or have served. How do you anticipate exercising your role in calling new priests? How have you supported and nurtured lay ministry?

As I mentioned in Theme 2, I have found that being involved in accountable relationships with my peers has been of critical importance to the effectiveness of my own vocation. I’ve learned that simply being told to meet monthly in a geographically based gathering does not provide the support clergy need. I’ve learned to be proactive, inviting other clergy into breakfast groups, monthly lunch meetings and/or prayer gatherings. It is within those settings that I’ve found the sorts of mutual pastoral relationships where I’ve been able to minister to my friends and they to me.

In my last parish, and especially as Dean of a Cathedral, I have been asked by my bishops to mentor new clergy, clergy in crisis and people who are having difficult experiences with the ordination process. Much of that ministry involves being a good listener and occasionally giving a little advice. In the case of young clergy it involves giving back some of the wisdom that I was given by the rector who trained me while I served as a curate in Delaware.

Lately I've been very active in working to train a group of women and men ordained in other traditions for ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church. Six of us meet together for two hours each week to study the Prayer Book, the polity and practical ministry of the Episcopal Church. I'd be very interested in finding some sort of similar ministry for whom a traditional seminary experience might not be possible or appropriate.

Much to everyone's apparent surprise, the glut of priests that we enjoyed over the past 25 years seems to have disappeared. We are now struggling to find good priests not just for rural and isolated congregations but for cardinal parishes too. I would be very proactive in recruitment in the short term at least. I would simultaneously work with the COM in Kentucky to refine a vision of recruitment of the existing leadership within the diocese to consider whether they might be called to serve God as ordained persons.

But I believe that COM's are not just meant to raise up ordained leaders. I would want to work with the COM in Kentucky to create a parallel program of lay ministry discernment. I would be interested in continuing and strengthening the School for Ministry and broadening its portfolio so that it became an valued resource for the laity, and a regular mobile training academy that would be able to set up shop on Sundays in different parishes and missions across a diocese to support lay ministry in the world. Finally, having been instrumental in the creation of a Center for Spiritual Growth in my last parish which had as its mission to strengthening of the prayer lives as the laity, I would expect to provide a similar resource should one not be available.

I have seen the extraordinary lay ministry that results when people are called, equipped and sent for work in the world. I have seen a single lay minister change the lives of so very many people when that happens. I would hope to continue that in Kentucky.

Theme IV – Role in and Responsibility to the Larger Church

Ordinal Questions: Do you solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship of The Episcopal Church? Will you guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church? Will you share with your fellow bishops in the government of the whole Church?

Please include: how you interpret the above, noting your sense of responsibility to The Episcopal Church regarding issues of human sexuality in matters of ordination, marriage rites, and Prayer Book revision. What other issues do you foresee as challenging to the Church and how do you expect to respond to them? Discuss your sense of the relationship you believe The Episcopal Church should have with the Anglican Communion.

Bishops are bishops for the whole Episcopal Church and ideally, for the whole Anglican Communion. This is a relatively new realization of an ancient truth for many Episcopalians. As such, when bishops speak, it is on behalf of a much larger body and not just for themselves. While Episcopalians hold a great affection for our bishops, only the Prayer Book is normative. The rest of the world (and even some Episcopalians) tend to forget that.

Given it, I believe it's very important for bishops to be careful in what they say and how they say it so as to avoid creating needless controversy. (Albeit sometimes controversy may be needful.)

A fundamental aspect of our polity as Episcopalians is that we discern God's will in community; not as individuals, individual parishes or dioceses. We are in a moment now when our shared understanding about how to fully integrate the lives of faithful gay and lesbian Christians has not reached consensus. That means, with apologies to all concerned, we need to be very careful in what we say and do corporately. And it means that we all will have to be willing to submit to the consensus of the body when it emerges.

If I were a bishop, I would be very supportive of finding a way to allow people whose consciences disagree on issues of human sexuality, or other controversies, to live together within a diocese, mutually respecting each other's position while not agreeing with it.

The Episcopal Church's continued role in the Anglican Communion is a matter of great importance to me. If there is any way possible for the Episcopal Church to remain at the table of the Communion, I will seek to help find it. That said, I'm troubled by people who believe that the Communion will only be saved by the ejection or discipline of the Episcopal Church or the Anglican Church of Canada. I believe they are in error. Any community that believes it must sacrifice people in order to maintain itself is making a grave mistake. But that cuts both ways doesn't it?

I believe the real elephant in our collective room is not the question of human sexuality or of potential liturgical revisions. I believe the pressing issue upon us today is the loss of our young people and coming demographic and financial winter which the Episcopal Church is about to enter. To manage this storm, and in the midst of it to start to build for a new future, is going to

require us to work together, mutually respecting one another's voices and collaboratively sharing our resources.