

BIOGRAPHIES OF ABBOTS OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX ORDER OF THE WEST

Abbot Lynn Bauman: Lynn was born in California into a staunch Anabaptist family where he was raised as a fundamentalist and evangelical. Following an early call to ministry, he completed a B.A. in Biblical Studies (1964) and began graduate school in Near Eastern studies at UCLA preparing to go to the Middle East.



In 1967, he entered a graduate program in Islamic philosophy and Near Eastern studies at the University of Tehran where he met his life-long mentor Seyyed Hossein Nasr under whom he studied for seven years. He eventually joined the faculty at the University of Tehran where he taught English literature and linguistics in addition to graduate research and writing. Later with his wife, Jackie, and their three children, the family moved to Yemen as Iran entered an extended period of instability under the Shah. In Yemen, both Lynn and Jackie taught at an international school.

During his years of academic training, Lynn received several master degrees from UCLA. After returning from the Middle East, he earned a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the Anglican School of Theology at the University of Dallas where he also taught. Later he also earned a Ph.D. in the Humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington focusing on Western Philosophy and Hermeneutics. Ordained to ministry in 1980, Lynn served as pastor; administrator; and professor of comparative religion, ascetical theology and hermeneutics, teaching in various seminary and graduate level programs across North America. He has also continued his Middle Eastern studies and research, focusing in the last several decades on the early tradition of Christianity in the Middle East in its flow as an Oriental tradition from Palestine to India and China. In addition to these studies, he has translated many of the early documents of Oriental Christianity into modern English. In the past number of years, he has published these in various forms as hermeneutical tools and study guidelines. Recently, he has led tours to the Middle East and to India in pursuit of that early, interesting history.

Lynn was invited to join the Oriental Orthodox tradition of Christianity by one of its Bishops, Dr. Marshall Voris. Following that ordination, Marshall suffered a fatal heart attack and passed into Eternity. Pursuant to his wishes before he died, the priests he ordained petitioned Bishop Gregory of the Holy Catholic Church in the East to change the ecclesial structure of its work into a monastic Order and were granted ordination as its first Abbots in the Oriental Orthodox Order in the West.

In addition to his work in the Order, Lynn serves as a retreat master, teacher, seminar and conference leader. He is currently Director of the Praxis Retreat and Learning Center, an ecumenical retreat facility that offers opportunities for prayer and study in the rural beauty of northeast Texas. Over a decade or more, Lynn has worked in close association with Cynthia Bourgeault, his brother Ward and others to establish Academies for Contemplative Wisdom (Wisdom Schools) across the U.S. and Canada. A primary focus in these Schools has been the Gospel of Thomas which has been Lynn's passion and

concentration. He has translated a number of important early texts of Christian wisdom from Coptic including the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene and the Gospel of Philip. These are collected into a volume called *The Luminous Gospels* with introductions by Cynthia Bourgeault and Ward Bauman and he has completed a major commentary on the text of Thomas, *Gospel of Thomas, In Trouble and in Wonder*.

Abbot Karen Poidevin: Karen was ordained as a priest in the Oriental Orthodox Church in the West in 2002 by Marshall Voris, Bishop of the Oriental Orthodox Church in the West, and consecrated as a bishop/abbot by Bishop Gregory in 2003. Since then, Karen has been instrumental in the development of the Oriental Orthodox Order in the West in the United States.



After graduating with a B.A. in psychology from the University of South Florida (1976), she worked as a chemical dependency counselor, case manager and program administrator of drug abuse programs for over a decade. She later worked in marketing for a private agency. Her work with 12-step programs, including Al-Anon, deeply influenced her spiritual journey and practice and continues to be a great asset to living her Rule of Life.

Karen currently lives in Fredricksburg, Texas where she and her life-partner, Ron, own and operate the Way of the Wolf Retreat Center. Her gift of hospitality has welcomed many seeking a space for quiet and restoration over the last two decades. The Center includes guest facilities, a chapel, conference space and a labyrinth.

Karen was raised Methodist with a strong Dutch Reform influence and in 1959 was confirmed into the Episcopal Church. Her journey deepened after attending Cursillo, a 3-day renewal program of the Episcopal Church in 1980. Since then, she has been in active leadership roles in this lay-led movement in multiple states as well as deeply involved in spiritual direction as a directee. After attending the Anglican School of Theology in Dallas, Texas, in the early 80s and studying with Dr Lynn C Bauman, she began intensive study in spirituality and the Wisdom traditions. In 1994, she graduated from the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation with master's level training in spiritual direction. She currently serves as a spiritual director as well as a supervisor to spiritual directors, having completed supervisor training with Mary Ann Scofield, a founder of Spiritual Directors International. St Barnabas Episcopal Church of Fredricksburg, Texas, continues to be her touchstone community.

She is married to Ron Poidevin and they have three children and seven grandchildren. Her interests include quality time with her family as well as camping, hiking and all things outdoors including enjoying wildlife. She is also involved in book studies and a poetry writing group.

Abbot Ron Poidevin: Ron was born in Buffalo, New York and grew up in Maine, Michigan and Florida. While in high school, Ron met Karen Orbaker whom he would later marry. They have three children and seven grandchildren, the greatest blessings of all.



Ron entered the Navy directly out of high school receiving training in aviation fundamentals, avionics and electronics. This provided a good technical base for future education and corporate leadership. In 1960, he left the military and entered the private sector working for General Telephone Company of Florida. In 1964, Ron began pursuing college courses while continuing to work full-time. He earned a B.A. in Management (1969) and a M.B.A. (1972) from the University of South Florida. His career in telecommunications provided the opportunity to work as GTE Vice President in several states. In 1993, Ron resigned as Senior Vice President with GTE after 34 years to seek new avenues of spiritual development.

While working with GTE, he attended a Cursillo in the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas. This led to over 20 years of active participation and leadership in the Episcopal Cursillo program across five states. His early Cursillo work in Dallas led to his enrolling in the Anglican School of Theology in the early 80's. Here, he met professor Dr. Lynn Bauman and began studies with him. Although this relationship was interrupted by corporate moves, it was restarted after leaving GTE and continues today.

Way of the Wolf Retreats was purchased in 1994 to offer a place of healing and restoration for groups and individuals. Since then, the Way of the Wolf has evolved from a small B&B to a medium-sized ecumenical retreat center serving families, businesses and churches. During this same period, Ron attended the Shalem Institute of Spirituality pursuing an intensive master's level program in spiritual direction. He graduated from the program in 1998.

More recently, a series of travels to England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland to study the influence of early Celtic traditions on the Anglican and Catholic churches led to an important awareness. Through these travels came the recognition of how important it had been for him to move from a corporate environment to one of intentional effort to inner growth and to the spiritual needs of others. Later studies and travel reinforced that the reconciliation needed among Christian denominations also needed to be extended to other traditions as well.

In 2001, Ron was invited by Bishop Marshall Voris to consider ordination. After months of discernment and preparation, he was ordained a priest in 2002. After the death of Bishop Voorhis, he was consecrated as Bishop/Abbot by Bishop Gregory in 2003. Early formation of Oriental Orthodox Order of the West began to take its current form during this period with the foundational premise being the inclusivity of all who come to share their journey. During this period, Way of the Wolf Retreat Center became a priory for Order, serving as a gathering point for the members and supporters of the Order. These last years have increased Ron's awareness of the great need for a new vision for spiritual formation that can reach across denominational lines and even across religious traditions. He believes "the time is now".

Abbot Blake Burleson: A member of the Oriental Orthodox Order in the West since 2008, Reverend Dr. Blake W. Burleson was installed as an abbot of the Order in 2013. Blake lives in Waco, Texas where he teaches world religions at Baylor University. His research areas include Jungian Studies, African religions, Contemplative Studies and the Wisdom Traditions. He is the author of *Pathways to Integrity: Ethics Psychological Type* (2001), *Jung in Africa* (2005), *Baptist Wisdom for Contemplative Prayer* (2012), and *A Contemplative Approach to Understanding World Religions: C. G. Jung as Phenomenologist of the Soul* (2014). Blake is also Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences.



Burleson received the B.A. (1978), M.A. (1982) and Ph.D. (1986) degrees from Baylor University and became a full-time faculty member in the Department of Religion in 1991. Traveling extensively on the African continent since 1978, Burleson has conducted field research among diviners of traditional religion in Kenya and has a working knowledge of the Swahili language. In 2007, Burleson was invited to give a plenary address to the XVIIth International Congress of the International Association of Analytical Psychology. He has given public lectures and presented academic papers on Jungian studies in America, Europe, and Africa.

Ordained to the ministry in 1986, Burleson has served Baptists as teacher, pastor, administrator, missionary, deacon, adviser and chaplain. He is a member of Seventh and James Baptist Church, a progressive fellowship focused on the arts and social justice. Blake practices centering prayer, *lectio divina*, the Anglican rosary and chanting as a part of his daily office. He uses contemplative *praxis* in the classrooms in order to help students cultivate attention and develop listening skills. He is married to Sandy Evans and they have two children: Garrett (b.1986) and Evan (b.1989). Blake's hobbies include carpentry, painting, backpacking, hiking and snow skiing.

Abbot Ann Johnson. Ann was drawn to the work of the Order in 2002 and has actively sought this Wisdom path since that time. She became a monk in the Order in 2004 and was installed as an Abbott in 2013.

Ann was born and grew up in Corsicana, a small, rural town in Central Texas. As a teenager, she realized she was seeking and yearning to find a meaningful understanding of and relationship with God. Not finding support for her queries in the Methodist church (a church founded by her great-great grandfather), she began attending the Episcopal Church, where she found comfort in the liturgy and the prayers. As an adult, Ann attended the Anglican School of Theology, a lay study program of the Diocese of Dallas, for five years. There she learned the expanded message of God's presence and a deeper understanding of Jesus available to those who want to walk the Wisdom path.



As an undergraduate, Ann attended The Colorado College and the University of Texas, graduating with a double major in Deaf Education and Elementary Education. As a teacher of children who were deaf or hard of hearing, she worked in Arizona, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. She earned a M.A. in Special Education Administration from Texas A&M. In 1996, she became an educational consultant with the Education Service Center Region 10 and began working with the Texas Education Agency to develop programs and curricula for students who were deaf or hard of hearing. After thirty- seven year as an educator, Ann retired in 2003.

After retiring, Ann moved to Flagstaff, Arizona and began to attend the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany. While there, she discerned a call to ordained ministry. After attending the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas, she was ordained to the priesthood in February 2007. She served as the vicar of St. John's Episcopal-Lutheran Church in Williams, Arizona until retiring in March 2014. In January 2015 she was called to be the interim rector of the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany. She served that church until June 2016. She currently serves as the vicar of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Winslow, Arizona. With a colleague, she has also been developing a curriculum to provide seniors with resources to create a deep spirituality in the second half of life.

Ann is the proud mother of two daughters and a son, as well as grandmother of six grandchildren. She currently lives in Flagstaff, Arizona and is an active member of the Flagstaff Symphony Board of Directors and other volunteer organizations. In her free time, she enjoys walking in the glorious environment of the Northern Arizona Mountains.