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Diocese of Central Pennsylvania
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1. How are you called to the episcopacy?

From early on in my ministry, I was asked if I sensed a call to episcopal ministry. It is a question I was reluctant to engage, perhaps out of fear, or a sense of inadequacy. However, after twenty-plus years of ordained ministry, in parishes large and small, in three different parts of the country, and now in a diocesan capacity, the question is still being raised to me and by me, and I feel that the time is right to explore it. I enjoy the 'big picture' nature of episcopal ministry, and believe that I have a good and honest understanding of its joys and challenges, especially at a time of such change in the church. But most of all, my passion lies in serving as a pastoral presence for those who spend their lives in the service of the church, lay or ordained, paid or not, and to their families. I believe that a bishop is, first and foremost, the chief pastor and teacher of a diocese, and, in terms of my own satisfaction, and the positive response of others, those roles connect with two of my strongest gifts.

2. How are you called to the episcopacy in Central PA?

The office of bishop has always been tied directly to particular geographical regions, particular places, that we call 'dioceses'. More than an administrative unit, a diocese is an area of land that has discreet topography, history and culture, to which a bishop must feel real connection, lest he/she be more the 'bishop from...', rather than the 'bishop of...'. From reading your profile, I am drawn to the spirit, the culture, and topography of your diocese, with its history, richness and beauty. Your profile is honest and direct about strengths and areas for improvement. Too often in the church we peer through rose-colored glasses. The Diocese of Central Pennsylvania is clearly not. I am excited at the prospect of serving with those who are prepared to face the future with faith, not fear. While I do not know what God intends for the church in the future, I do believe that the Body of Christ has much to offer that the world desperately needs, and that our task is to figure how best to intersect the gift of the Gospel of Jesus, and the needs of the world for which he died. I am anxious to use my gifts to seek those places of intersection. My sense is that you do too.

3. What challenges do you see in our profile?

Diminishing membership, the expensive overhead of people and buildings, and fear about the future of the church we love are all-present in your profile. They are far from unique to Central Pennsylvania. This makes them no less real or significant, but it does

offer us hope that these challenges are faced under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in the company of others all across the Episcopal Church. While the particularities of economic and environmental realities add unique dynamics in your diocese, they also give focus to how such challenges might be faced. Beneath it all lies a fear that pervades much of the church that we have lost our place in the culture, and are now being pushed to the shadowy margins. My question is 'are not the margins exactly the place in which the church is most called to be?' Red ink, sparsely populated pews, and aging buildings quickly become discouraging. Perhaps we are being called to witness to God's reconciling love from a new perspective, in which the structures of the institution are rethought. Being able to do that with courage and faith may well involve changing how we live in the culture to which we are called to make that witness.

4. What excites you about those challenges?

As my answer to the preceding question hints, I find the work of discerning how the Episcopal Church can function in new ways, no longer from the center of the public square, but now much more as a counter-cultural body, quite exciting. That said, it is no less scary to me than to anyone else. I don't have the magic formula to cure all our ills, or to reverse our fortunes. I do believe that we have, at times, allowed our own voices and concerns to drown out God's 'still, small voice' which will, in fact, lead us where we should go. But I also believe that we are poised on the edge of a time when religious traditions such as ours can find new relevancy in ancient patterns of worship and being, grounded in humility, prayer and real community, as opposed to a certain self-absorption that comes with proving ourselves 'right' as opposed to 'holy'. What I find exciting about meeting the myriad challenges before the church is deeply connected with the work of reclaiming the importance of conversion as a slow, often halting process, that will lead us to find Jesus in places and ways we least expect, but which turn out to be those in which we are needed most.

5. How do these challenges fit with your skills, experience and passions?

I have come to accept and embrace the obvious fact that, at any given time, I may well be wrong—about almost anything. A willingness to acknowledge that I do not have a lock on 'truth' or 'the mind of Christ' is a gift, which allows me to enter into discernment and dialogue about the challenges and opportunities facing the church from a place of openness and honesty. I have the gift to see both sides of almost any issue, which allows me to enter into difficult issues and situations seeking common ground rather than a dynamic of winners and losers. My passion for the pastoral care of those

who serve the church does not make me a slave to the structures of the institution, but it does speak to my conviction that the future of the church lies in fostering communities of real people who are willing to get into the mix and muddle of life, knowing how difficult it can be to function as both servant and leader in the midst of such a setting. Finally, my concern for God's creation, and about our rather dubious job of its stewardship, inspires me to feel that places of both natural beauty and a complex economic and environmental balance are settings in which I feel God calls me to be.

6. *Our Provisional Bishop is leading diocesan clergy in studying the Rule of St. Benedict. What is your rule of life?*

The basic Benedictine triad of work, study, and prayer reflects the pattern for my life, and the principles of my rule of life are basic and balanced. I pray some form of Morning and Evening Prayer on a daily basis, and am present at Eucharist at least weekly. Time for silence and listening for the Holy Spirit's whispering is something I need and seek. Annual retreat time is always good for that.

Recognizing the great opportunities it can afford, and how seductive and time consuming it can be, I am trying to build in daily limits on my use of technology. Although I am no longer able to keep up the running routine of my younger days, I am intentional about walking three to four miles several times per week. .

Finally, it is part of my spiritual practice to be intentional about spending time with my wife and children, and to find opportunities to be creative—writing icons, creating note cards, or dabbling in photography.

In all of this I regularly fall short, and have had to learn to forgive myself and start again. That, too, is part of my life's pattern.

7. *The Prayer Book ordination rite calls for bishops "to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church." How would you guard the Church?*

A bishop's charge to 'guard' the Church is fundamental to the role of chief pastor, and it entails far more than enforcing the rubrics of the Prayer Book, or adhering to the Canons, important as those activities may be. Guarding the Church is not so much about keeping the Church 'pure' or 'protected', but rather about helping the Church engage its mission in the world with a clear sense of identity and purpose.

My commitment to 'guard the Church' would begin with stressing the importance of faith formation for all members of the diocese, recognizing that any unformed or ill-formed group or organization will be doubly challenged in achieving its purpose, and doubly

liable to distraction or confusion in the process. Too often, I fear, this has been true of the Church, despite the best of intentions.

One of my gifts is that of encouragement, and calling people into lay ministry in particular. It is an essential tool in a guardian's work. Those on the front lines of the Church's ministry, lay and ordained, deserve and need to be encouraged in their ministry, whatever and wherever it is. A ministry of encouragement, especially from the chief pastor, promotes strength at the Church's core.

8. Our diocese is huge and diverse. How would you be in relationship with all members of the Body?

We live in a time when we have more ways to access each other than ever before. However, nothing replaces the value of time spent face-to-face, building relationships and allowing the creativity that only time spent together can spark to shape and direct our work on behalf of God's kingdom. I am a person who thrives on relationships. My life and faith spring from my relationship with God, and, by extension, with God's children.

A primary aspect of my ministry as bishop would be presence in the congregations and communities of the diocese. Having worked on a diocesan staff, I know the critical importance of time spent with others, not only in the context of diocesan meetings, or visits to the bishop's office, and even more of the time spent in places where the Church's ministry happens, in and beyond congregations, time which often provides unexpected opportunities for moments of grace. Windshield time is an essential part of the calling.

I would work with others across the diocese to encourage development of websites and social media networks, and would seek the exploration of some kind of diocese-wide computer platform or network to help congregations take the fullest advantage of the technology already at hand, which may, as yet, not be being used to greatest effect.

9. What strategies do you have for health in family-sized parishes?

Any path to health, for a person or congregation, begins with understanding the building blocks involved—the particular history, context, habits, sources of energy, etc. Gleaning such information takes time, and so it would for me as bishop, getting to know and understand the congregations of the diocese. It is something I love to do.

There is no one guaranteed way to strengthen a faith community, and smaller churches provide no exceptions. Given the statistical realities of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, I suspect that more and more diocesan assets, in all senses of that word, will be focused towards congregations that function much more like families than corporations.

Changes in the way we live as the Church are coming at rates almost faster than we can understand, and our working definition of 'church' is being challenged more now than perhaps at any time since the days of the earliest Christians. Our words are important; even talking more about 'faith communities' than 'parish churches' can set the tone for a response to the changing realities and landscape in ways that encourage, and are not so quick to raise anxiety. As bishop, it would be my task to help frame the 'conversation' in such a way that all Episcopal faith communities could see themselves as places of abundance and hope, not scarcity and fear.

10. 26 of our 66 parishes have full-time clergy; this number will decline this year. Overall membership has declined by 29% over the last decade. How would you work with us to create healthier parishes?

I don't believe that a corollary can be drawn between congregational health and the percentage of time a congregation has access to ordained leadership. Many churches can no longer 'afford' the presence of a priest on a full-time basis, and recognizing such a reality can be seen as a cause for shame, or even as a symptom of ill-health. It is not so.

Instead, I see an opportunity for us to reconsider our understanding of the shape of a Christian community lived out in a sacramental framework in which every member is genuinely acknowledged to have gifts to use, and ministries to practice. While there is no universally applicable formula for addressing this issue, I think there are common elements which need to be part of any conversation about promoting congregational health—clarity of mission and purpose, deep understanding of Christian stewardship as a way of life, better equipping of lay leaders, more creative ways of identifying and preparing those to be ordained, and a real willingness to die to self and live for others. How these elements are used will vary from place to place, and will certainly be augmented by others, but by looking at them as essential kinds of 'currency' with which the Church's ministry is carried out will be critical in forming and supporting communities we can honestly describe as healthy.

11. What does success in ministry look like to you?

While I think that statistics and their analysis are important tools for evaluating the life and effectiveness of the Church's ministry, my 'vision' of success in ministry is measured by the vitality of the daily conversion processes of those by whom the ministry is carried out. The Christian faith is a journey that involves being open to that daily process of being turned more and more in a God-ward, Christ-like, Spirit-filled direction.

No matter what words are used to describe each person's unique journey in Christ, being faithful to the process of the conversion of life, of turning away from our particular

preoccupations, and our frequent conviction that we somehow have all the answers, is the joy and challenge of the Christian life.

There are regular, though not necessarily frequent, moments in my life where I feel a particular internal integration, a strong feeling of being in the right place at the right time. Often these come when standing at the altar to celebrate the Eucharist, but I experience them at other times and in other settings as well. Wherever, however, and whenever they occur, these moments of grace that set aside my chronic doubts about the direction and purpose of my life, replacing them with what I can only call a sense of holy peace.

12. How would you integrate diocesan systems to serve the diocesan primary task?

Any attempt to integrate diocesan systems in serving the diocesan primary task begins with establishing clarity about the diocesan 'task'. Discussion and reflection needs to be fostered about how the life and work of a diocese is carried out in conjunction with the congregations that comprise the diocese. Participation in such a process would be invaluable for a new bishop in many ways.

Too often a dynamic of diocese *versus* parishes, rather than diocese *of* parishes operates in the Church. Any integration of diocesan systems must be focused around redefining that understanding, and aimed at providing ways that members of congregations can be brought together across horizontal planes, rather than seeing themselves as spokes on a wheel that relate to each other only through the bishop's office and the diocesan convention as its hub.

Integration fostered through common training and formation processes, among other things, and through the distribution of resources in ways designed to promote collaboration beyond the bounds of a single congregation, encourages a sense of common purpose. My goal in looking at and working with the diocesan system(s) would be to develop ways in which diocesan life and administration could be carried out in a design more reflective the interlocking rings of the Olympic flag, than the organizational charts to which we seem to cling so often.