



Autobiographical Statement-- Churchill Pinder

The Definition of the "Communion of Saints" in our BCP describes the Communion as the *Whole Family of God, the living and the dead, those whom we love and those whom we hurt, bound together by sacrament prayer and praise*. As I consider my life in the Church, this definition is a helpful description of how the Church family functions, and it offers us all a reminder that it is more from the love of God than our own efforts that the Church manages as a healthy family.

I was raised in an active church family with many of my family being ordained priests. This foundation has allowed me to know well the human side of our church leaders. I know that I am a beloved Child of God, and that nothing can separate me or you from the love of Christ. This knowledge has been a great asset and theme in my ministry and it has allowed me to move from an action based life to one of simple wonder and praise. I still have a framed psalm verse that my seminary friends gave me on my graduation "Be still and know that I am God". This has remained a helpful reminder to not only slow down but also practice listening to the Spirit. I do and it helps.

I grew up and did all of my schooling in Virginia. When I was 6 my father began a church start in south Richmond, at 13 we moved to Virginia Beach for another church start and I became what might best be described as a "Chesapeake Bay boy". I created my first job at the age of 16 running 150 crab pots and establishing my own markets at local grocery stores. I began my schooling in public schools and then at 15 went away to boarding school. I was able to study in England for a year of post graduate study and traveling. I then went to the University of Virginia and majored in "Political and Social Thought". I explored several careers and as I began to focus on going to Seminary my brother and I took off a year and built a house for our parents as my father was retiring and had little pension support. It was a wonderful experience and it has allowed me to add "builder" to my resume when needed.

At Seminary I focused on Deaf Ministry in my field work and then after a special mid-year of working as a chaplain and teacher I graduated and I landed in Baker City for my first parish. I was wonderfully raised into the role of priest by the laity there and I was given weekly mentoring support from my neighboring priests in La Grande and Ontario. I know and experienced the gifts of welcome and support by Rusty as my first bishop, and my commitment to shared authority in the church was greatly supported by all of my experiences at camp, Cursillo and diocesan life in Eastern Oregon. I loved the occasional visits of retired Bishop Bill Spofford as he rode into town on his motorcycle and I still remember Rusty encouraging me to go to the truck stop to do more evangelism and be the church in creative ways. All of these early experiences have been useful fodder for my late ministry experiences.

As I have moved through over 30 years of parish ministry I recognize the newer callings of the church to be more present in the world proclaiming both compassion and justice for all people and all creation. I'm excited by our newly elected Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry's message to "Go" and preach the Gospel. I believe this is the church's calling and I would encourage any diocese that I am engaged with to take on that role in an active and creative way.

I have been learning to deal with my children who have a very different relationship than I did with the church. I have tried to help my kids learn to laugh, and I pray they have a happy heart and then to leave the rest to God. I have always been active in both ecumenical and interfaith work and although I am a rip snorting Episcopalian, I believe in my Celtic roots that are open to the revelation of God, where ever it may come from. I strive to follow the slogan on the library at VTS "Seek the truth, come whence it may, cost what it will.

Based on your reading of our diocesan profile and any other knowledge you have, what do you see as your greatest challenge as the bishop of the Diocese of Eastern Oregon? And what excites you most about becoming our bishop?

I resonate with your emphasis of **relational ministry** over structure. Also later in the profile when you listed what people valued were *friendliness, compassion and an ability to be present in the moment*, I share the same values. I would summarize the list as an emphasis on an **authentic presence**. I think that such a presence is a challenging goal but it is where true episcopal ministry begins.

I began my ordained ministry in the Diocese of Eastern Oregon in the early 80's. I know many of the old stories and know many of the older members of the "Communion of Saints" of the Diocese but I need to hear your stories about the present challenges and meet the present players both lay and ordained in the diocese, before I will know how my gifts will or will not fit.

I remember the geography of Eastern Oregon is both one of the greatest gifts and challenges of the diocese. After only being in Baker City for two weeks in 1983, I was contacted by my mentor clergy and picked up in a van to join in a funeral for a fellow clergy in Klamath Falls. After the 6 1/2 hour journey and the service we all piled back into the van and headed home. That is the way relational ministry works, and after being in dioceses that are much closer in geography but much more distant relationally, I appreciate the Eastern Oregon relational emphasis.

A constant challenge for the church is the issue of scarcity of resources versus an attitude of abundance. I know that the small parish structure of Eastern Oregon demands teamwork within the diocese, and emphasizes the importance of the role of the diocesan family for each parish. How to keep those networks alive and well will be an on going challenge.

Please describe your process of discernment to this call. Share what was most helpful thus far. What surprises have you encountered? How will this process continue for you?

I have enjoyed the role of parish priest for my 32 years of ministry. I always wondered how the call came to the bishop's I admired, and I was aware that many members of the clergy seemed to run for the office of bishop. I was not interested in running for the role.

It was in my participation in the calling process for our new bishop that I witnessed a profound openness by certain individuals in their discernment towards the call of bishop that I began to understand the calling process as a journey with a diocese and not a seeking of a position or hierarchy. I want to offer my particular gifts to the Eastern Oregon church family and then listen to the Spirit together.

I have been Dean of St. Stephen's Cathedral and School for over 10 years and I am presently discerning my call to stay and a call to transition into a new ministry. Your invitation to share in a process of discernment that is creative, collaborative, and open to the Spirit intrigues me. With my being raised as a Virginia Churchman, I feel kin to many of your leaders from the past. I summarize Eastern Oregon's values as an emphasis on team ministry which I believe as Bishop Barton declared is the foundation of good leadership in the church.

I look forward to sharing some time for quiet reflection on the opportunities and challenges your process will offer.

What experiences have been most satisfying and most challenging in your personal life and ministry?

I have had the privilege of beginning my ministry as a single priest and having my family grow with my ministry experiences. We have grown into a family with a priest, a nurse mid-wife, and two teenage children, one is beginning his senior year in high school and the other is entering 10th grade.

I am a PK (preachers kid) and the church has been my family since my beginning. I have found, however, that my personal family needs my primary attention and I have had to learn limiting skills and boundaries with my work in the church to help my own family prosper. I have learned that if something truly needs to happen with the church that God will provide the resources and the leadership, and it does not have to depend on me.

The creative and collaborative style of camp leadership comes natural to me and I love helping youth claim their creative gifts and leadership potential. Each year for over 25 years I have led a service trip for youth applying both my building skills with my leadership skills. Those trips are always one of the highlights of my year, and I never tire of witnessing young and old participants surprise themselves at how much they can accomplish when given the opportunity.

At the Cathedral, we have created and developed an intentional community for young adults which helps graduates of college explore ministry as they work at living as community. The "Sycamore House" program has grown into a self-sustained ministry with an independent board. Presently we have a paid Director and we will have 8 participants who will be coming from across the country next year, to live on the Cathedral grounds and do a variety of ministries in Harrisburg.

Describe your worship style. How do you envision yourself as a Shepherd to parishes of vastly different sizes and congregational vitality in the context of diocesan community?

Since I was raised as a Virginia Churchman I have a high regard for the authority of the laity and the priesthood of all believers that begins at our baptism. In Virginia we say that we have "few symbols, but we hold them very high". I would describe my worship style as "broad church" and I would find it very natural to adjust to a variety of worship styles in the context of an ever-changing church. I have a host of stories about the past bishops and leaders of Eastern Oregon and the primary ingredient of the successful ones were their direct and authentic personalities which they openly shared. I would expect the present diocese would do well with the same.

Being a Dean of a Cathedral I have learned to adjust to the expectations of the worshipping community and I would expect that an effective bishop would need to do the same. Having begun my ministry with working with St. Barnabas Mission for the Deaf I have a strong appreciation of using the tools available for worship to proclaim the Gospel in Word and Sacrament; whether the tools involve visual, aural, or olfactory senses.

What is one book (*other than the Bible*) that has greatly influenced your life? How and why?

My first thought is to hold up the BCP and mention how it allows a rhythm to my life and makes scripture accessible and digestible as a regular part of my spiritual and intellectual diet.

However, I want to also mention Edwin H. Friedman's book entitled "Generation to Generation". Dr. Edwin Friedman was a family therapist and ordained rabbi, who was known in the fields of mental health and pastoral education and wrote this book to describe how institutions including churches and synagogues can utilize the principles of Family Therapy to learn how to operate as a healthy system. The tools of self-awareness offered by "Systems" thinking for a community can be life giving and can help move a congregation from dysfunctional behavior to open and healthy behavior and help create a healthy

dynamic parish family. Systems theory is now a prominent and effective tool often used in parish leadership.

As a clergy it was important and reassuring to realize that I could move from one parish family as the “star” with its relational patterns and then, although I remain the same person with the same skills, could move to another congregation and be the “goat”. Dr. Friedman taught me that vitality and health in both families and parishes has more to do with the relational patterns than with the particular individuals.

“Generation to Generation” teaches us that the South African tradition of Ubuntu, that says “*I am human because I belong. I participate. I share.*” is a natural and basic part of our Church life as well as our individual and family life. Once again I am reminded that we are all part of the Communion of Saints, the whole family of God, with all of its ups and downs, and that the health of the Church is centered on the “care that each person has for another”. It speaks to your profile that professes: *Our life is more about relationship than structure.*

Where do you see spiritual hunger and how do you address it?

I have many thoughts of how to define “spiritual hunger”. I think that most conscious people have a yearning for communion with the Divine and that the Church has an important role in sharing the message and the reality of God’s love. The Baptismal Covenant offers us several “callings” that could offer clarity on how to respond to spiritual hunger. The 4th question “Will you continue in the apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?” offers us the 4 fold response of the 3000 that were baptized as described in Acts 2:42.

In the Baptismal Covenant we are asked if we would continue in the:

apostles’ teaching-We need to help the world meet the people described in our Scripture and teach the stories of the Bible that proclaim the Love of God that is extended to all. A central moment of that story is described in the baptism of Jesus where we hear the voice from heaven that proclaims “You are my beloved, child, with you I am well pleased”. God’s love extends to each of us and we need to help one another hear that voice.

fellowship- Community heals the hunger of isolation which is one of the great diseases of our modern time. With an aging population we need to be proactive to help all people know that they do have a church family that cares and is ready to be present in their lives. It is working at our fellowship that much spiritual hunger is fed.

breaking of the bread- The Eucharist offers us an opportunity to not only give thanks, but as is proclaimed in rite I: “offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice unto thee: (BCP 336) I like to encourage people to take our “whole selves” to the communion rail, both our successes and our joys as well as our failures, our sorrows, and our brokenness, knowing that God will embrace us, refashion us, and make us whole into God’s vision for us. I see the Eucharist as essentially a healing service that offers us the Bread of Life, which fills the most basic spiritual hunger.

prayers- Prayer encourages us to listen to “That still small voice” as we discern our next steps. Prayer is more than offering our needs to God but it also assists our awareness of the presence of God in our lives. Living in a world so full of expectations and measures of “doing” well, we particularly need a way to “simply be” in the presence of our loving, forgiving, and grace filled” God. Creating opportunities for ourselves and our communities to “Listen to the Heartbeat of God” in our lives and in the world responds to a spiritual hunger that we all share. Our Celtic roots offer us an open and inclusive way of seeking for the revelation of the Divine that is greatly needed in the modern world.

The other “callings” of the Baptismal Covenant to “*seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself, and to strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being*” speaks of the hunger present in the world for wholeness, justice and truth. I love our newly elected Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry’s emphasis on “Going”. The Church needs to realize the world is hungry for the love of God and that everywhere there is injustice or violence we see an expression of a need that can be described as a spiritual hunger. The church needs to be ready to make its case in the community and offer a partnering spirit in addressing the particular needs of the community.

One of my learnings in ministry that I like to share is that “blame is a sign of need.” In my work with communities I often see the pattern of Blame that usurps any useful reconciling or cooperative efforts. The Church can often offer a more human and useful perspective that makes it clear that we all share in the brokenness of the community and that we need to be accountable to work on our parts of that brokenness. This perspective moving beyond the blame and focusing on the need, often is the beginning of wholeness and health and feeds a very real spiritual hunger.

To you, what is the most meaningful passage (*not verse*) in the OT? In the NT? Tell us why.

In the **Hebraic Testament** I love the stories of Creation, Exodus, and the growth of the Community of God, expressed in a multitude of stories; however I choose to offer a moment in the story of Second Isaiah. Isaiah 49 holds a passage where the prophet is proclaiming he is the Lord’s tool; a sharpened sword, a polished arrow, a servant; yet the prophet is tired, disillusioned, and ready to quit. What is beautiful about this passage is that it is all of our stories, all members of the Church, from the largest to the smallest congregations. We all have experienced the excitement and the disillusionment of the prophet in the opening of the passage.

The best part, however, begins at verse 6 where the voice of the Lord proclaims that the original mission that has worn us out is too small. Our true calling is to be a “light to the whole world” including the Gentiles and that we will help “bring God’s salvation to the ends of the earth.”

All too often we get caught up in the details of our projects and our personal efforts of ministry. It is through seeing the big picture that we find hope and freedom. When we can see our lives in this perspective, we can clearly see that it is actually all God’s work, and we learn that the details need to be held lightly. For me I am reminded of this truth when I look up into the heavens and witness the Milky Way Galaxy and recognize the magnificence and power of God’s creation. As I look I find my frustrations begin to melt away and my issues to be suddenly more manageable and simple than they had grown to be.

In the **New Testament**, I want to hold up several portions of the 8th chapter of the Paul’s letter to the Romans.

¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ...

²⁶*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ...*

³¹*What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ...*

³⁷*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,*

³⁹*nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The simple fact is that God claims us all, sets us free, and we are called to live not in fear of the uncertainties of life, but rather with a spirit of adopted children of God, with a profound spirit of gratitude and knowledge of whose we are. I love the image of the truth of God's love is held in the very fabric of creation, and that every fiber of creation is waiting for the revealing of God's love through the Family of God, made up of each of us and all the children of God.

To know that the Spirit is praying for all of us sets each of us free to no longer worry about "doing" ministry as much as a "being" a beloved child of God. It creates a posture where we trust the love and presence of God to move life forward.

It is the certainty that nothing can separate any of us from the love of Christ that sets us free and allows us to risk loving one another. I like to tell the children being baptized that as they are "marked as Christ's own forever", that mark of the cross on their forehead is like a branding that can never be erased no matter how badly they behave or what complications life brings. We are always "Beloved Children of God".

Describe a scenario that encompasses your understanding of small church needs where there is no priest in the community. Please address your own expectations for meeting canonical requirements for ordination and how you might guide the fulfillment of many of our parishes' needs for succession where they are unable to sustain traditional models.

I vaguely remember a moment at Canon City where several people were part of an *temporary ordination* and each represented a particular part of the ordained role. The reason I liked this concept because it was trying to deal with several challenges of such a ministry. First if any one person is considered the "priest" then they begin a journey that requires boundary skills by both the person and the community. By having several different people focusing on separate roles, it broadens their accountability, their work load, and their perceived leadership roles.

Today the canons offer some guidance but it seems that a diocese like Eastern Oregon will need a more creative posture than most dioceses.

There are several ways to approach the life of any parish that may be useful.

I like using John Allen's acronym of SWEEPS dividing the activity of any church into these 6 areas. **S**ervice, **W**orship, **E**ducation, **E**vangalism, **P**astoral Care, and **S**tewardship/Administration. A lay leadership group could be used to cover all these bases.

In **Worship**: The "priestly" role of celebrating the Eucharist is something that requires the broader churches support. So much has evolved with the use of Lay Eucharistic Ministers that I feel we are close to having a workable solution. I was a Delegate to General Convention from your diocese in 1985 when this canon was first included. I remember the description that it was an "extension of the communion rail to the distant parishioners". I like the idea of creating that opportunity for all people of the Diocese but you would need to teach me how to keep such sharing authentic and alive with the present make up of the Diocese.

The **Education** can be supported electronically in wonderful ways today as can the written communication from all the Diocesan members. Webcams from the National Church and from other church leaders are wonderful and useful tools.

The **Service** and outreach of each parish family is something that requires ongoing discernment. In my present diocese we have an “Engaging the Community” resolution that we are considering that could offer some simple guidance. It begins with each congregation working to create a clarifying statement of who they are and what they are doing that is then shared with the community at large. Second there is a working of the finances of the facility, leadership, and program that is sustainable. Usually the building is a large issue, but if each parish is considered a “light house” in the community and if the facility is considered a “tool for ministry”, meant to be spent for ministry and for fellowship by the congregation and the community, then creative partnerships can be developed. This effort also moves into **Evangelism**, with hospitality to all as well as sharing one another’s stories which always acts as a doorway to greater relationships.

The **Pastoral Care** needs to be done by trained and committed members who will be supported by the broader church, but many members can offer support with good communication and organization.

I have found many concepts of “team ministry” where ordained clergy travel to several parishes offering support has been effective. I do believe, however, that the BCP has it right in the *Outline of Faith* when it begins with the ministry of the Laity. In our bulletin we list the ministers of the church as: “all the members of the Congregation”. The bishop and the clergy are listed as supporting agents to the ministry of the laity. My present staff shares the Purpose Statement: “to enhance the full participation of all the members.”