

A Spiritual Autobiography

I was introduced to the faith as an infant, and grew up in quite a different part of the Christian family. And while I no longer find my home in the church of my childhood, I am thankful for a formation that was rich in scripture and unwavering in faith. Like many, my teen years were a time of exploration and questioning. Intrigued by my studies in science and history, I grew dissatisfied with the easy answers religion seemed to provide. I explored other denominations in my hometown, feeling out of place and unwelcome in most. And yet, despite this spiritual diaspora of sorts, I was unable to shake my faith—my belief that the Christian narratives had something to offer, and that God was lurking behind every twig and textbook.

My entry to university as a music student, I thought, would be a clean break: a chance to find my place in the world of art and philosophy. But to my surprise, I found myself in church. As a piano and composition major, my options for ensemble credit were limited. I could sing in the mass choir. I could use one of my other instruments to play in the jazz band or orchestra. Or I could join the chapel choir—a small group that sang, weekly, in the University’s Lutheran chapel alongside an organ or chamber orchestra. I was enthralled. Having spent most of my life in a community that had worshiped in a very different setting, with very different music and approach to scripture, I found myself at a turning point. Every candle, every colour, every vestment and window seemed to be steeped in meaning: part of a timeless community and tradition.

The years that followed saw me working as a church musician in Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and eventually, Anglican Churches—all the while, exploring liturgy, history, and theology. I remember arriving for an interview at my first Anglican Church, and being greeted with a poster in the lobby. It portrayed a stereotypical long-haired, blue-eyed Jesus, beneath the words, “Jesus came to take away your Sins. Not your mind.” I knew, then, that I had found my spiritual home.

Following the nudges of clergy and choir members, I entered seminary, and answered the call to ordination. My curious and questioning faith has led me to serve in unexpected places: in psychiatric chaplaincy; in a variety of parishes; in national and international ministry on the standing committees of General Synod, and then as General Synod staff, and finally, in a unique campus ministry setting—all the while with a heart for those who seek an ancient faith that still has something to say about the world in which we live.

Giving special attention to the local requirements (Section 6), what gifts and skills do you bring to the role of Bishop in the Diocese of Edmonton?

As a lifelong Christian, and a lifelong learner, my understanding of scripture has matured over the years. My education, ecumenical and interfaith experience has pushed me to accept nuance—it has become impossible to deny that interpretation is contextual, and that God can speak to different communities in different ways. That being said, I find the critical study of scripture to be both engaging and intriguing.

Teaching is one of my greatest passions—especially teaching students for ministry. The students at Montreal School of Theology have inspired me, as they have developed their skills, and reflected on their vocations (it is worth noting that this year’s Pastoral Care class consisted of students from five denominations, and a number of different continents). I look forward to meeting with Edmonton’s Examining Chaplains to discern which models might best suit local context. In today’s world, sending students out-of-province for several years is not only difficult, but often results in formation for another place and culture. I am aware that the Montreal School of Theology has already created a distance model with the Diocese of Edmonton—one that is worth exploring further, especially given my role there. However, I am curious what Indigenous Ministries has in store: as noted in Abp. Mark Macdonald’s recent article in the Journal, plans are in the works to train clergy [“for the whole church.”](#)

During my time at General Synod, I supervised a team of clergy and laypeople in dioceses across the country, and was required to conduct interviews, review skills and performance, and at times, end those relationships. Due to my centralized leadership role, I was also called on for pastoral support from seekers and young clergy—a dual role that eventually led to my doctoral studies exploring the ethics of situations in which one serves both as a colleague and a supervisor. I explored the topic further as I went on to study pastoral supervision.

My formation as a counsellor and supervisor demanded that I develop skills of self-awareness, in part to prevent countertransference when working relationships rubbed too close to home, but also to be realistic about my own limits. For all of us, there is a time to delegate, and there is a time to refer.

My work in Quebec—on a public, secular campus—has demonstrated many of the qualities you seek, especially in terms of staff and faculty support. The situation is most definitely politically complex, and the presence of the historic chapel community can be managed only by diplomacy. In my time on campus, relationships fostered have established my role as one of a respected caregiver—called on in crisis, for assistance with professional discernment or ethical dilemmas, and occasionally as a media contact—a role I am comfortable with from my own time in broadcast media. I remain convinced that building these sorts of public-private partnerships is instrumental to the church's place, and the church's voice, in the community.

I am, first and foremost, a pastor. Some of my greatest skills are in supporting leadership, both personally and professionally, building bridges, and peacemaking. I am concerned about clergy mental health, and their sustainability in times of unresolved stress and conflict.

I will say this plainly: if you seek a collaborative Bishop, I would be well suited to the role. If you seek a Diocesan CEO who practices top-down management, you'd best look to another candidate. I thrive in partnership, and wither without that network of mutual support. I have established good relationships at General Synod and in dioceses across the country, and am familiar with the work of the church at these levels. Ecumenical and interfaith dialogue is a core element of my current role, and in my present community, I have encouraged greater understanding and organized mutual service between the Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities.

Why do you feel called to stand for this particular Episcopal election and how have you discerned this call?

I want to answer this question carefully, by observing first that in our tradition, discernment and confirmation of call is not a process to be undertaken alone. Rather, when the Spirit speaks, She speaks to the whole church, as we watch and listen to identify gifts in one another. In that sense, a nomination email from the Diocese of Edmonton cued a process of discernment that, while not entirely unfamiliar, has inspired a new sense of nudging within me.

The first step in the process that followed was a conversation with my spouse, because my family is my first vocation, and because we make decisions about parenting and family life together. To some, that may go without saying. To others, it may be surprising. But as I have learned from the model of some of my own Bishops, it is important to name.

I followed up with my Diocesan Bishop, Bruce Myers, who asked helpful questions, provided methods for personal reflection and prayer, and suggested a number of other Bishops with whom I have worked in the past that he felt should be part of this time of questioning. In those conversations, I listened carefully, as those I respect identified charisms they had observed in my ministry: my passion for the interpretation and proclamation of the

Gospel; my peaceful presence in the care of all the baptized; my commitment to creative unity. My willingness to celebrate the historic tradition while exploring expressions of new life. Together, we discussed the joys and sorrows, the challenges and blessings. All expressed their hope that I would let my name stand.

I followed through on their suggestions: praying through the ordinal, as I considered my own gifts. And then again, considering the needs identified in the Diocese of Edmonton. Alongside the reflections of those who had raised me up, those who had offered their observations and guidance (both now and in the past), the discipline of prayer confirmed, for me, that I very well may be called to this ministry. At the very least, I am called to let my name stand, and to enter this process of discernment with you.

I do so with ears to listen: is God calling me to live and serve in episcopal ministry alongside the Diocese of Edmonton at this point in time? That is yours to discern. Together, we seek God's will.

In what ways are you committed to a culture of inclusion and diversity within the Diocese of Edmonton, illustrated with examples?

I need to begin this conversation, and our relationship, with the recognition that I don't represent any visible minority community. In fact, I am deeply aware that my gender, sexuality, race, and socio-economic status have provided me with incredible levels of privilege. But as one who carries unearned privilege, I also acknowledge my responsibility to use it—amplifying the voices of those who might otherwise be unheard, and ensuring that the Diocese of Edmonton structures itself, both in policy and practice, around inclusion.

There is already much to celebrate in the Diocese: the service of two successive women in episcopal leadership, balanced age, gender, and diversity in leadership, as well as ministries for the full inclusion of Indigenous and LGBTQ+ communities in the life of the church. In that light, Edmonton has been a recognized, and that should continue.

However, like racism and colonialism, our tendency to ignore diversity and inclusion is systemic—so built into our way of being that it often goes unnoticed. That plays itself out in many ways in the church, and there are still questions that we struggle to answer, or even avoid. For instance, I'd love to ask, as a church, what steps we are willing to take to welcome neurodiversity? What priority we are willing to give to serving people with disabilities? In that light, I wonder if it isn't time for the Diocese to take a cue from the secular world, and assign a Canon for Diversity and Inclusion?

What have you learned about systemic racism and how we can address it in the church?

If you've caught the news from Quebec in the last few years, you'll know that I live in a province whose government denies the existence of systemic racism. After the city of Montreal conducted a public consultation with 7000 participants; after a petition demanding change was signed by over 22,000 people; after a mass shooting at a Quebec City mosque; after the abuse and death of an Indigenous woman in hospital, our premier, who had said, "there's no systemic discrimination, no system in Quebec of discrimination" refused to change his position.

My sense is that the denial of systemic racism, especially systemic racism that is so painfully obvious, can only come from the perceived fear of the loss of privilege. It doesn't claim that individuals are racist, but rather points to inherited racial barriers in laws, and institutions, and social practices that lead to

marginalization, underemployment, barriers to housing, health care, and more. But if we can't see it—or worse yet, if we see it, but refuse to name it, there really isn't anything we can do about it.

Without question, the church has a role to play in fighting systemic racism. As disciples of Christ, we have the responsibility to name it to our communities—this is our public witness. But we must also acknowledge that systemic racism exists within the church. McGill's Dr. Myrna Lashley put it this way: “How do you fix the hole in your roof if you don't acknowledge there's a hole in your roof? How do you think you're fixing something that doesn't exist?”

One of the things I have found most helpful in my ministry is addressing the topic directly. In my time at General Synod, staff received yearly anti-racism training, led by Indigenous Ministries. Similar training is provided at my current university. I often felt that the ACC's program, or another like it, would be a powerful tool at Diocesan Synods or clergy conferences, later dispersed in parishes. Because if we can't acknowledge there's a hole in our roof, we'll never be able to fix it.

Other information you can share which would help us know you better

- I live with my wife, Karen, my son, Eben, two cats named Benoît and Fergus, and a Golden Doodle named Fletcher.
- I am an amateur mycologist and avid forager.
- I am a beekeeper.
- I have a passion for vintage motorcycles, boats, and shortwave radio.
- Archery, sailing, and snowboarding are my sports of choice.
- My academic and working life began in the arts, and before moving into ministry, I worked as a photographer, darkroom technician, choral conductor, music teacher, performer, and composer.