

Jesus said, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). My wife Catherine and I chose this scripture for our wedding and it has been the theme and pursuit of our lives these past 28 years. Seeking first the Kingdom shapes who I am, how I live, and why I’m in the DOMA bishop-elect search process.

I was born in 1969 in Pueblo Colorado. I was not raised in the Christian faith though I was baptized in the Catholic Church as a newborn. I believe God’s work in me started then, though the faith of my baptism did not come alive until I was in college.

My childhood was tumultuous. This began with my father’s return from the Viet Nam war with undiagnosed PTSD which he medicated through alcohol and drugs. My dad left us when I was a toddler and he wandered in and out of my life with many broken promises related to addiction. Years later (1997), by God’s grace and following much forgiving on my part, I led my dad to faith in Jesus Christ prior to his death from Agent Orange-related cancer.

Not long after my parents divorced, my mother moved in with a man who did not like children, was verbally and emotionally abusive, and whom she eventually married. It was the early 1970’s and we lived in San Francisco, CA. Though they were both medical professionals (a physician and a nurse), they were also hippies. My early memories include the hippie lifestyle and attending festivals and concerts. The Grateful Dead was a family favorite. For me, life felt chaotic and full of anxiety.

During my childhood, I had one stable and godly presence in my life. It was my grandmother (my father’s mother). She glowed with the love and joy of Jesus. And while I didn’t understand that it was Christ in her that I was experiencing, I knew I wanted the love, joy and peace I experienced whenever I visited her. She took me to church and gave me my first children’s Bible. I thank God for her influence and cannot overstate the powerful effect of her love and prayers for me.

Eventually my step-father became the head physician of the ICU at a major hospital in Los Angeles. We moved to Altadena, CA. The move to the suburbs was a huge shift. I spent the next few years in an affluent culture that included private schools, symphonies, art museums, intellectualism, and social climbing. However, the chase for satisfaction through materialism didn’t satisfy. By the time I entered high school, my mother and stepfather divorced. My mother and I moved from our large home in the heart of the suburbs to a small apartment above a parking garage in downtown Pasadena. It was a huge shock.

I spent my freshman year basically on my own. My mother worked nights and teetered on the edge of a nervous breakdown. As hard as life was, God was working through the pain. I attended a Catholic boys’ high school because it was the only safe school in the area. I was fascinated with my religion class, learned how to pray to God, and was drawn to the Mass. Even though I had only been baptized in the Catholic Church and had not made a first Communion, one of the Brothers saw my spiritual hunger and allowed me to receive the Sacrament each week. By the end of the school year, I had new friends, was active in sports, and began to feel secure again. This security was brief. By the summer, my mother moved us to Charlotte, NC where our extended family lived. I was devastated and lashed out in anger and rebellion.

High school was a blur of alcohol and drugs for me. I began listening to and following the Grateful Dead. And while occasionally I prayed to God, I didn’t yet know Him personally. My mother, on the other hand, came to faith reading a Bible someone had given her. She began to attend a vibrant Episcopal Church that preached the

Gospel and worshipped in the Spirit. She got involved in prayer ministry and had a prayer group which interceded for my salvation.

Upon graduation, I attended the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Primarily, I went for the beach, the girls, and the surf. I followed the Grateful Dead on their tours around the East Coast as often as possible. I slid into hedonistic self-destruction. During my Sophomore year I was at a Grateful Dead concert and encountered deep spiritual darkness while I helped a young man who was overdosing on drugs. I didn't believe in the demonic and had no categories for it, but suddenly I encountered it. I began to see that the culture of "peace and love" was actually very dark.

Some of my friends, who also were from broken and/or abusive homes, began joining the Rainbow family. This appeared to be the inner core of the Deadheads from which many of the drugs originated. It was cult-like and I was pressured to join. Over time, the pressure grew for me to get in, or get out of the Dead scene completely.

Eventually I attended a concert at RFK stadium in Washington, DC and things came to a head. During the show I had an overwhelming conviction that my life was crumbling and I needed to get out. As I started to leave the stadium, fear and spiritual darkness overcame me so that I could hardly move. Suddenly it lifted and I knew that Jesus was standing next to me. I didn't see anything or hear anything; He was simply there and the fear fled. I had not used drugs; it was not a hallucination. As I looked back one last time, I saw a vision of a vortex spinning down into hell with many people dancing their way into darkness while laughing hideously and cursing God as they went. It shook me to the core. I fled from the stadium and while I waited by the car for my friends to return, I knelt and prayed, "Please God help me!" I don't know how long I prayed, but my prayer ended with, "I love the Lord God Jesus Christ."

I travelled home to Charlotte, NC. Upon arrival, I told my mother that I thought I had met Jesus. I asked her what I should do. She arranged for me to meet her Rector the next day. I was confident he would reject me but he didn't. He listened to my story and gave me a Bible. He told me to read the Gospel of John and then the other gospels. He said, "You'll know whether the Jesus you think you met is the real Jesus if He conforms to the Scripture." As I read, I saw that I had indeed met the real Jesus. I was amazed by the way He intentionally went to the outsiders, the irreligious, the broken, and lost. He reserved his harsh critique for the self-righteous, religious insiders, but accepted the lepers and outcasts and prostitutes. I remember distinctly thinking, "Those are my kind of people! That really was Him!"

That began a journey of spiritual and emotional healing in me that God continues to use in the hearts and lives of others. Experiencing God's love profoundly changed me. His amazing grace made me new. I grew to value the Scriptures passionately as the Word of God. In time I received a powerful infilling of the Holy Spirit which cleansed and anointed me for God's service and released my spiritual gifts.

After college, I sensed a call to proclaim the Gospel and entered into discernment toward ordination at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Charlotte. I served as a youth pastor and regularly saw students and others come to Christ through my ministry. I met Catherine and we were married in October of 1993. Almost immediately she became pregnant with our first child Anna. I spent the next few years working in corporate America until we went to seminary at Trinity (Episcopal) School for Ministry in 1997. Our other children, Caroline and Nathan, were born while we attended Trinity. Both were baptized at St. Stephen's in Sewickley, PA where I served in field ministry as a seminarian. Our time at Trinity was particularly challenging because Catherine experienced severe postpartum depression following the birth of our children. By 2000 I graduated

with an MDiv with Honors, having written a thesis called, “Ministry in a Postmodern Context: Reaching Out to Generation X.” I was ordained a transitional deacon in the Diocese of Pittsburgh by the (Most) Right Reverend Robert Duncan.

After seminary, I served as Curate at Trinity Episcopal Church, a traditional, downtown parish in Columbus, GA. It was a fruitful and challenging season in ministry as I learned much about pastoring and preaching. I saw my gifts grow as I led Alpha and established a new and eclectic worship service where people from differing generations and socio-economic statuses met Jesus and grew in community. Our time in Georgia was particularly beneficial for Catherine who received much emotional and spiritual healing.

In 2002, I was called to serve as Associate Rector of Church of the Holy Cross, Sullivan’s Island, SC. The church experienced tremendous growth over the next few years as many people came to faith. In 2003, following a time of personal brokenness that God powerfully redeemed, I started a men’s hiking ministry that revolutionized our parish. Men encountered Jesus, received inner healing, and learned to pray, witness, and minister to others. This deeply and positively affected marriages and families in our area. I began to train and release pastors and lay leaders from other churches in this vibrant ministry. Over the years, God has moved powerfully through the men’s hike ministry that now exists in many churches, both Anglican and non-Anglican.

In 2007, the Right Reverend Edward Salmon called me to serve on the Diocesan staff as Rector of St. Christopher Camp and Conference Center on Seabrook Island, SC. Over the next four years, I oversaw a staff of 60 people and a multi-million dollar budget. God called me to renew the heart of this gem of the Anglican Diocese of South Carolina and to help transform it into a Gospel-based ministry of rest, restoration, and renewal empowered by the Spirit of God. This change was challenging but fruitful. It came about as I cast vision, spoke truth into dysfunctional systems, and gathered a team of humble and passionate people whom I empowered to enact their ministries.

By 2010, the Right Reverend Mark Lawrence had become the Bishop. His vision for St. Christopher’s future shifted because of the impending threat of litigation by the national Episcopal church. Necessarily, St. Christopher would be stewarded through management rather than visionary growth. After much prayer, I realized my gift mix was better suited elsewhere and so we entered a season of discernment for our next call.

We were surprised when the Lord led us back to Holy Cross in 2011 where I served as an Associate Priest. The Vestry tasked me to “close the back door” of the parish. The church was proficient at welcoming people through programs, preaching and music, but it wasn’t focused on developing mature disciples. This meant people continually left, marriages broke down, and lay leadership lacked. I began building infrastructure and systems to help the church live into its large, multi-campus size.

In the middle of 2014, the Reverend John Burwell (then Rector of Holy Cross), informed me he would soon step down. He asked me to consider succeeding him. Because of the church’s complexity, its significant financial challenges including high building debt, and a tired and disgruntled laity, Bishop Lawrence and the Vestry concurred that I was the right person to serve as Holy Cross’ next leader. As Catherine and I prayed, we sensed God’s call and so on January 1, 2015 I became Rector Coadjutor. I was installed as Rector a few months later.

As Rector, I have led the development of a relational and discipling culture. Along with Catherine, who heads our Life Group ministry and is a postulant for ordination to the priesthood, we are equipping the saints for the

work of ministry and have raised up leaders and coaches for about 30 Life Groups. I am encouraged to see Life Groups multiplying new Life Groups. My vision is to see a new metric for measuring church success. More than simply the “ABC’s” (attendance, buildings and cash), we are looking for multiple generations of disciples, groups, campuses and churches based on 2 Timothy 2:2. I’m pleased to see this happening as people engage deeply with the Word of God in the context of community. We are seeing disciples make disciples of others. We are also implementing spiritual disciplines and practices for the deeper life in Christ related to Trinitarian spiritual direction and formation.

By God’s grace, we have turned around our church’s financial health and in the past four years have paid down a million and a half dollars in building debt. We’ve also seeded Gospel work in Mexico, Honduras, Pakistan, India, and Tanzania. We’ve build a school for children rescued from the sex trafficking in India. People are meeting Jesus Christ. The church is growing missionally and in love for God and others. Things are moving in a good direction even with the pandemic. I am confident that if God wants me to remain, I have many fruitful years of ministry ahead at Holy Cross.

Why then am I considering the possibility of serving as the Bishop elect of DOMA? Because I believe the Lord is calling me to this process.

Since 2018, God has nudged me toward serving as a bishop in the ACNA. This began in a mentoring conversation I had with the Right Reverend Trevor Walters. It grew in 2019 while listening to Scripture at Caesarea Philippi in Israel. Since 2020, I have been approached to participate in several bishop selection processes - none of which I sought. I participated in one of these processes (ADOSC) where I was a final candidate. Since then, Bishop Lawrence has encouraged me forward in this process.

As I read your profile and think about your diocesan vision for growth and church planting, I’m stirred and intrigued by what could be. In praying, listening to wise counsel, and seeking confirmation from God in Scripture, I believe the Lord wants me to explore this potential call with you. From my earliest days as a Christian, my answer to Him has been and continues to be: “Yes, Lord, I will follow as You lead.”