

## Annual Chaplains Report - 2019

13 January 2019

***“... and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.”***

- Isaiah 42,9

Now for the announcement you have all been waiting for; yes, I will be running for a fourth term representing the Second District on the West Lafayette City Council. Thank you. Thank you very much. Looking for a chair for my finance committee, FYI.

Not the announcement you were expecting? How about this; this summer, at age 68, I will be retiring as your chaplain after 34 years of service here in West Lafayette, 37 years in the Episcopal church, and 42 years as a priest.

Thirty-four years at Good Shepherd. *Nobody* does that in ministry anymore, particularly not in campus ministry.

**Practically**, the Vestry has picked Kevin Edmundson, Leta Kelley, Debbie Knapp, Patti O’Callaghan, and Samantha Courtemanche to be the kernel of a search committee. Kevin will be the group’s convener. My job in this process is to get the diocese to take this congregation as seriously as they might St. John’s (Lafayette) or Christ Church Cathedral, or as seriously as the diocese did a much smaller Good Shepherd in 1985. The church’s history is on the inside left page of your bulletin.

I am not quite sure what the diocese will do in this process. Everybody is new. I first raised the possibility of my retirement at an April clergy retreat with the then interim diocesan transition person, Jennifer Phelps. Bishop Jennifer announced my intention to retire at the Diocesan convention in November. The Rev. Kristin White, the transition canon and I met for the first time last Thursday. She will be in touch soon with our new senior warden and search committee chair. I am their first retirement. They don’t know me from Adam.

I think the diocese likes campus ministry. Bishop Jennifer did campus ministry at Syracuse. She will visit our Sunday evening ESA gathering on February 17<sup>th</sup>. But the Bishop also, in her convention address, talked about new models for campus ministry. (This is usually institution speak for “cheaper”.) Our program budget has been reduced year after year. But the diocese does pay the chaplain’s salary and Good Shepherd’s “mortgage”. (Not a loan against this building, but against a group of endowment stocks.) This is a level of support unequalled in the Episcopal Church. Of all the campus ministries in the diocese, we are best able to weather those program cuts. We have pledging units and a donor list and a near-campus parking lot. As you will hear at the annual meeting, our financial situation is sound. We have been putting aside money for three years for this transition.

It will all work out fine. At the end, you will have a bright young clergy person who will challenge you and inspire you and love you to death.

**Personally**, have I mentioned that I have been here for 34 years?

Thirty-four years. 3 – 4 years. Huh. How about that? A great wife. Kids. A grandkid. Local politics. Three bishops. Three buildings.

This is Anthony Trollope's "realism and romance". This is Jan Karon, Susan Howatch, Marilynne Robinson type stuff. Perhaps with Jane Smiley's "Moo" and IU's Scott Russell Sanders "Staying Put" appended. Now, you need not to have read any of those folks. What I mean to say is that there is a literary quality to my ecclesiastical history.

You will be stuck with reminiscences for the next few months. But let me begin here. I know what a privilege this career has been. I know what a privilege this career has been.

A window-washer's son, I once had long hair, a religious studies degree, and an anti-authoritarian late 60's college history. I once ran a series of college newspaper articles which quoted urban blacks in Rochester on the Catholic Church; "shit honey, they don't do nothin' for us." That did little to endear me to the Roman church. I fled to Toronto for graduate school. I belonged to that liberal wing of the Catholic Church, which was wiped out, more or less, by John Paul II.

In campus ministry as a Catholic priest, I met good Episcopal priests. I met Sweet Briar and former MIT Chaplain Mike Bloy (he left me his ministry in higher ed. texts and novels filled with holy human stories), and George Bean (a Lynchburg, Va. rector, he called me a "man's man"; the only time in my life that has ever happened), and Holmes Irving (the rector of R.E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church; he had a cross burned on his lawn), and John Van Brederode (he ran the last blue collar Episcopal church in Rochester N.Y. and married Katy and I. He gave me my first prayer book in 1982) and Bob Spears (a bishop who only wore a business suit and couldn't believe I wouldn't take a job at a large corporate church) and Ted Jones (a gracious man and my first boss here.). I was so lucky.

The history of campus ministry in the Episcopal Church, to use a phrase from my former colleague Sam Portaro, is one of dis-appointment. The self-confidence that spawned its post war boom was surrendered by the church, and by 1969 it's elimination as a mission field was all but assured. Except in Indiana. Where they didn't get the memo. Where an Anglo-Catholic tinge meant you needed a priest to say mass for young people (photo top right). Where Eli Lilly's money propped us all up. So a bright young priest with a theory (stolen from Sharon Parks) that a mentoring community was the thing, that people sharing stories of identity, intimacy, and mortality ("birth and copulation and death; that's all the facts when you get to brass tacks" – T.S. Elliot *Fragment of An Agon*) would inevitable take young adults to the transcendent, could get away with a Christian humanism and a social justice bias (photo bottom right). I could de-emphasize clerical performance and shout that the audience out here each Sunday was indeed the holy actor in the places where they lived and worked. You went along with that. It worked for 34 years. 1985 – 2019.

During that kind of run you get to know **people**. Some in a burst. Some forever. I am still an introvert (Though Nancy Tiederman once called me a "learned extrovert".) I claim no counseling skills. But myself, I flourished in college and grad school and loved, then and now, the intersection of information and emotion that is the life of the young adult at university. I hope I shared that enthusiasm over the years.

You get to know the **place**. Unexpectedly, I have taken that to an extreme. Katy and I thought we would be here five years. Thirty-four years later I can tell you the size of West Lafayette's storm water pipes. I can tell you the size of our storm water pipes with pride. I helped pick them. Land use. Historic preservation. The environment. Economic development. I know about neighborhoods. I know this community. Our children can return home. The culture does not reward staying put. There are advantages.

What are these kaleidoscopes doing on the pews? I'm offering them as a metaphor. What we have here today, the building, the people, the light in the room, is this toy. But turn the lense once, twice, and a new beauty is created. That's the hope for this moment of renewal. It's also a small souvenir of this announcement.

One word of advice. Hire somebody who doesn't mind making the coffee. I've been making the Sunday morning coffee for years. But two years ago at a clergy gathering, an interim in the diocese was regaling the clergy at his/her table with a story about the rector this priest was replacing. Apparently, he mowed the church lawn. Even worse in this priest's opinion, he made the coffee on Sunday morning. This person said they had put an end to that. Everybody around the table laughed at the practices of that ol' burnout. I smiled. That's me; "Mr. Coffee". I even go and get the donated beans from Kitchen Art, "The Store for Cooks". I did the owners wedding. Find someone who is more than a professional.

We have two awards and one scholarship to give out this morning.

First, the **Nellie Johnston Award**. Nellie wove our altar cloth decades ago, and it was good fun for a younger Peter Bunder to visit her at Westminster. You could join her at 4:00 for the medicinal scotch she had been prescribed. Her daughter Kathleen Johnston helped anchor this community for years, and paid for our upstairs kitchen. So this annual award goes to the "grown-up", whatever that means, who has done something here above and beyond the usual and customary at Good Shepherd.

This year the award goes to **Kevin Edmundson**. I have to be careful that this award doesn't just become the senior warden appreciation trophy. Certainly Kevin's willingness to assemble a search committee for Good Shepherd's transition removes that concern. But Kevin actually won this award while climbing to the top of our over-sized stepladder, reaching out with one end to grab the front edge of the proscenium arch, while changing the linear frosted socket lights with the other. That is a chore something like making the coffee.

Next, we have the **Angela Falzone Student Leadership Award**. Angela was elected our first (graduate) student senior warden in 1987, and she still pays for the trophies! This year's Falzone Award is given to **Erin Sample**. Erin has done a remarkable job as our peer minister, taking that position and turning it into something that has far exceeded my expectations; and I have a rich fantasy life. Vivacious, imaginative, she has taken our student ministry in several new directions; including to Recitation 303 for our mid-week Jimmy John's sandwiches. Of all the factors that make me comfortable turning you over to new clergy leadership, her enthusiasm for this community is chief among them.

Our **Good Shepherd Scholarship** goes annually to a Purdue undergraduate who demonstrates need and/or is best able to propose a solution for this line found in the book “101 Reasons to be Episcopalian” compiled by Louie Crew; “#41 – “Where else can you be considered a young person until you’re forty?” The winner of our essay contest this year is **Alex Adams** (New Harmony, IN). Alex, who’s parents left the Episcopal church when she was small, believes college students (introverts especially) need a place where they won’t be judged on their appearance, their sexuality, or how often they come to church. If nothing else works, she suggests we emphasize the free food.

New things I declare, and before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Join us upstairs after the service for our annual parish meeting. There’s free food. Later the new vestry will meet back here in the chapel for an organizational meeting.

Amen.