

## **RESPONSE TO THE FORMAL QUESTIONS**

**by**

### **THE VEN. BRIAN KAUK**

#### **1. PERSONAL FAITH**

**How did you come to trust in the Triune God? How do you maintain your faith in daily life? How would you communicate this faith to others?**

I have always known I have faith in a loving God, that Jesus is my friend and teacher, and the Holy Spirit is a guiding force in my life. I am privileged that way. Unlike many people their age in the early 1970s, my parents found a faith community that challenged and nurtured them. They passed that faith on to me and nurtured it within a church that felt like family. There are two aspects of this early faith development that formed me as a Christian and led me to become the faith leader I am today.

First and foremost is a social ethic grounded in the commandment to ‘love your neighbour.’ I was listening to a recording of Marty Haugen’s Let Us Build a House (Sing a New Creation #10) in the car one day with my father, and we were talking about the church we attended when I was a child. He exclaimed, “That’s what we were doing in those days!” The church that helped form me was actively engaged in building a house where love can dwell, prophets speak, and all are welcome. They practiced what they preached. I have early memories of sharing the dinner table with friends from church and often a stranger or two. It wasn’t unheard of to take someone in need into your home for a while. The people on the streets of downtown Ottawa were also considered a part of the family, the household of God.

Second is a spiritual style of worship that leaned towards the charismatic and evangelical side of Anglican polity, a side we don’t see often anymore. It wasn’t exclusively so - I was trained to serve by a man from Barbados who was firmly and rigidly Anglo-Catholic in his practice. For me conversion was a process of exploring what else is out there in the Christian world. It started when I joined Diocesan youth programs like Challenge, the Diocesan Youth Conference and the monthly Diocesan Youth Service. There weren’t many kids my age at our church, and making friends broadened my horizon. That process continued, and in theological studies at Huron, the lid came off. I no longer felt constrained by the way I had been brought to faith. I saw first-hand there is so much more.

Since then, I would say I have come to a new appreciation of the word ‘evangelism’, a second naiveté. Sharing the gospel, understanding my relationship with Jesus is personal and salvific, putting my faith in the reign of God: it’s all still there. I understand them differently now and use a broader theological lens.

I nurture my faith as I always have, with prayer and worship that includes good music. Personal prayer became a daily office, and then I found contemplation. I’m an

omnivore when it comes to music. In my youth I helped lead worship with a guitar. In high school my horizons expanded to include classical music. I now enjoy leading a church with a traditional music program. Our Music Director is a classically trained organist who enjoys exploring new music that is truly contemporary. I'm in heaven! I love a good solemn evensong, and I love a good Jazz Vespers. A song or a piece of music can move me spiritually. Music nurtures my soul and brings me closer to God.

Faith is a muscle that needs exercise. My faith community is actively involved in the world God loves. Our Diocesan Community Ministries are very important to me. Supporting them gives me more than I give them. So does ministry in my parish's context, where we offer open hospitality to the wider community once a week, and open our hearts and our space in times of pain and struggle. I'm often occupied by other things in parish life, but that's where my heart is.

Faith like this is caught, not taught. I can talk about my faith, sharing what it means to me, but to communicate faith involves making a connection. You and I communicate our faith by living it. The powerful witness of Christians who love one another and serve the world God loves can be attractive and infectious. When we are present in the public square, using our resources to the serve common good in alignment with the most vulnerable among us, faith starts to communicate itself. We should then be prepared to tell the story of our faith, why we seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbour as ourselves.

## **2. LEADERSHIP AND GIFTS**

**What do you consider the core functions of a bishop? How do your gifts align with these functions?**

Our church is episcopally-led and synodically-governed. Bishops provide leadership and synods make decisions. That's what we say about ourselves when asked how our church governance works. I believe in leadership that equips and empowers people to make bold decisions. This approach to leadership has served me well guiding parishes and our Community Ministries through transitions like the amalgamation in North Dundas, the establishment of St Luke's Table as a Community Ministry, and the formation of an Area Parish in east Lanark. My preferred leadership style is collaborative. The leadership task ahead is to create space so that our Diocese can face change together. I have experience leading through transition and change. I am a creative problem solver and often bring what I've learned from one context to another.

There are always situations that require the efficiency of clear and authoritative direction, and I'm not afraid of that. Our Canons give our Bishop tremendous authority so that those situations can be dealt with. Our next Bishop needs the wisdom to know when to share decision-making, and when to act. Wisdom comes primarily through discerning the mind of Christ. The promises at ordination/consecration require our Bishop to be a leader of the faithful in addition to providing effective executive leadership. To be a spiritual leader is to demonstrate and practice my own faith as a person of prayer, formed by scripture and seeking the mind of Christ in all things.

Our generation must navigate the increasingly turbulent seas of cultural, technological, and social change. To me, it feels like we're in the eye of the storm. We need to own the decisions we face at all levels of our church. To guide and lead us, our Bishop will need to rely on trust-based relationships, particularly between those on the margins of our Diocese and the centre. Trusting one another and trust in God is essential to mission that crosses the threshold of the current generation. Building those relationships is a gift I bring to ministry.

The pastoral needs of parishes, clergy and our Community Ministries would be of primary concern to me. I've been facilitating parish appointments for almost nine years, and I have come to trust the process. As an assessor with the Advisory Committee on Postulants for Ordination over the last 17 years, I've seen candidates present new gifts for a new era. God is raising up gifts our church needs now, and into the next generation. Those gifts need to be nurtured and put to use, alongside those of experienced clergy who have honed their skills over their time in ministry. My time on the Clergy Development Committee informs my sense of clergy as a learning community, and I value the times we come together. We are also experiencing tremendous growth and expansion in our Community Ministries due to increasing needs in the community. Making sure growth doesn't outpace capacity and governance is important.

A weekly preacher for almost 30 years, I am still captivated and daunted by the task. Tom Long says that "To be a preacher is to be a midwife. We do not create the word... we serve with gratitude at its coming and exclaim with joy at its birth." (The Witness of Preaching, 20). I find joy in the act of proclaiming good news. A theological understanding underpins not only what I say, but the task of pastoral administration. I want to take what we say we believe and make it accessible, without lessening the impact of our core values, and put it into practice.

Our procedures and policies, the organization of work at Ascension House, the ongoing revision of Canons, Bylaws and Regulations and parish governance are in the best shape we've seen in decades. The image of the oak and iron that holds a stained-glass window together has helped focus our Diocesan conversation on structures that need to be repaired or restored. Structures are in good shape or we're making progress. There is still work to be done, but I believe it is time to turn our attention to the stained glass and the light that shines through. These structures exist to support our common life, but the greater purpose is to allow the light of Jesus Christ to shine. Leadership can and must provide continuity and at the same time allow new directions to emerge, without one being at the expense of the other. I think, on this, we can walk and chew gum at the same time.

The organizational structure of the Anglican Church of Canada is on the table right now. Gifted leaders from across the country share in the work of the Transformation Task Force with essential contributions from our Diocese. Every Diocese will be a part of changes that are coming, ours included. The gift I bring as our Diocese participates in discernment and transition is pastoral presence. Clergy and parishes must be well-

supported if they are to risk change. We must be calm and sure-footed as we move forward. Others bring their gifts, which need to be cultivated, affirmed and activated. Everyone's gifts are essential and necessary, from the highest levels of church governance to the ministries where the rubber hits the road in our parishes and communities.

### **3. DEMOGRAPHICS, DIVERSITY, AND VISION**

**Demographic shifts within our diocese reflect broader changes taking place across Canadian society, in both its cultural and spiritual makeup. What is your perspective on these shifts, and how would you lead our diocese as we navigate the reality of social change?**

The decline in membership and participation in parishes across the Anglican Church of Canada is well documented. From what I can see, it's the same story in every "mainline" denomination in the western world. Looking behind the numbers and statistical analysis, decline is also experienced personally. I mourn the loss of those who were a vibrant part of church life in my youth, who are largely absent now. I hear parishioners' grief when they wonder why their children and their children's children have no interest in a faith experience they value so highly. A defeatist attitude can set in. "I just want the church to be there for my funeral," is often heard in church-land, an expression of grief and lament. Biblically speaking, lament can be a valid and important expression of faith.

Rural parts of our Diocese are subject to all of this, and the effects of rural depopulation. It's a double hit. In these places, and in other vulnerable parishes of our Diocese, we are closest to the edge of our ability to sustain our presence. We on the margins are the canary in the coal mine. There are exceptions, where collaboration creates new opportunities and carries faithful communities.

Before the good news (and it's there!) we have to look at the world around us. In the era when our churches were growing, demographic growth was driven by our own birthrate and immigration from places where Anglicans looked a lot like us. For whatever reason, our church has not made the cultural leap with new Canadians who arrive looking for an Anglican faith community they can relate to. Colonialism and racism work against us.

I currently work in one of the fastest growing towns in Canada (Carleton Place). Beckwith Township (where I live) reported even higher population growth, per capita, on the last census. The good news is that ministry opportunities abound. Community engagement is the key. The ministry of our church is thriving, but demographic growth by itself doesn't affect participation rates, other than help to stabilize decline. The days when we can pretend this isn't happening are far behind us.

Decline could actually be good news, if we are faithful and can see beyond the horizon of our own lives. Our faith teaches us that the church is at its best when it is cruciform

in shape, when we model our lives on the sacrifice and love of God found in the life and ministry of Jesus. We are also taught to put our faith and trust in the resurrection. We wear this mortal form and are told to expect a new one that is authentically us - the same spirit, in a new form. Why then are we afraid?

Canada is changing. I am interested in working with people of other faiths and no faith at all without asking them to change. I am curious as to why we aren't doing as well as we should with immigrants who are Anglicans and might suggest this is where we focus liturgical and missional exploration. We can also engage in true interfaith and ecumenical dialogue, where we can be authentically ourselves with others who are authentically themselves.

Some parishes are struggling, and the answer isn't always more money or more people. Difficult questions like "What is God calling us to do right now?" and "What is the faithful use of the resources we have?" must be asked. We're in this together as long as if we don't fall back into "us" versus "them" patterns.

#### **4. FAITH AND COMMON PRAYER**

**Anglicanism is rooted in a tradition of common prayer, but it also encourages local expression in worship. As bishop, how would you guide the Diocese in maintaining a balance between common prayer and local expression?**

When I was in my 20s, I could attend a Sunday morning service at St Stephen's Buckingham (where one of the younger priests in our Diocese served). I could be at a Diocesan Youth Service, known for exuberant music and outbursts of enthusiasm. I might get to a Celebration of the Holy Eucharist at the Cathedral with the Boys Choir. All these expressions of Anglican worship were using the same words from the same prayer book. It was our Bishop who insisted that parishes use the "new book", at least when he was making an official episcopal visit. The Book of Alternative Services became the standard, but it stands in a firm line of succession within the tradition of common prayer. We enjoy that tradition today because it is a living tradition. A living tradition is never static. When we pass tradition on to a new generation, it needs must evolve and change. Local expressions of this tradition are where our essential identity meets the local environment and adapts itself to pass on the faith. For our church to adapt, evolve and pass on our important traditions, there must be some variation and experimentation that goes beyond the current norms. Our Diocesan Bishop doesn't have the authority to write or authorize a new prayer book for the whole church. But the authority does exist to allow local expressions of worship that fit a particular context. I believe it's time for guidelines, developed by the Liturgical Advisory Panel, that would invite and encourage liturgical forms and texts for contexts we are not currently addressing. I hear frustration from some quarters, and that tells me our tradition is alive and well, and ready to be refreshed.

## 5. MINISTRY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE VULNERABLE

**Our Diocese is committed to meeting the needs of the vulnerable, through both our community ministries and our parish life. Under your leadership, how would you help both parish and community ministries flourish in this calling?**

It's important to recognize this is God's work. We are participating in God's mission. In both our parishes, and in our Diocesan Community Ministries, the active concern for the well-being of others is a feature of our faith community. We do this because it is who we are called to be. Sometimes we use our words, bringing people to worship and faith formation, to be transformed and sent out. The ministry of the local congregation specializes in this. Sometimes witnessing to the gospel is pure action, showing the unconditional love of God for all humanity. This is where our day programs, housing for women, refugee ministry and counselling platform are at work. Neither words nor actions are mutually exclusive, and there's plenty of crossover. We need both, neither at the expense of the other.

The Community Ministries under the oversight of our Diocese depend on committed leadership and staff who have skills most of us do not have. They do what needs to be done in ways that I cannot, with tools I do not have. We depend on funding from sources that are beyond our means. I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with some of the most gifted leaders in our Diocese through our Community Ministries, and I can attest to the clear vocational nature of those who lead in these places. Frederick Büchner's well-worn quote comes to mind: "Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need."

When a parish feels called to reach out, that is cause for celebration. It shouldn't come at the expense of the core function of a congregation, but it may certainly feed into it. When a visit to a Community Ministry becomes an experience of transformation, this is good news. We should thank God and celebrate. Contextually sensitive strategies for community engagement are the way forward.

I suspect there is an important role for the diaconate in this. Historically, that's how we send the ministry of the church out into the world and bring the needs of the world into the heart of the church. We know the diaconate as a vocation on its own has yielded fruit. Exploring this vocation could be the answer we're looking for when it comes to contextual mission, while ensuring ministries of justice and compassion continue to be the work of the whole people of God.



## 6. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

**Our diocese is deeply engaged in the journey of truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities. Why does this matter to you, and how would you bring your own passion to this ministry of reconciliation and justice?**

There was a family at my church when I was young. The kids were about my age, and my sister's, and we spent a lot of time together. Their father Jim (a name I'll use for now) had his arm amputated just above the elbow, which was a curiosity I tried to contain. The younger me didn't know he lost his arm in an incident related to the Indian Residential School system. An older me was surprised to hear one day that he was hired as an Administrator in an Indian Residential School. Colonialism can be insidious.

I grew up knowing none of these things. We weren't taught these truths in school, we never heard about them in church, and it never came up around the dinner table. I am still very much on a journey of learning.

Motion 12 at our Synod in October commits our Diocese to ongoing education in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action number 59. That call to action is now 10 years old. I noticed and wrote about that call to action 5 years ago in the context of our last episcopal election.

I've had some time since then to reflect and learn. In the spring of 2023, I was on Sabbath Leave. Most summers I can remember, my parents took us on a camping trip across the Canadian shield to visit family in Winnipeg. On May 14th Brenda and I and our golden retrievers hitched up the new travel trailer and away we went. We hit snow two days later, on the shores of lake Timiskaming, and the temperature dropped. But it wasn't just the weather that chilled me as we drove towards Thunder Bay. I had assigned myself a reading, Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. As I read about the American experience of institutionalized racism, I was constantly reminded of something an American friend once said to me. "Canada is racist too; you just cover it up differently." I started to notice things I'd never seen before, how people and sacred places were treated, how some roads were maintained and others were not. We slept (not well, I'll add) at a campground where unmarked graves from the Brandon Residential School were discovered. The land was once a city park, then turned into a campground, then sold to new owners who wanted to renovate. Graves were found on campsites right across from ours, outlined by stakes and a rope fence, marked with a sign. Water and sewer hookups were untouched, evidence that for a very long time, no one cared.

It came to a head for me at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights. I didn't take a direct path from the parking lot. I walked through the Forks, a historic site and meeting place for indigenous peoples. I went around the long way and followed a path that eventually took me to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, close to the entrance of the museum. I came up behind him, asking myself who else I was following. I didn't know it

when I left home in May, but I had been on a pilgrimage. I traveled the places of my past, places my family called home when they settled in Canada, only to see with new eyes.

I think it's time for more action than call at this stage. Despite everything that occupies us, we can't drop the ball on this one. We should all learn to become pilgrims in our own back yard.

## **7. CALL AND DISCERNMENT**

**What is exciting, and what is challenging, about the prospect of being Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa?**

I don't spend as much time beyond our Diocese as others, but what interactions I do have make me proud and thankful to be here. Our Diocese is in such good shape. We are well-served by competent, engaged and gifted clergy. We have parishes that actively seek to embrace mission. Our Diocesan Community Ministries are a jewel, and I love to tell people they are only the tip of the iceberg when you find out what churches and groups are doing at the local level. This is exciting to me, and the prospect of working with all aspects our Diocesan ministry is thrilling.

The oversight of this constellation of ministries is beyond any one person's gifts and abilities. We have questions and differences of opinion on how to manage them. Being Bishop is to take on an impossible job and trust that God's grace will be enough, that everyone's gifts will be enough, and that you will be enough. I faithfully trust that this will be so for whomever is chosen by the Holy Spirit and our Electoral Synod to become Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa. I feel called to offer my gifts fully and without reservation for the work of our church in whatever capacity I am called to serve.

There are things we haven't talked about in these questions. The climate crisis comes to mind. Our church is called to live the baptismal covenant in relation to God's whole creation, not just our fellow human beings. There are the things I don't know, that I haven't seen, that I can't possibly wrestle with yet. In this, I trust that the same Spirit who calls someone to this ministry will empower them to accomplish what needs to be done and allow them the freedom to release what needs to be left undone.