

THE REV. JONATHAN WICKHAM

Biographical Data

Name: Jonathan William Wickham
Date of birth: March 31, 1969
Place of birth: Oneonta, New York
Name of spouse: Jennifer S. T. Wickham
Names/ages of children: Patrick (22), Ian (18)
College and degree(s): North Community College, AS
Binghamton University, BA
Seminary and degree(s): The University of the South, M.Div.



Other education experiences:

- Youth Minister, First Presbyterian Union Church, Owego, NY: 1989-1992
- Institute for Professional Youth Ministry, Orlando, Florida: Intern 1992-1994; Trainer 1994-1997
- Youth Minister, St. John's Cathedral, Knoxville, TN: 1992-1995
- Director of Youth Ministry, Good Shepherd, Corpus Christi, TX: 1996-1999

Diocese where you are canonically resident and current position:

- Diocese of West Texas; Rector, All Saints, Corpus Christi

Experience in the ordained ministry (position and dates):

- Assistant Rector and School Chaplain, St. George, San Antonio, TX, 2002-2004
- Deputy for Camps & Conferences, Youth, College, and Young Adults; Diocese of West Texas, 2004-2006
- Associate Rector, St. Mark's, San Antonio, TX, 2006-2012
- Rector, All Saints, Corpus Christi, TX, 2012-present

National, provincial, and diocesan and community activities:

- Diocese of East Tennessee:
 - Happening staff 1993-1995
 - Happening co-chair, 1994-1995
 - Youth Ministries Commission, 1992-1995
 - Short-term youth mission trip to Guatemala, 1993

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(Continued) National, provincial, and diocesan and community activities:

- Diocese of West Texas:
 - Happening Board, 1997-1999
 - World Mission, 1998-1999
 - Youth ministry mission trip to Costa Rica, 1996, '97, and '98
 - Camp Dean/Chaplain, 2003, '04, '06, '09, '14, '15
 - Development Committee (DDC), 2013-present
 - DDC-Camps Sub Committee, 2007-present
 - Leadership Development, 2007-2009
 - Executive Board, 2009-2011
 - Liturgy and Music Committee, 2010-2011
 - Cursillo Spiritual Director, 2010
 - Haiti Connection Conference, 2010
 - Haiti partnership visit, 2011
 - Provincial VII Synod Deputy, 2011
 - Happening Spiritual Director/Dad, 2003, '04, '06, '13, '15
 - TMI Trustee, 2016-present
 - Corpus Christi Metro Ministries Board, 2013-present

What do you do for recreation?

I love outdoor activities like hiking, bird watching, nature photography, physical fitness, and gardening. When I am indoors, I enjoy reading, playing acoustic guitar, roasting and brewing coffee, and rooting for the Yankees, Spurs, Bills, and Newcastle United.

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“Proclaiming Christ’s resurrection and interpreting the gospel” are foundational to the ordained Ministry. How are you living this out in your life and ministry?

“Alleluia, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!” This triumphant proclamation greets us as we enter worship on Easter day and continues through the entire Easter season. The power of this proclamation rests in the verb tense: Christ IS risen. “Is” constantly challenges us to understand the resurrection as a present miracle and not merely an historical event.

Resurrection happens now. In the midst of deepest sorrow, tragedy, struggle and trial, the love of God is not stifled or muted, but is revealed as the dominant force in the universe.

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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.” Romans 8:38-39

Christians often refer to themselves as “Easter people.” What does this really mean? To me, it means that I choose to be about hope. About possibility. About resurrection. It means that while the Good Fridays of this life are to be expected, we have been given a promise that all things are being reborn, recreated and renewed in Jesus Christ. This deep truth animates my life, guides my interactions and shapes my proclamation of the Gospel. I am called to love, embrace, nurture, and dream, confident in the promise that “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well” (Julian of Norwich).

As a people transformed by the love of God we are called to new life as confident risk-takers, eager to share our gifts, talents and passions with one another. And when this takes hold in our worshipping communities we no longer seek only to be filled. We find that we are able to come together as a church already filled, eager to share abundantly with one another. My identity as an Easter person forms the very core of my life, and it is my deepest desire to be an Easter reflection in all aspects of my ministry.

Describe your personal discernment in allowing your name to go forward for the ministry of Bishop Suffragan. What gifts, skills, and experiences would you bring to this ministry?

I had not expected to find myself in this place, and when first approached by trusted friends I wrestled with whether or not I was “worthy” or “ready.” But as the conversations continued, I was reminded that the path of discernment isn’t about worthiness or readiness - it’s about prayerful listening to what God might be saying.

I am an extrovert, and I enjoy meeting people and building relationships. One of the highlights of being a diocesan staff member was having the opportunity to serve as supply priest. Sunday after Sunday I would hear the amazing and diverse stories of what God was doing in our parishes, and I was inspired to see the incredible gifts we offer to others. While our churches and communities often face complex challenges, I believe we have been given all we need to transform these challenges into grace-filled opportunities. We do it every day.

As I participate in my own journey, I invite all of us to engage in a process of mutual deep listening and careful discernment. In that way, and because of one another, we will all have a clearer understanding of who God is calling us to be.



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How do you envision working in collaboration in support of the Bishop Diocesan?

I currently serve as rector of a mid-sized parish. I have also served as a lay youth minister, assistant rector and on the diocesan staff as Bishop's Deputy for camps, conferences, youth and young adult ministry. My entire professional life has been spent in service to the Church, and I have been blessed to participate in healthy, dynamic team ministry.

In the Episcopal Church, only one person is called to be Diocesan Bishop. This leader sets the tone of diocese, provides direction, and calls forth the gifts of others in shared ministry. While a Suffragan is also a bishop, she or he serves at the direction of the Diocesan. This person is called to support the work of the Diocesan and provide assistance in whatever way needed.

In our diocese we have been blessed to have the collaboration of two bishops. Their example of mutuality, counsel, support and prayer is indicative of life in the Body of Christ. Following the "still more excellent way" (I Cor. 12:31) of love, this working relationship also provides an example of the appropriate ordering of life and labor, and embraces the understanding that every role is vital to the health of the whole body.

How are you living out the vow to "be merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper"? How do you envision living this out as a Bishop Suffragan?

Many years ago a mentor shared this wisdom: "Embrace the ministry of interruptions." While programs, meetings and deadlines are significant realities in my ministry, my schedule should never be so tightly packed that I cannot respond whenever I am asked to meet someone in need.

God works through interruptions. The burning bush did not appear as part of a parish program, Abraham and Sarah didn't have a calendar meeting to schedule the visiting angels, and Mary and Joseph definitely didn't plan on becoming instruments of the Incarnation. Repeatedly we see people becoming radically available to the interruptions of life.

I am a Christian, called to be the hands and feet of Christ. This call is not theoretical. In order to follow Jesus, I must seek opportunities to serve. Sometimes the everyday tools of ministry are familiar: a telephone, a chair, a genuine greeting, a careful listening ear, a simple cup of coffee. What is most important, though, is that I remain available and remember to view the "interruptions" as opportunities.

While the ministry of the church is important, it is often through collaborations with other groups that lasting change takes place. I have been blessed to be a part of boards, clergy partnerships, committees and a number of community efforts working to bring real healing and transformation in the lives of people. It is important for our bishops to be present in the community, interacting with those outside the walls of the church and learning how best the Church can be of service.

As Christians, we must also be willing to ask prophetic questions about how we live. In "Prayer for the Human Family" (BCP, p. 815), we pray:

"O God ... Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth ..."

Does this prayer translate into action? Do the decisions we make reflect the intentions of our hearts? Who speaks about the systems that perpetuate injustice? Where are we complicit in the damage being done in the world? These questions are critically important, and by giving voice to the voiceless our bishops can stir up our collective conscience so that we can ask them as well.

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The ordination vows for a bishop call for bishops to “share in the leadership of the Church throughout the world.” Describe how you see the relationship between a Diocese, The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. How do you think you could make a positive difference in building and nurturing these relationships?

I believe that relationship is at the very heart of our faith. It is a profound mystery how we can be separate and together, one yet many. While perhaps impossible to comprehend, this mystery has the power to change who we are and how we interact. In the Holy Trinity, God’s own nature is revealed to be one of interconnectedness. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are freely bound together in what theologian Richard Rohr calls a timeless, intimate dance of self-giving love. It is transformational.

The miracle in every covenant relationship rests in the “I do”, and in every “I do” which follows. Consider this: the Episcopal clergy in Corpus Christi are vastly different from one another. In spite of these differences, we work hard to maintain authentic relationship. We gather weekly to read scripture, share burdens, pray, and break bread. We share liturgies and work on ways to be in ministry together. We continue to say “I do” to one another, and we are all being transformed by this ongoing, mutual commitment.

In the same way, the relationship between diocese, Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion should be one of mutual love, trust and forbearance. We will not see things the same way, for we all have different contexts and circumstances. In spite of this, we are united in our common commitment to Christ. We share in Christ’s death and resurrection, and we live as people who have been forgiven much. Each time we renew our baptismal vows we proclaim with one voice, “I will, with God’s help.” If we are to strengthen the unity of the Church, then all parts of the body must continue to commit to one another and call upon God to help us.

“I will, with God’s help.” Relationships are difficult. The delicate balances are too much for us to manage alone. This is why true relationship is sacramental, and it is in this sacrament that the Church is called to be an outward and visible sign of God’s grace to the world. What a legacy it would be for us to do that well.

In the midst of church decline and increasing disinterest in religion, what are some ways that you believe the Episcopal Church can make new disciples, strengthen congregations and grow the Kingdom of God?

First, we must listen deeply. What are people really seeking? What do they need? In a recent conversation, I listened to an un-churched person describe a lifetime of hateful rebukes, painful abuse and crushing betrayal, all in the name of Christianity. My call in that moment was to be present and hold his story gently, hopeful that perhaps this encounter would offer a measure of healing.

Next, we need to learn. The way we “do church” is changing, and it’s important to ask what is happening and why. Gone are the days when average Sunday attendance should be the sole indicator of parish vitality. Every day of the week people walk through our doors seeking renewal, restoration and recovery. Regardless of the language they use, I believe they experience the Kingdom of God.

Finally, we need to love. Discipleship begins with an authentic, honest, loving presence, especially to those “living in the margins.” But when we do, we should not ask if they attend church or pledge regularly. By seeing people for who they truly are, we may just reveal Jesus as he truly is. That, I believe, is what people really seek, and that is what we can offer.

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What excites you about being a Christian and a member of the Episcopal Church?

As a child, being a Christian meant regular attendance in our small Presbyterian church. I remember Sunday school, children's sermons and crawling under church pews. As a teenager, being a Christian meant summer camp, youth group, and difficult questions about whether or not I was "saved." As a Christian in college, I wrestled with calling, vocation, community, and the slow sorting of the priorities of young adulthood.

I became an Episcopalian when I was 22, grateful to find a church that explores the great mysteries of God. The liturgy, beauty and compassionate community of the church brought me in and set me on a path of growth. I fell in love with a church that encourages thoughtful study of scripture, deep learning shaped by tradition, and creative inquiry set free by reason and wonder.

The roots of my Christian faith were planted in my youth, but the real joy has come in the process of growth. I love Jesus, and I continue to discover him in new and deeper ways. That is what I find so exciting. I have a living, breathing, growing relationship with God, and I am grateful to be on the journey with others.

