

Questions for Nominees

for the 2008 Bishop coadjutor Election
Diocese of Texas

Note: Recognizing that volumes could be written on each of the questions below, please keep your answers to the maximum word count specified. Answers that are appreciably longer will be cut.

1. You have viewed the diocesan video "Legacy of Leadership" which shows the wide scope of responsibilities of the Bishop of the Diocese of Texas. Tell us about specific positions you have held that you believe have prepared you for some of these diverse responsibilities. This is an opportunity for us to get a sense of how you understand your management style and your relationships with those whom you share ministry. (250 words)

As Canon to the Ordinary I am the chief operating officer of one of the largest institutions in the Episcopal Church: the Diocese of Texas. I am intimately involved in the day-to-day administration of this diocese and in every ministry of the Bishop. As a trusted counselor, and prayer partner, I aid the Bishop in managing the diocesan office, budget, and staff; deployment; appointing leadership to boards, committees and task forces; discipline; victim and clergy care; conflict mediation; goal setting; teaching; and communications.

I am a collaborative and creative leader. I know enough to recognize what I don't know and how to surround myself with those who have the expertise. I thrive in seeing goals achieved daily. I am intrigued by the unique qualities of every person, and I want to see the gifts of each applied in the service of the Gospel. I am energized by challenges and finding solutions to problems and stumbling blocks. All three current bishops have told me they believe I am fully capable of being Bishop of Texas.

Being a Deputy to General Convention and serving on a national board, I understand how our polity is a strength and how voices of leadership are essential. I will continue to be a voice of leadership for the Diocese of Texas within the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion.

In my work as parish priest I learned to help people achieve their goals in ministry. Ultimately, I want to aid in making the Gospel of Jesus incarnate in the lives of all. I believe I am called to be the bishop diocesan who will serve as the administrative officer and as shepherd of this diocese.

2. One of the core Values of the Diocese of Texas is a missionary emphasis that honors our history of mission and expansion. Describe a circumstance where your personal leadership in an organization or institution led to a significant growth or expansion of it. (250 words)

Creativity, planting ministries and redevelopment have marked my ordained ministry. Among the initiatives with which I have been involved are consulting work with congregations, outreach centers and redevelopment of our diocesan planting strategies; creation of the diaconate ministry, Iona School for Ministry, and Crosspointes; Young Adult programs; new worship services and ESL classes. Every growth in mission and expansion is a mutual ministry project rather than a solo operation, for as a solo operation the vision perishes.

I am most proud of work I did with St. Cuthbert's, Houston. I was called to visit with the vestry about renewing a Quin grant to support a new assistant who would help launch an additional worship service. I first listened to them describe their challenges, fears and hopes for the future. In response, I suggested that the diocese should not fund the position of a new priest because the parish itself could

afford it. What the diocese could do would be to co-fund the development of a vision/mission and strategic plan. We would also co-fund a site plan. Today, St. Cuthbert's is growing, has sold their property, will move to a new, strategically located site, and is building a new church to accommodate their continued growth.

The people and leadership of St. Cuthbert's made the wise and prayerful choices. In my personal leadership role, I offered what I believe needs to be a diocesan response: listen, ask strategic questions, be creative with diocesan support, and support what God is doing in the vineyard.

3. What do you consider the most important challenges the Episcopal Church is facing today? (250 words)

Our greatest challenge is proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is also our greatest purpose. We can no longer do things the same old way. The Episcopal Church has been in decline for the past 41 years; the average age of parishioners and clergy hovers at 58. In the next decade, 45% of the clergy in this diocese will retire. Our task is monumental and awe-inspiring. It will take a fresh set of eyes, boundless energy, and creative leadership committed to following Christ in order to turn the tide.

The first charge to a new bishop is to be one with the apostles, proclaiming Christ's resurrection and interpreting the Gospel. To proclaim a transformational Gospel in a changing culture, we must be intentionally Christian.

We must unashamedly read and study the Bible. We must courageously engage in dialogue with others about Jesus, respecting differing opinions. We must live intentionally spiritual lives as we foster discernment and help craft rules of life for daily living. Our Sunday obligation must expand to include worship throughout the week, with time for contemplation and prayerful conversations. We must create loving communities inside and outside of the church. We must cloak the poor and the environment with the mercy of Christ, putting the Gospel into action on behalf of others and the world.

Younger, innovative, Gospel-oriented leadership must be involved in transforming our churches into places where belonging leads to believing, dialogue leads to commitment, and stewardship leads to changing the world for Christ's sake.

4. Please relate your personal views regarding the ordination of non-celibate gay and lesbian persons and the blessing of same-sex unions. How would you lead the Diocese of Texas in light of your views? (250 words)

I believe that the bishop's responsibility to the Church is to conserve the faith, unity and discipline and represent the whole of Christ's body. It does not seek to preserve any one special interest.

Anglicanism values communion as a guiding principle and bases decisions upon scripture, tradition, and reason. The Communion is clear about its teaching on sexuality. The Lambeth Conference has reaffirmed this historic teaching. The General Convention of The Episcopal Church has not changed its teaching on sexuality. The Diocese of Texas is clear in its canons regarding the definition of marriage. Therefore, I will not ordain non-celibate individuals, whether heterosexual, gay, or lesbian. I will not give permission to celebrate unions in the Diocese of Texas. As bishop, I will hold true to the canons of the Diocese of Texas.

While some would see me as a Windsor bishop, my goal is to be a faithful and discerning bishop. I will not be anxious or have a problem leading the diocese through this time, for I have already been an integral part of the voice and vision.

5. Our diocesan vision states that the Diocese of Texas is One Church where “all are sought and embraced in worship, mission, and ministry.” What does “sought and embraced” mean to you? In your ministry, how have you given leadership to communities that seek and embrace all persons? As bishop, how might you continue to give leadership to and even create communities that reflect the multicultural character and diversity our vision seeks? (250)

The key word for us in multicultural mission needs to be *invitation*. We must invite the people "out there" to come in the door, to the Lord's Table, into the conference room, and into the conversation. We must personally invite them into leadership positions. In this multicultural ministry model, our congregations turn from receiving communion and go back through the door into the world, proclaim the gospel and meet the living Christ in all people. I believe "all" means ALL. We are behind in the work Christ himself modeled for us when he invited the Samaritan woman at the well to drink from living waters, and we have much work to do. My leadership as bishop will model creatively ways to seek and embrace ALL, working tirelessly to involve them in worship, mission, and ministry.

I am very pleased with the role I played in the new congregation, Hope Episcopal Church, Houston. There was much talk that the predominately white church of St. Michaels, Houston, and the predominately black church of Incarnation, Houston, with their decreasing numbers, might not survive. Many saw this as a situation of scarcity. I saw it as an opportunity to empower two communities to take charge of their future. On behalf of the Diocese, I brought them together and gave financial support by underwriting a coach to work with the two churches. This process would eventually have in place a new rector, new life, unity, reconciliation and hope for the future. It all began with an invitation to envision the possibilities God had in store.

6. Please tell us about your relationship with God in Christ and the spiritual or other disciplines in your life that help you sustain that relationship. This is an opportunity for you to share with us what is at the heart of your theology. (250)

I follow Jesus because I have experienced his grace and believe he calls me to an intentional Christian life. Jesus replaced my sins with the work of the Gospel. This work requires a solid spiritual foundation.

After three years of discernment, I became a member of the Fellowship of St. John the Evangelist in 2004. I developed a rule of life, which I keep faithfully, practice daily and reaffirm annually. I read Scripture every day and pray the Daily Office. My prayers include my family, my coworkers, clergy and congregations with whom I am working, and the brothers at the monastery. I make spiritual retreats. I also take a fearless inventory of myself. I practice faithful stewardship.

My rule of life includes being attentive to my family. I have breakfast and dinner with my wife and children most days. JoAnne and I have an all-day date every Monday on my day off. I read nightly to my two daughters. I maintain a healthy diet and exercise plan.

I keep my rule of life with firm commitment and deep devotion. I believe these prayerful disciplines keep my relationship with Jesus healthy and enable me to undertake serious, challenging and difficult work.

7. What would you like to tell us, the people of the Diocese of Texas that might not have been addressed in these questions? (100 words)

The election of a bishop is about:

Hope
Change
Progress
Opportunity
New voices
New vision
New direction
Grace
Inspiration
Excitement

This is Jesus' church. He is calling us, commanding us, like Peter, to get out of the boat. We cannot be held back by our fears. Rather, we must walk on the waters of faith into the future which holds something new. This is true for me personally at the deepest level, and it is true for 900 Episcopalians in the Diocese of Texas who will gather on May 24 to choose a new bishop.

JoAnne's and my prayers join with yours as we seek the will of the Holy Spirit in this time of discernment.