Raewynne J. Whiteley

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I would like to apply for the position of Director for TEAC (Theological Education across the Anglican Communion). My overarching passion in ministry is enabling people to more fully respond to God's calling to them. As someone who has spent the last twenty years in parish ministry while simultaneously maintaining an academic life of teaching and research, and who is seeking to work on a more system level, I believe that I would bring the following strengths to this role.

**Educational leadership**

I am thankful for the strong theological foundations I received through years of good parish based theological formation as a teenager and young adult, and the excellent training I received at theological college and when I did my doctoral work, along with a constant re-grounding of myself in scripture, not only for preaching but to sustain my own faith, and the stimulation of constantly seeking to connect what we believe with how we live in both academic and practical dimensions. This kind of substantive theological scriptural and theological grounding is, I believe, essential for those involved in Christian leadership, both lay and clergy, as we seek to serve God and follow Christ in a rapidly changing context.

Theological education is undergoing rapid change. Post-Christendom and post-colonialism are dramatically shaping the way the church and theological, education function. Until relatively recently, theological scholarship - at least of a formal, published nature - tended to be concentrated in the west. However, the decline of the church in many western countries has led to a tightening of resources for and the closure of a significant number of theological colleges and seminaries. In addition, full time faculty have been cut back or eliminated, and there has been a consequent reduction in time for academic research. This has hit the area of practical theology particularly hard, with an assumption that ministry is primarily a technical rather than theological skill.

Simultaneously, the ability of parishes to support full time positions has led to bi-vocational and non-stipendiary clergy. In this climate, the old model of full time residential theological training has become impractical, and many dioceses offer local theological formation. This shift in the way parish ministry is undertaken has the potential to open up opportunities for lay ministry; however in many places, such lay leadership is woefully under equipped. The development of new models for training is essential.

At the same time, the church in non-western countries continues to flourish. there is a hunger not only for theological education, but for theological work that embodies its culture. Thus there is a need to move from simply contextualizing theology (which far too often means taking western thought and overlaying it on local cultures), to developing an incarnation understanding of theological thought.

Technology has enabled greater consultation among scholars internationally, across cultural lines, and allows for the more easy distribution of thought. It also provides for new methods of publishing, such as the work of Borderless Press (<https://borderlesspress.com>), which make such academic work more readily available worldwide. Nevertheless, there are still issues of access to resources, once again, particularly in the field of practical theology, and for a greater emphasis on lay formation.

Drawing both of these themes together is the incredible mobility of people across the globe, both voluntary and involuntary. Diaspora churches face many challenges, and while Anglicanism often provides a connecting thread, a significant issue is theological education that takes account of both the original culture and language, and the new culture and language where they have settled.

I love learning and I love teaching. My theological studies began when I was at university, studying psychology, and I took a course in ethics at Ridley College in Melbourne (where I was a university residential student) to give me a theological lens with which to explore my secular learning. That morphed into the beginning of a BTh, interrupted by an MA in Women’s Studies while I was working in government, and was then resumed when I was accepted as an ordinand.

I hold a PhD in Practical Theology (Homiletics), my research focussing on the integration of homiletics, liturgy, and theology in attempting to define a distinctively Anglican homiletic, and have also written on ecclesiology and the relationship between culture and ministry practice. I currently serve as Rector of St James Episcopal Church, in the town of St James on Long Island, NY, as Canon Theologian of the Diocese of Long Island, and faculty member of the George Mercer Jr. Memorial School of Theology. In addition, I am dean of our area deanery, and chair of the Protestant chaplaincy at the local university.

My experience in Anglican theological education, largely in the area of homiletics, includes a small predominantly residential theological college in Australia, a diocesan school of theology doing non-degree training of lay people, deacons, and bi-vocational priests, and an online program predominantly serving rural students, as well as teaching in a secular private university and in a large and wealthy Presbyterian seminary; I have also run workshops and retreats in Australia and the UK. While at Princeton Theological Seminary, I taught the orientation program required of all international students, focussing on cultural awareness, differences in educational expectations, and writing skills, with students from a range of countries including Nepal, Korea, Estonia, Ghana, and Nigeria.

What drives me is seeing students not only understand the material taught, but make connections between it and their own experiences, thus making it their own. That means that I value excellence in teaching, and have continued learning in that area in my avocation as a ski instructor (there are many parallels between skiing and preaching, both being about embodying knowledge).

As a member of faculty of the George Mercer Jr. Memorial School of Theology, our diocesan school for ministry (which only has a part time director and an administrator, and hence uses the faculty for much of the planning and decision making), I have been involved in developing new models for teaching., including an hybrid model using both online and face-to-face teaching. I also designed a flowchart model for discerning how those accepted into the ordination process might best be trained (traditional seminary, hybrid online and in-person courses at existing seminaries, reading for orders, or local formation in our school for ministry), and initiated a portfolio model to allow our students (who are not awarded a traditional degree) to effectively demonstrate their learning. in developing course as a faculty, we have made use of the TREC ministry grids.

In the area of technology, I have used Moodle, Skype/Facetime, and Google Classroom in teaching, along with Churchnext in parish work; while I have designed parish websites using Dreamweaver, including developing a template for other churches, I find more recent online tools such as Weebly to be lower in cost and more user friendly. During my time in the parish, I overhauled our communication, redeveloping the website, starting a weekly email blest, initiating the use of Facebook, both for a private parish group and for advertising in the wider community, and maintained our print communication for those who do not have internet service. I enjoy both speaking and writing.

**Collaborative leadership with expertise in Anglicanism**

Originally ordained in the Anglican Church of Australia, I have served for the last nineteen years in The Episcopal Church (USA), the last ten years of which have been in the the context of the most ethnically diverse diocese in the county, the Diocese of Long Island. I have worked with clergy from a range of backgrounds in the communion, including the Caribbean, the UK, Africa, Central America, and Asia, taught students from a range of countries including Haiti and Korea, and visited churches in Europe, New Zealand, the Pacific, and the Middle East. I frequently find myself interpreting different ecclesial structures to clergy and lay people whose experience is limited to their own particular branch of the communion.

As a parish priest and in leadership roles within the diocese and elsewhere it has been necessary for me to develop skills in listening and assimilating information in order both to care for those with whom I am working, and to develop strategies and programs that are effective in fulfilling our mission and consistent with who we believe we are called to be. One practical example of this is the work I did with my current parish when they asked me to tell them what their mission was. I developed a series of activities in which parishioners engaged with different ways of thinking about our mission, followed by a vestry retreat in which we spent time examining all we had been offered, and discerning where God was calling us in this time and place. The resulting three principles, growing in faith through scripture and prayer, building relationships in Christ, and serving one another and the world, were adopted unanimously, and continue to be the criteria by which we plan and evaluate everything do. I have also recently undertaken training in organizational and congregational development and facilitation skill.

I have been involved in a number of diocesan committees, particularly those focussing on the development of programs and projects, including an intern program for college students exploring ordained ministry, the refining of the ordination process in my current diocese, and developing resources for small churches.

Outside of my work, through a connection with the Australian consulate in New York made when pastoral care was needed following the September 11 attacks, I was involved in the early stages of development of what became Advance, a network of Australian professionals working overseas. I serve as co-convener of the history working group of the Academy of Homiletics. I initiated the co-convener model, which has even adopted by a number of other working groups within the academy.

**Strategic leadership**

Recently, I was invited to provide the theological reflection at the Gathering of Leaders conference in Seattle in August 2017, the theme of which is “The Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement: What does it mean to be a Missionary Church?” The reflection opens the first full day and is the most academic presentation of the Gathering, helping participants intellectually engage and consider the theme as it informs and influences their ministries and leadership.

I am passionate about creating opportunities to foster disciples of Christ. For the last fifteen years, I have been the solo priest in two different parishes. While the immediate contexts were different, many of the needs were similar, including the need to not only adapt but thrive in a changing religious context, reaching out to a predominantly non-churched or ex-churched population while caring for and encouraging those who had been steadfast members over many years. Both congregations had troubled histories of clergy leadership, ranging from burnout and “retiring-in-place” to psychiatric issues to a pattern of sexual misconduct with successive clergy. In neither case did I know all the details when I accepted the positions, however bringing these parishes back to a place of health and vitality became my role, along with helping them face change.

I have helped these churches to make long-term cultural shifts, providing steady and able leadership, asking tough questions with wisdom and grace, and helping communities to gather answers to such questions in with a collaborative spirit. I have provided pastoral support and theological frameworks for communities in transition, creating contexts for reconciliation, sustainable change, and congregational health, and have a track record of building consensus, encouraging creativity and connecting resources with needs.

One of the things I love most outside parish ministry is analyzing systems and seeking more effective ways of operating, whether it is as a board chair, and area dean, or a faculty member. I enjoy using the skills developed when I worked in government prior to ordination with my theological education and experience. I believe firmly that decision making is an act of discernment that must be grounded in theology, prayer, and thorough analysis. Attending to the “big picture” while building up an understanding of the details of a situation, synthesizing ideas, and building consensus are particular focusses in my work.

As a result of one initiative, our diocese has undertaken a review of clergy compensation, particularly attending to differences associated with gender and race. I am actively involved with a number of networks, including one for younger clergy and one for women clergy.

As chair of the board of Protestant Campus Ministries at Stony Brook University, I have:

* Acquired legal non-profit status for the ministry (which had been running without that status for 50 years)
* Overseen the shift from denominational funding being routed through a central campus ministry organization to direct funding by partner denominations, including grant writing, resulting in a tripling of denominational funding in the first year.Established ongoing funding in the diocesan budget for this ministry.
* Identified the need to be accountable to our donors, and instigated the development of a brochure outlining out primary achievements and other information about the ministry.
* Led the board through a significant turnover in members (due to retirement of long term members).
* Established stronger relationships with the Interfaith Center.
* Guided the hiring of a new chaplain after the sudden resignation of our previous chaplain at the beginning of the academic year.
* Begun difficult conversations about the nature and long term sustainability of our ministry.

**Publication**

I have published two books, *Get Up Off Your Knees: Preaching the U2 Catalog*, edited with Beth Maynard (Cowley Press, 2003), and *Steeped in the Holy: Preaching as a Spiritual Practice* (Cowley/Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), along with articles and chapters with a wide range of publishers including Abingdon, Morehouse, IVP, Baker, WJKP, and ATF Press. Through my work with the Academy of Homiletics I am acquainted with a number of editors, along with Dr. Joseph F. Duggan, the founder of Borderless Press, and Michael Collie, National Director of SparkLit (SPCK Australia).

**References**

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I attach my resume, and look forward to the possibility of speaking with you further.

Sincerely yours,

The Very Rev. Canon Dr. Raewynne J. Whiteley