

A Prospectus

St. Patrick's Anglican Church

A Community Church in the Anglican Tradition

and

The St. Patrick Center

A Place for Worship, Study, and Spiritual Formation in the Anglican Tradition

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The Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord

Introduction

The first thing you need to know is that it's not about me. It's about God. It's about the glory of God and the Kingdom of God. It's about the good news of the love and mercy and grace of God.

The second thing you need to know is that it is a little bit about me. That is, you need to know a little bit about me in order to appreciate where this vision comes from and how it brings together all the varied and seemingly disparate elements of my ministry experience within a single-minded goal of bringing glory to God in all that I do.

Forty-five years ago, when I was a senior in high school, God and I entered into a pact, a covenant, if you will. More accurately, God set some terms, and I agreed to them. He told me that, if I would use my gifts, talents, and abilities to advance the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and to help Christians "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," then He would take care of me. He didn't speak to me in an audible voice, but the reality of God's call on my life would not have been greater nor more certain if He had.

My pilgrimage has been (to borrow the title of a Beatles' song) a "long and winding road." I have been exposed to and influenced by a number of Christian traditions. I have served in vocational ministry in several of them. While to some observers, my circuitous journey from Fundamentalism via Evangelicalism and Anabaptism to Anglicanism reflects instability, I prefer to see it as (to borrow the title of a book by Eugene Peterson) a "long obedience in the same direction."

I have written a summary of my pilgrimage in a booklet titled *In Search of Authentic Faith* (available in hard copy or as a .pdf file). In that booklet I wrote:

At the time of my Confirmation (April 2009), I had been involved in vocational ministry of one sort or another for more than thirty-five years, during which a single pattern had repeated itself time after time. Whenever God wanted to move me into a new sphere of service, He made a group of His people aware of my gifts. They then affirmed those gifts, invited me to serve among them, and God gave me peace to accept their call. (Until three years ago I had) never applied for a job (nor even) compiled a resume. There have been a few

times when God led me to leave one ministry before He made it clear where I was to go. Those times of waiting have tested my faith, but God has always opened the next door according to His perfect timing, and in the waiting periods He has taken care of us.

I assumed that the same pattern would play out in my current situation (i.e. in the Anglican communion). In time, when I look back on this experience, I may understand how it conformed to God's established pattern. Many things are different this time, however, as we have made an intentional move into a new tradition. I have no ministry track record in Anglicanism, no list of contacts, no network to rely on. Still, it seemed to Shirley and me that, if God had led us to Anglicanism, it was with the intent of using my gifts in service to the Kingdom in this communion even as He had done in so many different situations before.

Many of you who are reading this will already know that I was ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Church in North America in May 2011. You may not realize, however, that ordination in this tradition is not generic; that is, a priest receives Holy Orders for the purpose of serving in a particular ministry. In the Free Church tradition where I served for thirty-five years, it was common for recognition of gifts and a call to a place of service to precede credentialing, which could be secured later if and when it was deemed useful or necessary. In the Anglican tradition, at least in my experience, credentialing precedes ministry but with full expectation that a specific ministry, identified at the time of ordination, will soon follow.

I came to the Anglican Church out of a lifetime of vocational ministry in the Free Church tradition. In all that time, I had never had to look for, much less create, a context in which to use my gifts in service to Christ and the Kingdom. More often than not, I needed to choose between several opportunities, any of which would have been a productive, fulfilling ministry. As a Bible college student, I was taught that the greatest ability required for Christian ministry was *availability*. "If you are available and willing to serve," I was told, "God will always lead you into a ministry context where you can use your gifts for His glory. The need will always exceed the supply of available servants."

Imagine my surprise, then, when I was told by a veteran Anglican clergyman very early in the process of discernment and preparation which would eventually lead to my ordination in this tradition, "I have no doubt that you are qualified for Holy Orders. What I don't know is where we will find a place for you to serve." This way of thinking runs counter to the principle by which I have lived my life and carried out my ministry for more than thirty-five years.

I simply cannot believe that the inability to "find a place" for me to serve in the Anglican Communion means that there is an absence of need. Rather, I take it to mean that there is a shortage of money. If so, this poses something of a problem for the future of ACNA.

"M" is for "Missional"... and also for "Money"

The Anglican Church in North America is a brand new (albeit unofficial) province of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Many of our parishes were formerly part of the Episcopal Church. In many cases, their "denominational realignment" cost them

dearly. Many were required to surrender buildings and other properties while others were forced into expensive legal battles in an effort to forestall such losses.

Sometimes these new ACNA parishes lost a portion of their membership in the move from TEC to ACNA but retained all or most of their clergy, thus requiring that clergy support be borne by a smaller giving base. Where the "realigned" parishes have experienced immediate new growth, the financial burden and ministry limitations have no doubt been minimized. I fear, however, that such immediate new growth has been the exception rather than the rule, and that the net effect of all this, at least in these early years of ACNA's history, is that the church is carrying a financial burden in the form of clergy support and new property purchase or construction which, coupled with the loss of equity in surrendered properties, may prove a hindrance to outreach and other meaningful Kingdom ministry.

Church leaders have reported encouraging growth in the number of parishes identifying with ACNA. This is a good sign. Many of these new congregations, however, are church plants which may not survive their infancy, especially if they are not substantially underwritten by existing churches who view church planting as a key part of their outreach ministry and essential to the "missional" character which ACNA wants to develop.

In his sermon at the time of his investiture as Archbishop of the newly-formed ACNA in June 2009, ++Robert Duncan challenged the new denomination to plant 1000 new congregations within five years. Considering that ACNA parishes numbered only about 700 at the time, the Archbishop's challenge was either visionary or delusional, depending on your perspective. I choose to believe it was visionary, and if it was, then we need to face the facts. New churches need facilities, clergy, equipment, etc.—all of which require funding.

Make no mistake. Anglicanism in the US is being renewed. God is blessing the courageous action that brought about the ACNA. He has raised it up. He will sustain and guide this new church. The greatest days for the ACNA as an instrument for the advancement of the Kingdom of God are most certainly ahead. I stand as a testimony to the magnetism of this tradition with its ancient roots, its timeless liturgy, and its contemporary vision. I want to see this new church thrive. We are, at least potentially, at the threshold of an "Anglican hour" in American Christianity. But that potential will not be realized, I believe, without an acknowledgement of some possible obstacles and a willingness to participate in some shared sacrifice in order to confront and overcome the obstacles.

The ACNA is facing almost unlimited opportunity but with limited financial resources. If we are to realize our potential and take advantage of that opportunity, we will need to be creative in the use of our finances and willing to sacrifice for the good of the Kingdom. I know that God is infinite and possesses boundless assets, but I am always amazed that the infinite God has chosen to accomplish His purposes in the world through finite humans and to make the advancement of the Gospel dependent on our faithfulness.

I did not enter the Christian ministry "for the money," and I have never been generously compensated for my ministry, nor have I expected to be. Vocational

ministry is not a profession. I have tried to live according to the principle established by Paul in his instruction to Timothy: "If we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content." (1 Tim. 6:8) In a culture obsessed with materialism, adopting a frugal lifestyle not only offers an opportunity to exhibit Christian values which counteract the prevailing culture, it also frees up resources which can be used for the work of the Kingdom in other ways.

I am trying to be faithful. God led me into Anglicanism, but it cost a lot to follow that leading. For one thing, I lost my job. As I moved from Evangelical Anabaptism toward Anglicanism, my contract was terminated at the Mennonite Bible college where I had taught for fourteen years. As I write this in the summer of 2011, it has been more than three years since I have drawn a paycheck. During that time, I walked with my wife through her battle with breast cancer, and I completed the requirements leading to Holy Orders in ACNA. My bank account is busted, but my spirit, while bruised and downcast by times, remains unbroken. God, too, has been faithful.

Carving Out a Niche—Church Planting?

More than two years ago, at the very beginning of the process which culminated in my ordination to the Anglican priesthood, I came to realize that I should not expect to be placed in or appointed to a ministry position which already exists, especially in the Diocese of the Great Lakes, since there would likely be no vacancies among the relatively few compensated positions in the diocese. Thus, if I were to find a place in which to use my gifts in vocational ministry, I would need to "create" a position, devise a ministry, if you will, and the most likely area in which that might happen would be church planting.

At the time of my ordination, I was commissioned by Bishop Ames to plant a new Anglican church on the west side of Columbus with a ministry focus on both a local neighborhood and the OSU campus community. In many ways the notion of planting a new Anglican church with these demographic parameters seems like a "no-brainer." In the first place, it is unthinkable that there is only one orthodox Anglican parish of any size in all of the Columbus metropolitan area, St. Andrew's in Lewis Center. In addition, while it is likely that a church which intentionally focuses on university students will experience considerable turnover in attendance, it is equally likely that the influence of this new church, particularly if the experience is positive, will go with these students into their professional and family lives, even if they move away from Columbus upon graduation.

In many ways, too, I am suitably gifted for a ministry of this sort. In the first place, I taught at the college level for fourteen years, and with considerable success if expressions of appreciation from former students are any measure of accomplishment. Granted, a Bible college classroom is not a university lecture hall, but there are similarities, both in the classroom dynamic and in the 18-21 year old students in both settings. I am not intimidated by this age group, neither by their probing questions nor by their brash self-confidence which often is merely a veneer over some deep-seated uncertainties. I know how they think, and I can relate to their doubts. In my preaching, teaching, and informal conversation, I can respect their points of view without surrendering or compromising my commitment to Jesus Christ and to the Christian scriptures as the ground of all truth.

In addition, I am not a novice. I come to this new challenge out of a lifetime of experience in ministry. I have been a pastor. I firmly believe that the heart of pastoral ministry is Spiritual Formation—exhibiting, encouraging, and enabling Christlikeness in people's lives. Moreover, and perhaps more pertinently, as a pastor at this stage of my own pilgrimage, I am committed to the idea of the church as *both* the agent of the Kingdom of God *and* as a compassionate community in which people feel loved and accepted and where they are enabled to heal and encouraged to grow. This emphasis arises from my own experience in the recent past, when my wife and I went through some of the most difficult and painful experiences of our lives, largely without benefit of pastoral care or a compassionate community to which we could turn and by whom we could be embraced. We both intend to work hard, in our future church endeavors, so that those in similar circumstances can have a positive and life-affirming experience in relating to the church in their time of need.

Two Scenarios

When I consider the possibility that a church like this might actually come about, I envisage two separate scenarios, either of which could give rise to such a church. In the first scenario, a church planter takes up residence in the neighborhood or community where the church's meeting place will likely be located. Over the course of time, the church planter comes to know, and be known by, the community. A basis for trust is established, and gradually a core group forms, eventually achieves "critical mass," and grows into a vibrant fellowship. The key elements in this scenario, of course, are time and a personality suited to the task of developing a community of faith from the ground up through the cultivation of personal relationships.

In the second scenario, the vision for planting a new church is taken up by a church already in existence. The established church commissions a number of its members who are excited about the prospect of the new church to form the core group for the new church and to devote themselves, for a specified period of time, to the development of the new work. Some, including the founding pastor, actually move to the location of the new church; many would likely commute. Some will become permanent members of the new church; many would likely return to the original "mother" church once the "daughter" church was established and growing. In this scenario, the new church "hits the ground running," so to speak, and, owing to the positive effect of both people and money from the "mother" church, achieves critical mass, and thus the likelihood of success, much sooner than in the first scenario.

I am not a missiologist, but I have been a church member all my life and a servant of the church for most of that time. The scenarios above do not derive from textbooks on church planting or sociology but from life experience and common sense. I don't know if one of these scenarios is preferable to the other. I do know that both of them can succeed, and both of them can fail. I also know that, of the two, the second is more attractive to me since, at age 61, an introvert by nature, and unemployed for the past three years, it is difficult to believe that scenario one is at all a possibility. For one thing, I currently live thirty miles from the community most often considered the likely location for the new church (Grandview Heights), and I am in no financial position, on my own, to relocate at present.

At the same time, scenario two seems equally unlikely at present, since there is no parish in the Columbus area in a position to own the vision I have summarized here in a tangible or substantive way. Despite that, I am confident I could provide effective leadership for such a venture. I am further confident that, if this vision is from God, He will raise up the support necessary to make it a reality.

Little is Much, When God is in It; Much is Little, When He is Not.

On the one hand it seems unconscionable to me that an urban area the size of Columbus should have only one orthodox Anglican parish (although I am sure there are Episcopal churches which would challenge that appraisal). On the other hand, church growth and the advancement of the Gospel of the Kingdom are, in the final analysis, products of the sovereign will of God. Too many "projects" are undertaken because they seem like a good idea at the time, but they are not part of God's plan, and they eventually close down when their human organizers run out of time, money, or energy. I once heard someone say (and I fully concur), "I don't want to undertake a project and ask God to bless it; I want to find out what God is doing, or wants to do, and join it."

As an evangelical Christian, I want to see the church grow through the baptism of its children and the conversion of those who have not yet believed. And I believe that one of the most efficient means to that end is to plant new churches. New churches grow much faster than established parishes, and their conversion-to-transfer ratio is generally far higher. New churches are the most economical method to achieve significant growth for the Kingdom of God. I would be happy to be involved in such an effort in Grandview Heights, and I think I bring a gift-set to the endeavor which would contribute to the likelihood of its success. But I will not force something to happen when I am not convinced that God is in it. I do not want my legacy as an Anglican priest to be "failed church planter."

A Broader Vision

On May 10, 2011, The Rt. Rev. Roger Ames, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of the Great Lakes in the Anglican Church in North America, laid his hands on my head and prayed a prayer of dedication over me as he ordained me an Anglican priest. The Bishop was aware of my 40-year pilgrimage from Fundamentalism to Anglicanism and of the gifts I had exhibited and the ministries I had been involved in along the way. In his prayer, Bishop Ames asked God to use *all* my gifts and to draw upon *all* of my experience in directing me to the area of ministry in which He wants me to serve as a priest.

I have been a pastor, a broadcaster, a ministry executive, and a college professor. While I am perfectly willing to spend the rest of my life and ministry as a parish priest, I'm also aware that I come to this moment in my pilgrimage with a different perspective on life and ministry, and with far broader experience, than most newly-ordained priests. It occurred to me, as I was writing the first pages of this prospectus, that it might be possible that God had brought me to this place in this time to give voice to a vision somewhat broader and bolder than simply the planting of a new church (the value of which I do not mean to diminish in any way). Is it possible that God might want to use me to articulate a vision for a ministry which could

meaningfully serve our diocese and even meet a genuine need that could benefit the entire ACNA? Since I believe God has put such a vision into my heart, I am going to devote the remainder of this prospectus to giving it verbal expression. I will leave it to God to use it as He will in the minds and lives of those who read this essay.

I am convinced that, in the economy of the Kingdom, no institution or organization is more important for the advancement of the Gospel and the growth and nurture of Christians than the church. We err, however, if we perceive the church exclusively as a local assembly or even a denomination. Throughout its history, the church has recognized that its effectiveness could be enhanced and its purposes served by the cultivation and development of ministries with more specialized and focused areas of concern than those which could be profitably and economically pursued by a single local church, particularly in the era before the megachurch. Monasteries, schools, hospitals, mission agencies, and social service ministries are examples of endeavors which have been developed by the church, with accountability to the church, in order to serve a broader constituency than a single congregation and to provide services and meet needs which few local churches would have resources to accomplish on their own. In this vein, then, I propose the development of a ministry I am calling...

The St. Patrick Center—A Place for Worship, Study, and Spiritual Formation in the Anglican Tradition. *

A Place for Worship—Liturgical worship in the Prayer Book tradition is at the very heart of what it means to be Anglican. I was not very far along the road from Evangelicalism to Anglicanism when I learned the Latin maxim, "*Lex orandi, lex credendi*," which means "the law of praying is the law of believing," or more colloquially, "as we worship, so shall we live." For Anglicans, our "theology," *i.e.* the most basic elements of our belief about God, Christ, humanity, sin, and salvation, are contained in, and communicated through, our worship—notably the liturgy of the Daily Office and, especially, the Eucharist. The St. Patrick Center (SPC) would be a place of regular worship. Morning and Evening Prayers would be said daily, and the Eucharist celebrated often.

In addition, the Center would host special events, such as retreats, conferences, and seminars, where the importance of worship, both communal and individual, would be explored and experienced within the context of other aspects of Christian discipleship such as apologetics, evangelism, charismatic gifts, spiritual warfare, and inner healing. SPC would also be a place where individuals or small groups could come for silent retreats, focused prayer, and spiritual direction. Anyone seeking a place to get away from the frenetic pace of modern life in order to be spiritually renewed in a setting dedicated to worship, and anyone looking for a place to explore and experience what it means to be an Anglican Christian would find it at SPC.

A Place for Study—While it is true that the genius of Anglican theology is its connection to the experience of worship, that does not mean that there is no place in Anglicanism for serious study and the cultivation of the life of the mind. SPC would be a place where earnest Christians with intellectual curiosity could engage in the thoughtful examination of subjects such as Biblical history and content, church history, apologetics (defense of the Christian faith), moral theology (ethics), liturgics, and the interface of Christianity with contemporary culture. The Center would

provide a setting for individual study (both directed and non-directed) and reflection as well as periodic (or regular) classes and seminars designed to explore "cutting edge" issues with a view to equipping believers to be more responsible, sensitive, and effective as disciples of Jesus Christ in a postmodern culture.

In addition, the Center would offer a curriculum specially designed to serve as the "Anglican component" for Anglican students doing their seminary study in a non-Anglican school or to supplement the theological training of persons from other Christian traditions who are pursuing Holy Orders with ADGL-ACNA. While neither competing with nor replacing similar programs already available through Anglican seminaries, the SPC curriculum would be more limited, less comprehensive, more flexible, and less expensive than those programs. I could have benefited from a program like this as I was preparing for Anglican Holy Orders.

A Place for Spiritual Formation—As I wrote above, I believe the primary focus of pastoral ministry should be Spiritual Formation, by which I mean exhibiting, encouraging, and enabling Christlikeness. The ADGL, and indeed the entire ACNA, could be well served by a place where pastoral leaders (especially deacons, priests, and those in training) could come to experience, and be equipped to facilitate, genuine Spiritual Formation. This might involve participation in some of the programs, opportunities, and emphases available through the Center and already discussed above under Worship and Study. It would also include a specialized learning environment comprising, as desired, spiritual direction, individual and group retreats, as well as courses, seminars, and conferences on themes related to Spiritual Formation.

This is a but a brief sketch of what the ministry of The St. Patrick Center might entail—a mere framework to give basic shape to the program which would develop in response to genuine needs as God made resources available. Some may consider the vision too ambitious or bold, particularly in hard economic times such as those facing Americans at present. I believe, however, that there are always sufficient resources to accomplish all that God wants to do with us and through us for the glory of His name and for the advancement of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Moreover, I believe that my gifts, training, and experience over a lifetime of Christian service and Kingdom work, have prepared and equipped me to lead in the development of a ministry such as that which I have outlined here.

Finally, Why St. Patrick?

The man we now know as St. Patrick of Ireland was born in Roman Britain in the late 4th century. As a teenager he was captured by Irish raiders and forced into slavery in Ireland for six years, until, through unusual circumstances which he interpreted as God's miraculous intervention, he escaped and returned to his family in Britain. Eventually he was ordained a priest and returned to Ireland where he spent the remainder of his life preaching the Gospel to the very people who had enslaved him.

While Patrick's life is the stuff of legend, it is virtually indisputable that he was instrumental in the conversion of 5th century Ireland from the tribal paganism of the Druids to the Trinitarian Gospel of Jesus Christ. His evangelistic success owes much to his willingness to embrace whatever elements of his surrounding culture he could use in the preaching of the Gospel, short of compromising the faith through unwise

dilution of the Truth with paganism. His ministry may be the only historical example of the conversion of an entire pagan culture to Christianity without violence and bloodshed accompanying. For these reasons, I believe that St. Patrick has set a wonderful example for any ministry seeking to preach the Gospel cross-culturally. Twenty-first century America represents a cross-cultural challenge for evangelical Anglicans. I would encourage our new parish, and the ministry center which I have described, to identify Patrick of Ireland as their patron saint.

Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?

I have never thought of myself as particularly creative or "entrepreneurial" in my approach to vocational ministry. Then again, up to now I have not needed to be. What I have written here is not some grandiose scheme designed to advance my agenda or promote my interests. Rather, it is a modest attempt to outline several potential opportunities for fruitful, productive, and Christ-honoring ministry within the "new Anglicanism" currently emerging in North America. I have set these opportunities against a significant challenge, *i.e.* limited financial resources, which the ADGL and the ACNA will need to address.

Only God can provide the support and supply the resources that will transform this vision from concept to reality. It may be that God will use this prospectus as a catalyst in the lives of some of His people who have the means to help that transformation come about. Significant progress in the growth of ACNA and the advancement of the Gospel through its auspices will require both visionary leadership and substantial sacrifice. If we are up to that challenge, however, I believe God can and will do great things through ACNA for the glory of His Name.

Soli Deo Gloria

*My vision for The St. Patrick Center arises, in part, from my acquaintance, either personally or second-hand, with a variety of ministries which have embodied a similar vision. These include:

- *L'Abri*, the ministry of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, originally a single community in Huemoz, Switzerland, and now continuing in many countries around the world
- The *Taize* Community, begun by Brother Roger in post-WWII France and continuing to grow in impact even today
 - The *Iona* Community in the Hebrides Islands, Scotland—truly a "thin place"
 - The Holy Island Community of *Lindisfarne* in NE England—another "thin place"
 - The **London Institute for Contemporary Christianity**—continuing the important ministry of John R.W. Stott
 - **Grace Haven Farm** and Grace Church, Mansfield, OH