

**1. In the examination of bishops, you will be asked to “be one with the apostles proclaiming Christ’s resurrection and interpreting the Gospel, and to testify to Christ’s sovereignty as Lord of lords and King of Kings.” What do you understand those words to mean, and (assuming their usual meaning) are there any you hesitate to endorse?**

It was the apostle Peter who first gave us an example of this mandate on the day of Pentecost, when he stood in the middle of the gathered crowd and declared, “let me explain what this means.” He boldly spoke to them of the death of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead; “This man whom you crucified, God has made Lord and Messiah. “Furthermore, he invited them to respond to this good news by repentance and Baptism. That is quite a clear example to follow.

Christ’s resurrection is central to our faith! “If Christ is not raised from the dead, vain is our faith and we the most pitiful of all people,” was the admonition of St. Paul to the Corinthians! It is a reality, not just to be intellectually assented to, but also experienced through faith.

I believe firmly that Christ rose from the dead, as witnessed by his disciples. I believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God and contain all things necessary for our salvation. This includes the resurrection of Christ, his sovereignty over all of creation, his Lordship of all.

I have experienced the presence of the living Christ in diverse ways throughout life. Because of this, proclaiming and explaining the gospel comes from a convinced and very grateful heart. Jesus found, saved, touched, is changing, and helping me to be a better person. He is encouraging and leading me to help others find freedom and a new life in Christ.

There can be no interpreting of the Gospel that is not based on a personal relationship with Jesus. Through joys and sorrows, in prayer, communion, in ministering to others, at home, in the church and society at large, Christ is revealed, and we are being transformed. In a changing world we are witnesses to the unchanging love of God for all of humanity. We relate how these Good News apply to the circumstances of life and invite others to relationship with God!

I have no hesitation in endorsing any of these words!

**2. Like other dioceses, the exit of congregations and communicants in the first decade of this century left lasting scars on our community from which we continue to heal. How have you fostered unity among individuals of differing values and diverse opinions?**

Differences of opinions among Christians, sometimes leading to separation, are not unique to the Episcopal Church. The book of Acts relates the disagreement and separation between Paul and Barnabas. Galatians gives witness to a difficult confrontation between two apostles. The ongoing discord among believers about the role of the gentiles in the church had to finally be addressed by a council in Jerusalem. Sometimes sincere Christians hold divergent ideas, have strong conviction and emotions and are not able to come to an agreement about what they believe.

Communion across differences in theology, language, culture, socioeconomic status, and political ideology is possible but never simple. Staying together requires patience, willingness to listen, difficult conversations, setting aside disagreements, forgiveness, a lot of prayer, friendships, and love. We understand this when it comes to our own families but less so in the context of church life.

My Christian life and ministry have been in places of great diversity and the corresponding potential for conflict. For the past 20 years I have ministered among people of many cultures and national origins, political ideologies, languages, values, as well as ideas about how worship and church life should be. Often, I have been placed in the uncomfortable middle, facilitating conversation, mediating between opposing ideas, persuading divergent parties to stay and work together despite discomfort. It has been a decades long learning experience in forming and maintaining relationships, that to this day requires the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is the story of the parishes and diocesan ministries I serve.

Beyond the boundaries of the Episcopal Church, I remain in relationship with clergy and lay people from very different backgrounds and theological outlook. Those relationships have enabled me to encourage, people who are very different to work together in prayer and community events, despite fundamental differences in doctrine.

This is a challenging aspect of the ministry of every Christian we are called to assume; peacemakers, ministers of reconciliation, guarding the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, united as Jesus himself prayed his disciples would be.

**3. One of the challenges that our denomination faces is an aging clergy force. What qualities are you looking for in the next generation of clergy leader?**

Our denomination faces an aging membership which is reflected in an aging leadership, clergy and lay.

I would hope that our next generation of leaders would foremost be committed Christians, persons who call Jesus Savior and Lord and have experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit. The apostles were lacking on many things that we require of our leaders. They were said to be unschooled and ordinary, but all had to recognize that they had been with Jesus. Beyond liturgy, the required sacraments, camp experiences and a rigorous seminary education, we need leaders in relationship with God. It is going to take more than words to speak to an ever more skeptical world. Paul writing to the Corinthians stated that "his preaching had not been with eloquent or persuasive words but with demonstration of the Spirit and power." I pray that we and future leaders understand more clearly what that means!

Our church also faces a crisis of diversity. This is a reality that we can see clearly in our parishes, camps, committees, diocesan conventions, and diocesan offices, confirmed by surveys and official reports. To serve an ever more racially and ethnically evolving society, where multiple languages are spoken, diversity and inclusion need to become more than mere words as we train and recruit today's and tomorrow's leaders!

I would want to look beyond what seem to be our usual candidates. To consider, cultivate and actively recruit people from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds would enrich our church. It would be important to look carefully at the methods we have in place for discernment, education, ordination, and placement of clergy to eliminate or minimize implicit biases that make it difficult for minority candidates. In ethnic ministries, expanding paths to the priesthood would facilitate recruitment of a new generation of clergy leaders who may be unable to make the time and financial commitment for seminary training.

Churches with a sense of mission and those who embrace diversity seem to be growing in the Episcopal Church. We need leaders who can embrace that vision!

**4. Almost two years have been spent in struggles with the COVID pandemic and the many social, political, and economic challenges it brought forward. Where do you see hope springing forward in the Episcopal church? What are some of your hopes for the Diocese of Florida?**

I see hope in the Episcopal Church as it embraces the Way of Love suggested by our presiding Bishop, a reminder, and an invitation to a life in relationship with Jesus and to one another. This theme of his Episcopacy which he has voiced at revivals, rallies, ordinations and even a Royal wedding has been very inspiring as a way to live out the faith and communicate the Gospel.

The pandemic and challenges of the last two years have also revealed a resilient church, one that was able to adapt, survive, and in some places flourish. Seeing our church actively evangelizing in social media, virtual worship services, celebrating the sacraments in creative ways we would have not thought possible while engaged in outreach and acts of charity, is a source of comfort and hope. Times change, we will surely face other challenges and crises, but we have learned an invaluable lesson, we can change, we can adapt, we can move forward with God's help!

In the diocese of Florida my hopes are centered on our youth and young adults. Prior to the pandemic, seeing the work, worship, and enthusiasm in the Happening and Vocare retreats was a source of inspiration. These made a difference in the spiritual lives of many in my parish. For some this was their first encounter with Jesus, a tangible sense of God's love that has had lasting effects. I would pray we continue to embrace, support, fund, encourage young people to attend, and later support them in their walk with God!

Multicultural ministries are dear to my heart. In the last decade ministries serving the Latino-Hispanic community have been established and continue growing in our diocese. We are blessed with new families who call the Episcopal Church their spiritual home, enriched by the traditions, languages, and cultures they bring to the Diocese of Florida. People from many nations and backgrounds live in our cities and neighborhoods, often within walking distance of our parishes. It is exciting to think that the Episcopal Church, our diocese, really welcomes them.

We need to expand our efforts and support for these vital ministries!

**5. What do you see as our diocese's biggest challenges/opportunities moving forward? Based on your previous experiences, how have you addressed similar challenges?**

Ministry to young adults, both single and as part of families, and increasing the diversity of our parishes pose the largest challenges and opportunities for the diocese of Florida. These are a large part of the context in which I have served in ministry over the years, and in which the Hispanic Ministries in our diocese have been planted, pastored, and supported over the past decade.

Young adults are the lifeblood and engine of growth for any church. Many are not connected to any faith tradition and have non-spiritual priorities. Their current attitudes towards institutional churches are less than favorable. Yet my experience has taught me, that when this demographic is making vital decisions about that will impact their futures and raising children, a relationship with Christ and a faith community are vital.

I am no stranger to ministry in this area, now as a pastor, but also, for several years, planting and coordinating Bible study and support groups to students in medical school. It takes patience, an open-mind, honesty and prayer to impactfully minister to young adults. It also requires identifying, mentoring, and working with younger leaders who feel called to this important work.

Our diocese already has some of the tools to confront this challenge: New Beginnings, Happening, and Vocare retreats, as well as Episcopal Schools and Summer Camps can be utilized to increase engagement with unchurched young adults. Activities and programs catering to new and working parents, would also create opportunities to minister to younger families.

Missions should also play a vital role in our future. The bulk of my Christian service has been spent in this area of ministry. I have had the blessing of planting at least 5 mission churches, and in the Episcopal diocese of Florida, I pioneered and foster the diocese's Hispanic Ministries, which was lacking in the diocese since its inception. Today three churches offer services in Spanish and many new families call the Episcopal Church their spiritual home. The small part of the diocese where I serve, is multicultural, other languages are spoken alongside English, there is a rich diversity in ethnicity, socioeconomic backgrounds, theological and political perspectives.

New missions and smaller worshipping communities require prayer, support by the diocese and larger parishes, coordinated efforts for Evangelism and outreach, a larger role for lay leadership, part time or bi-vocational clergy and Spirit led risk taking. Challenges like these often turn out to be opportunities that lead to blessing.