



The Rev. James L. Burns, Biography

The Diocese of New York

The Rev. James L. Burns currently serves as the Rector of The Church of the Heavenly Rest in Manhattan.

He was born in 1946 in Indianapolis, Indiana. He received a BA in Psychology from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1968. From 1968 until 1971 he served as an officer in the United States Navy, and following his military service he attended the University of Idaho where he received a MS in Clinical Psychology in 1972. From 1972 until 1979 he worked as a Psychologist in the Tennessee Department of Mental Health, first as Director of Forensic Mental Health and later on the clinical staff of Cumberland House School, a program for emotionally and behaviorally disturbed children in Nashville. During this time he was also on the faculty of Volunteer State Community College where he taught Psychology, and Behavioral Statistics.

In 1979 he entered the School of Theology of the University of the South and received his Master of Divinity degree in 1982. He began his ordained ministry as the Vicar of St. Thomas Church in Knoxville, Tennessee. While there he helped the congregation to build a church and become a self-supporting parish. In 1988 he was called to Christ Church in Lexington, Kentucky as Rector, and in 1989 when it became the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Lexington he became the Dean. In 1996 he was called as the ninth rector of The Church of the Heavenly Rest in Manhattan.

In the course of his ordained ministry he has served as a Stewardship Consultant in the Dioceses of Tennessee, East Tennessee, and Lexington. He has served as Chair of the Commission on Ministry in the Dioceses of East Tennessee, Lexington and New York. He was the Chair of the Standing Liturgical Commission in the Diocese of Lexington. He also served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hope Center in Lexington, a comprehensive program for the homeless. He has been an elected Deputy to the General Conventions of the Episcopal Church in 1988, 1991, 1994, and 2006 and an Alternate Deputy in 1985 and 2003. During his tenure as Rector of the Church of the Heavenly Rest he has served as a trustee of the Trevor Day School and also taught Psychology at the school. He is a trustee of the Diocese Of New York, a trustee of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and a member of the boards of directors of the House of the Redeemer in Manhattan, the Community of the Holy Spirit, and A Partnership of Faith. He is also a member of the Leadership Council of Habitat for Humanity in New York.

Mr. Burns' wife Nancy is a therapist. They have a son, Eric, who is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University and works in the field of Computer Science, and a daughter, Sarah, who is a graduate of Brown University in the fields of Art History and French.

The Rev. James L. Burns
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New York, New York 10128

RESUME

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Born: June 10, 1946
Indianapolis, Indiana

Married: Nancy Dianne VanderNaald
May 7, 1976

Children: Eric Lee – October 11, 1978
Sarah Elizabeth – April 24, 1982

EDUCATION

Miami University (Oxford, OH) B.A. in Psychology 1968

University of Idaho (Moscow, ID) M.S. in Clinical Psychology 1972

St. Luke's School of Theology
University of the South (Sewanee, TN) M. Div. 1982

MILITARY SERVICE

United States Naval Reserve, Active Duty 1968 – 1971
Lieutenant Junior Grade – USS Vermilion

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1972 – 1973 State of Tennessee, Department of Mental Health: Coordinator of Juvenile Mental Health Services

1973 – 1974 Faculty, Volunteer State Community College, Gallatin, Tennessee
Instructor in Psychology and Behavioral Sciences

1974 – 1976 State of Tennessee, Department of Mental Health: Director of Forensic Mental Health Services

1976 – 1979 Cumberland House School for Disturbed Children: Director of Liaison Services, and Clinical Team Supervisor

ORDINATIONS

Deacon – June 27, 1982, Rt. Rev. W. Fred Gates, Bishop Suffragan, Diocese of Tennessee
Priest – January 5, 1983, Rt. Rev. William E. Sanders, Bishop of Tennessee

ECCLESIASTICAL SERVICE

1977 – 1979 Vestry Member, Christ Church, Nashville Tennessee
1980 – 1981 Field Work Student, All Saints Chapel, University of the South
Sewanee, Tennessee
1981 – 1982 Seminarian in Charge, Trinity Church, Winchester, Tennessee
1982 – 1988 Vicar/Rector St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Knoxville, Tennessee
1988 – 1996 Dean and Rector, Christ Church Cathedral, Lexington, Kentucky
1996 – Rector, Church of the Heavenly Rest, New York, New York

SELECTED ECCLESIASTICAL AND COMMUNITY POSITIONS

Chair, Commission on Ministry – Diocese of Tennessee
Chair, Social Concerns Committee – Diocese of Tennessee
Member, Bishop and Council – Diocese of East Tennessee
Chair, Commission on Ministry – Diocese of Lexington
Alternate Deputy to General Conventions of 1985, 2003
Deputy to General Conventions of 1988, 1991, 1994, 2006
Member of Commission on Ministry, Diocese of New York
Co-Chair Clergy Wholeness Committee, Diocese of New York
President, Board of Directors, The Hope Center, Lexington Kentucky
(A comprehensive center for the homeless)
Guest Period Chaplain for Kanuga Conference Center (twice)
Leader of “How To Be A Vestry Conference” at Kanuga Conference Center
Chaplain for Christian Educators Conference at Kanuga Conference Center
Board of Trustees, Trevor Day School, New York, New York
Board of Directors, House of the Redeemer, New York, New York
Board of Directors, Community of the Holy Spirit, New York, New York
Board of Trustees, Cathedral of St. John the Divine
Trustee of the Diocese of New York

PUBLICATIONS

Forward Day By Day, Daily Meditations, August – October 1996
Forward Day By Day, Daily Meditations, November – January 2000/2001
“Episcopalians and the Bible”, Forward Movement Publications

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Responses to the Questions

I. What called you to the priesthood and how has that call grown, how does it relate to my relationship with Jesus Christ and His church? Why have I now agreed to have my name submitted in nomination as Bishop of Tennessee?

It is both overly simplistic and incredibly complex to say that God called me to the priesthood, but that is the only answer I can give. I experienced a pull toward ordained ministry early in my life and then embarked on a determined flight from it. I wanted to do something that would help others, just not in that context. After two degrees in psychology, a career in mental health, and a mature rediscovery of the Church of my upbringing I began to listen once more to the inner voice urging me to offer what I had to the service of God in the Church. As I began to be open to this possibility I experienced God's call through the community of Christ Church, Nashville and her rector Eric Greenwood. I found the calling confirmed by others not in the church. And, finally, in my sense of harmony about the decision, best described in the words of Frederic Buechner's definition of "vocation": "The place where one's deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Over the 24 years of my ordained ministry I have found that my relationship with Jesus Christ has grown – not so much in my certainty about what His will is for all things, but in my trust in Him and my dependence on His love and guidance in my life. I find that I sometimes understand Him less while wanting to know Him more. When I attend to my relationship with Jesus and offer myself in His service then occasions for that service arise along with a better understanding of what He would have me do.

I have agreed to allow my name to be submitted in nomination for Bishop of Tennessee at this time because I believe that I am to be open to the leading of God's Holy Spirit. It's God's ministry, not mine.

II. What is my style of leadership? Where has it excelled and what is an instance of where it has fallen short?

My style of leadership is first to listen and observe and then to prayerfully articulate and offer a vision. I then try to communicate that vision as well as possible and invite others to share it. If there is no ownership of the vision then I will look to revise it based on what I learn from others. I seek to empower and encourage others to work for the fulfillment of whatever needs to be done to fulfill the vision that we now share.

I feel that this model of leadership has worked for me in helping St. Thomas, Knoxville build a church and become a self-supporting parish. I feel that it worked in helping Christ Church Cathedral heal from a divisive termination of ministry and in accepting its role to be both a caring parish community and a Cathedral in service of the Diocese of Lexington. I feel that it has worked in helping my current parish become a strong community of diverse membership with a commitment to service of others. It has fallen short in my present parish with regards to designing a Christian Education program that will generate a commitment of time and involvement from a highly over-committed and mobile population. (But we're not giving up!)

III. Given the tenor of the Episcopal Church today, and the hope of healing and reconciliation on the hearts and minds of many, what is my hope as it relates to a diocese and the wider Church?

My hope first of all is that the Church, at every level – parish, diocese, province, and world-wide Anglican Communion would focus the overwhelming preponderance of its energy and resources on the tasks of making Christ known and serving the world, and most especially the poor and vulnerable, in His name. To that end my hope is that the Church at every level would model for the world what it means to live in covenant. In pre-marriage counseling I explain to couples that marriage is a covenant not just a mutually agreeable relationship. A covenant is not only a commitment to another it is also a commitment to the commitment, so that when the parties in a relationship find themselves in a place of disagreement and struggle they remain in relationship and “labor to be reconciled” (as the Canons say) because of their covenantal commitment to their relationship. This is my understanding of God’s relationship to humanity in Christ who is the new covenant. Despite our rebellion and sin, God does not give up on us because God’s way is the way of covenant. My hope for the Church is that it can actually be a witness to the power of covenant.

IV. What are the most important attributes in one who is called to be a bishop and why?

I believe that the most important attributes for one called to the office of bishop are: Proclamation – one who can articulate and proclaim the Good News of God in Christ in the context of the world in which we are now living. Pastor – one who cares for those in his or her charge, especially the clergy and lay leadership of the Diocese. Presence – one who is willing to be the face and voice of the Church in his or her community.

V. How do I take care of myself spiritually, emotionally, and physically?

I care for myself spiritually by keeping a daily discipline of prayer which includes both the Daily Office and meditation and spiritual reading. I also seek the spiritual counsel of others.

I care for myself emotionally by working with a psychotherapist and by paying attention to my emotional health and needs. I also devote time to activities that I enjoy: my family, reading, cooking, films. I take regular days off and use all my available vacation time each year.

I care for myself physically by trying to exercise regularly, having regular physical exams, and practicing moderation in my dietary habits.

VI. What is it I offer/bring to the Diocese of Tennessee?

What I bring to my ministry at this time in my life, and thus to the Diocese of Tennessee is 1.) A strong commitment to the Episcopal Church and a desire to see her weather the current controversies and become stronger, as well as a desire to see the unity of the Anglican Communion preserved while honoring the unique attributes of her constituent provinces and churches. 2.) Nearly twenty-five years of parish experience in both large and small congregations. 3.) Experience in Diocesan and National Church structures and programs. 4.) Skills as a preacher, teacher, pastor, healer and reconciler. 5.) A firm belief that our world desperately needs to hear and understand the Good News of God revealed in Jesus Christ. 6.) A love of the Diocese of Tennessee, where I began my ordained ministry, and an understanding of her history.