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Why I Became an Anglican Bishop

Why is yours a story worth sharing?

I hope the truth of my story informs your own story, fills you with courage to follow your path and calls to mind those who have been guides for you, though maybe unnoticed until now. My goal in telling this story is that you'd have some "Aha! I get it!" moments for your own life as you explore the meaning and power of liturgical worship.

Do you think that interest in the Anglican church is growing?

There is something in the air today, something in the spirit of our age, something in the Spirit that is leading thousands, maybe millions of people to reconsider liturgical forms of worship. Liturgical seekers cherish the confidence that comes from historical connectedness, from theology that is not tied to the whims of contemporary culture but to apostolic-era understandings of Christian faith and practice. Our frantic lives make us yearn for rhythms and routines that build the spiritual health we seek.

Is this interest in reaction to particular contemporary forms of church?

For many of us, the architecture, theater seating and structure of our former churches said to us, "Sit back, relax and receive what comes to you from the stage." While having no need to criticize that, there is a hunger in many churchgoers today for a Sunday ethos that says, "Sit up, be alert and participate."

What do you mean by "accidental" bishop?

In my case *accidental* means blessed, lucky and fortunate—kind of like a Little Leaguer who *accidentally* hits a pitch with his eyes closed. *Accidental* in this context is just a playful way of saying, "I didn't see it coming!"

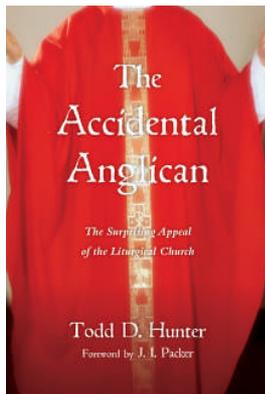
But in another sense, I am in no way an *accidental* bishop. I chose. I am not a victim of others. I have benefited from others and from God's leading in ways that I simply did not anticipate. Conversations, events and memories over the past ten months have shown me that my calling into the Anglican Mission in the Americas (AMiA)—a missionary church-planting movement sent from the Anglican Church of Rwanda and connected with the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA)—has not really come out of the blue. Reflecting back, I can now see a clear trajectory of events and people that prepared me to be an accidental bishop.

What does a bishop do?

The bishop is the overseer of churches and priests, usually in a district called a diocese. You begin as a deacon, an ordained servant usually ministering in a local church. Then you can

Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



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become ordained as a priest, a minister who conducts sacramental worship. Coming from a low-church background, I felt I was neither ready nor suited to be a bishop. Nevertheless, I became convinced that being consecrated as a bishop was the right and responsible thing to do. *Right* because it was responding to God's call. *Responsible* because birthing churches means raising them too, not abandoning them to the forces of an increasingly hostile culture.

To learn more about Anglicanism, you spent some quality time with J. I. Packer, author of *Knowing God*. What's he like?

I found Packer to be gentle, peaceful, kind and generous. He is an icon of a loving and clear-thinking evangelical Anglican. Looking back over decades of knowing English evangelicals, I saw in J. I. Packer someone I should try to emulate as an Anglican bishop.

Who else has inspired you?

John Stott is for me a lifelong model of what it means to be a rector. His qualities of a keen mind, authentic spirituality and dedication to his congregation have shaped my imagination for a number of years. There is something about the mixture of kindness, love, respect for others and scholarship exemplified in Stott that provides a solid foundation for the many tasks of pastoral ministry. And no one has influenced my overall theology more in the last decade than Tom Wright. Wright has ongoing influence in my work as a missionary bishop because he shows me the way of being a Christ-follower in the kingdom of God.

Also reading about and then meeting Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini of Rwanda and his good friend and partner Bishop John Rucyahana, along with their wives Freda and Harriet, saved my eroding confidence in Christian leadership. Having lived through the genocide in Rwanda, they know better than most of us the devastating pain and the powerful love and deliverance that can be found in the kingdom of God.

What is your biggest surprise so far in your journey from the Jesus Movement to the Anglican church?

I get asked that question a lot. As I've studied Anglicanism for the past couple years and pondered this question, a clear answer has emerged: Anglican theology and practice have given me, as a pastor and church planter, a huge treasure chest of tools for contemporary evangelism and spiritual formation.

Many of us are burned out and looking for a fresh way to practice our faith. We are looking for a way of following Jesus that keeps our feet firmly in historic orthodoxy and in conversation with the world. We have been given great gifts in our tradition that God is now using in our lives to make us into his cooperative friends in putting the world to rights.