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Essay Questions for Nominees
Diocese of Alaska Bishop
Discernment Process
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Alaska has a rich history of evangelism. Yet even while new ministries spring to life, we struggle to attract new people to our churches. What would you propose as an evangelism strategy for Alaska?

1. "[Faith] comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ." Romans 10:17

I am convinced that Paul expresses in his letter to the church in Rome the foundation for a seemingly simple yet highly effective evangelism strategy. This strategy certainly was effective in the context of the first century Roman world, which one could argue was in many ways as vast and diverse as Alaska is even today. The heart of Paul's strategy in this context was the proclamation of Christ. For Paul then and for us today no other strategy is as effective in bringing people into relationship with Christ than the proclamation of the Gospel by people who are themselves converted, committed, called and prepared to share their personal faith with others.

Evangelism for Paul, and for me, is founded on sharing the message of Christ Jesus and his redeeming love with others. It seems such a simple strategy, but in a Church that often finds itself driven to develop new mission, new programs, and new activities to attract new members, it is this foundational core evangelism strategy that is often lost in the shuffle to be 'marketable.' Yet I believe it is this core understanding of evangelism that needs to be revitalized. If the Church is to grow, we must share our faith.

The bishop's role in this strategy is to be a leader and a witness to the Gospel who is present in the various communities of the diocese. Within these communities, the Bishop is to share his faith; to experience life and the hope of Christ in the contexts of the people of Alaska; to preach in word *and* deed; and to nurture and support others in their understanding and experience of the Good News so that they, in turn, may share their message with others. This is the practical aspect of the evangelical calling of a bishop expressed in the prayerbook liturgy for ordination of a bishop: "...to be one with the apostles in proclaiming Christ's resurrection and interpreting the Gospel, and to testify to Christ's sovereignty as Lord of lords and King of kings (BCP page 517)."

As bishop, therefore, I would make it my goal and priority to support those who have come to faith in Christ by being with them in prayer, worship, and study. Furthermore, I would keep close fellowship with the clergy so that they might also be nurtured and grow in their own evangelistic witness to the transformative life of Christ in their life and in their context. For this to work in Alaska, I believe, requires a bishop willing to engage the journey of faith as well as the journey of vast distances to be with Alaska's people of faith to support and nurture their evangelistic witness. I believe there to be nothing more attractive, more magnetic, than a church of individuals, alive and energized by their faith, who are willing to reach out and speak out to share that faith with others.

Alaska is a young state in that its median age is fairly low. Alaska also has a heritage of honoring its elders. Describe your work with youth and elders.

2. My first cure as an ordained leader of the Episcopal Church was as an assistant rector in a parish church located in a college town. I was relatively young at the time and the father of two pre-school aged children. Naturally, I was drawn to ministry with young people, as that was also the context of my family life. I initiated several programs for young families including a weekly worship service that was young family friendly and that included a potluck supper. I also became very much a part of the parish ministry with college students—a program in that parish known as the Canterbury Fellowship. Furthermore, I supported the work of the Sunday School program and frequently taught classes in all age groups. To this day, I count working with Confirmation candidates as some of my most cherished ministry.

Perhaps it was because my wife and I were ourselves young adult members of the parish and knew first hand some of the challenges, hopes, and needs of younger members that I found myself looking for opportunities to support the spiritual needs of younger people. Hearing the unique spiritual concerns of young husbands and fathers, I developed what became a men's spirituality and prayer forum. I also have had an active ministry of spiritual direction for youth and for couples preparing for Holy Matrimony.

When my family came to St. Michael's, Geneseo, another college town, the first ministry my wife, Lisa, and I started was a Sunday program for college students modeled on the Canterbury Fellowship ministry at our previous parish. The program has been a great success. The design is simple enough: a prayerbook worship service later in the day on Sunday (even 5 o'clock is early for some college students), followed by a time for fellowship and sharing around a home-cooked meal at the Rectory. Lisa has been the principle cook for these Sunday meals and she joins me in supporting the fellowship of the program. We have been deeply blessed by this ministry with young adults, and those blessings have born fruits in the abiding relationships we have maintained with Canterbury

Students who have gone on to graduate and, in some cases now, to marry and start families of their own.

I also firmly believe that children should be seen and appropriately heard in worship. Serving as an acolyte in church was a formative part of my own experience growing-up in the church. Serving at the altar taught me a deep respect for the worship of the church and of the value and dignity of my participation in the liturgical life of the parish. Therefore, in my parish leadership I have been intentional in developing an active acolyte ministry that involves even the youngest members of our parish community. St. Michael's was proud to send a team of almost 25 young acolytes to the National Acolyte Festival in Washington, DC in 2006. Our youngest acolyte at that event was 5 years old. These young Disciples of Christ know that they belong to the body of Christ and that their parish family values their presence and gifts.

Nothing helps build a commitment to faith than opportunities to put that faith into action. In 2008, I organized and led a small group of our teens to Bay St. Louis, MS where we worked together on rebuilding homes destroyed by hurricane Katrina. This mission trip will long be remembered as an important element in the formation of all who participated.

While I have certainly loved ministering with and being ministered by youth and young adults, the witness, concerns, and care of my community's elders has also been an important element of my vocation. In Lexington, VA, I initiated and led a weekly Bible study and Eucharist with the residents of the local nursing home. I found listening to the stories and interpretations of scripture from within the context of their many years of experience to be an extraordinary gift.

It has been a joy and a gift to call on the older members of the parishes I have served, too. Many of the community elders in my parish in Lexington have remained close friends and correspondents. In Geneseo, I initiated a regular worship service at a local community residence for seniors. I also participate in the shared worship leadership at the County Nursing Home.

My hope, working with a small group of committed elders of our parish, is to develop a program that will support and prepare elders to share their personal stories and faith with the younger generation. While visiting Alaska on sabbatical in 2006, I was blessed to have visited Allakaket at the time of "Culture Camp." Sitting with the village children and listening to Johnson Moses, a village elder, tell the sacred stories of his youth--the stories that were important to his formation as a person of God, was truly a holy experience. I came away from that experience with a renewed commitment to the power of personal story to effect lives and with a clear sense that our elders have much to provide the next generation that should not only be honored, but also cherished as a sacrament of faith. Having participated in the process of Public Narrative while attending General Convention, I see many opportunities to support our elders in sharing

their stories with others in ways that transcend generational barriers and keep us rooted in our traditions.

Based on your reading of the diocesan profile: What do you see as your greatest challenge as the Bishop of Alaska? What excites you most about the role?

3. My greatest challenge as Bishop of Alaska would be balancing the many great challenges of being the Bishop of Alaska. Here I am moved by the profound image used by Father David Salmon to express the five gifts of ministry as expressed in Ephesians and his understanding of the thumb as representing the bishop, the apostle, who touches all the other ministers. Father Salmon's image is a symbol that reveals the need for the bishop to be in motion and in balance.

In Alaska, I see that role as a challenge to be present to the various ministers: to be in-touch, in fact and in degree, with a vast and diverse diocese of disciples and ministers. That challenge speaks directly to a personal need to be willing to honor the image of the bishop's crosier as the symbol of one who goes out to the people, who is present, and who serves as a symbolic unifying agent. To succeed in this task requires a bishop with the courage and fortitude of Bishops Rowe and Bentley and Archbishop Stuck who traveled extensively in the days when even 20 miles covered in a day was considered good progress; combined with the openness, care, and deep understanding for the diverse needs of Alaska's peoples expressed in the ministries of Bishops Charleston and MacDonald; the determination and energy of Bishop Gordon; and coupled in the administrative skills of Bishops Cochran and Harris. Overall, it seems a balance of many personalities and gifts is the tallest order for success as the bishop called to touch the many ministries of the diocese of Alaska.

What excites me most about this role is the very challenge of it. I am a pilot and flying has become a very important element of my own personal spiritual joy and renewal. I fly mostly for my own recreation and prayer life. However, ever since I can remember, I have had a deep desire to combine my ministry with my joy of flying. I see in the role of Bishop of Alaska an extraordinary and exciting opportunity to live out that desire.

For several weeks on sabbatical, I visited the Diocese of Alaska and served the villages of Allakaket, Beaver, and Tanacross. The experience left me with a strong desire to return, to learn and experience more, and to become even more a part of this wonderfully diverse diocese and church. In Allakaket, I had the distinct privilege of baptizing two children: Flora Alba Daisy Henry and Elma Elizabeth Cheyenne Bergman and I have long wondered how they are doing and growing. Realizing that my very brief stay in the Diocese those few years ago was not even a pixel of the entire image of Alaska, I am excited by the opportunity to learn more deeply of the many people and regions that compose the Alaskan profile. I have so much to learn about Alaska, and the possibility that Alaska would be willing to teach me fills me with an awed sense of hopefulness and energy.

It would be foolish for me to avoid the challenge stated by Alaska's clergy: "Money!" I must say that like many of my clergy colleagues there is little in the prospects of financial challenges and economic realities that excite me in the same way that the thoughts of visiting the various people and places of the Diocese excites and energizes me. Nevertheless, the challenges of money are real and can occupy a substantial amount of our time and energy—time and energy better served in evangelism, worship, and fellowship. Funding ministry is and will always be a matter of creativity, hopefulness, and, more often than not, a deep faith that God will equip and provide for those who are called.

The bishop, I believe, must be willing to help the ministers of the Diocese make priority decisions. By touching all the ministries of the Diocese, the bishop is in a unique position to provide a broader context for priorities to be established. Furthermore, the Bishop can serve as one who makes connections that help support ministries with resources from both within the Diocese and from the broader Episcopal Church. Finally, the bishop can help protect the hopes and ideas of the diocese so that effective long-range vision and planning is possible. This is the work of stewardship and I see it as a great gift, an invitation to participate in the eternal work of God, and an exciting element in the role of bishop of Alaska.

The Bishop of Alaska serves the largest area of any bishop in the United States. How do you currently maintain a healthy mind, body and spirit, while balancing the demands of your vocation with relational and personal needs?

4. The Bishop of any Diocese must make wellness a top priority. This is especially important as the one called to be a "faithful pastor and wholesome example for the entire flock of Christ." The demands on a bishop's time, energy, and spirituality are manifold and, to be certain, unlimited. As certain is the responsibility for the bishop to protect and assert boundaries and practices that protect these most cherished gifts that the bishop has to offer. This is another example of stewardship and a sacred responsibility every bishop and minister must take seriously.

It is also every person's stewardship responsibility to take good care of those who are closest in his or her life. This means being willing to make personal and family needs a priority over church needs at times when sound stewardship dictates that as the most healthful course of action. In the end, the decision to focus on one's personal health is ultimately a decision to serve the health of the church.

I maintain a healthy lifestyle. Regular exercise, physical and spiritual, is an important part of my life discipline. In addition to regular gym workouts over a week, I walk two times a day with my dog. My personal prayer life is focused around the Daily Office and time for quiet contemplation and meditation. As

mentioned in the answer to an earlier question, I use opportunities to fly as a time for recreation and reflection. However, I also engage in many activities that I enjoy with my family. As a family, we camp, sail, fish, swim, snowmobile, ski, and enjoy exploring the natural world.

Another element to balancing the demands and needs of one's vocation with one's wellness and health is being able to identify when one's health is deteriorating—when the balance is being lost. In other words, it is necessary to know when you are getting sick. I find that the best 'physician' for this diagnosis is a trusted counselor or confessor who is outside the church/diocesan system. It is important to have friends and family who are not part of the church. I have found my ecumenical colleagues to be of great benefit in maintaining my perspective and in encouraging my wellness. I have also found my friends who are not members of my parish to be some of the best supporters of my health and wholeness.

As Bishop of Alaska, it would be a top personal priority for me to establish and maintain these systems and practices to support my health and the health of my family.

Most of our clergy are non-stipendiary and work in isolation from other clergy. How would you provide pastoral care and support for these disciples?

5. The foundation of pastoral care, as I have understood it and experienced it, is a ministry of presence. While electronic means of communication and new technologies have made more immediate contact possible with individuals scattered over vast areas, there is still no adequate substitute for the gift of personal presence in the care of souls.

In Alaska, a ministry of physical presence is an enormous challenge. My sense is that this challenge would be somewhat relieved by the ability of the bishop to make regular visitation with clergy, and may be more feasible if the bishop were able to participate actively in providing the means of making those visits.

The bishop can also go a long way towards pastoral care by taking time to keep in contact with the clergy by using the technology available. Of course, as one who has appreciated the personal pastoral care of my own bishop, I have come to recognize the gift of hand-written notes. Receiving a written letter from my bishop demonstrates to me that my pastor is willing to give his time and personal touch even when he is unable to be with me in person. I believe this personal touch is a real expression of the ministry of presence.

While there are many challenges to overcome, I have to believe that there is a way to make the bishop available to all the clergy, and to build opportunities for regional clergy to engage in fellowship and mutual support. One model for this sort of support that I have experienced and would seek to adapt in Alaska is regularly scheduled 'clericus' gatherings of regional clergy. In the Diocese or

Rochester, these meetings have been a time for Bible Study, Case Study, and communication. I have found them to be an extraordinary pastoral blessing. Therefore, I would seek to make a similar experience available to the clergy in the Diocese of Alaska. Of course, the model would have to be adapted, but important needs and goals are fertile soil for new and creative modification of worthwhile ministry.

It has been my experience, too, that non-stipendiary clergy do not have the same scheduling 'freedom' that parochial paid clergy sometimes enjoy. Many times in my ministry I have witnessed local clergy and non-stipendiary clergy, who in most cases work full-time jobs outside the parish setting, prevented from participating in diocesan clergy support programs or events because those events have been scheduled during working hours or days. This is a special concern that any bishop must address and made even more challenging in the context of the Diocese of Alaska where the bishop must be willing to accommodate the many contexts in which the clergy engage their ministries. In the Diocese of Rochester, it is often said, "the distance to Rochester (the See City) is as far from Allegany County (our southern most area) as Allegany County is from Rochester." This terrible quip is a very insensitive response to those who complain about having to travel to the Diocesan House in Rochester for programs and support. The fact is, however, that often it is far more difficult for people in Allegany County, who are mostly part-time or non-stipendiary clergy and lay leaders, to get to Rochester than it is for Rochester to get to Allegany County. I suspect that similar situations exist in Alaska. Isolated non-stipendiary clergy have many additional barriers to access the bishop and peer-support. Therefore, I believe it is even more important for the bishop to work with all the clergy to develop models that accommodate this reality.

Until as bishop I have the opportunity to examine the resources available for pastoral care, my best answer to this question is that pastoral care would be an important element of my ministry and a priority as I look at models and hear from the diocesan clergy how best to meet their pastoral needs. My hope would be that my ability to fly might open the door to even more opportunities to serve those who otherwise would be left in isolation.

Our Diocese is highly diverse in culture. Many of our heritages are unique to Alaska. What leadership experience do you have with diverse cultures?

6. While I have had many opportunities in my life and career to experience, learn about, and participate in diverse groups and cultures, I must admit that my leadership experience with the sort of cultural diversity represented in Alaska is limited. My short time in the Diocese of Alaska was spent with the genuine hope that I might get a taste of the experience of ministry in diverse cultures. The simple fact, however, is that while I was grateful for these experiences, it would be a stretch to count them as leadership experience.

In my parish setting, I have leadership experience with ministry in conversation with the migrant farm worker communities of our region of Western New York. In that area, I facilitated a welcome dinner and gathering for the members of the local Migrant Farm Worker Center at the church. The goals for this event were learning from one another and opening channels of communication and mutual respect. St. Michael's has a history of ministry *to* the Migrant Center. Our vision, however, was to develop a ministry *with* the Migrant Center. To realize this vision required that we first come to understand each other better and to develop into mutual partners in mission.

Although not necessarily a culturally distinct group in the true sense of the word, prior to ordination, I served as an administrator for group homes for developmentally disabled adults. One of the many homes I worked with was a deaf community—all the residents and most of the staff were deaf. In order to work effectively with this group, I learned sign language. Nevertheless, beyond simply knowing the 'vocabulary' of this group's language, I discovered that if I was to be trusted and understood in this community, I also needed to come to know and understand their unique social perspective. I needed to 'listen' and understand as best I could the experiences of life for these people who sensed the world in a unique way.

I certainly hope not to be misunderstood as saying that diverse cultures are similar to developmental disabilities. Nothing could be further from the truth. However, as one not exposed to significant leadership opportunities in diverse cultures like those in Alaska, as bishop in that context, I would draw upon my experience and understanding that diversity is to be cherished. All groups of people possess God given integrity and are blessed with unique and holy gifts.

If we are to be leaders and good stewards of God's manifold and diverse gifts, we have a special obligation to respect and value the integrity of those who are different from ourselves. This has been an important element of my work in the parish, at the diocesan level, and in my career in residential programs before my ordination. For true ministry to happen, diverse groups must first learn from one another and come to a place of mutual respect and value of each other's differences and gifts. Here I am reminded of the early 20th century missionary experience of Archdeacon Hudson Stuck whose writings are full of cautionary criticism of the lack of mutual regard and respect for the traditions and integrity of Alaska's native peoples demonstrated by many who had come to Alaska from the outside. Without understanding, without valued differences, without mutual respect for the integrity of cultural groups, the freedom and hopeful message of the Gospel is reduced in power and effect.