

JOEL SCANDRETT – CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

1. What are the greatest challenges to the spread of the Gospel in the United States today?

The major challenges to the spread of the Gospel by the American church today fall into two categories: external and internal. Externally speaking, we continue to face the modern challenge of *scientific materialism* (not science!) which insists that only material reality is real, and that the supernatural, miracles, and especially the Incarnation and Resurrection of our Lord are fables that cannot be believed by reasonable people. If there is a God, according to scientific materialism, that God is either absent (deism) or identified with nature (pantheism). This perspective has been with us since the rise of the scientific age, and Anglicans like Joseph Butler and CS Lewis have contended against it. The “New Atheism” is one recent outgrowth of it, “moralistic therapeutic deism” is another.

In our postmodern context, this perspective is increasingly combined with a *radical relativistic individualism*, which asserts that no single understanding of reality can or should be normative. Instead, the individual is free to choose from a smorgasbord of divergent “realities” and identities as fits their preference. What is true or real matters far less than whether the individual is free to be and express themselves, and tolerance and inclusion are valued above all else. By contrast, Christianity, which offers a unified biblical understanding of God, the world, and humanity made in God’s image and under God’s rule, is increasingly perceived to be oppressive. Together, these two perspectives (with others) make many parts of American culture increasingly unreceptive to the Gospel.

Internally speaking, I believe the main challenges to the Gospel within the American church are *politicization* and *traditionalism*. While biblical Christians have understandably reacted to the trends mentioned above, we have too often failed to respond *as the church* with the love of Christ. Instead, we have withdrawn from the public square while relying on legal protections and political champions to defend our rights and freedoms. While political process and legislation *are* necessary, the unique role of the church as the redemptive public presence of the Body of Christ is too often abandoned by such withdrawal, and the credibility of the church as a vibrant public witness to Christ is undermined.

Relatedly, I see much of the American church reacting to these trends by retreating into an insular *traditionalism*. I am the first to affirm the need for the church to be faithful to Scripture and the apostolic tradition, but that is not the same thing as an unbending fixation on traditional ways of doing church for their own sake. I am absolutely committed to our beautiful tradition of Prayer Book worship, which is one of the main reasons I became an Anglican. But as the Anglican Communion itself demonstrates, the style and aesthetics of that worship can vary widely from culture to culture. With the great diversity of cultures present in our region, I believe we must be open to ways of doing church that are contextually appropriate to that diversity, and thereby able to proclaim the Gospel more effectively in those contexts.

2. As you look back on your ordained ministry, describe one or two highlights where you saw the advance of the gospel or the growth of the church. What was your role in this?

Two ministry highlights immediately come to mind. The first occurred while I was a grad student living in New Jersey. (I was not ordained yet.) I spent a year assisting with the English-speaking congregation of a local Korean church. This was an immigrant church and the English-speaking pastor was the husband of one of my Korean grad school friends. The English-speaking congregation was made up of second-generation, college and post-college Korean-Americans. The pastor was concerned because many of these young Koreans were openly questioning their faith or even actively departing from it. The cause of this trend was that many of these second-generation Koreans identified Christianity with traditional Korean culture. Now living in America, they were rejecting traditional Korean culture and Christianity along with it. The pastor asked if I would spend a year teaching and discussing basic Christian doctrine to help his people distinguish between their Christian faith and their Korean culture. So began a delightful, exciting, challenging and immensely rewarding year of ministry with these young Korean-Americans. Every Sunday, I would present a brief teaching on some aspect of Christian doctrine, then discuss it with them over (fantastic!) Korean food. At the end of the year, many of them said that the process had been helpful, and several shared that it had helped to make their faith their own. Unfortunately, several also continued their journey out of the church. But all in all, it was a successful and immensely valuable year of ministry.

The other highlight took place after I was ordained and living in Chicagoland. Our family was attending Church of the Resurrection Wheaton, but there was little opportunity for me to exercise priestly ministry there. However, our pastoral care pastor was a deacon awaiting ordination to the priesthood, and he asked if I would join him to plant a church and serve as its priest and celebrant while he would serve as deacon and rector. This came as clear answer to prayer, so we joyfully left Resurrection in 2010 to plant Church of the Ascension Elmhurst. The next two years were a wonderful season of preaching, celebrating, and providing pastoral care for this church plant. And growth came. It wasn't explosive, but we steadily grew from a core of about twelve people to over thirty, drawing a number of unchurched people from the neighborhood in which we planted. Unfortunately, our family left in 2012 to come to Pittsburgh and the plant subsequently struggled. Sadly, it closed several years later, but I learned a great deal—both positive and negative—about church planting, and grew as a pastor through the experience.

3. What modern or historical (non-biblical) figure do you view as an inspiration or example for their leadership? Please share an example of how this influenced your own ministry.

The figure that most inspires me as an Anglican leader is John Wesley. Wesley is virtually unique in his embodiment of a number of ministry traits that some might consider incompatible. But Wesley is the original “three-streams” Anglican, and I believe such a combination of qualities is essential for success in Anglican ministry today.

Evangelical and Sacramental. Wesley is best known as the evangelist-revivalist who was instrumental in the Great Awakening and the founding of the Evangelical movement. He is legendary for his willingness to go beyond the walls of the parish and preach the Gospel to unchurched people from all walks of life. However, many do not know that Wesley was also a high churchman, committed to Prayer Book piety and worship, who received Communion weekly—and in penitential seasons, daily! Wesley was also convinced that Communion was a “converting ordinance,” and would offer Communion to his unchurched (but *baptized*) hearers. This combination of evangelical commitment and sacramental spirituality has been central to my own ministry, with robust evangelical preaching (Word) and joyful celebration of the Eucharist (Sacrament) forming the dual core of transformative Anglican worship.

Missional and Ecclesial. In a similar manner, Wesley was at the forefront of mission as a part of his “Methodist” movement. He instituted the practice of the “circuit rider,” first in England and then in America, by which preachers on horseback could plant and sustain multiple churches in a region. (My great-grandfather was converted by Methodist circuit-riders in the late nineteenth century.) However, the circuit riders were all *clergy*, and their churches were under ecclesial authority. For Wesley, an “independent church” was an oxymoron. This model of the church on mission is one I find especially compelling. Rather than outsourcing mission exclusively to individual Christians or parachurch organizations, we need to act missionally *as the church* by planting church communities in strategic and unprecedented locations.

Doctrine and Spirit-Led. Wesley was unbending in his commitment to creedal Christian orthodoxy and highly critical of the weak “latitudinarianism” of many of his Anglican contemporaries. Yet when it came to his methods of evangelism and mission, he followed the leading of the Holy Spirit, despite the protests of fellow clergy who wanted him to remain within the bounds of the parish system. Wesley relied deeply on the Holy Spirit in prayer and decision-making, and would often alter his plans or approach to situations in response to promptings of the Spirit. Wesley’s Spirit-filled orthodoxy has been central to my approach to pastoral ministry.

A Catholic Spirit. Finally, while Wesley was convinced that his Anglican faith was the truest expression of historic Christianity one could find, he engaged both non-conformist Protestants and Roman Catholics in conversation, seeking to draw closer in mutual understanding and cooperation. Wesley’s ecumenical hospitality has been a model for me in my own ecumenical conversations and relationships, and one I believe that we should follow in establishing relationships of Christian friendship and cooperation with other Christian bodies.

4. Based on what you read in the diocesan profile and bishop's profile, what skills, gifts, or characteristics would you expect to bring to the role of bishop?

Visionary and Collaborative Leader. I am a visionary leader. I naturally envision opportunities for the organizations of which I am a part to improve processes and develop initiatives to strengthen and extend their mission. This has been an invaluable asset in the major projects I have developed over the years, but I would be far more personally invested in bringing these gifts to bear on behalf of the ADP, especially in respect to church planting and strategic ministry partnerships. I am also relational and collaborative in my approach, and delight in gathering the right team of people with the right combination of gifts to most effectively accomplish the mission.

Pastoral Care and Oversight. I love to love people. I am an empathetic and compassionate leader with a large capacity to extend myself to others. My experience and training in crisis have equipped me to engage hurting people, and I have a great deal of experience in pastoral care. I have been blessed to teach and mentor future pastors over the past decade, and have organically found myself advising and supporting a number of former students now in pastoral ministry. Whether helping them to think through challenges or strategize about ministry opportunities, I have already been serving as an adviser and support to a network of junior clergy. I would do this all more for our ADP clergy. In respect to broken relationships, I would identify qualified persons to assist me in the process of reconciliation.

Transformational Leader. All ministry is contextual. I am a highly adaptable missional leader with formation and experience in a variety of cultural and ethnic contexts, and truly delight in working with people from diverse backgrounds. I would vigorously undertake the development of new ministry opportunities and creative reconfigurations of existing ministry resources in order to maximize the ADP's Gospel impact. And I would leverage my relationships with TSM and other networks to identify promising aspirants who would not only renew our ranks but extend the ministry of the ADP.

Bridge-Builder. I am a relational connector, bridge-builder, and ecumenist both by temperament and conviction. I would make the spiritual health and cohesion of the ADP one of my top priorities. At the same time, I would develop collaborative relationships with other church bodies and organizations in the region to uphold our public witness to Christ and extend the work of his Kingdom. As for the ACNA and Anglican Communion, I have extensive experience working with bishops at the provincial level through my work on the Catechism and Catechesis Committee. I am confident that I would represent us well at every level of Anglican governance.

Competent Administrator. I am a competent administrator in my own right, and have extensive experience leading administrative bodies of various kinds. I am able to direct and delegate with confidence and kindness, and have administrative wisdom as to appropriate courses of action and communication. I would delight in working with the ADP's administrative bodies to advance the robust ministry of the diocese on all fronts.

5. Briefly articulate your position on women and holy orders, specifically women serving as deacons, priests and rectors.

I joyfully support the ordination of women to the orders of deacon and priest, as well as the appointment of women priests as rectors.

The question of women's ordination is a complex one, with a painful history inherited from our prior life in the Episcopal Church. While I firmly stand in the "pro" camp, I question some of the arguments for women's ordination inherited from that history. In particular, I question any argument for women's ordination on the basis of rights, representation, or therapeutic affirmation. These are not arguments from Scripture or Christian theology, but are imported from the culture and undergirded by the progressive assumption that "relevance" to culture trumps all other concerns. While the modern cultural recognition of the equality and dignity of women may have opened the church's eyes to women in leadership, our *reasons* for diverging from centuries of precedent must be grounded in Scripture and sound theological reasoning. What are some of those reasons?

First, Genesis 1:26-28 makes clear that humanity (*adam*) was created in the image of God *together* as male and female and appointed to rule *together* over God's creation. Genesis 2:15 uses the language of "working" and "keeping" the temple-garden of Eden, the very language used of the function of the priests in temple service (e.g., Num. 3:7-8). Genesis 2 also introduces the woman as the man's "counterpart" in this God-ordained role, without whom he is incomplete. Thus, Genesis 1 and 2 depict man and woman created to be rulers and priests of creation *together* under the rule of God. It is not until Genesis 3 that any aspect of hierarchy enters into that relation, and that hierarchy is clearly presented as a consequence of sin. God's original intention was that man and woman would work *together* as partners, whether in marriage or in service to the world, as rulers and priests of creation.

Second, following the scholarship of others, I have come to believe that the Apostles Peter and Pauls' proscriptions against women exercising authority in the church (1 Tim. 2:12) and their ordering of households in terms of submission to male authority (e.g., Eph. 5-6) are not universally applicable to the church in all ages, but were concerned with the harmonious and peaceful conduct of the church in relation to pagan culture in its first-century context. Moreover, Scripture contains significant instances of women serving as judges, prophets, and teachers, and Paul himself refers to various women as "apostles" and "fellow-servants." In light of the whole counsel of Scripture, it is difficult to make the case that God does not want women to lead in the church.

Third, the abolition of slavery in the modern era is to me a hermeneutical parallel to the question of women's leadership. It demonstrates that there are redemptive biblical principles of freedom and equality that point beyond the sin-laden cultural horizon of Scripture to a transformation of church and society that more closely approximates God's original creational purposes. These do not overturn the God-created structure of gendered human relations described in Scripture, but rather reverse their distortion and corruption by sin and seek to

restore them to God's original intention for man and woman. Just as Scripture both acknowledges the reality of slavery yet contains redemptive principles that contravene it, so Scripture acknowledges the reality of male dominance yet contains redemptive principles that lead to the restoration of man and woman to full and equal partnership.

Finally, there is the complex question of what Anglicans in particular mean by "ordination." This is especially challenging because of the divergent Reformational and Anglo-Catholic ecclesiologies that lie behind our differing positions on ordination to the priesthood—irrespective of the question of women. Are Anglican priests more like "teaching elders" or are they "icons of Christ?" Do we look to the Old Testament for our understanding of Christian priesthood, or does the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ (Heb 10:10) render that understanding obsolete? All agree that the One True Priest and Celebrant of the Church is our ascended and reigning Lord Jesus, who is *presently and actively* our Head and "worship leader" (Heb 10:19-22), and who intercedes for us continually before our Father in heaven (Rom 8:34). Our priesthood is a participation in his Priesthood and all Christians share in it (1 Peter 2:9). Contrary to the view that the Old Testament paradigm persists and that the male sex continues as a prerequisite to the Christian priest serving as an icon of Christ (*in persona Christi*), I believe that Jesus' once-for-all fulfillment of the Levitical priesthood and his exaltation as our everlasting High Priest relativizes the question of the sex of the priest. Because it is in his perfected and sinless *humanity*, not his male sex, that the incarnate Son intercedes for both men and women, so both men and women in their common redeemed humanity are able to serve *together* as priests in his name (*in nomine Christi*). Much more lies behind my reasoning here, but this is the core of my conviction on the subject.

For all these (very briefly sketched) reasons and more, I uphold the ordination of women to the offices of deacon and priest and make no distinction on the basis of sex. I would joyfully ordain qualified women to these offices and approve their appointment as rectors to those congregations that welcome them. In addition, I would encourage women rectors to include men in active liturgical and church leadership whenever possible, just as I would encourage male rectors to include women in such leadership—in order to symbolically re-present the service of man and woman *together* in leading the church and as a witness to God's reconciling love in the world.

6. The Diocese of Pittsburgh has a diverse range of congregations. Please articulate the different needs between urban, city, suburban, and rural churches in a Revelation 7 context.

All ministry is contextual. The ADP is a “mixed body” of churches in a variety of diverse contexts marked by differences in geographical location, social location, ethnicity, and politics, just to name a few. While the majority of our people may be white and middle class, we often inhabit different “tribes” of culture and speak different “languages” by which we make sense of the world.

Such diversity presents us with both a challenge and an opportunity. Our challenge is to identify and uphold that which *unites* us as a diocese: our common love for Jesus Christ and membership in his one Body, and our common Gospel mission to make disciples of all peoples. This requires that we foster a spirit of love, humility, and mutual respect in relation to one another—a spirit that is united in essentials and tolerant in non-essentials. It also requires that we move forward in a way that nurtures the health and flourishing of *all* our churches. This will require different expectations for each church in respect to location, scale of ministry, and assessment of resources and opportunities. In some cases, it may require cooperation and the creative reconfiguration of structures of ministry appropriate to the resources of each church. And all of the above will require strategic initiatives at the diocesan level.

But that diversity is also an opportunity, in two senses. First, each of our churches *already looks like its community* and has natural points of connection to it. We need to support each of our churches in leveraging those connections to minister to the needs of their local communities as an integral part of their Gospel witness. I am convinced that if we minister the love of Christ in concrete ways that engage the needs of our communities in the name of Christ, we will see people coming to Christ as a result.

Second, we also live in a diverse region that includes communities in which the ADP has no church presence. This is an immense Gospel opportunity, but it requires that we recruit clergy who are able to plant and minister in those communities, and who ideally reflect in themselves the character of those communities. My experiences among Afro-Caribbean, Korean, and Latin American Christians have given me an abiding desire to see Anglican churches planted in such diverse communities. But how do we also minister to prisoners, homeless, and mentally ill in our communities? And what of Pittsburgh’s Jewish community, one of the largest Jewish diaspora communities in the world? Bringing the Gospel these communities will require strategic support by the diocese and recruitment of gifted and committed leaders by which to undertake it.

Pittsburgh is an amazing city and region, with a rich history that precedes the founding of our nation. And Anglicans have been here from its beginning. If we move forward together in the love of Christ, we can both strengthen and extend the ministries of our existing churches, and raise up new churches that make disciples of every people, tribe, and language—to the glory of God, the renewal of his Church, and the advance of his Kingdom!