

Dear Search Committee,

Shortly before seminary, my wife, Holly, and I shared a meal with my spiritual director and her husband, a retired priest. He asked what kind of ministry I hoped to have, and I replied, “I want to be a parish priest for a while, but I feel like there is something else that God is calling me to—maybe campus ministry or teaching at a seminary.” And then he said, “Or bishop. You have a scholar’s mind, but a pastor’s heart.” Since being ordained to the priesthood, I have worked in parish ministry, in local formation, at Episcopal and secular non-profits, but I have never felt that I had found the final calling of my ministry. Along the way, lay and ordained people have suggested that God’s plans for me might include being a bishop, and I wonder if North Dakota is the place where God is calling me.

After nearly a decade of parish ministry, I sensed God was opening new doors. I began working for Saint Francis Ministries, where my work took me throughout the Episcopal Church and beyond. I directed a small group of priests who met with over 80 dioceses in two years. I led grant writing teams, started conversations with large cities about how to better serve juvenile offenders, and spoke regionally and nationally on subjects related to our work. Saint Francis Ministries gave me countless opportunities to meet people, to hear about their work, and to lend an ear to clergy who might only share their troubles with someone from outside their immediate context for ministry.

During COVID, I completed an executive MBA program and became the executive director of Rakhma, a small dementia care non-profit. Later, I joined Episcopal Homes as the manager of Becketwood, a large senior housing cooperative. Both positions required that I lead organizations through major changes. The changes at Rakhma were about the financial structure of the business; at Becketwood, I have had the opportunity to completely reorganize a staff and initiate conversations about deeper cultural change. For most of this time, I have also been acting as the cathedral dean in Eau Claire, managing diocesan liturgies including ordinations, serving on the diocesan governance committees, and working on the Wisconsin Trialogue. When I ended my time in Eau Claire in August of 2024, I almost immediately realized that my administrative gifts were strong, but my passion remained in ministry.

The recent chapters of my vocation have put me in places where I could listen to communities, come alongside them, and consider how they might grow or evolve. This quiet leadership of listening and reflecting is critical for a church that is changing, a church where lay and ordained Christians need to explore new ways of sharing Christ with the world. Whether that means starting a house church, providing overflow space for a homeless shelter, or simply welcoming people who are not always welcome in their communities because of who they are, I believe that most congregations would act if given permission to reconcile people with God and one another in new ways.

The need for someone to give Christian communities permission to innovate in their local context has brought two things into focus for me. First, I thrive when I am meeting people and sharing their hopes and dreams. Second, my heart longs to do this work full time. North Dakota's profile describes a search for a bishop who supports local ministry, who values diversity, and who draws people together around a common vision. I believe that God has given me the skills and the experiences, but most of all, the heart to do this work of building relationships and trusting congregations to hear what the Spirit is saying to them. If that same Spirit moves you to further conversation with me, I will look forward to that time, and if not, know that the Diocese of North Dakota will remain in my prayers.

Peace be with you,

Benjamin

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REMEMBER TO SAVE your changes.

Title	First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
The Very Rev.	Benjamin	Randall	Thomas

Personal Ministry Statement

"You are the salt of the earth." Ministry is like cooking: gather the ingredients, then be the salt— the small, transformative change that reveals what is possible in God's kingdom.

Order of Ministry	Status	Canonical Residence/Diocese	Licensed in Diocese of
Priest		Wisconsin	The Episcopal Church

Deacon Ordination Date	Priest Ordination Date	Bishop Ordination Date
Jun 9, 2007	Dec 8, 2007	

CPG Client Number	Sex	Birthdate	Marital Status
	Male	Sep 13, 1974	Married

Ethnicity
Caucasian

Languages Written	Languages Spoken	Languages in which You are Able to Lead Worship
German	English	English
Greek		
Latin		

Preferred contact
information
Home

Work Location

Work Phone

Work Cell

Work Email 1

Work Email 2

Home Location

Home Phone

Home Cell

Home Email

Website

Spouse/Partner First
Name
Holly

Spouse/Partner Last
Name
Krech Thomas

Spouse/Partner
Lay/Ordained
Lay

Number of Children
4

Number of Children
Living with You
4

Portfolio Individual's
Surname at Birth

Date of Last Background
Check
May 15, 2010

Company performing
check
Oxford Document

Diocese requesting
Western Kansas

Current Annual
Compensation

Cash Stipend
Cash Stipend

Housing / Rectory
Housing Allowance

Cash Stipend Detail

Housing / Rectory Detail

Utilities

Utilities Detail

SECA Reimbursement

SECA reimbursement
options

Compensation Required
for New Position

Negotiable
Yes

Additional Compensation Note

Housing Required for
5

Healthcare Needed
Full family

Degree Conferred

School / Institution
UMN-Carlson School of
Management

State
MN

Year Begun
2020

Year End
2022

Conferred Degree /
Certification
Executive MBA

Subject
Business

Degree Conferred

School / Institution	State	Year Begun	Year End
General Theological Seminary	NY	2007	2011
Conferred Degree / Certification	Subject		
Th.D.	Hist. Theology and New Testament		

Degree Conferred

School / Institution	State	Year Begun	Year End
General Theological Seminary	NY	2004	2007
Conferred Degree / Certification	Subject		
M. Div.			

Degree Conferred

School / Institution	State	Year Begun	Year End
CU-Boulder	CO	1997	2000
Conferred Degree / Certification	Subject		
M.A.	Philosophy		

Continuing Education

School / Institution	State	Year
General Theological Seminary	NY	2019
Certification Workshop	Subject	
	Preaching in Advent	

Continuing Education

School / Institution	State	Year
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Certification**Subject**

Continuing Education

School / Institution	State	Year
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Certification	Subject
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Continuing Education

School / Institution	State	Year
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Certification	Subject
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Position Title	Church/Organization	Diocese/Organization
Interim	Name	Name
	Christ Church Cathedral	Eau Claire

Location	Date Begun	Date Ended
Eau Claire, WI	Aug, 2019	Aug, 2024

Primary Gifts/Skills Engaged
administration , preaching , community outreach

Notes

Leading Vestry through complete re-evaluation of ministry, identity, property, and finance. Working to define mission. Repaid over \$60,000 in debt, raised \$30,000 in new endowment funds in first 18 months. Recruited community partners for conversations about partnership to serve the homeless, developed a partnership with City of Eau Claire, and local non-profits to provide emergency warming shelter for the homeless.

Position Title	Church/Organization	Diocese/Organization
Specialized Ministry, other	Name	Name
	Saint Francis Ministries	

Location	Date Begun	Date Ended
Salina, KS	Sep, 2016	Dec, 2020

Primary Gifts/Skills Engaged
networking , public relations , development , business acumen

Notes

Advocated nationally for social justice for a 1,500 employee ministry. Assembled team and engaged local leaders to build a lifetime employment program for youth aging out of foster care. Coordinated team of lay and clergy associates to reestablish contact with an under-cultivated donor base and worked to identify new ministry opportunities as part of a department that raised \$1M+ annually. Co-led website revision to emphasize people and stories at the core of ministry and drive philanthropy.

Position Title Teacher / Professor	Church/Organization Name Bishop Kemper School for Ministry	Diocese/Organization Name
Location Topeka, KS	Date Begun Sep, 2012	Date Ended
Primary Gifts/Skills Engaged teaching , mentoring , pastoral presence		
Notes For the last nine years, I have taught lay and ordained students in various aspects of ministry from biblical interpretation to priestly spirituality. I currently teach sacramental theology and liturgy as well as serving as the the consultant for student-designed liturgies.		

Position Title Cathedral Dean	Church/Organization Name Christ Cathedral	Diocese/Organization Name Western Kansas
Location Salina, KS	Date Begun Jul, 2010	Date Ended Aug, 2016
Primary Gifts/Skills Engaged administration , evangelism , preaching , teaching		
Notes Guided significant organizational change: Developed relationships with local non-profits for collaborative, public ministry. Led Vestry to rewrite parish bylaws and develop guidelines for building use, programs, and liturgy. Reconfigured the staff and outlined a 25-year capital improvement schedule for a nationally registered historic building. Increased presence of younger families and improved clarity about business/finance/administration of the Cathedral. Reduced energy costs by 30%.		

Position Title Assistant / Associate / Curate (Part-time)	Church/Organization Name Grace Church (Manhattan)	Diocese/Organization Name New York
Location New York, NY	Date Begun Aug, 2007	Date Ended Jun, 2010
Primary Gifts/Skills Engaged Christian education , preaching , pastoral care , worship leader		
Notes Designed and wrote an adult study program, emphasizing a broad range of modern and historical interpretations of New Testament books and/or major theological themes such as sacraments, creeds, and ecclesiology. Recruited lay people to lead small groups of 9-12 people for quarterly studies. Provided pastoral care, preached, and led worship regularly in a theologically and culturally diverse, resource-sized congregation.		

Position Title Seminarian	Church/Organization Name All Angels	Diocese/Organization Name New York
Location	Date Begun	Date Ended

Primary Gifts/Skills Engaged

adult education , confirmation , small groups , preaching

Involved for 3+ years in a home group which met weekly for a meal, prayer, Bible study, and fellowship. Taught confirmation for Jr. High and led adult education sessions. Assisted with liturgy. Parish had a significant homeless population which was fully integrated in the congregation.

Position Preferences	Open to Consider New	Desired Geographical
Bishop Diocesan, Canon to the Ordinary, Cathedral	Position	Location
Dean, Diocesan/Regional	Full time	Province I
Staff, Rector / Vicar /		Province II
Priest-in-Charge, Seminary		Province III
Dean, Teacher / Professor		Province IV
		Province V
		Province VI
		Province VII
		Province VIII
		Other Anglican
		Other

Additional Geographic Notes**1. Describe a moment in your recent ministry that you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.**

A few years ago, I was chatting with former student (now a colleague) in her office when she mentioned that she was just starting to work on a capital campaign. I offered to help, and she said, "That would be great, I've never done this before." In about an hour, we sketched the outlines of a \$85,000 capital campaign, which was a lot of money for a small church (about 30 ASA) in a town of 5,000 with a half-time rector. We defined the scope of work, the mechanics of accounting for pledges, and how to look for donors both in the church and the local community, and finally how to package the work in a way that would attract the most support. Three months later, she asked me for feedback on a letter that she was sending out to the congregation explaining the project, and I learned that she had already raised half of the money in a quiet phase. The capital campaign also started a conversation about vestry dynamics and served as the lead-in for the parish's 150 year anniversary. Reflecting on the conversations we've had about this project, I realized that I felt as much excitement and enthusiasm about my former student's success as about any of my own accomplishments.

2. Describe your liturgical style and practice.

Beautiful worship is a passion of my ministry: worship brought me to the Episcopal church, and I believe that excellent worship has the power to transform the human soul. My liturgical practice is best described as uncluttered. Worship should be designed for the context—the space, the ministers, and the congregation—with a goal of praising God and increasing congregational participation. At Christ Cathedral where I served as Dean and Rector for 6 years, I restored a number of historical "high church" liturgical elements while removing visual clutter and fussiness in practice. As a liturgy professor at the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry, I help students understand that the vision of liturgy is local. Good liturgy with 25 people looks different from good liturgy with 125 people. As a visiting priest in various places where I represented Saint Francis, I simply fit in with the local customs. For me, liturgy should bring people together to praise God with a common voice. How this is done varies from place to place, but the ultimate goal of praising God and transforming people never changes.

3. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

My leadership begins with asset based thinking: for any problem or opportunity, local people, local knowledge, and local assets are always what counts the most. It is a model that is directly compatible with the story of the loaves and fishes—local people and local resources are transformed to reveal the kingdom of God. For this reason, I begin with questions: what needs to be done here, what do you hope to change about your church or community? Learning what people want to do and what they think might work is the first step to building a shared vision of ministry. From this starting place, I mostly exercise a ministry of permission and empowerment. Leadership in ministry is most effective when the people whose lives are impacted have chosen the ministry,

rather than having them be maneuvered into an agenda that has been imposed from outside. This process involves a frequent communication, trust, and a lot of grace, but the result is that a team or community owns a project rather than a person. A leader's job is to bring to bring questions and perspective to problems.

4. How do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

I care for my spiritual well-being primarily through a disciplined prayer life. I begin most days by reading scripture and saying morning prayer. I meet with a spiritual director monthly and receive sacramental confession from time to time. In some eras of my ministry, I have taken a monthly day retreat to pray, to read, and to write. Emotionally, I put my greatest levels of trust in family and close personal relationships which do not depend on my "success" at church. I also spend time training and working with Ody, my bird dog (and family pet) and engage in other outdoor activities that allow me to be fully physically and mentally present in that moment. I have friends both inside and outside the church who like me for me, not because they call me "Father." Physically, I run and practice yoga. I keep regular dental appointments, and I am happy to see a doctor when physical problems arise. I limit my intake of processed foods. I often nap on my day off.

5. Describe your involvement in either the wider Church or geographical community.

As the Director of Church Relations and as the Director of Social Justice Programs, I represented Saint Francis Ministries to people throughout the Episcopal Church at diocesan conventions, as a speaker at conferences, and as a representative at significant events in the national church. I serve on the Alumni Executive Committee at General Theological Seminary. I was an invited panel speaker on the future of Anglican theology at the Consortium of Endowed Parishes. I served on the faculty for the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry (BKSM), a collaborative effort of four dioceses to train priests, deacons, and lay leaders. I was the co-chair of the Structure Committee in the Trialogue, a three-diocesan conversation about reunification of all Wisconsin dioceses. Outside the Church, I taught New Testament at a local college, served on the local YMCA Board of Trustees, and participated in the Site Council for Cottonwood Elementary as a community leader. I guest lectured at a local Lutheran college on early Christian practice and was an invited speaker at their annual preaching conference.

6. How do you engage in pastoral care for others?

Meaningful pastoral care is built on the active cultivation of relationships. People will call when there is a crisis, but the best ministry is not built on the energy of a crisis. Good pastoral care grows from earned trust. Keeping confidentiality, praying for people, and stopping by their homes and workplaces are the building blocks of my approach to pastoral care. When someone seems down or distant on a Sunday, I often call on Monday. I visit parishioners when they are sick, call them when they miss church, and stop to chat whenever I run into them in public. My family frequently hosts groups of people in our home for dinner or other social events, and I tried to have lunch with parishioner a couple of times each month to spend time with important volunteers and to get to know newcomers. When people visit the church, I follow-up with a phone call, an email, or a handwritten note. I have a group of clergy friends who I call on a regular basis to find out about their work and ministry and to share my own disappointments and joys.

7. Tell about a ministry project that exists because of your leadership. What was your role in its creation? Who can be contacted about this project?

Feeling that our congregation needed to do more outreach, I contacted the Ashby House, a homeless shelter next door to Christ Cathedral (Salina, KS) where I was the Dean. We partnered to write a \$75,000 matching grant with the Jessie Ball du Pont Fund for construction of Sanctuary House, a 10-unit stable housing community. Sanctuary House is a program of the Ashby House with ongoing volunteer participation from Cathedral parishioners who provide mentoring and spiritual support for residents. Bryan Anderson, (retired) Director of Ashby House, and Mark Constantine, (previously) Sr. Vice President of the Jessie Ball du Pont Foundation, are the best contacts for this project. I built a multi-partner program with a number of non-profit, for-profit, and government agencies to employ youth aging out of foster care this school year in a t-shirt and embroidery shop in Wichita, Kansas. As a multi-step light manufacturing process, T-shirt printing was selected as a useful entry point for a strong local manufacturing economy.

8. How are you preparing yourself for the Church of the future?

At the beginning of the COVID lockdown, I guessed that this disruption would be lengthy, so I enrolled in an executive MBA program to get some executive coaching, consolidate my business background into a degree, and learn new skills for management and executive leadership from a new perspective. I am an avid reader of the Bible and theology. Ongoing engagement with the primary story of our faith (the Bible) and with others who are reading that story keeps me open to new ideas about how God still brings light into the world. Preparing for and teaching courses gives me opportunities to bring others into conversation about matters of faith and culture. For a few years now I have used resources from the Fresh Expressions movement which arose out of

our family. Because of a commitment to incarnational ministry, we purchased a home in a marginal part of town in order to live in the neighborhood most directly served by the parish where I was the priest. I address tithing openly in stewardship campaigns, sermons, and conversations. My other stewardship practices are easily visible to the public: I keep a recycling bin in my office; people see me in the neighborhood, walking or biking to work, and running errands in my collar. Being out of a car is often an act of evangelism as I have chance conversations with people who see me and my clerical collar en route, and these conversations can lead to relationships and to inviting people to church. With respect to the physical assets of the church, I am a firm believer in long-term solutions rather than short-term fixes. Short-term solutions are generally rooted in a theology of scarcity and fear. By contrast, doing things well sends a clear message that we care about stewardship and that we have ministry plans both for today and for the future.

10. What is your experience of conflict involving the church? And what is your experience in addressing it?

When I arrived, Christ Cathedral (Salina) was home to a Montessori preschool which had been set up to run "independently" on the parish's tax ID number. There was no oversight from the Vestry or Rector, leaving the church open to the possibility of potentially devastating lawsuits. After discovering that the school was not separately incorporated, I brought in the Vestry to exercise what was essentially pro forma oversight. A major conflict erupted. Working with the Bishop, the Diocesan Chancellor, and the Vestry, I created an agenda to solve the problem based on issues such as liability, corporate integrity, incorporation of all programs into the mission of the church rather than personalities. We communicated the legal facts dispute directly to the congregation and the school community in a letter that I signed. When it was clear that the Montessori leaders saw the school as separate from the church's mission, the Vestry voted to incorporate the school separately and to move it off the church campus, thereby removing a source of contention and freeing space for the church to develop its own children's ministry.

11. What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

As interim dean in Eau Claire, I lead a team of part-time staff and highly committed volunteers who are overhauling a ministry model. As the interim, I see my role as someone who loves the congregation, whose job was to help them see possibilities that were already there, but not as someone who should be the prime mover. I do however, present the congregation with a clear choice either to keep the current, full-time priest model and be out of money in five years, or to engage with their neighbors, give up the prestige of a full-time priest, and start inviting the community to be their partner in ministry. In the first year, we paid off a \$30K diocesan debt, hosted an emergency warming shelter in partnership with another agency, rented space to a local arts instructor, and welcomed a community choir to practice and perform in our space. Letting go of the old way and being open to a

newfound curiosity about what God might do has helped the congregation engage the community and attract partners and even gain new members during the pandemic. Change did not go nearly as well in the Montessori School example as described in the “conflict” section of this portfolio.

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https://saintfrancisministries.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/SFM-271-Hi-LitesFall2019_web.pdf

You may provide the links to classes you've taught, resource materials you've

You may provide links to sites where others have reflected on your ministry

You may provide links to sites of groups/associations you participate in

Attach your resume here

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