



## **Electoral Nominating Committee (ENC)**

Nominations for Suffragan Bishop to be elected at Synod 2023

### **Application Questions: The Reverend Sean Love**

#### **Please provide a statement of coming to faith.:**

I am a sinner saved by grace through faith in my Lord Jesus Christ. The older I grow as a follower of Jesus, the more I know I would be hopeless, helpless, and ruthlessly self-absorbed if it were not for the mercy God showed me in Jesus.

I am a cradle Anglican, baptized in my infancy at St. John's Shaughnessy, my home parish for the first 25 years of my life. I gained an early appreciation for the dignity and reverence and beauty of Anglican Prayer Book worship. When I was seven my adoptive father died, and my mother Marguerite faithfully continued to take me to church weekly. When I was about 12, Harry Robinson came to St. John's and through his unique and faithful preaching the Holy Spirit began to work in my mind and heart in new ways. As a teenager I began to understand the Gospel – Christianity is not about what we do for God but what He has done for us in Jesus Christ. Over my teen years I realized that I needed a Saviour (sin and depravity affected every part of me) and that Jesus, shockingly exclusive in his teaching, was and is my Saviour. He died to pay my debt, and rose to confirm my new life in him.

I came to realize, slowly but surely, that I have been adopted twice: by my loving parents who chose me at birth and gave me a new name, and by my Heavenly Father, who redeemed me and made me a son and heir. He has sent the Spirit of his Son into my heart, crying 'Abba, Father!' (Galatians 4:5-7). The gospel is the power of God for salvation, "for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" Through the ministry of the Word, applied by the Holy Spirit, my faith has deepened: not faith in my faith, but faith in God and all he accomplished through Christ. Romans 5:1-11 and Ephesians 2:1-10 are accurate descriptions of what God has done and what it means for me personally.

One of the ways the Holy Spirit worked to mature me (I needed a lot of work!) was my annual involvement with Pioneer Pacific Camp, as a camper, and eventually cabin leader and later a co-director of Boy's Camp.

In this setting my growing understanding of God and his gospel got fleshed out in service. As a young cabin leader, I totally came to the end of myself and witnessed firsthand the power of prayer and God's work in bringing people to faith.

In my early 20's I was asked to become the new Youth Minister at St. John's, and learned through affliction and joy the weight of full-time ministry responsibility over a three-year period. The Lord provided me with excellent mentors, for whom I remain so grateful. The Lord also provided me with my future wife, although that was hidden from both of us at the time!

After getting married in 1993, Penny and I moved to Los Alamos, New Mexico (yes, the very town where Oppenheimer lived and worked), for her Post-Doctoral work. It was supposed to be a two-year gig; we ended up staying for nine, and all three of our sons were born there. What kept us in the U.S. was a full time Youth ministry job that Penny and I shared, which both the Episcopal and Lutheran churches developed together. This was ministry in churches that were full of committed people but where the gospel was not as clear as what I had been used to in Vancouver, and it was this lack that actually helped push me, under God, towards ordained ministry. In 2002 we moved back to Vancouver to attend Regent College. The nine years in Los Alamos were in some ways a 'desert' experience where I really started to study Scripture for myself.

By 2005 Penny and I and a team of about a dozen core members began to pray and plan for the launch of a new church plant, St. John's Richmond. God has blessed this work, and me, and I count it an inestimable privilege to serve Christ at SJR within the context of ANiC.

In sum, my journey of faith has been on-going, a consequence of God's faithfulness to the promises made at my baptism. I am now a convictional Anglican Christian. I love the Prayer Book way of worship (corporate and personal) because it so faithfully reflects the Bible and the Gospel.

## **1. What strengths and weakness do you look for in discerning if someone is called to ordination to the priesthood/presbyterate?**

In my capacity as the Diocesan Ordination Chaplain, I am involved with about 35 people at various stages of discernment about Ordination.

The first thing to say is it's never just "me"; ANiC does this essential work of discernment of possible future leaders collaboratively. Our basic goal is to prayerfully determine a person's (I'll call them a "candidate" from now on) suitability and fitness for ordained ministry. This involves assessing spiritual readiness

(biblical, theological, and pastoral assessment), understanding the demands of ordained ministry (through excellent in-parish training and experience), and personal suitability (gifts, skills, and character assessment) so that we are able to give a reasoned recommendation to the Bishop concerning whether or not the candidate should be accepted for ordination. We look for strength and ongoing growth in three areas: *conviction* (of the truth of the Gospel and Christian doctrine), *competency* (in ministry and in leadership) and *character* (moral integrity).

I will articulate this further in six ways. We are looking for:

1. LOVE OF GOD: The first qualification for leadership in the church is not *gifts* or *skills*: intellectual ability, financial aptitude, bold visions or creative thinking. The basic qualification is love for the Lord Jesus. Loving Jesus means knowing you have been forgiven much (Luke 7:47). It means ongoing repentance (continual turning *from* sin and *to* Christ for forgiveness) and joyful submission to him and service to His people. Is the candidate clearly committed to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?
2. GODLY CHARACTER: Is there evidence of dying to the love of money, to manipulation, to always having it one's own way? Are they faithful to their spouse? If single, faithful to Christ in celibacy? Is there a spirit of 'teachability', borne out by others' statements, and experience? Are they eager to learn, and readily claim they need teaching? Are they learning what it means to be transformed by the renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2), to "think Christianly" about every dimension of their lives - money, time, sex, family, recreation? For this reason, Paul warns against being too quick to call recent converts to leadership; commitment and conviction take time to deepen.
3. GOSPEL UNDERSTANDING, BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE and THEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS Does the candidate have a clear, substantial, shareable concept of the Gospel? Do they know how to make their way through the Scriptures and help others to do so (2 Timothy 2:15)? Do they lead every aspect of their ministry with their Bible open? Do they have a sound sense of Biblical Theology (the way the whole Bible works together to tell one big story)? Do they have biblically informed convictions about who God is, who humans are, the meaning of history, the nature of the church, and especially the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection? Are they familiar with, and so they subscribe to, the Jerusalem Declaration, the 39 Articles, and the Creeds?
4. LOVE OF PEOPLE - EVANGELISTIC HEART Do they love people? Do they desire to share the gospel with others? Have they a track record of faithfulness in evangelism in their own life, and in the context of the church?
5. COMPETENCIES: The NT qualification for ministers (other than godliness) is the ability to teach.

Has this been demonstrated? Does ministry coalesce around this person? If they lead, will people follow? Are they competent in timely communication, planning, teamwork, project management?

6. Demeanor: Are they humble servant leaders? Are they hungry for the gospel to progress? Do they express personal warmth? Are they fully engaged in conversation, both emotionally and intellectually? Are they reasonable and coherent in their conversation?

In the New Testament, the concept of “call” is not related primarily to ordained ministry but refers to the universal call to follow Jesus; to obedience; to suffering; and to maturity. This is the call we all have in the church! However, in 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul instructs Timothy, “if anyone aspires to the office of overseer...” So there will be a personal sense of motivation, a desire that will not go away, a passion the Holy Spirit gives someone.

But even more important is the church’s discernment. We often don’t see our own gifts (spiritual or otherwise) but depend on the community of faith to discern gifts for ministry and leadership in the church. The Holy Spirit plants a seed, but the *church* identifies, invites, trains, and discerns with a candidate the possibility of full-time service as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament (in Acts 6:1-7, it is the ministry of the Word and prayer). In ANiC we have a process for those who would be ordained (Deacon or Priest), which involves them being “tried and examined” in a formal way.

The one weakness I look for is the personal conviction that a candidate *does not have what it takes* to carry out the ministry. They should be deeply aware of their own spiritual poverty (Matthew 5:3), unworthiness, and inability to serve Christ and his church. They should have come to the end of their own resources and be living a life of dependence upon God and his Word, which gives life.

## **2. Identity issues, along with the desire for autonomy from God, are driving wholesale change in North American society. How would you help ANiC stand firm in the truths of the Christian gospel without alienating the world we are called to reach with the gospel?**

I think the first step in addressing this situation is to define how identity issues and the desire for autonomy from God are driving such radical change in our society. The root of autonomy is found in Genesis 3, where Satan tempts the woman. Satan doesn’t simply “tempt;” he *makes promises*, including, “you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (3:5). Why depend on God when you can determine good and evil for yourself? Canon J.I. Packer said that humanity in sin “plays God, and fights God.” I know this in my own heart, and what it really comes down to is that I want to substitute

myself God in His place; I want to put His crown on my head and rule my own life. I am so thankful to God who in his mercy substituted himself for me on the cross!

The Biblical idea of identity is that we are made by God (in His image – Genesis 1:27- 28; 2:7, 24), known by God, and loved by God (1 John 4:10).

We are creatures in a dependent relationship with our Creator. We are designed to worship and serve Him. He has crowned us with glory and honour, and given us the task of stewarding Creation in the context of adoration (Psalm 8). Sin has defaced and polluted the image of God in us, but in Christ we are reborn and transformed into true humanity. The gospel reality is that every Christian is a sinner saved by grace. Therefore we “identify” as disciples of Jesus Christ above all else. In Galatians 3:28 the Apostle Paul writes, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” We are “in Christ” and Christ is “in” us (Colossians 1:27). Our identity comes from being part of the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the family of God.

But in the past few centuries, and especially the last few decades, the desire for autonomy from God has merged with the pursuit of identity found not in a transcendent or objective foundation, but in the individual self. Identity is popularly defined by sexuality and an elastic sense of gender. This form of identity is validated by personal experience, must be reinforced by the affirmation of all others, and legally protected at all cost. Identity has become a personal construct. To critique someone’s sexual *behaviour*, for example, is to critique their *identity*. To many in our culture, the church represents a dangerous and oppressive authority. Asserting the Biblical story of identity is dismissed not simply as *wrong*, but as *bigoted* and a form of violence.

This shift is dramatic, and now explicit in our culture. Many of us know great pain and confusion personally and in the church as the values of society have changed around us, and influenced the church especially in the West.

So how do we stand firm in the truths of the Gospel in this context? I’ll start with Carl Trueman, who in his book [The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self](#), notes three things that should mark the church as we move forward:

1. Be consciously aware of the primacy of images and personal narratives over ideas and moral principles. The gospel is based on the revelation of God in speech and action and the incarnate Jesus. It is doctrinal. We must be pastoral and compassionate, but within the context of revealed truth.
2. The church must be a community. Human beings still need to belong, to be recognized, and to be physically present in a community. This is also the normal way we come to understand our

identity, but it is also the place where genuine love and welcome is extended.

3. The church needs to be able to teach coherently about the moral principles that the Gospel implies, affecting everything from abortion to transgenderism and euthanasia.

Basically, this means that ANiC needs to *tell a better story*. The despair and confusion of the world offers no hope. There is no gospel there. For that reason, in ANiC we need to continue to be a real community (made up of multiple congregations) where the Gospel is preached and taught in an atmosphere of compassion and great welcome and hospitality. We need to keep clear on the categories of true humanity derived from Scripture (such as dignity, value, and the image of God in every person because every person is *created* by and meant to be *in relationship* with God). I'm convinced this is a better story than the world tells. It will be very powerful if it is backed up by living church communities marked by loving humility, honest conversation, service, forgiveness, and joy.

The way to alienate the world is to condemn it without lovingly offering God's solution for the very real identity issues that surround us. We need to try to understand the world's way of pursuing identity and autonomy, agree with the underlying need, and then gently and truthfully persuade people to see the better story the Gospel contains. We also need to catechize well, because the world is *always* catechizing us. We need to teach and preach Genesis 1-3 more than we do. We need to protect young people from abuse. We need to foster open, respectful conversations with those with whom we disagree. We need to remember our task is not to judge the world, but to foster godliness within the church (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). No one behaves their way into the kingdom. I didn't!

### **3. Give examples of how you have provided for the identifying, training, and care, of both new and seasoned lay leaders.**

Every lay person is called to follow Jesus and serve him. Every Christian is part of the body of Christ, serving in distinctive ways. Every Christian has gifts. The leadership of the church must not forget they are serving the laity, not the other way round. The goal is the equipping of the laity to be the church, maturing together in Christ (Ephesians 4:7-16). We want local congregations to be 'greenhouses' where lay leaders can flourish. Raising lay leaders in the church is vital to the maturing of Christians, and of the church. It is vital to growth. It is a primary task of the Rector of a congregation.

Specifically,

**Identifying new lay leaders:**

- At SJR the existing leadership is always looking for qualities of humility, godliness, gospel fidelity, and competence and in order to do that we seek to know our congregation.
- The primary way spiritual gifts are discerned is by the body of Christ observing them in people. When a gift or passion is observed we will approach someone and invite them to serve in a specific way.
- Sometimes people say “I want to do this” and I always seek to give permission for them to serve as long as it aligns with the ministry of gospel.
- We seek the wisdom of the leadership: It’s never just one person making a decision about identifying lay leaders. Staff and Directors (Council) collaborate.

**Training new and seasoned lay leaders:**

- We have always made it clear that training is provided for whatever ministry (greeters, coffee, children, Bible Study leadership, youth ministry, music, intercession, Lay Readers) we invite people into.
- Training is both taught and caught. We teach by giving the theological, biblical, and practical background of a ministry (for instance, WHY is coffee ministry or children’s so important in the life of the church?).
- Training involves three main steps: instruction (what and why); modelling (how and when), and then follow up (reviewing what worked and what didn’t; learning from these and encouraging more practice and growth).
- Seasoned lay leaders should be asked to help train new lay leaders! Training others is a great way to learn.

**Care of new and seasoned lay leaders:**

- Pray for them.
- Give them the resources they need, in a timely manner.
- Offer ongoing feedback and encouragement.
- Have an ‘open door’ for any concerns or issues.

- Acknowledge lay leaders before the congregation by commissioning them in a Sunday service; celebrating their ministry in the Annual Report; regularly praying and giving thanks for them in congregational prayer.

At SJR we established a Lay Readers Training program in 2020. During the Pandemic we trained 12 lay leaders (women and men) that we identified and invited. They were instructed in theology, Anglican history, the history and use of the Book of Common Prayer, the 39 Articles, how to lead the liturgy, and preaching. These Lay Readers have led and preached at both Sunday and weekday services, and assisted as Intercessors, Greeters, Communion Servers, and have even served in other parishes in the absence of clergy. They were licenced by the Bishop at a special service.

#### **4. Please give an example of how you have worked well with a team in Gospel ministry. What strengths do you bring to team ministry?**

One example is the early years of church planting. I am the founding Rector of SJR but was blessed at every step in the journey with a team that shared the vision, and were prepared to put in the necessary labour. I think this was an example of true partnership in the gospel, which bore fruit for the Kingdom. I could never have planted a church on my own (obviously!). I had no specific training for church planting. I was never evaluated by a church planting organization. I had only been a Deacon for a few months. I knew how terribly weak and frightened I was. It shouldn't have worked out the way it did. But in God's providence the church grew and part of the reason was the existence of an effective, committed leadership team that sacrificed for a greater vision.

I bring a few strengths to team ministry.

1. My default observation is that I am not the smartest person in the room! I'm always impressed by the wisdom and creativity of others. I have much to learn from those I serve with.
2. I consciously try to respect each person on any team, because we all are made in God's image, and we are serving together for the glory of Christ. The Apostle Paul teaches us to care for one another; it is a mark of the body of Christ that "God has so composed the body, giving greater on her to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).



3. If I have leadership of a team, I monitor dialogue and ensure each participant is heard.
4. I try to lead with Scripture, because teams can get off course pretty quickly. How is what we are doing actually accomplishing something that aligns with Gospel priorities?
5. Although I am weak in this, I am highly impressed with team members who speak uncomfortable truths with grace. It is possible to avoid elephants in the room. Sometimes I don't even see them.
6. I seek to listen to my team's wisdom and then, as the leader, make the hard decisions once everyone has had input. Not everything is a democratic vote – sometimes I have to say no.
7. I think I am gentle with people (diplomatic?) yet strong with the gospel and my convictions.

**5. What are the challenges for you in this kind of ministry? What is unique about the role of Suffragan bishop and what are the important attributes needed to serve well in this role?**

**Challenges:**

As I contemplate this ministry, I see two kinds of challenges. First, those related to the job description itself, and second, those relating to the ministry of any ordained person.

First, the job description is a big departure from local parish ministry. It is not grounded in one place with the same group of people every week. I love this task, being an under shepherd of the flock of God in my local parish. So it would be a challenge for me to shift focus from one congregation to a wider breadth of pastoral oversight, caring for many parishes, clergy, and people. Another challenge related to this would be the frequency of travel, with the disruption of routine this will entail. I would need a lot of wisdom to learn how to stay focused, and not get distracted, while moving around the western part of ANiC. Another challenge would be resisting the temptation for this ministry to become more about institutional preservation than Gospel proclamation and humble service.

Second, there are challenges related to gospel ministry that will continue and perhaps intensify: maintaining good relationships with my wife and children;

retaining a regular pattern of prayer and Bible reading; being available for friendships and extended family; protecting time for preparation of sermons and talks; not falling into temptation on trips away from home; keeping an exercise regime. It is no secret that Bishops come under intense pressure to compromise. I would need much prayer.

### **Uniquenesses:**

The role of Suffragan bishop is unique because he submits to the vision and direction of the Diocesan Bishop in all things lawful and godly.

### **Important attributes needed to serve well:**

The Ordinal in the Book of Common Prayer beautifully and soberly lays out the job description of a Bishop. It lays out both the *tasks* (responsibilities) and the *attributes* of a Bishop. Two of the most important tasks include diligently preaching God's word (feeding the flock), and maintaining the doctrine and Discipline of Christ (protecting the flock).

The attributes listed in the Ordinal include godliness and learning (being an example to the flock); courage (under God) to 'banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine;' self-denial; 'quietness, peace, and love;' gentleness and generosity; and to "...be to the flock of Christ a shepherd, not a wolf."

To these attributes there are many that could be added. I will mention just a few: a posture of service (Philippians 2:1-11); willingness to suffer (2 Corinthians 11:23-28); and a defiant joyful resolve to glorify Christ and "present everyone mature" in him (Colossians 1:27-29).

## **6. Our ordination vows and the 39 articles state that "Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation". From your reading of the Bible, what are those necessary things?**

In the Bible God reveals himself cumulatively by word and deed. The Bible unfolds the character and purposes of God that the unaided human mind could not discover. The Bible is history, literature, and a record of human experience but above all is a book about and for *redemption* (rescue, salvation) supremely through Jesus Christ. The

'sacred writings' are able to make us "...wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). The Bible is not just *informative*, but is *effective* in bringing children, women and men to salvation because it is the living word about Jesus Christ's person and work. It is breathed out by God through his Holy Spirit into minds and hearts (2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12).

Thomas Cranmer put this question in the Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer, "Why ought you to read God's holy Word, the Bible? Answer: Because it tells how God has made himself known to man; and how we may come to know him, and find salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of his Church (p.554, 1962 BCP).

What is necessary for salvation? The Bible unfolds the treasure of the gospel. It begins with God himself, transcendent Creator and yet personal God. This is his Creation, and we are his creatures, distinct from all others by our capacity to relate to him. The gospel is the good news that God loves the world and offers salvation from sin through his Son, Jesus Christ. Specifically:

1. Acknowledgment of sin. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). "Though created good and made for fellowship with our Creator, humanity has been cut off from God by self-centered rebellion against him, leading to lawless living, guilt, shame, death, and the fear of judgment" (*To Be A Christian, ACNA Catechism, p.23*). Genesis 3 tells the sobering story of human pride and pretension. Psalm 14:1-3, and its echo in Romans 1 document the appalling depravity of our natural state. We cannot save ourselves; in the Bible, salvation is *rescue* from jeopardy and misery, leading to a state of safety and security and true flourishing. God *saved* Israel from Egypt, Jonah from the fish's belly, and through Christ he *saves* us from sin and its consequences.
2. Reconciliation. In the Bible we learn of God's gracious, loving reconciliation. God reconciles us to himself through Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Jesus offered himself as my representative and substitute on the cross, taking my sin on him, and offering me his righteousness (Romans 5:8; Colossians 1:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:21). God reconciles himself to us at great cost; it's not just "forgiving sin" but taking the just penalty our sin deserves on himself in the person of his Son. The cross is central: it is the intersection between God's love and his justice.
3. Repentance and Faith. The Bible is clear that this good news requires a response: In Acts 2, the Apostle Peter says to the crowd on Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (38). In Acts 3 he says again, "Repent, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord..." (19). Repentance is turning away from sin, and to Christ, trusting him as Saviour and obeying him as Lord. Faith is not a special personal attribute, rather it is simple trust that what God has accomplished through Christ is

sufficient and powerful for salvation.

4. Growing in Christ. Baptism, which Christ commands, means that we are washed and regenerated (re-born) into a new family. In our lives as Christians, God works through his Holy Spirit to illuminate God's word, the Holy Trinity, and the Gospel to us. We never stop learning! By the Holy Spirit God sanctifies us as we continue to learn and submit to Holy Scripture. The personal goal is maturity (Ephesians 4:7-16), being conformed to the image of Christ, so that we love God with all our heart mind soul and strength, and our neighbour as ourself.

