



rather roundabout account of how it is that I have come to consider myself a candidate for Anglican ordination.

### The Blossoming of my Anglican Heritage

My grandparents on both sides are Anglicans, respectable citizens of the (once?) Great isle of Britain, pillars of their communities, and loving parents of the missionaries my mother and father have become. [All Saints, Lindfield](#) is the church in which my mother grew up, and remains my parents' main supporting church. My father was christened as a child, but then converted through [Charlotte Baptist Chapel](#) in Edinburgh, re-baptised, and eventually ordained by them as a reverend minister as my parents were sent out into the nations to help reach East Asia's billions with the gospel message of Jesus.

[I was born](#) in the Philippines, as were my brother and sister, but it wasn't until being sent to [Chefoo School, Malaysia](#), as a primary school boarder that my Anglican formation began. Each Sunday morning we would walk down the long and winding school drive, past the flourishing ferns of the surrounding rainforest, to an old [nissen hut](#) that went by the deceptively [grand title](#) of [All Souls' Church](#). which each week was the stage for a full rendition of the Holy Communion service from the Book of Common Prayer. I remember the tedium of the liturgy being outdone only by the rambling sermons of the unpronouncably (at least to my English eight-year old mind) named Reverend Ng. I remember being convicted when a missionary speaker gave an altar call—but not quite summoning up the courage to make my way to the front to surrender my life to Jesus. I remember spending each Sunday leafing through [Annie Valloton's illustrations](#) in the church's Good News Bibles. I remember sitting next to [Phil](#) and snickering at the discovery of [the Song of Songs](#). I remember the privilege of being asked to do the lectionary's Bible reading.

Meanwhile in Singapore, where I went 'home' for the Christmas and Summer holidays, our family went each Sunday to the nationalistically named (Singapore was, of course, originally a British colony) [St George's](#). At least we went there until after church one Sunday I said to my parents—'You know that thing the preacher said... doesn't it say the opposite in the Bible..?' Which catalysed my first conversion to Presbyterianism, as we thereafter attended [Adam Road Presbyterian Church](#). Nonetheless, faithful nominal Anglican that I am, we would return each Christmas eve for Midnight Mass, and—even in the tropical heat of equatorial Singapore—I would enthusiastically join in with *In The Bleak Midwinter*, and all the rest of England's favourite carols.

At secondary school in India, I churched mostly at [Union Church](#) (once home of the apostolic cricketer CT Studd), and it was there that I was baptised. I joined the Anglican communion only on those Sunday mornings when I rolled out of bed slightly too late for Union's 10.30 service, and so had to make my way further up the hill to [St Stephen's](#) 11am Eucharist.

<http://peter.prescott.ws/blog/2014/07/a-priestly-vocation/>

But at university, I again found my home in an Anglican church—this time it was St Barnabas on Mill Road. Having encountered God powerfully in my final year of school but still not quite (!) got my life together—nor discovered the humility to confess to another my need—‘*Barney’s*’ evening service gave me a place where I could anonymously come and experience the healing presence of the Holy Spirit. I also discovered a thoroughly radically group of students, who drew me into a lifestyle of expectant and exhilarating prayer that has become the driving force of all that I do.

But when you are running after God with all of the zeal you can muster, it is hard to be content with the steady and slothful pace of a parish congregation. I converted again to Presbyterianism, and I remember my confirmation as a member being misinterpreted as a conversion to Christian faith: ‘*This is the greatest day of your life!*’ a sweet old lady told me, after the service. After graduating with a mixed degree in Mathematics and Theology, I was employed as Church Evangelist, but in retrospect being a convinced Charismatic I was perhaps never going to have any long-term future in a denomination which forbids the (public) speaking of tongues.

Taryn and I joined YWAM in Harpenden, where we were initially part of Christ Church Harpenden, an independent evangelical church recommended by some friends at CPC, and then at New Covenant Fellowship, Luton a newly beginning Pentecostal church-plant that invited myself and Taryn to be involved with worship, preaching and leadership.

### **My Doctrinal Convictions**

Meanwhile, my doctrinal convictions were settling into place.

I believe that for mortal homonids such as ourselves, the universe is an impossibly complex thing to come to terms with, and that to do so in any meaningful sense requires that we extrapolate from the limited evidence at hand and put our faith in that which mere rational analysis cannot ever satisfactorily prove. Which is to say that everyone has faith in something, and our actions show what that faith is in.

I believe that time and space and matter and forces that act thereon came into existence at a particular point—and that this points to the existence of a Being who transcends time and space. I believe that the existence of life on our astonishingly green and fertile planet, in a universe which is astonishingly hostile to the earliest inklings of anything which might grow and reproduce, leads to the conviction that this transcendent Being is a deliberate designer. I believe that the instincts of human conscience, and the recognition of the ideas of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ in diverse cultures and countries, cannot be convincingly grounded without postulating that the transcendent Being (of whose existence we have already been convinced) is also a consistently and perfectly moral Being. Indeed, because morality is nothing but the code which governs interpersonal relationships, He (with the requisite mutterings about such a being not being gendered in any recognisable way) must be a personal Being, and in fact an *interpersonal* Being.

I believe that this Being is not some silent static supposition, but a living and active participant in the great drama of Time. I believe that He hides himself in the numerous nooks and crannies of creation, like Easter eggs hidden in a childhood garden, to reward those who can be bothered with the effort of seeking him. I believe that He reveals himself to those who seek him—and sometimes to those who do not!—and that he’s done so to people from all tribes and tongues throughout history. I believe that the Hebrews—Abraham and his Mesopotamian clay tablets, Moses and his Egyptian papyrus scrolls, Paul and his parchment epistles—have been particularly frank and honest about the way in which He revealed himself to them; I do not believe that such true and authentic honesty could be possible without the inspiration of the very Spirit of this self-revealing transcendent Being.

I believe that communication by the power of the written word is all very well, but that it can never compare with face-to-face encounter. I believe that Jesus the carpenter from Nazareth has made such encounter with God possible.

I believe that this Jesus was a real, historical, human being. I believe that there is ample manuscript evidence not only for the belief that such a man lived, but also that he died unjustly and painfully on a Roman cross, that he was buried in a high-security tomb, and that he was then seen by multiple witnesses three days later, having been raised to a new yet true sort of life. I believe that those witnesses are to be trusted, and that the proof of this is the corroboration of their distinct testimonies, and their willingness to suffer even unto death for the sake of these testimonies.

I believe that Jesus' death was not some political accident, but the most profound and significant event in human history. I believe that for the sake of humanity, such a death was vitally necessary; I believe that though it was motivated by obedience to the will of God, such a death was entirely voluntary. I believe that the fact of the cross proves paradoxically both the seriousness and the irrelevance of our sin.

I believe that this story of Jesus dying for our sins and rising again, this demonstration of the power of the love of God over the curse of death—this is good news! This is singular, unique and unprecedented. If it is true, then the problem of evil is solvable, then the tragedy of any person's life is redeemable.

I believe that just hearing this message can transform hearts and minds and reconcile people to God. I believe that we therefore have a missionary mandate to communicate this astonishing announcement to whoever we can, however we can. But particularly by living lives which resonate with the power of this death-defying lavishly-loving abundant life.

I believe we cannot do this of our own free will. But I believe in the Holy Spirit, who shortly after the resurrection of Jesus began to fall in power upon those who believed in the death-defying life of Jesus. I believe that that same Spirit is still at work today, fanning into flame the flickerings of faith in our feeble and faltering hearts, convicting us of our self-satisfied hypocrisies and self-indulgent wickednesses, teaching us how to pray prayers that go beyond our mere human vocabularies, propelling us out in awkwardly overambitious mission to a bruised and broken world.

I believe that this is what we were made for, we human beings. Not to survive with the fittest, but to lay our lives down in sacrificial love, daring to do what has never been done before—not for the sake of vainglorious pride, but for the greater good of our communities, and for those outside the dotted lines which mark the boundaries of those whom we consider 'our neighbour'. I believe that since a transcendent God has made us for this empowering experience of relationship with him and through him with others, it is no surprise that when we reject him and live as if self-sufficient, we instead find ourselves—at best!—tired, bored, and angry.

I believe that we need community. I believe that the communities that we most need are communities of faith in this invisible, transcendent, powerful, morally flawless, personally loving God; communities that would take the life of Jesus as their model, the death of Jesus as their message, the resurrection of Jesus as their motivator; communities that would dwell in the presence and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit; communities that would read and hear and think through and grapple with and live and breathe the story of the Scriptures.

I believe that to have a church like this is impossible—but I believe more strongly that nothing is impossible with God. And I believe that God can and will and is raising up churches like this, and

bringing them together, preparing them for the day when the same Jesus—who was born of the virginal Mary, who was sentenced by Pontius Pilate to immediate execution, who died and rose again—when this same Jesus will return in glory to the same Mount of Olives just east of the walls of Jerusalem where he was last seen.

### Presbyterian Polemic leads to Anglican Doctrine

These convictions have been mine for some time now. But it is only more recently that I have been persuaded of the truth of some of the more minor claims of Anglican doctrine—and interestingly it has not been Anglicans that have persuaded me of these things.

The first of these relatively minor points was the baptising of infants—'christening'. Growing up in close proximity to more than a handful of Baptist missionaries, I must have frequently heard the argument that such a thing was absurd. Baptism is a symbol of faith in Christ—and how can an infant too young to understand the gospel message have saving faith? I had seen Anglican christenings, had even vowed with the congregation *to uphold \*name\* in their new life in Christ*, but never had I heard a vicar explain the biblical rationale for such a thing, though I had seen several Anglicans who seemed uncertain there was one. It was only upon attending Cambridge Presbyterian Church that I heard the case for infant baptism. The point that persuaded me was the view of the Apostle Paul that circumcision was a sign of faith—and yet circumcision was clearly permitted for infants. That, combined with having grown up in a missionary family, understanding the gospel for as long as I can remember, but frequently being plagued with doubts as to whether I was old and wise enough to make an informed commitment—when in retrospect I wish that I had sooner dived in foolish childlike faith into the rich and true love of God.

A second issue was the whole issue of political power and the church's engagement with such—'Christendom'. That history has too many incidents of wicked men claiming the name of Christ in defense of their evil deeds is a point that I readily concede. But it seemed every story I had heard explaining church history was one which skipped from the deaths of the apostles past the conclusion of the canon of the Scriptures through what was unquestioningly considered the irredeemable corruption of Constantinianism, the dark ages of which were only concluded by the light of the Protestant Reformation. It was only upon coming across the fascinatingly intelligent high-church Presbyterian Peter Leithart that I found someone who argued persuasively that a politically influential Christianity might not *per se* be a hypocritical denial of all that Jesus stands for.

The other advantages of such a mould of Christianity slowly began to dawn on me. The instinctive commitment to hard-fought visible unity, rather than quick and easy doctrinal schism—that's one thing I like. Then there's the actual fact of genuine local churches (thousands of them, in parishes across the country), rather than the incongruity of evangelical rhetoric about 'the importance of the local church' coupled with congregations drawn to their favourite attendable church from the various farflung corners of the city.

But there was one point of Anglican doctrine for which I had never heard any biblical defense, nor did I think it particularly likely that I would: in a word, bishops.

### The insight of Ruskin's Gothic imagination

The first spark of revelation on this matter came from a rather unusual source.

Rewind to the year after I graduated, when the incomparable Phil had invited a group of friends to join him in a cottage in the Lake District. We were part of that privileged party, and in between striding up hilly peaks we managed to squeeze in a visit to the one-time abode of the great nineteenth-century Anglican architectural critic John Ruskin. I couldn't resist buying a copy of Ruskin's

'Selected Writings', and while in the Lake District read his celebrated essay on [The Nature of Gothic](#). In this essay he suggests that

*the systems of architectural ornament, properly so called, might be divided into three:*

- 1. *Servile ornament, in which the execution or power of the inferior workman is entirely subjected to the intellect of the higher ;*
- 2. *Constitutional ornament, in which the executive inferior power is, to a certain point, emancipated and independent, having a will of its own, yet confessing its inferiority, and rendering obedience to higher powers ;*
- and 3. *Revolutionary ornament, in which no executive inferiority is admitted at all.*

He goes on to explain how the first division consists of Classical architecture, which "could not endure the appearance of imperfection in anything"; the third, Renaissance architecture, in which "the inferior detail becomes principal... and the whole building becomes an exhibition of well-educated imbecility"; the second, mediaeval Christian Gothic architecture, which recognises both the value and imperfection of every soul, "bestowing dignity upon the acknowledgement of unworthiness".

Now, my interests are more ecclesiological than architectural, and so the thing that immediately interested me was the analysis of architectural styles applied as an analogy of different denominational leadership structures, with 'servile ornament' corresponding to authoritarian Papism, 'revolutionary ornament' to an anti-episcopal Prebyterianism, and 'constitutional ornament' to a unifying and yet releasing Anglican Episcopalianism.

Not that you should take my word for this—read Ruskin's essay and mull over it; then tell me what you make of the idea. And at this point I had yet to see any hint that there might be some biblical basis for the existence of bishops. That had to wait until the following year...

### **How a Southern Baptist missionary made me an Episcopalian**

We had just finished doing Youth With A Mission's Discipleship Training School, during which a clear prophetic word had called us to commit immediately to full-time missionary service with YWAM. But 'immediately' is rarely (if ever!) quite as immediate as it sounds, and before returning to Harpenden as full-time staff, we had to return to Cambridge, inform our church of our plans, and begin inviting people to partner with us. Having nowhere to live, we went to stay with my parents, who that year were back at [All Nations Christian College](#). I mentioned to my father that when we returned to Harpenden we were also planning to be involved with [New Covenant Fellowship](#), a Pentecostal church-plant in Luton. As he was teaching a course on church-planting at the time, he was rather pleased by this, and had soon given me several books on the subject that he thought might be interesting. I cannot remember any of the books but one—[T4T: Training for Trainers, by Steve Smith](#). But that one gripped my imagination and filled me with fiery excitement. It is both the story of the most successful church-planting movement in recent times, and a detailed defense of the biblical basis of the principles underlying it. It persuaded me that the revival for which we have been praying is—or must be!—nothing less than a church-planting movement. And it persuaded me that one of the vital keys for such a thing to occur is the rediscovery of the simplicity of the nature of 'church': *'wherever two or three are gathered in my name...'*

But how did a house-church movement connect with the conviction that had taken root in my heart that [night-and-day worship was not just valid, but vital](#)? And how could the incredible accounts of missional multiplication in Asia be reproduced in the post-Christendom context of the UK?

And the key revelation came in a little chapter towards the end of the book, where the author is addressing the question of whether Paul's command to Timothy that a 'novice' not be ordained

means that for all of the missional effectiveness of releasing young leaders to start and lead new churches, in fact it is clearly unbiblical to do so. But in fact, argues the author, we need to recognise the distinction between the potential Ephesian *episkopos* in Paul's letter to Timothy, and the potential Cretan *presbuteros* in Paul's letter to Titus. Only the former must not be a novice; the latter is required merely to be 'devout'. Anyway, by the time the author had sketched the differences in context between the two superficially similar sets of criteria for Christian leadership, he had convinced me that there was indeed a possible biblical argument for a certain sort of hierarchy in church leadership.

And having had those Presbyterian preachers function as Anglican apologists, the idea that a multi-tiered Episcopalianism might be more missionally effective and more exegetically sound than a flat Presbyterianism was the last straw—! And so in my mind I was now a convinced Anglican. (Though it is worth reiterating that I am very grateful for my [Presbyterian experience](#), and was mightily encouraged to have my Presbyterian former minister give his blessing to my potential Anglican vocation.)

### The Unanticipated Effect of Pentecostal Unction

It should be remembered that at the time I was still happily committed to our Pentecostal church in Luton, in absolutely no hurry to up and leave for the Anglican church. My conviction is that if the Spirit leads you to move from one church to another, you should follow that leading without any hesitation—but if the Spirit does not thus move you, then you should remain part of the congregation of which you are a part, even if there are aspects of doctrinal emphasis or understanding with which you may begin to differ.

I may be called to the Anglican church, or I may not be. But I am certainly called to be a missionary and an evangelist—as we all are! ([Matt. 28:19](#), [2 Tim. 4:5](#), etc.)—and God in this season had called us to help plant this church! And to catch people's attention with the simple gospel message of Jesus in whatever way I could.

It was not long after we returned to YWAM Harpenden, and to church with NCF in Luton, that our church hosted the Brazilian pastor whose church network we were linked with. We had a weekend conference, and Pastor Raimondo (as was his name) preached on The Power of The Cross. Then on the Sunday morning as his sermon drew to a close, he invited forward those who were called to Christian leadership. I was specifically called to the front. He laid hands on me and blessed me, praying a prayer of impartation, asking that I would receive the fullness of the unction that God had given him, to do the work of ministry and pastor God's flock.

A few days later I woke up with the crazy idea that I should [run for Archbishop](#). 'Running for Archbishop' was a number of things, none of them perfectly realised. It was an attempt to do some street evangelism in a way that tied in with an internet strategy. It was a joke. It was a serious attempt to try and demonstrate what my newly-arrived-at missional Anglicanism would look like when put into practice.

Because that's the thing, that it's not a hum-drum '*we are gathered here today*' sort of Anglicanism that I've been converted to, but a propulsively Pentecostal, almost manically missional '*GO in peace to love and serve...*' Anglicanism. The episcopal thing is not a relinquishing of the missionary mandate to hierarchical authoritarianism. Rather it is a recognition that the missionary mandate (which each believer possesses with full apostolic authority by virtue of the Great Commission) is best served by an upside-down multi-tiered servant-hearted ruggedly-Gothic (in a Ruskinian sense) hierarchy that is absolutely releasing and empowering but also discerning and patient. The virtue of patient discernment being that it makes it possible for a multitude of disparate individuals to speak in harmony.

Rather than requiring that “**all that occurs**...should always be under the control of the eldership” ([Presbyterian Book of Church Order 8.4.1](#)), affirming a multi-tiered hierarchy of leadership allows leaders to release control, allowing people to make mistakes, knowing that a lay-person is not a deacon, who is not a priest, who is not a bishop. The job of leaders in the church is most certainly not to be in control of all that occurs! Rather, it is to discern and confirm those whose leadership is under the control of the Spirit of God (which of course means those that are releasing others to be led by the Spirit of God, rather than by the authoritarian control of man).

‘Running for Archbishop’ was about the fact that as an English layperson I had God’s full permission and authority to declare the gospel with all the might I could muster—while still affirming my recognition of the established ecclesial authorities of the land.

### **The Moment I’d Been Waiting For**

So we did the ‘Running For Archbishop’ thing, much to the confusion of all the people who get our news updates. We did street evangelism in seven different cities around the country—we didn’t see anyone come to the Lord. A few weeks later we were involved with the Circuit Riders, and suddenly discovered how to do [street evangelism in a way that worked](#). Or maybe we just suddenly stepped into that breakthrough evangelistic anointing—it’s hard to say.

We spent the rest of the year happily at New Covenant Fellowship, me never quite working out how to put the T4T multiplying vision into practise in a church that already had a strong and specific way of going about cell-group discipleship and Sunday morning meetings.

We returned to Cambridge, and rather than return to CPC, decided that as well as being involved with the Anglican Fresh Expression that is [the Cambridge House of Prayer](#) (with which YWAM Cambridge is partnering), we would take the opportunity of a new beginning to try and put this vision of multiplying house church discipleship into practice. I put together a [Simple Christianity discipleship course](#), and we announced our new course to the world. We were delighted when John and [Inge](#) said they would like to be part of this vision for house church—we had no idea that these would be Inge’s last few months.

Soon after arriving back in Cambridge I was in a pub talking to Andrew Taylor, the ordained Pioneer Curate who leads the Cambridge House of Prayer. *What exactly is a house of prayer?* was the question we were discussing. Specifically—*is it a parachurch-like less-than-church sort of anomaly?* Or could it be a church? A different-church? A more-than-church?

After a somewhat heated discussion, Andrew paused and said to me— *‘Have you ever considered Anglican ordination? You know, I could recommend you...’*

### **Meeting with my Vocations Advisor**

Over the last six months I’ve been meeting with Father Robert, the vicar of [the Little St Mary’s](#), and the man appointed as my Vocations Advisor. He’s been asking all sorts of probing questions, and listening patiently as I attempt to describe my call to the ordained Anglican priesthood.

After our final meeting, his conclusion is that he ‘discerns a priestly vocation’, but that nevertheless he recommends that we put things on pause for a year, for if I were at this moment to proceed up the next rung of the ladder towards ordination, I would be turned down by the Diocesan Director of Ordinands on account of appearing at least on paper insufficiently Anglican.

This, upon consideration, is actually exactly what I want. For at the moment I am more than busy enough trying to get this [Revival & Reformation DTS](#) established and sustainable. And I want to

continue doing that without too much distraction for at least the next two years, without worrying about jumping through any Anglican training hoops.

### **The Communion of Saints**

It's an odd position to be in, to not be an active part of any actual Anglican church, but to have suddenly been anointed with an energetic conviction that not only has God has not finished with the Church of England, but that it will a key instrument in the Holy Spirit's purpose of bringing a revival to this land greater than any previously seen.

It's a tension that I resolved in my mind by some combination of three ideas. The first thought was that just as the priest-in-charge of a particular local congregation wouldn't be a regular weekly member of another, so I—as a vocational missionary, called by God to help start new churches—shouldn't be expected to be (indeed, what with trying to start house church gatherings at the same time as pioneering a particularly long and intense version of the world's most intensive discipleship programme, we were terrifically busy). The second was that the Church of England is not a narrow membership-based church, but a broad accepting open-armed servant of the community that quite explicitly states from time to time how it exists not just for church-goers, but for the whole nation. And third, that my theological convictions were now quite passionately Anglican—indeed (I would argue), more recognisably historically Anglican than many Anglicans (even ordained Anglicans) that I knew.

But when [Inge's death](#) brought our Sunday house church gathering to a premature end, we started joining Sunday fellowship at our local parish church, the Church of the Good Shepherd. And so—finally!—I am visibly a part of the Anglican communion.

I suppose that visible communion is one of the main things that this is about. My sense of missionary vocation was forged in [an exhilarating few weeks of prayer](#) in the second term of my second year, for which the initial catalyst had been a frustration with Christian disunity and the consequent prayerlessness and missional ineffectiveness it caused. So while I am absolutely convinced that the Great Commission gives any Christian believer all the authority they need to make disciples — and therefore to gather together as 'A Church', and baptise new believers and break bread in celebration of the Lord's Supper — yet I believe that it is worth the effort of trying to be visibly unified in our communion.

I believe in 'one, holy, catholic, apostolic church'. If a church is to be 'apostolic', then it has to release the missionary potential (and destiny!) of every one of its members, empowering them to be pioneering apostles, proclaiming the gospel wherever they go, and initiating new gatherings of those who believe. And as the church thus multiplies, in unpredictable Spirit-led fashion, it is meant to remain 'one'. This was [Jesus' prayer](#), and he suggests that continued Christian unity is as important a factor in 'the world believing' as evangelism itself (Jn. 17:21).

### **The Priestly Vocation**

Will you be diligent in prayer, in reading Holy Scripture, and in all studies that will deepen your faith and fit you to bear witness to the truth of the gospel?

*By the help of God, I will.*

Will you lead Christ's people in proclaiming his glorious gospel, so that the good news of salvation may be heard in every place?

*By the help of God, I will.*

Will you faithfully minister the doctrine and sacraments of Christ as the Church of England has received them, so that the people committed to your charge may be defended against error and flourish in the faith?



*By the help of God, I will.*

Will you, knowing yourself to be reconciled to God in Christ, strive to be an instrument of God's peace in the Church and in the world?

*By the help of God, I will.*

Will you endeavour to fashion your own life and that of your household according to the way of Christ, that you may be a pattern and example to Christ's people?

*By the help of God, I will.*

Will you work with your fellow servants in the gospel for the sake of the kingdom of God?

*By the help of God, I will.*

Will you accept and minister the discipline of this Church, and respect authority duly exercised within it?

*By the help of God, I will.*

Will you then, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, continually stir up the gift of God that is in you, to make Christ known among all whom you serve?

*By the help of God, I will.*

I will, I will, I will! But—at least so far as ministering the sacraments of Christ as the Church of England has received them—not quite yet.