

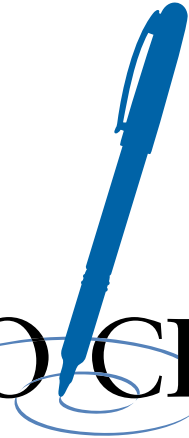
About the Author

The Rev. Courtney A. Shucker II completed his Church music career at St. Margaret's in Palm Desert, CA, and then went off to Church Divinity School of the Pacific thinking he might become a Cathedral Dean, or at least Liturgist, somewhere. His first clergy position was for a combined Episcopal and United Methodist congregation in a rural Nevada town of 1800, followed by a combined Episcopal and ELCA Lutheran Parish in rural Utah. He did buy a three-manual organ for his retirement home, but seldom has time to play it. "God has a sense of humor, She really does," he has been heard saying on many occasions.

About Vintage Voice

Vintage Voice is a monthly publication written by beneficiaries of The Church Pension Fund. We hope you enjoy these articles and find them helpful. Articles are published with the authors' permission. If you have a reflection about your life in retirement, consider writing for the Vintage Voice! Send your submissions to vintagevoice@cpg.org.

VINTAGE VOICE



Finding Yourself In Retirement

By The Rev. Courtney A. Shucker II

A recent necrology noted the passing of Rev. Bill Campbell in Denver. Bill was the Priest-in-Charge of The Episcopal Church of the Ascension when I retired to Salida, Colorado, in June 2006. I had been working in the Church almost every non-vacation Sunday for about 40 years — 30 as part-time and full-time Organist-Choirmaster in the Dioceses of Los Angeles and San Diego, and around 10 as Clergy in Nevada and Utah. When Bill learned I was coming to town, he asked if I could PLEASE fill-in for him as he would be away for two Sundays and could not find supply. "Of course, they COULD do Morning Prayer, but those Sundays are Pentecost and Trinity," he said. "But, I've just retired!" I protested. "The Bishop received your letter from Utah and asked me to ask you if you would be so kind to do this just this once...." (I knew better!)

I arrived at my new vacant house at 1:30AM on the Day of Pentecost and made it for the 7:30 Rite I! When I arrived, the Altar Guild members and Server were running around in total confusion. "What have I gotten myself into?" I thought! Come to find out, when they got there, they discovered all the silver had been stolen and they were trying to make do the best they could. "Oh, Father, welcome. We're not always like this," they said.

After fulfilling my two-Sunday obligation, I was looking forward to discovering what else there was to do on Sundays in my new Colorado mountain town, besides spending hours in church. I soon discovered I had no idea what it was like to be "just" a member of a congregation. I had always been "up front," and it seemed strange to just sit there through most of the worship, especially when I church-hopped. And, to be honest, I was sure, if they only asked, I could help them improve how they were doing everything!

Thank God, I had signed up to attend a Retired CREDO and was soon off to post-Katrina Louisiana to participate. (If truth be told, I have always been somewhat of an introvert who always seemed to have to over-compensate to fulfill my various ministries, and I was not really looking forward to this concentrated live-in experience very much.) Turns out, it was just what I needed (imagine that!).

I guess what I was looking for was “permission” to investigate new ways to get to know myself in different situations that were not church related.

I have since had wonderful opportunities to travel on trips that were not vacations with that built-in need to hit the ground running when I returned home. I’ve acted in local plays, served on a local board or two for short times, volunteered at the local tourist board to tell others why I love this place, organized a local Sing-Along-Messiah, and, from time to time, filled in at organ consoles or altars in various churches around town. I came to Salida with one rescued golden retriever who would be my last dog, I told myself. Seven more have taken his place, but no more than three at a time! I was best man for college friends 50 years ago this August and will meet them so we can observe the total eclipse of the Sun a week after their anniversary.

Church musicians and short-term clergy can have very small nest eggs set aside for this retirement adventure, but, by the Grace of God, it’s working! I enjoy my life and my own company here in the beautiful Rockies. What is there to do other than church? I tell people my primary occupation now is to ponder and just enjoy participating in life. Hallelujah!



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