



### About the Author

Bob was born in New York City in 1930. He attended the excellent public schools in Larchmont and Mamaroneck New York. At St. John's Larchmont, he sang in the boys' choir, served as acolyte, and learned to play hymns on the tower bells. Bob graduated from Williams College in 1952 and from The Virginia Theological Seminary in 1955. He was ordained deacon in the diocese of New York and priest in the Diocese of Atlanta. He served for five years at St. Luke's in Atlanta, then spent 27 years as rector of St. James in Greenville, South Carolina. Bob was called to be Canon Missioner and later Canon Pastor at Trinity Cathedral in Columbia. Bob served the Cathedral Parish for 31 years, the last five as the part-time Canon Pastor. He was married to Nancy Lawrence and they had sons Robert Junior and James. He was later married to Keren Moore and had step-daughters Elizabeth and Heather. Bob is thankful to God for his happy family and for four wonderful parishes, one that brought him into the church and inspired his calling, and the countless people who helped him know and celebrate the Presence of Christ in them. You can contact him at [beebob82@gmail.com](mailto:beebob82@gmail.com).

### 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](mailto:vintagevoice@cpg.org).

# VINTAGE VOICE



## Figure and Give Thanks

By The Rev. Robert Riegel

Some decades ago, a young man was shipping out on a battleship to the war in the Pacific. He was a Baptist, and yes, young. At just 16 years old, he had to lie about his age so that he could begin to serve his country.

As the cruise began, the captain asked the ship's chaplain to offer a prayer. In the middle of delivering the prayer, the chaplain ran to the rail and threw up overboard. He immediately came back and finished the prayer.

Impressed, the young Baptist set out to get to know the Episcopal chaplain, so much so, that over time he began the process of becoming an Episcopalian himself. Eventually, he became a priest, and then a bishop of the Church.

The name of the chaplain was Jim Stirling. After the war, he would become the first dean of Trinity Cathedral in Columbia, South Carolina. The name of the bishop was Bill Beckham. He served for years as bishop of that diocese. Looking back, both of these men were very important to me in my life and ministry. Bishop Beckham led our diocese into mission work. In Haiti, we not only built schools but a hospital, and improved the quality of life overall in several nearby villages.

As for Bishop Beckham's great contributions to the church at large, he served The Church Pension Fund as a Board Trustee from 1984 to 1997 and was Board Chair from 1991 to 1997. He made numerous trips to New York City to visit The Church Pension Fund offices. Even after losing a leg in an accident, he continued these trips.

He is described on The Church Pension Fund website as "A man of faith, love, and dedication, Bill led the Board and the Investment Committee at a critical time in CPF's history. With Alan Blanchard and Sam Pryor, he encouraged the Fund's shift toward broad diversification in the Fund's investment strategy, beginning in 1992, in order to enhance returns while reducing risk. The ability of the Fund to increase pensions to the extent that it has over the past ten years is due, in great measure, to his foresight. Although

he experienced tragedy in his personal life, he was sustained by his faith, inspiring confidence and strengthening the faith of others. He had a wise and caring heart, and the ability of the parish priest to retire with dignity was primary to him. “We don’t have anyone retired now who has less purchasing power than they did when they retired,” he said in 1998. “It’s great when you can make a difference.”

One of his sons reported to me that the Fund increased from \$800 million into the billions during this time. I’m not sure of the accuracy of that, but I do wish that I had followed that investment plan.

With great thanks to many people like Bishop Beckham, the Fund has worked well for me. I decided to do a bit of arithmetic and see how much I have received in pension payments since I retired over 25 years (I would guess I received a middle stipend in my years of ministry). Wow!..... Could it really be that much?

I invite you to calculate, or at least contemplate, how much The Church Pension Fund has done for you in retirement. If you are still young and not yet retired, begin to think about how much you will receive, or the blessing it is to have a pension one day to help take care of you and your loved ones.

Then, I invite you to give thanks for Bishop Beckham and his dedication, and for the countless people who have worked to make The Church Pension Fund such a success for the benefit of the people who serve our Episcopal Church.



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