



### About the Author

George Back was ordained in the diocese of Long Island and served parishes in New Hampshire, Western Massachusetts and Central Florida. He retired after 28 years as Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Oklahoma City. His wife Margaret recently retired from 50 years as an RN working with moms and babies. They have three children, two of them priests — Rev. H. Elizabeth Back, Priest-in-Charge of Calvary Church, Louisville, KY, and Rev. N. Luke Back, Rector of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, Abilene, TX. George assists at St. John's Church, OKC.

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

# VINTAGE VOICE



## Reminding

### By The Rev. George Back

In my old age, I am finding a steep learning curve in adjusting to life without my mind. I had been absent minded as a child, but my parents found my forgetfulness more problematic than I did. I might not even remember how forgetful I was, if they had not often reminded me.

Yet with a long education, and over the course of many adult years, I became very attached to my mind. I became addicted to using it too much. During 43 years of ordained ministry, I am sorry to confess that I depended on it much more than on my soul. No wonder my over-worked brain wanted to go into retirement with the rest of me. I have found my mind's inattentiveness very inconvenient, if not annoying. "How could you forget that?" I complain to myself — but I never get a competent answer.

I had a small stroke in 2010, just after I retired. The stroke left me with a "touch" of aphasia. This led to some comical wording issues. Some words play "hard to get," while others just refuse to be pronounced. Some words bug me when I am trying to be quiet and then hide when I'm on the telephone. A whole lot of words multiply all over the place when I try to write concisely.

As I ponder things sublime and ridiculous, most of the distinctions I learned are obsolete to my present life. I am like the man in our Lord's parable that stored up huge quantities of things he would not live long enough to use. I have a vast knowledge of good & evil, true & false, Christian & un-Christian, all crowded into my huge warehouse of "disambiguations" — letting go abides a daily labor.

Retirement has opened for me a golden age of soul. I did a lot of reading over my lifetime and often read the Daily Offices. I was always short on time. So I read fast and prayed fast. Now that I am "out of my mind," I am into voicing liturgical and personal prayers out loud. Singing, humming and breathing, I am slowly "re-embodying" my soul. I have great new words to rationalize with, so I am not "losing my mind," but I am "updating my interface with reality."

Old words like, “Take delight in the Lord and he will give you your heart’s desire” have been downloading themselves into my second childhood drive. I love getting up before sunrise, going outside, and by the light of my iPad, playing with holy sounds and words, like toys a loving God has given. With the birds and critters, I enjoy being alive in God’s presence.

I was blessed with a long ministry in our Church. This vocation, constantly and tenaciously, interrupted my mind’s isolating, self-absorption. I am grateful for the generous wisdom of the souls that invented retirement as a time out for “being,” between doing and dying. While I still miss my mind, I enjoy soul, voice and breath, all the more.



CHURCH  
PENSION FUND

19 East 34th Street  
New York, NY 10016  
[www.cpg.org](http://www.cpg.org)