

The Vintage Voice

Serving The Church Pension Fund's Family of Beneficiaries

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The Legacy

The Rev. Canon Nelson W. Pinder

Approaching my retirement from the active ministry a few years ago, I asked myself the question, what will the parish family remember me for, or better still, what would be my legacy? This question may well be asked by those clergypersons who return to parish ministry following retirement. I assume that each person would like to leave some kind of legacy. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., left a great legacy to this nation and the world. He was a drum major for justice, love, righteousness, peace and brotherhood, of which we all are benefactors. What will my wife, Marian, and I leave behind after years with the parish family at St. John-the-Baptist Church in Orlando, Florida? We both worked for small salaries (Marian was a public school teacher and myself, a small parish rector) and could not leave behind a building on our limited investments. Then I remembered something from my college days back in the fifties, while I was a student at Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune told us, "Write your name on the hearts of mankind and it will live forever, even if change comes."

Looking forward to this great event in my life as my retirement date approached, I knew that change was always taking place. I have lived through many changes in my life, both inside and outside the church. Our world has radically changed since *Brown v. the Board of Education*, and the desegregation of the public schools in Little Rock, Arkansas. Since that day, the whole idea of leaving behind a legacy has been given much thought by most donors. What shall we leave behind? What legacy shall we leave for those coming after us?

With regard to my parish church family, in the few years before my retirement, I made sure that a true legacy in Jesus Christ was established. A legacy that would include:

Love for Him and for each other; abiding love that lasts forever; a love that goes beyond hurts and bad feelings; the kind of love that makes you secure in all your undertakings.

Faith ("the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen," *Hebrews 11:1*); faith that Jesus Christ will dwell in my parishioners, giving them the hope and the glory to do the work they are given to do and the faith to see it through.

Trust that God is always with them; trust the providence of God to provide.

Joy that Jesus Christ is the strength of their lives; to share the joy of Jesus Christ in their lives with others so that others, seeing this joy in the lives of the members of St. John-the-Baptist, will want to become members of this parish church family. Joy is a tool of evangelism.

Thirst for crossover cultural understanding, knowing that no person is an island; we are neither dependent nor independent, but we are interdependent in this world; every person should be treated as Jesus.

This legacy amongst my parish family will run over into the greater community. Others will see the parish family living out the baptismal covenant and where they have put their trust. It is Jesus Christ who will give them strength to endure in the days ahead.

The youth of today are the adult parish church members of tomorrow. I leave them a love for Christian education, which begins with adults living an active Christian life. This clipping was given to me some years ago:

“If we work on marble, it will perish.
If we work on brass, time will efface it.
If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust.
But if we work on children’s immortal minds,
if we imbue them with high principles,
with the just fear of God and love of their fellow men,
we engrave on those tables something
that no time can efface,
and which will brighten and brighten
unto eternity.”

Anonymous

Years will tell about engraving ideas and principles on the minds of the youth.

Others can and will benefit from this heritage; they will be grasped by the powerful contagion of the serene and trusting soul. Let me suggest to those who are ordained and working after retirement that in addition to buildings, books, vestments, churchmanship, and investments, leave to your parish church family a legacy in Jesus Christ that will show forth **love, faith, trust, joy, and cultural understanding**. Buildings can be destroyed, investments can go bad, and vestments can change as can churchmanship. The parish family must live out the true meaning of Jesus Christ’s ministry. This is the kind of legacy that will withstand *Temptation Island*, *The Young and the Restless*, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, fire, wind, storms, ice, and hurricanes; one that will not and can not be destroyed; one that does not grow old or cold, but rather warm, friendly, and kind.

Our former parishioners will be blessed with a priceless legacy.



The Reverend Canon Nelson W. Pinder, DD, is a retired priest in the Diocese of Central Florida. He is the Diocesan Coordinator for the Episcopal Relief and Development Fund and chairs the Anti-Racism Training Committee for the Diocese of Central Florida; he is also the Vice President of the National Union of Black Episcopalians. His wife, Marian, is a retired public school teacher. They reside in Orlando, Florida, and enjoy music, reading, walking, traveling, sports events, theater, and operas. Both are volunteers on many committees and boards in Central Florida and nationwide. They have two adult children and four grandchildren.