



About the Author

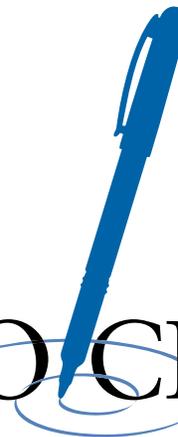
Bill McLemore retired in December 2000 after serving as a parish priest in Cedar Key, Florida; Christ Church, Pensacola, Florida; St. Paul's, Jesup, Georgia; Holy Trinity, Auburn, Alabama; and St. Stephen's, Phenix City, Alabama. In retirement, he has supplied for many parishes in Georgia, Maryland, and now Illinois. Currently, he is the part-time Rector during the Interim of St. Ann's, Woodstock, Illinois.



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



Cartooning Priest

By William (Bill) P. McLemore

My beginnings were at the Cadet Hospital at West Point, New York, October 14, 1937, the son of a mathematics instructor and the daughter of an Episcopal priest. That priest, my grandfather, baptized me in the Cadet Chapel, November 10, 1937. He was the Rev. William Arthur Pearman, and I was named for him: William Pearman McLemore.

From then on, I was the son of an Army officer and a nomad upon the face of the earth. We moved almost every two to three years throughout my childhood. When possible, I tried to attend Episcopal churches; however, many times it would be whatever Protestant chapel happened to be near our quarters.

My outlet for the lack of continuity in my life was both worship and cartooning, which still, even in retirement, seem interchangeable to me. Many of my cartoons related to the foibles I would see during services. When Dad was stationed at Fort Monroe, Virginia, I served as an acolyte at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Phoebus, Virginia, a few miles north of the main gate.

One Sunday, as we were processing in, a heavy-set woman in the choir got her heel caught in a floor grate and it came up out of the floor firmly attached to her shoe. Undaunted, she kept parading up the aisle, clacking the grate on the floor. I burst out laughing and the priest behind me hissed, "We do not laugh in church."

At this point, cartooning became an integral part of my faith. I cartooned in high school, college, seminary, and throughout my parish ministry, finding humor in the weirdest times and places. Cartoons about comments people make as they leave the church, "That was one of your better sermons." Cartoons about clergy greeting each other at clergy conferences, "Why wear a collar? Everyone knows what we do!" Then there's the one about a priest talking to his bishop with caskets lining the wall of his office, "Sorry, sir, I've got a funeral that day."

I turned 80 in October and have been a parish priest for 51 years. I lost my first love and mother of my children to cancer in 1996 and did not plan to marry again.

But God saw my despair and led me to my present wife, the Rev. Lori M. Lowe. Both of our bishops presided at the Blessing of our Marriage on January 8, 2000, in her parish, St. Mark's, LaGrange, Georgia. I suddenly found myself the spouse of a priest saying, "Could you talk to the vestry about the stove in the rectory kitchen?" This brought back memories of my late wife asking me the same sorts of things! That should have become a cartoon, but didn't. Life is full of ironies and humor, thanks be to God.



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