



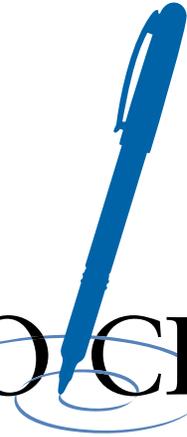
### About the Author

Steve is a retired priest living in Portland, Oregon. He is one of the associate priests at the parish of St. John the Baptist, Portland, and he plays clarinet in a community concert band. He and his wife, Sandy, are enjoying the freedom to visit Europe several times a year. You can reach Steve at [snorx@hevanet.com](mailto:snorx@hevanet.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@cpfg.org](mailto:vintagevoice@cpfg.org).

# VINTAGE VOICE



## Liturgical Assisting

By The Rev. Steve Norcross

When I retired from parish ministry, I began thinking about the right place for my wife, Sandy, and I to call our church home where we would attend worship on Sundays and also find a church community that seemed to be a good fit. It didn't take long for us to realize that the Parish of St. John the Baptist, Portland, was a very good choice.

My first step (after attending worship for several Sundays) was to ask for an appointment with the rector, The Rev. Canon Robert Bryant. He was delighted to speak with me, and seemed very happy to learn that we had chosen St. John's as our home church. His first question was, I think, a wise one. He asked what it was about St. John's that appealed to us.

I had anticipated this question (glad he asked!). A most obvious answer was the proximity of the church to our residence. The Portland area has about 15 Episcopal churches, many quite a drive across town. St. John's is a 10-minute drive, door to door. I am becoming a more frequent user of public transportation. A 10-minute bus ride, plus a 10-minute walk, is good for my finances as well as my fitness.

Beyond that, we liked the liturgical style of the congregation. The worship is Catholic in its orientation, and the music is traditionally hymnal yet with openness to other sources.

The church is on the campus of the Oregon Episcopal School. Education plays a vital role in the life of this congregation. We sensed that no question is inappropriate, and the congregation seems to have its critical faculties in place. No platitudes in the preaching there. The parish has an atmosphere of honoring both diversity and tradition.

Fr. Robert then asked me what I would like to do as a retired clergy member of the congregation. I appreciated this question. As I have read other contributions to Vintage Voice, I have noticed that some writers are happy that they now can devote their energies to those aspects of parish ministries that they felt most skilled at. Some have offered to help with pastoral care, others with social justice. My preference is to offer to assist at parish worship.

The staff clergy prepare a rota of ministries for Sunday worship. I am frequently scheduled to serve as deacon, as we have no real deacon assigned to us at present. I also serve as assisting priest, distributing the bread of communion alongside the presider. I am invited to preach about once a quarter. I am grateful that I can step in at the altar and pulpit when needed, and appreciate that I can exercise those aspects of ministry that I find most satisfying even into retirement.

Pastoral care is always at the request of the staff clergy. Once in a while, I am asked to take communion to a parishioner. It's clear that I will honor this request from the staff clergy upon occasion. It's very good now to not be in charge.

I'm also grateful that I am not called on to provide leadership in those areas of parish ministry that I found difficult. I think that I am terrible at evangelism and stewardship. Now that I'm retired, I gladly turn those ministries over to others who are more suited than I am.

How good it is to be in this time of life, and at a place where I can offer my strengths and set aside my weaknesses. I share this ministry at St. John the Baptist with six other retired and non-stipendiary clergy. Our group includes a retired bishop and a retired cathedral dean. One of us is a younger priest whose other vocation is financial planning. We gather once a month in support of our rector and associate, and to express freely our views of the health of the church and world.

Together, we are a blessing to our church. Each of us will freely admit that in that blessing, we are ourselves richly blessed.

