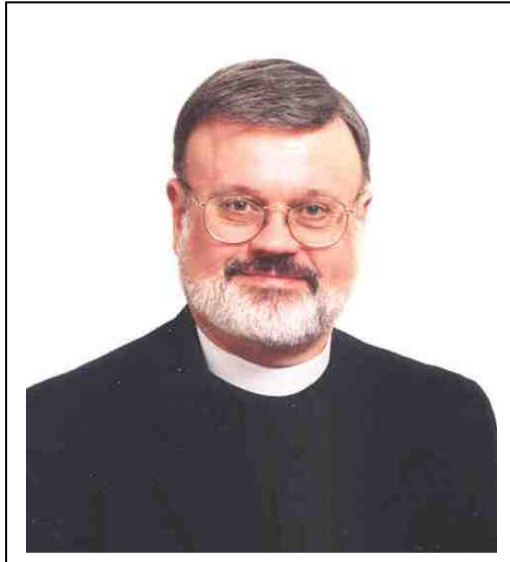


The Venerable Shawn W. Denney



Age (at time of Nominating Synod): 59

Diocese of Canonical Residence:
Springfield

Current Position:
Archdeacon of Springfield and
Vicar, St. Luke's, Springfield, Illinois

Spouse:
Mary Ann Narve Denney

Email:
archdeacon@episcopalspringfield.org
stlucas1098@aol.com

Church Website:
www.stlukesofspringfield.org

Personal Website:
None

Résumé

The Ven. Shawn W. Denney

3813 Bergamot Drive
Springfield, Illinois 62707

Telephone

Home 217-585-1348, 217-585-2982

Church 217-528-5915

Diocesan Office 217-525-1876

Email: archdeacon@episcopalspringfield.org

Date and Place of Birth: April 5, 1951, Jacksonville, Illinois.

Family: Wife, Mary Ann, son, Lucas.

Education

MacMurray College, Jacksonville, Illinois

B.A. in History (Cum Laude), 1973

University of Illinois, College of Law

J.D., 1976

Licensing

Member of the Illinois Bar, 1976-Present

Theological Studies

Read for Orders (1993-1997)

(At the midpoint of these studies (1995) I took the examination administered by the General Board of Examining Chaplains, receiving a passing score in all seven canonical areas, with the mark of Outstanding in Church History)

Extensive Individual Study

Education for Ministry, University of the South Extension Course, Completed 1997

Oxford Summer School in Religious Studies (Summer Study Program)

Three two week summer programs (1994, 1997, 2000)

Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, Summer School Programs

Ecumenical Studies, Anglican Centre in Rome

Seminary Affiliation

Alumnus Associate, Nashotah House, Nashotah, Wisconsin, 2008-Present

Ordination

Deacon, Diocese of Springfield, June 1, 1997

Priest, Diocese of Springfield, May 26, 1998

Ordained by The Rt. Rev. Peter H. Beckwith, X Bishop of Springfield

Church Employment

Episcopal Diocese of Springfield

Archdeacon, 2003-Present

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Springfield, Illinois

Vicar, January 1, 1999-Present

Priest-in-Charge, June 1-December 31, 1998

Deacon-in-Charge, June 1, 1997-May 26, 1998

Diocesan Positions

Clerical Member of the Standing Committee, 2001-2005, 2008-Present

President, 2004-5

Lay Member of the Standing Committee, 1988-1992

Commission on Ministry, Clerical, 1999-2005, 2006-Present

Commission on Ministry, Lay, 1989-1992

Diocesan Council, Lay and Clerical, 1985-Present

Ecclesiastical Trial Court, Clerical, 2000-2003

Chair of the Committee on Constitution and Canons, 1993-1996.

Director of the Division of Mission and Worship, 2001-2003

Chair, Department of Christian Education, 1992-1993

Clerical Deputy to the 73rd General Convention (2000),

Clerical Deputy to the 74th General Convention (2003)

Clerical Deputy to the 76th General Convention (2009)

Member, Church Pension Fund Committee (2009)

Secular Employment

Assistant Attorney General, State of Illinois, 1976-2002

Staff Attorney, Opinions Division, 1976-79

Chief, Opinions Division, 1979-87

Solicitor General, 1987-88

First Assistant Attorney General, Springfield, 1988-1995

Counsel to the Attorney General, 1995-99

Senior Counsel to the Attorney General, 1999-2002

Commissioner, Executive Ethics Commission, 2004-Present (Attorney General Appointee)

Chair, Executive Ethics Commission, July 1, 2007-June 30, 2009

Other Governmental Activities

Chair of Open Meetings Subcommittee, Access to Government Task Force, 1988-92

Member, Civil Justice Reform Act Advisory Committee, Central District of Illinois, 1991-94

Chair, Attorney General's Ethics Commission, 1999-2002

Principal Draftsman -- Illinois Open Meetings Act revisions enacted in 1982 and 1994

Civic Activities

Member, Board of Directors, Illinois First Amendment Center, 2008-Present

Honors

Illinoisan of the Year, Illinois News Broadcasters' Association, 1991

James C. Craven Freedom of the Press Award, Illinois Press Association, 1995

Written Responses to Questions by the Nominee

The Venerable Shawn W. Denney

1. Who do you say Jesus Christ is?

With St. Thomas, I confess Him as my Lord and my God! Since I confess Him as Lord, I am called to follow Him, the commands in His word and the imperatives in His actions, as the pattern of my life. As I strive to do that, I rejoice in the frequent awakenings I experience, which awakenings give me glimpses into His truth.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life -- God's gift of Himself to humanity that we might fully understand the nature of God. He invites me to deny myself (perhaps the most challenging of tasks), to take up my cross (whatever form that assumes) and follow Him. He is Lord, Redeemer, teacher and brother. He is faithful in His promise to make, along with His Father, His home with me, as I open my heart to His presence.

I never cease to be in awe of the ministry of Jesus. He moved through the world with a clear sense of His mission, but always took time for interruptions in which ministry could take place. I try to learn from that myself. It is often easy to fall into patterns in which we are so focused on the things we are doing or think we need to do, that we lose sight of what we should be doing. I once had a visit from a retired bishop who liked dropping by to visit. I was occupied, and no doubt my reluctance to spend that particular time with him was apparent. When he left, he said to me, "sorry for the interruption, but they say, you know, that ministry occurs in the interruptions". So it was in the ministry of Jesus, and so it should and will be for us.

Hanging above my desk is a copy of the Keble College version of William Holman Hunt's *Light of the World*. Every time I visit Oxford, I pay a visit to the Chapel of Keble College to see again and to pray before this remarkable work of art.

This familiar painting is filled with symbolism. Jesus, holding a lantern, stands knocking at a door (Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: Rev. 3:20). The door is overgrown with vines and has no handle on the outside (if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him). As I reflect on this picture, I pray that I may open the door, bound and overgrown though it may have become. In prayer, the door begins to open, and the light of the Lord beckons. Some days it is wider than others, and perhaps only in the last day will it be fully open, but I see in my life steady progress in His direction and an increasing ability to be obedient to His voice. Over and again, I marvel in His presence and the remarkable things that occur when I respond positively to His simple but profoundly life-changing commands.

2. What is the Gospel message?

God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to show us what love is all about, and the depth of the love that God has for us. Worked out in our lives, that love brings transformation, healing and ultimate freedom. Jesus set His agenda on that Sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth, noted in the 4th Chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. When handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, He read these words:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The eyes of all were fixed on Him as he began to say to them "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." The promised Messiah was in their midst.

Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God and to commission us to Kingdom work, that all might be set free from sin and death and that all might be made whole – that all might receive healing – that all might experience true freedom in service to Him that manifests itself in service to others. He came to make it possible that those who receive Him, who believe on His Name, might have a totally new relationship with the Father, being given the power to become God's children. Thus receiving and believing, we are not left stagnant, where we are, but are opened to transformation into His new creation.

The call of the Gospel also establishes a new relationship between those who follow Jesus and the rest of humanity. We are taught by our Lord that service to the least of the members of His family is service to Him. We see His face in the faces of the poor, the hungry and the oppressed.

The Gospel is so powerful that it cannot but draw those exposed to it into its embrace. As Jesus is lifted up, He draws all people to Him. As evangelists, we are called to lift Him up as we share His message. He gives us powerful but practical ways to do that. We bring His Kingdom near in these endeavors, that it may become known and tangible in the lives of others.

We are fully equipped to become agents of reconciliation, for which He first breathed the Holy Spirit on the Day of Resurrection, and the tangible expression of God's love in this broken world. As the Father sent Him, so Jesus sends us, the heirs of His disciples into the world to continue His work, which is the key to bringing humanity into unity with God.

The Gospel draws into focus God's ultimate gift – the promise of eternal life. With the contemplation of forgiveness, healing, renewal and eternal life before us, the message cannot but excite us, and we cannot but act upon it.

3. What is your understanding of “Mission” and “Ministry”?

Our mission as the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ, and our ministry is to represent Him and His church, to bear witness to Him and to carry on His work. We do this trusting in His promise that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we may be able to accomplish the work that He did, and, as He said, even greater things.

In a simpler sense, mission is our agenda, and ministry is what brings that agenda to fulfillment. When the former is clear and focused on its source of power, the latter follows.

When I think of mission, my mind goes to one context in which I have worked, St. Luke’s, Springfield, but it also extends to what I have seen on a broader level in my role as Archdeacon. I find myself longing to take God-given successes from the one and spread a vision for them elsewhere.

For 120 years, St. Luke’s Mission has been a beacon on the east side of Springfield (I like the title Mission – it can be a “two-by-two, don’t take too much baggage” operation). Sometimes the light has been bright, but sometimes the embers have been about to die out. Recently, the breeze of the Holy Spirit has stirred things up a bit and fanned some flames.

Our mission to show the love of God where we are, has taken us places where we never dreamed we might go. Our group has gone from being the excluded, to the included, to the inclusive, in the best sense of that term. Throughout that time of transformation, real ministry has taken place and has expanded far beyond our expectations.

If we might say that mission begets ministry, we might say even more that real and effective ministry begets more ministry. People are attracted to places where they see Gospel work taking place. They want to be part of this work, which begins in being icons of the love of God, loving and serving others so that they may see clearly what the love of God is all about, and put that love to work in and through their own lives.

Social service is an aspect of our ministry, but, in every sense, it is driven by Gospel imperatives. Since it is so grounded, it flourishes and is sustained. The saying “preach the Gospel at all times and use words if necessary,” attributed to St. Francis, is a model. We strive to preach the Gospel in all that we do, that God’s love may thereby be illustrated, but we do not neglect the Word.

We preach, teach, admonish and seek to nurture. It is not always easy, but the bottom line is that we cannot know the limits to what will be the outcome of our faithfulness. God takes it and uses it in ways that we may never see, never know about. Yet we are certain that God uses it to change lives.

4. Provide an autobiographical sketch of your life, including those turning points which were significant in your spiritual development.

I am a late vocation, ordained a Priest at 47. Before that, I had spent 21 years working as a lawyer.

My life has been a journey into understanding God's purpose for it and having faith that He will provide all that I need to be equipped to fulfill that purpose. I can remember experiencing the beginnings of a call to ministry at a very early age, but, for a variety of reasons, most particularly my sense that I was not adequate to it, I kept setting that call aside. The way God began to open the way forward was through what I perceived to be a need at St. Luke's. That need, for ordained ministry, led me to begin ask God how I might respond.

My journey to ordination was filled with setbacks because it was a non-traditional approach, interfered with by a very demanding job with the Attorney General, which seemed to get even more demanding. Some within the clergy were challenged by the non-traditional approach to preparation. Patience was the byword for years, but I treasure what the process taught me.

As I prepared for the General Ordination Exam, I was consumed with what I perceived to be inadequacy. A friend, trying to encourage me, said "if God wants you to be a Priest, he will give you the answers." That word of encouragement put things in a proper perspective. Certainly, I had read volumes and done all I could to prepare, but the knowledge that this was up to God's will gave me the serenity to complete the exam successfully.

Of most significance, perhaps, were the times in the journey when I stopped and said to myself "I don't need this." Every time that happened, the answer came back clearly – "yes, you do".

I kept saying Yes, but I did not fully understand it. I thought it would be no problem to enter the Priesthood and continue with a demanding secular job. After ordination, it became increasingly clear where my true vocation was. The demands of secular work became more of an interference with what I felt called to "be." Early retirement from secular work was God's answer. Along with that change came the opportunity to serve as Archdeacon, which, while having a set of challenges of its own, has offered an abundance of insights.

I find the responsibilities of ordained ministry to be challenging, daunting, frustrating, but filled with joy and fulfillment. I am blessed with a loving and supportive wife, who, day by day nudges me along in response to a variety of Gospel imperatives, and we are blessed with a son, who is the joy of our life together.

I was once asked if I wished I had reached this point earlier, or if I wished I had sought ordination as a first career. My answer was and is No. Everything I have done has given me insights that I would not want to forego and has enhanced my abilities to minister.

5. Describe your rule of life in detail.

I regard a rule of life as a vital underpinning of ministry. While I have endeavored to maintain a rule of life faithfully since before I became a postulant, that rule has not remained stagnant. It has grown and has been adapted to meet the needs of the moment. Perhaps the rule itself has fostered its own growth.

I have always treasured the offices as a “gateway to prayer” not as an end in themselves. The discipline of reading scripture (and spending some time to “soak” in it) and praying psalms and canticles opens the heart to prayer that can become conversation with God. I also find that prayer sets a good stage for theological reading.

For me, each day begins with the Daily Office, and I incorporate into that some time for reflection and reading. I have been using the book *Love’s Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness*, compiled, *inter alia*, by the Archbishop of Canterbury. It consists of excerpts from the writings of persons who have played a role in the development of our understanding and expression of the faith. I usually read one entry a day at the conclusion of Morning Prayer. I have also been working my way, at the rate of a sermon a day, through John Henry Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. Written before his conversion to Roman Catholicism, these sermons contain remarkable insights into scripture and the early development of the Oxford Movement.

The goal of these exercises is to begin each day with my mind’s eye fixed on Jesus and on what He would have the day become. I pray that He will keep me focused and that He will infuse each encounter with witness to Him.

I love verse 14 of Psalm 27 – “You speak in my heart and say, ‘Seek my face.’” I strive to answer, also in the Psalmist’s words – “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” I am inspired to emulate the old spiritual – “I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus.” The challenge is to be able to do that, and, if my mind wanders elsewhere, to redirect it to where it should be.

I make frequent use of the Jesus prayer in reflections throughout the day. I find that prayer helpful for moments of refocus, particularly in times of stress. Just thinking to call upon His Name has a remarkably settling effect, almost as though He catches me up with His crook and draws me back from whatever precipice lies before me.

I celebrate the Eucharist four or five times a week. Every opportunity to celebrate is a joy and a comfort. To me, the exercise is never a rote one, but is constantly renewed and renewing. Especially in times of darkness, doubt and confusion, the encounter with Christ in the Eucharist has become again and again my strength, as I meet Him in scripture and as He reveals Himself to me in the breaking of the bread.

6. Based on your reading of the Diocesan Profile (including the survey), and any other knowledge you have, what do you see that is positive, and what do you see that is challenging, for the next Bishop of Springfield?

My work as Archdeacon has expanded my picture of this Diocese. I see it filled with good people and possessing a strong group of clergy. Together they show an inspiring level of commitment to the work of the Gospel. We also have fields that are ready for the harvest, and have received glimpses of what can happen as we put Gospel models of ministry into action. I believe that we are poised for growth, as we are able to understand that evangelism is our natural and empowered mission.

I am inspired by our diocesan motto – *Deus dat incrementum* – God gives the increase. These words are a challenge to be faithful in our witness and filled with confidence that it is God who will take our faithfulness and produce results. I am not disheartened by what is perceived as decline. Numbers are not and should never be our sole focus. Even if we never see the kind numerical increase we might long to see, we should not fall into the trap of believing that we have labored in vain. Growth will come in a variety of ways, some of which we may never see or understand, but all of which, as a product of God’s faithfulness, will make a difference in the lives of ones we have yet to encounter.

Our greatest challenge, as I perceive it, is to effect reconciliation and foster unity. Issues that have produced divisions in the wider church have divided us. “Party spirit” and even “demonization” of those with whom there are disagreements, have taken their toll. The result has been fracture and an inward focus that, together, have acted to stifle the important work we are called to. We must find ways to communicate across whatever divides exist and strive to experience the unity we are called into by Jesus Himself, when He prays that we might all be one, with a oneness mirroring His oneness with the Father. As we are unable to be in unity, we place our mission in peril, remembering that, as Jesus says, unity is necessary so that the world will believe and know that God sent Him and that God loves the world as God loves Him.

Every one of us needs to strive for reconciliation. I was once approached by someone, with whom I had experienced differences, with the suggestion that the Diocese participate in a particular program aimed as fostering reconciliation. While indicating that the time was probably not ripe for implementing the suggestion, I said that the two of us could begin the process by seeking reconciliation in our own relationship. She took me up on the suggestion, and our relationship in Christ was renewed, even though our individual perspectives remained different.

We can do this. We need to do this, as it is the command and imperative of our Lord. We are enabled to do this, because He is there to equip us and lead us from our separate understandings of truth into His truth.

7. Describe your understanding of leadership, particularly as it would be exercised as a bishop.

I bring to ministry significant experience in leadership in the secular world. At one point in my career, I supervised nearly 200 employees scattered around Illinois. My faith informed my exercise of leadership in the secular world, and the experience I garnered there has helped to inform my exercise of leadership in the church.

The Bishop, as leader, needs to cast a vision for ministry and function as encourager to the faithful. He needs to keep always before his eyes the image of the ministry of Jesus, how Jesus led, the depth with which He loved and the example that infuses His words, His actions and His life on earth. All of these aspects blend to establish authority that must be present for leadership to be effective. Power always seems to try to get the upper hand in relationships, even those in the church, but, as in other situations, when you must exercise power, you have often already lost the battle.

Jesus has the power to compel, but He does not do it. Rather, He invites. He invites us to come under His authority. A bishop, as chief pastor, must ensure that he has placed himself under the authority of Jesus. As a person under such authority, he receives the responsibility to exercise authority over those who have been entrusted to him. A bishop must constantly remind himself of whose he is and under whom he functions, and do his utmost to ensure that his exercise is consonant with the example given by our Lord.

St. Peter calls us all to be ready always to give a reason for the hope that is in us. It is the role of the bishop as leader to articulate that reason for all, as a challenge and a reminder that the power in us is greater than the power in the world. He must do that with clarity, but also with gentleness and reverence. This particular call would have us understand, particularly as it is given in the context of persecution, that faithfulness to the Gospel has never been easy – that it has never been easy to be the church in any age. But, God, who has the power to turn the cross into a symbol of triumph, has the power to lead us through whatever might seek to impede our work for Him.

We have recently reflected again on Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The pastoral model therein is compelling and defining. It speaks of a relationship that is nurtured – His call to us by name, our recognition of His voice, the building of trust, a sense of reliance and faith. In order to be the Chief Shepherd of a diocese, the bishop must have a sheep to shepherd relationship with Jesus – hearing His voice and trusting Him, that his voice might be heard by the sheep entrusted to him, and that he might give them a love modeling that of the Father, testified to in the priceless gift of the Son.

8. A Bishop is called to “guard the faith, unity and discipline in the Church” (BCP 517). How do you understand this charge as it relates to the current crisis and other challenges within the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

Guarding the faith means looking at the whole picture of what the faith is, and ensuring its clear expression. It does not hinge solely on how one perceives and acts on “hot-button” issues. I have heard some described as valiant defenders of the faith whose actions fail to communicate and foster an understanding of God’s love, respond to the command of Jesus that we love one another or articulate how the Gospel carries us through the problems of the present day. Unlike such “defenders,” a true guardian of the faith communicates it all and makes a witness formed by its totality.

To me, a full understanding of the faith plants one firmly on the side of the traditional teachings of the church about the nature and work of the persons of the Trinity, how we are to live our lives, and how our human relationships are formed and gifts exercised. To me, it is the duty of the bishop, in guarding the faith, to teach about a God who is transformational, who calls and equips each of us as a new creation in Christ.

Unity is a word that is often bandied about without a clearly understanding what it must be in the church. The focus seems repeatedly to be placed on us, what we can agree to, how we can work out ways to live together, how we can coexist. We will never find true unity on an earthly plane – we will never find it in what we can work out ourselves, because our faith is not about us and what we can agree to. Rather, it is about God and His plan, and most chiefly, God’s plan of salvation. Every participant in the quest for truth, and every contender in the current controversies, needs to begin by denying himself (seeking to identify those things that are “of us” and not of God), take up his cross and fix his eyes firmly on Jesus. I have no doubt that, if such were to occur, everyone would experience some measure of transformation.

Discipline is not a function of power, but of authority. It has been much abused in the current controversies, and those who would exercise it in an autocratic way will eventually come to understand that it is for naught.

Guarding the faith, unity and discipline of the church has local application but it takes us perforce to the role of the bishop in the wider church. To exercise these functions and carry out these responsibilities in the wider church, one must be engaged in the wider church, participating fully in the work of the House of Bishops and in gatherings of the Anglican Communion.

Withdrawing from such gatherings only serves to foster isolation and inhibit understanding. We can become blinded to the Christianity or even the humanity of those with whom we think we disagree. Worse yet, the wider church is deprived of other perspectives which, when delivered in love and charity, can change hearts, even our own.

9. Describe your liturgical style; include in your answer your understanding of the place of preaching in the liturgy, and the use of music in the liturgy.

I have always been firmly rooted in the traditions of Anglo-Catholic worship, but, as I have grown in liturgical style, I have tried to develop an approach that is worshipful and fully cognizant of the solemn nature of what we are doing, but not stuffy and, above all, not overdone. I recently had someone from another tradition who has visited St. Luke's, describe our worship as infused with joy. I rejoiced in that remark, because I have tried to ensure that, whether the season is penitential or celebratory, the worship of God should always be filled with and communicate the joy that comes from being in His presence.

Preaching must always be at the core of our worship. It is something I treasure because of the opportunities it presents to communicate the Gospel and connect our daily living to it. I often find that the points with which I challenge our people become an equal, if not greater, challenge to me. In that sense, I find the very act of preaching to be transformational in my own life. Without forsaking preparation, I long ago forsook being bound by a text. I love looking at the faces of those to whom I am speaking and often find the contours of the sermon molded by the interaction.

I love music. Since I was a small child, I have loved to sing. I well remember my grandmother telling me to sing out in church, especially if the crowd was small.

Music can communicate in ways that mere words can never hope to. It has a spiritual dimension, and even in its secular expressions, it touches the soul. It is a spiritual gift, lifting us into the experience of the presence of God in ways that transcend human understanding. It floats our praises unto God and His blessing flows back.

I incorporate music in every celebration, and I find that in its simplest forms it is sometimes the most meaningful. It is best done in a way that fits the setting and the skills of those present. I think there is always a temptation for those of us who love the English cathedral model of church music to want to replicate that. We need to be careful, however, not to go beyond our capabilities or the capabilities of the worshippers who participate (after all, this work of the people should always be made accessible to the people). Rather, we need to find something that is comfortable, worshipful and capable of lifting us as a community.

Once when attending Evensong in England, I saw these words in the order of service: "The congregation is invited to associate itself with the voices of the choir as *they* offer music." The import was clear – keep quiet and leave the worship to the professionals. This made me sad, even though I knew we were ill-equipped to do what the choir was doing, because it missed an important point of the worship experience – the involvement of all.