

## The Reverend Robert M. Lewis



**Age (at time of Nominating Synod):** 32

**Diocese of Canonical Residence:**  
Central Florida

**Current Position:**  
Rector, Church of the Advent  
Dunnellon, Florida

**Spouse:**  
Ellen K. Lewis

**Email:**  
[adventrector@aol.com](mailto:adventrector@aol.com)

**Church Website:**  
<http://adventepiscopal.net>

**Personal Website:**  
None

## Résumé

### The Reverend Robert M. Lewis

3570 Southwest 151 Street, Ocala, FL 34473 + 352-361-5058 + adventrector@aol.com

#### **Objective:**

To proclaim to a lost world the saving grace of Jesus Christ, equip the saints for the work of ministry, proclaim the faith once delivered to the saints in word and deed, and lead the Diocese of Springfield, God willing and if elected, into closer relationship with Jesus Christ and each other.

#### **Sacraments Received:**

Holy Baptism	April 6, 1996	Cathedral Church of St. Peter, St. Petersburg, Florida
Confirmation	April 6, 1996	Cathedral Church of St. Peter, St. Petersburg, Florida
Holy Matrimony	July 7, 2001	Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist, Wausau, Wisconsin
Ordination to Diaconate	June 2, 2007	Cathedral Church of St. Luke, Orlando, Florida
Ordination to Priesthood	January 6, 2008	All Saints' Church, Morton, Illinois

#### **Education:**

Present	Doctor of Ministry ( <i>in process</i> )	Nashotah House, Nashotah, Wisconsin
2007	Master of Divinity	Nashotah House, Nashotah, Wisconsin
2004	Bachelor of Arts (Psychology)	University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida
1997	Associate of Arts	St. Petersburg College, St. Petersburg, Florida
1995	High School Diploma	Canterbury School, St. Petersburg, Florida

#### **Ecclesiastical Experience:**

July 2009 – Present	Rector	Episcopal Church of the Advent, Dunnellon, Florida
January 2008 – June 2009	Vicar	All Saints' Church, Morton, Illinois
July 2007 – January 2008	Deacon Administrator	All Saints' Church, Morton, Illinois
October 2004 – June 2007	Seminarian in Residence	St. Alban's Church, Sussex, Wisconsin
April 2003 – August 2004	Lay Assistant to Rector	Holy Faith Church, Dunnellon Florida

#### **Diocesan Positions/Commissions Held:**

October 2009 - Present	Bishop's Liaison for Pastoral Care of Clergy Families, Central Florida
October 2008 – June 2009	Dean, Northern Deanery, Springfield
October 2008 – June 2009	Commission on Ministry, Springfield
October 2008 – June 2009	Department of General Mission Strategy, Springfield
October 2008 – June 2009	Diocesan Board, Springfield

***Special Skills:***

Administration, Staff Management, Pastoral Care, Spiritual Direction, Special Event Planning, Stewardship Program Design, Vestry Training and Design, Sung and Solemn Liturgies, Family and Pastoral-sized Congregations, Lenten Program Design, Clergy Counseling, Accounting, Neighborhood Evangelism, “Three Streams” Liturgy

***Secular Positions Held:***

2003-2004	Pier One Imports, Ocala, Florida	Sales and Customer Relations
2001-2003	Pier One Imports, St. Petersburg, Florida	Assistant Manager
1999 – 2001	Realty Executives of Wausau, Wausau, Wisconsin	Office Manager-Bookkeeper
1997 - 1999	Florida Resurrection House, St. Petersburg, Florida	Office Manager-Bookkeeper
1995 – 1997	Pier One Imports, St. Petersburg, Florida	Assistant Manager

***Passions:***

Family, liturgical sewing, violin, piano, banjo, guitar, antiques, gardening, formal entertaining

***About Fr. Robert M. Lewis –***

Fr. Lewis was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Florida. His family of origin had nominal Methodist/Baptist connections. Although he was always raised to believe in Christ’s message of redemption, he committed his life to Christ as a result of the evangelistic efforts of the Episcopal day school he attended. After graduation from High School, he attended St. Petersburg College and received an Associate of Arts degree in 1997. He furthered his education by beginning his major studies in Psychology. He placed his education on hold when he met his wife of eight years in 1999 and moved to Wausau, Wisconsin. Father and Mrs. Lewis married in 2001. Shortly thereafter, they moved again to St. Petersburg, resumed his undergraduate education, and began the process toward ordination. Father Lewis wrestled with a call to the priestly ministry for many years, changing his major from law to medicine, then education and finally, psychology. In retrospect, he finds that period of time of running from God’s call a blessing in disguise as it has made his ministry much richer though education in many different fields. The Diocese of Southwest Florida was considering a moratorium on candidates to the priesthood so, after an invitation from Fr. C. Thomas Raezer, he began the process in the Diocese of Central Florida. There he served under the tutelage of Fr. Raezer at Holy Faith Church, an invaluable asset since he would never have opportunity for a curacy. In 2004, his wife, Ellen, gave birth to their only child, Edwin, and three months later, they left for Nashotah House. Upon graduation, there was no position available for him in central Florida. He was referred to Bishop Peter Beckwith by a fellow seminarian regarding an opening in his diocese at a mission in Morton. After much prayer and discernment, he accepted the call to be the seventh vicar of All Saints’ Church, Morton. He was ordained to the Transitional diaconate after graduation and began serving All Saints in June of 2007. During his time in Morton he became very involved in the life of the diocese, but, due to the economic downturn in 2009, and the inability of All Saints to

continue to cover his clerical package, he thought it best to consider if God was calling him elsewhere. After receiving a call to be the second rector of Advent Church, Dunnellon, he prayerfully discerned this call for thirty days and then accepted. Currently, he believes the Lord is leading him to use his gifts at the diocesan level. He believes strongly that God's being draws ministry out of us and is committed to taking the people of God out of maintenance and back to ministry.

***About Mrs. Ellen K. Lewis:***

Ellen K. Lewis (*nee Biedermann*) was born to Lutheran parents in the central Wisconsin town of Wausau. She is an avid supporter of traditional family roles, lay ministry, and chief supporter of her husband. She is a Daughter of the King and has served as discernment leader, Daughters of the King Secretary, volunteer parish secretary, Junior Daughters of the King directress, and leader of women's Bible studies. Most recently, she was elected to the Diocesan Board in Central Florida. She has recently completed an Associate of Arts degree from St. Leo University in Dade City, Florida, a small, private, Benedictine college. Ellen also engages in community through her son's school, Sunrise Elementary, where she serves on the Parent-Teacher Organization.

***About Master Edwin H. Lewis:***

Edwin is a precious six year old boy. Born in Ocala, Edwin has known nothing but the clergy lifestyle. He has a precious relationship with God that is the fodder for much of his father's sermons. He currently claims he would like to be a priest when he grows up, "Just like Daddy".

## Written Responses to Questions by the Nominee

### The Reverend Robert M. Lewis

Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Hello. I am Fr. Robert Lewis, currently serving as rector of The Church of the Advent in Dunnellon, Florida in the Diocese of Central Florida. To some of you, I am a familiar face and I look forward to discerning with you if our Lord is leading you to common ministry in Springfield as your Bishop. The nine questions are a great starting place to discern our common ministry.

I begin with the first question: **Who is Jesus Christ?**

At a time in our church and culture when Jesus is seen as “a way” or “my way”, I insist that His is the way and the only way. His Holy Incarnation brought the second person of the Trinity to earth through the humanity of a willing vessel, the Blessed Virgin Mary. He fulfilled the Messianic prophesies, proving Himself to be both fully God, fully man and our suffering servant.

His ministry was composed of instruction, divine insight into the true meaning of the law, and nearly seventy percent of His recorded actions were miracles of healing – something He commissioned His church to not only pray for, but expect. Jesus was bruised for our transgressions and by His stripes, we are healed. His Passion and death purchased our redemption from the world, the flesh and the devil. He was raised from the dead as evidence that God accepted His unblemished sacrifice and the path to God was now open to all who put their trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Perhaps an even more important issue is who is Jesus for me? His sacrifice is personal – I accept His atonement because I recognize that, apart from His grace, I am a most miserable offender. Having accepted Christ personally, washed in Baptism and empowered by His Holy Spirit, I live a new life – changed and reborn. To paraphrase Dietrich Bonhoeffer, when Jesus calls us, He calls us to come and die. I must daily die to self in order to live for God, difficult, of course, but rewarding, absolutely. This is the Jesus I serve – a personal savior who did for me what I could never do for myself.

#### 2. **What is the Gospel message?**

The Gospel message is the Good News of redemption. By ourselves, we are bent on destruction. The Gospel, the message of Atonement, is not simply a message of sin and redemption, but a message we accept inwardly and outwardly. Inwardly, the Gospel refers to personal relationship with Jesus. Outwardly, it refers to Jesus’ commission to tell others

the Good News that they too would come to saving knowledge of our savior. To put it at its simplest level – God loves us, we blew it, Christ died, we must accept.

The Gospel is lived out in the life of the church through the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. The Great Commandment is to love God with all our heart and soul and love our neighbors as ourselves. To live out this commandment is to reach out to the modern day lepers of society and welcome the least and the lost into our fold. This is the radical inclusion of the Gospel.

The Great Commission teaches us that there is a lost world out there, perishing for want of an authentic, biblical Jesus. He tells us to go and make disciples (that is to say people growing in personal holiness and relationship with God in Christ). He further tells us that we are to baptize them, initiating them fully into Christ Body the Church, lastly he promises that he will be with us always – we are never alone in ministry. This is the authentic Gospel we are to proclaim in season and out of season, whether popular or not, doing so in love and charity, with respect, yet not confusing inclusivity with the prevailing attitudes of the common culture.

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

Mission and ministry are our reactions to the grace given in our walk with the Lord. Mission is our bringing Christ into community, engaging a lost world with Christ in a loving and caring manner. Ministry is drawn out of us by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s movement in our life, both common and individually. We are called to have a ministry to bind up the broken, or, as Matthew 5 states, to be salt and light to a hurt and broken world. The church must be an agent of change in society, or it will become a relic of the past. We are but one generation from extinction.

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

I was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Florida. My family of origin had nominal Methodist/Baptist connections. Although I was always raised to believe in Christ’s message of redemption, I committed my life to Christ as a result of the evangelistic efforts of the Episcopal day school I attended for all my early education. After graduation from High School, I attended St. Petersburg College and received an Associate of Arts degree in 1997. I furthered my education by beginning my major studies in Psychology. I placed my education on hold when I met my wife of eight years in 1999 and moved to Wausau, Wisconsin. We married in 2001. Shortly thereafter, we returned to St. Petersburg where I resumed my undergraduate education, and began the process toward ordination. I wrestled with a call to the priestly ministry for many years, changing my major from law to medicine, then education and finally, psychology. In retrospect, I find that period of time of running

from God's call a blessing in disguise as it has made my ministry much richer though education in many different fields.

In 2004, my wife, Ellen, gave birth to our only child, Edwin, and three months later, we left for Nashotah House. Upon graduation, there was no position available for me in central Florida. After much prayer and discernment, I accepted the call to be the seventh vicar of All Saints' Church, Morton. During my time in Morton, I became very involved in the life of the diocese, but, due to the economic downturn in 2009, and the inability of All Saints to continue to cover my clerical package, I thought it best to consider if God was calling me elsewhere. The decision was painful. I was not only leaving an area and mission I had come to love as my family, but I was leaving a diocese that had placed me in such wonderful positions where I could build the Kingdom of God beyond the local level; as Dean, and serving on Commission on Ministry and Department of General Mission Strategy.

After receiving a call to be the second rector of Advent Church, Dunnellon, I prayerfully discerned this call for thirty days and then accepted. Advent is a healthy, pastoral sized congregation that is at home with evangelical, charismatic, and catholic elements in their liturgy. It is incredibly healthy, but it certainly is not Springfield. When I was first approached about becoming a nominee for bishop, I dismissed it as the remark of one who really appreciated my ministry. After the fourth person commented that they felt I would be called to be a bishop, I began listening because call is always discerned in community. If I were elected and consecrated bishop, I would probably have a very unique outlook. True, I may not have twenty years of parish ministry in my pocket, but I do have the desire to take southern Illinois for Christ. A young, energetic, three-streams bishop, it would seem, could be a refreshing and promising new change.

## **5. Describe your rule of life in detail.**

My rule of life begins and ends with the God's word written and the Holy Eucharist. As a priest, I am convinced of the interior value of the daily office and the Daily celebration of the Mass. I receive monthly spiritual direction from a retired Old Catholic Bishop. I am always immersed in the Word of God in one manner or another, whether from reading commentary or the works of the Early Church Fathers. Except in times of illness, I observe the suggested days of fasting and self-denial. I also have at least one 24 hour quiet period each year to reflect and pray for insight of God's will for my life, and the direction He would have me take for the coming year. Perhaps the greatest element of my rule of life is constant prayer. Whether in the car driving to a shut-in, working on a sewing project, or dusting my office the whole day is devoted to God's service, even if in the most mundane activities.

**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?**

The Diocese of Springfield is uniquely blessed with incredible potential! It has a group of godly priests and deacons, committed to serving God. It is committed to being both a member of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. It has several champions I admire and respect: Archdeacon Denney, a wealth of information on all matters of canon law, the capable and super-organized Sue Spring, and the hub of the youth program, Joe Hooten, as well as countless others. Most church buildings are debt free and do not draw from the diocesan finances. It is a ripe mission field, encompassing four major universities. As it is said in real estate, it has the most important asset: location, location, location.

It poses some unique challenges. First, the number of struggling missions is staggering. While I am not a proponent of closing churches, I do feel passion for helping them *refine* their vision for the future. Another obvious need is to reconcile factions within the diocese proving ourselves to be *both* faithful Episcopalians and striving to remain a constituent part of the Anglican Communion. If ordained bishop, I would focus on healing divisions (especially in places like Edwardsville, Bloomington, and Lincoln), fostering mission and finding a new generation of Christians, who are formed and educated to be the church, instead of simply attending it. I believe now is the time to elect a younger Bishop who is committed to being approachable by the next generation. Young persons are not simply the church of tomorrow, they are the church of today. We must *form* Christians by teaching the faith, not simply dispensing the sacraments without due preparation. God will indeed give the increase (*Dens Dat Incrementum*) *if* we remain faithful.

Ideas I have:

1. Young Priests' Initiative (very successful in Pittsburgh)
2. Expansion of YTBCL – for youth, thereby making leaders of THIS generation!
3. Seek out one young person in each parish to be a volunteer youth leader in each parish/mission
4. Commission to actively promote Women's Ministries as a diocese
5. A diocesan wide curriculum standard for persons presented for confirmation.

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

My style of leadership is one of consensus, yet unity in diversity. Every voice needs to be heard. I would lead as a servant, not an autocrat. A bishop is best first as a pastor, then as an administrator.

As a pastor, I am a strong advocate for clergy packages and compensation. I believe wholeheartedly in “gatekeeping” that is, that the bishop must defend against those who

would seek positions that would attack our creedal faith. I would be very much connected with lay persons, especially the young. I would maintain lines of communication with my clergy. As an administrator, I would strive to be the backbone of the diocese, accepting both criticism and praise in order to build the bonds of the common life in the diocese.

I do have a “the buck stops here” personality, but only after ALL viewpoints have been listened to and addressed. The factionalism and disagreement within the diocese (as evidenced in Synod 2004 and 2008), needs to be addressed and minds brought together.

I would encourage the Deanery systems to have a monthly clericus, not to discuss business, but to hold up each other in prayer. Parish priests are not islands, they need support from their peers, I would make every attempt possible to attend them myself.

Finally, I would gather an advisory committee, this committee would represent many viewpoints, lay and ordained, liberal and conservative to try to bring our beloved diocesan family together. I would moderate the meetings and pray it would be a step forward toward reconciliation from within.

**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, unity, and discipline of the church is an odd balancing act that is best understood in Springfield, as engaging in the life of both the Episcopal Church and the life of the larger Anglican Communion. The balancing will take tact and skill, recognizing the various viewpoints in our church, yet holding the line that the church must continue to teach the catholic and reformed faith as expressed in scripture, tradition and reason.

The issues facing our common life, especially with regard to human sexuality, are polarizing. The challenge is to bring both sides together, yet officially holding to the traditional view of Christian marriage and godly sexuality. We must at all costs remain part of the Anglican Communion. It is the difference between catholic Anglicanism and protestant denominationalism. Without a worldwide connection, the catholicity of the episcopate suffers. We are a confederation of dioceses linked by a common life and history, it would indeed be a pity to allow it to become just another protestant sect.

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

My liturgical style is an amalgamation. While I prefer classic sung and solemn liturgy, I am a conversational preacher. I am equally at home with modern music as with Anglican Chant.

*Catholic:* I am a sacramentalist and I believe strongly in the Real Presence. My style of celebration is a mix of Fortesque and Dearmer, while interpreted for the modern church.

I have celebrated Mass in a great different styles, ranging from the colonial era “northender” to east-facing Sarum use, and everything in between.

I am personally in favor of widening the liturgical resources permissible in the diocese, including *The Book of Common Prayer 1928* and the *Anglican Service Book 1980*. Other liturgies might also be permissible insofar as they preserve the historic faith and receive the express written consent of the ordinary.

***Evangelical:*** I have been told that I preach as an evangelical. I preach to convict the listener of the need for conversion of life, personal holiness, and growth in the Holy Spirit. I rarely preach comfort, except at funerals. I expound on scripture as God’s authoritative Word and address its meaning in light of the needs of the congregation.

***Charismatic:*** The gifts of the Holy Spirit are minimally exercised in the Episcopal Church. Healing of emotional, physical and mental ailments is one of the commissions that Jesus left with the church. It is, however, one we do not live into well. I have discerned gifts of faith, evangelism, prayer, works of mercy, and healing. All believers have some spiritual gifts, yet they are often underutilized.

Why then are we afraid to use our gifts? As I see it, the Episcopal Church, and the Diocese of Springfield, will be strong if we use all three; an evangelical faith, in catholic order, empowered by the Spirit.

I hope that this has answered questions about me. I also pray that God will give you a bishop who is godly and concerned for the mission of the Diocese of Springfield. Perhaps that person is me.

The Lord bless you and keep you

The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you,

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

In His light and love,

Fr. Robert M. Lewis+