

Fr. Paul S. Winton - An Informal Profile



Tidbits of Interest

Fr. Paul is a vibrant and healthy 55 year old. He is just under 6', over 200 pounds and God gave him a voice for public speaking (but it can get tired). He is an introvert but you would have to know him to know that. He laughs daily and fully. He tends toward formality, in speech, dress and writing but when he relaxes he really relaxes. If you catch him in white socks he is way into his relaxing mode. Relaxing will often include paper and pen with which to write, a good cigar and a better single malt. He is a better than average handy man and has over a 6 year period totally re-modeled a home – almost single handedly – including a 4 level, 4000 square foot deck. He claims that his fried chicken is “blue ribbon” – a big claim to make in Georgia. Fr. Paul reads everything from People magazine to quantum physics but his favorite book really is the Bible and the BCP runs a very close second. His music taste runs to classical but he has discovered some pretty good theology in Country Western. He loves opera – in Italian, please! He is a serious but not pathological Braves fan (radio only until the play offs) and has a favorite Pro-football team. Fr. Paul is A- political but informed. He is most comfortable in small group settings socially. Fr. Paul has dear friends throughout the country. He much prefers the mountains to the beach. And a cabin to a condo. “If I am in the water there must be a sunken boat underneath me. Fr. Paul is a car guy. He says: “I never make a commitment to a car. I date them. I buy only used cars – the one I have now is 12 years old. You can't tell if my car is in the lot because you won't know which car is mine. It is the closest thing I have to a hobby. It's a little cheaper than golf or fishing.” The person he admires the most is his Son, Tyler – an attorney in commercial litigation in Columbia, South Carolina.

Work

Fr. Paul has never been out of work since he was 17 years old – not for a day. His work experience is rich and varied. He was only fired once, as a waiter, and as Fr. Paul reports it he was “the worst waiter in the history of food.” Work includes - in no particular order:

- Heavy equipment operator
- Cabbie
- (terrible) Waiter (fired)
- Soda Jerk
- Janitor
- Police dispatcher
- Sheriff's deputy
- Feed mill laborer
- Director of safety and personnel
- Labor Relations Manager
- Human Resource Manager
- Director of (Medical Center) Operations
- Chief (Medical Center) Operating Officer
- Chief (Medical Center) Executive Officer
- Consultant – Labor Relations and Worker's Compensation
- Sr. Associate to the Rector
- Rector

Education

Fr. Paul did his under-graduate work with an emphasis in (Industrial) Sociology and his graduate work is in Health Care Administration, Labor relations and then Theology. He raced through his bachelor's degree in 7 years but became a serious student at the graduate level – particularly in Seminary. Fr. Paul graduated from The School of Theology at The University of The South, distinguishing himself as a preacher and has a genuine fondness for the Mountain. He would love to return to Sewanee to teach after retirement.

The Church

Fr. Paul came to the Church as a young boy who was placed by the courts in the loving care of The Saint Francis (Episcopal) Boys Homes – where he was raised from the time he was 12 until he graduated from high school. It is there,

surrounded by priests who loved and cared for him, that Fr. Paul fell in love with the Episcopal Church. Writes Fr. Paul: “The Episcopal Church is the only family I knew as a child, and though She, like all families, will sometimes break my heart, I love Her still and I could never leave Her. While being raised in an orphanage with 25 other boys did not equip me very well for family life as an adult, I enjoyed a wonderful life of friends, and social activities and sports, and the great life in the (Adirondack) mountains. I had about the best life of any of the guys I knew in town. I still count those years at St. Francis as a time of great joy and blessing. I have stories for a life time.”

Fr. Paul is demanding in terms of the liturgy of the Church. He expects it to be reverent, beautiful, theologically grounded and absolutely faithful to The Book of Common Prayer; convinced that this offers God’s people the best opportunity for a Divine encounter within the context of Sacred Worship. For Fr. Paul preaching is Sacramental, the Eucharist an invitation into heaven itself and there is no better moment in the Church than a Baptism.

If Fr. Paul were a coach he would indeed bench the most talented player if he didn’t “play nice” with others”, “If you can’t play nice – (or work to learn how to) you don’t get to lead a ministry – no matter how talented or senior you may be.” Within The Body of Christ we ought to be able to manage at least that – to be kind to one another. And...the greater the responsibility the greater the call to kindness and generosity of spirit– especially the ordained.”

He is not a big fan of meetings and while he will do thousands of them a year, none is any longer than it has to be. The bigger the meeting (in terms of numbers of people) the less he likes it.

Church politics

He spends no energy on them. If he has to, Fr. Paul will speak out on an issue, but then it is back to the work for the parish. A typical Fr. Paul response: With respect to the recent news about the Roman Catholics’ outreach to disaffected Episcopalians: “I think when the Roman Catholic Church returns to the reforms it halted with the birth of the Church of England I would be interested in learning more; provided that reformation resulted in : the opening of the Eucharist to all Baptized Christians, the Ordination of women, vigorous protection of all children by serious pedophilia screening of all present and potential clerics, the shedding of its excessive wealth and holdings and surrender of those proceeds to the poor, and a much more generous liturgy. By then of course, they would be the Episcopal Church. I think it makes rather more sense to stay here and prepare to welcome Roman Catholics into the reformed Catholic Church we have always been. “

About his call to Saint John’s

“The first thing to say, is that I really do believe in “discernment” and “call”. They are old fashioned words, but they are words with depth and meaning. A priest is never “hired”. A Rector is not an employee. Rectors do not work for a parish or a Vestry or even a Bishop. A Rector serves a community of faith to whom he/she has been called – which is to say – that people of faith, guided by people of faith and wisdom – seek – by the guidance of the Holy Spirit what might be God’s will for the spiritual leadership of the community. Calling a cleric is serious work for serious minded people who are prepared to work very hard at listening. If you were to speak with your search committee you would discover that most of their time was spent *listening*. Further, in our tradition, a Rector is called (“raised up”) by the community, approved by a Bishop and elected by a Vestry.... for life. While this rarely happens, what is possible and is almost always the case, is Rector and People come together with an understanding that our relationship is framed in terms of decades - not years. Our commitment to one another is immediate and long term. The good news for a parish is that no Rector needs to rush things or force change or teach everything right now. We will be in relationship with one another for a long time. Therefore, we can afford to be gentle. We can take the time to learn about one another and truly know and understand one another. I am in the 9th year of my Rectorship at Saint David’s and I love the good people of Saint David’s deeply. One believes that I will serve the good people of Saint John’s for many years and I am certain to grow to love them deeply as well.”