

## The Reverend Norman Y. Ishizaki: An Oral History

Presented on the occasion of his retirement from  
St. Alban's Episcopal Church  
September 29, 2002

As St. Alban's ventures into the future, it seemed important to better understand our past, and so we have recently begun a parish oral history project (a supplement to Betsy Cahall's official parish history). And what better place to start the series of interviews than with the man who has shaped and marked St. Alban's for the past 35 years? Norm, on the occasion of this retirement we make a gift to you and your family--but also to ourselves--of these oral histories, verbal self-portraits of you and Velda. In conversations with you both over the last few weeks, I have come to better understand and admire your wisdom and soul, as well as your devotion to each other and to St. Alban's. It's been a pleasure and an inspiration. As parishioners read these accounts, I am sure they will agree that one of your great legacies has been your extraordinary ability to personally engage so many in this faith community, and to have cared for each and every sheep in your flock. Your pastoral calling, carried out tirelessly and lovingly, has indeed been deep and abiding. We will miss you and we wish you even more of God's grace in your future.

September 29, 2002  
Luisa Del Giudice

**Early family life: relocation.** Norman Yukio Ishizaki, October 27, 1939. I was born in Sacramento. Then the war broke out, so our family was relocated. In fact, we went to an internment camp at Tule Lake. My dad had a jewelry store [and] having a jewelry store [meant that] we had something like two weeks to sell the whole thing. [...] He had to sell everything, and [for] the things that we couldn't sell, we got receipts from the FBI—but we never got [any of] it back. [...] For example, back at the beginning of the war, we had a 16 mm sound projector and system, and [for] all that stuff, we got a receipt, but we never saw it again and never got compensated. [Have you tried?] I don't know if they did, they might have.

**Japanese heritage.** [What generation were your parents? Nisei?] My father was born in Japan. My mother was born here but [was] of Japanese descent. [Where was your father born in Japan?] I don't know the name the village, off the top of my head. [Were they of the artisan class? What did their parents do?] [...] I've never made a pilgrimage back to

Japan so I don't know. My sister has, so she could fill you in on some of that. [Is your sister older than you?] Yes, I have an older brother who died recently, an older sister, a sister born and died (not in childbirth, but as an infant), then I was born, and I have two younger brothers—a large family. Everyone has been to Japan except me. [And why have you not?] I don't know. I like Europe! I think Velda and I are going to Japan this next spring, so it'll be my first trip, but I don't think we'll do a pilgrimage per se. [...] Then we were relocated. Because my dad had a jewelry store, there used to be a gathering of lots of young men who would hang out—they had to hangout some place. Because he had a friend through the jewelry business who lived in the Midwest—if you could get a sponsor (like the Vietnamese refugees now) who would vouch for you and make sure that you had money coming in, you could relocate. [We were] a family of five children, mom and dad. We relocated to Rockford, Illinois, where I grew up. I don't have any direct memories of internment camps because I was too young. I was two years old. [...] Good childhood...jumping to high school, I think I had one B, straight As in everything, as a semester average, in high school. I went to the University of Wisconsin and majored in Chemical Engineering. Then my dad decided I should really continue college in Los Angeles. So I applied to USC and UCLA. USC [...] accepted first [...] I was all set to go there but I went to UCLA instead.

[Your relationship to your Japanese family: did you live a very Japanese life?] Not really; it was a mix. There was a resistance on [the part of] all of the kids to learning Japanese, because it was just after the war. [...] We heard a lot of Japanese spoken in the house. My grandmother lived with us for a while. [Did your parents speak it to each other in Japanese?] Not to each other but to my grandmother, so I heard it a lot. Then we had visitors who didn't speak English. But it wasn't a big influence...like I said, that's perhaps why I did so well in school, because it was like I was a native-born American. But the culture was there in every other aspect, lots of ethnic dishes, etc.

**Eastern values.** [What part of your Japanese background do you particularly value?] The part I value is just the approach to life, to learning things. It's hard to explain. There's a great Eastern influence on how you look at life and approach life. [It's]

probably why I like Scriptures so much. The Bible is written for Eastern people. It wasn't written for the Western world specifically. [...] There's a lot of emphasis put on...the earthiness of things (rather than looking at [things] technically). There's a lot of appreciation for family and relationships and extended family. [...] If you do something individually and it brings shame on the family, that's very important. Whereas, in the United States and in Western society, it's a much more individualistic thing. If you do something wrong, *you* have sinned, *you* have done something wrong. And you may bring shame upon yourself—not a community.

**Tension and balance.** [Then there is] the idea of *tension*. The Eastern world is comfortable with tension. The Western world wants to solve everything, to fix it. That's why there's so much trouble with the Middle East: it's because we want to go in there and fix it. Well, for centuries, they've been used to not having to fix it, to the tension. The illustration I use here at St. Alban's is: Eastern flower arrangements are never symmetrical. Western ones always are. Even the ones on our altar are always symmetrical. If you draw a line through the center, one's a mirror image of the other. Eastern arrangements have a thrust going out one way, an object off to one side. It's balanced but it's never symmetrical. [And you're comfortable with that?] Yes, I was trying to explain the values, and I think that's probably one of them—tension. But it runs through everything. There's a tension in the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. You can admire the esthetic and at the same time the technology—the coefficient of the expansion of metal, and the strength of metal—that allowed someone to build that kind of a bridge. That's all in balance. So, that's one dimension of thinking Eastern.

**The greater good.** And the whole sense of the greater good... [...] Some European countries have this more than we do in the United States, even though they are Western. They have [...] a sense of that larger community, and that feeds right into our Christianity. That's probably why I became a priest. There is a sense of the greater good in a faith community. It's different from being all by yourself on a golf course. It's that kind of heritage that, for me, means a lot. It wasn't so much style of dress or language, but it was feeling embraced by the whole way of looking at things, at valuing things, and

then combining it with everything I think of as Western. That's why I started out in Engineering, the great influence of Aristotelian logic:  $A + B = C$ , the clarity of sequential thought.

**Growing up in the Midwest.** [You were talking of tension, and of living through those times. Was it hard growing up in the Midwest?] No, because we weren't a big enough minority. I think that's where the struggles come now. There's a need for more balance, in the sense that we have a real plurality. Back then, it was just a majority thing. The Midwest was lily white, with middle class values. I didn't feel the tension of feeling odd because I didn't look like [them]... There weren't enough of us to [feel] odd. [Did you have a community?] No, that's why the relocation worked—for the government, anyway—the relocation didn't form other Japanese American communities. It just formed isolated groups, and they felt in that a safety. [...] [Did your parents have a hard time?] You know, I think they were being helped by some people they knew well, and that was a support—just to have someone say: yes, even though you have been essentially forced to move, we'll support you. They had a lot of support that way. There was a sprinkling of other Japanese Americans, so they would get together, but it wasn't a big thing. They didn't form a neighborhood like we see here, where they cluster. [...] They certainly could in the big cities like Chicago. There, there were Japanese grocery stores, for example.[...] We didn't have that.

**UCLA, California.** [When you came to California, did your family come with you?] By that time, my sister had already relocated out here and we had other relatives and friends. My mother died while I was here at UCLA. Then my father remarried soon after that. But I had already left home [...] and really came here where we had relatives. [...] But this was Los Angeles, not Sacramento, of course.

[What year did you come?] I was here in 1959. [What was your student life like? Did you like Los Angeles?] [...] As far as UCLA went, I love big schools. My next younger brother didn't. After his freshman year, he transferred from UCLA to a smaller liberal arts college, made college "Who's Who," graduated summa cum laude. [...] But I liked

UCLA [...] I took advantage of being a minority, because at UCLA they were looking to integrate all of their communities. Instead of serving at an entry level in political offices, for example, I got to leapfrog. I guess [I had] the talents and energy they were looking for. [What do you mean by political office?] Well, I got to know Joel Wachs who [became] one of our L.A. supervisors. He was president of the student body at that time. I could work on committees under him very quickly. I didn't have to be a worker bee and work up. I could chair. As an example, I chaired the committee that located Spring Sing [...] at the time [it] was at the Hollywood Bowl. But we'd have banquets before it and afterward, and I could go on location and scout, etc. [...] Being Japanese American, the school integrated the boards politically at the top level. So, it was easy for me to go right in. [Were you appointed to these positions?] Yeah, all appointments. That's what I mean about the political system. [...] In addition, I was a member of a fraternity, Beta Theta Pi, so I had connections to a lot of the student labor force, the pledge classes. We had to do so much community service [the worker bees!]? Yes, so if you needed help... That's where I got to meet people like Sheila Kuehl, who's now a well-respected member of the California Legislature. She became a good friend. And academically it was easy. [...] I took a couple of Psychology courses, which I really loved. I ended up being a Psych major with a minor (almost a major), in Math as well, because I had all this Math from Engineering. I had figured out in Wisconsin that I didn't want to be an engineer. [...] That's why I'm a priest. [I] didn't want to be in a laboratory 50-70 hours a week. I needed to have people in my life, and relationships.

**The army and the priesthood.** [How did you decide, and when, to become a priest?] It was after I graduated from UCLA. I turned 18 when I was in college and at that time they had a draft. You had to register for the draft when you were 18. I registered in Madison where I was at the University of Wisconsin. They were supposed to transfer my registration to my hometown, which they did, but everything after that was a bureaucratic screw-up. I thought I had a student deferment all along. Somewhere between the campus and my home draft board, it never really happened. So one day I got a notice while at UCLA: we'd like you to report to Chicago for a physical. [...] I quickly wrote and explained, but at that time they wouldn't give me a renewable student deferment.

They said: yes, we never had you on [the list], but they gave me [only a] one-year deferment.

**Time to think.** So I joined the army reserve, and it was that 6-month period (where you have to be on active duty and go to boot camp) that I had the chance to slow down and really think. I had met Velda by then and the whole spiritual side and meaning of life became more important. I got to know, through Velda mainly, some great priests. I only knew about four, but they happened to be the really great priests of the diocese at that time: Parker Jones, here at St. Alban's being one of them. It's at this time in my life when I knew I wanted to be a priest. When I came back from active duty, I became a lay reader at St. Alban's...and that led to going to seminary. But it was that reflective period in the army and Velda's strong spirituality, which made the difference. That [time provides] a great time to think—everything is taken care of and you don't have to think [You're not supposed to think!] Exactly! It's almost a mechanical thing. They even tell you how much toilet paper to use! [...] I think the draft for young men, whenever we've had them, was a good thing, in the sense that for males, it gave you a guilt-free time off from whatever you were pursuing. [...] You'd be drafted for two years. In my case, I reduced it to 6 months. You didn't have to explain the time off to anyone. Nowadays, kids go to Europe. They do it in other ways, but they take some time off their normal track, in order to reflect. [It's] almost like taking a retreat.

**Clerk typist.** [What were you during this period?] When I went in the army reserve, I was up at Fort Ord, Monterey Peninsula, and after boot camp, I came home every weekend. It's wrong to say God looks after you, but you do feel that when you are looking at your spiritual life, things start happening that make sense. I was terribly blessed that Velda was in my life at that point. Since I was so low on the totem pole in the army, I was assigned to be a medical clerk at a clinic at Fort Ord. It was a joy. The whole medical staff was there at 5 in the morning for sick call and I was a clerk typist in the clinic and came in at 9, so I kept the records (I'd file). But the others would all leave (since they'd been there since 4:30 or 5 in the morning), and I would work until 5:00. The clinic was shuttered after 2:00 p.m. and I just answered the telephone. I had lots of

time to think [...] and it was ideal. [...] I was located at the hospital. [...] They didn't have inspections. Since we had 24-hour shifts (24/7, the hospital ran), any time they had a surprise inspection, everybody could always say: oh, he's on shift, and they could never figure things out, [but] because I was so low on the totem pole, it didn't matter! I had hospital food [so] I didn't have to eat mess hall food. It was ideal! I wore medical whites; the army did the laundry [...] I was looked after so I didn't have to maintain a lot of stuff. That gave me even more time. I made some new friends; [it was] very important to have relationships. And I had Velda to go home to. Every weekend, after I was in basic training, I'd go to see Velda. [How did you meet Velda?] We were friends at UCLA. Everybody used to go together to drink at Kelbo's or one of the local hangouts and she lived in a co-op down the street on Hilgard. I lived in an apartment. We hung out and got to know one another as friends and that developed into a much deeper relationship. It changed my life.

**Religious background.** [You didn't tell me about your religious background. Were you raised Christian?] Yes, my family was Presbyterian in the Middle West. [Had they become that when they went to the Midwest?] We were always Presbyterian, I assume... [Your father in Japan as well?] I don't know in Japan, but certainly in Sacramento. [Did you go to church a lot?] In the Midwest—sure. It was only at college, where everybody drifts away, [that] I drifted away from institutional religion.

**Spiritual awakenings: Velda.** I didn't really go to church—until I started having a more serious relationship with Velda. [So Velda influenced you?] Oh yes, as I said: she changed my life in so many different ways. [...] I think that was one of the things that could bond us: I could understand her spiritual side and she could understand mine. We both had a [strong] spiritual dimension. It was very important. I don't understand how a priest could be married and really be understood by his/her spouse if the spouse didn't have a spiritual side to them as well. It doesn't mean they have to duplicate the call.[...] [Velda grew up Presbyterian herself?] Yes, I think so. [And her father was a priest?] No, her father took off a couple of years. He and Velda's mother took on a mission of the Presbyterian Church. [In North Fork?] Yes, they took on a mission up there to care for

the children of some of the Indian population in the area (but you'd have to talk to her). We [recently] went up there and did kind of a pilgrimage, so she could see what's standing of that mission where they served. The building is still there. It's now a camp. So her father and mother were involved to take on a mission, much like the Mormon church, I think, where people dedicate a couple of years of their life. He came back and worked with the Red Line and ended up working with transportation, the Cal. State Public Utilities Commission, and worked his way up.

**Decision to become a priest.** [What did your family think about your becoming a priest?] Everybody thought I was going to become either a stockbroker, or something in business, and I had offers to do that, but that just wasn't where I was called. Had I had a renewable deferment, I probably would have gone into some kind of psychological [training]. I was thinking at that time of pursuing a Ph.D. in some kind of industrial psychology, something that would tie a math/engineering background, with psychology. Or [else] some kind of psychological specialty with personnel (personal testing), that sort of thing. [So, when you told your parents you were going to become a priest...?] I think they were just surprised. [Were they happy with your choice?] Oh yes [...] You talk about values, and it sounds like a cliché, but [parents] really do want the happiness for their children. That's a really primary value, a high priority. So, yes: pursue what you really want to do. I think my father always felt that. He told me: whatever you do, just work hard at it, and you'll make it. And it wouldn't matter what it is. If you go into medicine and there [might be] already five ophthalmologists in the area, and it seems like a saturated place. If you're the best ophthalmologist, you'll succeed [...] [So, you took that philosophy and worked as hard as you could?] Yes, in everything. [It was] almost too solid a work ethic. It's not the Puritan ethic, where your whole worth is in your work. What Christianity brings is a work ethic that allows you to work hard, but you're valued as a person also. It makes a lot of difference. [...]

**Mentors.** [When you decided to become a priest, what is it that really attracted you to this kind of work? And who were your mentors? Where did you go to school?] The attractiveness of priestly vocation was basically [that] I really got to know four priest

very well. [Who were they?] Parker Jones was one, John Yamazaki was another, Ken Cary was out in the Palisades, and John Burt was out at All Saints, Pasadena. These were stunning men, as well as priests. You look at four really good people and what they have in common is that they're priests: that had a huge appeal to me. These were solid, great men. I would love to be like any of them, in the sense of their character. [...]

**Paid to seek the truth!** And then the appeal of the spiritual side of the priesthood, rather than just being a member of a congregation—to actually be ordained so you could sacramentally carry out the work of the church. That's what I still feel is the value of the priesthood. We're not different in our ministries from everybody else who's here. St. Alban's has such good people; one reason is because they really feel that you don't have to be a priest. But the priests are ordained so they can celebrate the Eucharist; they can officiate at funerals; they can marry people [...] absolve sin. [...] And the other thing was: we all want to seek truth. Academics do it in their fields, but I think most people want to seek truth. As a priest, you get paid to do it! It's a great job in that sense. That's the way I looked at it. That was a strong pull.

We meet Jesus in the Bible of course, but the main way we meet Jesus outside the Bible, is in other people. That's where I get fed and that's where Revelation takes place. Christ is brought to me through others. I felt that very strongly back then. It's an inevitable. [...] It's a calling. There's a poem called "The Hound of Heaven." You can't get away from God! You can go behind the barn [but] wherever you go, you can't get away, because the hound of heaven will [...] seek you [out]. I had no idea I would end up with a place like St. Alban's. It's rare that you're called back to the place you were sponsored. You (Luisa) are on the vestry. You sign all those things about good character, [about being] upstanding. [...] So it was really a combination of lots of events that brought me here. I already had a job offer, a solid one, in Evanston, Ill. (in the suburbs of Chicago). I was about to graduate from seminary. [Where did you go?] Seabury Western in Evanston, Ill. and one of their thriving parishes felt that I would be the best candidate to add to their staff. I did a year's internship there (fieldwork). I just caught on and they

really wanted me there. So it was nice to have a choice, to have two parishes really want me.

**Time in seminary.** [Can you talk a little about your time at the seminary?] That was fun! One of the things that has been so great is that every decade of my life has been better than the previous. I do look back fondly at things that happened. There a lot of disasters that came along the way, but the nice thing about hindsight and getting past them, is that you grow. I don't think I ever want to go back. You know, there are some people you talk to and they say: Oh, the happiest time of my life was (blank) decade, when I was in college, when I was doing this... Well, I enjoyed every part of it, but I've also equally liked going on, and every decade has been great. That's the way I still feel, as a matter of fact. [...] I look back at seminary and it was an important part of my life. Things that happened in seminary: we had Lisa, for example, our first child. [When did you get married?] We got married right after I got out of the army, in 1963. [...] Then we went to seminary and had Lisa—which was great. We had a fund set up so that, no matter what happened, we would be able to have a baby and not worry about the finances. We were blessed that way as well. The timing was right. Velda was teaching while I was at seminary, in Glenview. [...] One of the other seminarian families babysat Lisa while I was in class and while Velda was teaching. But she had the summer off, the way I had the summer off. We made some really close and good friends there. [I] got to know the dean of the seminary very well. It was a very different experience for me because I had always been used to big schools, and at a school like UCLA you can slide right through. In fact, as a prank they've registered a dog, and got the dog through to graduation! Just because they can do that at a big school! At a small school, it's the other way around. What you really do is get some intimacy with the professors. I quickly learned which professors I liked and [I] took everything they gave. [When] you find really good minds and really good teachers, it doesn't matter what the content of the course was—that's the easy part. But what you learn from the professor was a lot more. That's what I got to do. And we were across the street from Garrett Theological School, which is Methodist. Being right across the street from them we got to interchange and take courses there. And Northwestern University was right across the street, so I got to

take on courses at both places and that was a very big thing, and we could use the Northwestern library for research. Spiritually it was an uplifting thing. Seminaries all are. I [also] got to lead some activities in seminary. We had a Breck Missionary Society that raised money for missionary work, and I was head of that. So, I had a full student campus life as well. But the main thing was getting to know professors very intimately. That's where I got to know Fred Borsch. He taught there one year while I was there. [...] The community life was irreplaceable. [...] You grow spiritually and you talk about lots of things. If you were anti-war, what you should do about it? If you were against something in the church, should you leave the church [...]? How do you deal with that? The conversations, relationships, and dialogues in community, were invaluable.

**Theologically conservative, politically liberal.** [How would you label yourself politically?] Well, at that time, and still (and I think St. Alban's is the same way): liturgically and theologically, I would probably consider myself on the conservative side. In contrast, I feel I'm much more liberal on cutting-edge issues. We were on the front with the ordination of women, for example. [...] Because I was there, that's where the parish was. On capital punishment, and these kinds of issues that have a base in theology, I think we would consider ourselves liberal. And as far as inclusiveness, I think we would consider ourselves on the cutting edge rather than on the following edge. But our liturgy is relatively conservative and grounded, and our music is the same way. It's not experimental. [...] Again, going back to the balance and having the tension between the two, I think that the idea of bringing our values and our theology to life is to make ourselves [a] strong spiritual base and from that position of security in faith we can take on just about anything that [...] the world throws at us. [...] The first thing to do is recognize that we need retreats; we need a strong spiritual life; we need a strong liturgy—we need all of this to be secure. Security is not a place you run to, it's a place from which you can reach... That's the whole idea of families. You build the base, and if a family is strong, the children are not going to be protected from all of the issues. If they have a strong family base, it's that base from which they can take on whatever comes along and make choices and decisions, and even make mistakes.

**Professors.** And I got that back in seminary. [...] The professors I liked were the ones who were always exploring, always pushing, looking for things. One of my favorite professors was George Buttrick who edited the 18-volume Interpreter's Bible, the standard of Bible commentary. It just happened he taught at Garrett across the street. I took everything I could from him because he was such a great mind and great soul. That's really what I looked for in seminary. Our social life in seminary fed both the soul of Velda and me. I went to chapel every day. It was not a requirement but there was a strong core of people who attended daily mass. [...] I had a good relationship with the bishop, even though we were miles apart [politically], Bishop Bloy, at that time.

**Research on censorship.** Writing papers was not always researching saints or one of the patristic fathers or anything like that. I would write papers on ethics and ethical issues and I did a research paper on censorship—the value of it, the non-value of it, what it did, etc. It was fun. I went into the locked room at Northwestern University to see what kinds of books they had there under lock and key. The room's primary purpose was to secure the things that were stolen often, like Emily Post's *Book of Etiquette*. Books there weren't under lock and key because of censorship or because it had material that was obscene. They had books of monetary value and ones with obscenities there too, but they also had books that were frequently stolen. So it was fun for me to explore different things [and] to apply theology to life as well. Ethics: I really enjoyed that.

**Chicago labor union.** As another dimension of ethics, I took one course where we actually worked with the AF of L CIO, the labor union movement in the Chicago area. We got to talk to all the people there, explore who they were, and the problems they had. Let me give you an example of the application of ethics I discovered: compare academia and blue collar labor. Academicians get sabbaticals. Well, academic sabbaticals allow for many kinds of exploration. Some of it's research, you go to where the papers are, or to sites, [to] travel, learning [about] other cultures, etc. [...] But you give a laborer a sabbatical and it's a whole different situation because these are people did not know what to do with their time. So we explored family dynamics. When a person got 6 months off as a laborer, they just hung around the house and the spouses were going crazy. What

does that sabbatical time mean? How do you give time off and how does one measure its worth? It's very different in labor. Here at St. Alban's and at UCLA one of the big problems in attracting faculty is the housing. The cost of housing is enormous (at Stanford it's even worse because its Silicon Valley). It's a big problem because people who live close to universities where they work are living in million dollar plus homes, and worse. [...] How does one solve that situation ethically? Conversely, if you want to attract a labor force, blue worker laborers (in order to run the factories that churn out the products), you're talking about setting up a community in which you provide interests for them...it may be bowling alleys, anything. Universities have to have great libraries [...] to attract a good faculty. It's the same thing with a blue collar community. So we got into that sort of practical thing. And the challenge is to remove judgemental attitudes.

**Musical training.** I loved [...] as well as learning and doing Bible study, Church history, and our musicology program—which was outstanding. We actually sang, by the time I got through three years, every hymn in the hymnal. We used different settings to the mass, and we learned how to chant psalms different ways: Anglican chant, Gregorian chant, plainsong, etc. [You chant very well.] Well, thank you, but part of that was that we were almost forced to do it, whether we were good at it or not. So exposure to it was great. That was seminary life. We really got a lot of things.

The friendships were really fabulous. [...] At small places, I discovered, you could actually go over and break bread with your professors. [...] And it was a joy to intersect their lives, their home life, as well as their academic one. [...] Velda and I enjoyed it very much being in community. Plus, we were in the Midwest, which is a different culture from the West. [...] [It had] different seasons. We had a baby and that opened us to embrace so much more of life.

**Chaplain at summer camp.** One of the summers we spent as a chaplain at camp in New York State [...] a whole new experience where I got to work with the counseling staff. It was a huge camp. Elko Lake camp brought up inner-city children as part of their program. [...] We had children there who would cry because they had a bed of their own;

they had never experienced what it was like to sleep in a bed that they had all to themselves. I worked with the counseling staff to inner-city kids. Many didn't know how to brush their teeth; they'd use street language—a whole different kind of language than most of the counselors were used to. The seminary era was quite exciting.

**Extra-mural life.** Velda was a teacher so she brought in a whole life I could never have had just in seminary. [...] I think that was one of the benefits, in our experience. Velda brought in a life that was part of *real* life, so you didn't stay in an ivory tower. [...] She's very good at what she does; she had real friendships there, staff and students. And having a baby brings a whole constellation of problems and situations and relationships that are equally important...and intramural sports at seminary—so it was a full life. [...] And also here at St. Alban's, part of the blessing that Velda and I have had, since we both went to UCLA, we also have a community of people outside the parish. Lots of priests, when they are called to a parish and they move every 3-5 years into a brand new community, tend to have [their] relationships within the parish itself. Which is not bad, but it means that you're not part of the community in the same way which. [...].

**Ordination and St. Alban's.** [I'll want to get into your community connections later, let us focus on seminary: how long did that take?] Three years. At the end of seminary you prepare for exams for ordination, like the bar exam, except it's for theology. Whatever diocese you're sponsored from, you become canonically resident, and get ordained there after successfully passing. But you can seek, with the Bishop's permission, jobs outside of your diocese. In this case I had an offer to work in the diocese of Chicago, [but] I was, of course, open to offers from here. And the main one, obviously, came from St. Alban's. [St. Alban's had sponsored you?] Yes, this was my home parish. I was a lay reader here, and Velda and I pledged to St. Alban's even as students. Then, right after seminary, one is ordained and one has to have a job, or most people do. So the first job is critical. I was hired as an assistant at St. Alban's. I don't know if it was controversial or not. I found out later that there were a lot of people who felt I wasn't the right person for this particular job, in that I was from this parish. It worked. The rector, Parker Jones, had had a heart attack—that was the basic reason that they needed somebody like me.

Then, when Parker had a fatal heart attack, they went through the search process, just like they are doing now.

**First rector to *retire* from St. Alban's.** Actually, I will be the first rector who has *retired* from St. Alban's. The first two rectors: John Bryant, had a ministry here about 20 years, was 55 years, had a heart attack and died. Parker Jones was here about 20 years, was 55, had a heart attack and died. [You've overcome that hurdle!] So I rejoiced when I passed that milestone in my chronological age. [You got a little nervous?] Being the third rector of this parish, but I'll be the first who actually has retired and not had a heart attack and died on the job! [It's a job that kills them!] It's a very demanding parish. [...]

**An open pulpit.** There are some priorities in my ministry and one of them is to have an open pulpit, and one that has a variety of people. Partially, I lead the parish to have people like George Barrett, stunning as a preacher, in our church—one of the best preachers I think in our Church. You know, most parishes couldn't or wouldn't have George, but I pursued it. [Because of his politics?] For a couple of reasons. One, they might not have agreed with his cutting edge presence. He was willing to ordain women before it was legal—things like that. And he headed Planned Parenthood for many years, and was very involved with them still. He was on their national board while he was active with us. But his level of preaching, well...how many priests want to put themselves next to George? Because it just raises the level! But that's a purpose, I think, of a pulpit. I like to have a Lizette Larson-Miller to come through as often as she can. She's a very good preacher. And she's a teaching preacher. And we should have and embrace those kinds of voices. And so we've had bishops—not just our own, but other bishops as guest preachers. We've had New Testament theologians like Glen Holland.[...] It's an open pulpit in that sense. Our last assistant, Winnie...Winnie grew. If people could look at her first sermons... [They were lightening fast!] Yes, they were lightening fast and compressed. You were in a whirl. [...] But she grew. [...] And part of the thing was that she was around preachers [from whose voice she could learn, and]

she could grow. And, as a compliment to me, many times she would quote out of sermon of mine when she preached elsewhere. [...]

**St. Alban's back then.** [When you got to St. Alban's, what was the church like? How would you characterize it?] It was unbelievable. It's really the value of the ministry, when I look back at it. [During] the time I've been at St. Alban's, we've brought this faith community through a change in the Prayer Book—huge battles over that; women's ordination—huge battles over that; we've had wars like Vietnam—huge issues that came from that. We've changed our Hymnal—big impact.

**Four Sunday services.** When I first started at St. Alban's, it was the sunset of the post-World War baby boom when everybody went to church. When I first came to St. Alban's there were four services on Sunday morning: the early service at 7:30 (with no music, no choir); then we had a 8:15, 10:00, and 11:15. All [were] bigger than any of the services we have now. [They were] packed. So as a priest, I ran from one service to another. [You did all four?] No, we participated in all four; we had a much bigger staff at that time. [Who were the other people?] John Farnsworth had just left, and we had Ollie Garver around, Reynold Bowden, we had Parker Jones. [...] It was just a matter of covering all four services on any given Sunday.

**750 children at St. Alban's.** The church school, just before I got here, had 750 children. [Where did you put them all?] Well, that's why you needed three services. You had them spread out over three services [...] every office and room was used as a classroom. The parish hall was sectioned off so you could have classes down there. It was just amazing. That's the St. Alban's I entered. [How large was the church?] I don't know what the main list was, but to have that many kids in church school, it must have been a couple of thousand families. It was huge. And the physical plant was just bursting at the seams. And programming before I got here was really a matter of [simply] putting a sign up list out. If you wanted anything done you just posted a sign for twenty names, if you wanted twenty people. With that many people, you always got them, so it wasn't a matter of recruiting and pushing. It was just a matter of thinking up a program and

executing it. [Was it very active?] Yes, it was good. Parker Jones was active in the diocese and there were many big issues.

**Social issues.** The biggest issue they faced was the discrimination housing act that was voted in Los Angeles county. Every apartment building over six units could not discriminate because of race. St. Alban's took a big stand on that and said: this is what we have to do; this is what is right. And a lot of people felt the other way, that we should not intrude, that if you want a building you had a right to do anything with it you wanted, and if you wanted to discriminate you could discriminate. A lot of people left. It was a firm, definitive, articulate stand on that. [...] That's the kind of parish I came into. [...]

**Liturgical change.** At that time we had morning prayer as part of our regular Sunday worship. I think I can take credit for this: we moved the parish from a morning prayer-parish to a Eucharistically-based parish. That's where I'm conservative theologically. And that took a lot of yanking, because it was very difficult for some people...and I understand that. We had people in their sixties and older [who] had been told their whole life that morning prayer [was] a legitimate Sunday worship service and then you come along and tell them: but its not the sacrament, and if you're going to worship on Sunday, this is what you do. So it was a huge battle and [there were] many scars from that and losses of some relationships that I cherished.[...]

**Youth programs.** The youth program, as happens, was in a down cycle. As happens: youth programs cycle, so you have times which have to cycle up. At the time I came, it was on a down cycle. It was there but it just wasn't doing anything. And just like everywhere else, they were always looking for more money in their budget. They were having to maintain the structure and the staff, [and that] took a lot of money.

**Loss of membership.** If you lost membership because of a stand on discrimination, those members were also pledging members, and that goes down, so... [How did you manage that?] Well, you dip into reserves, the part that you can, then you try to increase the giving of the people who are there, or else you reduce staff. Which is what they did.

[...] This was the boom when everyone was going to church. All churches had big memberships. About the time I got here, we were at the sunset of that era. Then the reality was that Christianity was becoming, even at that time, *not* the majority religion in the United States. The secular society still believes in God, but as far as the institutional church and believing in Jesus as the son of God, it was starting to become a minority [...]

**A smaller Church. One faith community.** It was an interesting time I came into, and then, we were taking the church back to her roots. Again, being conservative theologically, I felt it was the right thing to do. [...] We reduced the services from 4 to 3, then from 3 to 2 main services. Then at one point—again, for theological reasons—[we tried to make] it *one* faith community. When you have two main services you really have two communities. [And never the twain shall meet?] Right, and the later service tended to attract the older ones who got up later. And the music started diverging. But the idea at St. Alban's is that we have one faith community worshipping together, and that has its risks, but its healthy I think. When I came, it was the other way around (but it was that way everywhere). [...] All mainline churches had diminished in size. There are no new churches on the Westside of Los Angeles in the last 30 years. Lots of temples, but no new churches. This area is stable and it reflects the demographics of the population here. All Westside churches are struggling in their own ways, even if they're different.

**Apprenticeship & divisions of labor.** [When you first came to St. Alban's, what sorts of things were you assigned to?] I did a lot of youth work initially, and then a lot of the parish activities in general, running the mechanics. I really was overseeing programs, everything from altar guilds through women's groups, lay readers, etc. [Did you enjoy that?] Oh yes. That was the life of this place.

Parker was making policy decisions, and we'd talk all the time, and [providing] leadership, but a lot of his work was with the vestry and with the diocese. At that time, he had a personal secretary who was part of the staff, and he could do a lot, even outside the parish, for the diocese. He had a secretary who could keep track of [it] all. So the

mechanical running of the parish I could do. It was an opportunity because I was young and inexperienced. I could dive into all of this. And I was very blessed.

**Youth activities: nightclubs and car rallies.** The youth group, for example: I either caught it at the right time or attracted the right young people, and it blossomed. It was good. We founded a teen nightclub. We did lots of things. [Here at the church?] No, we rented a piece of property and got rock bands [What?!] Yeah, it was unbelievable. We'd have car rallies, creative, fun things [Is that when you started to become passionate about cars?] I already had that. The car rallies were fun for the kids too. We had kidnap breakfasts a lot, and our house was TP'd at least twice a year. [...] We had Youth Sundays, which we never had here before; the kids would come up with the service. We'd have retreats with the kids, ski trips. But ski trips were not just a fun trip, we had Eucharist on those trips, and on our retreat we planned things. Youth services were very much freer than anything this place had seen. There were drummers. That's an example of the kind of thing that was going on. [...] Then just being with the altar guild, you learn a lot. Being with the youth group you learn a lot, being with the lay readers you learn a lot—touching all the bases. [...]

**James Vail.** And getting into the music. Even though Parker was the rector, there was a lot of stuff I really feel I had a big hand in. Even [in] getting Jim Vail. [Were you responsible for that?] In so many ways. There was an opening for an organist and I had a priest friend who was on the staff of St. John's parish and knew that Jim was at least available to be wooed away from there. It worked really well to suggest an interview and an audition [and] put him there. Yes, this is the organist you want if he is available because he's a great musician and churchman. [...]

**Learning a lot.** It was a great experience for me because being on a staff and not the rector is probably ideal [very freeing?] It's very freeing because I didn't have to raise the money and have stewardship as my primary responsibility. I guess, it could have been my assignment, but it wasn't my assignment. Outside of things like the running of the vestry and the stewardship program...just about every other program I had a finger

in—which was a way to learn a whole lot, very quickly. [...] It was a real opportunity. In fact, if you went back to the minutes of those annual meetings, I think just about every report probably had my name on it because I was that involved with what was going on here.

**Regrets: not enough time.** [What do you regret from those years?] The biggest regret, no matter what vocation you have, is spending too much time. The hours were just enormous. Just about everything that's people-intense requires a direct proportion of your own time with the people. If you don't have that, it's not going to work, no matter how well-organized it is. And it takes its toll. But at the same time, by then, we had our second child, Craig. So this parish, those who have been here a long time, have had the chance to see a family grow up here, which is really a benefit. They saw all the struggles that families have and bring. But doing all of this meant that it was a truly a vocation. I think, from the family's standpoint, that's what suffers the most, and that's what I regret. [Did your family suffer?] Well, I think, to the degree that this happens in every family. [Of young professionals?] Yes, [it's] an entry-level kind of [thing], you pay your dues, that's what they call it now, and you work very, very hard. There are attorneys that put in "billable hours," positions that have to go through internships and residencies. No matter what it is, everybody who works at a level that the family suffers...if you look back, that's probably what you'd try to change. The regret is there more than anything else...that's the biggest one.

**Conflicts.** Skirmishes that you had with personalities, I wouldn't want to mention them, but you grow from those. There are definitely personality conflicts, and how much time do you have for a person, and how effective can you be in helping a person? The regret is that you don't have enough hours too. At the same time, the hours you did put in, take their toll. You always want to be able to do more. [...]

**Sermons.** I regret that I didn't have more time to prepare sermons because I already had a full week...and on top of it, to come up with a sermon...I did a lot of experimenting

early in my priesthood. Brought music into the sermon. But I regret not being able to polish [my preaching] more.

Then the whole country was going through the drug revolution, Cleaver, Soul on Ice, you know “if you’re not part of the solution you’re part of the problem”—it was all happening in society at about the same time, so it was challenging. Mainstream Christianity was becoming *not* the mainstream. And secularism was rapidly taking over. *Playboy* magazine was an expression of the humanism, sometimes hedonism...the statements of secular society were really starting to take off. So all of that was a blend, to try to keep involved with what was going on, and at the same time...it was quite a time. Kids were into drugs. Drugs now are still a problem for children. [...] Steroids are a big problem.

**Loss of status.** [What do you miss about those early years?] I think the carry-over of the position of the Church in society was still something that was good. You’d put on your collar and you could get lots of places and be treated in a different way. That’s just not the case anymore and I miss that automatic authority, the respect of your opinions. It was automatically given to you. It wasn’t something that you necessarily even earned but [...] that’s something that we’ll probably never get back. We stand now for symbols that are different and probably more exciting in their own way. [...] But I think that’s true with professions across the board: there’s a scrutiny, a skepticism. [...] I miss that, because it was a way of getting an entrée into situations that would not automatically be given now. You can’t do it the same way. [...] Like at UCLA—when you can get in at the top, its kind of nice. [You get spoiled] Yeah.

**Loss of a common language.** And I miss the vocabulary that was part of everyone’s understanding. We’ve moved on from that, so the mythology we use now is very different from the mythology that was extant when I entered the priesthood. So while we have some things that still exist, like Good Samaritan Laws, where we can still say GSL and everyone [kind of] knows what it is, I don’t know that they could relate the parable it was named after. Now creation myths are very different. The virgin birth: things were

not questioned as much. You accepted the statement of the truth. Now we question the myth. There was a de-mythologizing going on, I think, and a new vocabulary. I miss that people would understand when I'd say something. They knew what I meant. Whereas now, you have to almost explain what you mean by it. [...] Now we have to construct a new vocabulary [...] of things that made sense to people before. And we're doing it all the time now. But that's why we have these controversies. "One nation under God." That would not have been a controversy back then. Even inclusive language [...] I kind of miss [those days] because everyone really understood, and it's not that what's being challenged isn't wrong now, but people understood the generic use of "man." You meant "humankind." You didn't mean just "man" excluding "women."

**Highlights: Steven Wise Temple & Wise Saints, Vietnamese refugee families.** [What were some of the highlights of St. Alban's over the years?] We were able to take on entire Vietnamese families that would not have a sponsor. After all, how could one person sponsor 8 people? [...] We found the house to rent, we cleaned it up, we put furniture in it. We helped them get through the red tape. It was a wonderful thing. And those people stayed in contact with our parishioners up until very recently. [Was Wise Saints a St. Alban's project?] Wise Saints was. We teamed up with Steven Wise Temple. Steven Wise Temple started in this parish. They were a spring-off from one of the other big temples. One of the rabbis wanted to start a new congregation and if you get twelve families together you can start a group, in the Jewish tradition. And they had no place to meet so they met down in our parish hall and grew and grew. [...] Still a great friend of mine, Isaiah Zeldin who is just great...God would want him as a fundraiser, because he's that good at it! I'd talk to him and he showed me a picture of the top of Mulholland Dr. It was all hills and he said: Norm, we bought this parcel of land; we're going to level the hill and put a temple up there. And so they did. Then they put in a grade school and a high school. It just went on and on. They've got the University of Judaism up there. It's part of their complex. But they started here. So we teamed up with them and because of that some of our parishioners have worked with theirs, and jointly we did that. So Wise Saints also had that dimension to it. So, if you

talk about highlights, that's the kind of thing [which] involved this place with its community.

**UCLA as a Parish Mission.** I think one of the highlights is yet to evolve here, and that is, really focusing upon UCLA as a mission. It opened up just recently, because before there were a lot of chaplains, who with one exception [...], were pretty much independent of this place. We helped them out a lot: we provided a place of worship, and other support, but it wasn't really a calling of the parish—as part of their mission. I think, in the last four years, we've been really intentional about having a mission to this great big city we have across the street from us, with huge resources. And our congregation is having a higher percentage of college staff, faculty, as well as the young people (undergraduate and graduate). The UCLA chaplaincy is never going to be self-supporting, therefore it's got to be supported by a parish like St. Alban's. Students aren't going to pledge enough to support its ministry on its own. So, between the diocese and this parish, that's a growing highlight, because outreach is really taking a look at the community around you and becoming a part of it. I think it's important.

**St. Alban's social presence.** And I think we've also maintained a presence here on the Westside. People know St. Alban's. Like I said, we don't have banners out in front but in our quiet way we've worked with the city council at times, the county supervisors, Edelman, one of the previous supervisors, is one of the supporters of our music program. He didn't have to do that but Edelman makes a big pledge to our music program. The presence is quite remarkable. [Who are some other friends of St. Alban's?] Zev Yaroslavsky is a friend of mine, and of St. Alban's, and has helped us out with political things, when we wanted to make a voice heard. We try to work with each councilman that represents this district, and the county supervisors—its mostly at that level. [...] I don't think we've had an actual office-holder in our parish. [...] In my rectorship, Dorrie Pie was president of the Chamber of Commerce for this area and she was a member of this parish.

But like I said, I wouldn't characterize us as a crusading parish but one that certainly is involved all the time: the housing issue, the discrimination issue—we just take a stand on it. Everyone knows where we stand on capital punishment—those kinds of issues too that are political—all of the -isms that you can come up with. [For] most of our peace and justice issues [we] have involved parishioners.

**Parishioners in the diocese.** We have always had individual parishioners active in the diocese, and Bob Vanderet is a good example, a current one. Bob Vanderet is one of the vice-chancellors of the diocese. That's not a paid position. But when a parishioner is committing lots of time at the diocesan level, they can't always be active at the parish at the same time. They split their time. I think part of the mission and part of the ministry of the parish is that when someone gets involved at that level, its not release time, but its almost like release time. We're willing, the parish is, I'm willing, to sacrifice using that person here, using their resource, their energy, their time, and letting the diocese benefit from that. And we've been very good—editors, Ruth Nicastro was a loyal member of this parish. [...] Ollie Garver was on staff here and he became Suffragan Bishop. [...] I think one of the things that's important is balance, as you well know. That flower arrangement kind of balance.

**Not burning people out.** [...] Sometimes the PTA gets your time, energy an attention. Other times it's St. Alban's turn. We look to *not* burn people out. Had we not had this transition, the situation I've had on the vestry agenda since last March, we would take time and expand the committees. [...] We would have done it this year as well. The Vestry, at a planning session would all have copies of the directory and go all around and suggest names of people out of our congregation who would be good on outreach, for Canterbury, etc. We attempted each year to expand our existing working committees. That's part of the strength of this place too, that we try not to burn people out. It's not that their Christianity and their membership in this place should be their overall, only, solitary consuming thing [in life]. It's frustrating sometimes, because we have people who are involved in a lot of other things. But then, they bring us so much. The key of it

is probably to be balanced, so the place is not run by just a small group of individuals that remains the same.

**Diversity.** We've had people drifting in and out because you always have a small group that does most of the work, but hopefully, that group keeps changing and we get fresh people. In many ways that's one of the strengths of the parish, we are very much a diverse community, inclusive. Another element is diversity of age, different kinds of people: people who probably could buy St. Alban's several times over; people who are really struggling to have enough left over to put a dime in the dryer at a commercial washing place. I don't think you'd find this in any other walk of life. Many parishes don't have this diversity.

**AIDS ministry.** We're landlocked, and we take [this] very seriously. So we don't take on everything, but what we do take on, we do very well. [Take] the AIDS epidemic, for example. We tried to emphasize pediatric AIDS. It breaks your heart: women who are exposed to AIDS through intravenous needles, or however they contracted the AIDS—doesn't make any difference—but they have AIDS and they're pregnant. [...] What do they do with their babies? And they have babies who contract AIDS—the babies didn't ask for it, but they die and die young. So we raise money and have a Christmas party. About ten years ago we started having Christmas parties. Very effective for the families, the siblings of the AIDS baby get to be with their sibling [for] a great Christmas party. Eventually Magic Johnson saw what we were doing, and got interested in it, and he brought his corporate sponsor, Pepsi Cola, into funding it. So we really worked ourselves out of a job [...] We could have kept doing it but [we did] draw attention to that need and once that need was evident to other people...they had resources that they [could use, and] we let them do it. [...]

**A great faith community.** If there's anything that this place can say is that it is a healthy faith community. I am taking a retreat at the end of my active rectorship. [...] The point of a retreat is to go away and be quiet and listen and to refresh your soul. I've got a big end of the month coming up and I need God's presence in my life. Even on that last

Sunday, one of my prayers is that it's going to be a great time, it's going to be fun, and I'll be full of gratitude and very humble, I think. That's what I anticipate, but at the same time, on that day, I hope that everybody still senses and feels that the important thing is that I've had a good soul and it's been nourished and nurtured and will continue to be. I think we've been very good at being an example, and it's just not me. I think people in this parish. It's remarkable. They're accessible, they're available, and they really live out what it means to be in the community of Christ. I think that if either of us had a problem and we needed help, I have no doubt that we could reach out. I know we would be helped, no matter what. [...] I'm not talking about financial help, but emotional—if we were hurting. We've got some great people here, and I think [it would take] just a couple of phone calls and one would be surprised how much help would be available in this faith community.

**Legacies: a place where lives change.** [What legacy will you leave? How would you like to be remembered?] I think it would be that this is a spiritual place that does good things [...] that we are Christ-centered. A legacy would be: compassion, empathy, healing, and the ability to change a part of who we are. I've said this a dozen times: I think St. Alban's is a place where lives change [...] I would love that people have that feeling: that they could come here, and if they are judgemental, become less judgemental, if they're searching to deepen their spiritual life, that it would be deepened here, [that] coming here to help, there would be certain projects, that if not here, they could initiate and make work here. I think that lives do change in this place and that's the Gospel and *that's* the legacy—not monuments or anything else. It's much more the community.

**Relationships first.** The legacy I would like to be remembered by is that part of who we are is relationships. That's probably more important than anything else, I think. [...] I believe this place feels it. We're less ego-centered than many parishes are. The other legacy would be that we have a great and open pulpit and that the Word of God is important, not just in the words of Scripture, but [in] how it's shared, emphasized, and focused upon in the ministry. In Sunday liturgy, by comparison, we do more singing;

there's the communion; there's a lot [...] going on. But at the same time, there's an emphasis on the Word in Liturgy, and we've had many voices in the pulpit. That too is a legacy. [...] Many times you have a great preacher with great skills. There's no reason why that person shouldn't be preaching every Sunday, but on the other hand, it excludes the other voices. This place doesn't do it that way. We had George Barrett, and we could have had him preaching every Sunday, and I would have enjoyed every minute of it, and hired him just to do that. But that wasn't the point. The point was that he was one of many voices...and Lizette (were you here last Sunday?) I think that's the best sermon she's preached here. [...] She had time to put into it, she knows this community, [and] what would make sense to it. She took a portion of the Gospel and made it come alive. [...] When I think of this parish, I want it to do so many other things, and we will. It won't be everything, but I look for it to do even greater things. I hope that's the case. I pray that's the case. [...] If I have a legacy [it might be] that part of what goes on [...] comes from a base. [...] When I got here, it was just big, and did a lot, and now it's a Eucharistically-based parish, and the people who are here are good people. You could fill any church doing certain things [...] but I think there's a difference between having a place filled, and [then] looking at the people who are the faith community.

**September 11.** [...] I think 9/11 really affected so many people. It was a lightening rod for a lot of things that had just been put, not out of sight, but certainly on a back burner. [...] It helped reinforce a lot of what we are. I think people care about their kids here, they really do, and its not every parish that does. For the most part, when you talk and meet children in this parish, they know where their parents are and their parents know where they are. It's really quite something. What 9/11 did was reinforce, in a very dramatic way, to a secular country, some of the values we've always had as part of who we are as a faith community. In our quiet way we recognize it. Even in the way we designated the remembrance of this day is reflective of who we are. Its good for me to see prayer candles lit and to know that someone actually went in and lit one, that someone cared that much to do that. [...] There'll be activities from dawn way into the night, so people can choose. [...]

**Choosing people over buildings.** I love that we're going to have a nice looking building on the outside. That's not a priority program. It was a priority for me having people in community. We've done a lot of deficit budgets. Every year, every vestry has to struggle with what that means. We've got more of a reserve than most of the parishes in the diocese. It's in good shape that way. That's not an accident: we don't have to have a reserve. We could have been spending it every year (and there's an argument actually for doing that). Still, we could make a small dent in the reserve [to] clean and re-carpet the whole place...and maybe that'll be done next. But when we come up to the end of the year, I'd rather have another priest, and so would the vestry. When it comes down to it: do we want to spend \$35,000 on this? What they choose [is] part of their legacy. We have a youth director. When Tracey Fitzgerald was hired it was because there was an interested core group of people who said: this is important. It's always important. If we're going to spend money there [though], is that the best stewardship for the amount of money that we've got? When it bubbles up to the top and it makes sense, then we do that. [...] There are choices all the time [and we need] balance. [...] We could spend money endlessly. Just [on] the building, and it seems like we do, but we really don't. [...] You defer, and eventually you have to take big steps. For example: termites. Eventually you have to fumigate. [...] In between, when we see signs of termites, we treat locally, and that cuts down that cost. The extra money gets switched over to something else. But that's a choice and it's purposeful.

**Spiritual retreats.** And we have retreats here, spiritual days. The reason we can call this one in October an annual retreat, [is that it is] not a new thing, its the *annual* fall [...] conference; you can call it a seminar, a retreat, but we've always had a spiritual dimension to it. [...] I cannot think of a healthier way for St. Alban's to begin the transition. An official way: [...] they'll attempt to gather a lot of data and to organize [it], but you know, I think they're going to do it with a spiritual base [...] that's important to the current vestry and it says so much. [...] It's stunning how easy it would be to just organize a survey [and] begin the profiling. [...]

**Weaknesses: community beyond Sunday.** [You've mentioned some of St. Alban's strengths. What would you consider some of its weaknesses? And in what future directions would you like to see it go?] Every weakness [could almost be considered] a strength. One of the weaknesses is still trying to find an identity as a community beyond Sunday morning. And I don't even know if it's possible because we are a reflection, of course, of our busyness in the world. If we have a weakness, it's not overcoming the inertia that comes from that. We will continue to work on how that connection is being made, on how the relationships extend [and] embrace each other, beyond our Sunday morning. I don't even know if it's possible but it's a weakness from my standpoint to not have been able to quite galvanize that link.

**Need for public relations.** Another weakness we have is that we're not really good at tooting our own horn here. Whether you call it public relations or publicity [...] I think we're weak in that area. That's just something we don't do very well. We do a lot of great things but I'm not sure that a lot of other people even remember [St. Alban's], nor know about it. I would love to see that improve. The Web site is going to change it, and as more people are on the Internet, that may even make a difference. But there's a remarkable number of people who are not on the Internet. So it's not the only answer, having a good Web site. But it's a step in the right direction and one that's been supported. I think maybe a solution could have one of our standing committees working on it, instead of having it be a part of a lot of committees. Maybe separating it out: a PR committee, something like that [...]. Our music gets publicized. But now with e-mails, you could almost simultaneously send out an e-mail announcement to dozens of places with one push of the button. How are we going to do this? And maybe [even] having a sense of communicating internally and allowing our own constituents to recognize, to get a better overview of, how many things really are working here. This has been a weakness. A lot of people love what they do individually [...] but they don't see the rest of it. How many people have never been up in the church school? We have this whole second floor. Outside of the choir, the church school and kids, most of our parishioners have never even been there.

**Nuts and bolts.** And there are other challenges ahead: we have handicapped access but we don't have a handicapped bathroom. It would mean making that a priority. [...] We've been trying to work on it and we do get things done. Some of the "nuts and bolts" kinds of things, we could [also] work on.

**Business sense.** And maybe even some decision on how we run [St. Alban's] as a business. How do we balance that? Our vestry starts each meeting with our prayer list. You go to a lot of parishes, they don't have a clue who they are praying for—ever and why! Seems out of balance to me. That balance—on the business side, how much more can we learn? [...] We could be a little more efficient and better, I don't know. That's a direction I would certainly like [our] community, moving [in]. [...]

**Witnessing. Learning from the Jewish community.** And Christianity is changing—our presentation of the Gospel, in general. [We need] to make more people aware of it. We're not always good at it. We're a little weak in that area. [...] To have other people know you go to St. Alban's, that your faith means something, [and] finding ways [of] sharing ways that we can all do that together [is important]. [...]

[You were talking about the Jewish community. How could we learn from them? What do they do well?] Oh well, they just have a whole different kind of community [...] life. We astound them as much as they astound us. [Theirs is] a business—purely and simply. It suffers from that point, as well as excels. When we had our vacation Bible school up at Stephen Wise Temple, they were absolutely stunned that the people in our VBS were all volunteers. They could never do that there. They'd have to hire every single person that was involved. That's just one little difference, but that's the way they do things and they don't mind doing it that way. I don't think that our way is right and their way is wrong or vice versa. Yes, the Jews have been a minority their whole existence. We've got a lot to learn from anyone who's been a minority for their whole existence. We're brand new at it. We're a minority now [...] and so we ought to start taking it [seriously]. As I told you, before we had hundreds of people around, you just tacked up a sign on the bulletin board, and you'd have your program. Well, we're not that way anymore so we've got a lot to

learn. The rabbis are paid. They know how much everybody makes in their congregations and their salaries are set at the median. That's just the way they do it. [They submit their income tax returns?] Just about. You declare it. I'm sure there's an honor system involved but yes, you declare it. It's a very different way of doing things, and we've got a lot to learn. They take their atonement very seriously and it's ritualized in Roshashanah and Yom Kippur. It's a great time of reflection. [...] They look at it: what can they do for their community of Jews. They take it very seriously and they let you know that.

I gave an invocation for commencement for graduation at UCLA. I'm a Christian and I said "Christ our Lord," and I got lambasted by the papers—the *L.A. Times*, and everybody else! UCLA never asked me back. But I shouldn't be afraid to say: this is what I believe. I didn't say everybody had to believe it. I just say: that's how I offered my prayer because that's the way I pray. And I was raked over the coals. [Did you write back to them?] No, I didn't write back. It's just that the Jewish community itself [is] very "in your face" with the same thing. That's what probably got so many writing to the *LA Times*, and to the *Bruin*. [...] They made it clear that they were offended. Well, maybe we should make it clear that we're offended when someone doesn't take Christ into consideration. We have a lot to learn. They have a presence of community. When you have a person who's Jewish and actively involved in their Jewish community, it doesn't take 30 seconds [to know it]. If you meet a committed Jewish person at a party, you know they're Jewish. How long does it take for us to meet one another and find out that we are Christians? "Gee, I didn't even know you went to church..." [...] I don't think we'd do it the same way, nor should we, but we've got a lot to learn from our brothers and sisters who are of a close faith to [ours]. And I think we're going to learn a lot from the Muslims. I think we're going to learn a lot from everybody now. That's the reality of becoming a minority in our society. [...] This is also what St. Alban's is good at: people are *not* afraid to speak.

**St. Alban's in the diocese and city.** [I wanted to know a little bit about your relationship with the diocese and initiatives you've been involved in with the diocese and the city, and

also how St. Alban's is viewed] That's one of the nice parts: St. Alban's has a history here and it's wonderful. [...] You could grow that and even do more, if you liked. We have not been the kind of parish that requires that the rector be a Rotarian or an Optimist. [...] That can be good or bad. It's not right or wrong, but it hasn't been [our] thrust. And that doesn't mean I don't go to Rotary meetings. Occasionally people want me to join. [...] But St. Alban's hasn't had a community link in that sense.

The ecumenical group in Westwood has been very difficult to get going. I've been involved in three attempts at a resurrection. [Could you describe those?] It's been the Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans—all the local churches, Christian churches. There really hasn't been a community in Westwood [...] and it's kind of too bad. [Why is that?] Because I think on the Westside we don't have a community identity. We're really cosmopolitan. We're not a suburb of Los Angeles. Santa Monica has an identity of its own. Pacific Palisades—you go to one of their supermarkets, chances are you'll run into neighbors. We don't have that here. Our youth group, when you look at it, might have as many as a dozen high schools represented (and middle schools) rather than one or two. So [if] there's a homecoming for one high school, it only affects maybe one or two people in the youth group. So it's not a community identity. It's hard to pick out a supermarket where you'd run into more parishioners. It's partially that, and partially, on the Westside, [that] the churches are pretty well-established. They're almost independent. [...]

What are our ties to the diocese? We're independent in the sense that each parish or congregation is rather parochial. They really are an entity unto themselves. [Take] Good Friday: I have participated in ecumenical services on Good Friday, but then we have our own service on Good Friday. The mission of the church: you have asked which direction we should be going. [The direction I] see this place going [is] a much more intentional mission outreach to UCLA. [...] Just because the chaplain gets involved in an ecumenical service over there, maybe we would pay more attention to things like that. I've given the baccalaureate benediction at UCLA, [...] there's that kind of community involvement.

**Not a historical landmark.** Every time there's a homeowners' meeting—on occasion [they] have met here (every time there's a huge issue involved)—they come to ask for our support. We've been instrumental in keeping Hilgard looking the way it's looked, without making it [become] a designated historical landmark. There was a big move to do that and we were one of the ones that did not want that. [Why did you not want that?] There are terrible restrictions once you establish a street as a historical landmark. In other words, if St. Alban's were designated a historical landmark, it [would] look great on paper, but what it means is that we could never put the roses in without permission from the board, and we could never take an olive tree out or hang banners without permission from a board. It's mostly the impact on the exterior, so even [in] painting the building, we'd have to get permission to change the colors. It goes on and on. It looks good: we may never want to change the color of the building, but we just did paint the building, and we did change the colors—not dramatically but [we did used] different shades. All of that needs to be passed by a board [...] There is a 3-storey height limit on buildings on Hilgard and that's why Hilgard hasn't developed more. They have that big Hotel W down the street, but that's the only building that's really a high-rise. [How did they get that passed?] Because originally that was a UCLA dorm, La Mancha, a private dormitory, and at that time UCLA didn't have enough dormitories, so they desperately needed places to put students. [...] [Wasn't there some controversy regarding Hillel next door?] Yes, because they got a lot of waivers. They got pretty much what they wanted, but they had to fight for it, in the sense of a political fight for it.

**Groups get a start at St. Alban's.** I mentioned it before, Steven Wise Temple started here at St. Alban's. I've been to the dedication of every new building, and they've been building a new building about every other year. They've slowed down now because they've already built so much, but that relationship has always been good. They tied in with Wise Saints Housing Project with us. We've had the Jewish community use St. Alban's for their High Holiday holy services.

Various other groups [too]: Alcoholics Anonymous have met here, AA groups have met here. As I told you, the Rape Crisis Center for UCLA began with an organizational meeting here, [as well as] PATH (People Assisting The Homeless), which [today] is a huge social service agency. [...] Their first program was run out of St. Alban's because we extended, at no charge to them, a place to which they could come [...]. We were very instrumental in beginning Turning Point. We've been involved in assisting the establishment of the battered children's program in Santa Monica. [...]

**Release time.** The blessing has been that the parish has given me some release time to do these things, to be involved, to attend functions. Sometimes, on a Sunday afternoon, after I've had a full morning, it's tough to get there, but you do. And then the diocese: we release parishioners [...] we've had people involved in Good Samaritan Hospital, in fact very much involved, twenty years ago, with the raising of the money. [...] The Corporate Secretaries of America have a conference, and so I've given the invocation, sat at the head table, next to the president of the Bank of America [...] people you don't normally get to rub shoulders with. [And you enjoy that sort of thing?] Yes, in the sense that it means there's a presence there, and because I'm a priest, it says something about St. Alban's, puts it on the map. [...] We [also] have what I call "marginal" parishioners, who have some connection with St. Alban's. Oftentimes we will have a big funeral here of a person very active in the city [...]. Before I forget, I've been blessed [in the diocese] because I've had good relationships with bishops, going back to Bishop Bloy through Bishop Rusack, Bishop Garver served on the staff here, and then Fred Borsch I've know for 20-some years. [...]

**Diocesan committees.** I've been on the diocese task force for institutional racism [and] issues I've felt very strongly about. I think it's important that I was able to pick and choose. I was on the communications board for many years in the diocese—a group that puts out the diocesan newspaper. They put out press releases, plus they cover the news of the diocese, and more recently they're the ones who put up the diocese's Web site. We had a parishioner, Dan Crossland [...] he was the producer of CBS news when [it] was really big. They had a West coast [operation] and he was in charge of everything on the

West coast. [...] Dan ended up elevated to the level of television and videotaping, and that sort of thing. I was on the board with him. [So, St. Alban's has great talent that it sends to the diocese?] Yes, but we have to release them. You only have so many hours. [If] someone's working very hard here on programs [...] then they take that energy and do it for the diocese, its great for the diocese, and great for our church.

**George Barrett.** And the other way we've reached out, to be part of the larger church, [was] in our preaching schedule [...] George Barrett. Our young kids in the parish just thought every parish had a bishop, I would imagine, but they got used to knowing what a bishop was. Well [in] most parishes, maybe you see a bishop once a year, maybe every other year, sometimes once every three years. We had George Barrett here all the time. So we were much more aware of the larger church.

**Gross (continuing education) Fund.** One other thing I want to mention: one of the founding families of this parish, the Gross family (two brothers of the family ran Lockheed Aircraft), gave the big organ to the parish. We moved the organ that was in the big church into the chapel, and the pipe organ that was in the chapel we gave to another church in the diocese. When the Gross' died, their daughter, Palmer Gross Ducummin who I knew very well, and her husband, Charles Ducummin, wanted to leave a memorial. One of the things that I talked to them about, was leaving a *living* memorial. The family had already given an organ, had contributed a lot to the brick and mortar upkeep of this place. Palmer and Charles were very open to having a living memorial, which meant that we now have a Gross memorial fund. It allows the staff of the parish to use the interest of about \$100,000 to fund continuing education of St. Alban's professional staff. For example, that means [that] attending conferences: sending Jim Vail to the American Guild of Organists conference every summer. I think that's added a huge dimension to making our staff aware of what is going on, and being able to participate at another level. That funding is important and almost unique to St. Alban's...I don't know of another parish that has a like fund, and it's a restricted fund and is reported on at every annual meeting. [...] I'm sure that future vestries and congregational leaders will want the rector and other people of the staff to be included. Jim Vail, our organist, is widely recognized

around the country, and probably the world—until his retirement and even after his retirement. He's written some texts on liturgical music that are unequalled.

**St. Alban's leadership in the diocese.** The other thing I didn't mention was [that] our financial support of the diocese has always been key. In fact, we were lead pledgers in any drive that came along, [which meant] sometime not being able to spend that money some place else. [...] When they were building Cathedral Center, St. Alban's [...] almost immediately pledged \$25,000 [...] That's leadership, and it meant the faith community had to be able to say: yes, we'll give \$25,000 to our new Cathedral Center. We could make it public and we could do it early. Once we started it, I can just [remember] every large parish lining up and making at least \$25,000 pledges. I think that we should try to continue in the future [...] leadership in the way of support for diocesan ventures. [...] Sometime money is a way to say "yes."

I think of the inclusiveness of who we are. That's another leadership position that I expect to probably be strengthened more. Anything that's really an advent of change [...], I think St. Alban's, in her quiet way [will support]. [We're] not out there with a placard [...] but it's a quiet and dramatic way. [...] We supported AIDS ministry very early on, the ordination of women, very early on, prayer book change, very early on, new hymnals. We were, among the first, with the help of Jon Olson who was the chaplain at UCLA at the time, to highlight the Easter Vigil, commonplace now in most churches, but for a long time it wasn't. The leadership liturgically of our service of carols and lessons—now many parishes are using an Advent service of carols and lessons. We've always had it and I think that's one area where, just in the diocese and in the community as a whole, our own sense of being liturgically-based, of being at an altar...everything that we do extends from our basic soul here.

I think our witness will be strengthened and it will probably be needed even more in the future, because Christianity's becoming more a minority in a plurality of major faiths. That's new for Christianity, and it's new for our society. Fortunately, it's [...] exciting and fun. The alternative of Christianity used to be [...] humanism or secularism. Well,

now the alternatives are really quite different: [one could choose to be] Muslim, Hindu, Jewish. [...] St. Alban's can be a leader, by quiet example ... that's exactly the way Jesus worked. Jesus was not a revolutionary, in the kingdom sense, but a revolutionary of the heart, and I think that's where the strength of this place will grow. We will find ways to be an example. [Have we had any formal inter-faith dialogs?] Our inter-faith [link]...I think, will embrace the growing connection with the campus. Because we have a huge resource [...] across the street. [...] Trying to get the Westside clergy together [...] is difficult enough. After 9/11, we did have a panel and we did have a speaker. And perhaps we were one of the few churches [to do so]. Everyone responded to 9/11, but not in that way. I think the future of this parish is to continue to take [9/11] very seriously. You don't check your brains at the door just because you walk into a church. In fact, you're invited to bring those brains with you. That kind of emphasis is probably a strength [...] Even within the Christian denominations [there is] not enough emphasis on the reason and intellect. [...] I think God gave us brains to use, not to just muddle through.

**Landlocked. A medium-sized parish.** This is a medium sized parish [and its] strength will probably be doing fewer things very well [...] Parking has been an enormous problem. You can almost see the activity levels vary with the zoning and the parking. We've tried to get that changed but it's almost an impossibility. [How is Hillel going to manage?] Well, I don't know, to be honest with you [...] They think that since they're going to draw from campus, that the activities and people they will have, will either be coming from across the street or [will] be willing to park across the street and walk. I'll be honest: I don't know how that's going to work. They don't have enough parking. They're going to be hamstrung, the same way we are. It's not a church and doesn't have a congregation, in that sense. Its ministry is to the campus, so it's like a big chaplaincy. Their programs are much more issue-oriented. But it's a big problem for us, and even for businesses around here, because the two-block area around UCLA, as you know, is a separate parking district. You live in parking district 11, probably, and the one around here is 35 [which] only goes two blocks around the campus. That means there is no free parking, even on Sundays. So we are going to be a medium-sized church because there's

no way for us to grow. [Unless you build a parking structure.] Unless you go underground and build a parking structure [...] and that's not an insurmountable thing, but where should our resources be used?

**Healthy change.** I think [our] strength will be that we become a symbol, [that] we set an example. [...] That's been the exciting part for the last 30 years: how do we take things that come about and have an effective, viable ministry—and *always* to have the Gospel at our heart. That means the potential to grow and change and become a blessing. [...] We're not a mega-church—[this presents] some advantages, because if you're a mega-church, it tends [to foster] sub-cultures within a larger culture. Here, we're still able to maintain the concept of family. [...] Healthy families make all of the collisions with life work. [...] In fact, most families bump through life. But the strength of the family comes in making the bumps work. That might be a real strength here.

**Focus on common values.** We're finding that we need [...] emphasis on common values: not so much "what's for me?" and "as long as I don't hurt anybody, or myself, I can do just about anything I want" [attitude]. I think we're returning [...] to be a place where [the commonality] really is the center, and where we do care. I wouldn't want a son or daughter of mine unexposed to what real life is. [...] But at the same time, there is great strength in recognizing community and common goods, goals, [and] values. That's what makes us a faith community.

**Looking ahead to retirement.** [You don't have much time left here. You're leaving in two weeks. Are you excited about that? How are you going to spend your retirement?] Oh yes. What I believe about retirement, about life in general, is that you don't really change. [...] The people that have difficulty with retirement—I'll bet, if you went back into their life, probably had difficulty with a lot of stuff. And the people I know that are healthiest in retirement were healthy in their whole life. So, whether it was their family or their job responsibilities—whatever came along, [...], was just part of life. I don't expect to attack retirement any differently than I have attacked who I am right now. [...]

**Finding another faith community.** The hardest thing for me is going to be [finding] another faith community [...] like this. It'll be different, but I'm sure I'm going to find one. [...] It'll mean accepting new things, and I'm almost convinced that that's true across the board. [...] That's why we have a Gospel and why it works, because it's not just for certain kinds of people, it's for all of us. [...] I've worked very hard at this place. [...]

**Greatest need = greatest attention.** I'm never been afraid of criticism for example, if somebody thinks the young people need more attention, we focus on that. But if I focus my own personal attention and energy and time there, then something else has to slide. If I weren't working as hard as I think I work, then I would just take on new tasks. But in this place, it doesn't work that way. I think everyone who's involved at St. Alban's is really working hard. In fact, sometimes I wonder how people do it. I know how much time teenagers take, for example. And you know, we have a lot of people here with teenagers, [...] and they still find the time. [...] And those people won't have a problem when their kids grow up, because they'll be plunging into other things. [...] I tell my own family: I love them equally [but] the one that gets my love is usually the one that needs me the most, at [any] particular time. If it's Craig, our son, who needs my attention, that doesn't mean I love Velda, or Lisa, less. [...] Life is like that. It's going to mean that [if] St. Alban's [...] doesn't take my time and energy, something else will. [...] I'm looking forward to retirement, in the sense—that it actually broadens my choices, rather than diminishes them.

**Right timing: a new blossoming.** And this is why I'm retiring [...] I'm still healthy and I think my mind and soul are still healthy, so it's a good time to do it. Plus, it's a good time for St. Alban's: there's a lot of money in the bank, there's a very good vestry right now—not that they all aren't good, but it's a very good gathering of people who are serving right now. There's an eagerness that I sense. Even if I stayed here, we could blossom and move [with] a new programmatical area, and who's to know? [...] The vestry and congregation are going to have that delicious, serendipitous experience in profiling, in finding out who they are. I think there are going to be some real nice

surprises. In some ways it is like: sometimes, your kids will come home and they'll let you know that you're special, in a way you didn't think they even knew. [...] They'll come home and say: gee, thanks for supporting me, [...] and you don't even think they noticed, but they do. I think that's what's going to happen. [...] You'll say: oh, that's who we are?! Oh, that's a value I hold very highly. [...] In my own life, I think I'm going to surprise myself. I'm going to look out there and probably get involved in something, I don't know what it is now [...] It'll be something I can plunge energy and time and effort into. [...] I can't think of anything better. I'll definitely have more spontaneity and more time to spend with Velda. It's just going to be great.

**Velda.** [Speaking of Velda, you have often expressed your devotion and appreciation for Velda. How has Velda contributed to your life?] Again, this is so great, because it reflects the kind of community which has been shaped here. The expectation is that Velda is not a second rector. That is really healthy, and that has to come from the people. It doesn't come just because I want it that way. It really comes from a shared value system that respects and responds to an independence of a couple. [...] That's exactly the way I look at it. Velda has gotten me into things I would never have gotten into or felt—it's just wonderful. Esthetically, I was never into the ballet and opera. [...] It's easy to point to things like that. Velda has led the way, to have harmony and resonate on values and things to work on together, things in society, and around us in community, that we would like to support. [Our] license plates on our cars supports the arts in California. We belong to practically every museum that I know of around here. We pledge to the Japanese American Museum. (The director of that museum is a member of our parish. I didn't know that before I pledged.)

Velda is a spiritual example. I don't want to be her prayer partner, and I don't think she wants me to be her prayer partner, but the fact that she has a prayer partner strengthens me. But we're not clones. The last thing I would want is that Velda be my clone. That's where the blessing in the congregation has come. [...] They don't expect Velda to be my clone either. [...] She's been free to do some things. I have been free to do many things, and the freedom actually comes from the security of having that support and that

relationship. [...] Faith works the same way. The more secure we are in our faith, the more freedom one has to be involved [...] and take some risks.

Velda has been an absolute part of who I am, and part of who I am, is part of who I can be to everybody else. I think one of the strengths I have in my ministry is pastoral, but that pastoral strength doesn't come [from] just getting down on my knees and praying in a dark chapel. It comes from having the support, and Velda. [...] She brings so much into my life. She's into art; she's a great teacher. I am proud of her. [...] I meet new people through her. [...] I'm very happy. And she's also someone who could keep me straight—really important. [...] You have to have a partner in life. You've got to be able to express yourself. And if you've got a living example [in the person] you spend a lot of time with [and] you are almost soul mates. [...] Well, that makes everything else possible. [...] I'm really blessed.

In some ways, we've gone in the same direction. When people are in their twenties, it's really hard to know [where they will go]. Even in their thirties, it's really hard to know. If people are starting to go in different directions, [they need to] make it work. That's really the key. Then making it work is a bonding of sorts. But to make it work there has to be honesty, discourse, communication, sharing, a deep respect and love. Yes, we've been able to do that—but we've done this all along. I don't think I would have been the priest or servant that I've been [with it]. I think a priest ought to be a priest first, and then a servant of God. That's important. [But] Jesus also said: I came to be your friend. So, what does that mean? I've learned so much about servant-hood from Velda. It's hard to put into words. You transfer it into action. Couldn't be here without her... [Well said!]

Interviewed on September 6, 10, 17, 2002

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[transcribed by Luisa Del Giudice; edited by Luisa Del Giudice & Norm Ishizaki]

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