

Interview with Fr. Eric Kahl Continued

4. Eric tell us a bit about yourself and your ministry and your retirement.

I retired on August 1, 2021, after 37 years of ordained ministry; serving as rector of two congregations in Coral Gables and Tampa, for 27 of those years. Before that I served as curate, locum tenens and assistant rector at congregations in the Diocese of Florida. * In addition, Bishop Leo Frade appointed me the Episcopal Chaplain at Florida International University, Miami, Florida, and I served in this capacity between the two rectorships.

Born in Sendai, Japan, I grew up as an “Army brat” living in Japan, Long Island NY, Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina and West Germany before ending up in Tallahassee for high school.

After graduating from Florida State (BA in Philosophy, Communications), I worked as a youth minister and administrator for Advent, Tallahassee, before attending seminary at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley CA

I was ordained deacon and priest at St. John’s Cathedral by Bp. Frank Cerveney.

* Curate and locum tenens, St. Paul’s-by-Sea, Jax Beach
Assistant, St. Mark’s, Jacksonville

5. Which period in your ministry (or which church) do you consider the most substantial part of your work?

I served two congregations as rector and day school chaplain for 27 ½ years. My entire ordained ministry embraced the church and school partnership. I was Rector and Day School Chaplain, St. Philip’s, Coral Gables, FL and then Rector and Day School Chaplain, St. Mary’s Tampa.

6. What aspects of ministry did you appreciate and enjoy the most? What were the toughest parts?

Without a doubt being a celebrant at holy eucharist was where I knew I was called to be. I am most at home at the altar and where I always enter through the thin veil. I was and am most effective as a pastor when I am with those who are dying. To be given the privilege to offer up “last rites” and the final, earthly communion to someone is an aspect of ministry that is indeed a blessing.

The toughest parts of ministry were the inevitable conflicts that came with being priest and rector, husband and father of three. To balance and not over-function in one calling over another throughout my ordained ministry was always difficult.

Lastly, it was a forever battle for me to live into the truth that self-care was not selfish.

7. Looking at the other end of the spectrum from retirees—any advice to the newly ordained or those preparing for ordination?

Remember that before you are a deacon, priest, canon, dean or bishop, you are Beloved of God.

Remember that your fellow clergy are companions on the way not competition to be reckoned with.