

Dear St. Timothy's,

My name is Todd Bryant, and I have the joy of being your next Rector. My wife Kimberly and I are chomping at the bit to be with you all. I want to give some history about who I am. I was born in Tulsa, OK in 1970. Growing up nominally atheist, I got serious about my faith and Jesus in a tiny Wesley Methodist church in 1988. After getting on fire for Jesus, I lost it quickly after heading to Oklahoma University.

The faith fire never completely died, and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to St. John's Episcopal Church in Norman, OK. It's a church just north of OU campus that had, and still has, an outreach to college kids. It was my first taste of the Episcopal Church and was the doorway to who I am today. My time there was the beginning of falling in love with God again.

I graduated from college with a degree in Zoology (Biology) in 1994. I graduated the year that President Bill Clinton solemnly proclaimed that young graduates would be the first people in recent history to make less than their parents. After a little post college flopping around and not making the \$120K that I thought was my birthright, I dedicated myself to general aimlessness. For about a year, I waited tables and resorted to sleeping on a ski shop floor in order to afford a ski trip in Colorado. After shopping my resume around, I got a great opportunity to work in Houston for a chemical distributor as their lab manager. During those first years working, I settled into Houston and fell in love with the town. At the same time, I fell truly, madly and deeply in love with a young woman who would become my wife.

I met Kimberly at Palmer Episcopal Church when she was a youth minister. I volunteered for the youth ministry because I liked working with teenagers *and* I got to hang out with her. We could not have been more different. I was an Okie from Muskogee (Okie from Tulsa doesn't have the same ring). Her family has streets named after them, but she decided to love me in spite of myself.

From the moment I heard God telling me that priesthood might be a possibility, Kimberly has been my number one booster in ministry. She has a Master's in counseling from University of Texas at Austin. You can speculate that this might cause a problem for Saturday football, and you would be correct. Kimberly is a soldier in everything. Her work for our family, for the church, and our kid's school keeps her running. She has been my companion and friend through all of the last weird and wonderful 17 years.

I am not the smartest, or the most organized priest, but when I get too far into the weeds, I have an ace in the hole. I remember to lift my eyes to the hills and ask from where is my help to come? And I remember that my help comes from the Lord the maker of heaven (Psalm 121). Probably one my biggest strengths is that I cry "uncle" to Jesus early and often when I get in a pickle.

As the Diocese's sponsorship for seminary went from possibility to probability, Kimberly and I moved to Austin a few months before classes started. She ran a clothing store, and I was a personal trainer / youth minister. In the fall of 2003, I began seminary at Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas. I loved seminary and everything about it. Kimberly and I refer to it as our three year Disneyland. My field site in seminary was at St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin, and I had the privilege to work for the Rev. David Boyd before he retired. During my very last semester of seminary, our daughter Lauren was born, and I had joy of going to seminary choir and class with her strapped in a Baby Bjorn while I studied and sang. Lauren was baptized by Rev. David Boyd on Easter Vigil in 2007.

Once we left Disneyland Seminary, we transitioned to St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in League City where I worked as a curate for the Rev. Tom Day in 2006. Carter, our second kiddo, was born in Clear Lake (Houston), and I had the privilege of baptizing him on All Saint's Day. I performed my first (and last?) party boat wedding for a couple from St. Christopher's. The boat captain had impeccable timing. I was beginning to lead the ceremony, and she came on the PA yelling "Are you all ready to party!! woo gaa woo gaa". I had barely got out the words, "Dearly beloved" before everyone lost it laughing. Rev. Tom Day recently retired, but my two-ish years with him were filled with clear mentoring and real world experience in a healthy Texas parish.

After St. Christopher, we moved to Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church in 2009. Palmer was a very cool place. They outdo medieval England in pomp and circumstance. They were clear about worshipping Jesus and never "worshipped the worship." Our third and final child, Andrew, was born during our time at Palmer. Palmer was deeply committed to ministry with the homeless and managed to marry liturgy, devotion, and service seamlessly. I was in charge of campus ministry, worship, and newcomers. Like at St. Christopher's, I had another important mentor in the Rev. Jim Nutter, Palmer's Rector. After every time I preached, he critiqued me with a variation of "more Jesus, less you." I can trace a straight line in my development as a preacher back to Jim.

From 2011 to now, I have been the rector of Ascension Episcopal Church. The Ascension community is a powerful mix of cultures from US, the Caribbean and West Africa, and to a lesser extent Asian and South America. I have loved being Ascension's rector. You get to do *everything* as a rector and solo priest. I have shouted prayers through prison security glass; gone grocery shopping with a transgendered person (their first time outside their house); danced (poorly) as the guest of honor at a Nigerian wedding reception; and buried still born twins. I have counseled grandparents losing a grandchild to closed adoption and collaborated with people considering ordination. I have grown to be the leader the church needs. At Ascension, I have found my voice as preacher, teacher and pastor.

I have had great clergy mentors in previous parishes, but now at Ascension, our best teachers are the people who have loved us into who we are today as a family.

God's call to be with "y'all" (as you will hear a lot!) is clear and bright, and I can't wait. We still have small puzzle pieces to put in place, but I am looking forward to my first day in the St. Timothy's office (August 14th) and our first Sunday celebration together (August 20th)! As the Pointer Sisters sing, "I am so excited and I just can't hide it".

I know the Bryant clan will shape and be shaped by the community of St. Timothy's. My prayer for our ministry together is that God will work in us more than we can ask or imagine. I am praying the New Zealand prayer for our ministry together – *Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities. In your name we pray. Amen.*

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things - Philippians 4:8.