

CURRICULUM VITAE

The Venerable Elwin Wesley Cockett

DATE OF BIRTH

24th May 1959, in India, of British missionary parents



DATES OF ORDINATION

Deacon 1991

Priest 1992

Click here to view video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jbd8NTTVFPE>

Name of Spouse Susan Mary Cockett
Children's ages Sarah (34), Thomas (31), Rachel (29)

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MINISTRY EXPERIENCES

2007 - **Archdeacon of West Ham, in the Diocese of Chelmsford**

This is a full-time post serving 70 churches in urban and suburban east London within the Diocese of Chelmsford.
Primary responsibility with my colleagues on the Bishop's Staff for leading the implementation of the diocesan strategy to be a *Transforming Presence* in every community.

1992-2012 **Chaplain, West Ham United Football Club**
and a chaplain to the 2012 London Olympics

2004-2007 **Area Dean, Basildon Deanery**

2000-2007 **Team Rector, the Billericay and Little Burstead Team Ministry**

Leading an effective team of four clergy serving five churches of varying size and tradition in a prosperous commuter town in Essex. Membership c.650 adults and 150 children.

1994-2000 **Vicar, St Paul's, Harold Hill**

Arrived as Curate-in-Charge, becoming Priest-in-Charge and then Vicar of this small church on a marginal outer estate of poor social housing and great social needs. St Paul's grew during this time to about 100 adults and 30 children.

1991-1994 **Curate, St Chad's, Chadwell Heath**

Served under an excellent training incumbent in this thriving church in a working-class urban suburb.

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

1983-1988 Practice Manager, Bethnal Green Medical Mission, a GP health centre serving the people of an area of great deprivation in the East End of London.

1978-1983 Trained and practised as a specialist in personal taxation with Her Majesty's Inland Revenue.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

1988-1991 Degree – BA Theology and Pastoral Studies
(awarded by CNAAB, the Council for National Academic Awards)
Oak Hill Theological College, London

1986-1988 The Aston Training Scheme – passed with distinction
(Aston was an innovative pre-theological training course led by Revd Dr Laurie Green, later Bishop of Bradwell)

1973-1977 Forest School, Essex

1968-1972 St Paul's Cathedral Choir School, London

INVOLVEMENT IN DIOCESAN COMMITTEES

Current Chair, Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Education
Serving 140 schools in Essex and East London, along with chaplaincy in tertiary education and training in ministry with children.

Chair, Chelmsford Diocese Education Trust

Chair, the London Over the Border Council (LOB) promoting and resourcing mission in east London

Trustee, Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance (CDBF)

Trustee, Sparrows Trading Company, a subsidiary of CDBF, mainly involved in setting up and running pre-school centres

Past Member of the Chapter and Council of Chelmsford Cathedral

OTHER VOLUNTEER OR COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

Current Trustee, the Revd Dr George Richards' Charity for poor clergy
Trustee, Archdeacon Burney's Charity

Trustee, Aston Mansfield Charitable Trust (AMCT)

Director, Aston Mansfield, serving deprived communities

Director, Forest School, Essex

Chair, Hockerill Educational Foundation

Past School Governorships:
Billericay School and Quilters School, Billericay
Brookside School and Mead School, Harold Hill
Furze and Warren Schools, Chadwell Heath

AREAS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Music As a boy, I was a chorister in St Paul's Cathedral Choir, London. I went on to a Music Scholarship, and was later the Music Director of two churches. I continue to lead music in worship in a range of traditions, from choral to contemporary, on occasions with a band in Chelmsford Cathedral and elsewhere.

Mission I have a passion for mission – for making known the love of God beyond the fringes of the church, whether in the field of professional sport (as in my chaplaincy with West Ham United Football Club) or in groups on society not often associated with church (such as the bikers in the 59 Club, of which I am a proud member), and among people of difference ethnicities and faith groups, of whom we have many in east London. Inevitably, that involves engagement with the needs, interests and priorities of others, leading in turn to appropriate engagement with and prayerful encouragement of political and social leaders.

Motors My love of anything with wheels is a standing joke among my colleagues on the Bishop's Staff. I have a couple of Triumph motorbikes, one or two interesting cars, and even a few bicycles, electric and otherwise, which are my preferred mode of transport in the city. It was a great joy for me to be able to present a motorcycle as a gift to a priest in Kenya on a recent trip there.

Theology It would be wrong to make any assumptions from the fact that I attended Oak Hill College. I have enjoyed a wide range of theological influences, from the Liberal Catholicism of St Paul's to the Reformed traditions of Calvin College, Michigan, and Willow Creek. I value the breadth and diversity of the Anglican Communion, and enjoy wrestling with the complexities of being an Anglican today.

Elwin Cockett's responses to the eight questions

1. *Please share with us some of your spiritual autobiography. How did you come to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and a priest in the Church of God? What have been some of the milestones in your journey?*

My parents were missionaries in India and later in Ghana (my father was a doctor), and so I was blessed with a Christian upbringing.

As a boy, I won a place to sing in the choir of St Paul's Cathedral, London, and thus Anglican worship of the very highest quality became part of my everyday life. My childish faith was nurtured into maturity through the words that we heard, said and sang day by day. That disciplined pattern of prayer and the offering of the very best of music in worship alongside good preaching are still hugely important to me, whatever the tradition of the setting that I find myself in.

As a teenager, I had a number of experiences that deepened my relationship with God. Perhaps the key moments for me came in my early 20s, when I was challenged in a number of ways about my aims in life and my commitment to the Christ I knew loved me. The resultant change of direction led me first to work in an inner-city health centre and from there to explore ordination.

Through all the roles and situations that I have been in since ordination, I have learned to trust God with the next step. Each change has been a surprise, and each time God has equipped me for the work to which he has called me.

2. *Tell us about what you do to tend to your own spiritual health and vitality. What are the practices of contemplation, prayer, and service that are most meaningful to you? How will you work to preserve these habits and encourage others in the diocese to tend to their own spiritual after you take on the busy schedule of a Bishop?*

First, I would want to say that exercise, diet, sleep, relationships, a good book or movie, regular retreats and quiet days, and days off and holidays all contribute to my spiritual health and vitality. Clergy cause themselves problems when they neglect such basic needs, whatever their prayer-life.

Nevertheless, it is obviously important for all Christians, and for clergy in particular, to have a regular pattern of meeting with God in worship, prayer, and Bible-reading. For me, the anchor in my day is Morning Prayer, either said alone or with others, however busy the diary. I am not in the habit of 'daily Mass', although I am grateful for those who are, but regular participation in the Eucharist is certainly important to me, particularly with colleagues.

There is a tremendous richness to Anglican liturgy that I would not want to overlook here, but I have also gained much in the past from using other liturgies and forms of worship from Taizé, the Iona Community, the Anglican Church in Kenya and other less-well-known sources.

In all this, although spoken and silent worship are important to me, it is music in worship, in all its forms, that I could not do without. Whether that takes the form of a great anthem sung by an elite choir, a contemporary song led by a band, or a chorus sung by little children does not matter greatly to me. What does matter is that it speaks with sincerity about our relationship with a loving God.

3. *What is your vision for the Diocese of Rupert's Land, and what would be your top three priorities for moving towards that vision?*

My vision for *any* diocese would be to see the church being a transforming presence in every community, open and welcoming to all, and making the love of Christ known in both word and deed.

Inevitably, I would bring with me the experience of working closely with Stephen Cottrell for the past seven years on a strategy for Chelmsford. If I were to come to Rupert's Land, I would want to spend a time with you before setting any priorities, but these headings would be relevant:

Inhabiting the world distinctively. The church is the Body of Christ, and each member of it is called and equipped by God for ministry and service. We need to be a people of prayer whose lives and service reflect the love of God. To enable that to happen we need to concentrate on our people's spiritual formation.

Evangelising effectively does not belong to one tradition. God is the Evangelist whose love is revealed in Jesus Christ. Sharing the good news can be done in many ways, from Alpha to Emmaus, but the church as a whole must be intentional in passing on what we have received from Christ.

Re-imagining ministry: We need to discern the sorts of ministry necessary to be an outward-looking mission-shaped church, confident in making God's love known to *all* people. That may well involve encouraging the vocations of those who perhaps have been under-appreciated in the past, and the flourishing of lay ministry alongside better-resourced clergy.

4. *How do you see the relationship between celebrating the distinctiveness of the Anglican way of being Church and being open to ecumenical cooperation and full communion partnerships with other Christian traditions?*

It may be that I can bring some very positive experience to bear from ministering in England, and in East London in particular, where we have strong and healthy relationships with other churches.

Anglicans have little to lose and much to gain from working with others. Throughout our history, we have learned from the best in others and adopted it ourselves, at the same time sharing generously that which God has given us.

Chelmsford has been richly blessed by our partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran diocese of Karlstad in Sweden, to the extent that we have joint training courses and staff exchanges. Nether church has felt itself to be threatened or compromised by that cooperation.

Churches in the UK are generally glad to work together as much as we can. 'Churches together' is a strong movement here. Notably, the Alpha course, developed in an Anglican parish here, has been a blessing to Christians of a wide range of denominations and traditions. In the same way, we have learned much from others who have grown churches through new monastic communities, 'mission-shaped church', pioneer churches and even 'messy church'.

That is not to say that there are no issues that divide us. Nevertheless, practising generous orthodoxy recognises that we all 'see through a glass darkly', as St Paul put it. 'Walking together' as Christians does not necessarily mean walking hand-in-hand all the time, but it does imply mutual respect and love for those whom God loves as much as he loves us.

5. *How would you foster unity within our Diocese and enable us to be connected to and engaged in the work of the Anglican Church of Canada, the wider Anglican Communion, and other global partnerships? Why?*

I do not underestimate the scale of the challenges that face the church in seeking to remain united. Much is to be learned, I would suggest, from the Archbishop of Canterbury's modelling of reconciliation, of exercising loving, sacrificial leadership that encourages those who disagree to 'walk together', sometimes at a distance but still walking together in the same direction, even where there are profound differences.

This depends on building the kind of relationships that can only come from honest dialogue and careful listening, and an understanding that we are still better together than apart. Such work is costly and often painful – but it is worthwhile. It sees the diversity of the Anglican Communion not as a problem but as a gift, and it is dependent on all of us being prepared to offer ourselves constantly in humility to God.

Importantly, it is by listening to others, whether to members of the LGBT community who have felt rejected and ignored or to African brothers and sisters who feel betrayed by Western Liberalism, that we make space for the Holy Spirit to work within us.

In the end, we seek unity (but not uniformity, of course) out of obedience to our Lord because Jesus told his disciples to love one another. We love those with whom we find it hard to agree because Jesus loved us first. And we pray for unity because Jesus prayed that his followers would be one.

6. *What is your understanding of marriage, and how would you engage the whole Diocese in its ongoing discernment around the inclusion of same gender partners in this commitment?*

Much of my answer to the previous question could be applied to this. Clearly, this is a matter that the whole Anglican Communion is wrestling with. All too often, we have failed to listen to the LGBT community, and have caused much pain as a result. At the same time, we risk denying the faithfulness of those who seek to live their lives by what they understand Scripture to be saying.

I hesitate to speak about the Canadian context from my study in London, not least because the Church of England is struggling in similar ways. It seems to me that the first task of leaders in God's church is to love those whom he or she is called to serve. For that reason, I would want to be as generous as possible, both to those who experience same-sex attraction and to those who cannot, in conscience, accept same-sex marriage. I have the faith to believe that, in listening to each other, praying together, and seeking God's will together, we may be surprised by what God does in us and through us, to his glory.

7. *How would you engage the younger generations in the Church and its mission?*

While, again, I would be hesitant about importing an English, London-based approach to Canada without some careful work, I do think that our positive experience here of growth among younger generations has something to offer you. Some of this can be read about in the Church of England's excellent report 'Going for Growth', which is available online, and so I shall not repeat it here.

Wherever we are, we need to take seriously the cultural shifts going on around us. That doesn't mean being 'trendy', but it does mean being wise to how things are for younger generations. If young Londoners are anything to go by, they are as keen as previous generations to pray, to worship and to model their lives on what they understand the Bible to say to them. They just might not want to do it in the same ways that we do.

In my experience, young people respond to authenticity. For that reason, our focus may need to change from simply *teaching* the good news to *being* the good news, going from talking the talk to walking the walk. This is likely to involve welcoming 'fresh expressions' of church, and new ways of being 'mission-shaped' communities. Some of those fresh expressions will be new iterations of very old ways of being the church, as the new monastic communities and enthusiastic attendance at Tenebrae services in some London parishes evidence.

8. *How will you encourage this diocese in its continuing response to the call to healing and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and what role do you see an Indigenous Anglican Church playing in this process?*

Again, I hesitate to offer solutions from the other side of the Atlantic. I know enough about the issues surrounding the treatment of indigenous people and children in particular, to know that this is a complex area. Hence, I would want to do a lot of listening before I could contribute anything to the process of acknowledging and healing the wrongs of the past. I would need educating as much as anyone.

That said, it might be that there are some insights that I can bring from the work that has been done in England over racial conflict. Many black Anglicans arriving in England in the 1950s and 1960s faced discrimination, prejudice and rejection, even from Anglican churches. This led to the formation of many black majority churches outside the Church of England and, in some places, an unofficial religious apartheid that it has taken us two or three generations to dispel.

Only by an intentional process of reconciliation, shot through with love and a desire to move on, have we been able to reach the point where many of our clergy in East London come from ethnic minorities and most of our churches in my archdeaconry are deeply and delightfully multi-cultural examples of the kind of 'rainbow church' of which Desmond Tutu spoke so well.

England is not Canada, of course, but Christians everywhere are entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation. That is as true of the lovely Christian people of the Diocese of Rupert's Land as it is of the people of East London.