

## **Autobiography**

Bradley Smith

I was born in rural Ontario and grew up on our family farm with my parents and two younger brothers. Looking back, I can't imagine a better youth than the one I had. It was full of hard work in every season but equally full of fun. I learned the value of effort, teamwork, family, and practical skills. My Christian life began early, when I was baptised in our rural church, where I was the only server in the history of the congregation. They had a small oak processional cross made for me which I carried until we closed the church. It stands in my parish office today as a reminder of a place that really made me feel like I belonged and a call to create similar spaces where I serve.

In elementary school I played hockey and baseball and was involved in school musicals and choirs. I got my first job as a sales associate at Beaver Lumber, where I learned even more practical skills assembling furniture and outdoor equipment and planning small projects like sheds and decks. Working in retail for seven years taught me not only how to build things but also a lot about people and how to deal with them. One of the highlights of my five years of secondary school was being in student leadership for four years, culminating in election as president of the student council.

My undergraduate degree in History was done at Queen's University, Kingston. I spent four years there learning in and out of the classroom. I worshipped at St George's Cathedral, where I sang in the choir and immersed myself in parish life. I joined the Naval Reserve at the urging of a retired military chaplain who was supervising me in my first parish internship. I studied divinity at Trinity College, Toronto, and was appointed to my first parish as the lay pastoral coordinator in 2005. When I was ordained in 2006, I became the rector and began my transition from combat arms to chaplaincy.

Parish and military ministry have overlapped through most of my ordained life. I have been the rector of two parishes and (concurrent with incumbencies) priest-in-charge of two others. I served as a unit, brigade, and deputy division chaplain in the Army and RCChS. This dual ministry was a gift for the 17 years I exercised it, giving me a broad range of experience, perspective, and connections. Presently, I am the incumbent of St John's, Peterborough, where we are celebrating our bicentenary this year, and I lead a team that oversees ministry in six congregations across southern Peterborough County.

My husband Nathan, who is Turtle Clan of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, and I reside on 300 acres near Apsley, Ontario, where we find ourselves as neighbours to an incredible array of creatures who share the land, lake, and forest with us, and remind me every day of the generosity of our loving Creator. I use the practical skills I learned over the course of my life to look after our home and the church. I continue to enjoy singing and my drama years served well to help me understand liturgical presence. I value connection and relationships and the longest ones in my life—my immediate family—are nurtured every week when my parents gather their sons and our families around the table at the farm. God is good and I am full of gratitude for the life I have tried to describe briefly for you here. It would be a blessing to share the next chapter with you.