

## **The Reverend Caleb J. Lee**

### **Autobiographical Statement**

Eastern North Carolina is in my DNA. My great-grandfather served as an engineer on the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, a vital link connecting the northern and southern parts of our region. Though born in Chapel Hill, I was raised in Eastern NC from a very young age, and despite periods away, I have always returned. My earliest church memories are from St. John's in Wilmington, where my mother directed the Little Angels Choir and Father Al Durrance, with his distinctive red socks, was our charismatic priest. Our family, including my parents and three siblings, moved to Tarboro (Diocese of NC) the summer before I started first grade. I grew up at Calvary Parish, deeply involved in Sunday school, acolyting, and EYC. Easters were always spent at Holy Trinity in Hampstead, visiting my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Sundays in the summer were often spent at Wade Chestnut Memorial Chapel on Topsail Island.

My high school years were spent at Episcopal High School in Alexandria, VA, where chapel attendance was a regular rhythm, and I actively participated in student chapel, serving as Senior Warden in my final year. My senior "maymester" provided invaluable experience with a clergy couple who had both previously served in the Diocese of East Carolina. College brought me to North Carolina State University, where I majored in Sociology and minored in Russian Studies, including a summer in St. Petersburg, Russia, and a semester in New York City. It was during my time in NYC that I had a deeply mystical experience that would inform my later decision to become a priest.

In college, I met my wife, Allen. We were married at St. James in Wilmington shortly after graduation. While working in real estate, I also had a desire to give back to my church as a volunteer youth leader. This led me to many opportunities for leadership in youth ministry. Simultaneously, I began the Education for Ministry (EFM) program. Before long, I was discerning a call to the priesthood, serving as a parish intern at St. James and interim campus minister at UNC Wilmington. My theological education took me to Virginia Theological Seminary, with a field placement at St. Columba's in Washington, DC.

My first cure was as Associate Rector at St. Paul's in Beaufort. After two and a half years, I accepted a call to Grace Church Cathedral in Charleston, SC. My seven years there were intensely formative and life-giving: I arrived to build a youth program and departed as Canon Precentor of the Cathedral and President of the Standing Committee, navigating a pandemic and a bishop election in the absence of a bishop. In 2021, I was called to serve as Rector of St. Paul's, Wilmington. I am married to the love of my life, Allen, and together we are raising our three teenaged children.