

BIOGRAPHIES OF ABBOTS OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX ORDER OF THE WEST



Abbot Lynn Bauman: Lynn was born in California into a staunch Anabaptist family where he was raised as a fundamentalist and evangelical. Following an early call to ministry, he completed a B.A. in Biblical Studies (1964) and began graduate school in Near Eastern studies at UCLA preparing to go to the Middle East.

In 1967, he entered a graduate program in Islamic philosophy and Near Eastern studies at the University of Tehran where he met his life-long mentor Seyyed Hossein Nasr under whom he studied for seven years. He eventually joined the faculty at the University of Tehran where he taught English literature and linguistics in addition to graduate research and writing. Later with his wife, Jackie, and their three children, the family moved to Yemen as Iran entered an extended period of instability under the Shah. In Yemen, both Lynn and Jackie taught at an international school.

During his years of academic training, Lynn received several master degrees from UCLA. After returning from the Middle East, he earned a Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the Anglican School of Theology at the University of Dallas where he also taught. Later he also earned a Ph.D. in the Humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington focusing on Western Philosophy and Hermeneutics. Ordained to ministry in 1980, Lynn served as pastor; administrator; and professor of comparative religion, ascetical theology and hermeneutics, teaching in various seminary and graduate level programs across North America. He has also continued his Middle Eastern studies and research, focusing in the last several decades on the early tradition of Christianity in the Middle East in its flow as an Oriental tradition from Palestine to India and China. In addition to these studies, he has translated many of the early documents of Oriental Christianity into modern English. In the past number of years, he has published these in various forms as hermeneutical tools and study guidelines. Recently, he has led tours to the Middle East and to India in pursuit of that early, interesting history.

Lynn was invited to join the Oriental Orthodox tradition of Christianity by one of its Bishops, Dr. Marshall Voris. Following that ordination, Marshall suffered a fatal heart attack and passed into Eternity. Pursuant to his wishes before he died, the priests he ordained petitioned Bishop Gregory of the Holy Catholic Church in the East to change the ecclesial structure of its work into a monastic Order and were granted ordination as its first Abbots in the Oriental Orthodox Order in the West.

In addition to his work in the Order, Lynn serves as a retreat master, teacher, seminar and conference leader. He is currently Director of the Praxis Retreat and Learning Center, an ecumenical retreat facility that offers opportunities for prayer and study in the rural beauty of northeast Texas. Over a decade or more, Lynn has worked in close association with Cynthia Bourgeault, his brother Ward and others to establish Academies for Contemplative Wisdom (Wisdom Schools) across the U.S. and Canada. A primary focus in these Schools has been the Gospel of Thomas which has been Lynn's passion and

concentration. He has translated a number of important early texts of Christian wisdom from Coptic including the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene and the Gospel of Philip. These are collected into a volume called *The Luminous Gospels* with introductions by Cynthia Bourgeault and Ward Bauman and he has completed a major commentary on the text of Thomas, *Gospel of Thomas, In Trouble and in Wonder*.



Abbot Blake Burleson: A member of the Oriental Orthodox Order in the West since 2008, Reverend Dr. Blake W. Burleson was installed as an abbot of the Order in 2013. Blake lives in Waco, Texas where he teaches world religions at Baylor University. His research areas include Jungian Studies, African religions, Contemplative Studies and the Wisdom Traditions. He is the author of *Pathways to Integrity: Ethics Psychological Type* (2001), *Jung in Africa* (2005), *Baptist Wisdom for Contemplative Prayer* (2012), and *A Contemplative Approach to Understanding World Religions: C. G. Jung as Phenomenologist of the Soul* (2014). Blake is also Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Burleson received the B.A. (1978), M.A. (1982) and Ph.D. (1986) degrees from Baylor University and became a full-time faculty member in the Department of Religion in 1991. Traveling extensively on the African continent since 1978, Burleson has conducted field research among diviners of traditional religion in Kenya and has a working knowledge of the Swahili language. In 2007, Burleson was invited to give a plenary address to the XVIIth International Congress of the International Association of Analytical Psychology. He has given public lectures and presented academic papers on Jungian studies in America, Europe, and Africa.

Ordained to the ministry in 1986, Burleson has served Baptists as teacher, pastor, administrator, missionary, deacon, adviser and chaplain. He is a member of Seventh and James Baptist Church, a progressive fellowship focused on the arts and social justice. Blake practices centering prayer, *lectio divina*, the Anglican rosary and chanting as a part of his daily office. He uses contemplative *praxis* in the classrooms in order to help students cultivate attention and develop listening skills. He is married to Sandy Evans and they have two children: Garrett (b.1986) and Evan (b.1989). Blake's hobbies include carpentry, painting, backpacking, hiking and snow skiing.



Abbot Ann Johnson. Ann was drawn to the work of the Order in 2002 and has actively sought this Wisdom path since that time. She became a monk in the Order in 2004 and was installed as an Abbott in 2013.

Ann was born and grew up in Corsicana, a small, rural town in Central Texas. As a teenager, she realized she was seeking and yearning to find a meaningful understanding of and relationship with God. Not finding support for her queries in the Methodist church (a church founded by her great-great grandfather), she began attending the Episcopal Church, where she found comfort in the liturgy and the prayers. As an adult, Ann attended

the Anglican School of Theology, a lay study program of the Diocese of Dallas, for five years. There she learned the expanded message of God's presence and a deeper understanding of Jesus available to those who want to walk the Wisdom path.

As an undergraduate, Ann attended The Colorado College and the University of Texas, graduating with a double major in Deaf Education and Elementary Education. As a teacher of children who were deaf or hard of hearing, she worked in Arizona, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. She earned a M.A. in Special Education Administration from Texas A&M. In 1996, she became an educational consultant with the Education Service Center Region 10 and began working with the Texas Education Agency to develop programs and curricula for students who were deaf or hard of hearing. After thirty- seven year as an educator, Ann retired in 2003.

After retiring, Ann moved to Flagstaff, Arizona and attended the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany. While there she discerned a call to ordained ministry. After attending the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas, she was ordained to the priesthood in February 2007. She has served churches in Northern Arizona (St. John's, Williams; Epiphany in Flagstaff; and St. Paul's in Winslow) and retired from active ministry in July 2021. She has been active in the Diocese of Arizona, serving numerous terms as summer camp chaplain and with a colleague she developed a curriculum to provide seniors with resources to create a deep spirituality in the second half of life.

Ann is the proud mother of two daughters and a son, as well as grandmother of six grandchildren. She will be leaving the beautiful mountains of Northern Arizona for the beautiful mountains of Colorado in early 2022.



Abbot Alison Hine. Alison was raised in an intellectual, scientific, atheist family in Geneva, Switzerland. Her father was one of the founding scientists at CERN. She obtained a degree in zoology from Cambridge University (1971). After some field work in Kenya and further academic studies in Canada, she settled in Ann Arbor, Michigan where she obtained a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Michigan. She practiced as a psychotherapist for 35 years and began offering spiritual direction in 2005. She has a grown son and Turkish daughter-in-law. She lives with her partner, Murray, of 15 years. She loves BBC TV series,

classical music, all manner of art and creativity to be found on the Web and growing orchids in her living room.

Her spiritual search began 25 years ago with a friend's astonished question. "How have you managed to get this far without God?" From this point her hunger for spiritual practice was unrelenting. After stops in some peculiar way stations, she became deeply immersed in Vajrayana Buddhism. Despite being drawn to this path, it did not bear fruit. In 2000 Alison discovered the Diamond Approach, a spiritual path rooted in the wisdom on Buddhism, Sufism and Depth Psychology. She continues to be a member of this mystery school. In 2009 she was drawn to a Christmas service in a small Episcopal Church in Ann

Arbor, Michigan. To her great surprise this led to a deep study of Christian mysticism and theology. To this day the Christian path and the Diamond Approach sit synergistically alongside each other.

Since then she has been teaching the practice of Presence under the auspices of her church, the fruits of a cross pollination of these threads of practice and teaching. In 2014 Alison met Lynn at a School of Wisdom. This meeting resulted in a one of a kind collaboration and with his support she created digital illuminations of the "Luminous Gospels". She took vows as a monk at the Annual Gathering in February 2015.

In 2015 Alison took on the leadership of restoring a small house dedicated to silence, contemplation and spiritual practice on the property of her Episcopal church. The doors opened in May 2016. Over the last few years, a wisdom community has emerged and now gathers in this intimate sacred space.

Her collaboration with Lynn Bauman continues and now includes digital illuminations of some of the great mystical poetry in the Abrahamic traditions. At the annual gathering in February 2017 Alison was ordained as priest.

Since Alison's ordination as a Priest, especially during the year of COVID lockdown, her work has expanded through virtual teaching to a wider audience on Zoom. She reflects deeply on the existential social and ecological crises of our times and how, as contemplatives and monks, we are called to serve in our world in turmoil. Alison continues to create digital imagery that calls us into clear seeing of the challenges we face; to touch the wisdom of the ancients; and to listen and feel the bubbling of spirit and beauty that is rising up to meet us in these times of trial. Her collaboration with Lynn Bauman continues unabated. She was consecrated an Abbot in the Oriental Orthodox Order of the West in March 2021.



Abbot Michael Sciretti: Michael is pastor of The Center for Christian Spirituality in Houston, Texas, a ministry of Chapelwood United Methodist Church, where he has served since 2018. He is married to Rachel, who is Associate Pastor at The Center and Chapelwood. They have two daughters, Anastasia and Zoe, and one son, Nathanael. Michael has served churches in Texas and Virginia.

Michael grew up in Shreveport, Louisiana and was nurtured in two Southern Baptist churches during his childhood and adolescence. He felt a call to ministry at the age of 17 and attended East Texas Baptist University to pursue Christian Ministry ('98). After growing disillusioned with Christianity as he knew it at that time, he felt drawn to the contemplative dimension of Christianity and chose to attend George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University. During this time he and Rachel served churches in Waco, including the progressive Baptist congregation Lake Shore Baptist, where they were both ordained to ministry in 2005. After graduating from Truett in 2002, Michael attended the Epiphany Academy of Formative Spirituality in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where he received his certification in spiritual formation and spiritual direction. In December 2009 he received a doctorate in historical studies through Baylor University's Religion Department, with an emphasis in the history of Christian spirituality. It was during his work on his doctorate that he came to know Abbot Lynn Bauman and the work of the Oriental Orthodox Order in

the West. He became a monk in the early 2000s and was ordained a priest in February 2004. In 2022 he was consecrated as an Abbot.

Two of Michael's publications include *Entempling: Baptist Wisdom for Contemplative Prayer*, co-edited and compiled with fellow Abbot Blake Bureson and the chapter "The Christian Year: Practicing the High Priesthood of Believers" in *Gathering Together: Baptists at Work in Worship*. Michael, with Logan Jones, has also released an album of contemplative chants, *Epiphany Today: Between Two Worlds*. He has also helped produce the contemplative music album, *A Discerning Heart: Songs from The Center*, that features original music composed by Peter Johns for the weekly Contemplative Worship services at The Center.

Abbot Karen Poidevin (Emeritus): Karen was ordained as a priest in the Oriental Orthodox Church in the West in 2002 by Marshall Voris, Bishop of the Oriental Orthodox Church in the West, and consecrated as a bishop/abbot by Bishop Gregory in 2003. Since then, Karen has been instrumental in the development of the Oriental Orthodox Order in the West in the United States.



After graduating with a B.A. in psychology from the University of South Florida (1976), she worked as a chemical dependency counselor, case manager and program administrator of drug abuse programs for over a decade. She later worked in marketing for a private agency. Her work with 12-step programs, including Al-Anon, deeply influenced her spiritual journey and practice and continues to be a great asset to living her Rule of Life.

Karen currently lives in Boerne, Texas where she and her life-partner, Ron, relocated in 2017, after the sale of Way of the Wolf Retreat Center in Fredericksburg, TX. Her gift of hospitality welcomed many seeking a space for quiet and restoration over the last two decades. That opportunity continues with the availability of a place of respite on their current property.

Karen was raised Methodist with a strong Dutch Reform influence and in 1959 was confirmed into the Episcopal Church. Her journey deepened after attending Cursillo, a 3-day renewal program of the Episcopal Church in 1980. This experience was influential in an expanded experience of Spirituality. After attending the Anglican School of Theology in Dallas, Texas, in the early 80s and studying with Dr Lynn C Bauman, she began intensive study in spirituality and the Wisdom traditions. In 1994, she graduated from the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation with master's level training in spiritual direction. She currently serves as a spiritual director. After completing supervisor training with Sr. Mary Ann Scofield, a founder of Spiritual Directors International she is also a supervisor in a local Spiritual Direction training program. Currently, she worships with Grace Episcopal Church located on the campus of Texas Military Institute in San Antonio. She completed the Forest Dwellers program at Oblate Theological Center in 2019. She continues involvement in related groups which continue to instruct and enrich her journey.

She is married to Ron Poidevin and they have three children and seven grandchildren. In June of 2021, they became great-grandparents to Elijah Quinn. Her interests include quality time with her family as well as reading, camping, hiking and all things outdoors including enjoying wildlife. She is also involved in several poetry writing groups. In 2022, Karen stepped away from active leadership in the Order.

Abbot Ron Poidevin (Emeritus): Ron was born in Buffalo, New York but moved to the St. Petersburg area in Florida when he was in the 4th Grade. As a sophomore in High School, he moved to Anna Maria Island near Bradenton, Florida. A great move since Ron met and dated Karen Orbaker through High School. They later married in 1958 while he was in the US Navy. They now have three children, seven grandchildren and one great grandchild. These are the greatest blessings of all.



In the Navy, he received training in aviation fundamentals, avionics and electronics that provided a good technical base for future education and corporate leadership. GTE was his entry into the private sector in 1960. In 1964, he began taking college courses while continuing to work full time. He earned a BA in management (1969) and an MBA (1972) from the University of South Florida.

While working with GTE, Ron & Karen, attended a Cursillo in the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas. This led to over 20 years of active participation in the Episcopal Cursillo and a leadership role across five states. This early Cursillo work in Dallas led to enrolling in the Anglican School of Theology in the early 80's where he met Dr. Lynn Bauman and began studies with him. This was a relationship interrupted by corporate moves away from Texas but restarted after leaving GTE and continues today. Ron's career in telecommunications provided the opportunity to work as GTE Vice President in several states across the country. He participated in moving GTE from a rural based telephone company to a major electronic and digital corporation. After GTE merged with Bell Atlantic to become Verizon, he sought new avenues of spiritual development and resigned as Senior Vice President with GTE after 34 years in Telecommunications. (Oct, 1994).

The small retreat center, Way of the Wolf Retreats, was purchased in 1994 in the Texas Hill Country to offer a place of healing and restoration for groups and individuals. Way of the Wolf expanded from a small B&B to a medium sized retreat center serving families, businesses and churches from several denominations. In this same period, Ron attended and graduated from Shalem Institute of Spirituality in 1998. Shalem is an intensive, master's-level program that develops spiritual directors among both clergy and laity, with accreditation from Washington Theological Union. (WTU ceased operating in 2015)

Several years ago Ron and Karen began a series of travels to England, Ireland, Wales and Scotland to study and observe the influence of early Celtic Traditions on the Anglican and Catholic churches. These travels and other studies led them to recognize how important it had been to move from a corporate environment to an intentional effort to be more present to inner growth and to the spiritual needs of others. It became clear that traditional churches were missing much of the early experiences of the

church. Later studies and travel reinforced that the reconciliation needed among Christian denominations also needs to be extended to other traditions as well.

In 2001, Ron was invited by Bishop Marshall Voorhis to consider ordination in the Order. After months of discernment and preparation, he was ordained a Priest by Bishop Voorhis in 2002. After Bishop Voorhis death, Karen and Ron were consecrated as Bishop/Abbot by Bishop Gregory in 2003. At this point, the early formation of OOOW as an order began to take its current form. Inclusivity of all who come to share their journey is a primary attribute of the foundational work of OOOW. While participating in the formation of The OOOW, Way of the Wolf Retreat Center expanded its role and became a Priory for OOOW and continued until the end of 2017 serving a diverse population and gathering point for the members and supporters of OOOW. Way of the Wolf Retreat Center was sold in February 2017 and Ron & Karen moved to Boerne, Texas.

These last years have increased Ron's awareness of the great need for a new vision for spiritual formation within a wisdom tradition that can reach across denominational lines and across religious traditions. The time is now. The years of participation have been Ron's greatest years of personal spiritual formation because of the contact with the other Abbots and influence from the community of Monks who share their lives with one another.

In 2019, Ron enrolled in a two-year program at the San Antonio Oblate Theological Center (OTC) to study wellness and wisdom for the last third of adult years. "Forest Dwellers" is formatted around the Indian Hindu recognition of the importance of establishing time away from the chaos and demands of daily living. This provides a base-line of awareness for living fully in the latter years of life, embracing one's own mortality and aiding oneself and others with the wisdom of the later years. The expanded awareness of "aging and saging" has brought expanded opportunities to share the wisdom tradition with fresh options and awareness to enhance living fully in the last stage of life. In 2022, Ron stepped down from an active leadership role in the Order but continue to hold the community in prayer and wisdom.