



Jesus Hacked: Storytelling Faith

a weekly podcast from the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri
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Episode 103: Called, but not to ordination

In episode 103, we continue our focus on baptism, and discerning a deeper call to ministry, but not necessarily to ordination. It's the first of two conversations with a novitiate and a companion in an Anglican religious order, one lay person, and one person who went on to be ordained priest.

Today, Sister Donna Hawk Reinhard, PhD, talks about how she came to be a novitiate in the Anamchara Fellowship, which is a dispersed religious order, about her clothing, wearing a habit, and her relationship with her Episcopal congregation. Podcast host Barbi Click, who is the Guardian of the Rivendell religious community, interviews.

Barbi Click: Welcome to JesusHacked. I am Barbi Click, a member of St. Paul's Carondelet, a candidate for the diaconate, and the Guardian of the Episcopal Community of the Rivendell. I'm with Donna Hawk-Reinhard, a member of the Episcopal Church of the Advent in Crestwood, and a Novice in the community of the Anamchara Fellowship. Welcome, Donna.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

Barbi Click: As Episcopalians, we have a tendency to think of discernment as a path towards ordination to become a priest or a deacon. We also have a tendency to think of religious orders or communities in a Roman Catholic sort of way. Nuns, monks, parochial schools. Maybe particularly we think that way here in St. Louis. Let's talk about that. What is a community, what is a religious order? A religious order versus a religious community?

Barbi Click: There is the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas, there's about 20 religious communities that are part of a worldwide Anglican communion. These are more intentional in that many of them, they live in community. Whereas the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities is intentional living, but we don't necessarily live together. Anamchara Fellowship is one of those, as is the Rivendell Community, of which I'm part. Could you tell us about Anamchara Fellowship?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: So Anamchara Fellowship is, as you said, a dispersed religious community.

Barbi Click: And dispersed religious means?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Means that while those who are living in the same area may try to live together, in the same neighborhood or maybe even share housing, most of us live all across the country. And so we gather once a year for a week for formation, fellowship, and fun. And the rest of the time that we meet electronically. We telecommute.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: So I'll end up with a couple nights a week, I know what time to dial in on Zoom and say Compline with people from Florida or Detroit or even from California.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: We meet in priories once a month. Missouri, our diocese doesn't have enough people at Anamchara Fellowship yet to have a priory of our own. So I end up joining a monthly priory meeting, either out of Florida or out of Detroit.

Barbi Click: You go there, or you do it electronically?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: I do it electronically. So we're taking advantage of technology. This is something that couldn't have happened before the internet.

Barbi Click: Tools of the trade.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes.

Barbi Click: Where are you in your process of membership within this community?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: So on March 4th, I was clothed as a Novice.

Barbi Click: And clothed means?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Clothed for Anamchara Fellowship means that I was given the community's habit. So that means I'm dressed distinctively for ministry and service. Not all dispersed religious communities or even intentional communities wear a habit. Just like our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, not all of them wear a traditional habit anymore.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: So I'll be a Novice in formation for two years. What happened in that service is that I stated my intention in front of the parish, in front of representatives of Anamchara Fellowship, that I wanted to enter into religious life and to receive the habit of the community. The habit had already been gathered and was blessed by the parish.

Barbi Click: By Advent?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: By Church of the Advent and the members of Anamchara Fellowship that were here. And I was prayed into the tunic and the scapular, the belt. And the triquetra was blessed separately, and that I will wear as a Novice. It's a symbol of the Trinity, since Anamchara Fellowship is dedicated to the Holy Trinity. So the pectoral that I wear during my novitiate is not a cross, but this Celtic symbol of the Trinity.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: We affirmed together that I had been given this vision of the church that had been drawing me into religious life. I confessed obstacles to receiving God's grace, was absolved of those, and was blessed for the next part of the journey. So I've made promises, but I haven't taken vows.

Barbi Click: Promises to the community at large? To the parish itself? Or to the Anamchara ...

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: I think the answer there is "yes". Because it was in the presence of Church of the Advent, and members of other parishes that came to participate in this part of the liturgy. I need the parish in order to live into the work that I believe I'm being called to do.

Barbi Click: What part did the parish play in this, in this discernment? How did you get to this point? Why not the diaconate, why not the priesthood? Why this?

Barbi Click: In a conversation that we had one time, you talked about how there was just this pull, or this lacking that you knew you were being called to fill.

Those aren't your words necessarily, but that's the memory that I have of the vision. Just being pulled into something more than yourself. Do you remember what I'm talking about?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yeah, yeah, it's a sense of being in the right place, but not being completely in the right place.

Barbi Click: Right.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: So there's the ... with the right people doing the things I'm supposed to do, but there's something missing. Both here and at Church of the Advent, and at St. Stephen's, and at the Episcopal School for Ministry, I've thrown out the question. Am I being called into the priesthood or into the diaconate? And the answer has been, from those who know me, no. And the one who's the most helpful with discernment, my husband Doug, is, "No, this doesn't feel like where you're being called." And as the taskforce on discernment for ordination, I can't remember the exact title of that, put together the manual that we ... the workbook that we have on-

Barbi Click: The joint taskforce, right?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes. When I looked at what deacons and priests are called to do and how they're called to serve, that doesn't feel like what I'm called to do. So what is it?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: As I started talking to people at Church of the Advent ... well, first, I talked with Father Dan Handschy. You know, that I think I'm being called into religious life after hearing about Anamchara Fellowship and thinking, "This might be a good fit." He asked, "Why are you wanting to do this? Is this just to become more holy?" And it's like, "Well, no, I've studied with the Jesuits long enough to know that's not what the Christian life is about." It's, there is this call to holiness, but it's called holiness in order to serve the Church, in order to serve for the restoration of the world.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: And so there's this longing for more, more in order to be more. As I talked with people in the parish ... I talked to the few people first. Dan and I decided that probably discernment needed to be a little more formal, but not as formal for what we do for holy orders. So we met in the Adult Forum class twice, and then a vestry meeting, to talk about what this might look like for us as a parish, if I continued on this journey.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: And two comments I remember very clearly. One person said, "When people ask me what you do and who you are, I have a hard time describing it. But if you do this, it makes sense to me." If you become a religious, this makes sense.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: And the other person said, "You know, we've always known that you were called to something. We just couldn't figure out what it was. This makes sense." And so this making sense part is part of how I've looked at what discernment looks like. Is looking to see where you fit and how you can serve out of what you've been given and how you've been trained. And it needs to be a way the community can accept.

Barbi Click: I love that. That's good.

Barbi Click: Okay, so let's explain some of the terms that we have used during this little bit.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Okay.

Barbi Click: What is a Novice?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: A Novice is someone who is new and learning. And so in religious life, the Novice is someone who is between what is often called first vows, or promises, and second vows, or the final vows. Some communities take lifetime vows, so you only make those big promises to the vows of the community once. Anamchara Fellowship is a community that takes vows every three years, and we renew those. And those vows are simplicity, fidelity, and obedience. Each community's going to have their own vows.

Barbi Click: Okay. And you mentioned pectoral.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: And that is a cross or symbol that is worn that hangs down around one's chest, around the pectoral muscles.

Barbi Click: Okay. And yours is called a triquetra.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes. And so it is a Celtic symbol that looks kind of like a loop-de-loop triangle. So we're dedicated to the Holy Trinity, so that's a symbol that has been used by Christians to represent the Trinity. And then there is a circle around in the middle that holds this loop-de-loop triangle together that symbolizes the unity. So the threeness and the oneness is represented in that symbol.

Barbi Click: Excellent. And scapular?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: That is kind of like a really long apron that is the same length in the front and the back. It protects the tunic, or the undergarment, which looks like an alb. Ours is an off-white or flax-colored garment that is the first garment one puts on. And then you put the scapular, or this apron-like thing, on top. Really, it's practical. It

protects the tunic from splashes of food and other things you might be getting into.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: But it has become the symbol of religious life. And it's long. It's almost as long as the long tunic that it covers.

Barbi Click: Explain to us what Anamchara Fellowship, what it means, what it is, actually.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Anamchara is a Gaelic word, or an Irish-Scottish word, for "soul friend". This is part of Celtic spirituality. Anamchara Fellowship has a distinctive Celtic spiritual flavor to it. Anamchara Fellowship focuses on the way that we end up doing our formation. And so when we are about to become a Novice, we're assigned someone who will come alongside with us and be our soul friend during this time of formation.

Barbi Click: Wow.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: And so I meet-

Barbi Click: And is with you the whole time, or ...

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes, that's the plan.

Barbi Click: All right. What about the word Abbess?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: The Abbess is the feminine form of Abbott. And traditionally, that's the word that's used to describe the person who is in charge of a religious community. And so you're a guardian-

Barbi Click: Yes.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: -which is, I think, the equivalent of an Abbess.

Barbi Click: Abbess. Yes, it is. I'm guardian for the Rivendell Community. That is the same thing, basically. Although I feel very lacking in the word, what the word Abbess means to me, which seems to me to be, I think in terms of that religious community, or the religious orders. Flying Nun, Sister Act, all these different things. It just ... I don't feel adequate, often.

Barbi Click: But it is what it is, and I am, and it's a good thing. The sort of the idea of the symbol of unity within the community.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes, yes. And so for us, the Abbess is the one ... especially at our business meeting, our annual business meeting, which is called a chapter ... she's the one who calls the questions, sets the agenda, asks the questions, leads the conversation, and listens carefully for consensus.

Barbi Click: This is what I'm in the process of doing right now, planning for our general chapter meeting at the end of June. It's no small thing.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: No, it's not.

Choir: (singing)

Barbi Click: Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit, you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, Oh Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere. A spirit to know and to love You, and the gift of joy and wonder in all Your works. Amen.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Amen.

Barbi Click: When you reflect upon your baptism through this particular prayer, what phrases resonate with your own wading in the water, or entering into this new life?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: So joy has been something that I've been seeking. And I think that going back to our question about discernment, it's when you don't quite know your place in a community is hard to be joyful.

Barbi Click: True.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: And so what I've found since I was clothed as a Novice for Anamchara Fellowship, that knowing my place in the church has allowed me to relax and let joy bubble up. I wasn't really expecting that.

Choir: (singing)

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: But oh, I needed it.

Barbi Click: Yes.

Choir: (singing)

Barbi Click: So taking that idea of your place, finding your place finally, what does it mean to the parish for you to be there now that you are a Novice in Anamchara? How will that make a difference to them?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: So we're still trying to figure this out. Since it's only been since March that I've been clothed, we've been talking about this as a parish ... I think we started back in October in preparation for clothing, because that service, the clothing service, was going to happen here at

Advent. We didn't want any surprises. Wanted this to be organic. So we're still-

Barbi Click: What do you mean by organic?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Organic as in, I didn't want to go away and show up ... which was an option, to go away to our annual gathering and come back as a Novice, and then just show up on a Sunday morning, dressing different-

Barbi Click: You wanted it to be a natural process.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes. I wanted it to be-

Barbi Click: Where everybody was involved.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Because if my ministry is to be partly in the parish and partly in the diocese, as a dispersed religious community member, if my parish isn't with me, then how can I serve? So this needs to be a recognition together of this calling. And an affirmation in the community.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Right now, it is me continuing the work that I've been doing with teaching for the diocese, and teaching in an ecumenical setting, starting to preach more. The big change that we've already talked about is when I preach, is to focus on our baptismal vows. That as we start talking about what it might mean in the parish, I focused on how can my being clothed as a member of the religious life call all of us to our baptismal vows? Because really, whether you're called into holy orders or whether you're called into religious life, this is all a way of responding to our common call as Christians, and living into our vows as baptized people. When I preach now, I'm trying to make sure that I pay attention to how does this text help us as Church of the Advent-

Barbi Click: Because sometimes it seems like when we do the renewal of our baptismal vows, we say it by rote. It's just something that we do. And we think, "Well, this is what we're supposed to do because we're baptized Christians in the Episcopal Church." It seems important to me, and one of the things that you and I have discussed offline here, is how to get that idea that these are vows that we take that we can live out every day. It doesn't take some special order or community or ordination. It's something that we can live into every single day.

Barbi Click: How do you feel that you will be able to help that process of people understanding? Through your preaching, and then through your teaching. How do we get people to ... as opposed to saying, "Oh, I can't do that every day. I've got my secular life, and then I've got my church life." How do we bring those together?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: I think part of that is looking at the little things that we do. Looking at those baptismal vows and seeing, what does it look like for us to seek and serve Christ and all people? Part of that starts in the parish. How do we seek and serve Christ in each other? How do we practice that together? And then letting that fill over into our daily life.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: The call to continue in the fellowship and the teaching of the apostle, you know, to help people understand that continuing in the fellowship means not only coming to service and participating in the Eucharist, but it's also participating in the fellowship that happens afterwards at coffee hour.

Barbi Click: Oh, yeah.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: And just enjoying each other's company. And for me, part of that looks like, what does it mean to have holy conversations away from church? You know, to go to a coffee shop and meet with a friend and talk about religious life, talk about what it means to be teaching in ecumenical setting ...

Barbi Click: To have these conversations, to have this as part of your rule of life, is to make it more natural, so that it becomes more easily done, just in a day-to-day setting. It allows you to go more into having these sacred conversations, these holy conversations, just on a day-to-day basis with just all.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes. Yeah, and I think that part of my task with preaching is going to be to help people make the connections between what they may already be doing, and not realize how those holy conversations at the dinner table is actually part of living into our baptismal vows. So naming that's important.

Barbi Click: I found a quote on one of the National Association of Episcopal Christian Community's website. Basically, what it said was, "If you long to love God more deeply, to serve the Church and the world in significant ways, an intentional Christian community can help you do those things." Does that resonate with you?

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes. When I went and talked with Bishop Smith about my discernment into Anamchara Fellowship ... and the reason it was important to talk with Bishop Smith was because, canonically recognized Episcopal communities, which means that we're under the authority of the bishop, that before a community can come into a diocese, the bishop-

Barbi Click: Has to approve.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: -has to approve. He wisely pointed out that part of what I had been looking for and longing for was a community that would help me with living into my Christian walk. That I'm looking for accountability,

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Some people can set up their rule of life, their daily rhythm, and once it's set up, they just continue going. I'm one who needs ... I need accountability. I need support.

Barbi Click: I think that's a good point. Yeah, support and accountability.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: Yes.

Barbi Click: Well, Donna, thank you very much for this conversation, for this holy conversation, about these sacred things.

Donna Hawk-Reinhard: It's been a pleasure. Thank you.

Barbi Click: Thank you.