

REPORT OF THE ECUMENCIAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS OFFICER

In 2003, shortly after returning to full time parish ministry following several years in academia, Bp. Gordon Scruton invited me to serve as the diocesan representative to the Massachusetts Council of Churches Board of Directors. Then, the MCC Board meetings were held late in the afternoon and into the early evening and always in Framingham. Since I was serving near the eastern edge of the diocese, the Bishop considered me an ideal fit. I gladly accepted the invitation not only because of the logistics but because of my interest and commitment to ecumenism. Not terribly long after this, Bp Scruton extended another invitation to serve as the Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer of the diocese. It has been a rich and rewarding experience.

One of the benefits of such a long tenure is the ability to see the growth and change of ecumenism and interreligious conversation more clearly. As a member of the Board of Directors and, in recent years, as a member of the Advisory Board of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, I have had the opportunity to serve under three Executive Directors, each of whom has made outstanding contributions to ecumenical and interreligious relations in the Commonwealth. As the EDEIO for this diocese, I have witnessed a tremendous growth in the communication and cooperative activity between the different churches and spiritual communities in every corridor of Western Massachusetts; the growth in dialogue between a variety of Christian churches in our region and throughout the country; and a deepening spirit of understanding and respect between Christians and the members of other religious faiths.

The work of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer is not confined to the Diocese or even the state, but engages ecumenical and interreligious work throughout the nation and the world. I have been privileged to serve two terms as the Province I Coordinator for ecumenical and interreligious work in the Episcopal Church and to work with ecumenical officers, not only in our own Church but with a long list of denominational groups. Most notably in recent years, we have worked closely with the ecumenical and religious officers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Methodist Church. My life and my faith have been greatly enriched and blessed by this work and I am truly grateful to Bishop Scruton who invited me to this service and to Bishop Fisher who has provided a great deal of encouragement and support for this work in these past several years.

As I step down as the EDEIO for Western Massachusetts and from full time employment as a parish priest, I pray for the continued growth of ecumenical and interreligious work in the diocese, in the Commonwealth and in the world in order that Jesus' prayer that "All might be One" may be fulfilled. Serving as the Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer of this Diocese has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my years as a priest of the Church. I am deeply grateful. It has been a pleasure and a privilege.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Dr. William C. Bergmann