

Report to Diocesan Convention 2020
The Rt. Rev. Mark Beckwith, Missioner for Stewardship and Leadership

I am very grateful that my friend and colleague, Bishop Fisher, invited me in the fall of 2019 to serve as part-time Missioner for Spirituality and Leadership. With Canon Rich Simpson, we developed an outline for ministry that would match my gifts with opportunities for clergy and congregations in the diocese. The Bishop and Canon suggested that I visit a congregation twice in a month, at the congregation's invitation, which would provide more time to get to know one another and have some in-depth conversation about the congregation's ministry and mission. I developed a format for each set of visits:

- Conversation with priest (or warden before and after each Sunday visit)
- Preach both Sundays and Celebrate Eucharist on at least one Sunday
- Lead a parish forum that involved connecting a scripture story with the story of the church in general and their congregation in particular
- Meet with the Vestry to ask three questions:
 1. What would Jesus love about your congregation?
 2. What do you see as the congregation's purpose or mission?
 3. What challenges do you experience that get in the way of what Jesus would love and your mission?

My Sunday schedule filled up quickly

October 2019	St. Paul's, Holyoke
November 2019	Church of the Atonement, Westfield
December 2019	All Saints, South Hadley
January 2020	Trinity, Chicopee
February, 2020	Church of the Holy Spirit, Sutton
March 2020	Trinity Church, Ware (one visit due to Covid)
April 2020	Trinity Church, Shrewsbury (livestream)

In each case, I was inspired by the faithfulness of the congregation, and its openness to explore how God is working in both the congregation and wider community. The Covid pandemic shut down these visits, and the Bishop, Canon and I decided to not continue them until things open up. In their stead, I have offered to lead a small group of leaders in congregations in a 4 week program called "Leading Out of the Crisis", which involves engaging in a story from scripture, and capturing stories that individuals are experiencing during the Covid pandemic – and how to bring those stories into the life of the congregation as things open up. I have done this program (on Zoom) with leaders from Atonement, Westfield, and have started a joint program with leaders from All Saints, Worcester and the Cathedral in Springfield. We are learning as we go, and I am willing to explore this opportunity with other pairs of congregations who may be interested.

I serve on the Congregational Vitality committee, which seeks to provide resources and wisdom to congregations in their unique context. I also provide individual spiritual direction to several clergy in the diocese.

In my other arenas of ministry, I serve as the Bishop Liaison for Partnerships for Bishops United Against Gun Violence, a network of 100 bishops from across the church (Bishop Fisher is a vital member) that I co-founded 8 years ago. (in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting in Connecticut). In my other gun violence prevention work, I serve on the Community Council of the Mass. Coalition to Prevent Gun

Violence. The Executive Director of that group, Ruth Zakarin, and I serve as co-chairs of the Messaging Group of the national Gun Violence Prevention Table, a network of over 200 groups across the country.

I also serve as co-chair for partnerships for Braver Angels, a national movement/organization that seeks to depolarize America through the gathering of equal number of red (politically conservative) and blue (politically progressive) people in facilitated conversations. I presented "With Malice Towards None", a Braver Angels initiative that seeks to hold America together in the wake of the national election, as part of an October Clergy Day.

It is an honor to be with you, and to learn together.