

Report to Convention 2020
Missioner for Servant Leadership
The Rev. Jennifer Gregg

Cathedral of the Beloved:

The end of 2019 closed with an incredible Christmas party and celebration where those who participate in all the food distribution sites across the city came together to feast with those they serve in a festive meal. It was a high note, and we were so excited for all the things we thought 2020 would bring: ongoing dinner night's out, Circle Practice, Laundry Love etc. However, with the ongoing pandemic, as with all communities across the diocese, this year has been one of ongoing transition and negotiation for Cathedral of the Beloved and its members.

In the late part of 2019, Cathedral of the Beloved moved inside for the winter to Zion Lutheran. Here, in this space, our communal life was able to deepen as we were able to settle into the warmth that the sanctuary offered from all elements of life. Amid this deepening space, our worlds were turned upside down as everything shutdown in March and our community dispersed. With those experiencing homelessness having nowhere to land, Cathedral of the Beloved and its leadership began conversation with other community leaders to open a drop-in center during the week for the cities most vulnerable. We received a grant from Berkshire United Way and the doors to the sanctuary of St. Stephen's were open to provide hospitality amid a world that felt increasingly inhospitable to these beloved ones of God. Warm cups of coffee, donuts, face masks, and regular temperature checks with six feet or more of distance between pews framed this space. In a community that is already isolated, familiar faces and reassurance lessened the anxiety of those who came through the doors.

This year, Cathedral has also taken on a greater role within the community of advocating for systemic change. The homeless shelter in Pittsfield has been 2 miles outside of Pittsfield. This year, the agency which runs it, Service Net, worked out an agreement with First Methodist to bring the shelter to downtown where guests could readily access the services they needed. It was opposed. Alongside First Methodist and other downtown churches, COTB worked together to advocate for the homeless shelter in Pittsfield being moved downtown to First Methodist. Our work coupled with many others brought the pressure needed and the shelter was approved.

We have also hosted and our in the process of completing a downtown pastoral care training for the downtown meal sites. This endeavor has helped to build relationship between congregations and the different meal sites, bringing them out of their "silos". Our hope is to continue to build on these relationships. We are grateful to be a recipient of the UCC's Neighbors in Need grant in which this training was made possible.

Finally, we are grateful during all of this to have expanded our staff in adding another clergy person on a quarter time base to help with community development and pastoral care. We are grateful to have The Rev. Sloan Letman on board. We are also grateful for the ongoing support of both the diocese and The New England Synod (ELCA) as we find our way forward.

Finally, with the incredible vulnerability of this community and our (very) public gatherings outside, we have decided at this point not to regather for in person worship until we are well into our way of 2021. The risk we have decided is just to great. We continue to provide a hot meal every Sunday afternoon and pastoral conversation on the street in a staggered manner. We have begun to offer reflections and worship online which some of our members have begun to connect into. Our contemplative circle practice has also been moved online and through it we are finding new potentials for growth.

Leadership Development in the Diocese:

Loving the Questions: Loving the Questions is in an exciting new phase of development. In the spring of 2020, the year ended with five participants completing this process. With the ongoing pandemic, Loving the Questions moved online.

This fall we saw a 400% increase with 28 participants registered: 26 from the Diocese of Western MA, 1 participant from the Diocese of Massachusetts and 1 individual who was approved to participate from the Diocese of Idaho. We have also made Loving the Questions available to the Spanish speaking communities throughout the diocese with translation available throughout the program. 5 small group leaders facilitate the small groups.

With moving online, Craig Hammond and I worked diligently through the summer and early fall to deepen and expand this discernment space. There is a growing emphasis on living out our baptismal covenants, creating space for participants to discern where God is calling them in this time and place in their lives. At least half of this year's participants are deeply engaging in these questions.

Throughout, we continue to build intentional relationship with the Diocese of MA and other partners including, Society of St. John the Evangelist and Bexley Seabury. We give thanks to conversation partners around the country who have come alongside, shared resources and joint enthusiasm for creating spaces where God's people can listen deeply for the Spirit's movement in their lives.

In addition, through Together We Thrive (TWT) initiative and our diocesan trained coaches, participants will have the opportunity (if they choose) to be coached on a regular basis by a trained coach.

Professional Coaching- With Canon Pam Mott's retirement earlier this year, I now facilitate the coaching group in the diocese.

Through Together We Thrive 6 clergy have received coach training through the grant. Two have completed both Level 1 (ACC) and Level 2 (PCC). Three new clergy members from the diocese began their training with the second Together We Thrive cohort this summer-fall. As part of the gift of receive this training, clergy are invited to "give back" hours to other clergy, lay leaders or congregational teams, vestries, etc.

Outside of Together we Thrive, lay leaders have also been given the opportunity to complete the full Level 1 course. At the close of 2020, most coaches available in the diocese will all have received the

same training. Over the last year, coaches have been used for small group summits, are being introduced into Loving the Questions, and have begun to be utilized by clergy in the diocese.

Together We Thrive – Over the last year, the diocese along with the New England Synod (ELCA) and the Southern New England Conference (UCC) were awarded a million-dollar grant from The Lilly Foundation to encourage clergy wellness. Outside of coaching which I described in greater detail above, Together We Thrive initiative also offers:

Tending the Fire is a retreat for clergy to learn about family system dynamics and parish life. To date we have had two clergy from the diocese participate in this ecumenical offering. Other retreat opportunities will be forthcoming.

Finally, the Together We Thrive coordinator and Steering Committee is putting together Communities of Practice, ecumenical gatherings where clergy can come together to be fed and share in mutual support, as well as Affinity Groups, which focus on a specific theme and meet for a set period of time. Much of this work has been delayed due to the ongoing pandemic.

Outside of these endeavors, I have also begun co-leading Fresh Start with Canon Rich Simpson and continue to serve on the Vitality Team.

Faithfully Submitted,
The Rev. Jennifer Gregg,
Missioner for Servant Leadership