

## **Report From the Ecumenical Officer**

### **Rev. Erik Karas**

I became the Ecumenical Officer for the Diocese only in the last few months. I am thankful for the appointment and the opportunity to serve in this role. I began my career in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serving churches in Wisconsin, New Mexico and Colorado. Along the way I was able to serve as an Interim in two United Church of Christ congregations, an ELCA congregation and an Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Maine before I accepted the call at Christ Trinity Church in Sheffield, an Episcopal/Lutheran federated congregation.

In 2019 I was accepted into the Diocese of Western Massachusetts and the Episcopal Church. The continuation of the pandemic has limited my abilities to connect with larger ecumenical bodies but I hope that in the New Year the pandemic will wane and the ecumenical and interfaith outreach from our Diocese will grow.

For the moment, I would encourage all of us to add one simple question to all of our planning for the new year: "Can we do this with another congregation?" That simple question put to each of the projects we hope to accomplish could very well open up new possibilities and joys that we could never have expected. Thinking about a Beer & Hymns event? Could we do that with another church? It's been done and you can do it too! How about Adult Ed over Zoom? Could we do that with another church? That too has been done! Give it a try.

My prayer for us all is that we can pull that simple question into our regular list of questions we ask ourselves about any new, or recurring project our congregations might be looking to do. We do not have to be a carbon copy of each other, or be in Full Communion in order to play well together. Find the fire the Holy Spirit has lit which you both share and add fuel to that fire. God only knows where that relationship will go!