

Report to Diocesan Convention 2021
The Rt. Rev. Mark Beckwith, Missioner for Spirituality 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. This process has worked well, but it has been on hiatus since mid-March, 2020 when Covid shut things down. In the fall of 2021 I have renewed my visits to congregations. 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 reading a scripture story and connecting it with the opportunities and challenges of their congregation
- Meet with the Vestry (on at least one of the Sundays) 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?
 4. If time, to walk the neighborhood, or to walk the boundaries of the church property, and to reflect on what we see
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In the fall of 2021, I will have made visits to Holy Spirit Sutton, St. Paul's Gardner and St. Andrew's in Longmeadow.

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. I have also offered to lead leaders in congregations in a four-week zoom course on "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. In 2021, I offered this course, with All Saints, Worcester together with Christ Church Cathedral; Trinity, Shrewsbury and Holy Spirit in Sutton. 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. Over the summer and into the fall, we have been meeting with a Rector and a layreader from several congregations to hear stories of what they are experiencing and learning through this long season of covid. From our listening, the Vitality Committee intends to discern next steps to support congregations in their ministry and mission.

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. Along with Bishop Fisher, I serve on the steering committee of B-Peace, a ministry of leaders from the dioceses in Massachusetts to reduce gun violence.

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 refer to Braver Angels as the secular version of the Anglican movement – in that we can learn and grow in the midst of formidable tension.

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