

Dreaming, Daring, Doing: Together In Christ

181st. Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri

The Reverend Canon Doris Westfall, Canon to the Ordinary

Right Reverend Sir, Chancellor, members of Convention, people of the Diocese of Missouri—a worldwide pandemic cannot stop the work of God. It has not stopped the work of the church. It has not stopped the work of the diocese. It has not stopped the work of the Offices of the Bishop. How some of the work is done has changed, to be sure, but it cannot and has not stopped it.

The projects that have been initiated in the last six months are numerous and exciting and we hope, helpful to both congregations and the clergy who serve them. I would like to share with you just a few of the projects that the Offices of the Bishop are working on:

To help congregations and clergy address the change in how worship is conducted, technology grants were made to assist in the switch to virtual worship. In the anticipation of live-streaming more liturgies from the Cathedral, video and audio upgrades are in process.

In this time of separation, communication and connection are of critical importance. With that in mind, several projects have been initiated: Look for the new diocesan website to be launched in the new future. Our Director of Communications has been hard at work redesigning and updating this very important diocesan communications tool.

To assist the clergy's communication with one another, a gathering of the clergy every other week for what is known as Clergy Chats has been inaugurated. These are hour-long sessions, some are programmatic with speakers on topics of interest, and some are just to touch base with one another and with our bishop about how things are going and what the needs of the clergy and congregations might be. Clergy also are in Affinity Groups that meet once a month as a check-in with each other and to discuss questions that arise in ministry.

A new weekly clergy newsletter called Clergy Connections has been developed that helps clergy keep in touch across the diocese.

A video summer sermon series was introduced to help congregations that might not have a weekly clergy presence or whose clergy might be on vacation. We hope to offer this again throughout the new year.

New educational programs are also being planned. Canon Whitney Rice and Director of Communications, Janis Greenbaum, have offered seminars on evangelism, Christian Formation, and congregational communications. Workshops on leadership, vestry development, and conflict transformation are also being planned.

A rapid response team is being formed to assist congregations and clergy in times of conflict. It is hoped that addressing issues at the start of difficulties and the teaching of conflict transformation and communication techniques will help to resolve issues much earlier.

Task Forces on Pandemic Response, Hunger, Reimagining the Church, Children and Youth, have begun their work.

A Campus Ministry Initiative with the development of a Lay College Chaplain Leadership Program is in discussion. This is to extend our care and proclamation to additional college campuses within the diocese.

A redesign of the Formation and Ordination process is underway.

A new Deacon's Covenant of Call and Deacon's customary are being developed.

An Anti-Racism Covenant and Curriculum is in development as is a cultural competence curriculum for the Corps members of Deaconess Anne House.

The Bishop and myself have been virtual circuit riders and have held town hall meetings with close to three-quarters of our congregations. These meetings will continue throughout 2021.

Regional Ministry Collaboratives are being developed with the hope that the gifts and resources of different congregations in similar contexts can be leveraged to the benefit of the congregations and the communities that they serve.

Audits of all facilities will be occurring throughout the year with a diocesan facilities team.

The portraits of the Bishops who have served the Diocese of Missouri have been digitized and will soon be on display.

These are but a few of the projects that are currently underway. It is in no way an exhaustive list.

As you can see-a worldwide pandemic cannot and will not stop the work of God, the work of the Church, or the work of the Offices of the Bishop.