

What image or story from the Bible enlivens and enriches your own faith? What is the Good News found within this story that we are called to share with the world?

West Missouri's profile drew me in with its emphasis on Scripture and our Book of Common Prayer as the strongest ways your people are shaped. So I'm grateful that one of your discernment questions enables us to exchange a reflection on the Good News! The road to Emmaus (Luke 24) where the risen Jesus interacts with disciples is one that enlivens and enriches my faith when I'm reflecting on the church as a whole. The road to Emmaus signals a people ever-led by Jesus, with a missional spirit, who trust in Christian unity. Those are also facets of the faith familiar to West Missouri Episcopalians.

The action takes place on the day of Resurrection. Two disciples are leaving Jerusalem, walking to Emmaus. They're discussing Jesus' crucifixion, his promised resurrection, and the testimony of those who saw the empty tomb. A stranger walks alongside them; they do not recognize him as Jesus. Hearing their discussion about Jesus's death and the empty tomb, the stranger "opens up the Scriptures" explaining God's promised redemption beginning with Moses. When they've stopped for the night and as they break bread, the disciples recognize Jesus (who then vanishes). Immediately the disciples reflect back on their time with Jesus along the road, realizing how their hearts had been burning. They leave quickly, risking the dark, to share the Good News with fellow disciples.

Good News worth sharing is throughout this passage. Jesus's resurrection empowers the two disciples, as for us today, to seek the next missional horizon. In returning to Jerusalem, they begin the work of being a resurrection people. This is work that we all continue today. Jesus had been present to them, powerfully so. Jesus is present to us today – in your profile, I read an eagerness to lift up the good work that's born of knowing Jesus's presence among you and in the world. Just as the disciples wrestled with their own understandings, along the road to Emmaus, we can be encouraged to wrestle with the difficult realities of faith. As we wrestle, we trust that new aspects of God's missional purpose are being revealed. For the two on the road to Emmaus, their experience of sharing a meal with a wise stranger revealed the resurrected Jesus to them. Our modern experiences of the resurrected Jesus may come in a group Bible Study, working at a shelter, sharing communion, and visiting those who experience loss and deep discouragement. Your profile speaks of a people who learn through the lens of Jesus, as those on the road to Emmaus did, clearly seeing God's powerful hand at work.

Archbishop Rowan Williams is attributed with the wisdom that "It's not the church of God that has a mission, it's the God of mission that has a church." The road to Emmaus passage is rich with our Lord's action to build up the Faith and the faithful for God's mission. The Church is being formed for the better when we wrestle with Scripture, engage in conversation about our missional challenges, and watch for Christ calling us onward.

Why do you think there are declining numbers in the Episcopal Church and what is your vision for supporting Episcopal communities to find new vitality? What are some examples of how you have addressed this in other settings?

Your profile acknowledges that there are no quick fixes when it comes to developing our parishes. I'm drawn to the spiritual and theological depth expressed in that part of your profile. There are many demographic and cultural factors that have contributed to a decline in mainline Christianity. I find that those factors become clearer when analyzed through geographic and diocesan lenses. I approach the work of congregational vitality with my strengths for transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration. Fundamentally, I'm one who encourages, equips, and builds relationships. I'm grateful that the Episcopal Church has let me lead with these strengths for a lifetime in ministry.

When parishes are authentic in their expression of worship, prayer, and mission, we will sense the Holy Spirit's work to foster growth, charity, and spiritual maturing. As vice-president and chair of our diocesan board, I work with parishes who are interested in learning new skills to discern Christ's work among them. Work that I've found successful in supporting parishes is to: think and pray about our missional context with parish leaders; choose leaders who appreciate and cooperate openly; support mature practitioners of the faith; ask if our formational offerings feed our people; cultivate an outreach ministry; evaluate how we invite, welcome, and connect with newcomers; and work a plan that addresses stated needs. As bishop, I would want to orient our diocesan efforts toward parishes because that is where people are welcomed and incorporated into the Body of Christ. I would also begin talking, together, about how best to learn of parishes' unmet needs. I envision all of this as work that could fulfill your desire to build mutual trust and a shared vision with your next bishop.

In my parish, thinking and praying about our context with the vestry has led to an increase in parishioners willing to serve in prayer and Eucharistic ministries as well as inviting and welcoming newcomers more conscientiously. Supporting mature practitioners of the faith led to a renewed and invigorated vision of our parish's future. In a previous parish, I worked with an existing parishioner, a nearby parish, and two newcomers to grow a Laundry Love ministry. The ministry is active more than six years later, survived a catastrophic hurricane, and remains a vital way of knowing Christ at work in the world. When a parish wanted to develop a clearer sense of their local mission, I facilitated an exercise for thinking through aspects of the Anglican expression that felt present in their parish. They said that our morning together was both joyful and clarifying.

I've read that the offertory sentence "Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God" (*Ephesians 5:2*) is most commonly chosen on Sunday morning. I

hope this is true because it gets to the heart of congregational vitality for me. Vitality grows when we understand, and name, the Christ-like work that we're doing to serve in our context and to spread the Good News.

The Diocese of West Missouri is full of diversity from our politics to our geographic setting, from our congregations' sizes and financial resources to the people who compose those communities. How will you engage in relationship-building as you work across these differences and get to know the diocese?

Your diocesan diversity and the ways you've worked to build unity in Christ are aspects of your profile that took my breath away! I'm a leader who draws energy from being connected to the church's people and from learning their stories of faith, witness, and service. My natural strengths for connecting with others are undergirded and inspired by my prayers for them. This enables us to embrace the strength of diversity while leaning into the work of fostering unity (which is natural for people of common prayer). Getting to know West Missouri has been a joy! It's been a rich and renewing time of prayerful thought and conversation: meeting you in the middle, learning of how you hold fast to people's inherent worth even amid difficulty, and focusing on mission.

I'm an approachable leader who is dedicated to transparency and clarity. I build relationships by learning about others and the community, lifting others up, naming Christ present among us, and seeking the Holy Spirit's work among diverse voices. I'm an outward-facing leader who wants to foster mutual trust and cultivate a shared vision for building up the body of Christ in a diocese. Your profile outlines an excellent vision for the road ahead and I'm able to build on this hard work, following your lead, as we create a shared vision. Expanding ministry to Hispanic neighbors, emphasizing the formation of young Episcopalians, working alongside of you as I learn your common commitments, these are aspects of your profile that excite me. I also value your candor about the difficult work that was accomplished to get to this place and that building deep, Christian relationship is a long and disciplined process. I find this is especially good to have as a common understanding when we're working in diverse landscapes.

Communication is a professional strength that I draw on when building relationships; smooth and effective administration facilitates trust which is essential in relationships. As one who prioritizes relationships and wants to hear of the Holy Spirit's work among us, I cultivate relationships by building community. West Missouri is already skilled at this. I'm keen to learn the ways that parishes pray for one another and the fruits of those prayers, to meet parish leaders on days like their annual fundraiser or at special prayer services (in addition to annual visits), and to highlight missional successes. As bishop, these are ways that I would encourage our interconnectedness and build up the faithful across parish size, politics, skills, and charisms.

Thirteen years in rural county health departments, prior to seminary, only strengthened my need to minister in both metropolitan and rural, dense and sparse, popular and lesser-known settings, because Christ is in all. Diversity, and the inclusion necessary to foster it, is among The Episcopal Church's greatest strengths and to know that it's celebrated in West Missouri only deepens my engagement with your incredible and dedicated diocese.