



Name: Walt Tanner
Church: St. Mark's, Casper
Applying for: Regional Rep, Regions III or IV

A brief summary of current and past volunteer positions within the church?

I am currently serving as the grant writer for St. Mark's flagship ministry, Heart to Hands. Heart to Hands distributes diapers, personal hygiene products, and vouchers to local laundromats to anyone who wants them in Natrona County. I also am the lay lead of the ne Stone Soup Ministry at St. Mark's. This ministry connects St. Mark's parishioners with residents of the Central Wyoming Counseling Center's substance abuse treatment program and their families. Once a month residents of CWCC come to St. Mark's to prepare and serve a meal to their families and St. Mark's parishioners.

In the past I served on the St. Mark's Vestry and as a worship leader.

I also spent two years serving as the diocesan treasurer. In this role I had to be available weekly to review bank statements, open financial mail, and verify that any funds disbursed had been properly appropriated by the Diocesan Council through canonical procedures. This meant that I had to have a clear understanding of the diocesan canons and be willing to say "no" if procedurally appropriate.

Serving as treasurer, particularly during the administrative leave and subsequent deposition of the former bishop, was both difficult and engaging. There was more than one occasion I had to object to proposed policy or decisions because I could not reconcile them with our canons. This wasn't easy, but I believe the eventual decisions were better because of my insistence on adhering to our canons.

What do you want to accomplish in this leadership role?

My greatest hope is to bring a greater secular understanding of the diocesan canons to the Council and enable to Council to find practical solutions to issues within our canons.

As both a lifelong Episcopalian and one of the youngest, adult parishioners at St. Mark's, Region III, and the diocese at large, I believe I have a relevant perspective that needs to be heard as our diocese seeks a new Bishop Diocesan.

I would like to create a framework and practical procedures for how the diocese evaluates needs in our various parishes. At present, there is not a transparent process for choosing how and which parishes receive diocesan support and which don't. I believe Council, and its "power of the purse", is the appropriate place to create a workable system that addresses the needs of churches fairly. The erstwhile bishop's habit of making promises throughout the diocese and then placing them in the lap of the Council without notice or much discussion created resentment and distrust of the Council and within the diocese. Being a part of the ongoing shift to firmer checks and balances and more democratic governance is something I want to help shape.

Regular Episcopal worship and practice is difficult without ordained clergy and we, like the rest of the church, are struggling to find priests to lead parishes and services. I would like to work on creating a sustainable program, such as the proposed curacy program, to attract clergy to Wyoming, particularly to our smaller parishes.

If you have served on other boards, what is your greatest accomplishment and greatest disappointment?

I have served on two boards that are relevant to this position. First, I was twice elected to the vestry of St. Mark's while we weathered a pandemic, executed a capital campaign, and installed a rector. Consequently, the church continues to grow.

The other relevant role on a board was my time serving as the diocesan treasurer. In this role I sat as an ex-officio member of both the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Foundation.

My greatest accomplishment as a board member was securing needed revisions to the internal controls of diocese when we were in a state of emergency. The erstwhile bishop had created controls that required everything, including payroll and other financial obligations, to flow through him before being disbursed. When he was placed on leave, no one had the authority to submit payroll for diocesan employees. I was able to explain the situation to Council and secure approval before our employees stopped receiving compensation.

My greatest disappointment came sitting on the dais as treasurer at 2023 Annual Convention. Even though I was treasurer, I learned of the sale of HR Camp when the rest of convention did. Our canons vest the title of real property with the Council and mandate Council approval of any real estate contracts to prevent executive abuse of power. There was no record of Council approving the sale. I was not able to explain this to Council before the deal closed, however, I was able to secure an after-the-fact approval in January, 2024.

How do you invite God's Presence? When is God most present to you in your work?

I invite God's presence by acting of Jesus' mandate to love and serve one another. While I am not gifted with the charm or grace to lead worship services or preach his word, I am able to do Christ's work by serving those around me. I do this by organizing and executing ministries to the poor. I use my training as a chef to help people cook meals for their families. I use my training as a lawyer to advise my parish on how to solve problems within the bounds of the rules.

While it is not an invitation, God daily graces me with beauty and love everyday because I live in Wyoming full-time, even in the winter.

I have been graced with privilege and opportunity and do my best to use it in the service of God by giving a hand up to those who do not have privilege or opportunity.

FAITH ON THE NEW FRONTIER

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