

I just got back from two different conferences. I was out of the office for 10 ½ days and out of town for 9 days (I took a day at the beginning... and half a day at the end). They were both related to work, and they were both very rewarding.

As clergy, our Letters of Agreement require continuing education. This is a national requirement, and different diocese handle it different. In my last diocese, it was in my Letter of Agreement, but rarely honored, and no one asked whether a clergyperson did their continuing ed or not. In this diocese, we are required to take the time, so much so that we are also required to submit a report to the Bishop's office afterwards.

Thus, the first of my two conferences was my continuing ed requirement. The conference I chose to attend is called CREDO. It is offered throughout the year, but you book it about a year in advance (thus, this conference was booked last November!) CREDO is put on by the Church Pension Fund—which is almost like the HR department for The Episcopal Church. They oversee our benefits (including health care and retirement), and they offer online workshop (such as doing clergy taxes or dealing with student debt as clergy). And, they offer this conference. It's invite-only, and once you go, you can't go again for 10 more years.

We took time to learn more about the benefits offered to us by the Church Pension Fund, as well as time to discern and pray and grow and learn in 5 specific areas: mental health, physical health, spirituality, financials, and vocation. The retreat included days where we spent hours sitting in a lecture-hall type room, absorbing information. It also included days where we spent hours in silence, in retreat, and in nature. Since the location of this CREDO conference was in New Hampshire, I spent a lot of time soaking up the fall colors.

The other huge benefit of attending CREDO is meeting other clergy across the country (and, in some cases, even in other countries). I now have clergy friends and mentors in Portland and Denver and Montreal and Miami (and places in between, too). I didn't know when I signed up, but as luck would have it, TJ (St. Philip's former Assistant Rector) was also on this retreat. We actually spent a lot of time together (surprisingly, we were assigned to the same small group), and it was especially fun to meet the person behind the name (since I've heard so many good things about him without having met him in person before last week). Of course, TJ says hi to everyone!

The second conference was Clergy Conference in this diocese. Clergy Conference is a chance for the clergy across the Diocese of East Carolina to gather together with Bishop Rob and the diocesan staff and learn and grow together. While there was a lot of information shared, I think my favorite part was the putt putt golf tournament on Tuesday afternoon (of course my 4-some won!) :-D

After 10 days of continuing education and formation, I will certainly be taking a lot of time to unpack all that I experienced and learned. And as much as these conferences were rewarding and inspiring, it's great to be back at St. Philip's—especially renewed and ready for all the exciting things happening here!

Scroll down to see some photos!



There was a lake in the middle of the retreat center—very life giving!



A view on a hike (the train tracks were abandoned)



Two Assistant Rectors of St. Philip's



Clergy of the Diocese of East Carolina