



The Rev. Mark A. Cowell

The Rev. Mark A. Cowell is familiar to the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas. He is the vicar of Sts. Mary and Martha of Bethany, Larned, and Holy Nativity, Kinsley.

Mark began his education at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey completing a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science in 1990. While at Drew, Mark played rugby, which resulted in the most spectacularly broken leg. While an upper classman studying at Drew, Mark enrolled in seminary classes but chose the study of law over seminary.

Mark enrolled in Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, Kansas. He earned his *juris doctorate* degree in 1994, and graduated with honors. He was admitted to the Kansas bar in 1994. He was soon recruited to prosecute gangs in Dodge City, and he moved to Dodge City in 1995. After gang members shot out his car windows, he moved his family to Larned in 1996. He has lived there ever since, and has commuted back and forth to Dodge City. Mark now works part time as the City of Dodge City Municipal Prosecutor. He is also the Hodgeman County Attorney, and was just re-elected to his second term.

Mark was raised in the Episcopal Church, and fell in love with the Anglican Eucharist when living in England as a child. Mark and some of his classmates at their parochial school were allowed to serve as acolytes on the greater feast days. Mark was deeply and profoundly moved by the ritual and liturgy. After returning to the United States, Mark continued to serve as an acolyte at St. Peter's Church, Essex Fells, New Jersey, until he left for college.

After law school, Mark still knew that God was calling him, but Mark was faced with a problem. He had incurred his fair share of student loan debt, and there was no means to go to seminary. In 1997, Mark sought out Bishop Strickland and finally acknowledged that he wanted to be a priest. Bishop Strickland offered Mark a solution. Father Tom Keith, who was both a priest and a college professor, was putting together a class called Education for Vocation. The class was designed to incubate budding students who were discerning their calls to ordination. Mark agreed to study with Father Keith.

After two years of classes with Father Keith, Mark was approved as a postulant. Mark began serving the Central Region in the diocese, preaching weekly in rotation at Sts. Mary and Martha in Larned, and at St. John's Episcopal Church in Great Bend. After several additional years of study, Mark was ordained as a transitional deacon in October 2003. He was ordained as a priest in June 2004. He continued to serve the Central Region until its dissolution. He continues to serve Sts. Mary and Martha, Larned today.

Mark began his service to the Diocese of Western Kansas before his ordination. He was Senior Warden at Sts. Mary and Martha, elected to Diocesan Council, served as the Diocesan Youth Coordinator, and served as the adult representative to the Provincial Youth Network for Province VII while a member of the laity. Since ordination, Mark has served on Diocesan Council, the Commission on Ministry, and

numerous times on Standing Committee, including serving eighteen months as president of the Standing Committee in the absence of a bishop after Bishop Adams resigned.

During that time period, Mark oversaw the election of the next bishop, Bishop Milliken. Before that election, Mark met with Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori in New York to discuss and consult on the idea of a dual role Episcopacy. This is the model our diocese has pursued, and this was the role to which Bishop Milliken was elected. This new vision of the Episcopacy as both a bishop and a priest serving both the diocese and a church has been a successful solution, and a model which other dioceses, faced with similar problems, may employ.

Mark was elected as a deputy to General Convention four times, and will chair the deputation this year in Austin, Texas. Mark, along with Bishop Milliken and Sally Russell, is one of three persons from the Diocese of Western Kansas who will serve on a national legislative committee at the coming General Convention.

Mark began to serve Holy Nativity, Kinsley, as well as Sts. Mary and Martha in Larned when Father Dennis Zimmerman fell ill. Mark continues to serve Holy Nativity. When Father Zimmerman passed away, Mark and Father Larry Carver served St. Cornelius, Dodge City, for over two years while St. Cornelius searched for a new Rector.

Mark served both Bishop Adams and Bishop Milliken as the co-chancellor of the diocese with his wife Julie. Mark continues to be the Diocesan Youth Coordinator.

Locally, Mark has taken his youth group at Sts. Mary and Martha on four separate Lenten Pilgrimages to Canterbury Cathedral in Canterbury, UK. The youth group at Grace Church, Hutchinson, joined them in 2012. Since 2015, Mark has taken the youth group of St. Cornelius as well.

Mark is married to Julie, who is the District Magistrate Judge in Larned, and they have 3 children, Gabriel, Cathleen and Gryffin. They live in a Victorian home, which they are restoring, and they have too many animals. Mark insists that the animals are all for the petting zoo that Sts. Mary and Martha does every year, but Julie is not fooled. Julie is the daughter of a Kansas farmer and grew up on the family farm, located in Ford and Grant Counties. Mark knows almost nothing about farming, but has a hobby farm in Larned where he enthusiastically raises a brilliant crop of goat head stickers every year despite his best efforts. Mark has a 1961 Ford 600 tractor, and when it is running, Mark will go play on it where his cell phone cannot be heard.

Mark is a current member of Rotary International, and a past president. He served the 16th Judicial District as a member of the Juvenile Justice Authority Executive Council for fourteen years. Mark served as president of Kansas Legal Services Advisory Board.

If elected as bishop, Mark will serve in a dual role, continuing to be the clergy person in charge of the churches in Larned and Kinsley, and also as bishop.