

Conner Morgan – first months in the Woo

I've tried to make it my business to join the community here in Worcester, particularly where it concerns St. Peter's Church. This has been an easy task for me given the warmth with which I've been welcomed. The Sisters and the people of St. Peter's have a way about them that draws one in and extends both friendship and membership to the newcomer. I had barely unpacked and I had already been invited to meetings, lunch, and brought up to speed on the local news--and given several opportunities for further involvement, such as helping at the food pantry and teaching religious education classes.

ESL

We've commenced with our English Second Language (ESL) classes for the fall season. Truth be told, teaching English to adults for two hours at a time was one of the things that I was most anxious about when coming to Worcester (that and the knitting, of course). However, I am pleased and relieved to report that it is going very well. The students are eager to learn and lots of fun. I've even begun to help with private tutoring sessions outside of class.

The only difficulty is that the classroom that I teach ESL in is directly across from the classroom that I teach Religious Education in on Sundays; it can be confusing. The other day I started lecturing about the Annunciation instead of pronunciation!

Mentoring

The after school mentoring program at St. Peter's has finally begun and we couldn't be more excited for the year ahead. Myra, our new director of youth programs and AMA alum, Sister Nuala and I have spent the last couple of weeks earnestly recruiting both mentors and mentees. It's been gratifying to see the fruits of our preparations finally borne out in a score of children running about madly with mentors in tow. The other day one child and I worked on making a cardboard house for her small figurine. Before long, we were working on carpeting one of the rooms with a piece of felt paper; safe to say I'm still adjusting. I look forward to the months to come.

Exploring Worcester

I've finally begun to be able to navigate around Worcester a little. I've spent many hours exploring my new home--albeit sometimes inadvertently. I remember one such "inadvertent exploration" early in my Worcester residency that had me driving around aimlessly for nearly an hour late at night. Disoriented and dejected, I finally decided to stop and ask for directions back to Minnesota when I found a book in the back seat of the car: *The Rand McNally Worcester and Central Massachusetts Streetfinder*. I was saved. I had been spared a Twilight-esque fate of perpetually wandering the poorly marked Worcester streets by the generous gift of Sister Nuala only a day earlier.

CANA

Getting to know Joyce--the other half of the Cana Community--has been a real joy. I've benefited greatly from her organizational skills as well as her culinary prowess. She wears well the mantle of Assumption Center Security Guard. If not for her prudently locking doors and closing windows we would be running an AirBnB by now. One critical part of my role at the Assumption Center is that of Rodent Management. Recently rodent/human relations have deteriorated to such a degree that we have found it necessary to terminate the residency privileges of many e-mice-eries. All we can do now is watch and pray.

Labor Day

On Labor day I had a wonderful opportunity to accompany a group of young men and Fr. Ron from Assumption College for a day of hiking. We journeyed to Whiteface Mountain in New Hampshire. Though it was not what many might consider *ideal* weather for hiking, we persevered in spite of the wind and rain and the looming shadow of hypothermia. It served as a great chance to get acquainted with some of the Assumption gang that I don't often cross paths with otherwise.

I feel very privileged to be an AMA in Worcester. Sandy sees to it that I'm well cared for and well photographed. The Sisters have yet to protest my walking into their house at will. I even get the opportunity to work on a car now and then. I say it often and I think it more: I could not have asked for a better volunteer arrangement. "It's early days, Conner. Let's talk in a year." Yes, let's.

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