



The  
Episcopal Diocese  
of New York

Address of the Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche  
Bishop of New York  
to the 245th Convention of the Diocese of New York  
November 13, 2021  
The Cathedral of Saint John the Divine

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is an almost inexpressible joy to look out and see so many people gathered in convention in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine. Many more are attending through the live stream of this event, and I extend my love and greeting to all of them. But we made the decision to open the cathedral for this convention and to invite all who felt able to do so to come and be present for an in-person convention. We know that we are not through with Covid. Indeed, we are coming to understand that Covid may never go away, but that we will need to learn to live with it and manage it as we have done with so many other infectious diseases. I think of 2020 as the Year of Shock and Awe. And 2021 as the year which began with the availability of vaccines and the hope that we might end Covid and get past it, only to have the Delta Variant shatter some of those most optimistic hopes and push the world into yet another surge. I look forward to 2022 and believe that it will be the year of learning to manage a disease which is not going away. I am sure we can. Actually, our opening the cathedral today is an expression of our conviction that we are already managing the pandemic, and learning to live with it safely.

In the writings I sent you at the beginning of Covid, I said that a verse from the psalms had become a refrain for me as we retreated from one another and began a long season of living in isolation. Psalm 137 is an exilic psalm, composed during the Babylonian exile, and giving voice to the yearning of the Hebrew people for their home in Jerusalem. "How can I sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" And as the image and metaphor of Exile helped me to understand my own yearnings and losses and grief, that verse and those words remained part of my daily devotions and my lament. But 2021 has been a time of gradual reawakening, of people coming back out of their holes, of churches opening their doors again. And as I have spent time with clergy and lay people and seen the good things that God has done in our midst all the way through Covidtime, a different verse has supplanted that exilic cry. "Those who go through the desolate valley will find its a place of springs; for the early rains have covered it in pools of water."

A few Sundays ago I sat with a class of confirmands. They had been prepared for confirmation before the pandemic, and when Covid hit were about to be confirmed. A year and a half later I finally showed up to lay hands on them. But they had not wasted that time. They remained together as a class and continued to journey on, growing closer and closer to one another and to God. They had come over those months to the deeper understanding of how much they needed one another and how much they needed a real knowledge of God. They had come to a spiritual maturity that belied their youth, and as I spent time with them, I marveled that this great good work had happened entirely during the Covid pandemic. Over a season which felt so much about loss, here were real gains, gifts, and grace. We have definitely been through the desolate valley - the dry and barren land - but on that day sitting with those kids it felt like a place of springs. I drank from pools of water, and gave thanks. And that is how I feel today, to be again in your midst, and to give thanks to God for bringing us to this day. This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Our convention last year I thought was beautifully done, but I must say that looking out from this lectern into the emptiness of this cavernous church was hard. This is better, and the community of other people, the sound and sight and touch of other people, is a grace of God which we now know, if we had not before, we can never take for granted.

The offices of the Diocese of New York reopened in full on November first, and everyone has come back here to work. We kept setting dates for that reopening, and then changes in the profile of the pandemic made us keep moving those dates. But we are back, and I have told my staff that I do not intend ever to close the offices again. If there are new surges we'll manage them together. And I am happy to say that I imposed no vaccine mandate on my staff. I didn't have to. One hundred percent of this staff chose voluntarily to get the vaccine as soon as they could, which reinforced my already-held conviction that they are so fully committed to one another and to our common work on behalf of the diocese. They labored so faithfully through the pandemic, working remotely, when everything was much harder, and I am so proud of them, and so grateful.

On March 16, 2020 I issued my first instruction to the diocese related to Covid, and that was to suspend public worship (not *worship*, but *public* worship) for two months. I didn't sleep that night, or for some time after. I thought, "How can I, how can we, do this? Close indoor worship for a period that will include Holy Week and Easter?" There were many other letters to follow, as the course of the pandemic ebbed and flowed, until this last spring I said that I was tired of issuing mandates, and that the local clergy and lay leaders were as equipped as I was to make these decisions. Over the last months all of our churches have engaged in in-person worship to varying degrees, and with judicious use of masks, hand sanitizer, and appropriate distancing, we have been fine. Bishops Allen and Mary and I have resumed our cycle of weekly parish visitations, and it has been wonderful to see people in the pews, to lay hands on baptismal and confirmation candidates, to visit with parish vestries, and to break bread together. The sole directive which I have not relaxed is the requirement to continue to refrain from the administration of the cup at the eucharist. So that is the most often asked question which I get now - when will we return to the cup? - and neither I nor the people who are asking are equipped to make a responsible answer to that. I am certain that we will never see Dr. Fauci come on the television and announce that it is now safe for total strangers to drink out of the same glass. Actually no one wants to do that, except for sacramental Christians, for whom this practice is at the heart of our common life. After the turn of the year I intend to ask Bishop Curry to help us. To consult epidemiologists and health care professionals so to issue guidance to the whole church on this question. This cannot be figured out piece-meal, with every bishop and every diocese and every parish doing something different, or, to paraphrase the Book of Judges, to "do what is right in their own eyes." But it feels close, and I am certain that in 2022 we will again drink together from the chalice of salvation and give thanks.

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The theme for this convention is "Your Faith Has Made You Whole." Coming after more than a year and a half of Covid, these words speak very powerfully to our experience of praying our way through the illness and death, the loneliness and isolation, the economic crises, which have been not only the story of the United States, but very much also the story of the Diocese of New York. We are whole now, I believe that, and that is both a grace of God and an answer to prayer. But I am aware of the reality of exhaustion that many of our clergy, as well as lay leaders, experienced during Covid. And still do. I know that some of you labored through depression, sometimes dangerously so. Burnout is a lived reality in the church now. Some of you lost more than one or two, more than you could bear, of your parishioners to this terrible disease. You stood at graveside with the undertaker while next of kin watched from their

cars. This is very costly ministry. A whole lot of people contracted Covid, including more than a few priests and deacons, and some suffered the most grievous of losses. One of our priests lost his wife to the pandemic. One of our deacons lost his teenage son. Their hearts are broken now, and how will they be mended? How will they be made whole now? Parishes across our diocese watched their members suffer under the pandemic, and saw far too many of them die. When we say “your faith has made you whole” we must be careful not to allow ourselves to think that there is anything easy about this, or that this is some kind of conventional happy ending, or to diminish the difficult truth that sometimes what we mean by “faith” is a lifetime of serious struggle and contention with the God in whom we profess to believe. Jesus asked the father of the young boy thrashing about in fits on the ground if *he* believed, and the father, not knowing how to answer, afraid to answer, afraid of getting it wrong, cried out “Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!” I confess to you, often enough, that man is me.

This is our first time back together in a long time. We hope that the worst of Covid is past us. We bring to this church and altar our deepest gratitude to God for sustaining us on a difficult journey. God has made us whole, and by faith we see and know that. But if when we started this journey it felt like Exile, then let us now see in the Hebrew people making across the dry and forbidding desert their final return to Jerusalem a community not unlike our own. Grateful and rejoicing. Hearts leaping with gladness. But as well, carrying the weight of heartbreak, grief and suffering, and the memory of those who fell along the way, carrying also all of their doubts of God, their questions of God, their yearning for God, and too, their belief and their unbelief. We will limp back to Jerusalem like Jacob, and understand that this hard, complicated wrestling with God is what we mean by faith, and it’s how we get whole. And God being our helper, our faith, whatever we mean by that - the struggle and the glory - has made us whole. Whatever we mean by that. Hallelujah. Praise God.

So I want to say something now to church wardens. So much of the spiritual and ministerial life of a clergy person is lived as an interior journey. There is much that a priest cannot say or doesn’t know how to say to their congregations. Jesus said “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light,” but then he also went to the cross and got nails driven into him. Over the last year and a half the priests and deacons in this diocese have carried an impossible burden. They have done this for their love of God and they have done this for their love of you. It is extremely important to me that we do all we can to make them whole. Now, coming out of Covid, I am asking you to explore, together with your priest, some plans and provisions for sabbaticals. Every letter of agreement I sign for clergy includes the expectation of a sabbatical. Now might be the opportune time to act on it. But if your priest has not been with you long enough to take sabbatical, or is not ready to do that now, please in 2022 provide some time, apart from vacation, for retreat or rest or reading or spiritual renewal. Deacons don’t have sabbaticals in their contracts, but you can do something for them now too. Your clergy are your strongest asset. Any investment made in them now will reap dividends for your parish for a good long time to come. And to you clergy: be honest about what you need, and don’t be afraid to ask. And Canon Person and I will reach out ourselves to chaplains and other multi-vocational clergy.

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A good, balanced budget for 2022 has been presented to this convention, and given the last couple of years that is something of an achievement. When Covid struck, with the suspension of in-person worship and the closing of our buildings, many of our churches, maybe most of them, experienced a loss of income which was for some immediately catastrophic. You remember the things we did in this diocese to try to help our churches. We reduced the apportioned share asking for everyone. We partnered with Trinity Wall Street to create a system of emergency grants to parishes, and to Episcopal Charities. We provided

a map to help churches navigate the PPP process. We did all these things, but it meant that the diocesan operations were flat on their back. We stripped away as much of our program and mission as we could and went into survival mode. Yet through all, this diocese made a commitment to pay our assessment to the Episcopal Church in full through 2020. But as we came into 2021, we were not willing to continue on with our mission partnerships and our programmatic life and our social justice mandates and our operations so reduced. We are a significant diocese with a rich heritage of outreach and generosity and participation across the world and church, and: We are depended upon by others. So with our resources carved away, and a second year of apportioned share reductions for our churches, we turned to the Episcopal Church and applied for a one-year one-time temporary reduction in the assessment we pay to the Episcopal Church, to help compensate for the cost of the assistance we were providing to churches and community outreach. We had to wait an awfully long time to get an answer, but when it came, we were refused.

I confess that I have a whole lot of questions about the priorities of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, and I have my own thoughts about their decision in our case. But when we got the news I said, “We will write no letter, we will make no appeal of this decision, and we will absolutely, somehow some way, pay our assessment in full.” And that is what we are doing.

So you have seen at this convention, and you have passed, a resolution to modify Diocesan Canon 17.3.4 to increase what we call the “Trinity Cap” from 25% to 33%. This canon limits the percentage of our annual budget which can come from a single parish. So that the diocese will not become dependent upon one church. The only church with sufficient assets to trigger the cap is Trinity Wall Street, and I want to be clear that nothing in this resolution will increase or decrease the amount which Trinity pays to the diocese. It will only change the way we allocate it. So with this resolution we will receive needed relief to our operating budget as a diocese, at the cost of some decrease to our ongoing work of building the endowment. But I do want to say that Trinity’s giving makes a whole lot possible for us. When we decided to reduce apportioned share for every church, we knew we could not do that unless Trinity committed to still paying in full. Which they did. And when Father Jackson asked me if there was any other way that Trinity could help the diocese during pandemic, I said “Actually, I have an idea about that,” and the conversations which he and I and the warden John Talty then had resulted in the funding for the emergency grants. Trinity is a faithful parish of this diocese, “all in” in their participation in our common life, and I want to thank them for helping all of us and our churches come through Covid together and to come through intact.

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I have spoken at this convention in the past of the seemingly intractable decline in many of our churches, and of the crippling effect that this has had on our smaller congregations. Some of our churches have come to the painful decision over these years that they could no longer go on as they were and have asked to be dissolved and their churches re-purposed or sold. When I became Bishop of New York we had 196 congregations. Today we have 183. Not all of that loss indicates permanent closure, and we continue to have missional opportunities in some of those parishes. But taken on their face those numbers represent a five percent decrease in the number of our churches, and I note that even as I am aware that there are others among our churches which are at, or have passed, the tipping point.

We have offered a variety of congregational development programs and plans over these years, and many of our churches have participated in them and profited by them. Right now we are embarking on “Episcopal Futures,” with some two dozen of our churches enrolled in the first launch of the

program. Each of these programs has done wonders in building vitality and viability in our churches. This is congregational development. Yet we have continued to see the general decline in size of our churches and numbers of people which characterizes our life in substantial parts of our diocese. But actually I think those trends are bigger than we are. Church membership in America, across every denomination and tradition, has fallen by twenty percent in twenty years, with half of that decline coming just since my becoming bishop (though I don't think that's entirely my fault). And the largest single factor in that accounting has been the rapid increase in the number of people, mostly younger people, who claim no religious affiliation at all.

A former bishop of mine, in another diocese, said that "numbers matter, because God loves everyone." And definitely growth in church membership and stewardship giving is part of what we are about when we talk about congregational development. But we are first about enlarging the spiritual health and vitality of our congregations, both so that we may make the strongest disciples for the work that God has given us to do, but also in the hope that healthier, more vital churches will have greater purchase in attracting people into our fellowship. But it is also important to say that church growth and decline is not a competition. So much of what drives church growth is out of our hands, and so much of it is controlled by demographics. Every study in the Episcopal Church shows that churches in vibrant metropolitan cities or affluent newer suburbs are most likely to experience significant growth in numbers, and that churches in older suburbs or small towns are most likely to see the largest decreases. When I read that I thought that you could lay that metric over a map of this diocese and see it played out in full across our churches with almost no exceptions. So if your church is in Manhattan and you are growing, be glad and be grateful. You are using the gifts you have received faithfully and well. But if you are in an upstate small town you should know that the declines which you may be seeing are part of a larger pattern than just you and what you are doing in your church. Don't beat yourself up.

But we are at a crisis in our small congregations. We have been in this crisis for a long time, but we are at a tipping point. I have already referenced the reduction in the number of churches in the diocese during my time as bishop. And this matters. I am convinced that small churches are a gift, and that we need them and we need them to be healthy. But the declines in numbers have translated into declines in operating income, and for many of our smaller churches it has become harder and harder to support the cost of clergy leadership. But it is not easy for our churches, even those deep in the struggle, to see that the landscape of clergy recruitment and call has utterly changed even from what it was not so long ago.

Last month I went out to Staten Island and had an in-person evening meeting with the clergy and wardens of all of our churches on the island. I noted that when I came to this diocese twenty years ago we had ten churches on Staten Island and now we have eight. Back then all but one of our churches had a full-time priest. Today that is I think two (but maybe three). I told the gathering that I had a couple of rhetorical questions for them, and they didn't have to answer them out loud. But they should think about their answers. I asked how many of their churches had an average age over sixty five. And there was laughter around the room. So I asked how many of them had younger people or young families regularly coming in to join their churches. Less laughter. And I said that if their people are seventy, and younger people are not coming to the church, then ten years from now those who are left will be eighty, and ten years after that we may have only one or two churches left on the island. Aaron Hudson and Trevor Babb, together with some strong lay leaders, are taking on a convening authority among those churches to begin to look at the possibilities inherent in shared ministries to build strength and common life together. Shortly after that I had a similar conversation with the clergy and wardens of the South

Bronx. And a week later Paula Roberts of Trinity Morrisania called me to say that her church and Grace Church West Farms were taking the first steps toward a shared ministerial relationship. And I could have this same conversation with church leaders in place after place around our diocese.

When I became bishop, 117 of our churches had full-time clergy. Today that is 90. 27 of our churches had full time clergy twenty years ago and do no longer. That is a bad trend. However, back then we had only six churches sharing a full-time priest with another parish. Today that is 22. And that is actually a really big change in a very positive direction. Shared and regional ministries have dramatically increased the number of full-time positions for priests in the diocese, which makes attracting clergy to struggling congregations much easier. But more than that, shared ministry is the future. The larger cultural and societal forces which are driving this decline in religion in America are beyond our control. But what we can control, and must, is how we live together and set our priorities, and how we make the strongest witness which we can to the love of God for all people through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

When I was a new bishop, we created a shared ministry in the Catskills region of our diocese. It brought together the three churches in Sullivan County with Grace Church Port Jervis in Orange County. Four churches, under the oversight of two priests. We sought to have an experienced and seasoned priest mentor a newly ordained priest in a common ministry. David Carlson was the senior priest and Diana Scheide the junior. This venture, the Delaware-Catskill Episcopal Ministry, continues today. David has retired, and Diana has become the senior priest, assisted now by Jean Pierre Sequin, newly ordained. We are sustaining four small churches and providing mentorship and training for new clergy.

This was followed by a shared ministry among the three churches in Mount Vernon. One of those churches, Trinity Church, has since closed, but the partnership continues on even now with the remaining two congregations, sharing resources to provide for one priest serving both altars. We then founded a shared ministry among the churches along Route 22 in eastern Putnam and Dutchess Counties. Juan Perez continues to bring leadership to a bilingual partnership of churches. Each of these shared ministries is working. They are sustaining vulnerable congregations and creating full-time positions for priests.

Today, Saint Paul's Church in Chester and Saint Anne's in Washingtonville are in serious conversations about a move toward a merger. They are sharing a priest, coming together for worship, and exploring the ways in which they can do more community and outreach ministry together. And I've already told you about a new born conversation in the South Bronx to this same end.

Sharing ministry is how we make new life for small and struggling congregations, and there is no Plan B. We can come together, share resources, share a priest, minister together and work together for good - or we can just run out the clock. One of those is a faithful choice and one is the opposite. And everyone here should know that really good things are happening right now for churches of generosity and courage who are reaching out in partnership with others and are committed to having a future and to being a blessing to their members and communities. So I want to highlight the stories of two other congregations.

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Trinity Church and Saint Paul's on-the-Hill, both in Ossining, split apart in the aftermath of the Civil War over their conflicting sympathies in that war. Actually, the breaking point was the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the reason for that is a fascinating story which I will tell you another time. But they aren't fighting the Civil War anymore, and the issues which drove their division long ago ceased to have

power over them. So when finally, in the last decade, both churches found themselves struggling to maintain and sustain their lives and ministries, they began together to explore the possibility of sharing a priest. Which they did. But over time the deepening relationship between the members of the churches, as they labored at one another's side, led to new conversations, and thoughts of what it might mean to actually make a merger. They began to imagine the possibilities of all that they might be and do together which were beyond them when they were by themselves. This year those prayers and that hard work bore wonderful fruit, as Trinity Church and Saint Paul's on-the-Hill became one, as Grace Church Ossining.

In a few months the Haitian Church of the Good Samaritan will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. Over those years the congregation has moved many times, always meeting in other churches, always dependent on the good will of others, and always having to stay on the move. Indeed, for the longest time it has been their practice to take up a second offering at the end of their services, called the "Last Stop," with the collected money going into savings for the day when they might be able to buy their own church and settle in one place. When they had to leave their last location Saint Luke's in the Bronx invited them into their space, and they remained there in a happy partnership with Saint Luke's until this year, when Saint Martha's Church in the Bronx closed. So we offered Saint Martha's property to Good Samaritan. And members of Good Samaritan and members of Saint Luke's processed together from Saint Luke's to Saint Martha's on the day when Good Samaritan finally found their Last Stop and their own church. In all their years of moving around, the Haitian congregation had functioned as an organized mission. Now they have been incorporated as a parish. They have a new home, it is a new day, and it is a new relationship with this diocese.

So it is my privilege to welcome Grace Church in Ossining as a new parish formed from Trinity Church and St. Paul's on the Hill, and the Haitian Congregation of the Good Samaritan in the Bronx as a new parish formed out of their old mission congregation. And I invite this 245th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York to (1) recognize and welcome Grace Church in Ossining and the Haitian Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan in the Bronx as parishes of the Diocese in union with Convention, and (2) seat with voice and vote the clergy and lay persons delegated from Grace Church Ossining and the Haitian Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. And I would like to ask the clergy, delegates and representatives of Grace Church Ossining and Eglise du Bon Samaritan to come forward now and be recognized.

[PRESENTATION AND RECOGNITION]

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Still, though, for the first time the number of less-than-full-time positions for priests in the diocese outnumbers the full-time positions. So there is another statistic which is most alarming, and that is the increase in the number of churches relying entirely on supply clergy to get by.

Supply clergy - clergy who are available simply to cover Sunday morning services and that's all - have a vital purpose in the church, and that is to serve in very short-term situations when a parish priest is ill or on vacation or on sabbatical. They are not meant to serve in an open-ended capacity in any congregation. Engaging supply clergy is an emergency fix. It is not a model of ministry. Yet too many of our churches are functioning solely with long-term supply clergy, and this is detrimental to the health and sustainability of the parish. It is so because we know that a priest who works in a parish for two hours on Sunday morning and that is all, and has no other pastoral or teaching or administrative responsibilities

during the week cannot bring functional leadership to a parish. But more, the reliance only on supply clergy invariably disrupts the essential, but delicate, balance of leadership authority between clergy and lay leaders.

We know that there are Christian traditions which are very strongly clerical in their exercise of authority. Lay persons have little participation in the making of decisions, and almost all authority is vested in the ordained minister. There are also traditions in which the lay board of directors or elders has complete authority over the church, and the clergy function as employees of the board. Neither of those models is true to who we are. We are about an equal partnership of ordained and lay people in shared leadership and authority. That's our thing.

The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church is one of our great gifts. We are not overburdened by laws. Our canons come in a small paperback book, and for the most part they are less stridently directive than they are encouraging and guiding. I think of the canons as bouys in the water. Between the bouys our boat has much latitude to move freely across and about the water, but if we go around or outside the bouys we are likely to crash on the rocks and sink. Our canons serve as bouys to guide us and help us get safely down the channel, but allowing us as much freedom as possible to make local decisions and chart our own course. The Constitution and Canons delineate the roles and responsibilities of clergy and of wardens and vestry, and they are designed to create a true and real partnership, a balanced shared authority. That balance is critical to our life and ethos as the Episcopal Church. And it is when we tilt too much toward the clerical side or too much toward the congregational that we start going off the rails. That is where ruinous conflicts are born. It is where other agenda begin to run roughshod over the real gospel mission which is our calling.

The model of having wardens and vestries hiring clergy as employees to come in on Sunday only to conduct worship is detrimental to the culture, ethos and canonical structures of the Episcopal Church. It throws the governance of a congregation wildly and dangerously out of balance. We intend from this convention to discontinue the practice of long term supply clergy in this diocese. We will not do this abruptly or turn on a dime, but will work with each of your churches to make a seamless and gentle transition. But that transition needs to be into shared ministry. No matter that you may be content with your situation, it is not sustainable, and I am not willing any longer to sit on my hands and watch as your parish gets smaller and smaller and older and older until there is nothing left to build on. We may be in a time of decline for the churches, but we don't have to be defined by that. We can witness that a small church is a real church, and the people who roll up their sleeves and keep those churches going against all odds are heroic, and that the charisms of small church ministry are not at the edge but at the heart of our Episcopal community. So let us be together in faith, so that we may by the grace of God be made whole.

All of this has implications for the way that we recruit, receive and train clergy. Of course we need and will always need priests able and ready to come into leadership of large, strong, resourced, multi-staff parishes rich in program and ministry. These churches are the engines of our common life, and we must have well-suited and trained spiritual engineers to run them. But we are also going to need clergy who are called to small churches, to team ministries, to shared placements, to multiple congregations. This is a different calling, and I am asking you now to help identify those in your parishes who may have a vocation to holy orders as priests or deacons, but who also have that adventurous and entrepreneurial and somewhat intrepid spirit to go to the unlikely place, the under-resourced, the poor and declined, and make something new. "Let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to

their perfection by him through whom all things were made, Our Lord Jesus Christ.” We say that prayer on the day we stand before the cross and our broken, dying Christ, and we say that prayer before the altar when we ordain a deacon or a priest or a bishop. In that prayer is every hope we have for all the church and the world. So let that be our hope, and then by the grace and power of our loving God let it be our truth.



One area of grave concern in these parish statistics is that the number of full time rectorships with one or more assistants has dropped in the last nine years from 31 to 17. This is alarming, because it is often in serving as associate or assistant clergy under very seasoned, mature, experienced supervisory rectors that some of the great future leadership of the church is shaped and formed. The lack of associate positions limits the movement of clergy within the diocese, and can lead very promising priests to look for opportunities elsewhere. But hidden within that statistics is also the disappearance of curacies for the newly ordained. Every year I have the honor of ordaining new priests for this diocese, and they are always, without exception, people who make me very proud, and whom I very much want to keep in the Diocese of New York. But with the reduction in the number of curacies, finding positions for them is difficult. And providing them the mentorship and training that new priests need becomes all the more challenging.

In the budget presented to this convention there is funding for four half-time positions as curate for the newly ordained *of this diocese*. This money will not be available to churches which want a half-time priest. Rather, this funding is intended to contribute half the cost of a full time priest, with the parish contributing the other half. It is not intended to ease the budget burden of churches that can already support associate clergy. It is not intended to support the cost of a curate from another diocese. This money is meant to help keep our own newly ordained in this diocese, and to help churches which do not have, but would be substantially aided, by the presence of a second priest. These curacies are now, by this convention, funded, but they do not yet exist. Rectors and Priests-in-Charge of churches which would be interested in this partnership will be invited to make application. This is an exciting venture for this diocese.



Two years ago I asked this convention to allocate 1.1 million dollars of our endowment to begin a fund to support reparations for American slavery. I may have stepped out too quickly, and in the time since the Reparations Committee has brought that request and the sequestered funds which the convention and trustees set aside for this work into their larger vision and work of reparations in this diocese. I hope you watched the video convention rollouts in these last weeks. We did nine of them last year at the height of Covid, but half that number in this time of an in-person convention. There you will have seen and heard a remarkable presentation from the Reparations Committee about the work that is happening, has been happening, and the momentum and trajectory of our reparations work, including the reparations fund. I am proud and happy of the work of that committee, and of the movement we are making as a diocese.

So what I say now I say not to the Reparations Committee, but to the whole diocese. We are right now in an historical moment, a moment in which brave and strong reparation witness is possible not only to be made, but to be heard. But this moment will not last. In the nineteen fifties and nineteen sixties America came into just such a moment. It was hard won, by people - black people and their white allies - who had beat their fists against the wall of American racism until it cracked a little, and where the light shone through that crack a space - a clearing - was opened up in the tangled thicket of this world. And in that

clearing it was easier to know the Holy Spirit when she fell upon us. And into that clearing God raised up prophets and martyrs. In that historical moment, in the nineteen sixties, almost all significant civil rights legislation that has ever happened in this country grew up and blossomed. In 1963 and 1964 and 1965 and 1966. And then the moment passed, and it was fifty years before it came around again. Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day. Because night is coming." Let us endeavor to seize this moment and wring all we can from it, and stand in this clearing where we have the chance to be seen and heard, and make our witness to the love of God for all people through Our Lord Jesus Christ. While it is day.

Last year at this convention I shared a brief outline of my own family's shameful history of slavery and confederacy and racism and ku klux klan awfulness. It was confessional, and I didn't know how it would be received. But I did that because I worry that it is too easy for the language we use around the history of slavery and the history of race to become abstract and impersonal, so that we don't have to see ourselves in it. We see the "us" in it but not the "me." And then make it too easy for white people to find an easy redemption. Black people already know this, but it is harder for white people: everything about the history of slavery and race in America is deeply personal for every one. It is everyone's story. And we will never be made whole until we own our piece of it, and lift that up by bowing ourselves down. There is just no question that this is the work we have been given in this generation, in this age, as a church and a people.

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At that same convention I asked that we begin doing annual environmental audits for all property in the Diocese of New York, and that the reporting of those audits be folded into our annual parochial reports. And then we went straight into Covid, when those audits were simply not possible. In think that in 2022 we can revisit this, and create simple forms to help every parish in their own self-study and in their sharing of information.

An historic climate conference has just taken place in Edinburgh, and we don't know what will come of it, or whether the commitments made at this conference will be honored and kept. History might teach us to be skeptical. But climate change is upon us. We thought we had more time. But fire and flood and storm roll through our news cycle like a horror movie that just won't end. This crisis is bigger than we are, so that all we can do in the face of a crisis of this proportion is to take control and responsibility of our own use of energy and our own properties. We are going to revive this resolution and do something with it in the next twelve months and following.

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Finally, I want to make something of an announcement regarding both the immediate and longer-term trajectory of the Diocese of New York, and of Margaret and me. Four days ago I turned 68 (which was kind of shocking: 67 felt like my "mid-sixties; 68 feels like my "late-sixties"). And last month I passed the twentieth anniversary of my coming to 1047 Amsterdam Avenue to serve the Diocese of New York, initially as Canon Pastor. And six days from today will mark ten years since you elected me bishop. These are significant milestones for me, and they necessarily invite reflection and introspection. The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes wrote, "I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds." Past and Future have come to me at midnight and awakened with me in the morning, and I have learned from those nighttime meditations how to pay attention to the times and the changes, and to be

at peace. So with this address I now call for the election of a Bishop Coadjutor, who will one day succeed me as the XVII Bishop of New York. Following this address, the president of the Standing Committee will offer a resolution to that effect, and seek your consent. A second resolution will also come to you, asking your approval of a budget for the election process, the great liturgies of consecration and installation, and the additional salary expenses that this transition will require of us.

I want you to understand that the announcement of my coming retirement has nothing to do with Covid. Actually, I have postponed this action for a year precisely because I could not imagine telling you this in the midst of the crisis we were in a year ago. I am confident that by the time of my retirement we will be well equipped for the management of the virus, and no longer living in the midst of pandemic crisis. And be assured as well that today's announcement starts a process that will take two and a half years. The election will take place right here on December 3, 2022. That is one year and three weeks from now. The consecration of the Bishop Coadjutor will happen in this cathedral on May 20, 2023. These dates are firm and immovable. Finally, the installation of the XVII Bishop of New York will take place on or about March 16, 2024. At that time I will be 70 years old, and I will have been Bishop in this diocese for twelve years. This timing seems right. It will be a blessing for Margaret and me, and also I believe honors the trust which you put in me when you called me to this ministry. But be sure that I have no intention of becoming a lame duck. I will continue to be the Bishop of New York as long as I am the Bishop of New York, and I very much hope to hand over as healthy a diocese as I can to my successor.

At this convention you have elected a priest and a layperson to serve on the Committee to Elect a Bishop. I hope they didn't have any other plans for the next year, because their lives are about to get a whole lot busier. By the canons of this diocese, the remainder of the committee will be filled with appointments by me, by the Standing Committee, and by Diocesan Council. I ask that these appointments be made at the earliest convenience. A search consultant will be engaged by the diocese who will guide the Committee to Elect through the processes to come. I will have nothing to do with this process after today, except that I will pray daily that God grace this diocese with wisdom and courage, faith and understanding, to call a true bishop to lead this diocese in the next chapter of its life.

I am not saying goodbye now. But please know that shepherding the two hundred (or so) churches in this diocese has been a privilege which I did not know how much I needed until you called me to it. I could never have imagined - I didn't know - how deeply I would fall in love with these our churches, and the clergy and laypersons who lead them, and the people who fill their pews. I was no stranger to this diocese or our churches before, but becoming your bishop gave me new eyes and changed my life, and I am grateful to you for everything. And when the time comes to move on, I will bear you with me on my heart. Amen.