



The  
Episcopal Diocese  
of New York

**Report of the Right Reverend Allen K. Shin  
to the  
245<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York  
November 13, 2021**

Greetings in the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Bishop Dietsche, Bishop Glasspool, Convention delegates both here in person and online and honored guests:

It is an honor and privilege to make this report to the 245<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York in my seventh year as Bishop Suffragan of this great Diocese.

Allow me to begin by echoing Bishop Dietsche to express my gratitude to the convention planning committee for the excellent convention rollout sessions and for today's hybrid convention. Planning this hybrid convention has surely come with its own complicated set of challenges. I must say that the convention this year has again been impressive from the first rollout to today. So, thank you, Bishop Glasspool for your oversight, and Sara Saavedra and the Rev. Matt Heyd and all others who have worked hard on this convention.

If someone had told me two years ago that the Episcopalians in this diocese would be worshipping on YouTube or Facebook or Zoom, I would have laughed it off as a joke. I suppose the joke has been on me. As wonderful a tool as Zoom has been for staying connected, frankly if I don't have another zoom meeting for the rest of my life, I would be just fine. The online connection clearly is not the same as the in-person engagement and presence with one another. I for one am glad to see that our churches and offices are open again for in-person worship and daily work. But, I also acknowledge the usefulness of the online tools to for certain kinds of connection and gathering. How to use the online technology effectively and intentionally for building up the body of Christ is the challenge we should think more about and explore.

#### **Diocesan Council**

One of my responsibilities as Bishop Suffragan is to chair the meetings of the Diocesan Council, which oversees the mission and ministries of the five commissions of the Diocese and receives reports from them in each meeting. The Council also approves the annual budget proposal from the Budget and Finance Committee, which is to be voted by the Convention. I would like to thank those whose terms have ended and congratulate the new members who have been elected by this Convention. The next meeting on November 30<sup>th</sup> will be in person with the new members.

## **Congregational Vitality and Formation**

Crisis is an opportunity for renewal and transformation. The challenge we are facing in the current crisis comes with so much unknown that in the present crisis it is hard to figure out what and how to change and to assess the benefits and the risks of change. Yet we know that change is happening, and we must find ways to navigate through this uncharted landscape. Being creative is not about doing something different but doing something new with a clear mission and purpose. What is the mission and purpose of the Church in this present moment seems to be the question we all must grapple with.

The Office of the Congregational Vitality and Formation has been all about that. I am grateful to Canon Victor Conrado for his diligent and creative work during the pandemic, organizing and offering online programs on everything congregational from how to set up and use the online tools to the pastoral care in the pandemic, the stewardship and vestry training and more. Now that we are getting back to in-person gathering, he has been offering onsite vestry leadership retreats and training to help retool leadership skills and responsibilities of the parish leaders.

The journey of renewal in this Diocese really began with the Indaba process which energized and inspired many of our leaders for deeper relationships and engagements with one another across the Diocese. Then, we embarked on a strategic visioning process which gave us the document, *Open Doors, New Futures*. It lays out various characteristics and practices of a healthy and vital congregation. This document more than ever is an important tool for assessing the vitality and planning for the renewal of the congregational life. If you have not used this tool, I urge you to study and use it.

## **Episcopal Futures**

Episcopal Futures is a continuation of this journey. This exciting new Diocesan initiative was conceived and developed on three principles: fostering collaboration among parishes, developing adaptive leadership skills among the leaders of our parishes, and nurturing the spiritual practices of discernment within the ethos and polity of the Episcopal Church. This project is under the umbrella of the Congregational Development Commission.

In its first year so far, under the leadership of Canon Conrado and Abby Nathanson, its managing director, Episcopal Futures has put together a core team to carry out program managing, communication, technology and coach training. They have engaged Tod Bolsinger, a well-known author and consultant on leadership development and church renewal, and Bishop Melissa Skelton of College for Congregational Development to help develop the curriculum for the Learning Communities, which is the central part of this project. They have also selected a dozen coaches who will be trained by our Coaching Director, April Stace, to support the participating teams in their adventure of learning and exploring new possibilities for their respective parishes.

After many conversations with local leaders in all regions of the Diocese during the summer, they received the letters of intent from forty-six congregations in September, and thirty-four churches applied for the first round. Out of thirty-four, twenty-four congregations have been selected, who will form eight Learning Communities. The participants will learn together and

work in collaboration with one another as teams. The Learning Communities curriculum will begin in February 2022. The second round of cohorts will be in a couple of years.

### **Youth Ministry**

One thing I often hear in my parish visitations is the vestry leaders opining about the lack of young people in the church. The pandemic has made it even more difficult for the youth to participate in the life of the church. Many parishes must now approach their youth ministry almost as a complete new start. Youth are not just the future of the Church but the present members of the body of Christ. In my conversations with the Rev. Kyle Martindale, the chair of the Christian Formation Commission, we have talked about including youth delegates from our parishes in the Diocesan convention so that they can observe and participate in the larger life of the Diocese and build a stronger youth leadership network across our parishes.

Thanks to the leaders of the youth ministry committee, some robust online programs and activities were organized even during the pandemic, which gathered and engaged the young people in anti-racism training, an educational program on Absalom Jones, writing care cards to the elderly in nursing homes and in outreach ministries. Even the Summer Youth Conference was held online in August 2020.

### **Summer Youth Conference**

Going above and beyond the recommended safety protocols for overnight camps, Summer Youth Conference this year was held in person at the Incarnation Camp in Ivoryton, CT. A limited number of fifty young people from all regions of the Diocese took part in a five-day conference. The theme of the conference was the words of Jesus on love and faith, forgiveness and anti-violence, hypocrisy and judgement, and the use of their gifts and talents. Daily Eucharist, Morning Prayer and Compline were led by the chaplain, the Rev. Bill Baker. And, of course, they had all the usual fun activities—swimming, games, sports, a bonfire and more. I would like to thank all those who volunteered to make it successful in the challenging circumstance, especially to the co-directors, Chris Gerard, Liz Moeller and Christy Miller.

### **Young Adult Ministry**

The Young Adult Ministry has been an important ministry of the Diocese with a significant growth in recent years. The ministry focuses on building community, nurturing discipleship and carrying out service projects. Although COVID put a damper on the ministry, under the leadership of the Rev. Megan Sanders, the ministry remained active online during the pandemic. Young adults took part in Morning Prayer and Compline, led by Megan and other chaplains. They organized online programs on social justice issues in the face of rising racial and gun violence. This summer they slowly began getting together in person for fellowship. And just last month they held an in-person service of Vespers at All Saints Church in Manhattan, followed by a social outing. The annual St. Nicholas Day feast, which they could not do last year, is being planned for in person in December.

### **Episcopal Service Corps**

Another slightly different kind of young adult ministry is the Episcopal Service Corps, of which we have two programs.

### **New York Service and Justice Collaborative (NYSJC)**

New York Service and Justice Collaborative has continued to thrive under the steady leadership and oversight of its executive director, Judith Douglas. Its fellows live in an intentional community at the rectory of Trinity Church Morrisania in the Bronx and serve in various worksites in the City, four of which are our own parishes. I had an opportunity to meet this year's fellows and was impressed by their diverse backgrounds and the shared commitment to spiritual formation and social justice and service. They even got to meet Presiding Bishop Michael Curry while they were on retreat at Trinity Retreat Center.

### **Grace Year**

Grace Year fellows live in a house on the campus of Grace Church in Millbrook. They, too, live in an intentional community but serving in the rural environment of Dutchess County. Their worksites include the ministries on the farm, in outreach and in creation care. Thanks to the care of the Rev. Alison Quinn who took over during the pandemic, the program also adapted well through the challenging transition.

### **Episcopal Asian Supper Table (EAST)**

Since its beginning in 2016, our Asian American ministry, EAST has grown steadily to serve the spiritual and pastoral needs of the members of the Asian community in the New York metropolitan area. Under the leadership of Kris Ishibashi, the ministry has been focused on building a deeper and stronger network and leadership. During the pandemic, they offered an online series of Asian American Sacred Ground, which explored the history of Asian presence in the US and of the anti-Asian racism. In the light of rising anti-Asian violence, EAST and the Cathedral hosted a Service of Prayer and Witness against Anti-Asian violence on the front steps of the Cathedral, and joined the Interfaith Love Walk in Chinatown against Anti-Asian Violence, organized by the Interfaith Center of New York and the Buddhist and the Jewish organizations. The big highlight for the ministry this year was the election of the first Asian American woman bishop, the Rt. Rev. Diana Akiyama, as Bishop of Oregon. She was the guest speaker of the online Asian American Leadership Conference in May, which gathered over a hundred participants from across the Episcopal Church. In this new season, EAST will continue to be online and explore the issues of the Asian spirituality, leadership and theology with guest speakers such as the Rev. Fran Toy, the first Asian American woman priest in the Episcopal Church, and the Rev. Peggy Lo who will give a talk on the Asian identity and Scripture.

### **Asian Missioner of the Diocese**

In recent years, the Asian congregations in the Diocese have declined to just one Chinese ministry, the Church of Our Savior in Chinatown. The Korean congregation closed when its priest retired in 2004. The Metropolitan Japanese Ministry had no priestly leadership for a number of years. The Metropolitan Filipino Ministry has not met over a decade.

Last year I saw an opportunity to call a Korean priest to this Diocese with a grant from Trinity Church Wall Street. The Rev. Kyrie Kim arrived in New York at the end of March this year to serve as the Asian Missioner of the Diocese. She was the first woman priest ordained in the Anglican Diocese of Seoul in 2004 and speaks both Korean and Japanese as well as English. She

was inducted to the ministry by Bishop Dietsche on October 10<sup>th</sup> at St. James the Less in Scarsdale where the Metropolitan Japanese Ministry has held their monthly services for thirty years.

### **New Community Ministry at the Cathedral**

With the permission of Dean Daniel and the Cathedral, I have worked with the Rev. Kyrie Kim and Canon Conrado to envision and start a new ministry at the Cathedral in October, called New Community Ministry. On the second Sunday Canon Conrado began the Spanish service in the Cathedral, the first in over twenty years. On the third Sunday, the Korean service was led by the Rev. Kim and a lay leader, YunJeong Seol, and on the fourth Sunday, the Rev. Kim led the service in Japanese. The Chinese service was held on the fifth Sunday, led by Pam Tang. This pattern of the monthly services will continue. The first Sunday will eventually be a multi-lingual celebration of the New Community Ministry with all the different groups together. The kick-off service for this will be the first Sunday in February to celebrate the Lunar New Year. I am grateful to Dean Daniel and the Cathedral staff for opening the Cathedral space for these new services. Clearly the Holy Spirit has been very busy in our midst despite the pandemic.

### **Concluding remarks**

To say that this past year and a half have been challenging would be an understatement. The pandemic ushered in multiple other crises—the economic hardship, the fissures in the political and social life, the racial and xenophobic violence, the global climate change and the deep division in the civic life. Preaching the Gospel to a divided and broken world is not an easy task; it has been a stressful and even dangerous task. Yet, the world needs more than ever to be reminded of the Good News of God’s healing and redemptive love. Prophesying the message of hope, I believe, is the most urgent task of the preacher during this tragic time. As I look around the Diocese, I see many of our clergy exhausted and some even burned out. I express my deep gratitude and respect to the clergy members of this Diocese for their dedication and faithfulness to their vocation during these eighteen months. I am honored to share in the vulnerability of the vocation I share with them. Thank you.

Despite the uncertainties and the changes, the people in our parishes have adapted well to the new situation, continuing to serve and witness to Christ in their local communities. I would also like to thank the wardens and the vestry leaders and the people of our parishes for their commitment to their parishes, to each other and most importantly to Jesus in this challenging time. As the bishops have resumed the Sunday parish visitations in September, it has been life-giving for me to celebrate the Eucharist and the Confirmation again with the people in their local parishes.

With so much that is going on in the congregational ministries, I could not do this work without the capable support of the members of the Bishop’s staff. Some have experienced tragic loss themselves during the pandemic, some caught COVID and recovered thankfully, and all remained faithful to the work they had to carry out. I would like to thank the members of the Bishop’s staff for their work during these eighteen months. Now that the Diocesan offices are fully open, it has been energizing to work with them in person again.

I would be remiss if I did not express gratitude to my esteemed colleagues, Bishop Andrew Dietsche and Bishop Mary Glasspool. Although it was difficult to keep meeting on that virtual land of the Zoomdom during the pandemic, we managed to get through. When we finally began meeting in person this past June, it was a healing experience. I continue to value their collegiality, support and friendship, and feel fortunate and humbled to serve this Diocese alongside these two wonderful colleagues.

The theme of this year's convention is "Your faith has made you whole," which Jesus says after some of his healing miracles. That we need faith in order to be made whole is a counter-cultural and perhaps even counter-intuitive notion in today's culture and context. But as the followers of Jesus, we deeply believe in this. If we think that our faith makes no difference to our wellbeing, then we are doomed. To be human is to be relational. To have faith is to have relationship with someone or something we believe in. So, faith is relational. Faith is the only thing Jesus demands of us. Faith is the only thing we have to offer to Jesus. Faith is our relationship with Jesus and a foundation of our relationship with ourselves and with one another. Our wholeness depends on what kind of relationship we have with Jesus.

Faith keeps us hoping when there seems to be little to hope for. Faith helps us navigate through the unknowns in life when there seems to be no familiar path forward. We are in one of those moments in our common life when we need faith more than ever to help us navigate through the uncharted territory before us. We need faith in Jesus and faith in each other to heal the ills and repair the brokenness of our common life and to rebuild a new life together.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ of this awesome Diocese: We are on this adventure together. We are on this journey of faith together. So may God bless each and every one of us with the gift of deep faith, courageous hope and compassionate love that we may be made whole again as the one body of Christ in the Episcopal Diocese of New York!