



The Episcopal Diocese of New York

November 12, 2022 Diocesan Convention Report

The Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin, Bishop Suffragan

It is my honor and privilege to address the 246th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York in my eighth year as Bishop Suffragan.

Let me begin by thanking the convention planning committee and Bishop Glasspool for organizing such an excellent convention once again. It feels as if we have been doing it this way forever, even the electronic voting and the convention rollout. So, thank you.

Being a bishop can be a lonely job. So, I feel blessed to work with a team of bishops. I am grateful to Bishop Dietsche and Bishop Glasspool for their collegiality and for the love and respect we have grown to have for each other. I also want to recognize another team I closely work with, the members of the Bishop's staff, and express my deep appreciation for their faithful and hard work especially during these pandemic years. As we prepare for an important transition in the Diocese, I ask you to pray for us bishops and for all the staff members and for the discernment journey we are walking together.

Changes

The best of the bishop's ministry is the parish visitation. Each Sunday I meet the most dedicated clergy and lay leaders in our parishes. I express my deep gratitude for their pastoral care and leadership in leading their parishes through some difficult changes during this couple of years. It is a challenging time for the church on multiple levels. The most urgent question we must grapple with is the identity of who we are as the church and how to engage effectively with our local communities.

One big challenge we are facing is the priest shortage. For a few decades now, The Episcopal Church has been ordaining one new priest for every two priests retiring. Trying to fill half-time positions is nearly impossible. Canon Nora Smith can attest to that. One solution we have been encouraging such parishes is sharing priests and resources with neighboring parishes. A number of parishes have already been doing that, and more are having discerning conversations about that. We are one diocese and one church. We are not in competition with each other. We are in it together.

During my eight-year tenure, I have seen twelve churches close, a couple of which had already been in the process of closing before I arrived. When the bishop prays to God to take away the holiness out of the altar, it is the most painful and saddest moment in the life of that parish and of the faithful who have worshipped in that building. Yet, like any death and dying, it is also the most holy and grace-filled journey. I would like to say to those lay leaders who have seen their churches close that they are not to blame; they did not fail. Rather, I would like to commend

them for their faithfulness and gracious discernment in that painful decision. God's grace does not end with building closures. As Bishop Skelton said in her sermon yesterday, how to pick up those broken pieces and find ways to build something new out of them is the important task before us as well.

Recently a couple of churches have been engaged in property development. It is a long and complex process but can be life-giving to the parish. Holy Trinity Church Inwood has been completely redeveloped and renewed; they have begun a new life with a new priest. St. James Fordham is about to begin their development project as well. We are exploring property development for a couple of other parishes for their future sustainability. But it is a long and complex process.

Congregational Vitality and Formation

Crisis is an opportunity for renewal and transformation. Our Canon for Congregational Vitality and Formation, Victor Conrado, has been working tirelessly to provide resources and consultations to the parishes in their efforts in renewal and vitality, from the vestry training and stewardship workshops to the congregational vitality assessment. I encourage you to invite him for consultation and training if you have not done so.

Episcopal Futures

In 2020, the Diocese of New York received a sizable grant from the Lilly Endowment and Trinity Church Wall Street for a significant opportunity to launch a congregational renewal initiative, which we named "Episcopal Futures." Please note that it is not a separate entity but simply a congregational renewal initiative of the Diocese under the oversight of the Canon for Congregational Vitality and Formation.

In the middle of developing the curriculum for the project last year, we ran into a challenge when The General Theological Seminary had to pull out of the partnership due to major transitions it was undergoing. Left without an internal curriculum expertise, we, nonetheless, forged ahead and eventually worked with Ormond Center at Duke University, who designed an initial curriculum for us, based on a community organizing theory, called "Community Craft." During the first phase of the curriculum, however, we received a lot of critical feedback with comments such as it was too time-consuming, too academic and cerebral, lacked diversity and was not consistent with the Episcopal ethos in some important aspects. I want to thank the participants for their perseverance and patience as they completed the first curriculum trial.

As we stepped back and evaluated the curriculum, it was clear that it did not work; it failed from our perspective. We considered ending the project altogether at that point. Lilly Endowment and Trinity Church told us that they would support whatever decision we made and encouraged us to continue. After some discernment, Canon Conrado and I decided that it would be prudent for us to restart the project with a new curriculum which has the proven track record of congregational renewal. We found such a curriculum in College for Congregational Development (CCD).

CCD was developed by Bishop Melissa Skelton who was a parish priest in the Diocese of Olympia when she launched it in 2009. Since then, CCD has had a big impact on congregational renewal and development in a growing number of dioceses such as Rochester, Central New

York, Chicago, Atlanta, Maryland and so on. I cannot tell you how delighted I am that Bishop Skelton as agreed to work with us. Thank you, Bishop Skelton, for your wonderful introductory workshop and for your sermon yesterday. She will also be available for a small group conversation during lunch today. I am glad that we did not give up, and I am excited for the new possibilities this partnership can bring to this Diocese. We plan to launch the curriculum in February, 2023 with an eye toward two one-week-long training sessions, one in June and another in July. It is our plan to continue to offer the CCD curriculum every year in the Diocese of New York as long as we need it.

Youth Ministry

One ministry that has been hit very hard during the pandemic is the youth ministry. It feels as if we have lost a generation of youth. For many parishes, this is a complete, new start. The Rev. Kyle Martindale, chair of the Christian Formation Commission, and I plan to gather the youth ministry leaders from around the Diocese and organize a youth ministry council for the Diocese in the coming year.

Summer Youth Conference

One consistent youth ministry even during the pandemic has been Summer Youth Conference, which was held this year with 88 participants from all three regions of the Diocese. With the theme, “The Way of Love,” the participants explored the concepts of Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go and Rest through large and small group discussions and activities and Bible studies as well as lots of fun activities. I want to recognize the conference directors, Christian Girard, Liz Moeller and Christy Miller and the conference chaplain, the Rev Bill Baker, for their work.

Episcopal Youth Event 2023

Episcopal Youth Event, the national gathering of the Episcopal youth, is being planned for July, 2023. This Diocese has not sent participants to EYE for some years. The new priest at the Church of Our Savior in Chinatown, the Rev. Nelson Mendoza, is on the EYE planning committee, and he and Kyle Martindale are planning to take a group of youth participants to EYE next July. Please connect with them if you are interested in this.

Young Adult Ministry

Young Adult ministry has been a very active ministry in the Diocese of New York. I want to acknowledge the young adults who are present with us at this Convention. There are over 30 of them here, and the Rev. Richard Witt brought 50 young people from Rural and Migration Ministries for the Morning Prayer this morning. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see more young adults as delegates and active participants in the Convention rather than as guests?

During this year the young adult ministry held a Lenten Quiet Day and social events in the summer. Recently they had a fall kick-off event, hosted by St. Thomas Fifth Avenue. The St. Nicholas Feast this year will be hosted by Trinity Church Wall Street on December 3rd the night of our episcopal election convention. They have also organized the Young Adult Ministry Council, headed by Jack Smith, a young adult leader from Trinity Church Wall Street. If you have any young adults in your parish, please talk with Megan Sanders and Jack Smith about how they can help you organize young adult ministry in your parish or in your deanery. I also learned

last night that there are several young adults who are in a discernment process in their parishes. Clearly, the Holy Spirit is working her grace, and we need to pay attention.

New York Service and Justice Collaborative (NYSJC)

New York Service and Justice Collaborative has weathered through the pandemic under the steady oversight of Judith Douglas. In July, however, there was an unfortunate break-in at the rectory of Trinity Church Morrisania. The fellows were quickly relocated to temporary housing at The General Theological Seminary until the end of the program year. For the 2022-2023 program year, NYSJC moved to a new host church, the Church of the Ascension in Mt. Vernon. Thanks to Lorna Lewis and the Vestry of Ascension, the rectory was swiftly ready for the arrival of five new fellows in August. Their service work sites include East-Side Settlement House, Church of the Heavenly Rest, Trinity Church Wall Street, Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen, and St. James Church Madison Avenue. One of the fellows is discerning a call to ordained ministry.

Grace Year

Grace Year began the year with four new fellows under the care of the Rev. Alison Quinn. They live in the vicarage of Grace Church Millbrook, and the fellows have started their service work at Dutchess Land Conservancy, Grace Immigrant Outreach, Seasoned Givers and Food of Life Pantry and Community Garden. Two of the fellows, Kara-Lyn Moran and Coco de Marneffe, have been accepted as members of the Presiding Bishop's delegation to the UN climate talks (COP 27) in Egypt.

Episcopal Asian Supper Table (EAST)

Asian ministries in the Diocese have continued from strength to strength during the pandemic. Under the leadership of Kris Ishibashi, Episcopal Asian Supper Table (EAST) has focused on the Asian American leaders in the Episcopal Church, the racial justice and reconciliation and Asian theology. The speakers in 2022 have included some leading Asian American theologians and the Rev. Deacon Pauline Shigaki of the Diocese of Olympia, the first Asian-American woman deacon in The Episcopal Church. For 2023, they are organizing a national retreat for the Asian-American Episcopal leaders and other events to promote fellowship and support for Asian American Episcopalians in the Diocese and in the wider Episcopal Church.

Asian Ministries of the Diocese

Under the pastoral care and leadership of the Rev. Kyrie Kim, Metropolitan Japanese Ministry (MJM) has been renewed with stability and new energy. The community has been intentional about welcoming the unchurched with cultural and social justice activities such as tea ceremonies, the annual Obon festival commemorating the deceased, and the annual prayer service for the victims of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The MJM community looks forward to the baptism of two new members next Easter. The Korean ministry began its monthly worship at the Cathedral in the fall of 2021. This is a complete, new start and the Rev. Kim has been building a core group during this past year. She is developing a new vision and strategy for the next step in the coming year. She also organized the celebration of the Asian Heritage Month at the Church of Our Savior in Chinatown.

House of Bishops Theology Committee

Since 2017, I have been serving on the House of Bishops Theology Committee and as its chair since 2020. The committee is called by the Presiding Bishop to work on a particular theological issue. In 2017 the committee was organized by Bishop Tom Breidenthal, the former bishop of the Diocese of Southern Ohio, with other bishops and academic theologians to work on the theology of beloved community. Over the five-year period, the committee has made three significant reports concerning beloved community with the themes of white supremacy, reparations and the doctrine of discovery. These reports have been published by Church Publishing as a book under the title, *Realizing Beloved Community* with a Spanish version as well. This book has been well received around The Episcopal Church. I hope that this book continues to be an important resource for the work of anti-racism and reparations in The Episcopal Church. The committee is now continuing its work on the topic of Christian nationalism. We hope to submit a report on it by next fall.

Then a couple of years ago, Bishop Andrew Doyle of the Diocese of Texas brought together some bishops, theologians and writers to write essays on the episcopate. The collection of those essays has also been published by Church Publishing under the title, *Episcopate: The Role of Bishops in a Shared Future*. My contribution was an essay on Bishop Edward Thomas Demby, who was the first African American bishop of The Episcopal Church in the United States and Bishop Suffragan of the Diocese of Arkansas and the Missionary District of Province VII from 1918 to 1939. It was humbling for me to study and write about the life and ministry of this remarkable, unsung hero of racial integration and justice in The Episcopal Church and upon whose shoulders, I believe, I stand.

General Convention

The 80th General Convention took place in July this year, having been postponed from 2021. I served as the bishop co-chair of the Legislative Committee on Racial Justice and Reconciliation, which dealt with some hard and important resolutions. One significant resolution came from the Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth Telling, Reckoning and Healing, in which Diane Pollard and I had the honor of participating. This group worked diligently in a very short time to put forth a resolution for establishing Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice, which will ensure the continuing work of beloved community and racial justice into the future. I believe the passing of this resolution by the 80th General Convention will go down as one of the most significant historic moments in The Episcopal Church.

Lambeth Conference

Just a week after the General Convention, the bishops embarked on a long trip for Lambeth Conference. Frankly I was not too excited and eager to attend, and Bishops Dietsche and Glasspool shared the sentiment. But we agreed that the bishops of the Diocese of New York could not be absent from this gathering of bishops from the worldwide Anglican Communion. The conference began with some political posturing and heightened anxiety. But, once the conference got going, things eventually calmed down, and it was actually enjoyable. Thank God, Lambeth Conference is not the legislative body of the Anglican Communion!

The best part of the Conference for me was meeting other bishops, building relationships, sharing our stories and praying together across our cultural, national and theological differences. I came away with a greater global perspective and awareness of the Anglican Communion.

Lambeth Conference on one level is the church at its worst messiness. Yet, those moments of story sharing and praying together were filled with abounding grace. It was a testament to the power of common prayer which is at the heart of the Anglican spirituality. Praying is the most readily available means by which we participate in the mystical body of Christ and the beloved community of Jesus. Praying together in fellowship and communion with others is the first call of the Baptismal Covenant.

Death of my mother and Sabbatical

As many of you know, I lost my mother in the beginning of May this year. After she was admitted to hospice care, I returned from Seattle for my scheduled visitation on May 1st at Christ Church Bronxville. Just before the Eucharist that morning my brother called me with the sad news of my mother's passing. I would like to offer personal gratitude to you for the outpouring of prayers and support and to the people of Christ Church Bronxville and Jenn Brown for ministering to me on that Sunday morning.

That was how I began my sabbatical in May. Having canceled all my sabbatical plans earlier, Clara and I remade a new sabbatical plan. Aside from taking some respite, I wanted to trace and visit my ancestral sites back in Korea. It was moving for me to visit the birthplace of my grandmother and the area of my family's ancestral origin as I had never done that. This was a journey of healing I sorely needed after my mother's death. Grieving and healing is not a momentary thing but a journey, and often a life-long journey. I am deeply grateful for that opportunity.

Concluding remark

The theme of this convention, "That wonderful and sacred mystery," conjures up a beautiful and ethereal image of the Church. In reality, though, church is a messy business, isn't it? Perhaps that is because the dynamic grace of the Holy Spirit is often incomprehensible and, thus, feels messy to us. And we try to turn it into something neat and manageable to serve our agenda and fail at it miserably more often than we like. Yet, in the midst of hope and despair, joy and sorrow, wonder and chaos, the church is continually called to serve the people and discover the humanity of Jesus, transfigured in their lives and stories. Church is necessarily a messy business. And, oh, what a wonderful and beautiful and sacred mess she is!