

## Report of the Bishop 2020

This past year it seems that what could be called “normal life” was the narrow window between my return from sabbatical at the beginning of November, and the time we were hit by the full force of the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of March. That time was punctuated by my announcement of my retirement. Originally, I had hoped I might retire in April 2021, but my announced timeline proved unrealistic; accordingly I initially pushed it to June (with apologies and thanks to the Standing Committee as we all made adjustments). Judy Stark was brought on board as our consultant for the electoral process, and a Nominating Committee was formed. We moved forward.

Then “normal life” came to an end. As we moved through March and well into April, and the scale of the pandemic became clear, I pushed the date out again. The Ninth Bishop of Pittsburgh will now be ordained on September 11, 2021, with our Presiding Bishop as chief consecrator. This has provided us with a schedule that, we all hope, will be achievable, even under the conditions we may still be facing in the first few months of the new year. The election of the next bishop will take place on April 24, 2021.

The pandemic brought great challenges. So that we might face these together, with a common understanding of how the virus was affecting our worship and ministries, I wrote eight pastoral letters to the diocese in the course of 12 weeks; many of these I recorded and offered on video. I began to gather the clergy for a regular Zoom call every Wednesday morning, a practice that still continues. I asked the diocese to refrain from public worship, and the clergy and lay leadership quickly got on the same page. Sunday services streamed online began, and quickly became the new normal for nearly all of our congregations. I expanded the existing Emergency Preparedness and Response Committee and charged them with developing guidelines for any future re-opening, along with protocols for the safe distribution of the Eucharist. Thanks to the leadership of Tim Austin, and the contributions of all the Committee, the results were excellent. Every parish eventually submitted a re-opening plan for review by the Committee, which in turn made comments and — in some cases — suggestions for improvement. With these in hand, I then would have a pastoral conversation with the clergy in charge or senior warden, to make sure we were in agreement around the parameters. The experience of our different parishes from Sunday to Sunday was discussed by the clergy on our weekly Zoom calls, with colleagues sharing best practices, encouraging one another, bearing one another’s burdens, and praying for each other. Instead of the diocese simply adapting to a “top-down” solution, the result was a collaborative process that resulted in common agreement for the common good. Even as infection rates begin slowly to decline, and our churches begin very gradually to resume in-person worship, we continue to walk together to ensure the safety of the people of God.

No sooner had we adjusted to the conditions of the first pandemic, then we were hit by a second — I mean the widespread reality of racist violence brought to the attention of the world by the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. This was a moment of conviction for your bishop. In spite of my initial call in 2015 to address issues of race

locally, the Presiding Bishop's Pilgrimage for Repentance, Reconciliation and Renewal in 2017, and the resulting birth of the Church Without Walls in partnership with Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church, I realized that my efforts at racial justice had been sporadic and symbolic at best. I issued a letter and video with the title "Cut to the Heart," assembled an informal advisory group on race that continues to meet with me, and planned the first Zoom liturgy of lament that was broadcast from Trinity Cathedral on July 5th (another is planned for December 6th). Most important, in collaboration with the Reverend Jonathon Jensen and with the financial assistance of Calvary, the Beloved Community Initiative was launched, with the Reverend Canon Eric McIntosh as its director and Shahnaz Alam-Denlinger as program coordinator.

I do not wish to minimize the difficulty that we face in dealing with the intractable evil of systemic racism in our region and our diocese. The vision of the New Testament lifts up the Body of Christ as a collective of the greatest possible variety *in every local expression*. We are called as a *kingdom of priests drawn from every family, language, people and nation, to serve our God and Father (Revelation 5:9-10)*. Each community is called to reflect that diversity as much as we can. That means having a hunger to know people we do not yet know, who do not look like us or think like us. This can only begin to happen if we deal honestly, and over the long term, with the damage caused by racism — how this curse continues to segregate our communities, shorten the lives of people of color, and worsen social and economic inequality. I pray that, well beyond my tenure, the whole Diocese of Pittsburgh may, especially in this regard, become *an effective example in word and action, in love and patience and in holiness of life (BCP, p. 523)*.

In the face of all these challenges, I have been moved by the extraordinary leadership and collegiality I have seen among our clergy, by the devoted work of our governing bodies, and by the enthusiasm you all show for the witness of the Episcopal Church in southwestern Pennsylvania. I am particularly grateful for my superb colleagues in the Bishop's Office: Rich Creehan, Jay Geisler+, Natalie Hall+, Kimberly Karashin+, Andy Muhl, Marlene Rihn, and Kathi Workman.

As I write this, I am painfully aware of all the "lasts" I will be facing in the coming months: my last visitation to each of our parishes, my last Christmas and Easter at the Cathedral, my last ordinations, and — most immediately — my last regular diocesan convention on October 17, made all the more painful by the fact that we will not be together in person. At the same time, I am full of joy and confidence that the Lord who brought us together on April 21, 2012 will sustain and prosper us in the days to come. Thank you for calling me to serve you as your bishop. It has been the greatest privilege of my life, and I love you all more than I can say. Betsy and I will always hold you in our prayers.

Faithfully and respectfully submitted,  
+Dorsey

**Statistics for September 1, 2019 through March 22, 2020**

Visitations: 24

Confirmations: 37

Receptions: 45

Baptisms: 9

Burials: 1

Ordinations: 2 (Order of Deacon 1; Order of Priest 1)

**Statistics for March 23, 2020 through August 31, 2020**

In-Person Visitations Streamed on Social Media: 11

Online Renewal of Vows: 1