

# **Bishop's Report to Convention**

**November 2024 – October 2025**

The Bishop's Annual Report to Convention, along with the reports from our various diocesan leaders, gives us the opportunity to take a sweeping view at our common life and ministry during the previous year. For parishioners who worship and serve exclusively at their local churches throughout our diocese, it is often difficult to fully grasp the breadth of our common life and ministry. For some, the ministry of the Diocese simply consists of the Bishop's Annual Visitation and its related Episcopal Acts. Others, especially when they begin to get involved in the work of the diocesan districts or committees, discover with some surprise how much is involved in this aspect of our common life and ministry.

In the main part of this report I will highlight much of what we have done since last October. I will also incorporate partially or in full the reports submitted by Kathy Baird, Chair of the Fellowship Team, and by Jon Delano, Chair of the Communications Team. The information they provide best delineates the accomplishments of these teams. This report, and the many other reports contained in this journal, will give you a sense of the work that we have accomplished together during these last twelve months.

Faithfully,  
+Ketlen

## **LITURGICAL AND OFFICIAL EPISCOPAL ACTS:**

It is always a joy for me to confirm and receive those who formally want to join our particular expression of the Christian tradition. The ordinations of candidates to either the Diaconate or the Priesthood are especially meaningful.

On Tuesday of Holy Week, we had the privilege of celebrating the Renewal of Ordination Vows together with our siblings in the Lutheran Synod. Additionally, on October 18 of this year, it was wonderful to represent the Episcopal Church at the installation of the new Lutheran Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Melissa Stoller.

In addition to the Episcopal Acts detailed below, I officiated at the wedding of the Rev. Theodore Somes and I baptized young children and adults alike. I also received the Rev. Norman Erb-White as a new priest in the Episcopal Church and in our diocese. One of the great joys of

the year consists of my annual visit to Sheldon Calvary Camp, where I share lunch and worship with the counselors and bless them in their ministry to the campers in their care.

Here are the details of my Episcopal Acts:

Priestly Ordinations: 4

Diaconal Ordinations: 1

Confirmations: 40

Reaffirmations: 2

Receptions: 26

Licensed Ministries: 41

## **STAFF CHANGES:**

- The Rev. Miguel Carmona joined the staff, part-time, as a Missioner for Ministry in Brookline.
- Elaine Zevkovich retired from the position of Treasurer and Director of Administration.
- Rebecca Steiner joined the staff as Senior Accountant and Treasurer in February 2025 and chose to resign from this position during the summer.
- The Rev. Joann Saylor joined the staff in April as Canon to the Ordinary for Mission, Vitality, and Administration, serving also as Chief of Staff. She was also recently appointed as Treasurer.
- Marlene Rihn was promoted to Senior Accountant and Assistant Treasurer.
- An announcement was made about the departure at the end of 2025 of the Rev. Canon Kimberly (Kim) Karashin who currently serves as Canon to the Ordinary for Transitions and Clergy & Congregational Care.

## **WIDER CHURCH, PROVINCE III, AND ECUMENICAL ACTIVITIES:**

- I attended the spring gathering in March of the House of Bishops, which took place in Alabama.
- I am continuing to serve on the Executive Committee for Province III. We meet approximately once-a-month to plan for our annual Council and Synod gatherings.
- I attended both of the Province III annual gatherings mentioned above.
- I serve on the Executive Committee for Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania (CASP), which involves my participating in once-a-month meetings. I attended the CASP quarterly gatherings.
- During Holy Week, I participated in the Ecumenical Good Friday Tenebrae service at St. Paul's Roman Catholic Cathedral on Fifth Avenue in Oakland.
- I also took part in the Easter Blessing over the City organized by Bishop David Zubik.
- In July, I was invited to and attended the consecration of the new Roman Catholic Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Mark Eckman.
- I attended the heart-warming celebration of Lutheran Bishop Kurt Kusserow's ministry in view of his impending retirement at the end of August.

## **DIOCESAN PRIORITIES:**

Steady progress is being made in regards to our diocesan priorities, which are Fellowship, Communication, and Growth. Three teams, consisting of individuals from our various parishes, have been diligently working at developing these three pillars of our diocesan vision. Thanks to their dedicated efforts, each pillar is taking shape nicely and moving us more closely to our goals. I am deeply grateful to the collective effort of so many.

## **FELLOWSHIP:**

We've promoted fellowship through several regular and special events. While the members of the Fellowship Team generated several ideas, they kept the scope and focus of their efforts to only three initiatives.

## **A Diocesan-Wide Epiphany Prayer Course:**

In keeping with our mission statement, “*Grounded in Christ, Growing Anew*,” we spent time deepening our understanding of prayer with a diocesan-wide course offered on the Sundays of Epiphany. The course had 55 registered persons with a steady weekly attendance ranging between 20 and 25.

## **Ash Wednesday Prayer Vigil:**

An immediate and natural outcome of the Epiphany Prayer Course was a 24-hour Ash Wednesday Vigil. All 24 hours were covered by prayerful parishioners who also expressed interest in having special set-apart times of communal prayer vigils, though for a shorter time, throughout the year.

## **Clergy Breakfasts:**

I invited our active clergy to breakfast. We gathered on six separate occasions, and a total of 24 clergy members participated.

## **Ministry Celebration Day:**

We had a successful and joy-filled Ministry Celebration Day on the afternoon and early evening of Sunday, May 18, at Christ Church, North Hills. The group numbering close to 60 spent time talking about our experiences with prayer. We worshiped and shared a fabulous dinner prepared by long-time Christ Church parishioner Jill Anguish and her team. I am extremely grateful for the work of our diocesan staff, and for the assistance and warm hospitality of the staff and volunteers from Christ Church.

## **More on Fellowship – A Word from Kathy Baird on Behalf of the Members of The Fellowship Team:**

The Diocesan Fellowship Committee began meeting in early 2025 after an outreach published in *Grace Happens* resulted in 8 interested lay and clergy volunteers who set to work in the early spring of 2025. The group met via Zoom several times to define what ‘fellowship’ meant in our context, brainstorm ideas for increasing fellowship, as we defined it, chose several to develop further and choose which to launch first.

Among many suggestions, the key ideas considered included:

- Diocesan Wide Week-Long Revival
- Inter-Parish Bible Studies/Online directory of virtual offerings
- Continuation of the Holy Hikes initiative from the prior year
- Diocesan Passport
- LEM/Pulpit ‘Swapping’
- Vacation Bible Studies

To make best use of limited resources and time to implement, the working group decided to focus on:

- support for on-going fellowship activities (Holy Hikes)
- Diocesan Directory of Virtual Offerings
- Diocesan Passport

We quickly learned the Holy Hikes were indeed continuing and needed no further support from our working group to grow.

Anthony Crisafio took on the task of contacting parishes to collect information about their scheduled virtual offerings (e.g. bible study groups) that could be posted to the Diocesan Website and maintained by the parishes with support from Andy Muhl. The information has been collected and Anthony continues to work with Andy to make this a reality.

Kathy Baird shared her experience with the Diocesan Passport concept in an area of Ontario, Canada where churches were small and spread out and grouped under shared clergy operation. They created a ‘passport’ that parishioners used when they traveled to attend services at churches other than their home church. Father Brandon took that concept and developed the version that was announced this summer in Grace Happens and it is having some success. We hope that posting pictures in Grace Happens of parishioners using them and welcoming visitors will continue to grow as members of our diocese make new friends across the diocese and share in the unique traditions that each parish has.

Going forward, we plan to continue implementation and support of existing initiatives so they can become self-sustaining diocesan initiatives and take on brand new ones and/or flesh out ones we have already identified.

I want to personally recognize the contributions and perseverance of each of the working group members and especially to Anthony when he kept up the group’s momentum when my plate became too full.

Yours in faith,

Kathy Baird (Chair)  
The Rev. Brandon Cooper

Anthony Crisafio (Vice Chair)  
The Rev. Arthur C. Dilg  
Wilma Gaughan  
The Rev. Carol Henley  
Jane Parkhurst  
The Rev. Canon Joann Saylor

## **COMMUNICATION:**

In terms of Communication, I am grateful to Andy Muhl for designing our new logo. Andy has also been instrumental, along with Jon Delano, in advancing the mission of the Communications Team, which was defined in these three ways:

- (1) To evaluate current communications methods at the diocese and the parishes, including the cathedral;
- (2) To recommend and propose improvements, alternatives and upgrades; and
- (3) To recommend structures, implementation methods and help to facilitate the implementation of these communication recommendations

To gain a comprehensive sense of the excellent work done by the team, I invite you to read the words of Jon Delano, which you will find as an addendum to my report.

## **GROWTH:**

### **The Curacy Program:**

- Our four persons newly-ordained priests have completed their first year of curacy.

### **Brookline Ministry Exploration:**

- We explored the potential for ministry to Spanish-speaking and/or bilingual persons in Brookline. While this exploration will cease at the end of this calendar year, a positive result has been the development of a closer relationship with *Casa San Jose*.

### **The Growth & Revitalization Team:**

- This team include the following members: Anthony Crisafio (Council); Eileen Sharbaugh (Council); Daniel Siriani (Council); Mary Amanda Dew (Trustees); Eric Linn (Trustees);

Robert Lucas (Trustees); Sue DeWalt (at large/Calvary); the Rev. Jim Miorelli (at large/St. Thomas, Canonsburg); the Rev. Canon Joann Saylor; Bishop/Chair.

- In part, the team's purpose is to learn the nuts and bolts of the art of establishing new Episcopal Communities and revitalizing existing ones.
- Since April, the team has been living into this purpose by learning about our various initiatives in progress such as:
  - the Episcopal Education Exploratory Committee's discernment work about the establishment of an Episcopal school (more to be shared at our Diocesan Convention).
  - the development of Church of the Incarnation (more to be shared at our Diocesan Convention).
- They have also shared their hopes and dreams for the work at hand, having discussed the work done previously by the New Episcopal Communities Task Force.
- The Team also functions by means of four smaller groups responsible for these four identified areas: 1) New Episcopal Communities 2) Revitalization 3) Campus Missions 4) Data Analysis
- Canon Joann Saylor facilitates the work of these smaller groups who each meet once a month and do research in order to seek after relevant information.
- The larger group also meets once a month to discuss findings from the smaller groups, and to spend time in theological reflection/Bible study, and continued learning about church growth and revitalization through topic-related presentations. The whole group was privy to several presentations:
  - One was by a member of the team, Eric Linn, who gave a synopsis of the book, *God Gave the Growth* by Susan Brown-Snook.
  - Another presentation was made by the Rev. Deanna Briody about Church of the Incarnation.
  - Another special presentation came from a guest speaker, the Rev. Nandra Perry, whom Canon Joann had invited to meet with our group.
  - A big part of this presentation was about exploring the potential for revitalization with small and declining parishes.
- The G & R team is willing, if invited, to come along side parishes that desire to explore their potential for revitalization.
- The team is also developing new methods for gathering useful and effective data.
- In addition, the team has begun to talk about our college campus missions

These are the salient highlight of our common life and ministry during this last year. The day-to-day work of our diocese consists of so many hours of dedication on the part of many people. I am grateful for the ministry that we share, and it continues to be my joy and privilege to be a partner in God's work with you.

+KAS

## **ADDENDUM:**

### **REPORT of the COMMUNICATIONS TEAM October 15, 2025**

The Communications Team for the Diocese of Pittsburgh is pleased to report that it has accomplished a major part of its mission. The Team was first convened with Bishop Ketlen Solak on January 23, 2025. Its members include Jon Delano (chair), Carolyn Dillon, Marty Federowicz, Canon Mary Jayne Ledgerwood, Andy Muhl (diocesan director of communications & technology), Canon Joann Saylor (diocesan canon for mission, vitality & administration), and Rick Stachel.

At the outset, we want to thank the many clergy, wardens, deputies, parishioners, and church staff who met with us over the last five months. Without your help, this initiative would never have been possible.

#### **The Mission:**

At its initial meeting, the Team defined its mission as follows:

- (4) To evaluate current communications methods at the diocese and the parishes, including the cathedral;
- (5) To recommend and propose improvements, alternatives and upgrades; and
- (6) To recommend structures, implementation methods and help to facilitate the implementation of these communication recommendations.

#### **The Approach:**

In a somewhat unorthodox approach because of the time commitment, the Team concluded that the best way to facilitate the goals outlined above was to have **individual meetings** (up to one hour) with the communication leaders at **each** of the parishes in the diocese – **one at a time**. While this is extremely time intensive, it was judged that this was the best way to evaluate current communication methods, recommend improvements, and facilitate implementation of those recommendations on an individual, parish by parish, basis **all at the same time**.

Consequently, Jon Delano & Andy Muhl (occasionally joined by another Team member) met with over 110 individuals from 31 parishes over five months for a comprehensive discussion focused on how parishes communicate with their congregants and local communities and how the diocese could do a better job communicating. [A list of those parishes is found in Addendum A].

Each parish was contacted early this year by email from Jon to their rector or priest-in-charge, their wardens, and their deputies to Diocesan Convention. Each parish named the participants for the one-hour zoom meeting, and this often included a full or part-time office administrator, secretary, or staff member. The key was to include the person(s) most knowledgeable about communications.

### **The Focus:**

Our Team developed with help from Rick Stachel a Discussion Guide [see Addendum B] that we shared and used to elicit open and honest conversation about communications. Again, the goal was to learn the communication methods and preferences of each parish, make suggestions for improvement, and then (in many cases) arrange for Andy to help implement those improvements in subsequent meetings.

Our second major goal, as described below, was to critique how the diocese communicates, to promote “Grace Happens” (which requires individual free subscription by parishioners), and to elicit potential “stories” of church and community outreach efforts that could be shared across the diocese.

### **Initial Findings on Parish Communications:**

- 1) This is an incredibly diverse diocese when it comes to parishes and their ability and methods of communicating with parishioners and their local communities. Some very small congregations simply communicate orally at services, while others use an entire panoply of media (websites, emails, newsletters, social media, livestream, etc.).
  
- 2) Most parishes have some form of email communication, either using a weekly or monthly e-newsletter or sending out, more casually, an email to a group of parishioners with

announcements. Given a small number of parishioners, a few churches are experimenting with text messages. Some parishes still create “hard copy” newsletters of their e-newsletters for those without internet communication.

- 3) Facebook is a popular method of communicating at many parishes, although not all. The challenge is to keep content fresh and current. While we found the number of followers on FB often exceeded congregational numbers, there was not always a lot of interaction among followers. Most believe FB is a method to communicate within parishes but developing content that FB followers can share will broaden the reach of this social media option.
- 4) Many parishes have usable websites, but some do not. Most agree that websites must contain up-to-date service information (e.g., times, dates, nature of services) visible on the front page. That’s because websites are often used by “outsiders” seeking information about area churches. Unfortunately, we found many websites with outdated information and old inaccurate content. At least a couple larger parishes use its website as the main vehicle for communication, noting that almost all announcements made elsewhere are posted to the website.
- 5) With respect to other forms of social media, except for YouTube (often used to post & save live streams of services or church events), we found very few parishes, if any, who used Instagram, X, Threads, Snapchat, TikTok, WhatsApp, etc. While some say these may be a better way to meet younger people, they are not utilized in this diocese.
- 6) Improving the visibility of a parish in a particular community often depends on its ability to use social media and its capability of “live streaming” its services. Some parishes have significant community outreach programs that get promoted via FB or a webpage. Most do not.
- 7) Another form of visibility is the exterior signage at a particular church. While a few have electronic signs, most do not. Some churches felt they could use an upgrade in their signage. While some churches are on main thoroughfares, others are hidden away and could use locational signs. We also discussed the use of temporary posters or banners to promote special services or events. Finally, some churches have community newspapers or neighborhood e-newsletters that welcome information about their activities.

- 8) One of the major challenges to parish communication is staffing. We found only a very few parishes have one designated person responsible for coordinating all forms of communication, usually a paid staffer. Most have several people involved, including priests, deacons, volunteer parishioners, paid staff people, or anyone willing to take on a particular communication task. That often means the person doing the weekly e-newsletter is not the person doing FB or the website. What drives content could be the rector or priest-in-charge, a warden, a staff person, or a devoted volunteer – or all the above. Most parishes are simply not large enough or financially capable of affording a single communication coordinator.

### **Initial Findings on Diocesan Communications:**

- 1) Most parishioners do not identify with the Diocese of Pittsburgh, except through the bishop and her annual visits to their church. This is not unusual. Congregants are focused on their own church, its clergy, lay leaders, and members. The diocese is remote, amorphous, and basically unknown to many, especially in terms of its functions and leaders (beyond the bishop).
- 2) Almost everyone we interviewed identified “Grace Happens” as the chief method of communication by the Diocese. It is seen as the primary vehicle by which news of other parishes is shared, along with information on diocesan events, personnel changes, and messages from the bishop.
- 3) Since “Grace Happens” is subscription only albeit free, many parishioners never see it. In some meetings, half the participants acknowledged not getting the publication (which is emailed twice-a-month to subscribers). While the bishop promotes sign-ups during her visits, there was universal agreement to do more through parish communications to provide a regular link to “Grace Happens.” One suggestion was for the bishop to hand out cards to all parishioners when she visits that include the Grace Happens link and QR code.
- 4) We had a wide range of suggestions for “Grace Happens,” including (1) reflective messages from the bishop, including some on current events; (2) news articles about interesting developments at parishes; (3) feature pieces on diocesan initiatives like the Beloved Community; (4) reports on diocesan bodies, e.g., what exactly does the Standing Committee, Council, Board of Trustees, Commission on Ministry, etc., really do; (5) quick biographies on key personnel in the diocesan office; and (6) a feature story on what exactly a bishop does in addition to Sunday church visitations.

- 5) The Diocese does have its own Facebook page with approximately 1500 followers. It is kept generally current, but there does not appear to be much interaction among followers. As noted in #3, a link to FB might be included in the bishop's hand-out card, and parishes should be encouraged to provide a link and "share" diocesan stories on their own FB page.
- 6) The Diocese also has a webpage which everyone acknowledges needs upgrading. We heard criticism that the webpage was hard to use with difficulty finding key information. Andy Muhl has begun a process to improve the website, making it more user friendly. It contains a great deal of good information and content but can be a challenge to navigate. One suggestion was to encourage every parish to link to the diocesan website on their own webpage.
- 7) How is the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh perceived in the larger non-religious community? Just as we encourage local parishes to be an outward and visible sign of God's Love, No Exceptions, in their own neighborhoods, so too we should expect that from the Diocese in the greater Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania community. This is something that will require greater focus in the year ahead.

### **Going Forward on Communications:**

We are just at the beginning of helping parishes improve their communications as they deem best, as well as upgrading diocesan communications.

On behalf of the Communications Team, I found this experience of meeting with the communication leaders in every parish in the Diocese to be one of the most rewarding and fruitful experiences of my diocesan involvement over the many years. With the expertise of Andy Muhl, we were able to offer our insights and guidance – and, frankly, fill up Andy's "help schedule" for months to come on individual parish communication issues – and, at the same time, receive the counsel and wisdom of local parishes on how the Diocese could do a better job in communicating.

The rector of one of our larger parishes advised that one key to successful communication is to integrate it into everything we do. "Everything we do is communication. How do we tell the story?" In other words, every time someone at a parish (or the diocese) does something, that person should simultaneously think how do I share what I am doing with others.

Jesus was pretty good at telling stories, and he didn't have all the electronics, programs, and devices that we have in 2025. Given the great diversity in congregational size, services, outreach, and resources at our parishes, there is "no one size fits all" model. That requires the leaders of each parish – and the Diocese – to evaluate (all the time) what is the best way to share information. But making it a priority is key!

Finally, communication methods are ever-changing. Next April, the diocese will host an event featuring an exploration of artificial intelligence, both an exciting and scary new dimension in communication. We hope every parish will be represented.

In the meantime, the Communications Team, Andy Muhl, and I are available to assist in evaluating or helping implement any communication idea you may have. This is an ongoing process, and we thank you for the chance to take part in this important initiative of Bishop Solak.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon Delano, Chair

**Communications Team:**

**Jon Delano, Chair**

**Carolyn Dillon**

**Marty Federowicz**

**The Rev. Canon Mary Jayne Ledgerwood**

**Andy Muhl, Director of communications & technology**

**The Rev. Canon Joann Saylor, Canon for mission, vitality & administration**

**Rick Stachel**

**The Right Rev. Ketlen Solak, Bishop**

--- Addendum A ---

**PARISHES INTERVIEWED BY COMMUNICATIONS TEAM:**

St. Andrew's, Highland Park (3/25)

Church of the Redeemer, Squirrel Hill (4/1)

St. Francis, Somerset (4/1)

St. Matthew's, Homestead (6/16)

St. Stephen's, Wilkinsburg (6/18)

St. Peter's, Brentwood (6/23)

St. Thomas, Canonsburg (6/25)

St. Brendan's, Franklin Park (6/26)

Church of the Atonement, Carnegie (6/30)

St. David's, Peters (7/3)

St. Michael's, Ligonier (7/9)  
All Souls, North Versailles (7/10)  
St. Barnabas, Brackenridge (7/15)  
Christ Church, North Hills (7/15)  
St. Paul's, Kittanning (7/22)  
Emmanuel, Northside (7/22)  
St. Thomas, Northern Cambria (7/28)  
St. Thomas, Oakmont (7/28)  
Christ Church, Indiana (7/29)  
Church of the Advent, Jeannette (7/29)  
All Saints, Brighton Heights (8/27)  
Trinity Cathedral, Downtown (9/2)  
Church of the Holy Cross, Homewood (9/3)  
St. James, Penn Hills (9/4)  
St. Mark's, Johnstown (9/8)  
Church of the Nativity, Crafton (9/9)  
St. Peter's, Blairsville (9/9)  
St. Bartholomew, Scottdale (9/12)  
St. Stephen's, McKeesport (9/14)  
St. Paul's, Mt. Lebanon (10/14)  
Calvary, East Liberty (10/15)

**--- Addendum B ---**

**Parish Communication Discussion Guide**

Parish:

Date:

People Present:

## **PARISH COMMUNICATIONS**

Describe the communications methods at your parish, including content, timing, updates:

Service Announcements

Newsletters

Emails

Website

Facebook & other social media

When it comes to communications, who is responsible for what? Clergy, staff, volunteers?

How do you assess your current communication methods? What works, what could be done better, what are you proud of, what seems to work best for your parish?

How has your communication changed over the last few years, and do you have plans for additional changes?

## **DIOCESAN COMMUNICATIONS**

How could the Diocese do a better job with its own communications with parishes & parishioners?

What type of information do you include from the Diocese in your communications (Diocesan news, resources, Grace Happens, etc.)?

What would you like to see the Diocese do to improve both parish communications and its own communications?