

**Good evening, I am Mother Katherine Alonge-Coons, President of the Standing Committee. On Behalf of the Standing Committee: Welcome to the 154<sup>th</sup> Annual Diocesan Convention for the Diocese of Albany!**

Let us Pray!!!

Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel in this 154<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Diocese of Albany, for the renewal and mission of your Church.

Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A few weeks ago I participated in the CDPHP Workforce Challenge. This was not really an activity which I had longed to participate in – but I was determined to show this group of younger staff that I oversee, that this old broad still has it in her! I successfully walked the full route and came in ahead of others who I had personally decided I wanted to beat in this effort. Despite the challenges before me, such as aching joints from arthritis, being out of shape with tired muscles, hills both at the beginning, middle and end of the route, and crowding of other participants – I was able to accomplish the goal I had set! My personal achievement felt great!!! I had “pressed on” for the “prize” which happened to be a T-shirt and bottle of water!!! My personal Walking challenge can stand as a metaphor for the theme of this year’s convention. May I suggest that instead of the hills I walk on my challenge journey, we may be feeling as though we are climbing the 46 high peaks of these Adirondack Mountains! The prize is far greater

than T shirt and bottle of water, the prize which awaits us to spend all eternity in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we open convention this evening – we are mindful of the theme placed before us....Philippians 3:14 “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”. When we become focused on a goal we don’t spend a great deal of time looking back, instead we propel ourselves forward, focused on the achievement of the goal, one step forward at a time. Paul puts before himself and all of us, the ultimate goal of our lives and walk with Jesus, to be heaven bound to spend all eternity in the company of our Lord Jesus. In order to achieve this goal we must be focused on accomplishing the walk each and every day of our lives. There is no doubt we will and do have many obstacles in our path.

Let’s take a moment to turn the clock back to June 2019, (our last in person convention) and consider our personal and diocesan journeys. Back then we absolutely did not anticipate living through a worldwide pandemic. Amid the 2+ years of this pandemic we have not abandoned the journey, we have maintained commitment to our mission, and at times it has felt like we are climbing a steep high mountain. The diocese and many of our parishes have provided virtual worship and the diocese held two virtual conventions. We have continued to maintain connection as community in prayer, praise and ministry in Jesus name. The world continues to be challenged by COVID infection and we... **Press ON in the name of Jesus Christ!!!**

The pandemic and associated infection control efforts of a “lockdown”, or “shut down”, resulted in disruption of our lives as we were accustomed to living. There have been negative impacts to the

economy, relationships, loss of friends and loved ones, and added new and unpredictable stresses in our lives. We have had to become creative in maintaining connections, new models of working, educating, ministering, and worshiping. Virtual home-based work, schooling and Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting, are now a way of life! In some ways we have become more efficient in other ways we have felt socially isolated. We seek to return to customary ways of living and doing ministry and business. Thank the Lord – he works through Zoom connection and can anoint both in person and virtual efforts to do his work. In recent months there has been a lessening of restrictions, which have brought about more in person gatherings, such as this convention; not the same as 2019 days, yet a blessing. So, We **PRESS ON in the name of Jesus Christ!!!**

Simultaneous to the pandemic an unjust war is happening in Europe. Consequently, millions of refugees are seeking safe places to live, great economic distress is mounting, orphaned children are without home and family, human trafficking is happening, and innocent lives have been lost. We, as followers of Christ, on this sacred journey, pray for peace. We have a greater awareness of the need to become more focused on how to bring peace into every relationship in our own lives. Many of our parishes have held prayer vigils for peace, made donations to organizations supporting the care of Ukrainian refugees, and some have gone to Europe to serve displaced persons. We offer thanksgiving to the Lord for both Mother Laurie Garramone and Fr Jacob Evans who responded to the call of the Lord for mission ministry in Europe. These and other ministry opportunities related to this crisis will continue to emerge. The Lord has and will call us as a diocese, parish, and as

individuals to respond to these critical needs. So, we ... **PRESS ON in the name of Jesus Christ!!!**

In our own diocese we have had challenges in this time of transition without a Bishop Diocesan. The Standing Committee has responded to God's call, and the canonical call to serve as the Ecclesiastical Authority. The Lord has blessed us with the ability to listen to each other and recognize our unique spiritual gifts to provide this leadership. All of this is done in an environment of prayerful discernment. We have been blessed to have Bishop Michael Smith contract with us to serve as Assisting Bishop. He is providing apostolic leadership to support the diocese during this period of transition. Thank you, Bishop Michael, for the grace and witness you show in building bridges in Christian love with those whom we do not always agree. Your ministerial relationship with Bishop Carol Gallagher is a model for many of us. Each of you have your own theological perspective, but that doesn't deter the two of you in maintaining strong friendship, collaborative ministry. We look forward to hearing from the two of you in the plenary session scheduled for tomorrow morning. Welcome, Bp Gallagher and thank you for serving people in this diocese through the ministry of supplemental pastoral support, as we seek to find our way forward in complying with TEC resolution B012. Bp Michael works together with the Standing Committee to foster environments of healing conversations. He provides prayerful support in times of difficult decision making. He is also presiding over confirmations and ordinations. Bishop Michael is representing the diocese in the TEC House of Bishops. Bishop Michael ministers with us as we **PRESS on in the name of Jesus Christ!**

Thank you to my fellow Standing Committee members who have served over these past 18 months. Countless hours are spent by each of us month after month as we try to faithfully lead the diocese. PLEASE stand!!! Leadership by Committee is not an easy model. By implementing the diocesan norms and engaging in worshipful work, we have been blessed to serve the Lord and all of you through this ministry.

The Profile and Search process is well underway. We all recognize this is not a quick process and through the orientation provided by the P & S Committee we have a renewed understanding of the multiple steps it takes to elect a Bishop Diocesan. We may long to have this accomplished at a faster pace, but we must temper this desire by seeking patience as the fruit of the Spirit to allow this process to unfold as the Lord directs. At times this may feel like a very steep mountain to climb as we work to implement opportunities to incorporate the voices of everyone and foster conversations that are fruitful and respectful of one another and glorify the Lord. While we do not all agree on many points, we find our common ground in our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ and we ... **PRESS on in the name of Jesus Christ!!!** Thank you to Sue Ellen Ruestch and the members of the Profile & Search Committee – please stand.

The Deans are developing deanery events which are becoming centers for conversation and ministry in this time of transition. Through deaneries we have another means to strengthen connections with one another. This structure provides gatherings for clergy and laity to encourage and equip one another as we **PRSSS on in the name of Jesus Christ!!!** Thank you to the Deans of the Diocese – please stand.

The Lord continues to bless us with gifted Diocesan staff. Our staff may be few, yet their gifts are many. This evening we offer thanksgiving to Lay Canon of Administration, Jerry Carroll, who has faithfully served the diocese and now retires. Jerry's retirement date has been a movable feast of sorts and is now happening. Jerry and his wife Fran (our volunteer receptionist) have made many sacrifices for the life and ministry of the diocese for well over two decades. Canon Jerry and Fran please stand. Jerry has ministered in the diocese for over two decades. (present gift) We have been so very blessed by your ministry! We look forward to hearing from the two of you about your adventures of retirement and the new ministries to which God calls you. The two of you have given leadership and support to this diocese as we ... **PRESS on in the name of Jesus Christ!!!**

In response to this retirement, we have been blessed to develop a staffing structure to bring on additional staff without increasing our costs. Mother Meaghan Keegan effective May 1<sup>st</sup> is now the Interim Director of Administration, and we have two part time staff to assist with receptionist and financial duties. We are now in the process of determining the best structure to replace the recently resigned ADIT Coordinator. The Lord has blessed us with skilled and dedicated staff! (ask the staff to stand) This staff supports the diocese as we ... **PRESS on in the name of Jesus Christ!!!**

Over the past 18 months, we have experienced attrition of some clergy either through death, retirement, or the decision to leave TEC. We offer thanksgiving for the ministry, faithful service, and friendship we have shared with these brothers and sisters in Christ. At this time we remember those clergy who have passed into eternal life since our last Diocesan convention:

The Rev'd Michael G. Sowan

The Rev'd C. Robert Lewis

The Rev'd Geraldine Clemmons

The Rev'd Lawrence Hubert

Happy from now on are those who die in the Lord! So it is, says the Spirit, for they rest from their labors.

Let us Pray:

O God, who by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ destroyed death, and brought life and immortality to light: Grant that your servants, being raised with him, may know the strength of his presence, and rejoice in his eternal glory; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

As we celebrate those who have gone before us, we also offer thanksgiving for clergy who have been called by the Lord to serve in the Diocese of Albany since our last in person convention in 2019. As I call your name please come forward:

The Rev'd Amy Lewis, The Rev'd David Carlson, The Rev'd Helene Patterson, The Rev'd Jonathon Beck, The Rev'd Karla Banach, The Rev'd Jack Whritnour, The Rev'd Ken Hitch, The Rev'd Michael Greene. The Rev'd Andrew Cruz Lillegard, The Rev'd Michael Todd, The Rev'd Bill Lytle. The Rev'd Louis Madura. The Rev'd Meaghan Keegan. The Rev'd Dale VanWormer, The Rev'd Richard Roessler, The Rev'd Thomas

Higman, The Rev'd Nathan Ritter, The Rev'd Peter Schellhase and The Rev'd Jennifer Dorsey, The Rev'd Charles Wallace, The Rev'd John Allison and The Rev'd Kathleen Killian.

Let us pray:

Everliving God, strengthen and sustain *these your ordained servants*, that with patience and understanding *they* may love and care for your people; and grant that together they may follow Jesus Christ, offering to you their gifts and talents; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Lord has and continues to provide faithful persons for service and ordained ministry. Thank you to Mother Elizabeth Papazolglakis, Transitions Minister and Mother Sue Troiano, chair of the Commission on Ministry (as well as members of the COM) for your ministry in raising up new clergy and for supporting parishes in their time of transition for new clerical leadership.

We celebrate the gift of faithful priests and Deacons who serve the Lord and people of this diocese who lead us in as we ... **PRESS on in the name of Jesus Christ!!!** Invite all clergy to stand.

In recognition of the faithful and blessed servant ministry of our Deacons, the Standing Committee has developed an interim ministry of Director of Deacons. We currently have no Bishop Diocesan and we have no Archdeacon, and our Assisting Bishop has limited time to provide this organizational leadership. The Director of Deacons will be

in place for this time of transition and will work with the deacons to reinvigorate the Deacon's Council, plan a Deacon's Retreat, and be available for pastoral support to the Deacons. The Standing Committee is appointing the Rev'd Thomas Papazoglakis to serve in this temporary ministry capacity. Fr Tom will collaborate with assisting Bishop Michael Smith in serving our Deacons. Fr. Tom also is the Director of the Diocese of Albany Deacon's School. Thank you, Fr. Tom!

In our upcoming business meeting, you will be hearing reports regarding various ministry areas of the diocese. This includes the Cathedral of All saints, Christ the King SLC, Beavercross/Youth Ministries, Healing Ministries and the Missions Committee. We will be hearing the successes and challenges for these ministries. We will have an opportunity to celebrate the positive impact these ministries make in the diocese and in God's kingdom. We will also have the opportunity to participate in discussions regarding the challenges before us in resourcing these ministries. Thank you to: Dean Leander Harding, Rueben Todd, Daniel Hyde, Deacon Marion Sive, and Mother Patti Johnson, for the leadership you have provided in these critical areas of ministry in the midst these most challenging times. Each of you, and the teams who work with you, are nourishing, encouraging, and equipping all of us, to ... **PRESS on in the name of Jesus Christ!!!**

We all know there will be challenges before us: adequate financial resources to support the ministries of the Diocese, development of trainings for every parish to implement Safe Church policies, learning to live with one another in respectful loving relationships despite our differences, electing a new Bishop Diocesan, continuing to respond to the Lord's call for mission; we see on the horizon tall, high peaks for us to climb.

We will also experience blessed successes in ministry to celebrate and enjoy time in the journey on flat land which is easy to walk. No matter what the circumstances, we have been called by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to accomplish this journey together by upholding and loving God, and each other no matter what the circumstances.

As I reflect upon these past 18 months of this journey, I am grateful for each and everyone in this diocese. I have been humbled by God's call to serve as President of the Standing Committee in this unprecedented time and am very humbled to be the first woman to preside at the Albany Diocesan Convention. At the close of this Convention, I will step down from the Standing Committee, as I have reached my term limit. I look forward to the opportunities the Lord will present to use the gifts he has given me and all of us to serve him and this diocese as we continue to ... **PRESS on in the name of Jesus Christ!!!**

### **Prayer During this Time of Transition**

Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you for this, your diocese of Albany. Inspire and sustain us in this time of transition. Incline our hearts to do your will, and so direct us in your ways that the leader you are raising up to be our Bishop will find here joyful disciples, making disciples, united in faith, unflagging in hope, and steeped in mutual charity.

In your mercy, accept our repentance, and grant us peace; look with patience on our enthusiasms; and pour rich gifts and grace upon all who are entrusted with the ongoing work of your church; so that, with diligence and charity, we may discern correctly and walk righteously in your ways.

This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen