

The Bishop's Report

The Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ

August 6, 2023

I am writing this report nearly three months before the Annual Meeting of Convention. I will be traveling from the end of August through much of September. Because of deadlines to prepare the Convention reports for publication and sharing, I decided it was best to write it early.

As I write to you on this major feast day from the Ahupua'a of Honolulu, I take this moment as your Bishop to honor and give thanks for the founding patrons of our Diocese, King Kamehameha IV (Alekanetero 'Iolani Kalanikualiholiho Maka o 'Iouli Kūnuiākea o Kūkā'ilimoku) and Queen Emma (Emma Kalanikaumaka'amano Kaleleonālani Na'ea Rooke). I write from the land on which our Cathedral stands that was entrusted to the Church by the Holy Sovereigns. I acknowledge the trust they committed to our Church in 1862 to care for their people – Kānaka 'Ōiwi – and all of the children of these Islands, and for our responsibility to care for all of creation. As the Bishop of the Church invited to these islands, I deeply regret that we have not always fulfilled our responsibility through these many decades. We have often failed and turned a blind eye to those around us. For those things which we as the Church and as individual Episcopalians have done and the many things we have left undone that contributed to the harm inflicted on ka Kānaka 'Ōiwi and these islands, I offer our collective lamentation. I ask God's forgiveness. I ask the prayers of our blessed ancestors and you, God's people, that we, God's Episcopal Church in Hawai'i, will have the will and courage to better fulfill our responsibility – kā mākou kuleana – to the people of these Islands and to God's creation.

Looking back over the past year since the 2022 Annual Meeting of Convention, I realize how much the Church and the world has changed. Our Diocesan governance meetings are largely done online. That is also true for formation programs and even one-on-one meetings. In many congregations, worship continues to be offered virtually while we gather in person. The way we live out life as God's people will never be the same. We have also recognized that our mission as a Church is one focused on reconciliation and cooperation. We cannot go it alone. We need one another.

To help us – Episcopalians in Hawai'i – live in our responsibility to engage God's mission in Hawai'i, the Reconciliation Task Force has prepared the Hō 'Imi Pono curriculum. This curriculum invites us to tell our individual stories within our context of a living host culture and the many cultures of people who now call these Islands home. Based on the "Difference Course" created by the Reconciliation Leaders Network under the auspices of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and adapted and expanded by nine members of our Diocese working together for over two years, Hō 'Imi Pono seeks to engage every Episcopalian in our Diocese in a healthy conversation about reconciliation that honors our host culture, our heritage, our diversity and God's creation. Many will remember this Task Force from last year's Education Day. Your input and the team's hard work over the past year has readied Hō 'Imi Pono for our Diocesan ministry of reconciliation.

The Environmental Justice and Creation Care Ministry Task Force has called us to reconciliation with creation by sharing resources for action, advocacy, and education. The team administers grants for Carbon Reduction Assistance in our congregations.

As a Diocese, we have continued to learn together. Think about all the offerings for formation and training that are now online. We have continued to train deacons, priests, lay preachers, worship leaders and catechists in virtual classes through the Waiolaihui'ia Center for Ministry using mentors/instructors from within the Diocese and material from the Iona Collaborative of the Seminary of the Southwest. We also have a seminarian studying for ordination at the University of the South. Others are involved in distance and hybrid learning through various seminaries. As we look to the future, there will be multiple models of education for ministry – lay and ordained. This has included continued online 'Ōlelo Hawai'i classes.

I think the increased cooperation between congregations is an important reality as we look to the future. An example of such cooperation is the emerging sharing in ministry on the Windward side of O'ahu between Calvary (Kāne'ōhe), Emmanuel (Kailua) and St. Matthew's (Waimānalo). In the past year, the Diocese has faced the impact of the clergy shortage that has emerged throughout the Episcopal Church. Many of our congregations, like those in North America, have aging members. Sharing in ministry and cooperating in mission will be essential in the future. We have learned from past mistakes like the failed attempt on West O'ahu. This cooperation must be organic and arise from building relationships between congregations. It is not something that can be imposed by the Diocese. As we look to the future, congregations and clergy will need mutual support and shared administration.

We continue to engage in ministries of reconciliation in our local communities. A Cup of Cold Water has continued to roll on Maui and care for the houseless. Hot showers and feeding ministries continue at St. Jude's (on Hawai'i). The Thursday community meal at St. James never stopped and, in fact expanded to St. Columba's, Pa'auilo. We have thriving feeding ministries in several congregations. There are collections for school supplies, animal adoption projects, food panties, and feeding ministries. Our churches support the Diocesan prison ministry. Community farmers' markets are welcome at St. Clement and Grace. These are just examples of much more that has taken place in our Diocese. We have done much in our congregations and for our communities.

There have been changes in the Diocesan Support Center. We have had to adapt after the retirement of Denise Esposito as the Executive Assistant for the Bishop and Canon to the Bishop. Fortunately, Nani Carroll has stepped in with intelligence and energy. I have been blessed as a Punahou graduate retired that a Kamehameha graduate was able to step up without so much as a stumble. Likewise, Sam Okita joined us as Diocesan Controller as Danny Casey moved to the west coast for family reasons. Sybil Nishioka, Communications Specialist, and Spencer Lum, Financial Review Assistant, moved from contractors to employees this year. And Brett Johnson, Operations Support Assistant, joined us in June.

I do owe a profound note of thanks to the entire Diocesan Support Center staff. We have a small office staff that provide support for our congregations and clergy. The trainings and consultations (in person and online) that they provide for our congregations and leaders are

essential to our common life. The team works for you bringing a spirit of reconciliation and mutuality as we engage laws, canons, policies, leases, loans, budgets, insurance, and all the “business” of being the Church in the world.

As I look back over the past year, I am reminded again and again of Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20: “All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people’s sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation. We are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ’s representatives, ‘Be reconciled to God!’”

Submitted with my warm Aloha and blessing,

+ Robert L. Fitzpatrick

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick, Bishop Diocesan
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai‘i