

**Discerning Our Common Call Steering Committee
Report to the 236th Diocesan Convention, 2020**

The Discerning Our Common Call (DOCC) Steering Committee works as a strategic vision and mission team to assist the diocese in clarifying and focusing on our distinctive call to join in God's mission as the Episcopal Church in this region.

Our work began in 2017, when we led the work of listening and discernment throughout the diocese around our mission and budget which led into the Special Convention that year. In 2018, we began to focus our work around the mission and call of our diocese articulated by Bishop Stokes: *Our purpose is to form people as disciples of Jesus Christ who participate in God's mission of reconciliation in the world.*

Leading into Diocesan Convention in 2019, the DOCC Steering Committee sponsored a series of Bishop's forums around the question "What do you mean by 'disciple'?" These forums engaged laity and clergy in every Convocation in conversations about how we identify discipleship and how we form people as disciples of Jesus.

At the 235th Convention of the Diocese of New Jersey, the DOCC Steering Committee shared stories from congregations about nurturing and forming disciples, and asked leaders of the diocese to set goals for encouraging and supporting discipleship within their congregations. These conversations throughout the diocese led to a new vision of the Diocese of New Jersey as an interconnected community of 140 schools of discipleship, all working to become active disciples of Jesus Christ.

Beginning with a "Leadership Day" in June, which brought together members of Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, Trustees of Diocesan Trust Funds, the Deans, the Lifelong Christian Formation Committee, the Board of Consultation, Mission, Structure and Budget Task Force, Resource and Revenue Task Force, Project Resource, and Marks of Mission Giving Task Force, along with the Discerning Our Common Call Steering Committee, we began a series of conversations throughout the diocese around a vision of schools of discipleship that would excite and inspire us.

Fall Convocations also focused on this question, using interactive tools to draw on the wisdom of the gathered community. We learned from these gatherings the needed elements that would energize and inspire us as interconnected schools of discipleship. There are eight factors to this shared understanding: We will be a network of (1) communities focused on ongoing, practical formation. We will (2) grow God-centered relationships and have (3) empowered, accountable lay and clerical leaders. Our worship (4) would be compelling and engaging and our community would be one that is (5) Christ-centered, (6) diverse, inclusive, and barrier-free that (7) performs works of faith beyond the church. Together this will (8) tell and show Christ's love with passion.

We will explore this shared understanding further at the 236th Convention of the Diocese on March 7, 2020.

Throughout the year, the DOCC Steering Committee also led quarterly coordination workshops bringing together the Task Force on Mission, Structure, and Budget; the Task Force on Resource and Revenue; the Board of Consultation; Project Resource; the Marks of Mission Giving Task Force; and the Lifelong Christian Formation Committee to share updates on their priorities, find areas of overlap and shared resource, receive coaching, and renew our focus on mission and disciple-formation in the specific work of each group.

We continue to seek out examples and resources for discipleship and formation from congregations and ministries of the diocese, and are working to share those resources for the benefit of the whole diocese, to support all members and bodies of the diocese in living into this common call and vision.

One such resource is an adapted “Dwelling in the Word” scripture study focused on deepening our understanding of discipleship. This is available in the Discerning Our Common Call portion of the diocesan website, and updated quarterly. Vestries, parish study groups, diocesan governing bodies, and many other groups throughout the diocese use this resource regularly and report rich conversations and new insight from this opportunity to dive deeper into scripture together, and reflect on the impact of our discipleship on our shared life and work.

We are currently working with the coaching network to build a diverse list of resources for forming disciples and deepening relationship with Christ that that can be used by individuals, congregations, and ministries throughout our diocese. We will continue to share stories, tools, and resources for all in the diocese to live into this vision of interconnected communities that form and nurture disciples of Jesus to participate in Christ’s mission in the world.

It is a privilege to be invited to work with you all in deepening and expanding our opportunities to share in God’s mission in New Jersey, and to support one another in the work and grace we are called to share.

The Rev. Emily A. Mellott
Convener, Discerning Our Common Call Steering Committee

Members of the DOCC Steering Committee:
The Rev. Amy Cornell, Grace-St. Paul’s, Mercerville
Mr. Thomas Esposito, St. George’s-by-the-River, Rumson
Ms. Deborah Kirk, St. Stephen’s, Waretown
Mr. Philip Lewis, Trinity Cathedral, Trenton
The Rev. Emily Mellott, Trinity, Moorestown
The Rev. Juan Monge, All Saints’, Lakewood
Ms. Karen Moore, Grace Church, Plainfield
The Rev. Allen Wakabayashi, The Episcopal Church at Princeton

Canon Phyllis Jones, Diocesan Staff Liaison
The Rev. Canon Dr. Rob Droste, Diocesan Staff Liaison