

**LGBTQ Commission**

**Annual Report to the 238<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Diocese of New Jersey**

During last year's virtual convention, Bishop Stokes named me as the new chair of the LGBTQ Commission. I am deeply humbled by his trust and by the serious call this represents for the diocese and the larger Church and world.

After much prayer, my first step was to gather like minds and hearts to serve on the commission, seeking diversity but also passion among the members. Indeed, several individuals via chat and text contacted me while the virtual convention was still happening. There were clergy and lay people, who wanted to be involved and could not wait. Isn't technology wonderful!

Once we had called a group of 10 members from across the diocese and other identities, we met virtually where I shared my vision for the commission. The two missions I challenged us to engage were education and advocacy. We began to brainstorm ways to move forward with these dual missions in mind. The scope of our dreams expressed that day is considerable, but we brought energy and excitement to the goals ahead.

We are about ready to launch our first education module. It is just one piece of the larger need for education, but it's a great place to start. Be watching for announcements of educational opportunities. Bring your questions, but also your love and support to these sessions. Also, be watching for LGBTQIA+ resources for parishes, families, and individuals.

We invite you to pray for us and work with us as we educate and advocate, always seeking to respect the dignity of every human being. Our diocese is filled with many beautiful and diverse LGBTQIA+ people and, of course, those who love them!

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. D. Scott Russell, Chair  
LGBTQ Commission