



Pastoral Letter

The Rt. Rev. Carlye J. Hughes, XI Bishop of Newark

To be read in all congregations of the diocese, or otherwise made available to all members by email or other distribution.

March 23, 2021

Dear Companions on the Journey,

Two mass shootings in less than a week. Sadness and shock fill the air again. We remember the call of the greatest commandment. We remember the promises of our Baptismal Covenant. We remember God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1). As people of faith, we have work to do, and God guides the work.

At this writing, little is known about yesterday's mass shooting in Boulder. The deaths in Atlanta last week have been devastating to the families of those killed, to the Asian community, to those working for an end to racial killings, and to all who make it a practice to love our neighbors. The rising levels of violent hatred towards Asian people in our country are troubling and alarming. Such sorrow and worry are even harder to bear in a time already filled with sorrow and worry.

It was this time last year, after celebrations of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the Feast of Absalom Jones, and Black History Month that the racial killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd led us to begin working in new ways as a diocese to bring an end to systemic racism and white supremacy.

It seems to be more than a coincidence that just after the same celebrations this year, eight people died in a mass shooting in Atlanta:

Delaina Ashley Yuan

Soon Chung Park

Paul Andre Michels

Hyun Jung Grant

Xiaojie Tan

Suncha Kim

Daoyou Feng

Yong Ae Yue

Six of the dead were women of Asian descent. Current legal statutes will determine if this is classified as a hate crime. However, we know this happened within the context of growing violent racial attacks on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across our country.

We have hard work in front of us to stand against racial violence **and** it is work we can do. It is work we have begun to do in the past year. A significant number of our parishes have participated in two programs developed by the Episcopal Church to grow awareness and strengthen responses to racism: [Becoming Beloved Community](#) and [Sacred Ground](#). Our parishes also took on book studies, Namaste sponsored a speaker series on racial awareness in the Episcopal Church, and a group of parishioners across the diocese joined me for six weeks to study and pursue a rule of life for those seeking [racial reconciliation](#).

After a year of growing awareness and effort, we are more ready than we think to respond proactively to the vicious attacks happening around us. As the body of Christ, when one part of us is attacked, grieving, or frightened, we all feel the impact. Some immediate steps to take:

- Add the names of victims in both shootings to your parish and personal prayers lists. Pray for the dead and for their families as congregation and individuals. Pray also for an end to racial violence against Asians and for God's protection over all who are vulnerable because of their race.
- Be in touch with Asian members of your community. They may or may not want to talk with you, but you can send notes, cards, or messages of support and care.
- Keep a watchful eye out especially for the elderly or women, as they have been attacked more frequently.
- Write and call local, state, and national elected official about the urgency of stopping Asian hate.
- Continue to do your anti-racism work: Invest in your spiritual life, learn the history of our country, join others in taking action.
- On Holy Tuesday, March 30, at 7 PM, join the diocesan [Prayer Vigil for an End to Asian Hate](#).

It can be easy, in the midst of great fear and trouble, to ignore racial violence or to isolate from others. I implore you to do the opposite. Pay attention to what is happening and stay in conversation and community. Standing alongside the Asian community within and beyond our church doors is a powerful and necessary show of support amid relentless trouble. It is another way that we are called to love one another as Jesus loved us (John 15:12).

Grace and peace,
Bishop Hughes