

Quarterly highlights of news & events in printable format — WINTER 2019-2020



The gift of the incarnation

By Bishop Hughes

“The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” **Luke 2:10**

Dear Companions on the Journey,

Every Sunday we return to the good news of Christ’s presence among us. While we look forward to celebrating Christ’s entry into the world all through Advent, the story of Christ’s presence does not end with Christmas. Instead, it begins. It also begins in our individual lives as faithful people and in our common life as the family of faith.

What a relief to know that through, in, and with Christ we have a fresh start. Nothing, including the complexity of our circumstances, the humiliation of our failures, the brokenness of our spirits, the limits of our faith, nor any other obstacle can alter the life-changing impact of Christ’s presence among us. Forever and for always we are blessed with a new, growing, and ever-present relationship with God.

Shopping lists of presents will come and go. Resolutions and plans for a new year will come and go. The seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany will come and go. And though all manner of things may come and go, one thing will not change: Christ’s presence remains with us to this very day.

The good news the angels shared is true for us too. Christ’s presence transforms, heals, comforts, and compels us to live a life that is expansive, hopeful, compassionate and generous.

In these seasons of waiting, gifts, and light, can you imagine Christ’s loving presence with you? Amidst navigating celebrations and gatherings, could you embrace the transformation Christ’s presence brings? Would you be willing to hear, see, know this good news in every area of your life?

Christ’s incarnation is more than an offer of peace and comfort. It is a boundless invitation to the life God has planned for us. When we step into that life, then we also live as the people God created us to be. This more than a Christmas gift. It is a gift that resonates beyond our homes, families, and Christmas plans. A gift that can change households, congregations, communities, cities, states, nations, and the whole, wide world. This is the gift of life in Christ, offered to us, ours for the taking.

Listen for this, the good news. Rejoice and be glad, and then let the gift of Christ’s presence continue to transform your life and the world around you.

Grace and peace,
Bishop Hughes

See Bishop Hughes’ videos
and other messages online at
dioceseofnewark.org/bishops-vlog

Winter Events



These are just a few highlights from the diocesan calendar. See ALL upcoming events online at dioceseofnewark.org/events.

Episcopal House holiday closing TUE, DEC 24, 1 PM - WED, JAN 1

The Bishop and her staff send their warmest wishes to you and yours for a blessed Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.

The 146th Annual Convention FRI, JAN 31 - SAT, FEB 1 The Hilton Meadowlands

What Deputies need to know:

Registration Opens
Friday at 8:30 AM.

Business Session
begins at 11 AM.

Voting for Elected
Offices will include
Lay and Clergy
Deputies to the 2021
General Convention.



Convention isn’t just for Deputies!

Everyone is welcome to join us for:

Friday evening Dinner and Bishop’s address. Cocktails 6 PM, dinner 7 PM. For dinner reservations, contact Randy Johnson at rjohnson@dioceseofnewark.org by **Jan. 10**.

Saturday morning Diocesan Service of Holy Eucharist. Bishop Hughes is Celebrant and Preacher. 9 AM in the Main Ballroom.

Workshops both Friday and Saturday afternoons. Watch dioceseofnewark.org/convention for more info.

Plan to stay overnight at the Hilton? Make your reservations by **Jan. 10**. For details, go to dioceseofnewark.org/convention/hotel.

Follow our social media hashtag #beholdbecome throughout January for sneak peeks about what’s coming at Convention!

(More events on reverse side)



Polity: How Episcopalians make decisions

By Canon Wright

“Polity” is how a system is organized and structured. Each expression of Christianity has its own structure and way of making decisions. Some churches found this concept to be so important that they incorporated it into their name: Presbyterians are organized around the work of presbyters (elders); Episcopalians are organized around the work of bishops (*episcopos* means bishop or overseer). How decisions are made is a specific question within polity. Two common patterns are monarchical, with a central authority making decisions for all, or congregational, with decisions being made by congregations. Most Anglican churches around the world lean towards monarchical, with many decisions, such as selection of bishops, policy decisions or liturgical authorization, still being made by a central authority.

A funny thing happened, though, with the birth of the Episcopal Church in the United States. We were an Anglican church that was deeply formed in the same waters that birthed our nation, with a strong emphasis on representative democracy. It is not accidental that our denomination was formed in Philadelphia in 1789, the same year and context as the Constitutional Convention that gave our country its form of government.

The Episcopal Church is neither monarchical nor purely congregational. Instead, we elect representatives from the congregations to make decisions for the diocese, including the election of a bishop, as we did in 2018. These deputies make decisions across the diocese in our Annual Diocesan Convention; decisions are made between Conventions by an elected Diocesan Council. Additionally, those deputies elect representatives to go to the churchwide General Convention every three years and make decisions to guide the whole Episcopal Church.

Our bishops are elected, our Presiding Bishop is elected, our lay leaders both in the diocese and in the wider Episcopal Church are elected (or appointed by those who are elected). We vote to approve policies and budgets. Our liturgies and the texts of our hymns — even the possible translations of Scripture we use in our churches — are voted on by the General Convention.

Each congregation elects a Vestry or Executive Committee to make decisions such as calling a Rector, maintaining property, and overseeing the church’s finances. At each level, we seek the input and consent of those affected. This reflects the American spirit of participation in our decision-making. However, I prefer to think of it as primarily an outcome of our Baptism and the trust that God places in each of us as God’s children.

In our Baptism, we are made one with Christ. We as a community put on Christ. As we seek to order our common lives, to elect representatives and enact budgets and resolutions, even to elect bishops, all of this we do as a spirit-filled people, seeking to discern what God would have us do. This allows all of us to participate in the vocation of God’s people in the world today. When we elect people to positions in the Church, we are committing ourselves to seek God’s best will together through their work and our support.

As we plan to come together at our Convention January 31 and February 1, pray for those nominated, for those to be appointed, for all in leadership and ministry among us, that we may seek God’s good will together and be a blessing to our world.

(Upcoming Events, continued)

Pop Up Youth Ministry

A year-long experiment in regional youth ministry in partnership with Cross Roads. Youth in grades 6-12 are invited to attend monthly events intended to augment, rather than replace, existing church youth programs. Gatherings combine fun activities with faith formation, fellowship, relationship building and service activities. Learn more online at dioceseofnewark.org/youth. Upcoming events:

SUN, JAN 12

Christ Church, Bloomfield/Glen Ridge

SUN, FEB 9

St. Alban's, Oakland/Franklin Lakes

FRI, MAR 13 - SUN, MAR 15

Cross Roads' Middle School Retreat

Confirmation Retreats

SAT, MAR 7, Christ Church, Pompton

SAT, APR 4, St. James, Upper Montclair

Confirmation services will be held in late April and early May. Find out more at dioceseofnewark.org/confirmation.

Public celebration of the Feast of Absalom Jones

SUN, FEB 9, 3-4 PM

Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral, Newark

Hosted by the Diocese of Newark Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians. Save the date and watch dioceseofnewark.org/event/absalom-jones-2020 for more information.

Ash Wednesday

WED, FEB 26

Be sure to send us your church’s “Ashes to Go” photos! Email them to Nina Nicholson at nnicholson@dioceseofnewark.org.

Church Leader University

SAT, MAR 21, 7:45 AM - 12 NOON

St. Elizabeth's, Ridgewood

Save the date and watch dioceseofnewark.org/event/clu-spring-2020 for more information.

The VOICE Digest Winter 2019-2020 issue Display and distribute until Mar. 17, 2020

Online Archive: dioceseofnewark.org/publications/voice-digest-archive

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The VOICE Online: News, events and features, emailed twice a month September-May and monthly June-August.

Leadership News: Key information for lay leaders and clergy, emailed monthly.

Online Meditations: Emailed daily during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

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