

From Our Bishop

A different experience of Holy Week — but still holy

(This is a transcript of a video message.)

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. I want to talk with you today about Holy Week, and Holy Week in this time that we live in. It is going to be a very different experience of Holy Week this year. One where we enter in individually, where we enter in in families, where we enter in with a loved one or maybe by ourselves and we enter in to Holy Week in our own homes.

It's not quite the way we're used to doing it, but there is that part of me that can't help but wonder if God has something in store for us that is unique and special for this particular Holy Week. I think sometimes we come at Holy Week with all sorts of plans and the more we plan the bigger our expectations are, and then we wonder at the end of it all did we hear something specifically from God, do we know that thing that we really needed to know that particular week.

And because this week is going to be so much simpler we almost don't know what to expect — and I want to encourage you to expect something this Holy Week. Two things in particular. One, to really expect a week that is holy, a week that is dedicated to God. That's what holy means, dedicated to God. That when you start the day, when you have your lunch, when you gather together at dinner and at the end of the day that all throughout the day during Holy Week, that you say, "I give this day to God." That's something

that's harder to do when we're running around, when we're trying to make the next appointment, when we're trying to get someone shuttled off to their next appointment. But in this time that we're in, we actually have the time to say to ourselves, "I dedicate this time to God." And for those of us — and there are those among us who are out working and working hard, who are on the front lines keeping us safe, delivering food, taking care of us when we are ill — clearly as they do the work for all of the rest of us their day is devoted to God. To holy work, to keeping God's people safe and keeping God's people healthy.

The other piece that I encourage you to take a look for is that special way in which God is trying to catch your attention. I've been talking a lot about messengers. I've been talking a lot about hearing the Holy Spirit. I've been talking a lot about those behold moments, those moments where God is trying to call our full name and get our attention. We're moving at a slightly slower speed right now, and sometimes it takes a slower speed to actually hear what God has to say.

So I invite you to listen. Pay attention to the readings this week. Take the time on your own — many of your churches and certainly the diocese is sending out materials for Holy Week to help you have a way of practicing this week on your own, in your home, in addition to the many services that you will find online. And as you do those things, as you make the day and the afternoon and the evening and the night holy, and as you listen to God in the day, in the afternoon, the evening, in the night. As you do all those things you prepare yourself for Easter. An Easter that comes for us every day since that very first Easter. An Easter

where we know that we are beloved by God. And that the one that we look to for help, the one who has made us and created us. The one who keeps us safe, is watching our going out and watching our coming in, in this time, in this holy week, in this Easter and forevermore.

I pray for God's blessings on you and on your family and on a very holy week.

Statement by Members of The Coalition of Religious Leaders of New Jersey

(This statement has been endorsed by Bishop Hughes, along with other members of the Coalition.)

March 30, 2020

As members of the Coalition of Religious Leaders of New Jersey and as interfaith religious and spiritual leaders we seek at this moment in time to affirm our concern for the common good of the people of New Jersey. Our deep concern is grounded in our moral and ethical sacred texts that teach compassion and caring for one another.

We are concerned for the well-being of the most vulnerable, the older adult, the poor, the homeless, the prisoner, the immigrant, the socially isolated, and those whose physical and mental health are at risk. We see all over New Jersey and beyond, how our faith communities continue to reflect and live out acts of kindness and caring. We are truly blessed with wonderful communities that are springing into action by providing outreach initiatives to care and attend to those in need and most vulnerable. From deep in our hearts we thank you for your willingness and sacrifices to provide for the least among us.

We encourage all of you to engage in sacrificial giving to meet the incredible human needs at this time of uncertainty. Our faith beliefs call us to reflect the spiritual nature of our Creator In sharing our love, time and resources for others in need.

With a deep sense of gratitude, we recognize those who in this time of crisis who have responded with a deep sense of compassion and moral commitment to act. We are very grateful for our Governor, members of our federal and state legislatures, county, and municipal elected officials for their cooperative initiatives in addressing this crisis.

We will forever be in debt and hold a deep thankfulness for those in the medical community whose actions place their own lives at risk as they seek to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Much love and thanks goes to the police officers, First Responders of the Department of fire and emergency services, the civic and service workers, the educators, the grocery workers, the food deliverers, the retail associates and corporate offices who are adapting, leading and showing up so that we can all be safe and healthy. They work tirelessly for the good of all. We may not know their names, but they are deeply appreciated.

As Religious leaders we too are facing challenges that have deeply impacted the life of our faith communities. For many of us at the center and heart of our faith traditions are the acts of coming together in worship, in service and in community gatherings. We are learning and adapting to ways we can continue our traditions and connect our members and others to the spiritual places that we cling to in times of crisis. This challenge will not negate our foundational tenets of faith to care for the common good. This is our prayer and commitment in this moment in time.

Be Kind to each other.

From Our Canons

Encountering Christ in Word and Communion

By the Rev. Canon dr. Andrew R. Wright

When we gather together at Eucharist, we are gathering at Jesus' invitation to share more fully in

his life and love. The primary way that we enact that encounter with Jesus is through the meal that he gave us the night before he died for us, Holy Communion. Through eating the bread and drinking the cup, we “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (I Cor. 11:26). That is, we are bearing witness to the love shown to us and all the world in his death on the cross until he comes again. The Eucharist is one of the ways that we stay connected with Jesus in these ongoing generations of the life of the Church.

We are in a moment, however, where we have had to set aside gathering at one table, one meal. That raises questions for us as Christians formed and nourished by the Eucharist. One of the great successes of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer was its return to the Eucharist being the norm for public worship on the Lord’s day, recovering ancient practice, commonly in place until the Reformation. That shift, coupled with the formative experience many of us have had in other sacramental traditions, such as Roman Catholicism, certainly make the Eucharist the heart of our Christian worship in today’s Episcopal Church.

The difficulty, of course, is that we do not have a mainstream tradition in Anglicanism nor in our prayer book of encountering Christ in the Eucharist through simply looking upon the consecrated bread and wine, as they often did in medieval Europe. Nor are we well-equipped to implement priests consecrating bread and wine without at least one other person present. Our physical distancing makes all of that more complicated and more important to sort through.

Some of our churches and our people will simply, and properly, lean into our more Reformed side for this period. Returning to Morning Prayer (BCP p. 75 for Rite Two) as a common service is eminently suitable for such a time as this, a service of praise, scripture, and prayer that has deep and powerful roots for us as Anglicans. Or some will simply offer the first portion of the Eucharistic service – the Liturgy of the Word (or Ante-Communion – effectively stopping at the Peace (BCP p. 406-407

gives some instructions). These are good and effective options, to recall the encounter with Christ in Scripture itself and to explore our connection with Christ in common prayer.

Some will want to continue to enjoy some sort of direct use of the Eucharist, however, since it is so central for us, even though now complicated by distance. We can practice a form of Eucharistic worship, though it is a very different experience, and some of our churches are doing this. In places where the priest and people desire to continue in this way, the priest and one other person gather to celebrate Holy Communion. The service ideally is recorded or streamed for others to view. The priest and congregant receive the Sacrament in person – though Bishop Hughes has instructed our clergy that, out of maximum concern, only the clergy may consume from the cup at this time. Both may receive the bread, though, with adequate safe distancing.

Their communion is, effectively, on behalf of all those who wish to receive but cannot, because of our health requirements. Jesus is encountered in the direct reception of Communion; Jesus is also encountered in the life of the person who desires to receive, but cannot. The grace of God is present even so. God is not limited by our distance, our remoteness, our infirmities. In fact, the Book of Common Prayer indirectly provides for this on pg. 457, saying, “If a person desires to receive the Sacrament, but, by reason of extreme sickness or physical disability, is unable to eat and drink the Bread and Wine, the Celebrant is to assure that person that all the benefits of Communion are received, even though the Sacrament is not received with the mouth.” Now, that rubric does not envision our current moment; it is written for those in extreme circumstances physically and is often put to use by clergy visiting gravely ill people in hospitals. Even so, it does yet remind us that the theology of the Eucharist is that God can accomplish more than we can imagine and that God’s desire to provide for us coupled with our desire to receive are the most essential pieces of

the Eucharistic encounter with Christ. This is an extraordinary exception to normal Communion in person, but we are in an extraordinary time.

Some refer to this as Spiritual Communion and there are some prayers that talk about this that various people and places have developed and are incorporating, which is fine. The important thing to know is that Jesus seeks us out in our everyday lives, in our moments perhaps of isolation, of anxiety, and shares his love, mercy, and peace with us. We know this through our shared practice of reading Scripture and common prayer. We know this through the Sacrament of Communion, whether in person or at a distance. We have a multitude of ways to let Jesus fill our lives with grace that we may be a blessing to the world.

The important part of all of this is simply to find your way to letting Jesus come, to join you in your ups and downs, and to know that Jesus' love for you is not tied to where you are or who you are standing next to. And, in God's time, we will rejoice to gather again, to know the fullness of the Body of Christ in one another. Until then, we read, we pray, and we rejoice that God has loved us so dearly.

Diocesan Holy Week & Easter Services

Each day throughout Holy Week we will highlight a service from a different church around our diocese, culminating with an Easter Day service celebrated by Bishop Hughes.

Most services will be pre-recorded to premiere on the appropriate day for on-demand viewing, while some will be streamed live. A full schedule will be available soon.

Stories from Our Congregations

On March 20, Tina Kelley (who attends both St. George's, Maplewood and St. Stephen's, Millburn) read an article about a hospital requesting donations of home-made face masks. She reached out online to her neighbors in South Orange and Maplewood, and before she knew it "SOMa Sewing Volunteers" had formed, located materials, and sewed and donated hundreds of masks to

Overlook, Morristown Memorial and other area hospitals — all while practicing physical distancing.

Stories from Our Congregations

Loving through actions: Crafters sew hundreds of face masks

By Tina Kelley

Friday night, a Facebook friend shared a news story about an Indiana hospital asking for protective masks amateurs could sew, and I headed up to the attic to dig through my late mother's giant sewing basket. Sure enough, I had a healthy supply of sewing elastic, many spools of thread, and cotton fabric she'd used to make curtains for our guest room — I was ready to be the second coming of Scarlett O'Hara. I gathered the sewing shears, my sewing machine, and some thick cardboard to make a pattern for the six-by-nine inch fabric we needed. Sometimes, I pointed out to my husband, being a bit of a hoarder and a bit of a Girl Scout comes in handy.

I posted Friday night on the "in search of" Facebook group of South Orange and Maplewood, where I live. Did anyone want to try this pattern? Did anyone have more sewing elastic? Amazon could deliver by mid-April, the fabric store was out of stock, and people were posting mask patterns for breathing through bra cups. There had been a run on elastic in the two days since the mask story appeared. Did anyone have colorful cotton by the yard?

Dear lord it felt so good to sew, to do something tangible to protect important people, after days of watching the world collapse in slow motion, like the walls of a sand fort, like a calving glacier. Each dip of the machine's needle stabbed through all the inefficiency, miscommunication, and lack of resources I had watched in the headlines. Each completed, straight seam was a glass raised to the

health of a doctor or nurse who is far braver than I am, and far more at risk.

I set up boxes on my porch so people could donate fabric. I put jars of daffodils from my garden next to it, for people to take home. I taught my husband how to cut flannel, and he posed with scissors in hand, a kerchief on his head, and his biceps out, "Rocky the Riveter." My daughter, home for the duration from a closed university, cut elastic in seven-inch pieces.



Bags of pre-cut quilting fabric in cheerful colors showed up. I delivered yards of elastic to a neighbor who sews, I received three finished masks from a fellow freelance writer, and I have a promise of flannel pajamas from a friend in town. "You need flannel? Alert the lesbians! I'm headed to the closet right now," she wrote. A friend from St. Stephen's in Millburn delivered immediately, with an armful of flannel shirts and pajamas in Blackwatch plaid. A former neighbor from Maine offered to order me some LL Bean sheets to cut up. Dozens of sew-ers reported for duty via Facebook messages. SOMa Sewing Volunteers appeared on Facebook as a separate local group, and we shared strategies.

At noon, I paused the sewing machine and started pinning, a quieter action, so I could call Laura, one of my best friends from sixth grade (and the first female warden at her Episcopal church in central Jersey.) Our other dear friend, Diane, was trying to hold a funeral for her mother outside of Chicago, right as we spoke. Laura and I couldn't be there, though these old friends had stood firmly by my side when my parents died. Diane's father couldn't

attend the service for his wife of 61 years, and Diane couldn't visit him now, as his retirement community is closed to visitors.

As the day passed, I worked through a dozen masks. By mid-afternoon, I had a guy: my very own elastic supplier, a husband of a friend from two streets away who works for Atlantic Health Systems. We met in my front yard, and he tossed me a heavy spool of white elastic – enough for 370 masks – and promised to deliver finished masks from my porch to nearby Overlook Hospital, Morristown Memorial and others – one side cotton, one side flannel, three tucks in the front.

In the days since, SOMa Sewing Volunteers have delivered more than 550 masks to Atlantic Health Systems hospitals, a home care group affiliated with Atlantic, and Newark Beth Israel Medical Center. Parishioners from St. George's in Maplewood have been particularly helpful, with Aleeda Crawley sewing up a storm and creating a department of sew-ers supporting mail delivery people in South Orange and Maplewood, and Marymae Henley delivering masks to a senior living community. Lisa Basile, Valyrie Laedlein and Larry Jameson of St. George's and Peter Wick of St. Stephen's have been ready volunteers, joined by other local Episcopalians, Meredith Brehm and Leonora Hartley.

As I sit on my sofa and watch strangers come to my open front porch (no need to touch doorknobs) I am witnessing love in action. Bounty, abundance, charity and kindness emerge from the cars parked briefly in my driveway. A mother with two-and-a-half-year-old twins stops by for materials, followed by one is out with her three children and husband, for a bike ride (how do they do it?) A 79-year-old woman, 600 miles from her sewing supplies, needs a loaner machine and materials, and a delivery person and machine lender pop up, happy to wipe down the machine with wipes for good measure. I'm reminded of Bishop Jack Spong's interpretation of Jesus and His message to us: Love wastefully.

Love through actions. Love so that others may live to their fullest.

Love, and sew, so that others have a better chance of surviving.

We are ingenious, connected beings. We may be able to pull together well enough, city by town, state by neighborhood, and get through this. Maybe we can borrow the idea of a potlatch from the Pacific Northwest, where I lived for six years and left a bit of my heart (St. Mark's Cathedral! Its weekly Compline service!). Maybe as other crucial items become scarce, we'll gather in a ceremony where everyone gives away what they have, for the joy of it.

We crafters, like many humans, are determined people who keep sane by keeping busy. Maybe cooks are the same way, and woodworkers, and gardeners. Maybe our neighbors can get us through what looks too grim from 10,000 feet up.

I have a boxful of colorful masks on my porch that argues in the affirmative.

Tina Kelley is a journalist, poet, and co-author of Almost Home: Helping Kids Move from Homelessness to Hope. She grew up in St. Peter's in Morristown, and spends her Sunday mornings toggling between sermons at St. Stephen's in Millburn and St. George's in Maplewood.

As a body in Christ, we are [inter]connected

By Renee Charney

Last Sunday as we sipped our morning coffee, my husband asked me if I was going to attend "Virch." Anyone who knows my husband knows his love for language and, especially, humor. So, it wasn't surprising to me that, even before the caffeine had time to kick in, he was able to offer up a tongue-in-cheek portmanteau that described our new normal for worshipping.

Virtual church: Virch.

Who would have thought that, as quickly as our clocks changed just a few short weeks ago, our worship lives would shift so dramatically—and even more quickly?

And, yet, have our worship lives really changed?

One might respond with a resounding YES and point out that we can no longer physically gather in our sanctuaries. That our passing of the Peace has been limited to nods, smiles, and waves. That, as we come to the table to share in the Eucharist, we're caught in the frequencies of bandwidth and airwaves while we reach virtually for bread and wine.

And yet, little, if anything, has really changed.

At Church of the Holy Spirit in Verona we have been coming together to worship over the last three Sundays using Zoom, a technology that allows a group to gather through video and audio from our phones or laptops. Our first week, though at times a bit clunky, was a success; our 8 AM service, for example, which typically sees light attendance, had quite a few more than usual join in. Our 10 AM was also well-attended. Our second week of Virch ran more fluidly (we assigned a dedicated "tech" person to manage the screen transitions, allowing the rest of us to follow along with the text while still focusing on our priest). We sang and prayed together. At our 10 AM service, we unmuted Zoom so that, during Prayers of the People, everyone's voices could be heard as they offered our prayers and concerns. When it came time for the Eucharist, we collectively "approached" the table to receive. Our worship and prayer were lifted in community of voice and movement, even as we met through technology.

Coffee-hour was shared virtually, as well!

We, Episcopalians, hold dear the when and the where we spend together; the physicalities of how we worship are quite evident. Now, during this time of adjusting to the Covid-19 outbreak, we have elegantly found a new way of coming together, of keeping our congregant body

nourished, whole, and [inter]connected by gathering by virtual means, and by continuing to hold each other up in prayer and thanksgiving.

We will get through this; I have no doubt. Will the coronavirus force us to change how we live and work? I hope so! There is real opportunity for us to consider new ways in how we gather and worship, in how we meet and serve each other “where we are”, and how we can deepen our [inter]connectedness as a body in Christ. I look forward to what might emerge through this experience.

For now, I'll see you at Virch!

Sign tells neighborhood: Doors may be closed, but church continues

By the Rev. Elaine Ellis Thomas

All Saints is located on a busy corner on Hoboken's main street. Just outside our doors is a bus stop on a major route into New York's Port Authority. While many of those who pass by or wait there may never come inside, we try to find ways for them to connect with us and to know that we pray for them and for our little city.

Since starting this time of “loving distance,” we have put everything online, worshipping on Sunday via Facebook Live and following that with coffee hour on Zoom. Compline and Evening Prayer are also on Zoom, as is a Friday morning “Percolate with the Pastor,” a time to sit and chat over coffee.

The challenge for us is how to let the community know that we are still here, even though our big red doors are closed? In addition to activity on social media and word-of-mouth, we've just put up a new sign where we usually have some quote by the Presiding Bishop. This one is more about us, though.

Yes, our doors may be closed, but our hearts are still very much open.



Diocesan Announcements & Resources

Episcopal House is closed to routine operations at this time. Staff are continuing to work remotely from home, and can be reached via their usual work emails and phone numbers.

All diocesan events scheduled in April have been postponed or canceled. A decision about May events will be made later in April.

Stewardship Reflections: Gratitude Matters

Announcing the first in a series of reflections written by members of the diocese that reflect on concepts of stewardship, gratitude, and generosity in a time of pandemic, anxiety, and fear.

Gratitude

By Pat Yankus, St. Paul's, Paterson

Right now it can be hard to be grateful for anything. We are stuck in our houses; have to stay 6' away from everyone; work from home; work while trying to monitor school-aged children doing their work; wondering what is really happening and will we get sick or will someone we know get sick? Will they recover? So many things on our minds, things that can beat us down.

We can really go there.

But.

We also can not.

We can choose to look at this time as an opportunity for introspection, prayerful thought and thinking about what we are grateful for. Have you ever been in a situation where you are totally overwhelmed and can't figure out what to do? Have you turned it over to God? What happened? Did things change?

What if we took five minutes a day to reflect on this. How does it change your thinking, release some anxiety, make you look at the world situation differently? Ask yourself: Where is God in all of this? We read that God is with us all of the time. This is true. God is.

Even now, turn your anxiety over to God. Open your heart and mind. Feel God's presence. God will never let us down. For that, I am eternally grateful.

Sign up for diocesan e-newsletters

If you have email, you can sign up to receive The VOICE Online, currently published weekly on Wednesdays. Visit dioceseofnewark.org/subscribe.