



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — June 10, 2020

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From Our Bishop

Now is the time to learn all you can about racism and white supremacy

(This is a transcript of a video message.)

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. Last week I sent a message out to the diocese encouraging every member of the diocese to take intentional steps to support the growth and the deepening of their spiritual lives. My sense at the time, and even stronger now, is that with the level of need and intensity and pressure that we are experiencing due to continued racial violence, that it is going to take strong Christians. It is going to take people who think like Christians, act like Christians, and steadfastly bring the love of God into the world. It is going to take people who are strong in their faith in order to go the entire distance needed to make a difference, so that we bring not only racial violence, but racism in any form to an end.

I want to add to that encouragement. It's important to work on our spiritual lives and then the next step is let's work on our learning. Let's make sure that we know what we are talking about. I find that when we start talking about racism, and especially when we start talking about white supremacy and the impact on people in our country and on their day to day experience of life, that there are many people with many opinions, and there are a few people with strong experiences, and very few people that know our history. That understand why those experiences are happening, that understand why they have the opinions that they have, that understand that in our country we have enacted laws, some 400 years old, some more than 300 years old, some more than 200 years old, some decades

old, but we have enacted laws again and again and again that have created a climate of racism enforced by white supremacy. But you have to know our history to know that. But there's nothing personal in our history there is simply the truth.

So I want to invite you to continue doing the work on your spiritual life, continue naming the promises of the Baptismal Covenant out loud, continue reading and meditating and thinking and praying about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and giving that as much time as you do to reading the news or listening to the news or a news talk show. And to continue starting every day and ending every day asking yourself in the morning, "God what do you have me to do this day," and in the evening, "How did I see God in this day," and then add to that – do some reading. Do some studying.

If you have not read Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*, now is the time. If you have not read Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, now is the time. If you have not read Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy*, now is the time. By the way with *Just Mercy* and with Michelle Alexander's book there are film versions of those that you can see too. *13th* is the story, is a documentary based on some of the teaching from Michelle Alexander's book, and *Just Mercy* is the film that is streaming for free on all kinds of platforms right now. I would suggest reading the book first before you see the film versions of those.

No matter what now is the time for study. If you've already read those books then I want to refer you to our *Namaste Virtual Library*. Find something else to read. Learn all that you can about the history of this country regarding racism and white supremacy. Some of it will take you by surprise. Some of it will help you understand what you are doing. But most of all, it will

inform the work that we as individuals and as a diocese and as a community and as a nation have to do.

We can't simply wish racism and white supremacy away. We will have to do the work. It will take knowing that we are Christians, that God is leading us on this path, and it will take knowing our history.

Stories from Our Congregations

Christ Church, Teaneck's food pantry faces an explosion of need

By Nina Nicholson

When the food pantry that's now at Christ Church, Teaneck began, even one of its founders admits it got off to a slow start.

"It didn't take off like gangbusters but it did take off to some degree, and we developed a clientele," said Mary Sue Kaplow of the food pantry she helped launch in the late 1990s at the former St. Mary's, Ridgefield Park.

When St. Mary's closed a couple of years later, Kaplow went to Christ Church and so did the food pantry. At that time, she said the pantry was open two Saturdays a month, and estimates it eventually grew to support between 50 and 80 people a month.

"We're in an isolated area – we're in very much of a residential area – so people don't just see us. We're a little bit of an invisible church in a largely Orthodox Jewish neighborhood, so it's tricky to get people to come to us," she said.

"Mary Sue did a fine job all these years of maintaining a bunch of donors," said the Rev. Dr. Michelle "Chellie" White, Vicar at Christ Church. Supporters of their food pantry over the years have included the Episcopal churches of St. Andrew's, Harrington Park; St. Peter's, Essex Fells; and St. James', Ridgefield; as well as Grace Lutheran

Church and St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Cathedral, both in Teaneck, and Ridgewood Montessori School in Paramus.

White added, "We're down the street from Whittier Elementary School and a lot of our guests come from that school where 30% of the kids are food insecure, so we started working with the Center for Food Action to do snack packs."

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Christ Church food pantry is now open every Saturday and challenged to support a great many more people.

"Two Saturdays ago we were at about 70 [people], and then it grew to 90, and then it grew to a 170 people last Saturday [May 30] so I'm expecting over 200 this Saturday [June 6]. There are people coming from 15 different towns," said White.

"Nobody wants to be on a food line. You don't have to prove that you're hungry – I don't have a hungry meter check you. If you say you're hungry, you are," she added.

As well as the increased need for food, the food pantry is being asked to support a new need: diapers.

"We're finding out the people need diapers for their babies, which we did not necessarily have before because we're getting a different clientele now, so that has changed the picture of our pantry to some degree," said Kaplow. She sees this as a good thing: "We're really focusing and reaching out to people who really need our services."

White said, "The outpouring of support from the clergy has been phenomenal after that Zoom call with the bishop," at which White appealed to her fellow clergy for assistance.

Noting that that WIC (the Women, Infants and Children Federal assistance program) does not provide funds for diapers, White named in particular the Rev. Margaret Otterburn of Messiah,

Chester, who “came down with a whole truckload of diapers” from North Porch.

Lay people, as well as clergy, have risen to the call. “As a matter of fact, someone just called from Allendale,” White said. “They got their stimulus check and they felt compelled that people need to eat with it because they eat every day, so they're sending us their stimulus check, and that's amazing!”

Christ Church has had to restructure how their food pantry operates. “We've had to set up cones and barriers to direct the traffic into the parking lot of the church,” said White. “We've taken over the nave so that when food comes in we store it in the back of the nave,” instead of the undercroft, which had required volunteers to carry bags of food up and down stairs.

“It looks like a Ford Motor Company assembly line,” she continued. “The volunteers fill the boxes, the boxes are sent through, we pick up diapers, the people drive around, we plop it into their trunks and then they drive away.”

“The people are so emotional when they pick the stuff up,” White said, adding that many are essential service providers. They're even supporting the church's garbage collector: “The guy who picks up our garbage takes food from the pantry every time he comes to pick up the garbage.”

White had one final message for readers.

“If you write anything, please remind us all that we are members of the body of Christ, and poor people can't be amputated from that body. We have to take care of folks.”

*The Diocese of Newark has set up online giving to support the diocese's food pantries. Simply visit giving.dioceseofnewark.org and go to **Area of Greatest Need: Food Pantries** (second item from the top). **Donations made from June 10 through June 23, 2020 will go to the food pantry at Christ Church, Teaneck.***

Choir is Dangerous

By Kirk Petersen, published in The Living Church

With the possible exception of receiving communion, singing in the choir may be the most dangerous thing you can do in church these days.

A church choir traditionally is a group of people standing in a tight bunch, all striving to sing loudly enough to be heard over the organ by worshipers in the back pew. A singing chorister expels a lot more air than a person having a conversation.

It's not just a theoretical concern. Choir rehearsals and performances in March appear to have spread the virus in Europe and America.

Choir directors and members around the country have been coming to grips with the realization that because of the pandemic, an activity they love may not resume for a long, long time.

A gut punch came in early May in the form of a two-hour webinar sponsored by a group of national choral singing associations. Two scientists described in detail how the act of singing generates tiny droplets of aerosolized saliva that can be projected far beyond the social-distancing standard of six feet. They said the coronavirus particles are so small that significant amounts can be embedded in even the finest mist. They discussed possible countermeasures and workarounds, and explained why they were all ineffective or impractical.

The webinar caused anguish in choral music circles. “Everybody was just gob-smacked and devastated and heartbroken,” said Anne Matlack, who is choirmaster and organist at Grace Church in Madison, New Jersey, and also leads a 100-voice choral society.

“They're recommending things like taking temperatures, and everyone wearing masks, and testing 24 hours before each rehearsal,” said Marty Burnett, president of the Association of Anglican Musicians. “The very idea that everyone coming to choir on Wednesday night would have to have an

antibody test on Tuesday? That's completely unrealistic."

"Even with testing, the risk is never going to be zero," said Dr. Lucinda Halstead of the Medical University of South Carolina, who is also incoming president of the Performing Arts Medicine Association, one of the webinar's sponsors. "At our institution, we have a 3 to 5 percent false negative rate, which means that 3 to 5 percent of the people that come in with a negative test are actually positive."

Dr. Donald Milton, a professor of environmental health at the University of Maryland, said "as we wait for the high-capacity testing capabilities to come online, we need to be thinking about the ventilation and air sanitation in the practice rooms and concert halls." Even if the nave of the church is large enough for good air circulation, what about the room in the basement with the spare piano, where the choir rehearses?

One of the sponsors of the webinar was the American Choral Directors Association. Tim Sharp, the group's executive director, said he and his wife have both recovered from COVID-19. His case was relatively mild, but his wife had to be hospitalized.

"As a person who dealt with somebody who had to be in the hospital... you don't want to take this risk, folks," he said. "You don't want to be facing oxygen tanks and be responsible for somebody else who had to go the hospital and be there for a week. We need to live to fight another day."

At Church of the Holy Faith in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Director of Music Mark Childers said it had taken a while for the enormity of the problem to sink in.

Early in the lockdown, "I was still holding on to some hope, so I sent an email out to the entire choir and said, 'We're still going to get to do Lasso's Surrexit,'" he said, referring to Orlando di Lasso's motet Surrexit Pastor Bonus – The Good Shepherd is Risen. "I know we worked on it for

Easter, and we're still going to do it. We're going to do it in Easter season." Not this year, as it became clear well before Pentecost."

Many churches have moved their services online, either live-streaming on Sunday mornings or prerecording services. Sermons and Scripture readings hold up well after making the transition, but hymns are another matter.

Singing at home with a cantor or soloist on the computer screen is a poor substitute for a crowd of choristers and congregants belting out familiar hymns while organ music soars to the rafters. Virtual choirs can be fun — with parts sung individually and then mixed digitally — but it's a lot of work, and still involves singing alone at home.

Michael Smith is minister of music at St. Thomas' Episcopal in Whitmarsh, Pennsylvania, a church with roots in the 17th century. He misses "singing together in community, working on something, struggling with something, doing something with a group of people that you couldn't do by yourself."

There's no way to predict how long the situation will last, but it seems clear that choirs will not return to their familiar form until well after other forms of worship.

"I got an email from one of our 80-year-old choir members this week," Childers said. The choir member "was writing me a note to say, 'I love you, thank you so much for letting me be in the choir and sing, by the time this is all over I'm afraid that my time has passed.' I hated that."

"I'm not willing to say it's going to be 18 months to two years before we can sing again, because, look how much has changed in the last two months," Matlack said. Meanwhile, "I'm trying to figure out what is my relevancy, and what can I do to make music?" She's been giving one-on-one Zoom lessons to kids in her children's choir.

"We could produce videos with learning activities for the children and youth," Burnett said. "We could have a book club online to look at interesting

works of literature and music, and have study groups.”

Childers said, “I can see the makings of a pretty fabulous bell choir, and we can social-distance enough in our parish hall.”

“I’m unable to do this without hope, and I think we will recover,” Smith said. “It is so important, and for us as Christians, it’s our commandment to worship God, and God gave us this gift and grace of singing, and we will figure it out. I don’t think this will be the end of choirs and singing.”

Diocesan Resources & Announcements

Stewardship Matters: Everything is different

By Cynthia McChesney, Christ Church, Short Hills

As we enter the 12th? The 13th? The four hundred and fifty-seventh week of stay at home? Let's stop for a minute. Let's stop and reflect on what we notice is different, really different, in our lives as Episcopalians.

Our Sunday services are different. Our buildings are closed. Our choirs are not singing, at least in church. There is no offering plate being passed. No shared food at coffee hour.

Everything is different. Sunday services have moved online. Many churches have expanded their services to prayers and services throughout the week. Choirs are stilled for now but many church musicians are finding ways to make music. We're learning new habits of giving even without a church offering plate (at least a physical one) and we're certainly working at keeping community going through Zoom, phone calls, and prayer chains.

Everything is different, but God's love for us is the same.

So as we think about the work ahead in Stewardship this year, we can't pretend that it won't be challenging. It will be. This will not be the year that anyone can expect to pull out last year's files and just repeat the formula. (Honestly that was not a good idea last year). It really won't work in 2020: Everything is different.

And that's good. It means we can focus on the important things, the things that have become so crystal clear to us through the last few months. Let's focus on how much we value our church family. Let's focus on the joy of finding worship and community in unexpected (and virtual) places. Let's focus on the ways God and God's love keep showing up in our lives.

Those of us in Stewardship roles at our churches have gotten a gift --a gift that is also a great big wakeup call. Let's take the time to recognize how everything is different, and how God's love for us is the same. Let's share those stories now, and as we look forward.

Take care,
Cynthia

Gratitude Matters: Emily's gratitude

By Ross Wisnewski, St. Mary's, Sparta

With Emily's permission, I share a recent Zoom breakout coffee hour conversation that awed me.

My friend, Emily Ference, has been a member of St. Mary's for more years than my 25 or so. Her parents and siblings too were members beginning way back in the 1970's she tells me. Lay Eucharistic minister, Vestry member, vibrant puppeteer master at Vacation Bible School, Committee member, loyal worship attendee were among the many roles Emily has faithfully filled at St. Mary's, always with cheer and appreciation for the roles of others.

About two years ago, as her husband's health began to fail, he and Emily found themselves less

and less able to get to St. Mary's. Herman's passing, Emily's own health concerns and now the impact of the virus have further physically isolated Emily. But that isolation has not dampened her spirit.

At a recent Zoom breakout session following our morning prayer service, Emily enthusiastically stated her appreciation at being able to once again be a part of St. Mary's worship. She said how wonderful it would have been if Zoom had been available when she and Herman were homebound and sorely missing the shared community of faith. With a voice brimming with gratitude, Emily expressed the hope that whenever our church doors once again open, that we remember to include in our worship in any way possible those who may be unable to join us in our pews.

Amen, Emily.

Prayers of Pandemic from the Diocese of Newark

Bishop Hughes has invited members of the diocese to write and share their own prayers during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are collecting these prayers on the diocesan website and sharing them in *The VOICE* and on social media.

Prayers can be sent to Canon Wright at awright@dioceseofnewark.org for posting. Please include the name and town of your church.

The Chorister's Prayer – for Quarantine

Bless, O Lord, us thy singers, who once sang within thy temple.

Grant that what we sing in our homes, may yet be heard in the world,

And what is heard in the world, may lead all closer to thee,

Until we're choirs again. Amen.

– Anne Matlack, Grace, Madison

Lambeth Palace will be praying for us

This note was received recently from Lambeth Palace in London:

Dear Bishop Carlye,

Prayers will be said for you and the Diocese of Newark by the Lambeth Palace community on Friday 12 June 2020.

We remember especially all those who are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic at this time.

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.
In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

This comes with our warm greetings, and our prayers for God's blessing on your ministry.