



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — July 8, 2020

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## From Our Bishop

### Training to be the church that God needs us to be

*(This is a transcript of a video message.)*

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark and I want to talk with you about training to be the church that God needs us to be.

While I was watching the streaming of the Broadway musical *Hamilton*, I was struck by how much practice had to have been involved to make that production happen. The writing of words and music, and gathering of a cast, and the rehearsal, and practicing camera angles, and all of those pieces that had to come together in order for me to watch a Broadway musical in my living room. And it didn't happen overnight and it didn't happen by happenstance. It happened by focused and devoted and disciplined practice.

It made me think of that old joke about the person walking down the street on Sixth Avenue in New York City trying to find Carnegie Hall – they finally stopped a stranger and say "How do I get to Carnegie Hall?" and the stranger says, "Practice!"

Sometimes I think we think that the faith just happens, just by happenstance, and maybe for some people it does that way. But for many of us it takes practice. And the good news for us in the Diocese of Newark is over the last four months, we have gotten a lot of practice. And our practice has

been very specific and specialized. We have practice putting someone else's needs before our needs. The needs of distancing to handle Covid, the needs of people who are hungry or without work, to make sure that those are met, the needs of the people around us for encouragement and support and prayer – that we have taken to heart the commandment that Jesus gave us to love God with all our heart and with all our soul and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

I think our practice is this, is something that takes discipline and it takes devotion and it takes focus. And I know that I have seen that happen with so many people – with lay people, with clergy, with children, with adults, with large churches, with small churches – but all of us have learned how to stand in this very different position of us in church where we're thinking less about ourselves and our own needs and what church can do to comfort us, and more about how we can take care of God's people. Both God's people that we know in the church, but especially God's people who are beyond the doors of our church. It's taken practice.

We continue to go forward and we'll keep practicing. It's going to take a while before our economy rights itself. There are going to be people who are going to be in need of finances, financial support, of meals, and support for their families. There are going to be people who need to continue distancing, and will need us to work extra hard to stay in relationship. They're going to be the needs that we have as a larger community to work our way through this time of pandemic.

It'll take practice. But we've been doing that all along, and all along the way we've been discovering more about who we are and more about who God is. And if I'm right, and only time will tell, in the coming months we will discover more and more about what God needs the church to be, and how we're meant to live in to that new kind of church that God needs us to be. All it takes is practice.

## From Our Canons

### Tempus fugit

*By the Rev. Canon Dr. Andrew R. Wright*

"Time flies" so the old Latin goes – to which I'd add "especially during a pandemic." Hmm. Or maybe not. Time is relative, isn't it? Maybe in a couple of different ways – not only according to Einstein – but also in how we experience time.

It's hard to believe that it's already been a year since I arrived to join you all in ministry in this diocese as the Canon to the Ordinary; that year has gone by very quickly! My last days in my former parish in Texas were a whirlwind of moving and packing and farewells and included a high-speed (well, as the law allows) cross-country journey with my cat, Mjölnir. That all has gone by very quickly.

On the other hand, the "before-time," prior to our awareness of COVID-19, seems like a long, long time ago, doesn't it? The quaint olden days of sitting with people nearby, whether in restaurants, theaters, or church. Actually being okay with breathing alongside folks who we haven't asked to do a health screening. You know. The before-time.

Crisis events have a very odd effect on our perception of time. You know how, in the middle of a critical stress event (like someone falling or an auto accident), everything seems to slow down – like everything moves in slow motion? I always imagined that we had some kind of hyper-awareness that kicked in at moments like that, fueled by adrenaline, that allowed us to see and

respond more quickly. Apparently, that's not quite what is going on. I heard about a study on this perception of time slowing down in crisis in which the scientists demonstrated that our sensory and cognitive abilities pretty much worked the same in those critical incidents. What did kick into high gear, though, was our ability to document the details of the event. Think of it like a high-resolution image, for those technically minded, densely packed with more information than a normal snapshot. When we remember these events, even immediately afterwards, we have many more details of our experience available to us, so we subconsciously recall the event as if it were going more slowly, to get in all the details available. That doesn't mean any of us remember perfectly or accurately, since memory is always shaded and shaped by our experience and many other factors, but there's a lot more data to process in a crisis.

We are in two long-term critical incidents at the moment – the pandemic and the renewed struggle for racial justice in the public square – and we are each taking in a lot more information. We take it in personally, experientially, and also in what we see and read on our screens. Maybe that's why the before-time seems so long ago. We have a lot more to process in times like these. That awareness wears on us in its own way and we need to find ways and opportunities to take a break, mentally, spiritually, and reset. To clear the cache for a moment. This summer may give you some additional opportunities, even for a day or part of a day, to step away and focus on something else for a bit, to allow our minds and our spirits to reset and renew. We will be in both of these critical incidents for a good while to come, it would seem, so take those moments when you can, to refocus.

A year in, I'm thankful to be here with you all, whether in sickness or in health. I mean, I'd prefer health, honestly, but glad to be with you all no matter the circumstances. I'm thankful to get to know you better and better, and to share in

ministry that is challenging, but life-giving. Prayers continue for our common life – and our work continues for the spread of God’s reign.

## Stories from Our Congregations

### Paterson food pantry meets multiple needs while serving twice as many

*By Nina Nicholson*

Before the COVID-19 pandemic the food pantry at St. Paul’s, Paterson served 400 families a month, on average.

This past June they served 933 families.

“You see people come who have never used a food pantry before and they have no idea what to expect,” said the Rev. Deacon Erik Soldwedel, Deacon in Residence at St. Paul’s.

The pandemic was stressful for the volunteers as well.

“When this first hit, we were scared for our lives,” said Kimberly Arias, Manager of the food pantry. Pre-pandemic the food pantry was typically staffed by 8 to 10 volunteers, but due to fear of contracting COVID-19, all but three volunteers stopped coming. Arias, the food pantry’s only paid employee, left her office to work alongside them.

“It wasn’t about titles anymore – it was about getting the job done,” she said.

Thanks to an annual summer AmeriCorps program, the food pantry currently has enough volunteers.

“We may need volunteers again in September, though,” said Arias.

The food pantry now requires the wearing of masks and social distancing. If someone arrives without a mask, they will be given one. “St. Mark’s quilters guild in Teaneck makes masks for us to give out,” said Soldwedel.

Distributions are now made at the door, not inside the food pantry, and plexiglass shields have been put in place.

St. Paul’s food pantry started in 1970 as a small volunteer effort. In 1990, St. Paul’s launched St. Paul’s Community Development Corporation as a separate nonprofit to consolidate its outreach efforts, which in addition to the food pantry had grown to include an Emergency Men’s Shelter. During a major renovation in the late 1990s, St. Paul’s created a new, large space for the food pantry in the undercroft. It is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 11:30 AM.

The majority of the food pantry’s support comes from the Community Foodbank of NJ. As demand has grown during the pandemic, “They’ve been gracious about giving us extra food,” said Arias.

The Rev. Michelle White of Christ Church, Teaneck put St. Paul’s in touch with the Paramus grocery store Stew Leonard’s, which now donates an average of 50 cases of milk to them each month, including non-dairy almond milk. Support has also come from Christ Church, Ridgewood; St. Elizabeth’s, Ridgewood; All Saints’, Glen Rock; and local congregations from other denominations.

St. Paul’s food pantry also coordinates with other Paterson feeding ministries to share surpluses. Their partners include Eva’s Village and the United Presbyterian Church just down the street.

“St. Paul’s food pantry is unique in the sense that it does serve all needs of food – it’s just not limited to non-perishables,” said Soldwedel, noting that they do their best to accommodate food allergies, and also distribute toiletries.

The pantry even celebrates birthdays. “If you’re a client and you come and say, ‘It’s my child’s birthday,’ you get a full kit for a birthday party,” Soldwedel said. “You get a cake mix, you get frosting, you get filling, you get hats, you get paper cups, paper plates, tablecloth, candles – you name it, it’s there.”

Christ Church, Ridgewood makes and donates these “birthday bundles,” which are distributed to clients during the birthday month.

Arias described how one adult client broke down crying when given a birthday bundle for herself.

“She told us, ‘I never thought anyone cared enough about me to give me something for my birthday,’” said Arias.

“We see tons of clients with different situations,” Arias said. “We know most of our clients by name – we like to have that relationship with them.”

As if those offerings weren’t diverse enough, the congregation of St. Paul’s, in cooperation with the food pantry, has started a new ministry called Just Diapers. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, during the same hours the food pantry is open, they distribute diapers, wipes and baby food.

“The CDC and the church have come together during the pandemic to help each other,” said Arias. “They’ve gotten closer as a partnership. It’s a team effort.”

*The Diocese of Newark has set up online giving to support the diocese’s food pantries. Simply visit [e-giving.dioceseofnewark.org](https://e-giving.dioceseofnewark.org) and go to Area of Greatest Need: Food Pantries (second item from the top). Donations made from July 8 through July 21, 2020 will go to St. Paul’s food pantry.*

## Bergen County congregations raise record-setting \$8K for North Porch

*By the Rev. Lynne Bleich Weber*

Each Lent for more than two decades, 12 congregations in northeast Bergen County have worked together to collect a Lenten Offering to support a designated ministry.

Spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, their 2020 Lenten Offering collected a record-setting of \$8,010 that will go to support an unexpected need: diapers and other baby supplies.

An Epiphany service held at St. Paul’s, Englewood kicked off this year’s Lenten Offering at the end of February – just before the pandemic took hold in the U.S. Then the unemployment caused by this public health crisis dramatically increased the need for baby supplies from North Porch, as well as other organizations across our diocese.

According to the Rev. Margaret Otterburn, currently North Porch is serving 100 infants and toddlers a week in Dover and another 50 to 60 a week in Jersey City. If these numbers continue, North Porch is on track to serve over 6000 children this year – double their average for the past three years.

North Porch welcomed the additional support from the Lenten Offering, which enabled it to share supplies, particularly diapers, with other ministries serving infants, toddlers, and their families.

An ad hoc Outreach sub-committee of three or four people from different churches is formed to brainstorm and recommend that year’s recipient. This year the committee consisted of Ann Hirsch (St. Paul’s, Montvale), the Rev. Archie Palmer (Annunciation, Oradell), and the Rev. Jim Petroccione (Holy Communion, Norwood).

The Lenten Offering began over two decades ago as a project of the congregations in District 9, joined by All Saints’, Leonia in neighboring District 8. It has been the most consistent means by which District 9 has worked together, and provided opportunities for joint worship, social gatherings, and Confirmation education in addition to regular District meetings.

Every year, the goal is to raise at least \$5,000, and every year, that goal has been met, with the proceeds supporting both international and local organizations.

Previous Lenten Offerings included over \$7K for the re-opening of the Episcopal school in Monrovia, Liberia; \$5K for a well to provide water for a community through Episcopal Relief &

Development; nearly \$7K to provide new supplies for Episcopal schools in the U.S. Virgin Islands damaged by hurricanes; and last year, over \$6K to assist with transportation costs for the Center for Food Action. For several years in the mid-2000s, District 9 collected and delivered toiletries, phone cards and magazines for Seamen's Church Institute.

It's been inspiring for everyone to realize how much more we can do in Christ's name together than we can do separately. These congregations are now distributed among two of the new Regional Ministry Networks, where we hope to continue joint parish efforts.

*Following are the congregations involved in the Lenten Offering.*

*In the Regional Ministry Network Augustine of Hippo (East):*

*All Saints' Episcopal Korean, Bergenfield; St. Paul's, Englewood; St. Luke's, Haworth; All Saints', Leonia; Atonement, Tenafly.*

*In the Regional Ministry Network Benedict of Nursia (North East):*

*St. Andrew's, Harrington Park; Holy Trinity, Hillsdale; St. Paul's, Montvale; Holy Communion, Norwood; Annunciation, Oradell; St. Matthew's, Paramus; Grace Church, Westwood.*

## Diocesan Resources & Announcements

### Announcement from Bishop Hughes regarding Episcopal House operations

To mitigate risk during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bishop Hughes has directed that:

- Episcopal House staff will continue to work remotely through December 2020.
- All diocesan meetings will continue online through December 2020.

- All Episcopal Visitations will continue online through January 2021.

These guidelines will be reevaluated in November.

### 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](mailto:awright@dioceseofnewark.org) for posting. Please include the name and town of your church.

**Dear God - For this day, help me to keep my heart open.**

Help me to observe the beauty around me; to appreciate all that I see.

Help me to notice the blessings in my life, and to ignore those things that do not measure up to my expectations.

Guide me dear God to be of service to others, and to go through this day with humor and grace, and no regrets.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord we pray. Amen.

— Joyce Hart, St. George's Maplewood