

Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — August 5, 2020

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From Our Bishop

For just such a time as this

“Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal
dignity for just such a time as this.”

Esther 4:14b

The challenges of pandemic, protest, and economic disruption continue to shape every area of our lives. We are navigating complex and volatile circumstances involving health, work, school, and church. Some of us have grown tired. Compassion fatigue has become a common response. Some of us are confused, overwhelmed, or angry. The tension of division continues to take its toll on individuals, households, businesses, and institutions. Most of us have recognized that we are in a marathon rather than a sprint. Our journey forward requires perseverance, regular sustenance, and a continual deepening of faith.

Our faith is a gift given to us by God and nurtured into fullness by God’s generosity. Our role is to embrace the gift, to tend it by turning to God daily so that the gift grows and develops. In the midst of extraordinary distress, many in our diocese are experiencing a deepening of the faith. While we worry about long-term impact on our households, faith leads us to open our cupboards and wallets so that others can eat. Longing to hug beloved family and friends again, faith prompts our hearts and minds to grasp the seemingly impossible goals of ending racism and white supremacy.

God will guide and guard our way through this journey. In the past few weeks, we have talked often of *The Journey Forward* as it relates to in-person worship. It will help us all to broaden our definition of *The Journey Forward*, because it is also about the growth of our faith. It’s our impact in the world as faithful people, and our relationship with a God who loves us. Faith powerfully connects us to God and to those in need of God’s love and mercy. Faith helps us to see the church, ourselves, our neighbors, and the world the way God sees them. As importantly, faith helps us to love and be merciful the way God intends for us to love and be merciful.

The Journey Forward continues. Individually and as church communities we are becoming more like the people and church God intends us to be. Lean into your faith, God will meet you there.

Grace and peace,
Bishop Hughes

Stories from Our Congregations

Hawthorne's neophyte food pantry unfazed by pandemic

By Nina Nicholson

When Martha’s Pantry first opened at St. Clement’s, Hawthorne in November 2019, nobody came.

“We advertised all around town – the libraries, the storefronts, Facebook – but no one showed up. That was kind of sad,” said Linda Heerema, the parishioner who manages Martha’s Pantry.

“However, the second week we opened we had five families and it continued to grow after that. Last week, we fed over 100 people.”

The original pantry consisted of three sets of plastic shelves, purchased from Home Depot and assembled in St. Clement’s basement by the Rev. Deacon Erik Soldwedel, who is serving at St. Clement's part-time as interim clergy

During the pantry’s brief interval before the COVID-19 pandemic, clients would come downstairs into the basement and “shop” using points allotted based on the size of their household – a system Heerema picked up when she visited the food pantry run by St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Pompton Lakes to “learn the ropes.”

“As we were growing,” Heerema said, “we ended up with ten sets of shelves. We took up quite a bit of the one area in the basement. And then with the pandemic, and we started receiving so many donations, we took over the whole parish hall. It looks like the stock room at ShopRite.”

In mid-March, in response to the pandemic, Martha’s pantry replaced the point system and the in-person shopping with pre-packaged bags and outdoor pickups.

“We make the clients stay in the vehicles – just pop the trunk or open the window or the rear door or whatever – then we put the groceries in. We don't allow them to get out of their cars,” said Heerema.

“Our volunteers all wear masks,” she continued. “We have hand sanitizer, we're all six feet apart from each other – we're very respectful of our distances when we pass each other in the hallway carrying all these bags.

“We started with four volunteers – now we have nine, and they're extremely faithful. We work like a well-oiled machine.”

Pre-pandemic, food pantry clients had to show proof of need, such as receiving SNAP benefits. Now, anyone who asks for food receives it.

Named in honor of a long line of St. Clement’s parishioners who were either literally named Martha or whose service was reminiscent of the biblical Martha, Martha’s Pantry is open the first and third Saturday of the month from 10 AM until noon. Every time they’re open, they give out pre-packaged bags of non-perishable groceries. Diapers, baby food, toiletries and pet food are also available to those who need them.

The third Saturday of the month is “Laundry Day” when they give out laundry detergent.

“And if people say they need it without scent, we give it without scent,” said Soldwedel. The pantry also receives donations of gluten-free items and shelf-stable almond milk which they give to those who need them.

Martha’s Pantry does not work with a food bank but receives all its food and other items through donations.

“What that’s done,” said Soldwedel, “is it's led many people in the town to make donations. I constantly get calls – ‘Are you going to be there?’ – and we get food delivered.

“One of the parishioners at All Saints in Glen Rock” – the parish that sponsored Soldwedel for ordination – “said, ‘I want to do something to help Martha's Pantry.’ So, she contacted all her neighbors. Now every two weeks they show up with anywhere between 30 and 60 bags of donations.

“Parishioners make cash donations – there've been people who have decided not only to pledge to the church but to pledge to Martha’s Pantry at the same time.

“The Reformed Church next door is now collecting for Martha's Pantry, so it's become a focal point for the faith community in Hawthorne.”

Heerema said that some donations arrive via Amazon, FedEx, or US Mail.

“I believe St. James in Montclair has donated to us – a nice, sizable donation – through Amazon.

“Erik lives right next door [to St. Clement’s] so he keeps his eye out for all the packages that arrive and brings them indoors.”

Soldwedel related the story of a client early in the pandemic who later became a donor. The sole provider for a family of four, “He was laid off from his job and had put in for his unemployment, and he said, ‘Can I have something?’ I said, ‘You can come today.’ That was on a Tuesday – he got three bags and then he came the following Saturday.

“He recently got hired back and he came by with a donation for the food pantry.”

Soldwedel says he is very impressed with what St. Clement’s has done. “The most beautiful thing about it is it’s not clergy-dependent – laity have taken this on as their project. For the first time in 30 years, this congregation has a hands-on outreach that is truly lay-led, lay-formed.”

The Diocese of Newark has set up online giving to support the diocese’s food pantries. Simply visit e-giving.dioceseofnewark.org and go to Area of Greatest Need: Food Pantries (second item from the top). Donations made from Aug. 5 through Aug. 18, 2020 will go to Martha’s Pantry at St. Clement’s, Hawthorne.

Diocesan Resources & Announcements

Clergy ministry transitions

Departures

- **The Rev. Archie Palmer**, Interim Priest-in-Charge, Annunciation, Oradell - July 26

Departures

- **The Rev. Michael Allen**, Rector, Trinity, Allendale - Sept. 1

Arrivals

- **The Rev. Deacon Sun-Hwan Spriggs**, Deacon, St. George’s, Maplewood – Aug. 9

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.

A prayer written by the Rev. Fain Webb, St. Luke and St. Mary, Hope/Belvidere

Holy God,

We are a people reeling from sickness
In our bodies and our souls.

The virus is a killer among us,
Increasing our fear at just being alive.
That would be enough.

The virus of racism is a killer among us as well,
Where black people are always on alert,
Weary and wary;
And white people have been immune
And ignorant and indifferent.

We all need healing, Holy One,
From our fears of the breath-taking virus
And our surrender to the soul-taking one.
Heal us from the virus that has stolen our souls.
Heal us from privilege.
Set us all free.
Infuse us with the blood of true community
With one another.

Amen