



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — September 9, 2020

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From Our Bishop

Praying for our country

This is a transcript of a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. I am an Episcopalian, which is to say that I am a Christian and a devout one at that. I practice my Christianity in the Episcopal Church. This is the church that I grew up in. The church that formed me, that shaped me into an adult Christian, who has walked through life trying her best to lead a faithful life. This is the church that I serve now, and much of what I know about this church, I know from the Book of Common Prayer.

We are a prayer book people. There are some denominations in which there is a pastor who is the charismatic voice of the denomination. There are some denominations who have a statement, a doctrinal statement or set of theologies that define who they are. And in the Episcopal Church, what defines us is the prayer book. It says all we believe about how to live our lives, from our coming into the earth, having a place on the planet, our Baptismal covenant, being confirmed and accepting our role in the church as an adult and able to make our own decisions. It guides us through relationships in marriage, through ordinations, through death, through sadness, and gives us prayers that we can use all throughout every step of our lives.

As an Episcopalian I can't help but hear every conversation that is full of division, every conversation that starts off with the denigrating of "those people" and "them" and what they are not worthy of I can't help but think of prayers in the prayer book. And there's one in particular that I want to share with you, and I especially want to share this prayer with you as our

country heads to election. And it proves to be an incredibly divisive time going forward in the next two months as we head to that election. And I think if Episcopalians will do what we do – pick up our prayer books and say our prayers faithfully – then we have done an important act of service for the entire nation.

So I invite you to open your prayer book to page 820, and to pray the prayer both for our country, and there's also a prayer for elections. And I invite you to use those two prayers every single day as we head towards election [page 822]. I'll start us with this one, for our country.

Almighty God who has given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought Hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with a spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Stories from Our Congregations

When other food pantries hit pause, St. Agnes' filled the gap

By Nina Nicholson

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced other area food pantries to hit pause, the food pantry at St. Agnes', Little Falls stepped up.

For four months, from mid-March until mid-July, theirs was the only area food pantry able to continue operations. Usually open on the first and third Saturdays of the month, during that four-month interval St. Agnes' opened its food pantry every Saturday and distributed more than 7,500 bags of groceries, according to Bob Dombrowski, who co-manages the food pantry along with Pat Keating.

Around 150 to 175 vehicles would show up every Saturday for a bag of groceries to be placed in the trunk or back seat. They also made home deliveries to senior citizens and provided bags to be delivered to those recovering at home from COVID-19.

Like many food ministries in the diocese, they have stopped verifying need for assistance, and now give food to everyone who asks.

The pantries that couldn't operate during that period donated all their food to St. Agnes', which helped augment their usual supplies. Dombrowski also appealed to the mayors of three Passaic Valley Region towns – Little Falls, Totowa and Woodland Park – who blasted out requests for community donations.

St. Agnes' food pantry was started in July 2012 by the Rev. Deacon Deborah Drake during her service there. Pondering the question "What is God calling us to do?" drew attention to the people who would come to St. Agnes' every so often in need of food. The church started by giving them gift cards, then bags of groceries. Eventually Drake, who had

experience at the food pantry at St. Peter's, Clifton, decided to open a food pantry at St. Agnes' supplied by volunteer donations.

"Once people heard about it, they started coming," Drake said.

A drop box was placed in front of the church for food donations. Area schools started having food drives for them, and the library collected food donations in lieu of late fines. Other local faith-based organizations made donations.

St. Agnes' food pantry was able to expand after it qualified for a partnership with the Community Foodbank of New Jersey, where Drake, Dombrowski and Keating received formal training in food pantry operations.

They also formed a partnership with Table to Table, a food rescue program that collects food that would otherwise be discarded and distributes it to organizations serving the hungry. Table to Table's only requirement is that St. Agnes' provide the volunteers to unload the truck, which delivers food the day before their food pantry is open.

The pantry also has received grants from the Passaic County commissioners and the USDA.

Because Drake was involved in animal rescue, St. Agnes' food pantry began giving out cat and dog food as well.

"If people can't feed themselves, they aren't going to be able to feed their pets," she said.

The food pantry also distributes toilet paper and diapers.

Dombrowski recalls a recent and particularly memorable donation of pet food: a local animal activist called and told him to expect a large delivery from Chewy.com, the online pet supply retailer. Soon after, over the course of three days, UPS delivered four pallets of pet food.

Like Drake, Dombrowski's service at St. Agnes' food pantry is shaped by his personal experience. In his case, it was not that long ago that he needed to turn to food pantries himself.

“Six years ago, I was the sole caretaker for my mother, who had dementia,” he recalled. In need of food that Thanksgiving, he turned first to the Roman Catholic church where he’d grown up, but they had nothing for him.

“I’d been voting at St. Agnes’ since I was 18, so I went there,” he said.

A volunteer took his information and he went home, not expecting much. He was stunned when just an hour later, the makings of a full Thanksgiving dinner were delivered to his house.

“After that, I went back to St. Agnes’ and volunteered,” he said. Now he serves on the vestry and is also responsible for Buildings & Grounds.

Having once needed food assistance himself, Dombrowski is especially sensitive to the needs of those who come to St. Agnes’ food pantry. For example, he’s keenly aware that some of their clients only have microwaves and hot plates with which to cook.

“What are they going to do if we give them an uncooked turkey? They’re walking away feeling worse about their life, when they’re supposed to walk away feeling satisfied,” he said. He makes sure these clients receive pre-cooked meats.

Although other local food pantries are now operating again, Dombrowski still has concerns.

“Things are actually getting worse [for food pantry clients] because bills are coming due,” he said. “We have to be very thrifty with our spending. Right now, we’re good until October.”

*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 **Bishop’s Discretionary Fund / Area of Greatest Need: Food Pantries**. Donations made from Sept. 9 through Sept. 22, 2020 will go to the Food Pantry at St. Agnes’, Little Falls. They also have donation information on their website at stagneslf.org/food-pantry.*

"Love one another" signs express congregation's commitment to racial justice

By John Webb

The Episcopal Church of St. Luke and St. Mary, Hope and Belvidere has two new signs linking our commitment to racial justice and acting as disciples of Jesus. Designed by our resident artist, John Hovell, these "Love one another" signs hang at the front of our two church buildings in Hope and Belvidere. Parishioners have also ordered lawn signs of the same designs to display them in their front yards. One sign is placed for view by those floating down the nearby Delaware River.

In the weeks following the killing of George Floyd, a dozen church members met by ZOOM on Wednesday evenings in a "Circle around Racism" led by the Rev. Laurie Matarazzo, to learn more about racism and to open our minds and hearts to change. Learning together about white privilege, hurtfulness of monuments glorifying slavery and oppression, meaningful reparations and suppressed truth about lynching and terror has been transformative. The last three weeks, a parishioner has taken the lead to practice anti-racism guided by the 12 Steps. A few of our parishioners attended the protests early on.

We have a variety of experience that we bring to each other, with parishioners who grew up in the South, upper New York State and around New Jersey. We do want to learn, to let the learning change us, and to take action as we can. Somehow, it seems that being in the midst of a pandemic has made us able to focus our attention in a way we might not have been able to if life had been “normal.” We will continue this group and continue to look at different issues related to racial justice, equality, reparations and/or wherever the Spirit leads us. None of us is the same people we were before George Floyd was killed. All of us acknowledge we have a lot to learn.

Diocesan Resources & Announcements

understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. And so we pray. Amen.

Clergy ministry transitions

Ordinations

- **The Rev. Raul Ausa** to the Priesthood – Sept. 1

Arrivals

- **The Rev. Deacon Virginia Whatley**, Deacon, Good Shepherd, Fort Lee – Sept. 1

Departures

- **The Rev. Gregory Perez**, Rector, Trinity, Bayonne – Aug. 31

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.

Prayers for Ourselves

Help us be your Light and Love in this world

By Pat McKenzie, Oblate, Community of St. John Baptist

Good and Gracious God,
We come to you in a broken and suffering world.

Help us to remain hopeful by remembering that we are not alone, that You are always with us, guiding us.

Help us to work together, each of us contributing as we can, for the benefit of the common good.

May we be carriers of your Light and Love in this world. May the peace of God, which surpasses all