



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — September 23, 2020

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## From Our Bishop

### How are we to live with COVID-19?

*Bishop Hughes wrote this article at the invitation of The Church of England Newspaper, where it will be published on Friday, September 25.*

What a relief the late summer was in my diocese. The intensity of the COVID-19 emergency response was behind us. We had mourned, lamented, protested, and beseeched God for mercy. For the first time in August it seemed we could catch our breath.

In the relative quiet of late summer, we recognized that our journey with pandemic had taken a turn. We were no longer trying to get through an emergency. Instead we began to see that we will live with this pandemic for many months and perhaps years. It was a sobering time as we let go of the hope that disruption and death would end soon, and normal life would return.

With this new awareness came acceptance of our current situation. We have no idea when the pandemic will end. It is a relief to face that fact. And because we have accepted the ongoing nature of this virus, we have begun asking new questions about our lives and ministries.

### **How are we to live with COVID-19 and worship?**

Online worship started in mid-March as an emergency response, and over time our parishes have developed video production skills and become wildly creative. We are grateful for the

many people who make online worship happen and the connection it provides.

Still, many have remarked that is not the same as being in church. There is a need to see each other face to face.

As restrictions eased, we stayed online and began experimenting with gathering in person. While there are guidelines for all parishes to follow, each parish determines what works best in their circumstances. Some parishes will remain online for the duration of the pandemic due to members and/or clergy with increased risk factors. Some parishes gather for Sunday worship while streaming the service for those that cannot gather. Several have opted to keep Sunday morning online and meet for Evening Prayer or Bible study on a different day of the week.

Most in-person services have taken place outside. This past Sunday dawned with an unseasonable cold, which made planning winter worship more pressing.

For churches with no ventilation, indoor worship is limited to the warmer months. Those churches have already prepared to return to online worship only. Summer has given them time to upgrade audio visual equipment for live streaming services.

Several parishes are considering the church version of a pandemic bubble or pod -- the house church. This will take careful planning and a covenant within the group to observe the same health protocols. The members of these house churches will care for each other's health and spiritual lives.

Not everyone will be able to do this in person. Some will be online. These smaller groups will give parishioners the place to be in relationship with each other that so many miss.

**How are we to live with COVID-19 and ministry in our neighborhoods?** Last spring, much of our ministry was put on hold temporarily due to safety protocols. As it resumes, we are asking "how do we live with COVID-19?" at every meeting and gathering, during prayers and Bible studies. That question is changing everything about our ministry.

The 16.9% unemployment rate in New Jersey is significantly higher than the rest of the United States. New Jersey had an early and difficult experience with the pandemic. Lives and jobs were lost swiftly in late March through May. In July, the phased reopening of businesses began, but many could not reopen, and others reopened with reduced service.

The growing food insecurity issue was underestimated by public, private, and religious sectors. All our parish food ministries have experienced increased need. Based on reductions to unemployment benefits, it is reasonable to expect food needs to multiply. While it makes sense to respond to the food crisis with fundraisers and food drives, we feel compelled to explore other options.

Could all members of the food community work together to end hunger in New Jersey? Can farmers, grocers, restaurant owners, churches, food banks, and caterers draw upon their collective experience to find alternatives to food pantries? Is it possible to create jobs while providing low or no cost food? How can we work together with other faith traditions, non-profit organizations, businesses, and government organizations to meet the current emergency? We hope the answers will lead to a united force in our communities that feeds the physical body and nourishes the weariness of spirit experienced with prolonged lack of work.

**How are we to live with COVID-19 and the trouble besetting our nation?** We are a nation divided and not solely by extremists. These divides reach into our churches and many find it hard to agree to disagree about politics. Even more pressing is the killing of black people due to excessive policing. Alongside these deaths stand the twin challenges of systemic racism and white supremacy. Months of political upheaval and protests have demanded our prayers, attention, and action.

We are convinced that changing the world starts in our own community. Our question is simple: how do we end systemic racism and white supremacy in Northern New Jersey? The Diocese of Newark has engaged in anti-racism training for many years, yet we have not evaluated the systemic racism in our own policies, procedures, and processes.

We have no record of our racial history. From time to time anecdotal stories of church division by race will surface, but nothing in our archives documents this. And we have not ever broached the complicated issue of white supremacy. Pandemic has given us impetus, space, and time to pursue a more just community, society, nation, and church. We have much work to do.

The challenges of pandemic, both the known and the yet to be discovered, will continue. There are no absolute answers to our questions. The deep prayers of the first six months of pandemic have strengthened our ability to rely on God's guidance, the love of Jesus, and the leading of the Spirit. How do we live with COVID-19? With God's help.

# From Our Canons

## Worship Patterns – Fall 2020

By the Rev. Canon Dr. Andrew R. Wright

*“Behold how good and pleasant it is when kindred dwell together in unity.” Psalm 133*

We all long for the opportunity to gather again more fully, as we shift our understanding to living within pandemic. One of the signs of that longing is the number of churches that have made plans to gather in-person for worship or other activities in our diocese. Yet, part of living with pandemic is also recognizing that many of us cannot gather in-person, out of concern for our own health and well-being or that of others in our life that we care for. The Psalmist evokes this longing in Psalm 133, declaring how good and pleasant it is when we can be together. The Psalmist may have had more of an emphasis on unity in mind, but we long for any opportunities to “dwell together” in this difficult time.

In August and September, many more churches have filed plans to worship with a physically present congregation. Currently, I’ve received plans for in-person worship from 50 congregations. This number includes both indoor and outdoor services as well as one-time services. That does not necessarily mean that all 50 of those churches are currently doing in-person worship (some are for services that begin in October, for example), but that gives you a sense of where our churches are in terms of worship planning. Even when doing in-person worship, congregations should still be providing online options for their members, since we want to encourage people to stay safe and healthy.

Of our churches that have submitted plans for in-person worship, 29 have indicated indoor services and 31 have planned outdoor services. Some churches have included plans for both or have shifted between the two. This includes some one-

time services and, in a few places, midweek services. It will be challenging to continue outdoor services later in the fall, as the weather begins to shift. If more churches move indoors, it is very important to ensure that there is adequate ventilation in your space to do so more safely.

Of our churches that have submitted plans for in-person worship, approximately 26 churches are intending to offer Holy Eucharist on some sort of regular ongoing basis. Approximately 21 churches are intending to offer an in-person service from the Daily Offices (whether Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer or Compline). There is overlap between these two categories, in that some have submitted plans for both types of services. If you are conducting Holy Eucharist, please be sure to provide as safe an experience as possible, following the Journey Forward guidelines. This continues to mean that only the celebrant receives from the Cup for the time being and that the Bread is distributed in as safe a manner as possible to those who wish to receive.

Please remember that, as vital and powerful as it is to gather with each other physically in-person, it still represents a greater risk than remaining at home and joining in online worship. When we do gather in-person, please always remember and help others remember to maintain basic safety practices of wearing a face covering, staying at least 6 feet away (many people seem to not have a clear sense of how much distance 6 feet is), and maintaining good hand-washing hygiene.

How good and pleasant it is that we can dwell in new ways with our kindred. It is powerful to gather physically in-person and something we long for, but our true unity is in the One who calls us together and desires that we care for one another. We can do so by being vigilant with our safety guidelines when we gather in-person; we can do so even more by ensuring that we still provide for that greater congregation of those who can join us at a distance, by online worship, by phone contact, and in prayer.

# Stories from Our Congregations

## North Porch creates internet-based "village" to help NJ children in need

*By Lindsay McHugh*

How do you transform a face-to-face ministry serving mothers and young children in a time of pandemic? This was the challenge facing North Porch Women & Infants' Centers when board members met in early March to develop operational plans in response to COVID-19. North Porch's 35-year-old ministry was founded to not only give out supplies, but also to provide a listening ear to mothers and other caregivers without the means to feed and diaper their little ones. Over the years, young mothers, including recent immigrants and the undocumented, have all received commonsense advice from the center coordinators, along with a bag of much-needed supplies. How was this ministry to be sustained at a time of social distancing?

A plan quickly formed to continue service as seamlessly as possible. Clients would no longer be able to walk into the centers but would receive screening over the phone to determine their needs. The Center Coordinators transitioned to work from home, where they fielded client calls, gathered family details, and determined needs. Cynthia Moricz deTecso, the Program Director, coordinated a team of board members to help pack bags of supplies that are now distributed by appointment at open air outdoor locations in Newark, Dover, Morristown, and Hackettstown. In Jersey City, a distribution system was developed to comply with health and safety regulations, based out of the Triangle Park Community Center.

The next challenge was to access the supplies needed to assist an ever-growing number of clients. With in-person worship suspended, the formerly-reliable supply of in-kind donations from

parishes dwindled and funds had to be spent on the direct purchase of formula, baby food and diapers. Baby wipes and diapers became scarce as panic buying stripped supermarket shelves. Undaunted, our board members and long-time parish supporters have come through in creative ways. An Amazon Smile wish list has been developed so that parishes and individuals can send supplies directly to the Dover center, and financial contributions are being received through a PayPal account. A Madison business owner who is helping to raise awareness about food insecurity decided to include North Porch in an August donation drive. St. Peter's, Mountain Lakes highlighted North Porch as one of the beneficiaries of an online fundraiser event in September. Despite all these efforts, supplies are flying out the door, and North Porch is still in urgent need of donations. Most needed items include diapers sizes 4,5, and 6, baby wipes, and Enfamil baby formula.

One bright spot at this time of growing hunger has been the amazing sharing between food pantries even though all are under pressure. In the past months, North Porch was the recipient of donations from Hope House in Morristown that had suspended food pantry service to their clients. North Porch was also able to share store-brand baby formula with Christ Church, Teaneck, and helps other parish-based pantries like St. Paul's Chatham, when supply quantities permit.

North Porch is now on track to serve 5,000 children in 2020 – a dramatic increase over the 2019 total of 3,000 children. According to Moricz deTecso, many of the clients in the last few months are coming for assistance for the first time, having lost jobs and finding finances stretched. In July, she reported that 75% of the families seeking help were new to North Porch. At times, the need has seemed overwhelming.

"This has been a very difficult time for so many people, but especially for those who were already struggling to make ends meet," said North Porch President, the Rev. Ellen Kohn-Perry. "I'm really proud of what we do here at North Porch. We have

an amazing staff and volunteer board of trustees who stepped up to the task at hand and have been providing for so many in need. None of this would be possible without all of you – parishes, organizations and individuals – who have been so generous in helping us serve others. It takes a village to raise a child. Thank you all for coming together as a community to help our children."

*The Diocese of Newark has set up online giving to support the diocese's food-related ministries. 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 Sept. 23 through Oct. 20, 2020 will go to North Porch. You can also donate to North Porch through their PayPal account or their Amazon Smile wish list at [northporch.org/make-a-donation](https://northporch.org/make-a-donation).*

## Diocesan Resources & Announcements

### Clergy ministry transitions

#### Arrivals

- **The Rev. Deacon Ken Boccino**, Deacon, Church of the Saviour, Denville – Sept. 13
- **The Rev. Nate Darville**, Rector, St. Peter's, Essex Fells – Sept. 15
- **The Rev. Robert Solon, Jr.**, Priest-in-Charge, St. John's, Passaic – Oct. 1

### 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.

### Prayers of Thanksgiving

That God is using this difficult time to "grow" us

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

Good and Gracious God,

We are grateful for grace-filled learning.

As a church, we understand we are more than our beloved sacred spaces;

As global citizens, we see that our actions have a profound effect on each other, on animal and plant life, and on the environment;

As neighbors, we are increasing in kindness towards each other;

As individuals, we have been given relief from busy schedules and invited to journey inward;

As Christians, we can hear the call to be Your hands, Your feet, Your voice in the world. And so we pray. Amen.