



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — November 18, 2020

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## From Our Bishop

### Make a sacred space

*This is a transcript of a video message.*

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. I want to talk with you about making sacred space in your home today and I'm starting with showing you what has become my sacred space in my home, and it really is at my office. Sometimes when I say making sacred space, people think that I mean that they have to put an altar together, have a bubble machine, have water flowing – that they've got to change an entire room and have it lit in a very particular way. And you can do any of that, but for me what makes this space sacred is what I do in the space. And this is my workspace, I come into this space, this is my office, and I do work every single day from this desk.

But in the mornings when I come in here in the darkness and I light the candles, it is my space for prayer. It's a holy place where I lift up all the people of this diocese – the different parishes, all of the clergy, and the worries of the world. It's also my worship

space when we lead a worship service in the diocese or when I'm leading worship on Sunday mornings, it is from this space. For me it is seeing creation and seeing those lit candles that let me know I'm in a sacred space. And what just happened right then with the cars driving by, and I hope while I'm talking to you we also see some people walk and run by, but people walk their dogs and children and someone's always running by and it reminds me that I'm connected to this larger world of people that God has given us to care about.

I think sacred space is going to be very important to us, in sacred space in our homes, our worship place, our prayer place, our prayer closet – whatever it is you want to call it, but that holy place in your home where you know you can go and be in the presence of God. I think each of us is really going to need that over the next few weeks. All the reports that we are seeing right now have been letting us know that the rise in Covid is expected to get much sharper between Thanksgiving and Christmas and directly afterwards, that the travel and the gatherings will probably create opportunities for infection, and some of us

have to be very careful. It will be a Thanksgiving and a Christmas like none we have experienced before, where we're staying distant even though we stay connected. We don't necessarily get to see each other face to face and hug each other, but we can talk to each other over the telephone. We can look back at all the memories we've had before and we can plan for good memories in the future.

So it will be a very different holiday this year and I think I could be wrong but I think having these places – these places where we can go and gather with our family before God or sit quietly by ourselves before God – these places that bring us a sense of peace and connection and hope and holiness are going to be important to us in this time of celebration and separation.

Take care of yourselves, dear ones. Make the space that you need. It doesn't have to be perfect, it simply has to work for you. Know that you remain in my prayers and that God will be with us whatever is before us, and I pray that there are blessings on your Thanksgiving and on your Christmas.

## Updated guidelines for in-person worship in the Diocese of Newark

*Published Nov. 13, 2020*

“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.” – *1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Dear Companions on the Journey,

This Sunday, November 15, 2020 will mark the ninth month of our response as a faithful community to the COVID-19 pandemic. This summer, as we discussed options for in-person gatherings, we also recognized that the pandemic would stretch longer than anyone had imagined. I encouraged us to be flexible and fluid as we approached in-person gatherings. I asked us to be prepared to return to online worship when infection rates rose.

Infection rates in New Jersey have been steadily increasing since Labor Day. This month the increase has been rapid and associated with a rise in hospitalizations. Due to the fast-growing infection rate in New Jersey, we must adjust our approach to in-person worship. Further, we will need to take special precautions after the Thanksgiving holiday to ensure that we lower risk in our parishes.

The following adjustments begin on Sunday, November 15:

- Indoor in-person gatherings are limited to 25 people, all inclusive (including clergy, musicians, tech folks, congregants, etc.)

- Outdoor in-person gatherings are limited to 75 people, all-inclusive (including clergy, musicians, tech folks, congregants, etc.)

After Thanksgiving, the following adjustment will begin on November 29, for at least 2 weeks:

- Indoor in-person gatherings will be limited to 10 people, all inclusive (including clergy, musicians, tech folks, congregants, etc.)
- Outdoor in-person gatherings are limited to 50 people, all-inclusive (including clergy, musicians, tech folks, congregants, etc.)

These limits are for all church gatherings, including weddings and funerals.

We will need to be very careful from Thanksgiving into January. Holiday gatherings have the potential to increase infection through mid-January. We will adjust our gathering guidelines as needed, including relaxing them when infection rates lower.

The days are shorter, and nights are longer. Isolation can be felt more keenly during this time of year. We will need to check on each other, encourage each other, and stay connected to each other and to those most vulnerable in our communities. Please do seek assistance from a mental health professional if you find this time of distancing, limited gatherings, and altered holiday celebrations leaves you needing more support.

You have been a blessing to so many in these nine months. Your faithfulness, generosity, and compassion are gifts to those in our congregations and communities in need of compassion, care, food, and friendship. I know that you will continue to take of yourself, to look out for your neighbors, and to share the good news of God's love with those who need to know they are beloved.

Grace and Peace,  
+Carlye J. Hughes

## Prayers of Pandemic

O Lord, for those of us who have not yet been made ill by the ever-present virus, we are tempted to feel like we are doing all things right and perhaps the virus will pass over us like the plagues passed over the Israelites and only felled the Egyptians. But we know better. This virus is no respecter of persons. It has no boundaries. We have no natural defenses. We are all at risk. So, Lord of Life, we ask you to stay near us for better and for worse, in sickness and in health, and may not even death part us from you. Amen.

— *The Rev. Fain Webb, St. Luke and St. Mary, Hope/Bevidere*