

Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — March 3, 2021

If you have email, you can sign up to receive *The VOICE Online*, currently published every other Wednesday. Visit [dioceseofnewark.org/subscribe](https://dioceseofnewark.org/subscribe)

## From Bishop Hughes

### Why you should pray for the nation

*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 praying for the nation. I have been asking the people of our diocese to pray for the nation on a daily basis. I pray for the nation often, usually starting most meetings with it, and I use the prayer for the nation that you can find on page 258 in the Book of Common Prayer. And as I've suggested to so many people, including to you, right now, today, it's a good prayer but you can also pray in your own words. You can also visualize the good you would like to see in our nation, the healing that God can bring to our nation. The ability to draw people together and to work for the best for all people. That that's something we can see in our mind's eye as well as pray for.

And when I talk so much about praying for the nation, there are two questions that I get very frequently. The first is, "Are you saying that you can only be spiritual if that's our only response?" And the answer to that is of course no. Praying for the nation is ONE response. It's one of many responses. And we have been, I think most of us, very engaged in other ways. Talking to elected officials. Working with organizations that are meeting needs that we think are important. Letting our thoughts and our values be known to others. Doing the work that you find in our Baptismal

Covenant, where we respect the dignity of all people, and we seek justice for all of humankind. So no, this is not just spiritual work, but that spiritual piece is important too.

The other question that I get all the time is, "Why do you keep praying, why do you keep doing this work? Isn't it just time to stop?" That these are complicated issues, issues about the economy, about racism, about political division. These are complicated issues; they've always been with us. Maybe it's just time to stop and let them just roll along, being what they are. And the answer to that is an unqualified no! We are called. We are called by God. We actually have taken vows, not only in our Baptismal Covenant, but at Confirmation. We have said these are the things that are important to us, and they boil down to one thing really, and that is to love our neighbor the way we love ourselves.

So why do we say these prayers? We say these prayers because it reminds us that God is listening to us, and that we are not in this alone. We say these prayers because it gives us a place to take our worries and to take our fears. And when we take our worries and fears to God, God can then transform us with the sense of peace and faith that very often comes when we go to God in prayer. When we put ourselves in God's presence.

We also say these prayers because it reminds us to love our neighbors. When I say these prayers, I don't just say them for me and my family and the Episcopalians that I love, I say them for the people that I disagree with. I say them for the people who

don't like me, or people like me, and who have no respect for me. I say them for the people that I will always be in disagreement with. I say them for all people, I say them for the whole nation. Because we as a nation need this healing.

So I invite you friends, find your prayer for the nation. Say it every day, continue to do all the good work that you're doing. But know that when you say that prayer, that you hand it over to God, God blesses you and God blesses our country.

Here's the prayer that I say.

Lord God Almighty, you have made all the peoples of the earth for your glory, to serve you in freedom and in peace: Give to the people of our country a zeal for justice and the strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with your gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen, amen and amen.

## Pursuing Racial Reconciliation

### Troubled by emerging records, Redeemer forms group to explore its roots

*By the Rev. Cynthia L. Black, Rector, Redeemer, Morristown*

The Church of the Redeemer in Morristown has had a Racial Dialogue Group since the 1990s. In 1999, it asked our Worship Committee to develop a liturgical season addressing racism and other systemic forms of oppression. Redeemer's first Reconciliation Season began on Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend in 2000 and has continued every year since, running from MLK weekend in mid-January to the feast of Absalom Jones in mid-February.

In 2011, Reconciliation Season added a new component: worship with Bethel A.M.E. Church of Morristown. For one Sunday of the season, we leave our space (virtual or in-person) and worship with Bethel, and on another Sunday, they do the same. After doing this for 11 years, significant relationships have developed.

Because of the many incidents of police brutality in the last year, and the disproportionately high number of deaths from COVID-19 among Black and Brown people, Reconciliation Season this year was gripping. For a preacher, there was a lot to invite the congregation to consider. But I couldn't get to the end of Reconciliation Season without considering what for me had become a haunting question: what were the circumstances of Redeemer's founding?

The story about Redeemer's origins suggests that at the time its members split from St. Peter's, Morristown in 1852, they held a strong abolitionist position. Was this true? Were we being honest about our roots?

Shortly after my arrival at Redeemer in 2011, a former parishioner and sometime historian of the congregation had sent me a letter from the early 1900s, correspondence between a former rector of Redeemer and a parishioner. The century-old letter was heavily redacted – with portions literally cut out of the paper – so that no sleuth would ever be able to piece the puzzle together. It was easy to see why: it was on the topic of the role of Black people in the life of the church, and it did not cast Redeemer in a favorable light.

Then one morning in 2017, I nearly choked on my breakfast while reading a New York Times article about Columbia University's reckoning with their connection with enslaved Black people. One of the article's illustrations was an 1814 advertisement placed in the Poughkeepsie Journal by one of Redeemer's two founding wardens:

*NEGRO WENCH, FOR SALE. FOR Sale a sober, honest and healthy Negro Girl, of twenty one years, well acquainted with country work, and having fourteen years to serve. To prevent unnecessary trouble, the price is 150 dollars. Apply to WILLIAM A. DUER, Rhinebeck Flatts, June 1, 1814.*

William A. Duer had moved to Morristown after retiring from his position as seventh president of Columbia College. The other founding warden was Alfred Vail, and it didn't take me much research to learn that his family's business was the Speedwell Ironworks. Because of records kept by the Morris County Historical Society, we know that Black people were integral to the Ironworks' success and that they were not compensated. Were they indentured servants? Enslaved people?

With barely two days research I had uncovered more than enough evidence to indicate that Redeemer, like so many institutions of the time, was likely founded by people whose families had benefitted from enslaving Black people.

What is the rest of the story? And once we find out, what will we do with the information? A group has formed at Redeemer to consider these questions. My hope is that once we get closer to the truth, it will be possible to consider more deeply what Reconciliation means.

## Diocesan Resources & Announcements

### Prayers of Pandemic: 500,000 dead

*By the Rev. Fain Webb*

Dear Lord,  
it's hard for us to comprehend  
500,000 deaths.  
We can hardly grieve for that many.  
We grieve more easily  
one death at a time,  
two deaths in an accident,  
three deaths in a fire.

But 500,000?

But you know.  
You have received them into the arms of your  
mercy,  
into the blessed rest of everlasting peace.

Yet 500,000 people  
Have left at least one million grieving  
the loss of someone they loved,  
someone who cared for them,  
who they laughed with and cried with.  
Lord, we pray for those who are left behind and full  
of sorrow.  
May they cast their care on you, O Lord,  
and know the consolation of your love. Amen.