



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — May 12, 2021

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## From Bishop Hughes

### The freedom of vaccines, resurrection, and forgiveness

*This is a transcript from a video message.*

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. We are still in Eastertide, that time of year when we think intentionally about resurrection and the way that resurrection changes everything for us as Christians. And one of the particular ways resurrection changes everything for us is in the area of forgiveness. Not ever again are we separated from the love of God – Jesus took care of that by going to the cross, dying and rising again. We are forever through Jesus connected back to God, no matter what we have done, no matter how many mistakes we have made.

I think it's important for us to remember resurrection as we continue in this transition period coming out of pandemic. I don't know how long this transition will last – like at the beginning of pandemic, I had no idea how long that would last, would it be weeks, months, a year or more? I say the same thing this time: will it be weeks, months, a year? I do not know, time will tell. But one of the things that seems certain in this time, a time that has been characterized in many ways by the great joy of having vaccinations and the freedom that has given us and a sense of hopefulness about that. And yet, at the same time, we hear this incredible sense of anger and

frustration, contempt and judgement coming from all quarters, even coming from ourselves – perhaps in our own households, perhaps we've been using language that is angry, frustrated, contemptuous and judgmental of others or we've had it leveled against us. It's made a time that should be joyous quite complicated and we've had a very complicated and difficult year already.

So I want to offer this to all of us: we can't necessarily take care of what is going on with everybody else but we can take care of what is happening for us. So I offer these questions to you to ask yourselves each day: Who is it that you need to forgive? And I'm keenly aware of what Jesus told us: do we need to forgive one time or seven times? And Jesus said seventy times seven, as many times as it takes. So not only who is it that you need to forgive but who do you need to forgive multiple times?

And then there is the flip side of that question: who do you need to go to and ask for their forgiveness? And who do you need to go to and ask for their forgiveness multiple times? We are not meant to sit trapped by this sinfulness, this judgment of each other, this anger at each other, this hard-heartedness with each other. But they are real responses to hard and terrible conversations and invective that has been hurled either by us or at us.

I am reminded when I ask those questions of the Reconciliation of a Penitent, the service of confession in our Book of Common Prayer. You can find it on page 447. It starts with these simple

words: I as the penitent come forward or you as the penitent come forward to the person that we're going to talk with about our sinfulness and we say, "Bless me for I have sinned." But there's a blessing just in saying those words. And then the priest or the person who we are talking with has some words that they say to us, a prayer, and then we offer what we want to confess. They make no judgments but they offer absolution. And at the end of absolution, they say something that is so incredibly lovely and comforting: "The Lord has put away your sins."

I wonder how many of us could use that freedom, of knowing that the Lord has put away our sins. It's something to think about as we continue on through this particular time of pandemic, this particular phase of pandemic, to know that while vaccines bring us freedom, Jesus and resurrection bring us a completely different freedom that is priceless to us right now.

## From Our Canons

### Journey forward update

*By the Rev. Canon Dr. Andrew R. Wright*

COVID-19 risk levels have decreased steadily in New Jersey over the last several weeks, as noted on [covidactnow.org](https://covidactnow.org). All counties in our diocese, as of this writing on May 9, 2021, have moved from Very High Risk (red on covidactnow) to High Risk (orange). Additionally, New Jersey vaccination numbers continue to increase and are very positive, with more than 40% of NJ residents being fully vaccinated. Some counties have begun to move into Moderate Risk (yellow), which is very encouraging. The Journey Forward Team has reconvened to address needed guidelines for this Moderate Risk/yellow stage.

The current guidelines are still found at [dioceseofnewark.org/covid-19/journey-forward](https://dioceseofnewark.org/covid-19/journey-forward), including updates from the Bishop and the Notification Form for In-person Worship. The

Bishop's current maximum attendance limit is 100 persons at an in-person gathering, whether indoors or outdoors, provided those present can maintain 6' distance between households.

Of our 96 congregations, 28 had indicated that they intended to gather for in-person worship during the period from Holy Week through last Sunday. Some of those churches met in-person only on one or two occasions in that period; some have met weekly since resuming in-person worship. Of those 28, 14 are meeting indoors only (watch your ventilation and narrow spaces!), 11 are meeting outdoors only, and 3 are meeting both indoors and outdoors (either with 2 services or varying by week). There are 7 additional churches that have indicated that they intend to gather in person over the next few weeks, which will bring the total to 35 at that point.

Please continue to monitor communication about changes in our guidelines and changes in reported risk levels across our diocese. As we all have learned this past year, conditions can occur rapidly and with little notice.

## Diocesan Announcements

### Hegg Awards return online

*By Senior Ministries*

After a hiatus last year members of our parishes will be honored again with David P. Hegg III Lifetime Achievement Awards.

The award is given to Episcopalians 60 years old and older whose parish feels they should be recognized for what they have done – and continue to do – throughout our diocese and beyond. Congregations submit names and all are honored. This is not a nomination, and it is not a mark of retirement. Most Hegg Award honorees continue to serve long after receiving this honor.

## **This year's Hegg Award Ceremony**

Since we are in this time of pandemic, the Hegg Awards Ceremony will be virtual, but no less celebratory. On June 13 at 3 PM the service will be streamed and later available for viewing via the diocesan web site. Bishop Hughes will preach and we will have a worship service as well as the reading of the names of the honorees. Honorees will receive their certificates by mail.

## **About the Rev. David P. Hegg III**

The awards are named in memory of a man who was a tireless advocate and innovator in matters of retirement and aging. In his 34 years as a parish minister, the Rev. David P. Hegg III served churches in upstate New York, Missouri, and New Jersey, serving as rector at St. Peter's, Morristown from 1982 to 1996. In March, 1996 Hegg joined the Church Pension Fund staff as Senior Vice President of the Church Pension Fund and Director of Pastoral Care and Education.

Throughout his career, Hegg was deeply involved in issues involving aging and advocacy for the elderly. During his six-year ministry with the Church Pension Fund, Hegg traveled extensively, working with Episcopal clergy who were planning their retirement. He promoted educational conferences on financial planning and long term care issues for clergy and their spouses. In addition, he was an advocate for the needs of surviving spouses and also an advocate for organized ministry to retired clergy.

Hegg's commitment to matters of retirement, aging, and the role of seniors in the congregation made him the natural selection in 1991 to chair Bishop Spong's Task Force on Aging, which was subsequently called the Commission on Aging. That Commission is now named Senior Ministries.

In 2002 at the age of 64, Hegg died unexpectedly of complications from heart surgery. Hegg's legacy of advocacy continues to be a guiding force in the work of Senior Ministries. Inspired by his

commitment and leadership, Senior Ministries continues Hegg's legacy by honoring seniors for their contributions of time and talent to their churches' ministries and to their congregations.

## **Mental & Spiritual Health Minute: Welcoming Prayer**

*By the Rev. Dr. Debbie Brewin-Wilson, PhD,  
Episcopal Mental & Spiritual Health Crisis Ministry*

The Welcoming Prayer is defined as "a method of consenting to God's presence and action in our physical and emotional reactions to events and situations in daily life." It developed as a fruit of Centering Prayer practice.

Mary Mrozowski, a Centering Prayer practitioner and founding member of Contemplative Outreach, developed the Welcoming Prayer. She based it on the teachings of Father Thomas Keating and the 17th-century French Jesuit, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, as well as her own life experience. As Mrozowski taught the Welcoming Prayer, people found it so helpful and transformative, it spread throughout Contemplative Outreach—and beyond.

The practice of Welcoming Prayer helps us to release thoughts and feelings that help keep us tied up in our "false-self system," as Father Keating named it. This practice helps us to acknowledge painful emotions and discern the Holy Spirit's presence with us in our suffering. In other words, it helps us to be fully present in the moment, which supports a path of healing and freeing the true self.

Contemplative Outreach offers workshops on the Welcoming Prayer, and some training programs for it can be found online. It's recommended that you have a solid Centering Prayer or contemplative prayer practice before using the Welcoming Prayer, but here are the general procedures for using the practice.

It's important to remember with this practice that you are not welcoming whatever disease or trauma is causing your physical or emotional pain; you are

welcoming your response to it; you are accepting your feelings about it. It's best to begin practicing the Welcoming Prayer during the small, everyday frustrations in life, such as waiting in a line at the store or being stuck in a traffic jam. Practicing with these less intense events helps to prepare us for the more consequential upsets in our lives.

The prayer practice consists of three movements:

- Feel and sink into what you are experiencing this moment in your body.
- "WELCOME" what you are experiencing this moment in your body as an opportunity to consent to the Divine Indwelling.
- Let go by saying "I let go of my desire for security, affection, control and embrace this moment as it is."

(Contemplative Outreach publication, The Welcoming Prayer.)

For example, let's say you're sitting in a traffic jam on Route 80, and you see someone driving on the shoulder, passing all of the stopped cars. You start to tense up and say some not-so-nice things about that driver, but you catch yourself in that moment of tension:

- Feel what's happening in your body—your hands gripping the steering wheel, the shallow, rapid breathing, the knotted feeling in your gut—and sink into that sensation.
- Say, "Welcome, anger."
- Let go by saying, "I let go of my desire for security, affection, control and embrace this moment as it is." Alternatively, practitioners have simplified this final step and suggest that you could say something like, "I let go of the desire to change this feeling," or "I let go of my anger," or even, "God, I give you my anger." (Tom Frontier, My Shepherd King.)

This practice takes only a few seconds to do, and it can be done anywhere, in any situation. Over time,

it helps us to become more fully present in our lives and to cope with the emotional ups and downs we all experience. It can also help us through the more serious times of trial in our lives.

If you would like to set your intention to work with this practice, perhaps you could use Father Thomas Keating's The Welcoming Prayer [PDF] as part of a morning prayer time:

"Welcome, welcome, welcome.

I welcome everything that comes to me today because I know it's for my healing.

I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions.

I let go of my desire for power and control.

I let go of my desire for affection, esteem, approval and pleasure.

I let go of my desire for survival and security.

I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself.

I open to the love and presence of God and God's action within. Amen."

—Thomas Keating

May the Welcoming Prayer bless you and help you to become more spiritually grounded and resilient.

## Diocesan ministry transitions

Ordained to the Transitional Diaconate on May 8, 2021:

- The Rev. Deacon Carrie Cabush
- The Rev. Deacon Katherine Rollo
- The Rev. Deacon Lorna Woodham