



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — May 26, 2021

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

From Bishop Hughes

Behold, God is doing a new thing among us – can you see it?

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. The season of Pentecost has begun. It began on Sunday with a celebration of the Feast of Pentecost as parishes all over our diocese gathered either in person in their churches or outside their church or online in people's homes. And many of those who gathered wore red, red to symbolize the powerful way the Spirit came to those first followers of Jesus and the way She continues to come with power and fire and passion, bringing change in us and with us and through us so that we are able to show God's love and mercy and compassion to the rest of the world.

That change that happened at Pentecost to the disciples and that happens to us is also a change that we're experiencing with pandemic. Thank goodness for the increased numbers of people who have been vaccinated and the lowering of new cases that has allowed us to loosen the strenuousness of the safety precautions that we have been taking. I'm aware also that in this change, I'm reminded of the new things God is doing with us. And I want to remind you of that passage that we keep talking about from Isaiah 43, verse 19, when God said to the people of Israel, "I am doing a new thing among you. Behold, can you

perceive it?" Can you see it, can we see this new thing God is doing among us?

I want to highlight three of them that you may have noticed but you may not have and they are three that I think are going to continue to need our attention. One, that we want to stay the kind of church that cares about the vulnerable and right now some of the vulnerable in our church are people who cannot be vaccinated. And so even though safety precautions have loosened, we want to make sure that people who are under 12, people who cannot be vaccinated, people who have an immune system that is compromised in some way or that are taking a medical treatment that makes them sensitive – that all of those people are safe in our churches. We're not going to ask if people are vaccinated when they come to church; we are simply going to say, "You are welcome in this place." And to make them welcome, we're going to keep those safety precautions when we're indoors: we'll wear our mask and we'll stay distanced so that we can keep everybody safe. This is an old thing that's become a new thing. In the Episcopal Church, we have always said all are welcome and all means all and that is a new way for us to make sure that we include all – to take care of the safety of all people in our churches when we especially when we gather inside on a Sunday morning.

Another thing that is a new thing God has been doing among us is the sensitivity, the understanding, the compassion, and the care that we all developed around the subjects of race, racism, systemic racism, and white supremacy. All

of this began for many of us in a new way, in a very deep way, a year ago with the death of George Floyd. We have become aware of the myriad ways that people's lives are not safe if they are of color and of certain religious backgrounds. We've watched an outpouring of hate recently against Jews, against Asian people, that has taken many by surprise. And the work that we have done in this past year, we are going to continue to do. It's new work for us – to deepen and strengthen our spiritual lives so that we are able to work in a committed way for the safety of all people, to learn more about our history so that we have a better understanding of why we're in the situation that we're in, and then to gather with others to take action. We want to make sure that all people are safe and that we're not taking that for granted. That is a new thing for us.

The one, last new thing will feel like an old thing also but I'm gonna ask you to treat it like a new thing and that is taking some sabbath time. We have had a full, busy and intense year and these first few weeks of Pentecost and of summer and of lessening of safety precautions. I hope you take full advantage – that you're able to spend time with friends that you haven't seen before, that you can go and visit the family that you haven't seen, that you can go to worship and simply enjoy worship rather than working so hard at worship. That you treat this time as a gift from God, as a sabbath, as a time to rest and restore and to keep ourselves ready to do the good work that God has given us to do.

These are old things but they are new things, new things that God has brought to light for us and sends the Spirit to help us with. Behold, God is doing a new thing among us – can you perceive it, can you see it?

From Our Canons

Journey Forward Revisions May 2021

By the Rev. Canon Dr. Andrew R. Wright

On Wednesday, May 19th, Bishop Hughes issued a revision to the Journey Forward guidelines for the Diocese of Newark, in response to the improvement in risk levels across the diocese. On Covid ActNow (<https://covidactnow.org>), all counties in the diocese had dropped to Medium Risk, coded with the color yellow. Risk levels could increase, returning to High Risk (Orange) or Very High (Red). These guidelines provide information for each of these risk levels.

In this revision, High Risk (Orange) guidelines were updated, should they become necessary again, and more relaxed guidelines for Medium Risk (Yellow) were provided. Yellow level guidelines include an increase in attendance capacity and also provides for choral and/or congregational singing, provided all singers are masked and at least 6 feet from others. Congregational singing is more limited for indoor in-person gatherings. Guidance on masks from civil authorities continues to shift. These guidelines currently require masks for indoor in-person gatherings, and for anyone singing. The guidelines encourage them for outdoor gatherings, but congregations may determine whether they are required. Outdoor simple coffee hour offerings are available at the Yellow level as well.

Please contact Canon Wright (awright@dioceseofnewark.org) with any questions or for more information.