

Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — August 18, 2021

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From Bishop Hughes

Keep your lamps trimmed and burning

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. All day long I have had a particular spiritual in my mind. And I finally just started listening to it online and found a wonderful recording that I'll make sure the link is available to you to listen to (<https://youtu.be/PzkAF1S-m-g>), but it's "Keep your lamps trimmed and burning." And like so many spirituals those lyrics repeat: "Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, keep your lamps trimmed and burning, keep your lamps trimmed and burning, the time is drawing near."

I think those words have been incredibly comforting to me in part because they remind me of that parable that we read of in Matthew and in Luke, the parable of the bridegroom and the five wise and the five foolish virgins. They show up, these young women, and they have their lamps, and they need their lamps to provide light in the bridal celebration that they're going to. And five of them have oil in their lamps so that when the time comes and the door opens their lamps are lit and can help light the way and they go straight on into the celebration. Five of them realize they don't have oil – they showed up and they weren't ready – so they have to leave and go shopping and find oil, and when the doors open, they are not there to go in.

I have found that a helpful way to think about this time. There is so much happening. We are hard pressed – even those of us who don't want to watch the news – we are hard-pressed to ignore all that is happening around us. The absolute chaos happening in Afghanistan right now. The tragedy that is happening in Haiti right now post-earthquake. The devastation in the west of the United States from the largest wildfires ever seen in the history of those states.

These are hard things to watch and to watch the amount of suffering and to know that it's there. And then on top of it or underneath it all or holding it all, is this incredible sense of disappointment that we're all facing regarding coronavirus and this pandemic. We really thought we might be beginning to transition out of it and this new variant, the delta variant, has really changed all of that. So this summer that we thought would be much more like something we recognized has again turned into something that requires quite a deal of care and consideration. And if that's where we are in the summer where will we be in the fall and winter? And how are we to keep our lamps trimmed and burning, when all we want like everybody else is to be done with this kind of sorrow and this kind of tragedy and this kind of complicated life that we're in.

It's helpful to remember that our job really is to keep ourselves ready. That's all those women who showed up at the celebration needed, is they just needed to be ready. It's God's job to open the door and to prepare the way for us, and God did that all

of last year, all through every bit of this pandemic, and will continue to do that for us and for the people of the world who are in need, especially in places like Afghanistan, Haiti and in our own west coast.

So for us it means using all the things that we have discovered in the past year. That our relationships are very important to us and we need to tend to those. That prayer time is something that takes us deeper into relationship with God and with each other. That as important as contemplative prayer is, praying with others is also important. That when we study scripture, we remember things that help us to live our life, like remembering to keep our lamps trimmed and ready. We know that gathering with people of faith gives us inspiration, it gives us comfort and peace, and it gives us the confidence we need to go out and share the faith with a world that really needs to know that they are beloved by God and that we love them too.

We have much to face in the coming weeks and months, and most of it we don't even know exactly what will be coming around the corner. Most of it is unknown to us. But one thing we do know to be true: that God is always there for us. And, when we allow ourselves, when we make ourselves ready, we're able to see not only what God is doing for us but what God is doing for the whole wide world.

Keep your lamps trimmed and burning.

Upcoming Events

A Service of Prayer & Music on the 20th Anniversary of 9/11

This service, recorded at Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral in Newark to mark the 20th anniversary of 9/11, will premiere on the diocesan YouTube channel (<https://youtube.com/c/dionewark>) at 10 AM on September 11, 2021, and remain viewable on demand.

Please join us for prayer, music, and a message from Bishop Hughes, as we honor their memories, carry on in hope, and work for peace.

Diocesan Announcements

Bishop's Staff Vacation Week & Labor Day Holiday

Beginning Monday, August 30, all members of the Bishop's staff are using their vacation time to take off this quiet week before the Labor Day holiday on Monday, September 6. They will be back at work Tuesday, September 7.

Clergy ministry transitions

Departures

- **The Rev. Sylvester Ekunwe**, Vicar, St. Andrew's, Newark - August 15