

Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — December 15, 2021

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From Bishop Hughes

This Christmas, how about spending some time being the gift?

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. And as we head through these last few days – one more Advent Sunday and a few days beyond that before Christmas – I know if your house is like mine, that all of us in some way are getting all the last minute things together. We've known Christmas has been coming for 365 days since the last Christmas and still here we are, 10 or 11 days away from it, and we're in a mad-dash scramble.

And I had this thought today as I listened to people talk about all that they had to do and the lists they have and how worried they are – will things arrive, will they arrive, would friends arrive, would family arrive – all of this worry about things coming out exactly as they need to on Christmas. And I thought, what if we lowered our sense of importance and expectation about all the things that need to be done before Christmas. And I'm not saying do away with them, keep the ones that you want. But what if we lowered our expectations about them, and instead of expecting things to go perfectly or to get the perfect thing or give the perfect thing, what if instead our focus was on the way we could *be* the gift this Christmas? Not all the things that we want to do, not all the things that we need to plan, not all the places that we need to

be, and the disappointments around things that are not going to be able to happen as a surge continues. But instead, what we can do. Who can we be a gift to this Christmas?

I know very often our first thought is, let's make sure that we give a gift to people who are without something, and this is a different question. Please do give a gift to people who are without food or without shelter or clothes and have no way to give toys to their children. By all means, give a gift to them. But I also wonder, how can you *be* the gift. Often being the gift means something completely different. It means loving unconditionally, giving unconditionally, expecting nothing in return – simply giving ourselves and whatever we have to offer. Sometimes that's going to mean listening. Sometimes that's going to mean inviting somebody to be a part of things. Most people want and need a place to belong this Christmas – could they belong with you, if they belong with your family or with your friends? How can we be that gift, the gift that brings hope, the gift that brings friendship, the gift that brings knowing that another person cares about you? How can we do that for someone else?

It changes the focus immediately. I started thinking about how I could be the gift, and suddenly everything that I had on my list did not seem important. Because for every person and for every organization that I wanted to do something for, I knew more than anything what they needed from me was to hear how much I love them and how much I believe in them. That that is more powerful than anything else that I could do or get for them –

that sense of knowing that they have my support, and they have my belief, and they have my prayers.

So I offer it to you – it's going to be different for all of us, but this Christmas, how about spending some time being the gift?

"Great needs still surround us, and we are called to help" – Bishop Hughes' Advent letter on the Alleluia Fund for Outreach

Have you seen the Bishop's Advent letter? We hope you'll consider a gift in support of this year's Alleluia Fund.

"Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, lest we miss thy kingdom's goals."

*Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969)
Hymn 594/595 in The Hymnal 1982*

Dear Companions on the Journey,

When Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote the words to that grand old hymn "God of grace and God of glory" in 1930 the world was reeling. Widespread hardship had followed the collapse of the stock market the year before. Banks were failing. Unemployment was swiftly rising. Uncounted numbers of people were homeless. The Great Plains suffered from over-farming and drought. The Dust Bowl days would soon begin.

Some were stunned when Fosdick's hymn, written for the joyous dedication of Riverside Church in New York, criticized people and the church for their sins and failings. He wrote about "warring madness," pride, "weak resignation to the evils we deplore," and a selfishness that led to being "rich in things and poor in soul." Fosdick might have written a hymn for a building, but he believed that a church was more than its building. That's a lesson we have been learning since mid-March 2020.

Much changed for the better this year. Vaccines greatly reduce our vulnerability to COVID-19. Their availability has meant businesses, offices and our

church buildings are safely re-opening. Many of us are trying out a new way forward. For many, life feels a bit easier.

Yet, great needs still surround us, and we are called to help.

For over a decade, the Alleluia Fund for Outreach has been helping some of the most vulnerable among us. As recipients of Alleluia Fund grants, nonprofit partners in our cities and towns, along with programs as far away as Kenya and East Jerusalem, are living examples of the gospel in action.

This year, because of the generosity of donors like you, the Alleluia Fund made 28 grants totaling \$145,000. The work of these nonprofit groups goes on all year long. **Your generosity today will help that work continue, feeding people, helping them find shelter, and providing them with educational resources here and around the world.** Through it all we are constantly striving towards the kingdom's goal of a world where dignity, justice and peace reign.

Your generosity is so important! Please join with others in this diocese to continue "serving thee who we adore" by supporting our work towards bringing about God's kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven by making a generous gift to the Alleluia Fund this year.

Giving to the Alleluia Fund is easy. To donate by check, mail a check payable to **Diocese of Newark with Alleluia Fund** in the memo line to:

Alleluia Fund
c/o Diocese of Newark
31 Mulberry St.
Newark, NJ 07102

Your generosity truly will make difference. Thank you!

Grace and peace,

The Rt. Rev. Carlye J. Hughes
XI Bishop of Newark

Stories from Our Congregations

Three parishes team up to provide 1400+ Christmas gifts for kids

The parishes of **St. Paul's, Montvale, Grace, Westwood** and **Holy Trinity, Hillsdale** partnered with the Montvale and Ridgewood communities and George Washington Middle School in Ridgewood to collect and wrap more than 1400 Christmas gifts for children in Paterson. Last Saturday, Dec. 11 the held an all-day gift wrapping event at St. Paul's – it took all day to wrap that many gifts! The gifts are going to St. Paul's CDC in Paterson to be distributed to the children of the families that utilize the food pantry and their other services.

Update on the Afghan Resettlement Project

Shortly after the publication of *Six Constance Region churches prepare to host Afghan refugees* in the Dec. 1 issue of *The VOICE Online*, a refugee family moved into the empty rectory prepared for them by **St. Peter's, Mountain Lakes; St. Mary's, Sparta; Church of the Saviour, Denville; St. John's, Boonton; St. David's, Kinnelon; and Christ Church, Pompton Lakes.**

Don MacGowan, outreach chair at St. Peter's, Mountain Lakes, reports, "Things are going well with our Afghan family. They are thrilled, happy, overwhelmed, and grateful all at the same time. The four little kids (6, 4, 2, 1) are ecstatic with all the toys that were donated. It's a good thing and really fun to witness."

He adds that the **Church World Service needs additional housing throughout the state for other refugee families.** "They like that we had an honest-to-goodness house to offer for an extended period of time," he said. "Others are offering hotel rooms

and Airbnb places for limited periods of time, which aren't good solutions."

MacGowan emphasizes that Church World Service plays an important role in the whole process. "We couldn't do it without their guidance, and they are very good at what they do."

If anyone would like to learn more about their experience, MacGowan is happy to answer questions. He can be reached at dmacgowan@verizon.net.

Diocesan Announcements

Fourth BCEF Call of 2021: St. Stephen's, Millburn

The Bishop's Church Emergency Fund (BCEF) provides financial support for church buildings in the diocese needing repairs and renovation, usually with a special focus on emergency and unforeseen needs. Through the BCEF, you can support the critical needs identified by the Bishop.

*The fourth BCEF call of 2021 is for Hurricane Ida recovery at St. Stephens, Millburn. You can mail a check payable to **Diocese of Newark with BCEF Call #4** in the memo line to: Diocese of Newark, Attn: BCEF, 31 Mulberry St., Newark, NJ 07102.*

St. Stephen's Church in Millburn has a venerable history dating from 1851 when the first service was held. Land was secured in 1853 and a church built from oak timbers felled near the site. The church stands today as a strikingly beautiful landmark in the center of town. A rectory was added to the property in 1868 and a parish hall sometime later. Today St. Stephen's operates a preschool on the property and also has a historic cemetery a short distance away. The congregation returned to in-person services on June 20 and continues to stream Sunday services live on Facebook and

YouTube. Sunday attendance prior to the pandemic averaged 50-60 members.

The Rev. Paula J. Toland has been rector of St. Stephen's for the past three years. Prior to St. Stephen's, she served bi-vocationally as a parish priest and as a chaplain. "The people here at St. Stephen's are so honest, faithful, and trusting," says Rev. Paula. "They are an authentically welcoming and caring congregation." Among the parish's many opportunities for service "Within Our Walls" (as they are called on the church's website) there is a special emphasis on music, with choirs for both adults and children as well as a hand bell choir whose members are mostly in their teens. The church also has an impressive pipe organ by the celebrated German builder, Rudolf von Berkerath.

The congregation's many outreach ministries ("Beyond Our Borders") are too numerous to outline here but Rev. Paula says chief among them is the Drumming Camp. This ministry serves children who have an incarcerated parent in Essex County. In addition to a weeklong summer program, St. Stephen's has a year-round relationship with the children and their families, one that is especially meaningful during the holiday season. "The impact of the camp is so far-reaching it embraces our whole congregation," says Rev. Paula. "We try to instill within each child, 'Be yourself. You're a gift!'"

All of St. Stephen's ministries have felt the impact of events following August 29, 2021—the day Hurricane Ida, the second most destructive hurricane after Katrina, made landfall in the US. Ida hit the northeast on September 1st with record-breaking rain. Overflow from the Rahway River, just three blocks from St. Stephen's, sent over two feet of water violently surging over its property. The church's heating system, which had recently been replaced at a cost of over \$40,000, was destroyed, as were all the appliances, furniture, and supplies in the preschool. Dead fish, raw sewage, and

endless amounts of debris littered the church property. The cost of the clean up was enormous.

While a claim of \$230,000 was submitted to parish's insurance company, St. Stephen's was left with a 20% deductible representing a huge financial burden. The total damage was estimated at close to \$300,000. Many church properties in our diocese suffered considerable damage from Ida, but the loss sustained by St. Stephen's was especially serious. We hope that this, our fourth BCEF Call of 2021, will help to offset these expenses. I ask that you prayerfully consider the contributions of this vibrant parish and that you try to be especially generous in making a gift.

God's peace,

+Carlye J. Hughes

The Rt. Rev. Carlye J. Hughes
Bishop of Newark

Convention postponed until May 2022

In light of the uncertainty of the pandemic, and with a strong desire that all churches' Deputies and Clergy can attend the 148th Annual Diocesan Convention in person, the Bishop has decided that Convention will be postponed from February 2022 until the weekend of **May 6 & 7, 2022**, at a location to be determined. More information will be forthcoming in early 2022.

Clergy ministry transitions

Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate

- The Rev Deacon Danielle Baker
- The Rev Deacon George Dredde

Saturday, Dec. 4 at Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral.

Christmas & New Year's Break - Episcopal House closed

Friday, Dec. 24 – Sunday, Jan. 2

Bishop Hughes and her staff wish you a blessed Christmas and a healthy and happy 2022.