



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — March 2, 2022

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From Bishop Hughes

Lent, a time to turn back to God

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. It is Ash Wednesday, the official start of the season of Lent, those 40 days that we spend in preparation for the great celebration that is Easter, and that symbolically remind us of the 40 days that Jesus spent in temptation before the start of his ministry. This particular time is a time for us to think inwardly and to think deeply about what God is calling us to in our own ministry and in our lives, and these 40 days are a time for us to explore those things.

The collect for Lent that starts our worship today says this, "Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all of those who are penitent. Create and make in us new and contrite hearts." There's something about the opening to that prayer, the reminder that God hates nothing that God has made, and that God recognizes we are going to fall into trouble, we are going to fall into sin, we are going to fall away from being faithful people. And that all we need to do is to turn back to God and that God will renew our hearts, in essence creating a new heart whenever it is needed.

Years ago, I remember working with a group of five- and six-year-olds. And there was a six-year-old in the pack, Daniel, who was a rambunctious, fun

and big-hearted little boy. But, oh my gosh, he was so full of energy! And I used to say, wherever there was trouble in the room, look first for Daniel, because chances he was involved in that trouble. All the paints spill over, look for Daniel. Kids are in a fight and if they're pinching and hitting each other, look for Daniel. Somebody has swiped the cookies for snack, look for Daniel. And I remember one time, as he was coming out of yet another visit to the time-out corner, I said to Daniel, "Do you think you could try for the rest of the day to really mind your manners and to be careful of other people and of other things?" And he looked at me with absolute seriousness and said, "I don't know what happens. I try so hard to be good but there's just so many things to get into, I can't help myself. Even when I don't want to do it, I can't help myself."

It reminds me of the Apostle Paul talking in the book of Romans, in the letter to the Roman church: that even when we want to do good, we wind up doing things that we don't mean to do. That God has made a provision for us. God understands some part of us has the same struggle as little Daniel. Some part of us has the struggle that Paul names in Romans – that we do the things that we don't mean to do. And Lent gives us a chance to look at that, to turn ourselves, again and again, back to God, and ask the question, "What is it that I am called to do now? And what do I need to ask forgiveness for? And who do I need to forgive?"

We can't help but be human and it is helpful always to remember that in our humanness, that God has

made nothing on this planet that God doesn't love, and God will always be able to meet us and help us.

You have my prayers for a holy and deeply fulfilling Lent.

Diocesan Announcements

How shall we respond to war?

Bishop Hughes asks every parish in our diocese to add prayers for Ukraine, for Russia, and for peace to worship this Sunday and Ash Wednesday. As usual the prayers are your choice. Below are the prayers Presiding Bishop Curry, Archbishops Welby & Cottrell, and Bishop Edington of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe have posted in the last few days.

Further, Bishop Hughes encourages you and your congregation to support the global day of prayer and fasting for peace on Ash Wednesday.

Prayers for Ukraine and peace

We pray for peace, but maybe we don't have the words. We pray for a just peace, but maybe we don't have the words. We pray that the lives of innocents and the lives of any human child of God will be spared. We pray that our leaders will find a diplomatic way, a nonviolent way of solution. But we don't know how to pray as we are. So, the Spirit must intercede for us at this time.

– *The Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church*

God of timelessness,
From chaos and disorder
you brought forth the beauty of creation;
From the chaos of war and violence
Bring forth the beauty of peace.

God of compassion
You saw the humanity of the outcast and the stranger;
Help us to see the evils of our hatreds and

suspicious
and to turn them into the embrace of your Beloved Community.

God of peace,
Through your love on the cross
You overcame the power of violence and death;
Turn us away from the love of power
That we may transform a warring world
through the power of your love. Amen.

– *The Rt. Rev Mark Edington, Bishop of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe*

God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.

We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.

We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion
to guide their decisions.

Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.

We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.

– *Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and Archbishop Stephen Cottrell of York, Church of England*

Donations to Episcopal Relief & Development's "INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE" fund will provide humanitarian assistance for the crisis in Ukraine. Working through the Action by Churches Together Alliance (ACT Alliance), your donation will provide cash, blankets, hygiene supplies and other needed assistance. To donate, call 855-312-4325.