



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — March 30, 2022

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From Bishop Hughes

What we can focus on this Easter

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. And we are just past the midpoint of Lent, which is a good indicator of the season of change that is happening around us. We're just at the beginning of spring starting to show itself to us in northern New Jersey – even though it is 37 degrees today. We're also at the midpoint of an incredible amount of change that we're going through – and not just us, the whole wide world, every organization, every business, every government, including churches – are going through a worldwide change that pandemic has begun, and as we move through this third year of pandemic that change continues to happen.

It seems a really wonderful time to talk about the change that the church is facing, and I want to talk about one thing in particular that I'm hearing on Sundays as I visit with congregations. Congregations and also vestries have been talking with me in the last few weeks about their concern of people who have not returned to church. Most often I get asked, "What do we do about the people who haven't come back?" And as people talk further about that there's a recognition it's not just that they haven't come back but they haven't been seen for the last two years. They didn't want to be online, they didn't respond to phone calls or to mail sent to them, and they have not returned.

That question is really part of a much deeper question that some people get to eventually in these same conversations where they start asking, what is the future of the church? And then it becomes even more worrisome, and attached to that worry a deep sense of fear that maybe this won't be around, this thing that we love so much. I think the fear is real, the worry is real – I don't want to discount that we've been, in the Episcopal Church, in 30 consecutive years of declining attendance. Clearly it's a different church than it was 30 years ago with fewer people attending it.

But the thing that I'm really aware of is that our sitting in fear and sitting in worry doesn't seem to make any difference. And I wonder if we could take our attention away from the worry and the fear and put our attention on the purpose of church. And our purpose is very simple: it is to keep people connected to God and to help them be connected to each other through Jesus Christ. That's our only reason for existence. It isn't to make ourselves bigger, it isn't to make ourselves more powerful, it isn't to be successful in anything else but connecting people to God and helping them get connected to each other through Jesus Christ.

And it strikes me that in this time of change – gosh do we have wonderful opportunities before us! As you head towards the end of Lent and into Holy Week and towards Easter, I think it's important for all of us to be preparing to share this thing that we love so much: that we know that God is here for us, that God cares for us, and God is here for every single person.

How are you going to share that this Easter? There's some easy ways we can do that. One is

inviting people to be a part of our celebration. A second is making sure that some part of our celebration happens outside the church where people can easily find it. Simple things, like giving people a card that lets them know what is coming in church next, or some special book that we're going to be studying or some special activity. Simple things like saying a prayer for people or giving people a prayer that they can take home with them. Those are things that can happen on the front door or of the front steps or the front lawn or the corner of any church or wherever you happen to be. Simple things, like making sure that there are not only Easter eggs for all the kids who will attend, but Easter eggs and chocolate and games for the entire neighborhood.

What if Easter is a day that we give away as much love as we can and we help people to see that they belong. They belong to people who care about them. They belong to a God who knows them and loves them. I think if we can put our focus on what Jesus has called us to do, which is to go out, to share that good news that we are connected to a God who loves us and that we are not in this life alone. We are connected to people who love us. I think if we can put our focus in that place it'll help to mitigate that fear. It'll help us to spend less time worrying about who's not there and much more time being focused on the people who are around us who need to know that they are beloved by God and beloved by us.

Diocesan Announcements

Clergy ministry transitions

Arrivals

- **Apr. 1 - The Rev. Deacon George Dredden,** Clergy-in-Charge, Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral, Newark

Retirements

- **Apr. 30 - The Rev. Mariano Gargiulo,** Rector, St. James, Ridgefield

148th Annual Diocesan Convention

On **Saturday, May 7**, we are eagerly anticipating our first fully in-person Diocesan Convention since February 2020! While deputies are meeting in person, guests are invited to watch from home as Convention is live streamed to the diocesan YouTube channel,

<https://youtube.com/c/dionewark>.

Key Convention events to watch:

9:30 AM - Diocesan Worship Service

11:15 AM - Special Presentation:
Myth-Busting Diocesan Finances

12 PM - Diocesan Budget Overview

A new book by Bishop Beckwith

Seeing the Unseen:

Beyond Prejudices, Paradigms, and Party Lines

By Mark M. Beckwith

In his book published March 22, the Rt. Rev. Mark M. Beckwith, retired 10th Bishop of Newark and a gun safety activist, offers a way forward from opposing viewpoints.

Instead of dismissing those whose views and experiences are different from our own, Bishop Beckwith

argues that we must look directly at them and see the goodness that is inherent in all things. From the language we use to the imperative to understand and include, we have a duty to work through opposition and build community.

Available wherever books are sold.

