



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — January 11, 2023

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From the Bishop

Faith in community, working in collaboration

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. And I want to talk with you about community, and community as it is experienced in our churches. It is one of the gifts of being a member of a family of faith, that we don't do our faith on our own. We don't just say our prayers on our own, we don't grow as a Christian on our own. We don't worship on our own – we can do all of these things on our own, but as a member of a family of faith, as a member of the community, that we come together with other people for prayer, we come together with other people for worship, we grow more deeply in our faith, and our faith expands because of the people that we work with on this faith journey. It truly is a gift to be a member of the family of faith, because we are doing our faith with other people. We're experiencing it and growing into it, and moving into all kinds of ministries, along with other people.

This has been a very important and intentional step for us as a diocese. We had a belief that every church should exist on its own and be fine on its own, and we certainly learned in the pandemic years that we need each other. It's not just that we need each other as a parish, but we need each other as a diocese, that we can support each other. And we're doing that within our regions, these geographic designations, there are eight of them in our diocese. We're doing that within our regions,

supporting each other in our ministries, coming together to do ministry together, checking in on each other, and asking each other how do we do ministry better? How do we do church today, so many things have changed. We've been doing this work together, because this is the future of the church: collaboration. It's not about what any one individual or with any one church or any one lay leader, or any one clergy person can do, it's what we can all do together.

This year at Convention, we're going to spend our time talking yet more about beginning anew, but especially this piece of beginning anew of seeking what it is God is trying to do in our church. Seeking the vision of God for our particular church at this particular time, and seeking that vision together. It's an interesting thing, God didn't create us to do our faith alone, God created us so that we could be together and support each other in the faith. And part of that work of faith right now is asking the question, as individuals, as parish, and as diocese, what is God calling us to do now? And the way we're doing that in the Diocese of Newark, is we are asking that question together. It is how we continue to begin anew. Again and again, day by day, week, by week, month, by month, year by year, that we seek God and we support each other and we do these things as faithful people, together.

Christmas is about unconditional love

This piece by Bishop Hughes appeared in The Star-Ledger on Christmas Day 2022.

The celebration of Christmas has the potential to change the world. On the other hand, it can also be a crushing disappointment.

Christmas can be filled with expectations, especially when we chase the perfect celebration with family and friends on their best behavior. Unmet expectations can lead us to miss the essential spirit of Christmas. But when we lower our expectations and remember what motivates us at Christmas, then the holiday takes on a deep and special significance. It is that significance that can change the world.

Christmas celebrations are underscored by the effort we make to delight, surprise, and care for those we love. At the center of the shopping, wrapping, cooking, and traveling is love. A love that is expansive because of the birth of Jesus. This is good news of great joy for all people. We are loved truly, deeply, unconditionally by the one who came to us as an infant among the very least. His love of us makes our love of others grow.

When we experience this kind of expansive and boundless love, we cannot help but share it. This love is what so many people want to experience at Christmas, regardless of their religious persuasion or lack of religious belief. Some part of us always knows this celebration is meant to be about love, and unconditional love at that. Unconditional love drives us to donate toys, organize food drives, staff suicide hotlines, and comfort those who mourn. This love drives out a sense of scarcity, fear, hopelessness, and isolation. This love is a powerful antidote that transforms us and the world we live in. This love can change the world.

In the end, Christmas is about much more than presents, carols, trees, and cookies. It is about the transformative power of God's unconditional love for all people. For God, all means all. No one is left out or overlooked. At Christmas, and the other 364 days of the year, we are invited to participate in the transformation of the world by loving others unconditionally.

This leads us to gather with those we love and those who are lonely. It means we share our blessings with those in need of blessings. We look with hope-filled eyes at situations that seem impossible to mend. We dream of God's goodness for every part of our troubled world. We step outside of the shelter of our comfort zone and get

to truly know people who do not cross our paths regularly.

While Christmas is a religious holiday, Christianity does not own God's unconditional love. Further, all people have the ability to love unconditionally. So many of us are taught from an early age to take care of your own and let others handle themselves. It takes intentional practice to look at another person or situation and want the best for them. This is something all of us can learn to do with practice, no matter what our faith tradition or holiday.

While unconditional love seems possible at Christmas, many of us struggle with the number of long-term challenges facing our world. War in Ukraine will not stop for Christmas, neither will racial hatred, climate change, nor the current border crisis.

We may feel inadequate for the tasks, especially at Christmas. Yet, our capacity to love may be the most helpful way to address these global issues. Unconditional love keeps us focused on the needs of others rather than our own fallibility. This love can guide us to the first steps rather than withdrawing into acceptance of the unacceptable.

Diocesan Announcements

Clergy ministry transitions

Departures:

- **DEC 31 - The Rev. Jim Petroccione**, Rector, Holy Communion, Norwood

Arrivals:

- **JAN 1 - The Rev. Jim Petroccione**, Priest-in-Charge, Church of the Saviour, Denville
- **JAN 1 - The Rev. Lorraine Harris**, Priest-in-Charge, Epiphany & Christ Church, Orange

Episcopal House closing

Monday, Jan. 16 in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.