



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — February 8, 2023

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From the Bishop

Christ, Collaboration, Courage

This is a transcript from a video recording of Bishop Hughes' Friday evening address to Convention.

So let's talk about where we are as church, and where we are as the people of God. And what is happening to us and how we are supposed to think about all of these things. Because you'd have to have your eyes shut, and your fingers in your ears and be paying absolutely no attention to know that people aren't going to church the way they used to go to church. By the way, they're not going to synagogue the way they used to go to synagogue. By the way, they're not going to mosque the way they used to go to mosque. By the way, they are not joining Scouts, the Rotary Club, bowling, any of the kinds of joining leagues that we used to do, people are not doing that the way they used to do it. And that started decades before pandemic. Decades before pandemic.

So when we sit in our parishes on Sunday, and we go, "When are they coming back? When are they going to get off Zoom?" We're gonna have to make our peace that some can't come back, number one, because people are still getting COVID. And if you've got immuno issues at all, you cannot come back right now. And some are not coming back, because during this time, they discovered something else that gives them the sense of peace. That's what I used to hear from you the most my first year and a half here, why church was so important to you: "Because on Sundays, I receive Communion, and then I sit in my pew, and I feel

peace. And at least once a week, I need that sense of peace. And I hope that it will last me all week long until I get there on the next Sunday, and then I can get some more peace. But if I missed then I'm kind of out of peace. I'm kind of stuck and on my own."

People have found another place to get peace. Yoga, hiking, bagel and the Times – people have found other ways to get peace. So this sense of pressure that we're feeling, how do we get them back? What do we need to do? What's the right program? What's the right preacher? What's the way to get young families to come? How do we make that happen? We need to let that go. We simply need to let that go. God is already doing something in the church. Some things are dying. Some things are dying, so something new can come into being. It's a resurrection story that we are in the middle of. You cannot have resurrection if something old or dying does not go away. You cannot have Jesus without resurrection. You cannot have the transformation without resurrection. We cannot get to the new church without resurrection.

And everything we need to be that new church, God has already put in our hands. We have been experiencing it over these last three years. We have been experiencing it. People keep asking me, when are you going to give us the vision? When are you going to fix the churches? It's usually someone very sweet that saying it to me. They don't push like that. They kind of hold my hand and say, "I'm waiting for you to fix our churches." They're very sweet about the whole thing. People keep wanting

that from me, and I am looking around this and saying, "God's already doing it."

We have to open our eyes and see the part that God is doing. Three things: Christ; second, collaboration; third thing, courage. They have been happening for these last three years. We have been discovering Jesus in new ways. We thought the only way we could experience Jesus was at communion, where we got that sense of peace. That had to be the only way we could receive Jesus. As a matter of fact, I know there's at least one person at one church who's mad at me, because I said, Jesus comes in many ways, communion is one. But you can receive or be in the presence of Jesus in many ways, Jesus is not limited to any one thing. Now, we might want to limit our experience of Jesus. But that does not mean Jesus is limited, because we have just tried to define who Jesus is. But we've had an experience of Christ over these three years.

I want to remind you of some things, and I have them written down and my glasses on so that I can actually read them. One of the things that you did, everyone in this room in some way, helped to keep the clergy of the Diocese of Newark alive. These three years. There are story after story that clergy shared with me, and that I know about, where members of congregations said, do not come to the hospital, do not come to our home, we can do this on FaceTime, or on Zoom, you can say the prayers, they count still, we do not want you to put your family at risk. We only lost one clergy person to a COVID-related illness, in these three years. And as I say it he was 84 years old, and I'm not sure he should have been in a parish. And as his friend says to me, "Father Shearer died doing what he wanted to do. You need to make your peace." So I keep trying my best to make my peace with that because I feel like I didn't protect him enough. But you protected the clergy of this diocese. That was one of my first fears when this all happened. That was a selflessness that comes from Jesus. That was a selflessness and ability to care for them, that comes from God. Our being transformed at the point where we should hold on to people more tightly, you gave them freedom and encouraged them.

The number of laity who stepped into new roles. How many people – raise your hand if you've been leading the Daily Office, any part of it: Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer. If you - keep your hand up - if you go to a parish where a lay person is leading those services? Also raise your hand. Was that happening four years ago? Not to this level it wasn't. How many of you are either preaching as a lay person or have lay preachers in your congregation? How many of you have lay people who have been taking the lead with pastoral care in these three years? We've been calling people, visiting people in hospitals, taking communion home to them? That – doing those things – that is Jesus in us that makes us care to that ability. And for a person who's never done those things, that takes courage. It takes courage to step into something new. Every time a person preaches for the, for every person that preaches for the first time, preaches scared. They are convinced that they're going to say it wrong. They're convinced that people aren't gonna like it. Doesn't matter if you're lay or ordained, you preach scared until you get more used to preaching. It takes time to get that way. That was courage that was happening.

I'm really also aware, and it's rare that I name people because I think everybody is doing something really wonderful in this diocese. But there was a time right there at the beginning where we really didn't know what we were doing at all. Like how many of you have screens in your churches right now. In an Episcopal Church! Screens! I know people who are going to rise up from the grave and come and get us. Screens in our churches, they said it would never happen, that hell will freeze over first. That that would not ever happen, but it happened. But in those days, we really and truly did not know what we were doing. And when it came to technology, Bill Allport, who was – it wasn't that he knew everything – but he gathered a group of people to meet every week online and talk about how it was going. And Miguel Hernandez gathered the people who were dealing with food insecurity, to talk about how it was going. And Mark Collins, gathered the people to talk about schools, and how it was going. And

suddenly, we weren't trying to figure out technology on our own. We weren't trying to figure out food insecurity on our own. We weren't trying to figure out schools on our own. We were collaborating. We were in it together. We were figuring it out together. And it is less scary together. And you discover things together. It's easier to be creative when you're creative with a group.

And I love at one point, I don't know if this is still happening, but at one point when food was so tight, the food banks were not able to get food out to where they needed to get to. But our food pantries would communicate with each other. And one would call one and say listen, I have no diapers. And they say we need we have extra diapers, we also have chicken we don't need, could you use some chicken with the diapers? And food got where it needed to get across the diocese because we were in collaboration.

We're gonna talk about funding. John Gard talked a little bit about it, about the Trustees providing those loans to parishes, to get some money into people's hands quickly. I also want to talk about the folks who steward the Marge Christie Fund, and the grants for that fund, that made the decision that it would be helpful to put money into the hands of parishes so that they could buy the A/V equipment that they need to get. That was courageous. Sometimes, we can be very funny about money in the Episcopal Church. We are generous, generous, generous, until we think you're spending it the wrong way. Or we don't like how you're doing it. Or that money was dedicated to Project X and you just moved it over to Y. And this was definitely one of those situations. And they had the courage to say, we're going to expand the parameters of this grant to help parishes get the equipment that they need to do ministry online. It's got to happen, it's got to happen now, it's got to happen fast, and they made it happen.

Can I talk about musicians? How many of you in these three years had a musician that was sending music, either online for you to learn or a tape for you to learn so that you could join in singing, for the rest of the congregation? How many of you had

– keep your hands in the air – how many after that, had musicians who created a video of singing that they would put out to everybody? And then how many of you took part in, there was a diocesan-wide video that happened, we had people singing from different congregations. I think that was for Easter one year. Again, collaboration, working with each other, doing things that we had not done before. It takes courage to step into things.

I think the place where we've seen our courage the most, most certainly, is around the troubles that we have experienced with racism, with white supremacy, with gun violence, with police brutality and with anti-semitism. These kinds of growing concerns. There are so many that you can get to a place where you think, what difference can I make? What difference can my parish make? It's happening so much I don't have enough energy to keep caring, that we have compassion fatigue, that we're tired, this has gone on a very long time, enough is enough. I tried, I did my book study, I took Sacred Ground, and it's still happening. I have my orange ribbon, or my orange stole, and it's still happening. I make sure that I touch base with the local synagogue, and that the rabbi there knows that they have my support, and it's still happening. And it takes courage to stand in the midst of "it's still happening," and ask ourselves and ask God, and what will you have me do now? What would you have me do next to continue to show up. Because for the people that these things are happening to, they don't get to take a day off. You cannot – I can't take a day off from my black skin. Every single day of the week it is still right there. Our Jewish siblings can't take a day off from being Jewish. Our LGBTQ siblings – especially trans folks who seem to have been selected for a special brand of violence, and let's say be black and trans – it's as if a group has decided to home in on them. They don't get to take a day off. And until we get to the place where they can take a day off, we don't get a day off. We keep on going.

I say all this not to say how wonderful we are. There are things that are wonderful. You know, this is like the best spot, I wish you could all come and stand here with me for a little bit. Because I can see you all, and I love you so much. And just seeing

your faces and to know what God is doing in you and with you and through you, it is a gift to be here standing with you. I think you're wonderful. But it doesn't mean we get everything right. And it doesn't mean there's not work for us to do. So I say all these things, I remind us of all these things, not just because I think you're so wonderful. But because I am convinced God is already changing us and changing the church. It is already happening. Recognize this friends, Jesus has been walking with us. We have gone from being a church who looked to church as a place to receive our peace only. And the thing that people say to me so often now is, when I leave church, I feel ready to face what is out there. I feel strong, I feel confident, I feel ready to face what is out there. That is a very different thing than coming to church for peace.

Listen, so for the person who's going, my life is hell and she just took my peace away. I'm not trying to take your peace away. I want you to have that sense of peace. But there is a greater sense of peace, when we are confident that Christ is changing the world around us by moving through us. That's a kind of peace that is priceless. We already have that. You already have been collaborating with each other. It is just like Chip Stokes just said, it is the future, not just for the church, but for everybody. We will have to be in collaboration with each other.

Go back to those geese again that we were talking about. Figure out your spot in the V formation. And remember that we are always lifting each other up. We're always getting that little bit of assist from the velocity and the speed of the person in front of us, along with us. And somebody is going to be the lead goose for a while, but they're gonna get tired and then someone else will move into that position. That's what happens when we collaborate.

I'm gonna say something. I'm gonna really go Baptist on you and I've never been Baptist in my life. Ever. I pride myself on that. It was a part of country I was born in. Now I was proud of being an Episcopalian in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm going to say something, I'm going to ask you to repeat it. And then I'm gonna say it again and I'm gonna ask you

to repeat it. I'm gonna say it again, and then I'm going to ask you to repeat it like you really mean it with all your heart and soul. Are you ready? I am courageous. I am courageous. I am courageous. Grab ahold of that. Because we are living in a world that is dangerous right now for so many groups of people, and there is no room for us to be compassionately fatigued. When that comes up the response to my fatigue is, I am courageous. And that God is giving us what we need, in order to do the work in front of us. That there cannot be the sit around in silence, there cannot be waiting for the next book study. If you haven't taken Sacred Ground, you need to. But we can't keep falling back. We must press forward. We must press forward. It's what courageous people do. They keep moving forward.

I have you say, I am courageous, so when I think of you, when I describe you, I said – somebody just asked me, they're interviewing for a position here in the diocese, and they asked me, how's the Diocese of Newark, and I said – well, they're coming from the south – it's not the south, it's the northeast, there is no social capital in going to church here. You don't go to church because you're trying to grow your business, in northern New Jersey. If you're going to church it is because you want to be in church. And I said, these are people that recognize there's a level of anxiety and depression and fear and danger around us, and they are doing something about it. And if that draws you, maybe you belong in the Diocese of Newark, but we're not going to sit around and be polite about it. Because we have work to do.

So when I have you say "I'm courageous," I'm not being cute. I hate it when people tell me I've done something that is cute, because I'm not a cute girl. I never have been, not in my entire life. I don't do cute. I do direct. That's what I do. I'm telling you to say "I'm courageous," because it's how I describe you. There is quite a lot before us. I'll talk more tomorrow about how we get there specifically. But the thing that I want you to walk away with tonight, after the three years that we have just been through, that you have come to know Jesus in new ways. Being with each other, being in the prayer closet in your house, leading prayers,

praying for somebody else, being prayed for by somebody else, sitting with scripture. You have found Jesus in new ways that you had not experienced Christ before. Christ is not leaving us right now. You have been collaborating all through these three years. Churches that have been in competition with each other, for decades, have been working together and we're going to be doing more of that and working with faith organizations that are around us. You have already been collaborating, and, you are courageous. Does anybody have anything to say to me? ["Amen!"] That's not what I was looking for. ["I'm courageous!"] Amen.

Going where God sends, together

This is a transcript from a video recording of Bishop Hughes' Saturday morning sermon at Convention.

In the name of the God who loves us, amen. Please be seated.

While it's fresh on our minds, I want to go back to three things that we've heard already, from the collect. "Grant to your church, such a ready will to go where you send, and do what you command. Grant to your church, such a ready will, to go where you send, and do what you command." And then from the Isaiah reading, the prophet says, "I'm about to do a new thing. Now it springs forth, sharing God's words with people. I am about to do a new thing. Now it springs forth." And then from the Gospel reading, "And which of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to your span of life." But we do spend some time worrying, don't we?

I wanted to start with that mix of things, to put things in a framework for us. That we are actually called by God, and called by the church and called as diocese, parishes and individuals to go where God sent. And to do what God commands. It's helpful for us to remember that when we're thinking about where our churches are now, and where they're going, that it is God's church. And God is sending us to do things for God's church, and commanding us to do things for God's church. I say this, because I can't tell you how many times people tell me about "my church." And we're going

to do this my way. And I know what needs to happen here. Because I know this church better than anybody.

It helps us to keep going back to the beginning, how this all started, whose church it is, and whose people we are. And that God has almost always been saying, I am doing something new. Can you see it? There are those words all throughout scripture, that I am doing a new thing. And you know, that's tough for Episcopalians, and I'm an Episcopalian, because that thing we did coming up the aisle, I love me some of that stuff. I just love it. I love every bit of who we are in terms of order and the Prayer Book and what it represents. But it is our common prayer, something that we hold together. And then I'm going to pray it here and somebody else is praying in an hour later, and somebody else is praying it five hours later. And we're all saying that same prayer. And I cannot help but think this is the way God meant it to be for all people. Not just Episcopalians. Because this is my church. And I know how to do worship in this church.

And I have to remind myself, this is God's church. I just get to be invited into the space for a little while. And then I go, and somebody else comes in. And if we can all hold it as God's church. And God is always doing a new thing in God's church. It can help us, help keep us from experiencing that sense of bumpiness and whiplash and the needing to grip on with all of our might. "You're gonna pry that liturgy out of my cold dead hands." It can keep us from going there. And then the hard part for us, I think the really hard part for us right now is, you know, we're making our way out of pandemic but we are tired, and we're worn down and worn out. And when you're tired and worn down and worn out, you can't help but get even more worried and more fearful. And when we're afraid, that's when we really want control. We want to take over because we can fix it. If we have enough control, if we can tell enough people what to do, if we convince enough people, that our way is the right way. And if we can't convince them, just do it anyway. And if we really can't convince them, leave and go to another place and take our pledge with us.

And you know, there's some churches that call that church growth. When someone who's mad at one church goes to another church, taking their pledge with them, I have news for you. They did it to the other church, guess what they're going to do with you. Somewhere down the road. That is how these things work. Fear, when it takes hold of us, makes us behave in ways that are decidedly not Christian. Decidedly not Christian. There's some part of us that – when we hear God is doing a new thing, or we sense God is doing a new thing, or we feel God is doing a new thing – there's some part of us, that should be like, I don't know, like my husband was when the Eagles won last week. God is doing a new thing. Woo-hoo! God is doing a new thing, can I be a part of it? God is doing a new thing, thank heavens, because the old thing stinks, it doesn't fit us anymore. Let's rush into the new thing.

But it's funny, it's not how we work. And I love it, people that have been in these, we've been running these sessions, primarily for churches that do not have clergy. And in those sessions, we talk really honestly, about where we are right now and what God might be calling us into. And there have been people in those sessions who've said, after weeks of us talking about this, talking about what is hard about letting go of things and what might happen if we did let go of things, and what the church of the future might look like. And for someone to very bravely and honestly say, you know, I don't even know how to think like that. I'm so trained to hold on to what we do. And to keep this group of people safe in what we do. Or to say very honestly, and genuinely, every time somebody uses the word "change" in this conversation, a little piece of me wants to throw up. That there's so much change happening in the world. But in some ways, it's a gift to go to the place that I know when I turn to – open my bulletin or turn to page 325 or page 323 in the Prayer Book – I know what's going to happen. I don't have to worry about some people are talking about changing liturgy and changing the music and changing the prayers and inclusive language and expansive language, and using these new interpretations, to try to lose some of the sense of patriarchy and all of our language. When they talk about all those things,

they're taking away the things that bring me comfort. And I'm afraid of all that change.

And so we have to go back again to who we are. That we are people who are following Jesus Christ. Christ has changed who we are. There's a landscape of Christ all over our lives. The things we do, the things we want, the way we respond, the way we treat other people. But all of those things are shaped by Christ. We have to remember that we are Christians. We can get confused sometimes. We can get caught up in taking care of our group of friends, the group that we travel along with in our church. Sometimes that group can be hard to break into. And sometimes that group thinks it's inviting other people in. But basically they're saying, Come if you want to. And if you come, hello, I'm going to talk to with my friends. That group has become a club, in a church. Doesn't see itself as a club. But that is what it is. Sometimes, we have become so devoted to our building, the bricks and mortar, the building that our church is in – this is where people get really upset with me. That we call that building "church." And when something comes as a threat to that building, we get upset with it. People say to me, from time to time, this building, this church, deserves to stay open. This building deserves to be here. There have been generations of people who have worshiped here. It deserves to be here. It is bricks and mortar and when we go back to Jesus, not once did he say, "And take with you your bricks and mortar and go out and make disciples." Not once was it about a building and one of the things that we discovered in the last three years is church is this. It is the people. I keep saying lately – I haven't said it to you – but I keep saying this: The day that Kentucky Fried Chicken forgets to fry chicken, they are done. The day that Nike quits making sneakers, they are done. The day a church thinks that they are all about a building, the day a church thinks that they're all about a club, they are done. It is not club-ianity, it is not building-ianity, it is Christ-ianity.

We have got to remember it is Christ, the risen Christ who has transformed us through death into resurrection. That even if we walk away from a building, that Christ is resurrecting something new. Christ is bringing something new into that church,

which is the people, and into the world. I'm not saying sell all of our churches. That is not what I'm saying. But we do have a couple of churches that are asking that question: "This building take 60% of our budget. All of that money going to the building, and not to ministry and not to clergy leadership." To ask the question, and spend the time discerning about, "Where we are to go?" That is something that Christians do.

Sometimes God makes it so clear to us. You are sent. Where's the youth in here? Are there youth... where... they're all in... would you guys stand up? Thank you for being with us. And let me ask you a question, I'll put you on the spot, and I want you to tell me the truth. Can you tell me if there have been people of Convention that have spent time talking with you? I heard one "Yeah" over here. You're kind of a ringer. Because, sorry, you're family to someone on staff. But they love you. They are talking to you. I'm curious, anyone else? So they're more yeahs? A couple of nods. All right. Very good. Well done. So everyone sit down again. Thank you. Thank you for standing and thank you for letting me, let you be show and tell. I promise I will not ever do that again.

Let me say this. We talk about how much we want youth. You know, where we're sent? Over to that corner. That is where we're sent. Sometimes God makes it so obvious. We know where we're sent. But do we put anything in the budget for it? Oh, no, the building needs that. Sometimes God makes it that obvious where we're sent. And sometimes we don't quite know where we're sent.

So here's the bad news right now, that everybody talks about and I don't want to make it seem like I don't know because I know. And people feel like they need to hear me say it, so you're gonna hear me say it. Again, it feels like. So Pew told us, Pew polling told us, oh, maybe 12, 13 years ago, that 20% of the United States was unaffiliated, consider themselves spiritual, not religious. About five years after that, they said that the number, it was 25%, had grown from 20%. They have done another survey recently, it is now 30%. Is there a surprise? It's a growing number. I would imagine if they do that survey, even a year or two out from now –

they typically do it every five years – we're going to hit half, much sooner than expected. So we know this. We've been experiencing it in our churches. Our own church has looked at data and we look at the data knowing that every 10 years the Episcopal Church loses 20% of its membership. All across the Episcopal Church, including the Diocese of Newark, I've looked at our numbers, I've gone backwards, every 10 years, we drop another 20%. I expect that we will, if we follow that trend will drop another 20% in my ten-year tenure with you. But I'll tell you what else. I'm not going down without a fight. I'm not. Because we're called to it. We're called to it.

Barna did a study recently, where what they've discovered in pandemic is that people are still calling themselves spiritual, not religious, but half of that group is saying, I could use some help with my spiritual life. I need to know how to connect with whatever that is, I need to figure out how to get my sense of peace. I need to know what I'm supposed to do with my life. I need to have that sense of fulfillment. That half of the people walking around unaffiliated are wanting that in some way. And I can tell you what else, they have no intention of coming through our red doors. So we are being sent outside the red doors to be with them. I don't know how long it's been – I meant to look and I just didn't get a chance to do it – I don't know how long it's been since the Diocese of Newark has planted a church. But my plan is, within the next two to three years, we will plant two alternative groups for the spiritual life. Two. Alternative communities for people to learn about their spiritual life and to develop that relationship with each other and with God. They've already let us know, I don't do church. I don't want to do church. There are some people who do want to do church, and we need to invite those people. But there are large numbers of people who have no intention. And the thing that we have learned in pandemic is Jesus isn't limited to what's happening in our bricks and mortar. Jesus showed up all over the place for us when we were stuck outside of the bricks and mortar. That Jesus kept coming for us. So in all things, again, it's reminding ourselves that it's Christ that is guiding us. It is Christ that has transformed us. It is Christ that

allows us to know we're sent and to go and get after it.

So we're spending this weekend talking about one of the ways we get after it being the regional ministries. You'll talk more about that at lunchtime today. You've been seeing these videos about it. And that really and truly is about this sense of collaboration that we need to do ministry going forward. That it's not so much about what a church can do on its own. And yes, parishes have their own work to do. But how do we do that in relationship with each other? And how do we do that in relationship with other faith communities and other organizations in the community in which we live and move and have our being? That sense of collaboration is going to define who we are. It will help us continue to evolve into what church is going to be next. And we have to get ourselves ready. Half of our churches, have clergy support, have clergy leadership, a quarter of our churches have part-time clergy leadership, a quarter of our churches have very little to no clergy leadership. We are flying together, we're going to have to look out for each other. And we're also going to have to look at other ways of doing church.

We talked last night about the many ways that lay people stepped into ministry, being lay leaders and leading services, lay leaders doing pastoral care, lay leaders preaching. We need to make sure as a diocese that we're preparing people to do that. I am so delighted, grateful, and proud of everyone who simply stepped up during pandemic. And now I want to make sure you have the kind of education that you need to do it well. I want to make sure that we – if you are going into somebody's home on a regular basis for pastoral care that we have done a background check, so we know that you're safe. We want to make sure that you take Safe Church so that you're not just walking up and hugging every single person. Some people don't want to be hugged, they don't want to be touched. And our tendency is to think that that is a good thing. It shows our friendliness. But for somebody who's experienced trauma that doesn't feel friendly, it feels threatening. So you need to be trained in those things. We will train lay preachers. Thank you for preaching so far, I'm not saying that

your preaching is wrong. But I want to make sure that if you sit with the Gospels, you can do some homework in those books, and preach a sermon that theologically sound. That is not simply limited to a priest. A person simply has to want to know God and let God follow them, or guide them into the Scriptures. And let God speak to them about what the people of God need to hear. We can train you for that. And we are specifically looking at developing a school that prepares people for ministry, lay people and ordained people here in the Diocese of Newark. There are folks on that team that are already asking those questions, trying to decide, do we do something independent? Do we partner with another diocese? How do we collaborate for this?

I don't know how they're going to do it. But I'll tell you what, there have been people who've been in the process to be a deacon since I arrived here, that will not happen again. It shouldn't take five years to be a deacon. It should happen far more quickly than that. Listen, if somebody has life stuff going on, and they have to slow it down and pump the brakes, that is one thing. But if it's taking that long, because we don't have access to the learning, if we don't have people that we're preparing for ordained ministry, we don't have access to the learning for them, we definitely don't have the access for the laity. And we have to address those things.

So this piece of stepping into the ministry, it's not simply about celebrating the fact that we got through a tough patch. But it's preparing ourselves for where God is sending us next into a new model for some of our churches. We have at least one church in our diocese that is without clergy, that is discerning if they are meant to stay without clergy. They're a small group of people, and they're supporting a preschool. And they are convinced and convicted that God has asked them to keep that preschool going. And it is thriving. And as they have said to me, the preschool is more important than our needs. We know how to tend each other. We can do that. We just like to have a priest come and give us communion. But we can preach and we can lead Morning Prayer and we can take care of the finances of the church. That's a completely

different model. And those are the directions that we're headed in. God is in the middle of doing a new thing, now. Already.

And even in our churches that feel stable, that feel like there is no change, that we go from bigger to bigger, to greater to great to greatest to best. But even in those churches, God is working at doing new things. We have at least one of those churches who is asking the question, we funnel so much money overseas. Is it possible that we could partner with a parish in this diocese, and help them get their legs underneath themselves? This is, this is where we're being sent. This is where we're being sent.

There's another piece of this, that I keep coming back to in, rarely in these situations, but it's important for us to remember that we are bigger than who we think we are. We think that we, the Episcopal Church, is our church. And the Episcopal Church is all the parishes, all the diocese, all the provinces, and the provinces go around the world and to the Anglican Communion – we are part of something that is so much bigger than any one of us. And we've gotten so caught up in our worry and our fear and our diocese. And when I say "diocese" be clear what I mean: 93 congregations, a camp and a convent, all of them in ministry together, along with a bishop who checks to make sure that everybody has what they need. In our diocese – that's what, when I use that word that's what I mean. Sometimes when you use that word, you're talking about the bishop's office, that's just a handful of people providing support.

When the diocese gets afraid, when 93 congregations get afraid, when the camp and the convent get afraid, we forget how much bigger we are all together. And that our impact can be far larger. And part of the reason that we're designating the offering today, the way we're designating it, is to make a statement about who we are as diocese, that these 93 congregations and our camp and our convent say we care about what's happening in the rest of the world. We know that the Diocese of El Salvador is working as hard as it can, in order to bring up new clergy. Miguel Hernandez who is here is working as hard

as he can to help teach clergy down there to prepare people for ministry. We know that the Diocese of Gitega and Burundi, which has come to us two years in a row for Alleluia grants. As they built their well – that's what their grant was for – they spent so much time talking to people, that people wanted to know why are you doing this? Why are you building us a well? Burundi is a very poor country. And their response is, our God says that we take care of our neighbors, and the people said I want to know that God. So they planted a church that already has 300 people in it off of a gift that we sent them. When I talked with the bishop there, Bishop Joseph Aime, I said, "So you planted the church off of that too?" And he goes, "Yes." And I said, "So, do you mean to tell me the Diocese of Newark planted a church in Burundi?" And he said, "Yes, you did."

Those relationships with our overseas siblings remind us that we're bigger than our fear. We are bigger than our fear. For us to give money to that film project about the Philadelphia 11 says this is a, this is a piece of information and history, and history that has affected this diocese. That to give to that is bigger than our fear. All of these things, this sense of knowing who we are as people who are following Christ. This sense of doing this with other people, that we're collaborating, not only with us in our regions, but collaborating as a diocese. So it's not just us in our parish, not just us in our region, it's all 93, one and one. That all of us are doing something together and that we collaborate with a world that is much larger than us. That's when we stop being fearful and we start being courageous.

You know last night we spent a lot of time talking about what you've experienced in the last three years of pandemic, and the things that really can be celebrated in that. And I hope, I truly hope that every parish takes the time to remember, to reflect, to celebrate, and to some way memorialize the stories of the way people stepped into ministry over these three years. We have to remember those things. It helps us remember that we are Christian. It helps us remember that we've always been working together. It helps us remember that we're courageous. This is who God has created us

to be. And the most important thing about all of that together, is God is sending us. We don't remember this just because it makes us feel good. And just because we have a little bit more peace, if we remember these things, but when we remember them, we remember that we are sent.

I keep making references to geese. We talked about geese yesterday, so for people who were not here, the very short version of this is that geese fly in a V formation. And then when you fly in that V, you've got the lead goose, and whoever's flying behind that lead goose – well, whoever is a goose too – the goose behind that when it's getting a little bit of lift from the air stream created by that, that goose in front of them, and it keeps going down the whole V. So that they're all flying a little bit higher, and they stay in sync and faster. And the whole time they're flying, you hear they're honking, you can hear them coming before you see them. The scientists believe that the honking that we're hearing is two things: them telling the lead goose, "Keep it up, keep going, appreciate you man," that it's encouraging them. But honking is also a way of letting each other know where they are.

It's a helpful way for us to think about what it means to be in collaboration with each other, that we're talking with each other. And that we're encouraging and supporting each other. That we have our own version for honking, it's "Alleluia." It's "God is good." You know, and all the time. It's things like that, that remind us. And I'm gonna give it to my Baptist friends again – I'm not going to make you repeat anything today – but they are onto something with that repetition. Last night, I had, I told the group that they were courageous and I asked them to repeat it after me three times, and the last time to say it like they really meant it. And that's something, if you've been in a Baptist church, is not unusual for someone say, Look at your neighbor and say, neighbor, and they tell you all the things to say. There's something hopeful about claiming those words. About claiming the words, I'm a Christian. About claiming the words, I'm in this region and I collaborate. About claiming the words, I am courageous. When we keep saying the words to ourselves over and over again, we

diminish the other words that lead us to fear and to worry. And lead us into being trapped in churches that are not working.

It's important to me that you know, that I'm having these conversations with you and with small groups all across the diocese all the time. Not just because I love the Episcopal Church, which I do. But that is not my primary motivation. We have a ministry in northern New Jersey. There are people who need to know they are loved. There are people who need to know that God cares about them, and God thinks they're wonderful exactly as they are. Regardless of their skin color, regardless of disability, regardless – I shouldn't say regardless, because of their skin color, because of their disability, because of their sexual orientation, because of their immigrant status, because of whatever it is, that makes them unique and special, and in this place we say, "You are welcome." Because of all those things, they need to know that a church says, "You're welcome here. I love you. God loves you. This is your place." This is our ministry, and now is the time to claim it.

So I'm going to leave you with that one final thought about the geese. Because I find it so touching. When I stop talking, we're just going to take a little time in silence and let all these things settle in you. And as you sit in silence, you just ask Jesus to reveal to you what you are to be doing as a follower of Christ in this particular time in our world. The last piece about geese is, if one goose gets sick or gets hurt, and has to go down to the ground, two more go with it. And they stay with that hurt or sick goose until it feels better, or until it dies. And whichever the case may be, once that is done either better or death, the two or the three geese take off again. If they have a deep sense of where they're going, they go to their regular place and they catch up with their friends who've left already. And if not, they listen til they hear honking and they join another convoy. They join another flock. There's something about that, that speaks to me about the life of those who follow Jesus Christ. Amen.

Coverage of the 149th Convention

Strategic Visioning Team update at Convention

During the Diocesan Convention, the Strategic Visioning Team shared its findings from the Listening Sessions in the Fall of 2022. The main takeaways we learned were:

- You love your faith communities – and you want to see them thrive.
- The Covid-19 pandemic was really hard on you – and you are still feeling the impacts of it on attendance and engagement in community life.
- You want to build deeper connections to your neighbors and wider communities – but you need guidance and support.
- Many of you need guidance on how to do things – such as dealing with building issues, meeting Church reporting requirements and more.
- You want help and flexibility in figuring out how to support clergy for your faith community.
- You want to connect to each other through shared ministries and in other creative ways.
- You want to do something together as a diocese – to be a louder voice in our region on gospel-driven issues.

Based on those findings, the team came up with the following four priorities for the Strategic Vision:

- **Children, Families, Youth and Young Adults** – evangelism and formation
- **Congregational Collaboration** – particularly to strengthen our smaller congregations
- **Communications and Technology** – explaining who we are to the outside world and connecting better internally
- **Justice for People and Planet** – working together on gospel-driven justice issues

The next steps in the visioning process include:

- Forming working teams to meet over the next three months to articulate goals and develop initiatives; members of the visioning team will lead each new group;

- Recruiting people across the diocese to join us in this effort;
- Creating new Mission and Vision statements to guide the efforts of the diocese moving forward; and
- Providing an opportunity for everyone to give feedback on the proposed statements later this winter.

We will share more details on how to get involved over the next few weeks.

Election results

ACTS/VIM Board Clergy Class of 2026

The Rev. Ellen Kohn-Perry, St. Paul's, Chatham

ACTS/VIM Board Lay Class of 2026

Martha Boughner, St. James, Upper Montclair

Michael Francaviglia, St. George's, Maplewood

Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral Chapter Clergy Class of 2026

The Rev. Lorraine Harris, Epiphany and Christ Church, Orange

Constitution & Canons Committee

Tom Bisdale, Grace Church, Westwood

Patricia Arlin Bradley, Holy Trinity, Hillsdale

Paula Cappel, St. Andrew & Holy Communion, South Orange

The Rev. Kevin PJ Coffey, Atonement, Fair Lawn

The Rev. Nathaniel Darville, St. Peter's, Essex Fells

John Garde, Grace Church, Madison

Laura A. Russell, All Saints, Hoboken

John L Smith, Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral, Newark

John G. Webb, III, St. Luke and St. Mary, Hope and Belvidere

The Rev. Paul Yoon, St. Agnes', Little Falls

Disciplinary Board Clergy Class of 2029

The Rev. Dr. J. Brent Bates, Grace Church, Newark

Disciplinary Board Lay Class of 2028

Lawrence Sunden, Grace Church, Westwood

The Diocesan Council Clergy Class of 2026

The Rev. Raul E. Ausa, Trinity, Allendale

The Rev. Tom Mathews, Christ Church, Ridgewood

The Rev. Jon M. Richardson, St. David's, Kinnelon

The Diocesan Council Lay Class of 2026

Carol Harrison-Arnold, St. Paul's & Incarnation, Jersey City
Robert Thomas Cottingham, Jr, Epiphany and Christ Church, Orange
David Drislane, Christ Church, Bloomfield/Glen Ridge

The Standing Committee Clergy

Classes of 2027 & 2024 vacancy

The Rev. Danielle Baker, St. Paul's, Morris Plains (Class of 2027)
The Rev. Diana L. Wilcox, Christ Church, Bloomfield/Glen Ridge (Class of 2024 vacancy)

The Standing Committee Lay Class of 2027

Michele Simon, St. Paul's, Englewood

Trustees of The Episcopal Fund & Diocesan Properties Class of 2028

Thomas Bisdale, Grace Church, Westwood
Walton Clark, Atonement, Tenafly
Patricia Yankus, St. Paul's, Paterson

Secretary of Convention

John A. King, St. Andrew's, Harrington Park

Treasurer of Convention

Samuel P. Reckford, Christ Church, Short Hills

Assistant Treasurer of Convention

Rhonda Lutz, Saviour, Denville

2024 General Convention Clergy Deputies

C1 - The Rev. George E. Dredde III, Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral, Newark
C2 - The Rev. Robert Grant Mansfield, St. George's, Maplewood
C3 - The Rev. Cynthia Black, Redeemer, Morristown
C4 - The Rev. Anne E. Kitch, St. Luke's, Phillipsburg

Clergy Alternates

CA1 - The Rev. Dr. Elaine Ellis Thomas, All Saints, Hoboken
CA2 - The Rev. Elizabeth Ivell, St. Peter's, Morristown
CA3 - The Rev. Diana L. Wilcox, Christ Church, Bloomfield/Glen Ridge
CA4 - The Rev. Lynne Bleich Weber, Atonement, Tenafly

2024 General Convention Lay Deputies

L1 - Janelle Grant, St. Paul's, Paterson
L2 - Laura A. Russell, All Saints, Hoboken

L3 - Paula Cappel, St. Andrew & Holy Communion, South Orange

L4 - Bernard Joseph Milano, Trinity, Allendale

Lay Alternates

(note: only 3 candidates for 4 slots)

LA1 - Jewels Quelly, St. James', Hackettstown

LA2 - Rhonda Lutz, Saviour, Denville

LA3 - Patricia Arlin Bradley, Holy Trinity, Hillsdale

LA4 - Vacant

Bishop's appointments

Diocesan Youth Commission

The Rev. Carrie Cabush
Donna Caputo
The Rev. Asa Coulson
Kathy Dewalt
Janelle Grant
Chris Whitaker

Co-chairs: The Rev. Asa Coulson and Janelle Grant

Cross Roads Camp Liaisons: Anthony Briggs, Dylan Payanzo, Helen Payanzo

Bishop's Office Liaisons: Jane Jubilee and the Rev. Canon Andrew Wright

Commission on Liturgy and Music

Chair: The Rev. Audrey Hasselbrook

Dr. Jill Burnett-Comings
Dr. Laura Moore
Vanessa Wigfall
Alison Siener Brown

Gail Barkley

Bishop's Office Liaisons: Jane Jubilee and the Rev. Canon Andrew Wright

Bishop's Appointments to Elected Ministries

ACTS/VIM Board Class of 2026

The Rev. Lorraine Harris, Epiphany and Christ Church, Orange

Diocesan Council Class of 2026

Suzanne M. Hesse, St. Clement's, Hawthorne
Jewels Quelly, St. James', Hackettstown

Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral Chapter Class of 2026

The Rev. Ellen Kohn-Perry, St. Paul's, Chatham

Bishop appointments requiring concurrence by Convention

Commission on Ministry

Class of 2027 - Four year term:

Leslie Bisdale (1st full term)

The Rev. Brandon King (1st full term)

The Rev. Deacon Jill Singleton (1st full term)

Jean Wiedholz-Szczesny (1st full term)

Class of 2025 - Two year term:

The Rev. Canon Andrew Wright (fulfilling unexpired term)

For information, not requiring concurrence:

Co-Chairs: Sue Morgan and the Rev. Canon Andrew Wright (pro tem)

Administrative Liaison for the Bishop's Office: Jane Jubilee

The Committee to certify the minutes

Robert Sullivan, St. Paul's Church Morris Plains

William Kelter, Good Shepherd, Wantage

Actions of Convention

From the Budget & Finance Committee

2023 Budget adopted.

From the Resolutions Committee

Consent Calendar:

2023_AC149_01 - Create a Plan to Narrow Gender Gaps

Accepted on the floor of Convention for consideration:

2023_AC149_02 - A Resolution on Reducing Gun Violence and Paying for its Victims

2023_AC149_03 - A Resolution in Response to Tyre Nichols' Death

From the HR Committee

Approved the recommendations of the Human Resources Advisory Board for the 2024 Clergy Minimum Salaries.

RESOLUTION I: Minimum Cash Salary for Clergy

RESOLVED, that the 149th Convention of the Diocese of Newark adopts the following minimum salary standards

for full-time clergy serving parishes or missions in the Diocese, effective January 1, 2024:

Transitional Deacon*: \$44,000

Assisting Priest: \$47,000

Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge: \$58,500

** Compensation minimums for transitional deacons are intended only for those who have completed their formation and training process. It does not apply to deacons in field-education placements from a seminary.*

RESOLUTION II: Supply Clergy Stipend

RESOLVED that the 149th Convention of the Diocese of Newark adopts the following stipend rates for supply clergy, effective January 1, 2024:

- Sundays - \$300 plus \$100 for each additional service
- Weekdays - \$150 per service

Extinct Parish Resolutions

Calvary Church in Bayonne

Diocesan Announcements

Clergy ministry transitions

Arrivals

FEB 1 – The Rev Tristan Shin

Associate Rector at St. Luke's, Montclair