



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — May 3, 2023

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From the Bishop

Stay together, pray together, and listen for the Holy Spirit

This is a transcript of a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. I've been thinking quite a lot now that we are well into Eastertide, about how we got here. Not just how we got to this particular time in history, May of 2023, but also how we got here as people of faith. That Jesus faced the impossible going to the cross, dying, and then rising again, and then meeting up with his disciples, in small groups, individually, and always with this message, in some way of saying, "Stay together, pray together, and wait for the Holy Spirit to come." And when we read the book of Acts, that's what we find that they did. They did stay together, and they prayed together, and they waited for the Holy Spirit to come. And she came in that big way that we recognize this Pentecost now. She came as this mighty wind, that's what we hear in the Acts of the Apostles.

And I wonder about the time that we're living in now, in May of 2023. We have certainly faced a mighty wind. I'm not saying it's all the Holy Spirit! I don't think pandemic was the Holy Spirit. I don't think racial killings and the amount of gun violence that we've seen, and certainly the amount of just stubborn discord, where people refuse to speak with each other and refuse to compromise and collaborate with each other – I don't think that that

is the Holy Spirit. But certainly, it has been the winds of discontent and disruption. And when all that wind is stirring, I wonder, in what way have we consistently stayed together, prayed together and waited for the Holy Spirit to come. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "the advocate," the one who will help you, the one who will give you insight and wisdom so you know which way to go. And that is something for us to remember in these times.

One of the things people ask me all the time is, what is the new church supposed to look like? What is it that we're going to be? And I very often say, we're already evolving into that church. One of the things that we're doing as church far more frequently than we've done before, is we've been asking ourselves, "How do we do this going forward?" Rather than just doing what we have done in the past? We've been asking ourselves, "How do we do this going forward," and then we've been stopping to think about what that might look like, and trying on different things. This is what becoming the new church is. It is one where instead of just constantly returning to what went before, we stay together, we pray together, and we wait for the helper, for the Holy Spirit to come and to give us information.

I say all these things, not just because it's Eastertide, not just because we've only a few weeks ago celebrated Easter. I say this as a reminder to us that the change that is all around us is real. And that God will be with us so that we can change along with it into being the church that God needs us to be at this time. This takes courage. This takes willingness. This takes flexibility. It also takes

our being together in prayer and waiting for that wisdom and that inspiration that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Diocesan Announcements

Diocesan members receive awards for communications work

Several members of the Diocese of Newark received professional recognition for their communications work at the annual Episcopal Communicators Conference held last week at Camp Allen in the Diocese of Texas.

Nina Nicholson, diocesan Director of Communications & Technology and a member of St. George's, Maplewood, received an Award of Merit (equivalent to 2nd place) for her 2022 feature article, *"A string of miracles" - Second house renovated to host Afghan refugees*. She has won four previous Polly Bond Awards, for blogging, photography, social media post, and short-form video.

Chris Whitaker, Director of Communication, Outreach and Youth at Christ Church, Short Hills, received two Honorable Mention awards (equivalent to 3rd place) for the booklet *Christ Church in Short Hills: A 140th Anniversary Commemorative Guide* (an award he shares with **Libby Clarke** and **Cathy Fernandez**, who did not attend the conference), and the campaign *Deeply Rooted, Branching Out - Celebrating 140 Years of Christ Church in Short Hills* (which he shares with Libby Clarke). This was Whitaker's first Episcopal Communicators Conference and his first Polly Bond Awards.

Kirk Petersen, a member of St. George's, Maplewood who is an Associate Editor for *The Living Church* magazine (and, incidentally, Nina's husband), received an Award of Excellence (equivalent to 1st place) for his news article *Want More Pandemic Money? It's Complicated*, as well

as an Award of Merit for a second news article, *Against All Odds, Paula Clark Is Consecrated Bishop of Chicago*. These are his fifth and sixth Polly Bond Awards; all were received for news articles.

Founded in 1974, Episcopal Communicators is an organization of communication professionals working for dioceses, congregations and organizations in the Episcopal Church. In addition to its annual conference, it also maintains an email list for members, and a Facebook group open to all who work in communications in the Episcopal Church, whether or not they have chosen to become formal members of Episcopal Communicators.

Episcopal Communicators established their annual Polly Bond Awards to recognize excellence and achievement in Episcopal Church communications. They are named in honor of Episcopal Communicators co-founder Polly Bond (1914-1979).

April update from the Strategic Visioning Team

The four working teams – Children, Families, Youth and Young Adults, Communications and Technology, Congregational Collaboration and Justice for People and Planet – are off and running. Each team has met to address some strategic questions and are now forming goals and coming up with potential initiatives to meet the goals. Working team members are expressing their appreciation for these conversations and figuring out how to work together.

The teams are working through the end of May to recommend goals and initiatives to the Strategic Visioning team. Because Diocesan Convention took place in February, instead of June, the team has pushed its timeline out a month. They will present the final recommendations to Diocesan Council and the Standing Committee when they convene in September after the summer break.