



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — May 31, 2023

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From the Bishop

Please join me in praying for Presiding Bishop Curry

This week we learned that our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, suffered a health emergency. He was treated at a hospital, appears to be stable now, and is recovering at home. (See Presiding Bishop Michael Curry receiving medical monitoring and treatment, May 30, Episcopal News Service.)

I am aware that the pace and pressure of his job is relentless. We can all be grateful for his constant message of God's love for all people and the way he has put the Episcopal Church back into the public square. News programs refer to him as "America's Pastor," and often after a television interview the words Episcopalian and Episcopal begin to trend in Google searches.

I sat next to him recently at Bishop Stokes' farewell dinner and saw first-hand just how many people want to talk with him and take a photo with him. He was warm and gracious with every single person, and then got up and preached an insightful and stirring sermon. He has given his all to our church in this role as Presiding Bishop.

With deep gratitude for God's beloved son, Michael, I ask your prayers for his complete healing and restoration to good health.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry receiving medical monitoring and treatment

Episcopal News Service, May 30, 2023

The Episcopal Church's Office of Public Affairs released the following statement on May 30 with information about medical care Presiding Bishop Michael Curry is receiving for internal bleeding and an irregular heartbeat.

Over Memorial Day weekend, Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry was admitted to the hospital in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he underwent testing for internal bleeding and a heart condition. He has been discharged and will be monitored while working on a reduced schedule from home.

Curry's internal bleeding is under control, and additional test results are expected later this week. He has been receiving treatment for atrial fibrillation (AFib), which was detected in an annual physical. While in the hospital, Curry experienced two other episodes of irregular heartbeat, and he will wear a heart monitor to determine what further treatment is necessary.

Until he is cleared for air travel by his medical team, Curry will remain in Raleigh, resting and working from home on a reduced schedule. As more information becomes available regarding Curry's health and schedule, his staff will provide updates.

Please pray for a full and speedy recovery—and for Curry's medical team as they identify the best course of treatment.

Stories from our congregations

Congregation that posted Pride flags now concerned for community's safety after welcome sign vandalized

By Shireen Korkzan | Episcopal News Service | May 23, 2023

Each year in commemoration of June's Pride Month, Church of the Redeemer in Morristown, New Jersey, displays Pride flags on its property.

This year, the Rev. Cynthia Black, the church's rector, told Episcopal News Service they put the flags up on May 19, earlier than usual, in honor of a lesbian parishioner who recently died from COVID-19. The next day, on the morning of the parishioner's funeral, the church's "all are welcome" sign was found split in two.

"Clearly, across our country, a rise in anti-LGBTQ sentiment, whether it's in places like Florida — or what I hope is a small minority of people in local towns near Morristown — it's real and all it takes is for one person doing something like this," Black said. "The intent is to intimidate and to remind those of us who are gay and lesbian that they are there and they can hurt us."

Church of the Redeemer's welcome sign, which cost the church \$15,000 to install in 2015, invites people of all backgrounds — gay, straight, conservative, liberal, single, married, divorced, etc. — to worship. Black said a representative with the company that built the church's sign told her that someone would've needed to use a lot of force to break the sign in the way they did because it was made from hard plastic.

"While no one was physically hurt, this is a clear message meant to hurt, threaten, and harass the church and her people," Newark Bishop Carlye Hughes said in a press release. "The growing tolerance of derogatory language for sexual orientation, gender identity, race, and religious affiliation has direct and hurtful consequences. While those who perpetrate acts of hate think that their action affects only the intended object of their maliciousness, these acts harm the entire community."

Briceyda Rodriguez-Cancio, co-warden of Church of the Redeemer, told ENS that the broken sign will test the parishioners' faith, resolve and integrity in the coming weeks and months.

"If this can happen in our church, it could happen anywhere ... The Constitution gives us certain rights to voice our opinions, and this is a sign telling people what our church is about," Rodriguez-Cancio said. "You know what the Bible says, 'to treat others as you wish to be treated.' Would we have done that to someone else? Absolutely not. This is not only an affront to the LGBT+ community, but to our church."

The church doesn't have video surveillance on its premises, though it recently applied for a U.S. Department of Homeland Security grant to install cameras on church property.

"My parishioners do not feel safe," Black, who is gay, said. "The first person I heard from [after the sign was vandalized] was an older African American straight woman, so it's not just the LGBT members of our congregation."

Anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment has been rising in the United States for some time. So far, state legislation targeting LGBTQ+ rights has more than doubled since 2022. This week a New Jersey Superior Court temporarily blocked a new policy requiring school staff to out LGBTQ+ students to parents in the Hanover Township School District in Morris County, of which Morristown is the county seat.

"I ask us all to be mindful of the growing danger that some in our communities live with every day," Hughes said in the press release. "Now is the time to watch out for the safety of our neighbors."

Church of the Redeemer is hoping to replace the damaged sign with donations via its website, though Black emphasized that all remain welcome.

"I have a feeling that our church will come out of this louder and prouder, because if the essence of our message is love conquers all, then love will win over hate," Rodriguez-Cancio said.