



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — November 1, 2023

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From the Bishop

Making space for peace in the busy holiday season

This is a transcript of a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. It is November 1st, and a series of celebrations began last night with trick or treaters arriving at our doors, or with us preparing trick or treaters to go out, that continues on today with celebrations for All Saints and tomorrow for All Souls, and in some churches will celebrate All Saints on Sunday with baptisms. Those celebrations that we have this week will continue on as we head to Thanksgiving, and then Advent and then Christmas, and then the first of the year, and then Epiphany – it is the season of celebrations.

And I want to offer something to you, as you think about preparing. And that is this. In a very simple way, one of the gifts that the Church gives us all is the season of Advent, a way to approach Christmas with a sense of joyful expectancy. And it can be an incredible blessing to be in the Advent season, and actually really be with your family and friends. To really experience who they are, to pay attention to what's happening around you, to be peaceful in the midst of all of the activity that is happening, that that goes on in this season. And to look for the gifts that God might be bringing to you or to other people. Sometimes it's a word or a phrase, sometimes it's a series of coincidences, but it takes being able to have the space and the time to do all of those things, to notice the messages that are coming to us.

And I think right now, we really do need those messages. In particular, because we've been watching so much tragedy happen around us, not only the mass shootings that happen with such great regularity in this country, but the acts of aggression and terrorism and war that we've seen in Ukraine, in the Holy Land, in Haiti, in Ethiopia, in different countries around the globe. It's disturbing and hard to see and to watch and to know how to even help. And in the midst of all of that it can become even easier to get lost in so much activity to take our minds off things. And I want to encourage us, rather than getting ourselves completely lost in activities, is to take this time before Advent, to prepare for Christmas, and to prepare for Thanksgiving, so that when Advent arrives, we actually can be in Advent.

You have 28 days, if I remove all of the Sundays or whatever day you want to call your Sabbath, remove one day a week, we are 32 days away from the beginning of Advent. So take four away for Sabbath. You observe Sabbath however you want to observe it and what day you want to observe it on. And that leaves 28 days. Now you may not be able to get everything done for all of those holidays. But it gives you a chance to strategize about what needs to get done and when and who you need to have help so that it's not just all on you. And it also keeps it from all bunching up right there at the end. Meaning that Advent is really one more hectic season heading into Christmas.

This year, I think not only would it be a blessing for us to actually be in Advent, that we might be a blessing to other people. Because here is the thing. When we find the space, to be in God's presence,

wherever we are, whether that is with other people or on our own, we enter into that peace that passes all understanding. And imagine what it would do for all of your holiday celebrations. In every single gathering every dinner, every bit of the travel, all of the cooking, imagine that in all of the shopping, imagine that in all of it, you enter into it with God's peace. It takes some preparation to get yourself ready to do that. It changes not only you, but it changes everyone who is around you.

So I encourage you take this time, do a little bit of extra preparation now. Do a little bit every one of those 28 days, so that when Advent comes, you really can be in that posture of joyful expectation.

Stories from Our Congregations

St. Elizabeth's boosts building security with state grant

By Nina Nicholson

By taking advantage of free resources available to all New Jersey houses of worship, St. Elizabeth's, Ridgewood obtained a \$100K grant that covered most of the cost of substantial security upgrades to their property. With that project now reaching completion, they are sharing what they learned in the process.

St. Elizabeth's started the project shortly after Bishop Hughes, prompted by an increase in criminal incidents at houses of worship around the country, wrote a letter to all parishes in November 2019 inviting them to evaluate their buildings and create security and evacuation plans. While the crime rate in Ridgewood is fairly low, they did have some reasons for concern.

"That fall, there had been a few minor incidents of vandalism at St. Elizabeth's, and that December the Most Blessed Sacrament Church in Franklin Lakes was burned to the ground by an arsonist," says Peter Angelica, Senior Warden at St. Elizabeth's.

Another consideration was that St. Elizabeth's is a supporter of the Muslim Society of Ridgewood, and at one time Muslims had used St. Elizabeth's for worship, with the imam issuing the call to prayer from their bell tower.

St. Elizabeth's serves as the designated emergency refuge for the grammar school immediately next door. "I thought, we need to really upgrade our processes so that we can actually offer something which is pretty close to the experience at their schools," says Angelica.

A December 2019 meeting of vestry and parishioners led to their inviting Lieutenant Peter Bolten of the Ridgewood Police Department to do a walk-through and make safety recommendations, which he did in January 2020. "More importantly," Angelica says, "he connected us with the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office to have them review our property for security purposes. This is a free service provided by the county to evaluate public spaces such as schools, houses of worship, hospitals, etc."

In March 2020, William Stallone of the BCPO did a walk-through of St. Elizabeth's buildings and recommended that they apply for a grant from the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security (NJOHS) to help cover the improvements needed. A few days after the walk-through, Stallone sent a comprehensive report with further observations and recommendations.

"This report was vital to our grant application, as it allowed it to be very specific as to what was needed," says Angelica.

On July 1, 2020, St. Elizabeth's was notified it was being granted the maximum amount of \$100,000. The grant terminated after three years and required progress reports throughout that period. Every vendor and contractor had to be approved by the agency. Each invoice had to be submitted for approval before reimbursement could be made – a process that took weeks. "Grace Arscott, our Financial Administrator at the time, did all of this

work, for which we are most grateful,” Angelica says.

A group of eight parishioners worked on the project with Angelica, Arscott, and the Rev. Andy Olivo, Rector of St. Elizabeth’s, breaking into subgroups to focus on different aspects.

St. Elizabeth’s security improvements include:

- Ensuring all windows are secure by adding missing latches and correcting improperly installed ones; covering all first floor and basement windows with shatterproof film; and installing Plexiglas covers over stained-glass windows that did not have them.
- Ensuring all doors are secure by changing the locks – “An unknown number of people had keys to the building,” says Angelica – and converting most to a key-fob system which allows them to schedule when doors are locked and unlocked, as well as to lock the building down quickly in case of an emergency. Doors remain locked on weekdays, with staff using the new electronic system to “buzz in” visitors. The same system also allows doors to be locked or unlocked remotely using a phone app.
- Ensuring the buildings’ perimeters are secure by installing closed-circuit cameras to survey the exterior of the church and Parish House, which can also be viewed using the phone app (no cameras are in the interior); installing gates at the top of exterior door wells; adding or replacing grates over window wells; adding or updating exterior lighting; and removing an old coal chute and some windows, which were replaced with masonry to match the church.
- Ensuring detection of a break-in by installing motion and sound detectors throughout the church and the Parish House, monitored by an outside firm.

The grant also paid for five years of cloud-hosted service for the doors and three years of alarm monitoring. After that, St. Elizabeth’s will have to carry those costs.

St. Elizabeth’s received the final reimbursement on September 3, 2023, utilizing the entire \$100,000 grant. The NJOHS retains the right to review the invoices, competitive bids, and inspect the premises for the next 10 years.

Angelica says he’s happy to offer advice to churches looking to copy St. Elizabeth’s process, although, laughing, he adds, “I’m not interested in actually doing this again – it’s no walk in the park” due to the level of detail required to keep up with the grant requirements.

In a recent parish newsletter, Olivo wrote, “While St. Elizabeth’s will always be the warm, welcoming place that we are known for, I’m also very mindful that shootings and acts of violence at houses of worship are now commonplace in our country. It’s for that reason we will do all we can to keep our staff and parishioners safe.”

A Heartfelt Evening of Aloha: St. Paul's, Chatham Hosts Benefit Concert for Maui

On the evening of September 10, St. Paul’s, Chatham came alive with the soothing melodies and vibrant rhythms of Hawaiian music, all for a noble cause. The Benefit Concert for Maui, organized by long-time Chatham resident and musician, Andy Wang, touched the hearts of attendees while raising funds for the victims of the devastating wildfires in West Maui.

St. Paul's has a special connection with Maui having hosted multiple concerts by Maui-resident, Grammy-Award winner, and Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Master George Kahumoku, Jr. over the years. The church served as the picturesque backdrop for this heartwarming event.

The lineup of top-notch performers who donated their time included Bill Wynne, winner of the 2005 Aloha Festivals Falsetto Contest. The enchanting Claudia Goddard the soulful tunes of Steel Guitarist Chris Davis, the Accidental Hawaiian Crooner, Jason Poole, and of course St. Paul's own talented Andy Wang.

In addition to the amazing music, there were beautiful dance performances by the hula dancers of Pua Ali'i 'Ilima O Nuioka and Lāna'i-born hula dancer Janine Oliva. The beautiful music and dance transported everyone to the idyllic shores of Hawaii.

"I'm so grateful to share the stage with my fellow performers who donated their time, talents, and treasures, as well as thankful to St. Paul's and everyone who came together to support our friends in West Maui," said Andy.

The evening was not just about the music and dance; it was about a caring community coming together to make a difference in the lives of those in need in the world. Performers and concert goers came from the local area and surrounding states, including New York, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, to offer support for the people of Maui. The sense of unity and aloha spirit was palpable throughout the event.

The concert was a great success. St. Paul's raised over \$7000.00 in donations for the victims of the West Maui wildfires, and 100% of funds raised were given directly to relief organizations on Maui, ensuring that those who need it most receive the assistance they deserve.

Diocesan Announcements

Clergy ministry transitions

Retirements

- **NOV 5 - The Rev. Dr. Cynthia Black,**
Rector, Redeemer, Morristown

Departures

- **OCT 31 (corrected date) - The Rev. Dr. Bill Allport,**
Rector, St. Paul's, Engelwood
- **NOV 19 - The Rev. Billy Adams,**
Associate Rector, St. Elizabeth's, Ridgewood

Arrivals

- **NOV 1 - The Rev. Dr. Bill Allport,**
Chaplain, Seamen's Church Institute, Port Newark
- **NOV 1 - The Rev. Philip Zoutendam,**
Priest-in-Charge, St. James', Ridgefield