



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — November 15, 2023

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From the Bishop

What to do when you don't know what to do

This is a transcript of a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark, and it is the week before Thanksgiving. And I imagine your household is a little bit like mine – you're either making plans to travel, or to have people travel to you, and trying to determine, has everything been taken care of for next week's celebration. And, I imagine you're also a little bit like my household, trying to catch up with all business, get all emails answered, et cetera, before we know that it'll be quieter next weekend, it's harder to get ahold of people.

In the midst of answering all my emails, there was a message from one of, the parishioner at one of our parishes, that had questions about something happening with their schedule, and ended the message with, "Bishop, what are you going to do about the war?" And my first reaction was to say, "I'm going to tell them to just stop." And as if they would listen to me, one lone person sitting in Newark, New Jersey. But I think all of us feel a little bit of that, this sense that there's something we're supposed to do, but also feeling like we're one lone person sitting in northern New Jersey, what can we possibly do? I am not a head of state, nor am I a diplomat, nor will I be at any negotiating table physically. But what can I do? And that is something that is worth thinking about.

I had a conversation this week with two therapists in our diocese. One is Holly Speenburgh, who works with children and deals with trauma and younger folks, and she's a member at church of the Messiah in Chester.

And the other is Carrie Cabush, who is a priest in our diocese, and serves at Calvary Church in Summit. And I was talking with them, recognizing that I've had a number of children, teenagers, and their parents say that they really could use some help thinking about how to talk about war and terrorism, how to talk about these scary things, and then how to react to them. I think even that person that sent me that question was really asking, how do we do this as faithful people. I'm working on something that will go out to families, but it struck me that it was such a simple thing, that it's something to go ahead and share with everybody right now.

First, we pray. That is our first step as people who are following the one who loves us, so incredibly much. The first thing we do is pray because it connects us to God, and it gives us a place to tell the absolute truth, to say exactly how we're responding, how inconsequential we feel, how worried we are, how afraid we are, how angry we are – whatever the truth is, we can say that to God in prayer. And then prayer also changes us. It gives us a chance to listen to God, or to allow God to minister to us. And sometimes in prayer, a thought or an idea will come to us, if not right in the prayer, sometime afterwards.

So we go to prayer first. And prayer informs what our actions will be next. And the action that we think is really helpful right now is being open to conversation. To allow space for people to talk about where they are, especially if those people are younger than us, if they are children or teenagers or young adults, to allow a space to say, how is this affecting you? What do you think about it? What do you think God might be thinking about it or leading you to. But to allow that space that is nonjudgmental, and not us trying to fix it, but allow an open space for people to talk. And in those

two things, praying and allowing for that space to have open conversation, what will start to reveal itself is what we are to do. And what we are to do comes after those other things.

Our tendency is to want to do something right away. And I understand it. We hear horrible news and we want to fix it. And we want to be part of fixing it right away. But we are looking at complex situations all over the globe, including our own country. And they are not things that there can be a quick one answer fix, that any one of us can do. But all of us can pray. All of us can hold space for open conversation, we can allow that. That's a way we can act immediately coming out of prayer. And in those two things, God will reveal for us what we are to do.

I am grateful for our faith. I'm grateful for God's presence in all of this. And I trust that in exactly where we are headed to and time of gathering and celebration, that there will be many opportunities for us to be with people we know and love, and pray, have room for open conversation, and decide together what we shall do.

Stories from Our Congregations

Confirmands find love and friendship at The Lighthouse for asylum-seekers

By the Rev. Deacon Jill Singleton

They arrived bright and early Saturday morning, not sure what they signed up for – seven confirmands and a group of parents from St. James in Upper Montclair. “I didn’t know what to expect, but I didn’t expect to be so moved as I was,” said parent Jamie Pagliaro at the conclusion of the day.

The guests were greeted by Xavier, a seven-year-old boy who had arrived at The Lighthouse from Colombia just five months ago. Proud and eager to use his burgeoning English, Xavier opened the door wide, and flashing a smile powerful enough to melt any heart, said “Welcome to The Lighthouse. It is so nice to meet you!”

The day began with a brief introduction to The Lighthouse ministry, providing context as to the

purpose for the ministry and an overview of services provided to the 109 guests from 28 different countries who have found safe haven there since 2017. The group learned about the difference between refugees, who apply for immigration status from a safe place, and asylum-seekers, who are fleeing imminent danger. And of course the orientation stressed the fact that all of the asylum-seekers at The Lighthouse are strictly following the legal process set out by the US government – a process providing historic and constitutional protection for individuals and families whose lives are in danger due to persecution of all kinds in their home countries.

But the real story of The Lighthouse came into sharp focus when Usman shared the harrowing details of his 10-week journey from Ghana to the United States earlier this year. “I was captured and tortured for speaking out about the government,” said Usman, who participated in several peaceful demonstrations against the government's land-grabbing corruption and LGBTQ policies. “I was a wanted man,” he said. On one occasion, Usman, who earned his living as a yam farmer, was captured and tortured and left for dead on the side of the road, and on another was kept in a room for days without food and water before surviving an attempted poisoning. In a providential twist of fate, one of the captors showed Usman an exit, and he escaped with his physical life intact. However, it was clear that he could not stay in Ghana, so after getting his wife and child to a safe place, Usman began the dangerous journey to the United States as a stowaway on a ship – a trip that would take him through 13 countries (Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Brazil, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico) before making his way to US immigration officials at the Mexican border, where he declared his desire to seek asylum.

As Usman’s story unfolded, there were tears in the eyes of young and old alike, and it was clear that the Holy Spirit was present, doing the work that only the Spirit can do – knitting us together and reminding us that we are One people, that we are all children of God deserving of compassion, dignity, and the ability to become the person that God created us to be. Helping us to see that the geographical divisions that separate and divide us were never a part of God’s plan for his gift of Creation.

“You see people on TV and you don’t really see who they are,” said Jackson, one of the confirmands. “You think they’re just coming because it’s a better life here in the United States, but being at The Lighthouse you realize they are people and they’re doing it for their families.”

“More people should know of the struggle,” said Melissa Legters, a parent accompanying her daughter for the day. “I had no idea about the difference between refugees and asylum seekers. I had tears in my eyes the whole time.”

The story was all the inspiration needed to motivate the 15 people from St. James roll up their sleeves and join with the 15 guests from The Lighthouse to engage in the stated purpose of their visit: cleaning, scrubbing, planting, and decorating the house for Thanksgiving. The children of The Lighthouse were immediately enamored with their new and older friends from St. James, and when the work was finished, a lively soccer game broke out in the backyard. Confirmand Ian especially enjoyed this part of the visit. “It’s been very fun – especially playing soccer with the kids. It’s nice to see them enjoying their time here, especially after having to go through a lot to get here.”

Rev. Melissa and Rev. Audrey, who shared that they hadn’t really gotten to do this kind of mission-related work with the group due to COVID, were grateful for the experience. “When we arrived, and that little boy opened the door to welcome us, I knew that I was looking at an old soul,” said Rev. Melissa. It was as if he was saying, ‘Come into our temple, into our kingdom. We are going to share it with you.’”

“What touched me was seeing the same things about the youth and their parents,” said Rev. Audrey. “Even church people themselves who hadn’t spent time with each other now feel like they have new buddies and support groups. I saw them living out their faith – and that’s all we really want for confirmation. What good is it if they can name all the books of the Bible but can’t put their faith into action?”

“I went with hope, but no expectations,” said Rev. Melissa. “But these kids stepped right into the relationships without question – and to see how generous they were, how kind they were, how

accepting they were. I was blown away. They made me really proud and hopeful.”

The meaning of the day was not lost on the teens. “Even though we’re not changing the immigration system forever, we’re doing what we can,” said Jackson. “It’s good to see the kids here and out of the dangerous situations they could have been in if not for The Lighthouse. I’ve been grateful for the chance to help out when I can.”

Amelia was so impacted by the day she committed to starting a club at her high school to raise awareness about the plight of asylum-seekers. “People should know more about the struggles, and the difference between refugees and asylum seekers.”

And while the parents were happy to see their children engaged in the project, they, too, were changed by the experience. “I thought it was an eye-opening experience to spend the day with people who truly struggled to come to the USA in hopes of a better life,” said Christine Samuels. “The Lighthouse is a place that lives up to its name. I wish there were more Lighthouses.”

“The sense of family that has been created here is really beautiful,” said parent Lyndsay Cooney. “The people are lucky enough to find the place – a safe and happy place. It’s important for our kids to see. They have it pretty good, and they need to share it.”

The guests at The Lighthouse were enriched and appreciative by the day. “We were able to socialize and we worked together as a team,” shared Abina, one of the guests from Ghana. “I got to share our local drink – Sobolo. It was good to see my children playing with the older kids. They are very nice people, very accommodating.” Like Usman, Abina and her husband and two children – ages 4 and 6 – made the dangerous journey over land and sea, ultimately surviving the trek through the Darien Gap in the Colombian and Panamanian jungles.

Usman, who shared the story of his journey with the guests when they arrived, was grateful for the experience to do so. “The day was good,” he said. “I got to be with good people and to share my story. They know that I am not a bad person – I even got to introduce my family to them over Facetime. It was an experience I have never had before and we can do it again. We would love to receive them again.”

"I want to highlight the admiration I feel for those people who do their bit to make us feel special and thank everyone for dedicating their time to us," said Maria, a young mother from Colombia who came to The Lighthouse when her daughter was only 14 days old. "I am surprised by how humble and noble they were at all times with us and I want to highlight a young man who saw me super busy in the kitchen and helped me feed my baby. It was a very nice thing he did."

When asked if he enjoyed the day and the chance to meet so many new friends, Xavier, the seven-year-old who welcomed the group at the front door, flashed his award-winning smile and gave an enthusiastic double-thumbs-up. It was clear that he, and everyone who had participated in the day, were united and embraced by the Holy Spirit, had been changed forever.

The Rev. Deacon Jill Singleton is Director and Chaplain of The Lighthouse.

Note: To protect their privacy, the names of The Lighthouse guests have been changed, and the Confirmands are identified by first name only.

Diocesan Announcements

Birth in our diocesan family

With great joy we announce the birth of Chloë Malzahn to Vanessa and the Rev. Martin Malzahn on November 9, 2023.

The Rev. Martin Malzahn is clergy-in-charge at St. Paul and Incarnation, Jersey City. He writes, "Mother and daughter are healthy, happy, and resting comfortably. Big brother Noah is proud. Dad is smiling with gratitude for answered prayers."

Warm welcome and blessings from your diocesan family, Chloë!

O God, you have taught us through your blessed Son that whoever receives a little child in the name of Christ receives Christ himself: We give thanks for the blessing you have bestowed upon the Malzahn family in giving them Chloë to be their daughter and sister. Confirm their joy by a lively sense of your presence with them, and give them calm strength and patient wisdom as they seek to bring this child to love all that is true and noble, just and pure, lovable and gracious, excellent and

admirable, following the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Update to the Clergy Disciplinary Process

By Canon Andrew Wright

The Episcopal Church provides a process for addressing concerns regarding clergy misconduct – which includes violations of the canons or of ordination vows. This is described in the Episcopal Church canons under Title IV. Summaries and explanations of this process can be found at *Understanding Title IV: An Information Resource of the Ecclesiastical Discipline of The Episcopal Church* (titleiv.org) and on our diocesan website at *Clergy Disciplinary Process in the Diocese of Newark* (dioceseofnewark.org/canon-office/clergy-disciplinary-process-diocese-newark).

The starting point for the Title IV process, when someone has a complaint or concern about a deacon or priest in the diocese, is to contact an Intake Officer. I serve as one Intake Officer, in my role as Canon to the Ordinary, as Canon Jacobs did before me. The Rev. Susan Chrystal served as an additional Intake Officer for a number of years. She retired from this role in early 2023, with Bishop Hughes' gratitude for her work.

On November 2, 2023, Bishop Hughes appointed the Rev. Anne Kitch, Rector of St. Luke's, Phillipsburg, as the additional Intake Officer for our diocese. Having more than one Intake Officer allows for more options for those who may have concerns as far as who they contact or who might interview them. Bishop Hughes very much appreciates Mother Kitch's willingness to serve. You can learn more about her on her parish's website (stlukesnj.org/the-rev-anne-kitch).

Anyone may contact the diocesan Intake Officer to report concerns about the behavior of a member of the clergy (priests, deacons, bishops). To report any concerns, please contact either of us by email or confidential voicemail:

- The Rev. Canon Andrew Wright
awright@dioceseofnewark.org; 973-430-9915
- The Rev. Anne Kitch
akitch@dioceseofnewark.org; 908-520-6966