



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — December 13, 2023

If you have email, you can sign up to receive *The VOICE Online*, currently published every other Wednesday.

Visit: dioceseofnewark.org/subscribe

From the Bishop

How can we be a witness to Christ's light?

This is a transcript of a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. And we are in the midst of Advent. I want to, at this time, invite you into something that I've been thinking about all through Advent. It is that sentence, at the very beginning of the Gospel according to John, which talks about, "In the beginning, there was the Word and the Word was in God and with God. And in that word was light. And the light came and overcame the darkness."

That one sentence captures so much about what we know of, what we've experienced of, what we see of Jesus, what we celebrate at Christmas, that light comes in and overcomes darkness. It is that time of year where the nights are longer, we're headed towards winter solstice on the 21st, which will be the longest night of the year. And depending on where you live, in my corner of the world, when I walk outside of the house at night, I take a flashlight with me. Because if I'm going for a walk, I've got to be able to see what is happening on the ground in front of me. Something that happens at one particular part of the sidewalk where it is pushed up a little bit during the day, I automatically am aware of it. But for some reason at night, I forget that spot is there. And unless I have a flashlight with me, I will trip over it every single time. It's as if I have no memory of it being there, when I am standing in the darkness.

And isn't this what happens to us when we cannot see sometimes, that we need that little bit of light to remind us often of what is already there – the things that we need to walk around or that we need to step

over – to remind us that actually the landscape is perfectly fine. But it's when we can't see that we trip up over something.

I want to invite you this Advent to think about where you need light, and also to think about where you are asked to witness to the light. That passage in John goes on to talk about John the Baptist, and how he was not the light himself, but he was the witness to the light. He was the one who talked about where the lights had come. Our world continues in anxiety, in war and terrorism, in deep hurt and much mistrust. This is not people's imagination. It is the reality of the world that we live in. It is healthy to be slightly paranoid, so that one can be safe. And in the midst of this, we sometimes trip over things that we would see if we had light, or we watch someone else trip over something that they could see if they had light. So my question for us in this time of true difficulty, and being able to see where to take the next step, and being able to know what can be trusted, and being able to discern what is actually truth where we can let go of our worries and where we can have hope – my question for us is how can we be a witness to Christ's light? How can we share the light that we know? How do we share the hope that is within us, the hope of God's love and mercy and compassion that we know exist even in a world that is deeply, deeply fractured and troubled?

We have much preparation to do in these 13 days before the fourth Sunday of Advent, which is also Christmas Eve. And in that time as we continue to prepare. I ask you to hold on to that question: How can I be a witness to Christ's light in this particular time?

Happening at Our Congregations

St. Stephen's, Millburn receives Lilly Endowment grant

St. Stephen's, Millburn has received a grant of \$48,666.00 to enable its rector, the Rev. Paula J. Toland, to participate in the 2023 National Clergy Renewal Program. St. Stephen's is one of 177 congregations across the United States selected to participate in this competitive grant program, which is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and administered by Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. Established by the Endowment in 2000, the program's grants allow Christian congregations to support their clergy with the gift of extended time away from their ministerial duties and responsibilities.

Clergy whose congregations are awarded the grants use their time away from the demands of daily ministry to engage in reflection and renewal. The approach respects the "Sabbath time" concept, offering clergy a carefully considered respite that may include travel, study, rest, prayer and immersive arts and cultural experiences.

Through the National Clergy Renewal Program, congregations apply for grants of up to \$60,000 to support renewal programs for their clergy. Collaborative in nature and implementation, the program allows congregations to partner with their clergy in developing experiences that address their unique renewal needs and aspirations. Recognizing that clergy's families are subject to the stress and demands placed on pastoral leaders, the program encourages clergy to involve their families in renewal activities. Congregational needs during the clergy's renewal experience also are considered. Up to \$25,000 of the grant may be used to support interim pastoral leadership during the clergy's retreat, as well as renewal activities within the congregation. Since the National Clergy Renewal Program's inception, more than 3,527 congregations have participated in the program, including the 177 congregations receiving grants in 2023.

The heart of this sabbatical is opening paths to experience God more deeply and to embody faith in ways that are not the ordinary and which excite her senses. In a total of fourteen weeks of sabbatical in Spain, the United Kingdom, New Mexico, and Colorado, Rev. Toland will be present to God in time and space other than her usual: in holy places and sacred spaces, seeing the sights, meeting the people, eating the food, and being still in the presence of God. The first couple of weeks and the last month, she will enjoy time with family and friends. While she is away and in the months between the legs of her sabbatical, the congregation will explore the idea of spiritual pilgrimage through sacred stories and shared meals.

"Pastors play an important role in nourishing the spiritual lives of individuals and in guiding the work of the Christian congregations they serve," said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment's vice president for religion. "Through these grants, we seek to honor pastors for their extraordinary service and enable them to engage in a brief period of rest and renewal. We have learned that such experiences invigorate the leadership of pastors and bring new vitality to their congregations as well."

Dr. Robert Saler, director of the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs, noted that the National Clergy Renewal Program integrates key attributes of healthy congregations, including a mutual respect for the renewal needs of both ministers and the congregations they serve. "The program provides an opportunity for congregations to express appreciation for their ministers' service and leadership," Saler said. "At a time when leaders are often praised for their pace of innovation and productivity, the National Clergy Renewal Program pays homage to the timeless wisdom embedded in the practice of reflection and renewal."

Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis also directs the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations through its Center for Pastoral Excellence.

Diocesan Announcements

Episcopal House holiday closing

Episcopal House will be closed for the holidays from Monday, Dec. 25 through Monday, Jan. 1. Because of this, the next issue of *The VOICE Online* will be published Wednesday, Jan. 10.

Bishop Hughes and her staff send their warmest wishes for a blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy new year.

Fourth BCEF Call of 2023: Community of St. John Baptist

The Bishop's Church Emergency Fund (BCEF) provides financial support for church buildings in the diocese needing repairs and renovation, usually with a special focus on emergency and unforeseen needs. Through the BCEF, you can support the critical needs identified by the Bishop.

The fourth BCEF call of 2024 is for Garden of Hope accessibility renovations at Community of St. John Baptist. You can or mail a check payable to Diocese of Newark with BCEF Call #4 in the memo line to: Diocese of Newark, Attn: BCEF, 31 Mulberry St., Newark, NJ 07102.

The Community of St. John Baptist (CSJB) is a religious order well-known to most Episcopalians in our diocese. Founded in England in 1852, since the early 1900s the order has had a U.S. presence in Mendham, a Morris County community known for its beautiful homes and historic downtown. The sisters founded an orphanage there in 1908, followed by a new convent in 1915.

The sisters center their lives in prayer and worship, having undertaken the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They are also committed to using their gifts individually and corporately to minister to the needs of God's world. The convent's beautiful Guest Wing and Retreat House provide rest and spiritual refreshment to visitors from the surrounding dioceses as well as from more distant locations. CSJB hosts educational and interfaith programs at the

Convent and most of the sisters are certified spiritual directors.

Individual members of the Community have a variety of ministries, including work in parishes and service on diocesan committees and guilds. These ministries often address issues related to homelessness and food security in the surrounding communities. Sister Linda Clare entered the order more than twenty years ago. With the help of CSJB associate Julie Crawford she coordinates an agricultural program called the Garden of Hope, the heart of which is a large produce garden located behind the Retreat House. "All our property is sacred space," she says, "but the garden is a blessing to those who work there as well as those who benefit from the food that is harvested."

Begun about fifteen years ago, the Garden of Hope receives help from three other churches and over a dozen nonprofits including two Boy Scout troops. Produce from the garden supports local and regional food pantries and senior housing residents as well as organizations providing shelter for the homeless. This season over 700 pounds of garden grown produce have been delivered.

Unfortunately, while the Community's buildings are accessible to all, their outdoor spaces, including the Garden of Hope, are not. CSJB is seeking BCEF funding to renovate their outdoor areas to provide equitable access to all— including senior citizens and children. The funding would cover installation of paved pathways in the garden area, the replacement of an older patio, and the purchase of two new elevated garden beds. Upon completion, not only will the area better serve as sacred space for worship, but programs will be expanded to invite participation of residents from local nursing homes, senior housing centers, and a nearby school which serves disabled children.

Please affirm your support of this wonderful ministry by making a generous gift to expand the Garden of Hope to serve an even greater number of God's children, young and old.

God's peace,

+Carlye J. Hughes

The Rt. Rev. Carlye J. Hughes
Bishop of Newark



Bishop Hughes' 2024 Study Group

This is My Story:

Learning to see, talk, and share stories of faith

Many of us remain silent when given the opportunity to talk about faith. What are faithful people to say when faced with loss, pain, or fear?

Bishop Hughes' 2024 Study Group will focus on learning how to talk about faith and developing an ease with using language of faith both inside and outside of our faith communities.

*Four consecutive
Tuesday evenings:*

Jan 9 & 16

7-8:30 PM
via Zoom

Jan 23 & 30

7-8:30 PM
in person, location TBA

Find out more and register online by Jan. 8 at
dioceseofnewark.org/bishops-study-group-2024



A Lay Retreat with Bishop Hughes

(W)holy Work: Seeing Our Daily Work as Ministry

Fri, Feb 2 - Sun, Feb 4 | Cross Roads Camp & Retreat Center

How would our approach to work change if we thought of our work as a holy calling? What if our most precious offering to God is to see ourselves as serving God's people in the workplace? Join us as spiritual guide Kathleen Henderson Staudt (*right*) leads a retreat focused on exploring the way we see our work.



**Find out more and register online by Jan. 10 at
dioceseofnewark.org/event/lay-retreat-bishop-hughes**