



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — January 24, 2024

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 we get strong in the faith

This is a transcript of a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. We are just about a week past "Resolution Ditch Day." That is the day, January 17, that is officially called the day that most people leave behind the New Year's resolution that they planned on. And you know, those plans came out of the greatest intentions. It's the start of a fresh year, and you think I'm going to take this thing on, we're excited about it, we're committed to it. It takes a while for a new habit to become something strong that you stay with, you have to do it over and over and over again, for at least two solid weeks, sometimes three solid weeks before it becomes habit for that new behavior. And by the 17th day of the month, most people have left those things behind. Therefore, "Resolution Ditch Day."

Something that we have learned as people of faith, particularly people practicing a liturgical faith, is the ability to continue on even when you reach past that point, or you're in the midst of that point, where you ditch something, walk away from it. Those of us who've experienced Lent know that sometimes we take something on or we give something up for Lent. And a week or two goes by and we might meander away from that plan that we had. And rather than just say, "I'm done with it," we go, "You know what, I'm going to just jump back in there again." Usually that happens to us because of a church service that we went to, we go on Sunday, we hear the message and we think, "I'm not ready to give that thing up. I'm not ready to stop. I'm

not going to ditch that plan that I had for my spiritual life."

So I want to offer that to us now, as faithful people who probably took something on new, one of the things that I've asked people to consider in this diocese is make this be the year that we take our faith lives incredibly seriously. That we nurture them well, that we set time apart, that we read the books, that we go on retreat, that we listen to the speakers in the podcast, that we spend more time in prayer, that we spend more time actually trying to understand what it is we're reading in the Bible, that this is the year I've asked us to do that. And you may have started and started strong and may have felt like, "Okay, I'm going to ditch this plan." But think of it like you would a Lenten practice. We start off strong often, and then we meander, and then we get right back on it and continue on.

And that is what the faith life is all about. There isn't this kind of going from good, better, best. There isn't going from strength to strength. There isn't this kind of smooth sailing, I've made a decision, I'm going to be a more prayerful person, a more faithful person, and we're done with it. It's like anything else, we have to build that muscle, we've got to get stronger at it, we have to practice, we have to learn how to get better at something, we've got to make the decision to nurture it.

So whatever it is that you've been thinking of that I want to take on this year, I know a couple of our churches are looking at reading the Bible in the whole year. And I've had people talk with me about wanting to seriously spend time considering how they pray out loud. And then of course, we're working with people in my study group this year on how to talk about the faith. Whatever it is that you want to take on. When that moment comes where you think, "It's time to ditch this

new behavior or this new practice," I want to encourage you, give it a day, pick it back up again and keep on going. That's how we get strong in the faith. We keep picking it up and we keep on going.

Black History Month book recommendations

In preparation for Black History Month beginning Thursday, Feb. 1, here are five book recommendations from Bishop Hughes and her staff.

The Bishop and some of her staff plan to read:

King: A Life

by Jonathan Eig, 2023

Another recent book that might be of interest:

The Second: Race and Guns in a Fatally Unequal America

by Carol Anderson (2023)

For those who would like more devotional reading:

What Makes You Come Alive: A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman

by Lerita Coleman Brown, 2023 (selections from this book are being used by the Bishop's Study Group this January)

These two works could be good for a family discussion or for youth groups:

She Came to Slay: The Life and Times of Harriet Tubman

by Erica Armstrong Dunbar, 2019 (the author is a professor at Rutgers)

Absalom Jones: America's First Black Priest

by Mark Francisco Bozzuti-Jones, 2021 (the author is an Episcopal Priest, and this book is designed for older children, although engaging for all)

Feature

Celebrating Florence Li Tim-Oi

By the Rev. Canon Margo Peckham Clark

The saints that give name to each of our Regional Ministry Networks in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark are from a group that was carefully chosen to be a mixture of ancient and modern saints, saints from the Americas, Asia and Africa, people of color, and multiple genders. The Rev. Florence Li Tim Oi is one of those saints. She was born May 5, 1907 and died February 26, 1992. She was the first woman ordained a priest in the Anglican Communion, and the 80th anniversary of that holy day is this Thursday, January 25, 2024. Her feast is celebrated in the Episcopal Church's cycle of Lesser Feasts and Fasts on January 24 each year.

The Collect for her Feast day in Lesser Feasts and Fasts is:

Almighty God, who pours out your Spirit upon your sons and daughters: Grant that we, following the example of your servant Florence Li Tim-Oi, chosen priest in your church, may with faithfulness, patience and tenacity proclaim your holy gospel to all the nations, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Li Tim-Oi was a living icon of faithfulness, patience, and tenacity. In the foreword to Li Tim-Oi's memoirs, the Rev. Canon Edmund B. Der said, "She might only have been a minor character in the eight-year Sino-Japanese war, but her faithfulness and dedication in her labour along with Jesus won her the respect and love of many." Li Tim-Oi said herself in the preface to her memoirs, "So now I reminisce about the pitter-patter of events, the raindrops of my life, as a living testimony to the Creator." Her memoir (now out of print) is entitled *Raindrops of My Life*.

Mother Florence Li Tim-Oi lived a remarkable life punctuated by great hardship, rejection, and change. She herself is remarkable because of her enormous faith and persistent witness, in all aspects of telling her story, to the love of God. Her words about her life are something to contemplate in thanksgiving as this

anniversary is upon us: “No one has slighted me because I was a woman priest. I have passed through countless raging tempests, through thirty years of political movement in China, and God’s hand is always there to hold me up, to conquer the darkness and rampage. God lives in human hearts and he was with me every moment.”

More about the Rev. Florence Li Tim Oi can be found at the Li Tim-Oi Foundation.

A documentary film *Return to Hepu*, can be found on YouTube (while somewhat dated and jarring, it is an opportunity to hear her speak in her own words).

Her memoir, *Raindrops of My Life*, is the source of all quotes and information not from Lesser Feasts and Fasts in this piece. It was published in 1996 by the Anglican Book Center in Toronto, Canada.

Happening at Our Congregations

Messiah, Chester engages in "Hopes and Dreams" project

By Julie Crawford

The Church of the Messiah in Chester held a Hopes and Dreams PopUp in downtown Chester in early January. The event, which was designed using tools from a Princeton Theological Seminary program called The Collaboratory, shares community resources and allows participants to share their hopes and dreams for the community, the region, creation/environment, and other areas.

Messiah extended the project and made it available to participants from eight neighboring churches in the Long Valley region at Messiah's Martin Luther King Day of Community event held on January 15. At that event, participants collected and assembled takeaway meals for Faith Kitchen in Dover and hygiene kits for the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Warren County.

Information from the Hopes and Dreams Project will be shared with local leaders and local clergy.

Anyone interested in offering this project at a local community fair or sponsoring a similar Hopes and Dreams PopUp Event can contact Messiah's Outreach Team by emailing the Parish Administrator at messiahchester@earthlink.net.

Diocesan Announcements

Thank you, Alleluia Fund donors!

By Cynthia McChesney, Missioner for Stewardship and Legacy Giving

Thank you to the many individuals across the diocese who responded to the Bishop’s Advent Appeal for support of the Alleluia Fund for Outreach!

Because of the generous financial support of many individuals across the diocese, as well as congregational support and funds specifically allocated to outreach in the diocesan budget, The Alleluia Fund for Outreach was able to award over \$165,000 to 17 nonprofits across northern New Jersey as well as international partners.

Food is one of the four “pillars” of The Alleluia Fund’s ministry support. This year food ministries receiving support include St. Matthew’s Trinity Lunchtime Ministry in Hoboken, Grace Church in Newark’s food outreach ministry, as well as Grace Church in Union City’s Saturday lunch program. These ministries provide warm meals and fellowship to those in need, creating essential spaces of support within our communities.

Shelter and housing assistance is another targeted area and this year the Alleluia Fund was able to provide impact grants to both the Family Promise of Sussex County, for intensive case management services, as well as the Family Promise of Bergen County for shelter funding. Other local shelter and housing services receiving support includes United Community Corporation for emergency services; the Hoboken Shelter, as well as My Sister’s Lighthouse (Domestic and Sexual Violence support) and the St. John’s Refugee Resettlement Gund offered through St. John’s Boonton in partnership with St. Peter’s Mountain Lakes.

Education and educational enrichment ministries receiving support include a new counselor program being planned for All the Way Up Adult Education Center, and support for educational enrichment at Greater Life Inc., in Newark's South Ward. Other diocesan ministries receiving support included Seamen's Church Institute for general operating support and North Porch Women's and Infants Center (diapers and food supplements). A new ministry this year was The Parner's Path, also for general operations.

Donor generosity allowed the Alleluia Fund to continue its support of international grantees including this year the Mother Empowerment Program at the Jerusalem Princess Basma Center, support for Good Shepherd Academy in Cameroon, and BlinkNow Foundation, a nonprofit partner founded by a 19-year-old Mendham teen, that is now providing substantial medical support for children in Nepal.

Donor support of the Alleluia Fund made this support possible – from local initiatives including food ministries, shelter and housing assistance, and educational enrichment programs to international projects. And remember: the Alleluia Fund is hard at work all year round, and donations are accepted all year round too.

To donate by check, mail a check payable to **Diocese of Newark** with **Alleluia Fund** in the memo line to:

Diocese of Newark
Attn: Alleluia Fund
31 Mulberry St.
Newark, NJ 07102