

Good Morning,

Last Sunday we made the switch to using Zoom as the primary vehicle for worship and the feedback has been great. Everyone felt so much more connected and having lots of voices doing readings and leading prayers was wonderful. Many folks reported “I felt like I had been to church’! We learned a number of things in the process and will continue to work out the few glitches we had. However, overall it was super!



**LOOKING FOR READERS:** I want to continue to include lots of voices so I need to know who is interested. We can include everything from a full reading from Scripture to a line in the Prayers of the People and everything in-between. I would also love to have some of our youngest ones learn the dismissal “Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia. Alleluia!” and be able to offer that as well. Please reply with the weeks that you are able to participate remotely and I’ll plug you into the schedule.

**SPIRITUAL COMMUNION** - As part of the forum after service on Sunday we discussed doing the Eucharist. As you know, I have made the decision that I will fast from Eucharist until we are able to gather. However, I, along with a number of those participating in the forum, miss the prayers and the visual actions that are at the center of the sacred meal. We have decided that I will celebrate Eucharist and we will share the spiritual communion prayer as we did on Emmaus Sunday. No one present in church will receive and the consecrated elements will be placed directly into the umbric to be used when we are able to gather. I will consecrate one host and a very small amount of wine in the cruet. We will do this next on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

**CONTINUING TO FEED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN OAKLAND** The longer these stay-at-home orders continue, more stress is placed on those most vulnerable to scarcity of resources.

With your help, and the help of others through the Dogwood School community, we have been able to keep over 30 children and their families receiving nutritious food during these last three months. We have delivered large quantities of groceries some weeks and certificates to Shop Rite, the Oakland Giant Farmers Market, and The Dollar Store. We have also surprised the children with small gifts to bring some extra joy. Nurse Barbara Verga, Dogwood School, reports that she knows that our efforts are all that is standing between these families and hunger. I have also been connecting them with additional resources that are available because service restrictions have been loosened in a number of programs. I was able to make a great connection with North Porch and get baby items that our folks needed while dropping off other sizes of diapers and supplies that were left behind when the preschool closed in March. I worked with Teresa to get permission from the families to donate their extra supplies and we also donated supplies that the school keeps on hand. Don and I went through the school snacks and coffee hour supplies that had already been purchased and bagged those up and I distributed those as well.

The kids were so excited to get those kinds of snacks! I have picked up two new families who need support and have asked Nurse Verga to check with other Oakland school nurses to see if they have anyone who needs support. Because this has gone on for so long, families that are normally able to get by are finding themselves struggling.



We have received very generous support through our on-line giving for Outreach. Thank you to everyone who contributed to get this all going. We are using every penny that you are so generously giving to directly support our neighbors. If you are in a position to be able to contribute now it would be greatly appreciated. The need is still very present and growing. At the same time I am happy to share that one of the families has notified me that her husband has been called back to work starting in two weeks and so she wanted me to know that they will only need support one more time. She is so thankful for all that we have been able to do to help her family and hopes that we will now be able to help someone else.

**SUMMER TOYS COLLECTION** - Are you cleaning out your garage? Do you have extra scooters, bikes, skates, helmets, and outdoor toys that you would like to 're-home'? As I get to know the families more closely, I would like for us to help them in other ways too. If you have some things that are in good condition that you would like to pass on, please send me a list and I will check with the families to see if they can use them. With the end of school coming and recreation programs in question we can help make summer a bit brighter for them.

**BARBEQUE IN THE COLONY** - The majority of the families that we are helping live in the area of Oakland known as The Colony. Dean and I have been making the deliveries and we have discussed that we would like to load up the church barbeque grill and set-up one evening in the park at the center of the area and provide a traditional barbeque of hamburgers and hot dogs with salads. We discussed doing one in July and one in August. The restrictions in place at the time will determine whether we can offer some picnic games too or whether it will need to be carry out only. We are looking to put together a team of at least 6 people to plan, coordinate, and pull this off. A second and maybe third grill would be helpful too. If this is something you would be interested in being a part of and / or if you have a grill that could be transported and used please be in touch with me, Don, or Dean. The challenges of this pandemic have opened to us a new awareness of very real challenges and poor living conditions of our neighbors. We now have the opportunity to respond and build a new branch of ministry right here at home. Can you help?

**ADULT STUDY** – There was interest expressed to resume the Intro to the Bible class that we began in Lent. Now that the weather is nice, we plan to resume that with a couple people while also streaming it on Zoom. I will have more information after the weekly meeting with clergy and Bishop Hughes on Wednesday.

**KEEPING UP WITH THE WIDER EPISCOPAL CHURCH** - I encourage you to follow what is going on in the larger Episcopal Church via the links that we are sharing on the church Facebook page and weekend updates. You can also go directly to the Diocesan and National Episcopal Church websites and find news, updates, reflections, recorded messages from Bishop Carley Hughes, our Diocesan Bishop, and Bishop Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop. They are posting regularly on matters important to us in these challenging yet spiritually fertile times.

**Episcopal News Service** <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/>

**The Episcopal Church** <https://episcopalchurch.org/>

**The Episcopal Diocese of Newark** <https://dioceseofnewark.org/>

**LAND SALE** We continue to work towards finalizing the sale to result in the best outcome for the church. Please continue to hold the process and all involved in your prayers. Thank you to Don LaCass, Robert Wurster, Dean Mohamed, Ken Hancock, and John Garde (Diocesan Trustee and partner with McCarter and English) who are supporting me as we keep moving forward through the ups and downs of this project. Thank you also to our realtor, Eileen Bassi, who has been hanging in and working with us for three years now!

### **PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS ON PANDEMIC, RACISM, AND PROTEST**

Join online with Bishop Hughes and fellow members of the Diocese of Newark as we respond to the disturbing deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. This will be a time to share our hopes, worries, and fears in an uncertain time. We will begin and end the evening with prayers of lament and petition. This ancient practice of lament, reflection, petition, and praise is well-documented in the Psalms. It will uphold us as we gather with each other and before God to pray and reflect.



**We will meet via Zoom at 6:30 PM on both Monday, June 8 and Thursday, June 11.**

### **DIOCESE OF NEWARK MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR ALL WHO HAVE DIED DURING RESTRICTED DISTANCING PROTOCOLS**

– The last three months have been filled with all kinds of sacrifice, probably none greater than the death of loved ones in our communities. These losses were made harder by families unable to grieve with the family of faith. While this service, led by Bishop Hughes, will not replace what has been missed, it will be a time for us to gather as the diocese in memory of those who have died. **This service will be held Saturday, June 13, 10 AM on YouTube Live.** Please use this form to submit the names of loved ones to be included in the Memorial

Service: <https://dioceseofnewark.org/form/submit-names-diocesan-memorial-service>

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On Tuesday, June 2nd members of St. Alban's joined with hundreds of our neighbors to participate in a march organized by local high school students and opened to the whole community. Under the banner of Black Lives Matter we were invited to join our voices and presence in witness against the sin of racism that pervades our society and, for hundreds of years, has led to unequal treatment of persons of black and brown skin. We are at a crossroads in our country's history where we are experiencing an intersection of a health crisis and a racism crisis. The health crisis has elevated the disparity across societal life along the lines of race. The economic devastation of shut-down of our communal life is being experienced much more significantly by people of color. And the danger of contracting and dying of Covid 19 is terrifyingly higher for African Americans. The reasons for that are still under study and yet the health detriment of long term and sustained living under the stress and burden of systematic racism in rising as a contributing factor.

The Black Lives Matter march was not a political march. In fact, those who showed up with political flags or who shouted political statements were shut down. This was a time to come together as neighbors and companions on the earthly journey to name and raise awareness of a reality in our society that devalues the humanity of some. I was proud to stand alongside those from St. Alban's and our community who stepped up to raise a witness. Participating from the St. Alban's family of faith: Christian Nazare, Grace Nazare, Olivia Nazare, Julia Miles, Dean and Chitra Mohamed, Don LaCass, Cheri McCusker, and me.

Race and racism is an uncomfortable conversation for most of us because we live comfortably with white privilege. I was moved by the signs that some carried that said "I understand that I will never understand so I stand with you." This was helpful to me. No matter how many anti-racism trainings I attend. No matter how much I read about the systemic racism that I acknowledge exists. No matter how much I want to believe that I am not part of the problem. I understand that I will never understand. But that does not release me from the responsibility and moral mandate of my faith to respond.



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Participating from the St. Alban's family of faith: Christian Nazare, Grace Nazare, Olivia Nazare, Julia Miles, Dean and Chitra Mohamed, Don LaCass, Cheri McCusker, and me.

