



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — February 22, 2023

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From the Bishop

This Lent, try living your faith out loud

This is a transcript from a video message.

This is Bishop Hughes in the Diocese of Newark. It is Ash Wednesday, and the beginning of Lent. That time where we look at our own mortality, the time when we look at Christ's eternity and the eternity that Christ has promised to us, that when this earthly life comes to an end, that we will spend the rest of our time in the presence of God in the heavenly country. It's a time for us to look at our own sinfulness and ask for forgiveness. And it is a time, I think, for us to consider how we are called to live the Christian life.

I'm especially aware this Ash Wednesday of the news of President Carter entering hospice care. Here is a man who lived the entirety of his life as an unabashed Christian. Talked freely and easily and openly about his faith, taught Sunday school every time he had the opportunity, looked for ways to help people, and said, as a Christian, this is my calling. I am supposed to help someone at every opportunity that I can. He lived in his own words, most of his life thinking, what if Christ came back today, I want to live a life worthy of Christ coming back today.

On Sundays, I spend time in coffee hour talking with people, and certainly in vestry meetings talking in depth with the leaders of a church. And very often they asked me, "What can I do in order to help grow our church?" And I encourage them to do the one thing that is probably the most impactful for all of our churches. And that is to live your faith out loud, to let people know that you are a faithful person. Let them know that you're praying for them. Let you know that your version

of Christianity, the God that you believe in, calls you to help out people, and that the place where you worship, the Episcopal Church, is the one that believes that all of God's people are beloved, and all of God's people are welcome in church.

Very often in those conversations at coffee hour and in vestries, someone then tells me how hard it is to be a faithful person in this part of the country, that they're worried or afraid of the reaction if they tell someone I'm even praying for you, that they don't even want to say those words out loud. And I want to encourage all of us to look to people, like our 39th president. He paid some prices from time to time for his faith. There were people who disrespected him or ridiculed him. But I think the interesting thing is over the course of a life, there has been incredible respect earned by this faithful man that put Jesus first and God's people first, before anything else.

I want to invite you this Lent to find your version of doing that. Who would you be, if you were the person who put Jesus first and helping God's people first, before anything else? Who might you be, if you were the person that said, I'm going to hold you in prayer? And it is important for me, for you to know that you are beloved by God, and that I am praying for you. That would be an incredible gift for you to say to someone during this Lenten season.

This is how we live the Christian faith. And I don't know about you, but I'm incredibly grateful to President Jimmy Carter, for being an example to us all for how to do this.

Black History Month

Sharing strength, encouragement and joy

The Reverend Leslie Marie Wilson, First Lady of Saint Matthew AME Church in Orange, gave this sermon at the Absalom Jones Service at Trinity & St. Philip's Cathedral in Newark on Sunday, Feb. 12, 2023. This is a transcript from the live stream video.

Good afternoon. I am so excited to be here. I take nothing for granted. You know, some of you know that it is African American history and cultural awareness month that we're celebrating. My history, my culture, which is also American history. And if we had – some people if they had it their way it would not be taught in our public school system. I am excited to be here with the Right Reverend – Bishop – Hughes, 11th Bishop of the Diocese of Newark, Reverend Danielle Bailey, to the president, to President Smith, Bob Simmons and the Union of Black Episcopalians Diocese of the Newark Chapter, on this annual celebration of the life and ministry of Reverend Absalom Jones, the first Black person to be ordained in the Episcopal Church. I am excited and honored to be here in the company of my beloved husband and pastor of St. Matthew AME Church, Reverend Melvin Wilson, the fabulous dance ministry directed by Reverend Crystal Newby Reynolds, and our wonderful friends that are also here. I'm just excited y'all, I'm excited to be here and to share in an action plan from the texts 1st Peter 3, 15 through 16, on the subject, What was the last time you did something for the first time? What was the last time you did something for the first time. My brothers and sisters, when was the last time I, you, we shared, if I may borrow from the Apostle Peter, strength and encouragement and joy for the first time.

Pray with me, speak to my heart, Lord, give me your holy word. I can't hear from you. Then I know what to do. I won't go on I'll never go on my own. Just let your spirit guide and your word abide. I pray in the name of Jesus, that nothing about me, none of my silly ways, none of my foolish ways get in the way of another whose hope is in you, Lord. I pray for open hearts, open minds, understanding and application. I pray that the

words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart is acceptable in thy sight. My rock, my Redeemer. Amen.

So I'm excited, can't y'all tell, I'm excited today. I'm excited because I'm standing tall. I've never had one of these get ready for me. This feels good. I like it up here. Air feels different. In my excitement today, I must confess two things. One, I am a fan of country music, and two, to publicly declare that yes, honey, I have selective hearing. I am a fan of Darius Ruckers, and one of my favorite songs by him is titled, When was the last time you did something for the first time? I hear the words, when was when was the last time you did something for the first time, and he says yeah, let yourself go, let the feeling flow. Maybe something new is what you're needing like a real life. Let your hair down, feel alive. When was the last time you did something for the first time?

Hmm. Now don't know much about letting my hair down, but there is a question that does require a response, wouldn't you agree? When was the last time I looked, for example, into those big brown eyes of my husband and exclaimed with confidence? Yeah, for the first time, that he didn't get here by accident. God planned him and God planned me. Yeah, speak, Lord, speak. You don't know that, if you don't know you should know that every experience happens, new experiences happen all the time. We have new – they occur daily, weekly, monthly and yearly.

When was the last time you did, I did, we did something for the first time is a profound question. It's a reminder, it's a guide. It's not an open-ended question. You can't just answer it with yes or no. Nor is it a close-ended question. There are no predestined responses to choose from. You must think about it. It forces you to be strategic. To make what you, to make these things that we call goals, and set objectives, and list tactics, and write a mission statement. At 3 PM every day the question comes to me on my calendar, Am I pleasing you God? It is set so that I can pause, so I can take things in perspective and to ponder what is called the apologetics defense of the faith verse, 1st Peter 3:15-16, which reads in the NIV, "But in your words, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asked you to give the reason for the hope, for the hope, for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

When was the last time I did, you did, we did way we defended Christ for the first time. Please don't overthink this. Let's keep it "Morning by morning, new mercies I see" simple. New day, new experiences, new audiences, new first time opportunities. Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, a fisherman of the fair living in Capernaum with his wife, one of the first that was called with his brother Andrew to be fishers of men, who was once called Simon and was told by the word that was made flesh that the Lord selected him, the Lord selected him to hold the keys of the kingdom. Peter was most likely in Babylon when he wrote the epistle. Peter addressed the Epistle to the church, to the church members living in the five Roman provinces of Asia Minor, located in modern day Turkey. Pause here. Yes, I did say Turkey, Turkey that we're seeing on the news right now, the tragedy from the earthquake that has taken place, that has destroyed the lives of many, that has taken lives. Yes, interesting. When was the last time you did something, something like donate financially toward humanitarian assistance to those in a foreign land, for the first time? I'm just asking, I'm just asking.

But Peter prophetically wrote his goal. If I can be creative with his goal and borrowing from another writer and put it this way, he wanted to one, strengthen and encourage the saints in the trial of their faith. Two, prepare them for a future, a future of fiery trial. And three, teach them how to respond to persecution, and that in their suffering, they would find joy. Can you imagine finding joy in your suffering? I know some of y'all know something about it. You don't have to tell everybody but you know, God knows. This action plan, this plan of faith with doable goals was needed just as the Roman government moved from tolerating the Christians to persecuting them. Prayer for you recognize a plan a faith is needed now, as was then. When was the first time you did something for the last time.

First, strengthen the saints for the first time. When we think about Absalom Jones, we know he was the first Black person of American ancestry to be ordained as a priest in 1795 by the Episcopal Church, and no doubt that sacred act strengthen those believers who looked like him at that time. Before ordained it is noted he was a lay minister for the Black membership of St. George Methodist Episcopal Church, which greatly increased thanks to the active evangelism of Jones and his friend,

Richard Allen, who would go on to establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church. That strength, y'all, their strength. Together, they evangelize, strength. Together, they minister, strength. Together, they encourage the persecuted, strength. Pause because I want you to know that I said active evangelism. Evangelism is not an option. It is a requirement. It is a recruitment strategy. It is that wonderful activity every Christian that names Christ Jesus as Lord must do. It must be a goal in your plan of faith, to tell somebody, to tell others about the King of kings, the Lamb of God, the vine, the manifestation of love that came down. Yes, it is the strength of their love of those two men, their love for God, the church and for fellow humans that allowed them to be what I like to call other-oriented.

With gentleness and respect to witness faithfully in the time of fiery trial, of the fiery trial of their faith. One being pulled up from the pew while praying on a Sunday morning, to Jones risking and others risking health and safety during the yellow fever epidemic when he and others cared for those infected white Philadelphians, some who may not have done the same for them. It had to have strength there to preach against slavery, even though he was free, but to have others around him to know their pain. It is strength that says one can pray without chains of inhumanity. Some of you know better than I, you know the story of Reverend Jones more than I do. But I have to believe that these Christian men had a very, had to have some kind of strength, persistent strength, God's strength to endure, to defend Christ when other mean-spirited Christians put our Savior in a box of racism, of injustice, of inequality, of jealousy, disdain, disrespect. Does that sound familiar to some of y'all? That was then, but what about right now? It takes strength today, y'all. Persistence, strength, God's strength, to defend Christ, who was among other things loving and inclusive, against Christian nationality, nationalism. I know Paul said in Philippians 1:18, notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached and I therefore do rejoice, yay, I will rejoice. But Bishop, I have to tell you, I can't rejoice, couldn't rejoice for a while. My plan of faith lists the opposition, and the venom of their misinformation that is intentionally spewed really put me in a difficult place, to pray for my enemies, to love my enemies, to forgive them for their transgression. Don't you know it is hard to be gracious, and seasoned with salt, as it says in Colossians 4:6? But I can't lose sight, can I? We can't

lose sight of the big picture, of the plan. We have to strengthen the saints. It is strength, the capacity to stand, to uphold, to resist evil, God's power that enables us individually and collectively to run the race with our eyes set on the prize. And to give thanks, give thanks, give thanks for His amazing grace.

Second, when was the last time you encouraged someone to be prepared for the first time? The word says in New Living Translation, your heart should be holy and set apart for the Lord God. Always be ready to tell everyone who asked you why you believe as you do. Be gentle as you speak and show respect. I read somewhere that in his first sermon at the African church of Philadelphia, Reverend Jones put out the call to his own fellow African Americans to raise out of the dust and shake ourselves, throwing off that fear, that the habit of oppression and bondage has trained us up in. Throw it off, he said. But if I can take some liberty, I have to, I want to add that somewhere in there he said, let us also not be instruments of our own oppression. What do I mean by that? Well, StateFarm, one of the top contributors to conservative policies and politicians isn't the only insurance company that's out there. Walmart, which has made some progress, still does not pay its employees a livable wage. It's not the only superstore. And Chick-fil-A donates millions to anti-gay hate groups, isn't the only place to get a good fried chicken sandwich. I'm just saying, I'm just saying, I'm just saying.

Our hearts and minds must be in a constant state, amen. We must be in a constant state of preparedness and we must be encouraged every chance we get. Be ready, be prepared, be encouraged. And in doing so always remember that Matthew 5:16 said, Let your light so shine, so that what? Others may what? And do what? Give who the praise? God, the praise, honor and glory. Another goal that we can set when we talk about doing something for this first time in this first time plan. I see the defense tactics in the forgiving words of the family members of the nine who were killed at Mother Emanuel AME Church in South Carolina. I heard the defense tactics in the tears of the mother of Tyree Nichols who said she would pray for those who murdered her son. I felt the defense tactics in the Good Samaritan who offered assistance after an anti-semitic anti-Asian attack. I smell the sweet, sweet fragrance of defense tactic in the air when strangers from other

cultures, other races, do something just simple like smile at each other. I feel it, I feel it, I feel it.

Peter had to prepare, make ready, encourage the Christians in Rome at that time to defend themselves from pending persecution. They were going to be persecuted for defending Christ. He was encouraging them to revere Christ, to revere him always, no matter what the circumstances. Reverend Jones no doubt had to prepare his congregation also, encouraging them to trust God, whose ear was inclined to be ready and be advocates of the slave trade acts and against new fugitive slave laws that had southern states having the audacity to kidnap freed African Americans, transport them back to their state, and sell them into bondage. Always being ready means you are prepared with your talking points to encourage someone to believe in their heart that greater is He who is in me, in us, than he who is in the world. Always being ready means you can be humble because Reverend Jones said, and gave good advice then that's applicable today, pride was not made for man in any situation and still for less for the person who recently emerged from bondage. You may not have changed, your bondage may be that you like to shop a lot, that you like to eat a lot, that you liked, I liked, I liked, I liked, I liked a lot. Yeah. That may be your bondage right there. Always being ready means you checked your list of resources. David had a sling and five smooth stones. We have free, y'all, free free free means to post, to text, to tweet, to email on iPad, iPhone, your phone, to tell the story how to be encouraged, how to make it over mentally, physically, spiritually, in difficult times.

Lastly, this plan. When was the last time did you did something, that you taught joy, that you saw joy for the first time. In the voice translation, it says like this, even if you should suffer for doing what is right, you will receive a blessing. Don't let them frighten you. Don't be intimidated, but exalt Him as Lord in your heart. Always be ready to offer a defense humbly and respectfully. When someone asks why you live in hope, keep your conscience clear so that when, so that when those to ridicule you come before you and they look at your conduct, it will be good conduct in the anointed, and bad things that they say about you will put them to shame. I got joy, y'all. I got joy, joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart. Yes, I can feel it. I got joy that is going to be strategic in the defense of that joy,

that the world didn't give, that joy that the world can't take away. You may not know about that joy, but you're going to learn it because somebody is going to teach you. Teach you, teach us, teach others to respond with joy. We may still have a conservative US Supreme Court, but we also have in mind, heart and spirit the Honorable Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first African American woman to sit in the high seat.

I have teachable, I have teachable Genesis 50:20 joy, knowing that in 2020 election deniers, what they intended for harm God intended for good. I have teachable Romans 8:28, all things work together for good, joy knowing that the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act will pass federally and we'll set a tone so that never again will police officers stand on the side and ignore and not intervene when they're witnessing law being broken, somebody's civil rights are being taken, human rights being abused. Yes, I have teachable moments. I have teachable Isaiah 41:10, the victorious right hand of God is upon me joy, knowing that the January 6, 2021 insurrection will not, will not, will not have victory over democracy. Democracy is not for some it is for all. I have teachable Psalm 29:11 the Lord gives strength to His people, the Lord blesses His people with peace, joy. I got that joy knowing that the Coalition for the Freedom to Learn, defeating book banning and the fear promoted by misinformation of critical race theory. That area is representative, representative of you and me. It is representative of the traditional, the disenfranchised, and their allies. I have teachable John 3:16. Y'all know you got to go to John 3:16. For the day is over. For God so loved the world joy, knowing that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and he will be tomorrow. I'm standing in defense of him. I have General Nanisca, who was the woman king, who said I have this kind of joy, we fight for justice, not just for today, but for the future. That is teachable joy.

On January 1, 1808, Reverend Jones delivered a Thanksgiving Day sermon on the first day in honor of the end of the African slave trade in the United States. He repeated several times, He, God, came down. I have that, He, God, came down, teachable joy. Y'all don't know what I'm talking about. That's okay. I wrote this thing for me and I'm speaking to me right now. That's quite alright, that's quite all right.

In conclusion. In conclusion I'm, as a former Baptist preacher, we have three conclusions, but let me see

where I am with it. In conclusion. Peter's plan of action says, but in the hearts, set apart as holy acknowledging him, giving him first place in your lives as Lord, always be ready. Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to catch a beat to give an account for the hope, the confidence the assurance that you have within you.

Our, when was the last time you did something for the first time plan, this plan of action, it is complete. It's not a war plan, y'all. It's a plan of peace with doable goals, objective tactics, opposition research has been done and a resource listing that includes technology, tradition, and the Word of God that strengthens, encourages, and gives us hope. Thank you all for allowing me to be here today, to be a part of your Absalom Jones celebration service. I am still excited. I'm still excited because we are soldiers in the army. But according to, what made me think to close this thing out when it's the second or second closure. All right, y'all quit playing with me. Wikipedia talked about Charles Sheldon who entitled a book in 1896 In His Steps, what would Jesus do? That inspired a worldwide movement in the 90s, some of y'all may remember, that had the phrase WWJD. But it wasn't just a phrase or a theme. It's a moral imperative. It is a question. Bishop Marshall Gilmore of the CME Christian Methodist Episcopal Church wrote a book putting it another way. What would Jesus do? Wrong question. What would Jesus have us to do? Right question. The road may be tough in the going, make it real, but the one thing I know and I have on my mind, I have decided that I am going to love Jesus, share Jesus, pray in Jesus name. That I am going to prepare, strengthen, encourage the saints, prepare them for future fiery trials. Teach them so they can respond to the persecution in their suffering with joy that they should find and know that nothing, nothing can defeat them as long as they stand for and with the Lord. When was the last time you did something for the first time. In Jesus' name, amen, amen, amen.

Announcements

Clergy ministry transitions

FEB 4 - The Rev. Paul Rajan

Received as an Episcopal Priest from the Church of South India

From Our Churches

Heavenly Finds Thrift Shop celebrates its history, provides over \$100K in Outreach in 2022

By Cynthia Brady

Almost 70 years ago several members of the Women's Guild at St. Peter's, Livingston decided they needed a way to raise monies to support their outreach funding, and opened a Thrift Shop that providing donated clothing at a reasonable price to the community.

As the membership of the parish decreased and demographics changed, the Women's Guild ceased to exist. The Thrift Shop, however, continued to grow, expanding into two large rooms and entrance hall in the school wing. During this time, all the profits went to the church's general fund to subsidize the church's income.

With the anticipated closing of the church at the end of 2021, The Shop's executive board and church vestry faced the difficult task of deciding The Shop's future. Its closing would be another emotional heartbreak not only to the parish but also to the volunteers and the surrounding community who had come to rely on its merchandise and fellowship. After much discussion and assistance from the diocese, it was decided to seek another parish with which to partner rather than become an independent non-profit organization. This would enable the shop to continue its vision of being a ministry of and fellowship with an Episcopal Church.

During the summer of 2021 discussions began with the Church of the Holy Spirit in Verona. We found our visions complimented each other and their faith community was ready to welcome us. In the fall of 2021, we officially became a ministry of Church of the Holy Spirit, named a new Executive Board, and renamed the shop "Heavenly Finds Thrift Shop." One of the Executive Boards' immediate decisions was to use The Shop's profits to fund outreach programs, returning to the original ministry for The Shop that began in the 1950's.

The Executive Board of Heavenly Finds Thrift Shop met 3 times in 2022 to distribute over \$100,000 to various programs. Almost \$45,000 has been given to four food

pantries (CHOW in Livingston, Holy Spirit Verona Food Pantry, Christine's Kitchen at Holy Trinity of West Orange, and St. Peter's Haven in Clifton). Over \$15,000 in funding was provided to diocesan programs – the Alleluia Fund, Apostles' House, Cross Roads Camp and Conference Center, North Porch, and the Prison ministry. The Shop also supported the Community of St. John Baptist's Capital Campaign with a donation of \$5000.

Heavenly Finds was a top sponsor of the American Federation for Suicide Prevention Out of the Darkness Walk in Verona Park and proudly gave to the National Federation of the Blind in thanksgiving for the assistance they have provided one of the Holy Spirit members. Locally we have and will support the Livingston and Verona High Schools, providing \$6000 in scholarships for six students who have showed outstanding volunteerism. We have funded various other programs supporting children, teenagers, young adults and families.

The Shop also provides nonmonetary donations. We give merchandise that has not sold or not part of our accepted items to the United Breast Cancer Foundation. UBCF picks up 20 to 30 bags/boxes of gently used merchandise weekly. R.E.A.D. Foundation has provided us with a clothing bin in which we can place unacceptable clothing and linens. They then pick up the contents of the bin to recycle. We listen to the community's needs and donate as we are able.

Our customers have become part of our family. Many are regulars and we have seen their children grow, become customers themselves and bring their children. Twenty-five volunteers bless us with their dedication and expertise. The amount and quality of the donations we receive is extraordinary.

Thank you to our founding mothers for their faithfulness, wisdom, foresight, dedication, and talents to establish The Shop as we continue to grow this vital ministry.

Cynthia Brady is head volunteer at Heavenly Finds Thrift Shop and a parishioner at Holy Spirit, Verona.