

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

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From the Bishop

Bishop Hughes' sermon at Bishop Croneberger's funeral

This past Saturday, March 18, Bishop Hughes preached the sermon at the funeral of Bishop Croneberger, 9th Bishop of Newark, at Christ Church, Reading in the Diocese of Bethlehem. Here is a transcript of her sermon from the live stream.

In the name of the God who loves us. Amen.

Please be seated.

As we think about the life and ministry of John Palmer Croneberger, I want to take us directly back to those words that Jesus speaks to the apostles, that Jesus speaks to those who are following him, and that Jesus speaks directly to us. They give us a framework for looking at who this man is and all the things that we've heard about him and that you know about him already. It gives us a framework to look at how he lived his life. So, listen to those words again:

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. (John 6: 39)

And I'm certain if the disciples weren't quite sure what all of that meant, I'm sure those who followed Jesus through the centuries weren't quite sure what all of that meant. And I imagine even we aren't quite sure what all of that means. Jesus is talking about the people that are there with him. Jesus is talking about his own connection to God. Jesus is talking about his very life. Jesus is talking about his authority and his power. Jesus is talking about the fact that his life doesn't end on this

planet but will carry on into eternity. Jesus is talking about his divinity and his humanness, all of those things happening at the same time. And he says that God who sent me has no intention for me to lose anything that God has given me and that, indeed, I will raise it up on the last day and we go right after the Cross. Something happens, but it's not just that: it's everything. All the people that Jesus knew, all the power that Jesus had, all the divinity, all the humanity, that all of those things are raised up on the last day.

I want us to hear this in a slightly different way. You could call it the Carlye —my name is Carlye— the “Carlye revised version of the Bible” of Jesus' words:

- And this is the will of God, who sent Jack: that he should lose nothing of what was given him and raise it up on the last day.
- That this man would take everything that was given to him, hold onto it, dearly cherish it with all that he has and not lose a single bit of it, and carry it with him to the last day.
- That he would raise people up.
- That he would raise institutions.
- That he would raise faith up.
- That he would take people from one place to the next place the entire time building up how they saw themselves so they could see themselves as God, see them, saw them and then he would lose none of them.
- That his heart was big enough to hold all who came in his direction and continue to hold on to them.

Let me just ask you one question. All of you who knew Jack — because I didn't know him, though I have benefited from his ministry — but for those of you who know him, and I feel like I can answer this question even

though I never had a face-to-face with him, but for those of you who knew Jack Croneberger: is there anybody in here who felt like Jack raised them up? Raise your hand.

It's more than a few people. Most of the room have their hands up. And for those of you that had your hands up, I'm going to ask you to raise your hand again if you think it's even remotely possible that Jack, in the heavenly country, might be talking to our God about you, making sure that you stay lifted up, making sure that you do not get lost, making sure that you continue to be that person all throughout your life who God has planned for you to be, that Jack is the kind of person who didn't give up on people.

And I want to tell you: this verse is so important because it shows us about how we are meant to live the Christian life.

We are also always so busy trying to follow a rule, and as Episcopalians, please give us a book study. If you can just give us the book! If the book says, okay, here's what I'm supposed to do next, I'm going to do that next. Let me try that. Okay, what did the book say next? We just want the rules and we want to follow those rules and we want to get it right. But here is the thing: there are the things we hold onto as faithful people and as people in a liturgical church.

We believe that as some of you are going to come and receive communion, as some of you may come and receive a blessing, as you are hearing all of these prayers, and as you are hearing all the stories of this man's life, we believe that all of these things are going to touch you in some way. They will start to shift in shape and transform you in some way.

The words of Scripture can do the exact same thing.

We put so much emphasis on communion that sometimes we forget those words that Jesus says or words that we are meant to hold onto, that we are to learn them by heart, that we take them fully in to become part of who we are. I would go so far as to say that about these words and probably other words in Scripture. I don't know that these were Jack's favorite words. I'm just using them as a way for us to understand how this man lived the Christian life. He wasn't following the rules as St. Paul would say in the letters when he kept talking about the spirit of Christ,

that the spirit of Christ would take up residence in us, and when the spirit of Christ resides in us, we become more and more like Christ ourselves.

But hear me right! I am not saying we become Jesus. That's a pathology you need to work with a therapist on. [Laughter.] I am saying we become more like Jesus when the spirit of Christ takes up residence in us. We can't help but see God in each person. We can't help but see the plan God has for somebody. We can't help but make room for other people when the spirit of Christ takes up residence in us. I would say that Jack Croneberger wasn't just trying to lead a Christian life. He was trying to be as Christ in his Christianity. He was trying to see the way God sees, to know the way God knows, to love the way God loves, to be as Jesus Christ in the way he lived his faith in this world. You can hear it in these stories, that incredible sense of making room for people, of speaking for people who could not speak for themselves.

And here is the interesting thing. You speak for one group of people, they can't speak for themselves. Inevitably, another group is impacted and suddenly we're making room for all kinds of other people. When Jack entered Virginia Theological Seminary – my alma mater, by the way – when Jack entered that seminary, I was entering the first grade in a segregated town, in a segregated neighborhood, and a separate, but most certainly not equal elementary school. I was getting the same substandard education that every other little black child was getting in my neighborhood. There were a lot of people that worked at that. But I am here to tell you, I am a visible example, a tangible example of what happens when a person makes room for other people. There is no logical reason, but I am the 11th Bishop of Newark in the white Episcopal church. There is no logical reason other than people like Jack, but most especially Jack, making room for marginalized people, including the ordination of women. Opened a doorway not knowing who was going to walk into it, not knowing how many other lives were going to be impacted. There are little black and black and brown girls in Newark right now who think this is what a bishop looks like. Someone, yes, has asked me: can men be bishops?

Little ones, they see what's in front of them and they get it. This is having Christ take up residence in him in such a way that it was impossible for Jack to do

anything but make room for all of God's people. That intense sense of love. One of the bishops who's here sitting in the back there because he drove 11 hours to be here, is sitting there for most of the service and then he is going to hop in his car and drive 11 hours to be back because he's got to be in a church on Sunday morning and lives that far away. But when I asked him, what do people really need to hear when I talk about Bishop Jack? He said it was this incredible sense of joy and delight, this sense of being a leader who was and had so much joy in doing what he did.

Bishop Kevin [Nichols of Bethlehem], who's up here also, said to me that there was this sense of hopefulness that he shared with other people that things are always going to get better. There's always something coming. And I love the way that Bishop Kevin put it also: that you felt enveloped in his heart, that you were surrounded by that love.

That love comes from God. It's one of the many blessings God gives us. When we have a real sense of who God is, our heart opens up so largely, so wide, so exuberantly, we can take more people in. Then we have the ability to love more and the ability to be in more relationships to encourage more. I don't want to scare all of the introverts out of the room, but all of us have that ability to love in that particular way. Think about this. In the world that we live in right now, expansive love, enveloped by someone's heart, a sense of joy and hopefulness: how many places in the world, how many places in our country, how many places in your family could use some of that right now as that spirit of Christ inside us?

The last piece that I just want to highlight is the sense of leadership that you all talked about, this sense of authority. There is no doubt that Bishop Jack was in charge when he was in charge, but as Bishop Prince Singh said to me, he held his mitre lightly. Sense of humor becomes so important. It keeps you from being a prince of the church, someone who's slightly above it all. And there was a time, that's what we liked in our bishops in this church, people who were slightly above it all, that butter wouldn't melt in their mouths and their upper lip was so stiff that they found that they never cried. You actually couldn't even see anything move when they talked. They were just so cool. But that sense of holding a mitre lightly, of holding authority loosely, of recognizing that all of God's people have

something to give and then if I'm in leadership, part of what I do is help you be in leadership too. And then we lead together. This is who he is. And we have the thought that people are just born the way they're born. And maybe Jack was just born this way and all of it would happen this way. But I tell you what, I am a Christian and I know he was a Christian too, and part of that was him. And part of that was Jesus. Those two things came together, and this is the part that is important for us as we go forward. This was not just meant for Jack.

Jesus means to take up residence in all of us. The spirit of Christ is available for all of us. All we have to do is say, yes, I am ready. Yes, I will try. If you need a book study, God will get the book study to you. if you need a good priest or confidante, we will get that person to you. What God can't do is make you be willing the way Bishop Jack was willing. So, I want to end basically with where I started, this sense of that being given things that we are not meant to lose, that we are meant to raise them up. Let me read this again:

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

Now think for a minute, I'm going to ask. This is your quick homework. I'm going to ask everybody to do this homework right here, right now. Think of a person that that might be depressed, might be lonely or overwhelmed. Think of someone whose confidence has been broken. Think of someone who's feeling hopeless or feeling trapped.

I'm going to stop talking for 15 seconds so you can focus on a person. Do you have a person in mind? Just nod your head if you do. If you don't, just keep thinking. But if you have one, nod your head.

Let me ask this final question: Is there anybody here who is willing to do for that person what Jack has done for you? Are you willing to raise somebody up? That is all of our callings, not just bishops, not just priests, not just Episcopalians, not just Christians, but all of us are all over the world are meant to raise another person up.

I am grateful and we can all be grateful to look at somebody like Jack and say, okay, that's how we do this. If I can't figure out how to do it myself, let me do what my friend, my dad, my grandpa, my brother, my

priest, my deacon, my bishop, that loved one in my life. Let me do what Jack did. And Jesus Christ will help you with all the rest. Amen.

Bishop Hughes' sermon at St. Thomas on 5th Ave.

Then on Sunday, March 19, Bishop Hughes traveled to the Diocese of New York to preach at a Festal Evensong at St. Thomas Church on 5th Ave. Here is a transcript of her sermon from the live stream.

In the name of the God who loves us. Amen.

This is a word of hope for those with compassion fatigue who have been caring about people and caring about situations that continue to happen to the point where you don't know what else you can do:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
(Matthew 5:6)

This is a word of encouragement for those who are worn down and worn out with division, with depression, with argument, with disrespect.

This is a word of encouragement.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

This is a word of promise for those who cannot see a way out and long only for God's goodness to come and break open. The frustrating situations and systems that we seem to be stuck in that are embedded all around us, a part of, [a] vital part, it seems of the way that we operate. This is a word of promise from God.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

The Beatitudes, verse by verse, bidding by bidding, promise by promise, reorient us to Jesus. They force us to turn our face to Jesus. They force us to see the world the way Jesus sees the world. They force this radical realignment, this shifting around the way we talk about *metanoia* or, turning to Jesus, literally turning to Jesus. They force this on us by calling hunger and thirst a blessing by telling us that this longing for righteousness is a good thing and that we will be filled. That promise, that blessing, comes because we return and rely on God - on God, who is so much larger, so much more

expansive, who can take care of things that seem impossible to us because we cannot help but see through our limited view and our limited experience. Even when we think about God, we start shrinking God down to our size so that we can manage who God is and what God is trying to do.

When we hear the Beatitudes, when we hear "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," it turns it all upside down. Our Presiding Bishop would say it turns it upside down so that Jesus can get it right side up the way that it is supposed to be in the first place. What seems upside down to us is ordered by forces that are not of God. The right side up is that part of us that is always longing, always wanting what God has for us. It's like St. Augustine says, a very simple way: "Our hearts are restless. They're absolutely restless until they rest with you, O God." That is that sense of righteousness, of being in right relationship. We never feel quite right when we're out of right relationship with God and when we're out of right relationship with God it's not limited to God. It is limited to all of God's creation. It is all the people. It is the planet. It is the galaxy. It is the worlds. It is the other worlds. It is all of God's creation. So being in right relationship with all of those things is something we can't help but long for because we're created by God. We are in God's image. It is natural for us to want that which created us, which loves us more than anything. We can't help but want some of that, and when we fall out of that right relationship, we fall into this sense of discomfort to the point of lethargy or not caring or skepticism or disbelief or simply shutting ourselves down.

This whole sense that has become kind of popular to talk about is "it is a bad thing for us to feel bad when bad things happen." Well, what else are you supposed to feel?

When terrible things happen to other people, we will feel terrible. They are part of God's creation. We are part of God's creation. We can't help but want for other people, not just our families, not just the people that look like us, not just our friends, not just the other Episcopalians or the other music lovers, but for all people, we can't help but want good things for them. When we see somebody without, we can't help but want them to have what we have. That is that longing for right relationship with them, longing for right relationship with God and with God's creation. So, when

we fall out of that and we feel that discomfort, that discomfort to the point of hunger, that discomfort to the point of thirst where “I just have to have something different.” I'm wondering how many people here, when you heard about the banking crisis last week, how many people just wanted to throw something just having had enough?

We could use a break. The things just keep coming and in the midst of that discomfort and that anger and that frustration, in the midst of all of that is that part of us that knows this is going to hurt other people. It's going to hurt me in my house, but it is going to hurt other people, too. We can't help but care. We can't help but feel that discomfort. We can't help but feel that frustration. That is the blessing of feeling hungry and thirsty for righteousness. It is a blessing to feel that discomfort because that blessing of that discomfort lets us know just how much we care about being connected to God and to God's people.

In the late 1940s, early 1950s, a group of Roman Catholic sisters [Editor's Note: the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur] moved to Fort Worth, Texas. They were educators and they were completely frustrated by being unable to teach groups of children that looked somewhat like this [Editor's Note: the Bishop points to herself to indicate the color of her skin] that were integrated. Wherever they taught they had to teach by color or by race and they decided they were going to do something different. They were going to move to someplace where no one knew them and they were going to open a school and they were going to integrate it.

Notice what I said: the late 1940s, early 1950s. Where were the integrated schools in the United States? Nowhere. There was no such thing. This was before the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision that, theoretically, started integration in our nation. It took years beyond that before it actually started to happen.

They opened their school in Fort Worth, Texas, which happened to be my hometown. Why they picked Fort Worth, I do not know. They had a rough ride starting that school. But it was important to them because they had this incredible sense of intensity that left them so discomforted about teaching and not teaching all of God's children. That was their calling. That was their mission. It was not going to let them go. They were not

ever going to feel at peace until they started doing what it was that kept them connected to God and kept them connected to God's people. As it turned out, I entered the second grade in that school after having a year in a segregated school in my segregated city, in the segregated part of town that I lived in, taking classes that were called “separate but equal” but I am here to tell you, they were separate and not equal at all. The good sisters spent my year of second grade catching me up to the second grade because I wasn't at first grade level when I entered after a year of first grade in that segregated school that I had been in.

I say this story for two reasons. We live in a complicated, and I will say, dangerous time. When God comes to you, when the Spirit comes to you – and that us what is what is coming to you and kicking up that discomfort and kicking in that sense of hopelessness and making you think, “I'm just one person, I can't get it done” – then it is time, my friends, for us to get on our knees and bless the discomfort and remind ourselves that Jesus gives us this blessing, gives us this promise, gives us this encouragement and will show us the way. I dare say I would not be here today if those sisters hadn't listened to that sense of hunger and thirst for righteousness and kept working towards it. They weren't the only ones filled. So was I.

This is a word of hope. This is a word of encouragement. This is a word of blessing for all of us, for every single one of us:

*Blessed are we who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for we shall be filled.*

Amen.

Diocesan Announcements

Clergy ministry transitions

Departures

- **MAR 11 – The Rev. Jill Williams**
Priest-in-Charge at St. Paul's, Montvale

Stories from Our Congregations

Two phone calls transform church's fading food pantry into thriving community partnership

In 2021 Twelve Baskets Food Pantry, a ministry run for six years solely by All Saints', Millington, was on the brink of closing – until two unexpected phone calls led to it becoming a thriving community partnership with local government, other houses of worship, and neighborhood volunteers.

Launched in 2015 with a name inspired by the feeding of the 5,000 ("And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full" – Matthew 14:20), Twelve Baskets originally fed hungry neighbors through partnerships with the Long Hill Senior Center, the local Veterans' Hospital and the food pantry at St. John's, Dover.

When the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted those partnerships, All Saints' adapted by inviting neighbors to come to their parish hall by appointment to "shop," and a small but steady stream of clients did so. However, by 2021 operating Twelve Baskets had become more difficult as several core volunteers moved out of state, and clients began to return to work, reducing the need.

Long Hill Township, the municipality that includes Millington, Stirling, Gillette, and Meyersville, had recently created the position of Community Resource Officer, and in September 2021, All Saints' met with her to find out about needs she might know about locally.

A few days later, the pastor of the two Presbyterian congregations in Long Hill, First Presbyterian Church in Stirling and Meyersville Presbyterian Church, called All Saints' to ask if they could help with Twelve Baskets. For many years they had collected food for another organization but were looking to make a change.

Then the following day, a very active local volunteer called; she had a small army of volunteers who had been helping senior citizens with shopping and medical appointments through the worst of the pandemic, and wanted to continue their outreach efforts.

"These two phone calls seemed to us to be a gift of the Holy Spirit," says the Rev. Vicki McGrath, Rector of All Saints'.

In November 2021, All Saints' had their first brainstorming meeting with members from all three churches, the Community Resource Officer, the Long Hill School Superintendent, members of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), and other interested residents.

One particular area of concern was that because the local elementary and middle schools do not have cafeterias, children who qualified for free or reduced-price lunches were only getting milk, since they were unable either to bring lunch from home or purchase it from outside vendors, as the other children did.

The group decided to expand the food pantry with a much wider volunteer base, including people to drive to the Community FoodBank in Hillside to pick up orders; sort and shelve in-kind donations; set-up, staff and break down the pantry two Saturdays a month; and work on publicity and communications.

The newly revitalized Twelve Baskets Food Pantry opened on the first Saturday of February 2022 with 25 households coming to shop. Today they are serving nearly 50 families twice a month, with on-going donations from all three churches and the wider community, both in-kind and financial.

The items the pantry offers have expanded as well to include personal care items and cleaning supplies. Financial donations received from parishioners and community members enable the food pantry to purchase and distribute a dozen eggs per client household, and to offer milk, butter, cheese, and yogurt. One of the volunteers owns a local farm stand and was extremely generous in providing fresh produce throughout the 2022 growing season. Last Thanksgiving, they provided turkeys and dinner fixings to 40 households; last Christmas, they provided hams, turkeys and holiday baking ingredients to 45 households.

Meanwhile, a small group worked with Community Resources and the School Superintendent to find a solution to the elementary and middle school lunch problem: children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches have them delivered from the cafeteria of the local high school.

Food pantry volunteers meet monthly by Zoom to review operations, set policy, and resolve any concerns that may arise. Sub-committees meet in between to work on operations, communications, and volunteer management. The pantry has a separate checking account held by All Saints' in order to receive financial donations and purchase food and any equipment that is needed.

The mayor and council of Long Hill Township support Twelve Baskets by allocating a portion of the Community Resource Officer's time to it, as well as drawing on the township's CERT volunteers. In turn, this enables the Community Resource Officer to connect with vulnerable township residents. She is then able to bring support services from Morris County to some pantry days via a mobile social services unit called Navigating Hope.

Twelve Baskets Food Pantry has become a community partnership that benefits all involved. Hungry people in the community are being identified and fed. Three church communities have drawn together around a common mission. Township officials are more aware of the actual needs of residents that are often hidden, and they see value in what the churches have to offer.

McGrath says, "None of this would have been possible if All Saints' was trying to do it on our own. We are still learning. This project has been one of those 'flying the plane while you are building it' adventures. The pantry continues to develop, as we grow in our understanding of the needs of the people in our community, and as God leads us. We are very grateful to the Holy Spirit for giving us the nudge we needed to do God's work in this way that really benefits the whole community."

Grace, Rutherford's clothing drive gives away 1,000 dresses to outfit teens for prom

By David Paulsen / Episcopal News Service

A congregation in the Diocese of Newark made a big difference for hundreds of teenagers on March 11 when its growing clothing ministry distributed more than 1,000 free prom dresses to families from its northern New Jersey community and the neighboring New York region.

The ministry is called Grace's Closet, and this is its second year at Grace Episcopal Church in Rutherford, a community of about 20,000 people just north of Newark and just west of Manhattan. After giving away about 100 prom dresses last year, organizers got an early jump on planning and promoting the clothing drive this year – and were happily overwhelmed by its newfound success.

"It was wonderful," lead coordinator Susan Muller told Episcopal News Service by phone. "I had no idea how many people would come. You just don't know, and donations were coming through the door during the event. ... I'm still reeling from how much happened that day."

What happened was nearly 500 promgoers and their families were welcomed inside at Grace Episcopal Church and offered refreshments in the downstairs parish hall while they waited their turn. A few at a time then were invited upstairs to a church gymnasium, where rack after rack of dresses were on display, with makeshift changing rooms available for trying on the dresses. Each visitor was allowed to take home one dress of their choice, along with a pair of shoes, jewelry, a bag and a wrap – all donated by members of the community, along with some suits and tuxedos.

"There are a lot of kids who would like to go to the prom, but they really can't afford all that it takes to go to the prom, especially the dress or the suit," the Rev. Karen Rezach, Grace's priest-in-charge, told ENS. The church has about 200 members, with about 60 typically attending Sunday worship.

Rezach praised the work of Muller and her team of volunteers for expanding the clothing drive into an event that drew people from across New York's five boroughs and as far away as Allentown, Pennsylvania.

"Everyone came together, and it was just such a magic event," Rezach said. "People had tears in their eyes, families telling us their kids would not have been able to go to the prom without this."

Grace's Closet began in 2022 as an idea presented to Muller by a friend, based on a perceived need in the community. Muller, a vestry member at Grace Episcopal Church, thought the church could help meet that need for inexpensive or free prom attire, and other church leaders agree to support a formal wear drive.

Muller and her small team of core volunteers, however, had less than two months to plan and stage the first event. They were able to collect several hundred dresses, but many of them went unclaimed and had to be stored in a rectory attic while the team thought through how to expand the ministry's reach in 2023.

This time, they started planning soon after Christmas and stepped up their promotional efforts, including on TikTok and other social media. By partnering with businesses and other community organizations, they were able to collect a wide range of donated items, from clothing racks and hangers to the dresses themselves.

By the end of the clothing drive, donors had stocked Grace's Closet with more than 2,000 prom dresses, as well as a wide range of shoes and accessories, and turnout at the one-day event was driven higher by prominent TV, print and online news coverage across the region leading up to March 11.

Some people arrived even before the event's scheduled 10 a.m. start time, and they offered to help volunteers set up. Once the event got underway, the process remained orderly despite the large number of people, and their spirits remained upbeat throughout, Muller said.

"Dresses are so expensive, and my expectation was that anyone that came through that door could walk away with a dress," she said, adding that the church also gave away dresses to some women who were in need of formal attire. "I believe everyone left there with something."

Muller, 61, is a lifelong member of Grace Episcopal Church who recalled going to the prom twice, in 1979 and 1980. Her mother bought her a modest dress for \$30 at J.C. Penny.

"It was just a very simple polyester dress," she said. "We couldn't really afford those big, expensive dresses; it was just something that my family couldn't do. But my mother always made sure that we looked well."

Muller carried those experiences with her in developing Grace's Closet, and she was moved by the joy some participants expressed, both in donating their dresses and finding ones to take home. One woman told Muller

she had dug up her old prom dress to donate and asked Muller to find a perfect new home for it.

That dress, pink and sequined, caught the eye of a girl on March 11, who tried it on and decided it was the one for her. Muller applauded the choice. "You have no idea how happy you just made someone who donated this dress," she told the girl.

A family from Allentown, who drove more than an hour and a half to be there, was among the last through the door before the scheduled end time of 4 p.m. Volunteers were beginning to close up, as Muller helped the daughter find the dress she wanted. "They couldn't have been happier. The girl was crying," Muller recalled.

With more than 1,000 dresses left over after this year's Grace's Closet, the church is working with local schools and community organizations to donate some of them in batches. There are too many to fit in the rectory attic, so any remaining dresses will be put in bins and likely kept in a storage unit until next year's sale.

"It's just what church is all about, and it just could not have been a more blessed event that was also a blessing," Rezach said.

It was a "labor of love" for Muller – "a joyous event" that she is looking forward to bringing back for promgoers in 2024.