



Highlights of diocesan news in printable format — July 26, 2023

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## From Canon Clark

### Sharing Sabbath

*This is a transcript of a video message.*

This is Canon Margo Peckham Clark in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. If you've been following along with our video messages, you have heard our Bishop talk about the deep need for rest that exists in our world and in all of us, particularly right now. And the idea that we take this as a Summer of Sabbath, a summer of being deliberate about rest, relaxation, and reconnection. I spoke to you last time, following the scholar Walter Brueggemann talking about the restFULness of God versus the restLESSness of the world.

So the question I have for all of us – myself included – today is, how is your Summer of Sabbath going? Have you been able to find ways to incorporate this into your life and the life of your family? What are the things that you observe about yourself? About how this has impacted you? About how you feel? About the way your thoughts are flowing? It's really important, and a significant aspect of our spiritual lives, to be able to observe ourselves in this way, and to give some account, if only to ourselves, of how things are going, and how we observe. This is another way of quieting our minds and our spirits, and taking that rest that is offered to us in Sabbath.

It's also a way that, ultimately, can lead us more deeply into our relationship with God. If you've ever wondered what it means to have a relationship with God, it can be as simple as being quiet enough in yourself and in your mind, to notice God, and perhaps to reach out and speak to God about how your life is going. About what

your hopes and fears and desires might be at this time. And to really try to be aware of God with you in that and what God might be saying to you.

All of that is part of the strengthening that can come from the ongoing practice of Sabbath, because Sabbath is not only something for a summer, or a new thing to try, if you never have before. It really is a way of structuring our lives and deepening our spiritual lives and our connection to God. Sabbath strengthens us.

And when we are strengthened by the practice of Sabbath and other elements of our spiritual lives, one of the things that can and should happen, and that we can also try out, is what it's like to share that. Sometimes we are so consumed by our own restlessness, by our own tiredness and worry, and all the things that consume us, that we don't have all that much room for other people, and for what they might need, or for being gentle with them and offering Sabbath to them in some way.

And so as we move into the later part of the summer, I want to offer that idea to you, what does it look like for you to share Sabbath with other people. It might be as simple as not calling someone at the end of the workday, or waiting a little bit longer before they respond to an email or a text message. It might be inviting your family to not have screens at the dinner table and to sit together to eat. It might be when you see someone in a store or in a doctor's office rushing and struggling to do all the things that they're trying to do at once, to say something like, it's all right. I'm not in a rush, slow down. It's part of what it means to be human to slow down a bit sometimes.

You can also share Sabbath with other people by talking about your experience, by talking about the fact that you are trying this practice. When we talk about sharing

faith, and we're going to be talking about that a lot this coming year, a lot of it really is that sort of thing. It's not convincing people, it's not necessarily teaching them information – it's about sharing what your faith means to you, and what it looks like to practice it, and the whys of your faith. And Sabbath is a gift that God gives to the whole world. And the rest that Sabbath has built into the very nature of creation, because that's how God relates to creation, is something that we can share with other people. And I invite you to do that. If someone says, Boy, you seem a little bit more rested lately. You can say, Oh, well, you know what, I'm an Episcopalian. And our Bishop has invited us to try to practice Sabbath more deeply this summer. And so I'm doing that. And I find that it's really helpful. You might try it too.

So as you continue this summer, think about strengthening your Sabbath practice, and the ways that we can share this with other people. Because as with all things connected to God, it is a gift from God, and it is a gift for the whole world. So it is meant to be shared. May God bless you and keep you and please continue to enjoy this Summer of Sabbath.

## Happening in Our Churches

### The joy of feeding neighbors

*By Nina Nicholson*

It was Thursday, July 20, and the Rev. John Mennell, Rector of St. Luke's, Montclair, was nearly bouncing with glee.

"This feels momentous," he said, as Toni's Kitchen, a ministry of St. Luke's, prepared to welcome people to the first sit-down meal they had been able to offer in the dining room in three and a half years – since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Launched in 1982 as a soup kitchen serving mainly the housing insecure, Toni's Kitchen had expanded by 2019 to partner with other groups affected by food insecurity such as after-school programs and senior programs, serving 240,000 meals a year.

With the start of the pandemic in March 2020, Toni's Kitchen could no longer serve meals indoors, and their partners were also forced to pause operations. However, the need was greater than ever, so the

ministry pivoted rapidly, building a food pantry, starting home deliveries to seniors, and partnering with schools to provide groceries to families of children in the National School Lunch Program. During this period, the dining room was converted to food storage, along with church offices and conference rooms.

Mennell credits Anne Mernin, Executive Director of Toni's Kitchen, with overcoming the unforeseen challenges.

"Our operation has literally changed monthly, every month for the past three and a half years," he said. "Anne is amazing at developing processes to make it work."

Mernin herself points to the creativity of Stacey Cooper, the Director of Operations.

"Stacey was able to ensure all the logistics were flexibly designed to support a rapidly changing ministry," she said.

By 2022 the number of meals served annually had exploded to 1.7 million, and Toni's Kitchen began to consider how to better use their space. This led to a capital campaign that raised \$1.2 million to renovate St. Luke's undercroft, adding 5,000 square feet to their operation. Part of the new space is used for food storage and includes a walk-in refrigerator and freezer. The rest is used for Toni's Closet, a thrift store launched last year, which splits its proceeds between Toni's Kitchen and St. Luke's.

With the dining room available once again, Toni's Kitchen can now resume serving sit-down meals indoors. On the day of its reopening, about 40 people sat at cheerful tables to be served, restaurant style, a hot lunch of pork loin, broccoli, and roasted potatoes, with fruit salad for dessert. Going forward, lunch will be served every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, with dinner on Sunday.

"There will be more people soon," Mernin said. "The word is just getting around that we're open again."

Meanwhile in the church, a companion operation called Toni's Choice Pantry was underway, overseen by Nancy Xenakis, Guest Support Coordinator for Toni's Kitchen. Open every Wednesday through Saturday, registered guests may come once a week to select what they need

from among the available items. Last year, this ministry served about 1,500 households.

Tables next to the registration desk hold handouts in English and Spanish with information about available programs. Toni's Choice Pantry also partners with other groups that periodically offer services such as health screenings. On this day, two volunteers were there with information about Medicare.

"I feel so fortunate to be part of a dynamic team dedicated to serving our community to address food insecurity," Xenakis said.

Toni's Kitchen and its satellite ministries rely on 2,000 volunteers from all over the community, about 50 of whom are there on any given day.

"It takes a village to do what we do," said Mernin. "The community has stepped up with support."

Surveying the dining room filled with people eating, chatting, and laughing, Mennell smiled. "One of most important things we do," he said, "is build community and connect people."

*Reporter's note: After all the guests had been served, the volunteers announced there were leftovers and invited me to have lunch. I can personally attest that the lunch was excellent – both delicious and filling.*

## Happening in the Wider Church

### Newark contingent reports on "It's All About Love" revival in Baltimore

*By the Rev. Diana L. Wilcox*

"I didn't know Christianity was about love."

This is what our Presiding Bishop, the Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, told a packed crowd on July 9th that he had heard after he preached at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle back in 2018 (which he jokingly described as a "small family affair"). "I'm not exaggerating, over and over again," he said he heard this from people, "And I realized that Christianity needs a revival... a revival to the teachings of this Jesus for whom love was at the very center of those teachings."

And a revival is why nearly a thousand Episcopalians were gathered in Baltimore, Maryland listening to this fiery sermon in the heat of July. They had all come for the "It's All About Love: A Festival for the Jesus Movement." To be clear, this was no ordinary revival – no one night of worship under a tent. This was three full days of workshops, group discussions, presentations, and prayer centered on three main themes: Evangelism, Creation Care, and Racial Reconciliation.

There was a large group from the Diocese of Newark there too, yet they all came on their own. It was an organic response from 15 different people across our diocese, with only four joining together to attend.

The Rev. Joan Conley, Rector of St. Mark's, Teaneck, came with JoAnn Riccardi, Marsha Mackey and Christian Paolino from her parish's Sacred Ground group. Noting the opportunity for engagement with others who have gone through the program, she said "I really appreciated the various 'on ramps' discussed by the Rev. Marisa Sifontes in the workshop "What comes next?: A path from Sacred Ground to Racial Justice." She added that at the workshop "Healing the Cultural Divide between Indigenous Peoples and TEC," what stuck with her was that evangelization is not about colonization, but is a tool for healing.

Martha Thalheimer of St. Luke's, Montclair said she just felt called to be there. She not only attended, but served as a volunteer, helping to guide people to worship services and workshops.

It was good to see the Rt. Rev. Julio Murray, Archbishop of Central America and Bishop of Panama, and a friend to the Diocese of Newark. He is passionate about creation care and is working with many others in The Episcopal Church to plant the seeds of sustainability and environmental justice. Workshop attendees on this track learned about the impact of toxic waste and abuse of the earth on all people, especially those in the poorest communities, how to engage a parish in environmental evangelism, and the environmental advocacy work of The Episcopal Church at the United Nations.

Worship featured more than just our Presiding Bishop too. "I know it's a cliché," attendee Christian Paolino of St. Mark's, Teaneck said, "but I wished I could bottle up the energy in that room and save it for the times when

we could use a boost. The preaching, the music and the wisdom imparted on us gave me new energy for our work and I want to share what we learned and experienced with our parish and Regional Ministry Network.” Christian was so inspired by the revival, that he preached about it the following Sunday.

There were special places set aside for focused prayer. The Rev. Lynne Weber, as a member of The Episcopal Church Task Force in Creation Care and Environmental Racism, worked with others to create an Eco-Grief Prayer Space. There attendees could take a moment for reflection on the pain we have collectively caused, and experienced, from neglecting our responsibility to be good stewards of God’s creation.

From the campfire sparks that flew up to the sky on the screens at the opening worship to the rock version of “Ode to Joy” at the close of the final service, this revival had those who came fired up for the work ahead as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. But for those who could not attend, perhaps these words from Presiding Bishop Curry will inspire everyone to imagine what is possible for us, for the church, for all of God’s creation:

“Together with the God who is the source of love and life, together with God we can make poverty history together in partnership with God. We can do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with our God. Together with God we can clean up this environment so that there is plenty good room for all of God’s children. Together with God we can create societies and a world where everybody is treated as God’s somebody. Together with God we can create a world where justice really does roll down like a mighty stream and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Together with God, we can learn how to lay our swords and shields down by the riverside, to study war no more. When the power of love overcomes the love of power, then the world will know peace.”

*The Rev. Diana L. Wilcox is Rector of Christ Church, Bloomfield/Glen Ridge.*

# Diocesan Announcements

## Summer of Sabbath: Suggested reading

Bishop Hughes has recommended three books for your summer reading – simple, easy reads that can help you think about your spiritual life.

### **The Night is Long but Light Comes in the Morning: Meditations for Racial Healing**

*By Catherine Meeks; foreword by Michael B. Curry*

From the winner of The President Joseph R. Biden Lifetime Achievement Award, a spiritual guide to restoring yourself from racial trauma and committing to the long work of dismantling racism.

### **How Do I Pray?: A Little Book Of Guidance**

*By John Pritchard*

John Pritchard explores the art and power of prayer and explains how to slow down enough to hear what God wants to say. A book for all who are curious about how to become more in tune with the Spirit.

### **Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life**

*By Rowan Williams*

In his typically gentle, inviting, pastoral writing style, Williams offers biblically grounded wisdom for Christians at all stages of their journeys as disciples of Jesus.