



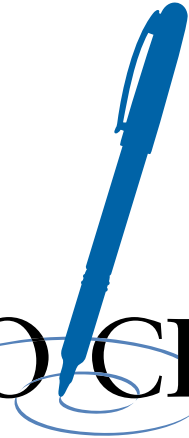
About the Author

The Rev. Robert Warren Cromeley served parishes in the Diocese of New York. In San Francisco, he was Executive Assistant to the Bishop of California, James A. Pike, Vicar of St. Aidan's, and rector of Trinity, retiring in 2002. Rev. Cromeley has three daughters and five grandchildren. He has been married to Ann Cromeley for 33 years. His ministry has always advocated for civil and human rights. You can contact him via email at robcro904@gmail.com.

About Vintage Voice

Vintage Voice is a monthly publication written by beneficiaries of The Church Pension Fund. We hope you enjoy these articles and find them helpful. Articles are published with the authors' permission. If you have a reflection about your life in retirement, consider writing for the Vintage Voice! Send your submissions to vintagevoice@cpg.org.

VINTAGE VOICE



A Faith Deepened and Refreshed

By the Rev. Robert W. Cromeley

My new life commenced in 2002 when I retired as rector of Trinity Church, San Francisco. My 20-year ministry at Trinity was mostly with gay men. Most churches have women as their regular attendees, and they serve as the backbone of parish life. At Trinity, which is in downtown San Francisco, our congregation was 85% men. Even the Altar Guild was all male. Wags dubbed us the gay 90s church because 85% of congregants were gay, and the rest were 90.

During my ministry, AIDS struck and for several years we ministered to dying men, their lovers, parents, and sometimes their children. We conducted 74 funerals. I joined with others to push the city of San Francisco and the Diocese of California to approve same-gender marriage.

After retiring, my wife Ann and I searched for a new parish to attend in San Francisco. After visiting a number of churches, we settled on the Episcopal Church of St. John the Evangelist, not far from our home. There are many LGBT members and a few retirees like us. Like Trinity, the Altar Guild is all male. Our new parish also suffered heavy losses from HIV and AIDS. At St. John, we continue the fight for the rights of same-gender people to marry.

Rev. Richard Smith, the Vicar of St. John, urges our membership to fight to end police killings of black and Latino people. We are engaged in immigrants' rights, as our neighborhood is a mix of Latino cultures. Our neighborhood is gentrifying, causing personal and family displacement, so we are working with city officials to find housing for the poor and seniors.

Some of us participate each Thursday in a Vigil for Peace and Justice outside the Federal Building. I had to give it up, as my creaky 86-year-old legs couldn't stand for very long. I do preach about every six weeks, helping our Vicar, who is part time.

When I retired, I vowed to write 500 words a day as a way to keep my brain stimulated. I continue to write letters to the editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* on issues of state and church, LGBT rights, poverty, peace, and the homeless. I find writing short pieces for

Facebook on social, political, and religious issues is well received. I also have a blog with over 400 entries. In addition, I enjoy writing *RWC Memoir* and *Essays Irreverent*, both self-published and available from Amazon. I also wrote a small book entitled *So You Want to Get Married*, also self-published. It has information and advice I gave in pre-marriage counseling.

My writing is the closest I come to meditation. Writing articles and sermons, I am astounded how often insights and epiphanies come to me. New angles, approaches, and stories enter my thought processes. I am a failure at sitting quietly. My prayer life is on the run, thanksgivings for all the gifts God has given me, Ann, my daughters, family, and friends. I pray as I go along with my life and activities.

Jesus is the exemplar and guiding light in my life. As the hymn goes, "I want to follow Jesus." The lens through which I read the Gospel of Jesus is caring for the poor, homeless, the sick, and those afflicted by injustice. That is the essence of Christianity as far as I am concerned.

I am nourished in all this by weekly attendance at the Eucharist. I love our community, our parish church. It is a small group of very diverse people. College professors, medical doctors, teachers, a masseuse, homeless people, a union organizer, and street people are members. Eight of us retired elders, lay and clergy, a racial and cultural mix of people we would never meet elsewhere, come Sundays to sing, pray, and worship.

Fifteen years of retirement have given me the leisure to see my faith deepened and refreshed.



19 East 34th Street
New York, NY 10016
www.cpg.org