



Tidings

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church is an inclusive worshipping Christian community that accepts the challenge of living the Gospel.

The Rector's Column

The Great Fifty Days of Easter -- the Crown of the Year -- are upon us!

If I'm honest, I have no clue where Lent went, but I'm not complaining. Much as I love that season and the incredible arc of Holy Week, I'm grateful for the seasonal reminder of resurrection.

Christ is made new. We are made new. But it's bigger: we say "all things are made new" with this season. We'll see it in green buds and warmer temperatures as our weather reflects our liturgical march through the year. But we'll see it elsewhere, too. If we're honest with ourselves and with our theology, "elsewhere" really should be "everywhere."

Sometimes that'll be more apparent, but at least the capacity for being made new exists under the surface of all things. I don't know about y'all, but I need that hope-filled reminder these days more than just about any time I can remember.

What fresh and beautiful things made new in this season will be revealed? I don't know, which is kind of thrilling. There are a few things I'd like to see, but I don't get to pick. Resurrection will happen where it happens, and though I'm confident I'll see it in some places, I know I'll miss it in others. And that sense of "I know it's here somewhere, I just can't quite tell exactly where" is part of the fun of Easter. It's the theological equivalent of an egg hunt. Some things have changed; I will find them. Some things have changed; I won't find them all.

I won't find them all, but someone else may. If you are that someone, if you see something made new or being made new, tell someone! It's a joy to share these kinds of witnesses to hope and tenacity. They encourage our own hope and tenacity as we continue to strive for the end of hard things. Rebirth can apply to the dirt under our feet, the returning geese overhead, even the insistence of truth, love, and kindness where lies, hatred, and cruelty once dominated.

Resurrection is everywhere and takes many different forms. And with Easter, the world gets a little brighter, so use that extra light and go find what all this new life reveals!

Brooks+





Tidings

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Nave Gazing

It has long been the practice of the Western churches (that is, churches that trace their lineage back to the church in Rome) to refrain from using the word "alleluia" during the season of Lent. Other traditions have more fun ways of saying this, like "the dismissal," the "suppression," and even the "closure" of the Alleluias!

Look at those italicized rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer, and you'll see our admittedly drier description. When the bread is broken at the Fraction, it says, "[Alleluia.] Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; Therefore let us keep the feast [Alleluia]. In Lent, Alleluia is omitted." (p 364) Or at the beginning of Morning Prayer: "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen. Except in Lent, add Alleluia." (p 80)

So what are we saying, or rather, what have we not been saying? First, there's two spellings: Hallelujah and Alleluia. The former is the English transliteration of the original word in Hebrew, and the latter is the English transliteration of the Greek transliteration of the original Hebrew word. In Hebrew, Hallelujah is a sort of portmanteau of two words smooshed together to mean "(you) praise God!" and it carries a joyful, often musical connotation.

We removed Alleluia to heighten the focus on the solemn penitence of the season of Lent, but now that Easter is upon us, we finally get to "restore" the Alleluias to their rightful place in our liturgies and our lives! Our liturgists assume we have been so pained by the absence of the Alleluias during Lent that they give us ample opportunities to make up for lost rejoicing during Easter. The very first words you'll hear me say in the services from Easter morning through the Day of Pentecost will be "Alleluia. Christ is risen," and you'll reply "The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia." (p 355) It'll show back up at the

Fraction again, and then twice more at the very end of the service when we'll add not one, but two Alleluias to the Dismissal! My only complaint with this tradition is that the Allelu-word isn't accompanied by exclamation points!

Keen observers of Episcopal practices may recall that Alleluia gets to break the Lenten pattern of removal on one very important occasion: the Burial of the Dead. "All of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia." (p 499) "The liturgy for the dead," the Prayer Book says, "is an Easter liturgy. It finds all its meaning in the resurrection. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we, too, shall be raised. The liturgy, therefore, is characterized by joy." (p 507)

All that to say, whether we're celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus, anticipating the resurrection of a loved one, or even expressing delight at some everyday joy, since we've been saving up for over a month, it's time to let those Alleluias ring! Welcome them, release them, open them, or just plain add 'em back in. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

A Prayer

In an age marked by self-interest, help us to remember others with the concern and gravity we tend to reserve for ourselves.

—Sojourners

Book Recommendation

The *Social Justice Torah Commentary* is an excellent resource for those interested in learning more about the relationship between ancient and modern justice work in the Hebrew Scriptures. Below are a handful of excerpts from the foreword written by Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss.

The prophetic message is simple: What matters most is justice. What God desires is a world in which humans care for one another. According to Isaiah 58:6–7, this means a world in which we help the oppressed to go free, we share our bread with the hungry, we clothe the naked, we do not ignore our kin.

...

The divine demand for justice repeats throughout the Bible. In Psalm 82, God demotes the members of the divine assembly who fail to administer justice on earth.... Psalm 82, like Isaiah 1 and other biblical texts, associates the administration of justice with the protection of the most vulnerable individuals, which in an ancient Israelite context meant the fatherless, the widow, the stranger, and the poor. According to Robert Alter, this psalm presents a mythological account meant to explain "the infuriating preponderance of injustice in the world."

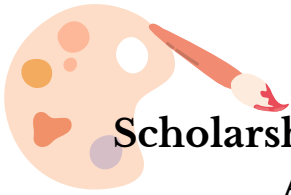
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Proverbs 2:8–9 encourages the listener "to keep the paths of justice" and to "understand righteousness, justice, and uprightness," each one a "pathway of good." Proverbs 16:8 advises, "Better a pittance in righteousness, than abundant yield without justice." Proverbs 29:4 observes, "A king makes a land stand firm through justice, but a deceitful man destroys it."

...

Turning to the Torah, the Five Books of Moses teach us not just why, but also how, to fulfill God's demand for justice and morality. The collections of rules and case law found in the Torah turn the abstract concept of justice into concrete actions carried out in the home, in the field, and at the city gate.... The common thread that binds together the Torah's wide-ranging laws: "The goal is to create a balanced society in which the poor and weak are legally protected from the rich and strong, in which property and human lives are respected, and—most importantly—in which individuals are subject to the community and its laws."

Outside of these legal collections, various narrative passages in the Torah explore the complexities involved in carrying out the command to pursue justice. Abraham challenges God's decision to destroy the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah: "Will You indeed sweep away the innocent along with the wicked? . . . Must not the Judge of all the earth do justly?" (Genesis 18:23, 25). The daughters of Zelophehad question the fairness of laws of inheritance: "Let not our father's name be lost to his clan just because he had no son! Give us a holding among our father's kinsmen!" (Numbers 27:4). After God declares, "The plea of Zelophehad's daughters is just," Moses enacts a new law to ensure that the legal system remains responsive and equitable (Numbers 27:7–11). These and other passages preserve the ways our biblical ancestors strove to "keep justice and do righteousness" (Isaiah 56:1). In laws and stories, poems and prayers, the imperative to practice justice permeates the Torah ... [and shows] how these ancient texts still motivate us to seek justice today. ... [The Torah] urges us to do our part to create a world in which "justice will well up like water and righteousness like an unfailing stream."



Scholarships for After-School Art Program

Scholarships available for kids' after-school art program starting in the Fall!

- Thursday (6-9 years old) or Friday (9-11 years old) from 3:00 to 5:00 pm
- There is a bus from HCS to the Arts Center (16 Broad Street, Hamilton)
- No monetary commitment for kids that receive the scholarships
- Aimed at elementary aged kids with an interest in art
- First priority will be low-income families, but eligibility is not necessarily limited to low-income families
- Questions should be directed to Kathy Herold either by phone or email

315-368-4453

hamiltoncenterforthearts@gmail.com

www.hamiltoncenterforthearts.com

Coffee Hour Hosts

If you would like to host a Sunday Coffee Hour, there is a sign-up sheet in the Parish Hall. Parish Life can make the coffee or teach you how to, and you can bring some goodies! If you have any questions, reach out to Linda Jenks at jewels2grams@gmail.com or 518-369-3384.



Upcoming Events

April 2nd 5:30 pm: Maundy Thursday Service

April 3rd 5:30 pm: Good Friday Service

April 5th 10 am: Easter Service

Followed by Easter Egg Hunt

April 6th: Church Office Closed

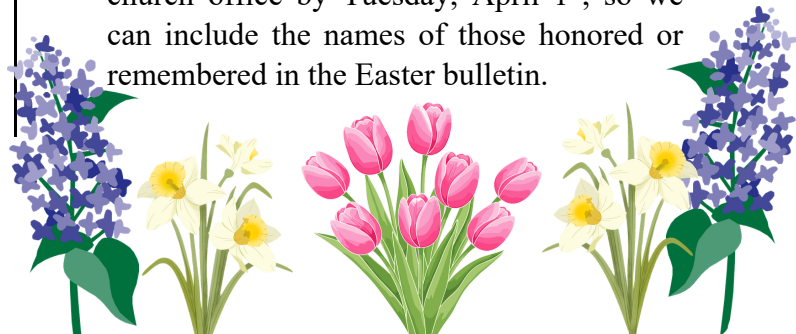
April 12th: Guest Organist Noah Apthrope

April 26th: Vestry Meeting



Easter Flowers

Every Easter St. Thomas' altar and sanctuary are decorated in joyful exultation with festive flowers to herald the Good News of Christ's resurrection. One of the most beloved Easter traditions at St. Thomas' is to give each child a flower to take home at the end of the worship service. These Easter floral arrangements are made possible by your generous donations. Please consider making an Easter flower offering to honor or remember a loved one. Envelopes can be found in the pews. You may either drop it in the collection plate or mail it to the church office by Tuesday, April 1st, so we can include the names of those honored or remembered in the Easter bulletin.



Join the Conversation: Bible Study

Our foray into film is coming to an end! Next up, we'll dig into the books of the Apocrypha, starting with Tobit.

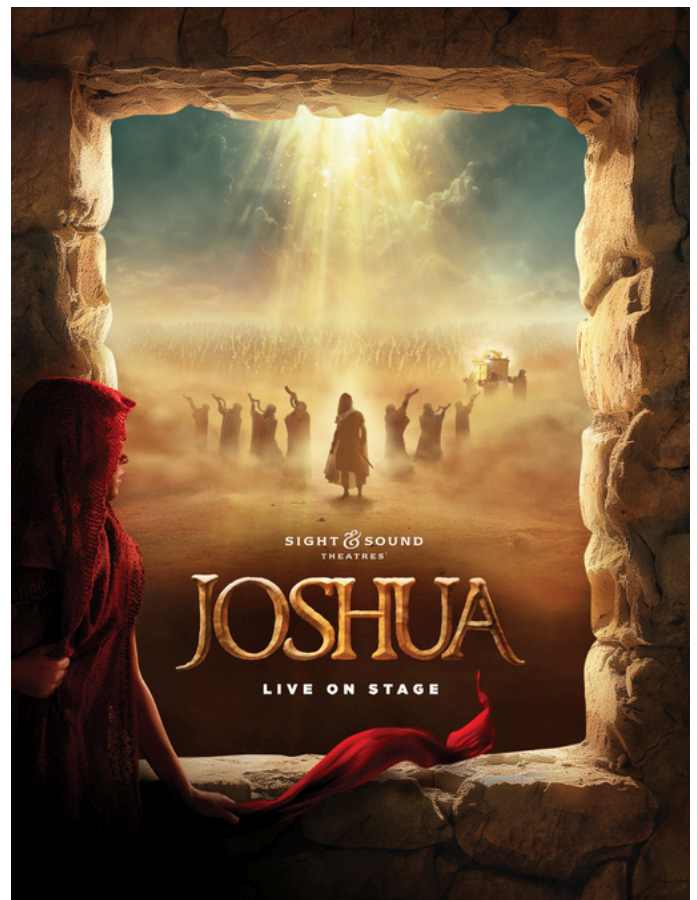
The Apocrypha is made up of several books that are far too varied to lump into a single, consistent category. Some were deemed too esoteric, others too difficult to be included among the 66 canonical books that make up Christian scriptures. Still, the Apocryphal books are generally considered to be efficacious (though not always doctrinally sound). If you're wondering if your Bible includes these books, they'll be sitting right between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. If you can't find them there, let Fr. Brooks know, and he'll gladly help!

Opportunity to Support Immigrant- Aid Agencies



Looking for a small and cozy way to support immigrant-aid agencies? Check out this knitting pattern at the link below for a hat inspired by Norwegian resistance in the 1940s.

<https://www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/melt-the-ice-hat>



Joshua Live on Stage

Joshua in Lancaster, PA
July 27 - 28, 2026

Experience one of the most redemptive stories of the Bible as it comes to life in this brand-new original stage production from Sight & Sound Theatres, complete with travel arrangements, food, and an overnight stay organized through St. Margaret's Retreat Center. Registration forms are available in the Office and must be submitted by June 12th. Pricing varies from \$465 - \$550.

For more information, see Susan Cerasano (315-247-2347) and Millie Franklin (315-750-9904).

Scripture Lesson

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

– Ephesians 4:31-32

April Thanksgivings

Birthdays:

Virginia Sakal (04/03), Leigh Yardley (04/05), Jaxson Keller (04/05), Everett Egginton (04/06), Michael Keller (04/06), John Keller (04/08), Karen Marriam (04/09), Sophia Balakian (04/15), Barbara Bowen (04/21), Jeffrey Monty (04/21), Samuel Williams (04/21), Martin Michaelson (04/22), Michael Sitts (04/23), Kevin Keefe (04/30).

Baptism Anniversaries:

Donnel O'Flynn (04/03), Janice Frutiger (04/04), Lucas Luttmann (04/04), Matthew Tarbell (04/04), Constance Harsh (04/09), Julie Dudrick (04/11), Max Conti Porta (04/12), Rose Conti Porta (04/12), Dylan Lopez (04/12), John Catania (04/12), Juliana Catania (04/12), Nicolas Catania (04/12), Sally Brackett (04/13), Rose Novak (04/14), Sarah Wider (04/14), Mea Martineau (04/19), Anne Perry (04/20), Barbara Baltusnik (04/21), Samuel Williams (04/21), Jeffrey Monty (04/22), Elizabeth Brackett (04/29).

Marriage Anniversaries:

Kristin & William Strohmeier (04/01),
John & Barbara Bowen (04/04),
Maureen & Chuck Fox (04/04).

A Prayer

Lord, your name is Love. In an era that suffers from the absence of it, steer us out of scorn and into pursuing the highest good for others, regardless of their response.

—Sojourners

Prayers of the People as of March 24th

For those in need:

Judy Azud, Danielle Bikowsky, Ian Blanchard, Emily Carroll, Holly Crouch, Nan Dietrich, Aster Dinku, Joan Fales, Lee Foreman, Stephen Foss, Marcia Gaige, Lisa Gee & her children, Laura Ginter, Kaia Harding, Amanda Harlan, Michelle Heavner, Mike Hicks, David Hollis, David Hughes, Kathy Hynes, Barb Kershaw, Pat Osowski, Diny Rupp, Joe Rupp, Lynn Ryan, Patricia Tayntor, Paula Tayntor, Marilyn Thie, Tom Tomsik, Lisa Trivedi, Ed Vantine, Becky Vinopal, Christine Watkins, Wanda Warren Berry, Amy Williams, Deb Willis, Dana Wratten, Shirley W., the Blum Family, the Dorgan family, Sarah & her family, Jerry & Roseann Fitzgerald, Anthony & Vincent Pacillo, Adam, Ally, Aurora, Carol, Frank, Jan, Janice, Joni, Kate, Kathy, Kim, Kristi, Margaret, Micaela, Nick, Paula, Rick, Scot, and Susan.

E-motion Grief

This May, join Kat Catania who is facilitating a Movement Community, a walking-based grief group, through E-Motion, a nonprofit organization that believes community should be a right for anyone navigating grief. E-Motion offers movement-based programs that create space for connection, reflection, and emotional support.

The group is an 8-week experience that combines gentle movement (like walking) with guided grief prompts and community conversations. Participants who can walk for 20-30 minutes are welcome. We will try to walk a little further each week.

You can get a feel for what the experience is like and sign up by checking out E-Motion's website:

<https://www.emotion-mc.org/events/hamilton-ny-2026>



St. Thomas' Episcopal Church Vestry Minutes Summary February 22, 2026

Present: Martha Berry, John Bowen, Brooks Cato (presiding), Connie Harsh, Kate Hooks, Kerry Linden, Mike Loranty, Valerie Morkevicius, John Orr, Jane Welsh

Absent: Debbie Barker, Rose Novak

Zoom: Jana Laxa

Call to Order

The meeting began at 11:35 a.m. in the parish hall. Jana Laxa opened the meeting with a prayer.

Clerk's Report

The minutes/summary report of the January 25th meeting were approved as submitted in final draft. Approval was moved by Jane Welsh; seconded by Mike Loranty.

Treasurer's Report

John Bowen reported the following: "The Budget and Finance Commission has been busy since the Vestry last met in December. We transitioned into the new year with an updated payroll, new budget entered into Church Windows, and brought all the Special Collection donations up to date. We had a problem with staff health insurance moving to electronic billing resulting in some delay in premium payments. That has been fixed. We completed the disability and worker's compensation audits. The financial portion of the Parochial Report has been completed and submitted to the Vestry. Year-end Giving Statements were distributed. We composed a special and exciting financial edition of Tidings for February.

Income and expenses are in expected ranges. Outliers include utilities, related to cold weather, and Clergy Expenses due to bunching several health insurance premiums and a one-time HSA contribution. Checking and Investment account balances are all stable. The recent **\$40,000** transfer of funds from NBT Checking to The St. Thomas' Endowment Account will show on next month's Balance Sheet." Valerie Morkevicius moved that the vestry receive the Treasurer's Report; Martha Berry seconded the motion. The Report was received as submitted.

Rector's Report

Brooks Cato noted that he had little to report at this point in the meeting. He announced that he and Rodney Agnant (who works in Leadership development, in addition to other areas, at Colgate University) would be presenting a series entitled "Joy as Resistance" during Lent as the Adult Forum.

Wardens' Report

Jane Welsh commented that she was pleased with the calm that has descended on the parish at the moment. "No news is good news," she stated. The vestry members heartily agreed.

Commission Reports

Rectory Building Project: Brooks Cato first reported that he is in the process of coordinating with various contractors who will refurbish the rectory. Slowly, everything is falling into place. Second, Brooks wanted to alert the vestry to the (high) degree to which the windows in the parish hall are "leaking" heat. This is true throughout the building, including within the kitchen area. Owing to this, the parish needs to initiate a window replacement project, which will be announced to the parish as soon as Brooks can return to the vestry with a quote (or quotes) from a vendor (or vendors) who can replace them. The project will begin on the windows in the kitchen and, eventually, all of the windows will be replaced.

- **Fire Alarm System:** On a separate matter, Brooks Cato informed the vestry that a section of the fire alarm system in the church seems to be malfunctioning (specifically the North-South beam that runs across the ceiling area). Ed Page is working with the company that provides this service to correct the problem.

[Additional Note, March 9, 2026: By a unanimous vote taken on March 5th-6th, via email, the vestry approved that \$2100 be paid to the company that fixes our fire alarm system in order to rectify current issues with the system. The Budget & Finance Commission recommends that the funds be taken out of the Capital Maintenance Fund.]

Old Business

- **Directory Update:** Brooks Cato was pleased to inform the vestry that this project has been completed (on the parish side) and now we are waiting for the photographers to send their final work. John Orr asked what percentage of the parish had participated in the photo-shoot. Brooks responded, “All that were expected to participate and a few who were unexpected as well.”
- **Security Camera Update:** Mike Loranty updated vestry members on the issue of finding an improved security camera for the front of the church. He outlined the most practical option that will cost around \$200-300 for a camera and around \$500 for a storage device. The final cost will be under \$1000 for the entire system. Vestry members agree that this seemed the best way to proceed. John Orr asked whether there might be a second camera added to monitor activity at the front door of the parish hall. At the current price it seems to make sense to expand the surveillance area. A short

discussion followed, after which it was decided that a second camera should be added. Mike agreed that he would submit a specific list of details to Brooks so that the vestry would have a record of what will be included in the purchase.

New Business

2025 Parochial Report: Brooks Cato and John Bowen (as Treasurer) pointed out a small error (in addition) that existed on p. 5 of the draft report. Under “report all revenue” the total should read \$338,391 instead of \$336,391. Turning then to key elements of the report Brooks Cato observed that, quite happily, the attendance numbers appear to be returning to something near the pre-COVID level. Under “How is your parish reducing your carbon footprint?” (p. 9) Jana Laxa suggested that installing the new dishwasher should be added to the list of things that St. Thomas’ engages in to create a “greener space.” All present thought that this was a good suggestion. Connie Harsh asked for clarification of how some statistics are recorded in the form. Brooks Cato responded to the specifics. On a related note, John Bowen commented that this year’s version of the form—its organization and construction—was surely the least effective version that he had been asked to work with. Brooks Cato also thought that the form, in and of itself, presented some issues, and that any specific comments might be handed on to the diocese, perhaps to be taken into consideration when they construct the next version of the report. Jane Welsh moved that the vestry approve the report in its current form, with Jana’s suggested addition on p. 9. John Orr seconded the motion. The vestry voted unanimously to approve the report with the addition. Lastly, Brooks Cato stated that he wanted to thank John Bowen, together with the members of Budget & Finance, for all of their hard work in preparing the parochial report. The members of the vestry offered their gratitude.

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Announcements

- *Announcements:* Announcements were made, including the details for the upcoming rally on the Village green (Feb. 28th), together with the Newcomer’s Coffee & Bring a Friend to Church Sunday (March 15th).
- *Next meeting:* The next vestry meeting is set for March 22nd.
- *Prayer Leader:* John Orr volunteered to offer prayer at the opening of the March meeting.

Valerie Morkevicius moved to end the meeting; Jane Welsh seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 12:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Cerasano, Clerk

Consider This

Nothing erases the past. There is repentance, there is atonement, and there is forgiveness. That is all, but that is enough.

– Fuwaad ibn Abbas, in Ted Chiang’s *The Merchant and the Alchemist’s Gate* (2007)

On the Lighter Side



Easter Blessing

He is Risen — and so is our Hope.
May this Easter season fill your heart with the peace that only Christ can give — a peace that calms your fears, renews your strength, and reminds you that you are deeply loved.
As the stone rolled away from the tomb, may every heavy burden in your life be lifted, and may the light of His resurrection shine into every corner of your soul.
May you find joy in the little things:
the laughter of loved ones
and the quiet moments where grace feels near.
Whatever season you’re walking through, may Easter remind you that new life is always possible — that from sorrow, joy can rise; from stillness, hope can sing.
And may the love of the Risen Savior surround you today and always — leading you forward with faith, comforting you with mercy, and filling your days with meaning, purpose, and unshakable joy.
Happy Easter — He is Risen Indeed!

Looking for Contributors

Interested in adding something to our monthly newsletter? We're always looking for contributors to spice up *Tidings* and add some variety! Pictures, poems, articles, book reviews, insights -- anything that's brought you closer to God. Please make submissions to the Church Office by the 20th of each month, and we'll consider them for publication.



**Sermon for the Second
Sunday in Lent:
Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121;
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17**

March 1, 2026
The Rev. Brooks Cato

Y'all, I am tired of waking up wondering what terrible news happened overnight. I'm tired of living in a country I didn't grow up in. I'm tired of what sure looks like meanness for the sake of new and exciting kinds of meanness. I'm tired, but I'm not done. I know that the Church gets most of y'all for an hour, maybe two each week. Some of y'all, we get more of, some a little less. That's all good. And I know that, of that hour or two, I get about 10 to 15 minutes, depending on how quickly I want to get finished and head over to Coffee Hour. Christianity is a big thing. What I mean is that there is no way every single sermon or any preacher, for that matter, can encapsulate the entirety of what it means to be Christian every week. This medium is meant to take our scripture, tradition, or reason, and tie it to our lives. As the application for my position said, "we want someone who preaches with one eye on the text and one eye on the news." So, I do a kind of spiritual triage when I write my sermons, looking for what part of Christianity I can shine a light on this week in a way that's real and evocative and, hopefully, compelling. Back when I told more stories, the world was a good bit calmer. I could preach about my grandma's biscuit recipe or teach y'all the proper use of "y'all" because evil wasn't flaunted in our faces with every move of the people in power. Can you imagine a "consider the lilies" kind of sermon right now? It's not that we shouldn't consider lillies, it's just that, no offense to lilies, we've got bigger spiritual fish to fry.

Now, with that said, one of the things I'm learning and learning to love is just how important it is for every member of our community, every part of this body to pitch in however we can. Maybe you don't love hearing the news in sermons, but you can still feed God's sheep. Maybe you're working

more hours than you're at home and your kids need to take priority; that's okay, you can still teach them about justice. Maybe you can't leave the house; you can still pray. And while we can't rely solely on prayer to fix all this, prayer matters. And if praying is all you can do, then by God, pray. If gardening is your thing, maybe considering lilies matters more than I gave it credit. Think of the joy a blossom brings to those walking by. Even if they don't register it, you've put a little beauty in their lives that wasn't there before. More and more, I'm appreciating what it means to do this work together, but to know what we're working for, we need to know what we're working against. I expect y'all to be praying. I expect y'all to be learning about scripture, whatever that means to you. I expect y'all to love your neighbors and work for their dignity not because we're trying to get on God's good side but because we have faith, and our faith turns our eyes to those who come to us by day or by night. In other words, I expect y'all to be doing the basics. I take that for granted. Which is why I'm digging into this stuff so deeply. Because it isn't the basics. We've all got a lot to learn real fast to get this community as strong as we can. Pray. Knit hats and socks. Bake cookies, plant something, make plans, look ahead with kindness and faith and the stubborn hope that says, no matter what happens today, when the dawn comes, look to the east, for there the sun will rise.

But as the sun rises, we have got to face the reality of the world we're living in, the world we're praying for, the world we're trying to change. If you don't know already, I'm sorry to be the one to tell you that, teaming up with Israel, we've bombed Iran. Now, I'm not saying Iran was in a good situation before this, but we belong to a religion that actively, fundamentally promotes peace. In that bombing, we hit an elementary school and killed at least 50 little girls. For what it's worth, this is the 12th country we've bombed in the last 13 months. There's Venezuela, and again, they weren't in a good situation, but a foreign nation invading just to get rid of your leader? Imagine if someone did that to us? Or just randomly bombed our boats out of the water? There's Cuba. My Lord, we've deployed an old fashioned siege with the blockade starving out the entire nation.

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If you'll notice in all these, there's a pattern here. There may be legitimate targets, but y'all, the disregard for collateral damage, assuming it is in fact collateral, is astounding. Meanwhile, Kansas negated trans people's drivers' licenses overnight. There was no grace period, no grandfathering in. They went to bed with proper ID; they woke up without it. So now they have to go to a government building (an increasingly frightening proposition), pay for the pleasure to get a new license with the incorrect gender, and risk imprisonment for driving to the government building with an invalid ID. ICE is still in Minneapolis, in spite of what you may've heard to the contrary. They regularly entrap potential detainees by preying on their kindness. There's stories and videos of them entering businesses and pretending to need help with a flat tire, or asking someone to come out and move their car, or posing as police searching for a lost child, or even, still, using children as bait. The Ancient City of Raffah has been bulldozed. Students across the United States are afraid to go to school and those who do make it there try to learn in an increasingly restrained education system hemmed in by the fear of the dual serial violences targeting them: being shot by their classmates or being kidnapped by their government. Teachers describe students worried about saying goodbye to their parents at dropoff lines 'cause it might be the last time they'll get to say goodbye; they sprint from bus stops to get inside as fast as possible; they skip class to sneak into the bathroom to call their parents at work in the middle of the day just to see if they've gotten taken yet. That's what I'm tired of waking up to. And I'm tired of feeling like I need to tell y'all about it, but when evil runs so rampant, it's kind of a priest's job to make sure you see it, too. I'm tired, but I'm not done. I know y'all are tired, too, but something tells me you're not done, either.

Now, there's one quick thing from our scriptures we still need to talk about, and that's Israel. I can't say it clearly enough or enough times. Israel is not the same as Judaism or the Jewish people. And critiquing Israel is not the same thing as critiquing Judaism or the Jewish people. Critiquing Israel, the nation state in the 21st Century, is

not the same as antisemitism. In the same way, critiquing the US is not the same as antichristianity, and in the same way, critiquing Iran is not the same as critiquing Islam. Though the players sure seem to be spiritually at odds, this is not a Holy War, if such a thing can exist. This is not Judaism vs. Christianity vs. Islam. These are immature boys with destructive toys and a total disregard for national sovereignty and human life. And the rest of us are at their mercy.

Paul says we're all descendents of Abraham, "the father of many nations." And we are. Christianity comes out of Judaism, and though Paul doesn't know he won't be remembered as Jewish yet, that's how this plays out. But Islam is, too, a descendant of Abraham. Abraham had a son, Ishmael, who God promised to make into a great nation, too. God made what would become Islam spiritual descendents in that moment, "For Abraham is the father of us all." In other words, these are both our siblings, and we share so much. Both Genesis and that Psalm remind us that Israel is favored by God. God favors Israel, favors all of Abraham's spiritual descendents. But did you catch in Genesis why God promises all these people to Abraham? "I will make of you a great nation," God said, "so that you will be a blessing." So that you will be a blessing. Now, I know there's more to modern geopolitics than "what did God tell Abraham?" I know that, but also, can you imagine how different the Middle East would be, how different this planet would be if our leaders came at every decision with at least the attempt to be a blessing? How different would we be? There in the evening light, Jesus told Nicodemus that new life would come from above. Would that our leaders cared before dropping death from above instead.

In all this horror and fear and shock, there's a piece we're still missing. You see, God has a habit of taking tools of destruction and making them into something new. When Moses led the people into the wilderness, in their wanderings, they ended up in a place full of venomous snakes. Moses made a little snake statue, and everyone who looked at

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it was cured! It sounds kinda silly when I say it that way, but that’s the basic story. God took something deadly and remade it as an instrument of healing and hope. History may not repeat but it certainly echoes, and when we get around to Good Friday and Easter, we’ll see another something deadly, the cross, become an instrument of healing and hope. Bishop Carrie Schofield-Broadbent, our former Canon to the Ordinary, when she was consecrated down in Maryland, they gave her a pectoral cross, those big crosses only bishops wear, they gave her a pectoral cross -- the visible sign of her episcopate -- they gave her a pectoral cross made from the melted metal of a gun, the modern equivalent of hammering a sword into a plow. Healing and hope.

I don’t know what’ll happen on distant shores, but I know this. God has a habit of taking what’s broken and making it not just better but sometimes a symbol of healing and hope. After the news this weekend, I don’t know what that would look like. A drone? A missile? A button? I don’t know what it will be, but I trust, somehow, that what’s been broken will be remade, and that life can come from the heavens, and that eventually, we’re all going to figure out how to be a blessing. I am tired, but I am not done.

Free St. Thomas’ T-Shirts

St. Thomas’ T-shirts are available for FREE in the office. Stop in to get one and wear it with pride!



Free Coffee

St. Thomas’ has free coffee in the Parish Hall every Tuesday, 9:00-11:00 am. Stay and enjoy a cup or take one to go. All are welcome!



Worth Repeating

I raise up my voice – not so I can shout, but so those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.

– Malala Yousafza (born 1997) is a Pakistani female education activist, and producer of film and television. She is the youngest Nobel Prize laureate in history, receiving the Peace Prize in 2014 at age 17, and is the second Pakistani and the only Pashrun to receive a Nobel Prize.



Flowers for the Altar

Just a reminder that if you would like to honor or remember a loved one with flowers on the altar, you can do that by making a donation to the Flower Guild (\$35 is recommended). Write a check to St. Thomas' Church and in the memo write Altar Flowers. Envelopes for flower donations are provided in the pews. You may either place the envelope in the collection plate during the Sunday morning service or mail or drop off your check in the Parish Office no later than the Wednesday prior to the Sunday you want your loved one honored or remembered so that the name(s) can be included in the bulletin. You can also fill in a date on the flower calendar in the Parish Hall.

Thank you.

—Rose Novak & Jana Laxa for the Flower Guild

Online Donations

You can make a donation to our parish online with the link below. You will receive an email confirmation of your gift, and the Diocese will forward your gift and contact information to our parish for acknowledgment.

<https://cnyepiscopal.org/give/give-to-my-parish/>

When you go to the link above, you will fill out the donation form. In the Parish section, select "Hamilton: St. Thomas' Episcopal Church" and if your contribution is meant to honor your pledge, please write "pledge" in the "Gift note/designation" line. The link to the online donation form listed above can also be found on our [website](#) on the home page and more details on the "[donate](#)" page.

AA Meetings in Hamilton

TIME	NAME	LOCATION / GROUP	ADDRESS / PLATFORM	REGION
Monday, 7:00 PM	<u>Hamilton on the Green</u>	<u>Hamilton on the Green</u> First Baptist Church	First Baptist Church 27 Broad Street	Hamilton
Wednesday, 7:00 PM	<u>Colgate University</u>	<u>Shaw Wellness Institute</u>	113 Broad Street	Hamilton
Friday, 7:00 PM	<u>Hamilton on the Green</u>	<u>Hamilton on the Green</u> First Baptist Church	27 Broad Street	Hamilton

April Schedule of Servers

APRIL	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS	COFFEE HOUR HOSTS
2	1st: Adger Williams 2nd: John Orr	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Kate Hooks & Emily Hutton-Hughes	Diane Rich Krause	Linda Jenks	N/A
3	1st: Martha Berry 2nd: Maureen Fox *Passion Gospel	Susan Cerasano	Ed Page	Emily Hutton-Hughes	Diane Rich Krause	Debbie Barker	N/A
5	1st: Emily HH 2nd: Kerry Linden	Barbara Bowen	Ed Page	Wynn Egginton	Diane Rich Krause	Linda Jenks	Parish Life
12 Rite One	1st: Joan Ford 2nd: Kristin Strohmeier	Susan Cerasano	Ed Page	Wynn Egginton	Diane Rich Krause	Linda Jenks	Katie Smith & Millie Franklin
19	1st: Debbie Barker 2nd: Linda Jenks	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Jane Welsh	Diane Rich Krause	Debbie Barker	Morkevičius Family
26	1st: Lynn Staley 2nd: Barbara Bowen	Wynn Egginton	Ed Page	Jane Welsh	Diane Rich Krause	Debbie Barker	Martha Berry



April 2026

Quinquagesima

Address Service Requested
St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
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