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# Tidings



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

## The Rector's Column

Right around a year ago, we published a write-up in the *Tidings* about where the word "liturgy" comes from, and I wanted to revisit that as we turn our attention for a new school year.

The original word for what we do when we come together to worship was "leitourgia," combining the old Greek words for "people" and "works." There are a pair of definitions that inform our Sundays now.

The first is "the work of the people," which is a beautiful way of emphasizing all of us doing this thing on Sundays together. In this month's Nave Gazing, you'll get a fuller picture of what that can look like, but it's notable in our history that the "work" being done in this context goes beyond the folks doing all those things. The "work" includes the prayers we say, the movements we make, and the shifts in our hearts as we move back into the world!

The second definition is just as cool to liturgy nerds like me: "public works at private expense." In this case, what we do on Sundays is still our work, but it's more open and outward-facing. We do this work together so that others benefit from what we offer. This is why, traditionally, all services of the church (with the exception of Reconciliation of a Penitent) are open to anyone that might walk in.

Sundays are our work for us and for everyone who wanders in. Our liturgies feed us, challenge us, put us to work, and shift our souls a little closer to that Kingdom of God. And they do that whether we've been here for ages or only just discovered this little brown church on Madison Street!

—Brooks+

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## Join the Conversation Bible Study

In September, we're finishing up with the Prophet Isaiah, and if there's time, we'll turn our attention to Galatians and Hosea.

**Where:** Isaiah is roughly three-fourths of the way through the Old Testament, Hosea is among the minor prophets towards the end of the Old Testament, and Galatians is kinda in the middle of the New Testament.

**What to Watch for:** Isaiah's gonna keep on prophesying against the evil influences of the world, Hosea leans into God's love for God's people, and Galatians is Paul very much being Paul. (If you don't know what that means, come find out!)

**References:** With these books, there's not a ton of required pre-reading so much as a willingness to read through multiple lenses at the same time.

**Content:** Isaiah wants the people to turn back to God. Hosea wants the people to turn back to God. Paul -- this is gonna sound wild -- also wants the people to turn back to God.

**Lectionary:** Isaiah gets used all throughout the Lectionary with special attention on and around Christmas. Hosea we might hear once a year. Galatians gets a lot of attention in Year C (but almost none in the other two years).

—Fr. Brooks

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## Sabbath Book

*The Spiritual Life* by Evelyn Underhill

This is the second Evelyn Underhill book on our Sabbath list this year. Underhill led us through Lent, and now she invites us into a more general season of life fully committed to God. As she puts it, "such a program demands much faith, hope, and charity; and courage, too."

—Fr. Brooks

## Nave Gazing

A couple of Sundays ago, I heard a great comment in the handshake line after church. Someone said, "It finally feels like we're getting joy back into our services again!" It was one part a comment on the number of folks filling the pews that day and one part the smiles of all those loving folks of St. Thomas'. But there was another piece, too: St. Thomas' puts on good liturgy. You do! We do!

That got me to wondering: what does it take to get ready for Sundays? Or better yet, how much time do people put into making a single Sunday morning service happen? So, I asked around. At first I just polled our volunteers, but that left some significant people (and the work they do) out of the equation.

We heard back from the various commission heads and staff-folk, and the results are both interesting and surprising! I knew it took a lot of moving pieces every week, but good golly, it is way more than I realized!

To prepare for and put on a single (more or less typical) 10:00 am Sunday Service:

- assuming a choir of 5, our volunteers put in roughly 36.5 hours every week.
- staff adds another 47.5 hours.
- it takes a total of 84 person-hours!!!

All that to say, y'all do a lot to make this place so full of joy and good liturgy! Thank you!

But numbers only tell part of the story, so let's take an incomplete peek behind the curtain.

The Altar Guild prepares the liturgical space, especially (but not solely) the area around the altar. Sometimes this means polishing vessels and changing the hangings, sometimes it's steam-cleaning the vestments, and always it's putting out wine and bread to set the stage for Eucharist.

The Flower Guild carefully picks the flowers in-person from all sorts of sources, arranges them into matching bouquets, removes the previous arrangements and replaces them. They tend to the foliage during the week, watering,

Continued from Page 2

pruning, and discarding whatever doesn't make it to Sunday.

On Zoom, we have a greeter working to welcome folks in our virtual worship space while also providing feedback on the quality of the livestream.

Ushers prepare the space on Sunday mornings, tidying up whatever may need tidying, ensuring bulletins are available, putting out flags, and creating a welcoming environment all before the first face arrives. They assist people to seats, answer questions, collect donations, and lead parishioners to communion.

Lectors (or Readers) of course read from the lectern on Sundays but they also spend time on their own practicing their readings, especially double- and triple-checking the pronunciations of those especially tricky Biblical names.

Lay Eucharistic Ministers assist with the distribution of communion and lead the congregation in the Prayers of the People. Again, this often entails practicing the pronunciation of tricky names ahead of time. In addition, the LEMs are required to attend occasional required trainings.

Acolytes move in a lot of ways, most are fairly visible but there's some liturgical sneaking that goes on, too. The cross leads our processions, of course, and you've certainly seen the assistance with preparing the altar for the Eucharistic prayers. But you may have missed the subtle assistance throughout the service. Acolytes catch falling papers, step up to read if a Lector can't make it, go on scavenger hunts when the priest loses something in the service, and generally stand ready for (and anticipating) whatever task needs doing.

The Newcomers Commission seeks out new faces and greets them with a welcome smile and a packet of introductory information to St. Thomas'. They also prepare these packets and keep them at the ready for (hopefully) weekly use.

The Choir puts in rehearsal time prior to the service, and they perform beautifully in front of God and everybody. It's not uncommon for them to practice at home, as well, or to offer other musical talents (that also require rehearsal time) to enrich our services.

Another volunteer confirms the count of donations, records the appropriate information, and deposits those donations at the bank.

The Parish Life Commission hosts coffee hour more often than not, typically requiring preparation before the service to make coffee and arrange treats. Of course, there's plenty of effort ahead of time, making those treats, shopping, and recruiting other helping hands. During coffee hour, they keep the table stocked with goodies, and after everyone else is gone, they stay back to clean up.

And that's just the volunteers! St. Thomas' Staff certainly add in lots of time and talent, too. They make bulletins, clean the bathrooms, prepare musical selections, compose masterpieces, gather talented musicians, write the occasional sermon, care for kids in Sunday School and tons, tons more.

All that to say, it takes a village to raise a church! If you're interested in getting involved in preparing for or putting on services, please let the office know! All those volunteer groups could certainly use more hands, and we'd love to get more folks involved in making this such a joyful place with joyful services week after glorious week.

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—Fr. Brooks

## A Quote

God respects me when I work, but he loves me when I sing.

—Rabindranath Tagore

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## Another Book Recommendation

*Advice for Future Corpses (And Those Who Love Them): A Practical Perspective on Death and Dying* by Sallie Tisdale

I know, the title doesn't sound like the most uplifting read, but this is easily one of the best books I've read all year. Drawing on her career as a nurse in palliative care, Tisdale takes on one of the biggest and most equalizing aspects of life. She is direct, somber, funny, and above all else, accessible. I cannot recommend this enough!

—Brooks+

## Adult Confirmation Class

Interested in being Confirmed? Need a refresher on the Episco-basics? Just want a chance to hang out with some of the coolest folks Hamilton has to offer? Reach out to Fr. Brooks for more info!

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## Sunday School Volunteers

With the school year fast approaching, we're getting our ducks in a row for our Christian Education offerings, and we need volunteers! Leah, Abby, & Zja'Kyla will be staffing the Nursery and Godly Play, and we'll need one person each week to help them out. Fr. Brooks will be leading the Teen Class, and he'll need one volunteer each week, too. If you're interested, please contact Leah in the Office or Fr. Brooks.

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## Driving Commission

We're rebooting our Driving Commission and need drivers to get behind the wheel! We're looking for folks that can give rides to parishioners on Sunday mornings, take people to appointments in or near Hamilton, and give folks rides to appointments in Syracuse, Utica, and places a little farther afield. If you're interested, let Leah in the Parish Office know and specify what kind of driving you're able to do.

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## Land Sale Update

In the words of Jesus himself, "it is finished!" The generous donation, after all the associated fees, brings in roughly \$68,800! The long-awaited sale of the Hill Road Property will go towards the large building projects on the docket for this year, especially the front walkway replacement, the paint, and the carpentry work.

—Fr. Brooks

## Newcomers Commission

The Newcomers Commission has been busy this summer, welcoming visitors and potential new members to St Thomas'. There are now 4-5 new persons/families who are attending on a regular basis. Another gentleman was only here for the summer, but he expressed his appreciation for the welcome he experienced.

—Linda Jenks

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## On the Lighter Side



## Christian Education Director

After over a year working as the Parish Administrator at St. Thomas', we are delighted to expand Leah Schmitt's role to include duties as our new Christian Education Director! Leah will still be in the office during the week, and in addition she'll staff the Nursery & Godly Play room along with our attendants Abby & Zja'Kyla while also crafting programming for our youth throughout the year. If you are interested in learning more about our Christian Education offerings for all ages, please contact Leah in the Office at

[stchurch@cnmyail.com](mailto:stchurch@cnmyail.com) or (315) 824-1745.

—Fr. Brooks



### A Note of Gratitude and Excitement

I am delighted to take on my additional title as Christian Education Director. It is hard to put into words just how grateful I am to Brooks, the Wardens, and the Vestry for everything they have done to make this happen. Simply put—Thank You! Please know that those two words are filled with the utmost appreciation. It truly feels like I “have it all” here at St. Thomas’. I work with wonderful people in an office where I do meaningful work, and I can stay connected to the Church in a special way. I am excited to use my creativity and background working with children of all ages to put something extra fun together for our education classes.

—Leah Schmitt

## Outreach

Many thanks to all who helped with the Interfaith summer food program and the collection of school supplies. The Food Cupboard reports that the collection of backpacks was especially successful! Representatives from the main churches in town will be getting together later in the month to plan a coordinated program for local Thanksgiving food donations. Stay tuned!

### SEPTEMBER Food Cupboard Needs:

Cans of beans and soup are much in demand and supplies are low. They could also use donations of baking supplies.

—Emily Hutton-Hughes

### A Quote

We did then what we knew how to do. Now that we know better, we do better.

—Maya Angelou

### Job Opportunity

The Help Restore Hope Center Program is looking to hire an Advocate for the Enough is Enough (EIE) position. In this position you are responsible for the development and implementation of presentations, outreach, and training related to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking on Colgate University and Suny Morrisville (Madison County location) campuses. The Advocate will work in the Madison County office with the rest of the Help Restore Hope Center Advocates and be responsible for sharing hotline duties.

More information or to apply for the position go to Liberty Resources’ website:

<https://www.liberty-resources.org/>. (look for the careers tab at the top of the website).



**Sermon for the Twelfth Sunday  
after Pentecost:**

**Matthew 15:21-28**

**August 20, 2023**

**The Rev. Brooks Cato**

I gotta be honest, I don't know what to do with this Gospel reading. It's not my favorite. I've got some trauma from back in seminary on this one, thanks to a humorless professor's blank stare in the face of one of my greatest puns. But it runs deeper even than the embarrassment of a flopped joke. It's not my favorite because Jesus -- the perfect human, Son of God, bringer of Love and Peace and Forgiveness -- Jesus calls this woman a dog. It's not just that she's a foreigner and he calls her that. Not that that makes it ok either, but he's in her country! It'd be like going to Mexico and complaining that no one speaks English...only, worse.

The word "dog" carried all sorts of nasty implications. I mean, it's not even great now. But as bad as it is, it was worse. Dogs these days are cuties. They're family members, emotional support, even our senses. Dogs can smell low blood sugar and even detect Parkinson's! Dogs are great. But they're also gross. I don't need to spell it out from the pulpit, but there are reasons -- plural reasons -- why I don't let my dog lick my face. And for all those reasons, dogs were ritually unclean. In other words, hanging out with a dog meant you'd have to say some extra prayers and take a special bath just for petting one. By that system, I'd never get to do my job. A significant part of pastoral care entails getting my black shirts covered in hair. I even carry treats, 'cause ya never know when an emergency encounter'll happen.

But that's not what dogs were. They were gross and a nuisance and sometimes rabid and always worth keeping an eye on. Dogs weren't great. And calling a person a dog said a lot about them and about you. Calling a person a dog meant you didn't want them anywhere near you. For one thing, you'd have to go through all that trouble of getting ritually cleaned back up. But for another, it meant they were low, as low as whatever slakes a discerning dog's palate. That person then becomes a nuisance, distrusted, dangerous even, a filthy cur, and nothing more. And the person that says it? Well, how does your opinion change when you hear someone use a slur? It's not great, right? I've

dropped relationships with businesses because an owner felt comfortable saying things like that. It's surprising, and it should be surprising, but in our world, it's not.

So, when Jesus ignores this woman in her own land and calls her a dog...it's not great. I want Jesus to be as pure as our theology says he is. I wish I could take the party line and say he was testing her or that her faith was just the witness he needed to turn toward the Gentiles or that she needed to humble herself or that she's a stand-in for all of humanity. All that's nice and tidy and completely unsatisfying. Because, like it or not, Jesus called a woman a dog after ignoring her didn't do the trick. Given the history Christianity has, that's not a good look. Christianity's done much to ignore and disparage the cries of women. Christianity's done much to enter foreign lands and insult those that live there. Christianity's done much to keep crumbs far from supposedly undeserving dogs in too many places to count.

Part of what troubles me's that I think there's two Christianities. There's the Christianity that does so much damage out in the world, and there's the Christianity that does so much good. I try with all my heart to be the good-doing kind of Christian. I try to teach that here. I try to live the Christianity that's infectious 'cause it's beautiful and kind and open. But then there's the other Christianity. The kind that says that Jesus' teachings are too liberal for today's political climate and don't work anymore 'cause they're weak. (That's a real critique that's out there, by the way.) The kind that says the poor deserve to be poor 'cause if they only lived right, they wouldn't be poor. (That's also real.) The kind that hears Jesus call a desperate woman a dog and says that's what we should do, too. (That's also real.)

Normally, when it comes to other denominations doing their thing, I take a live-and-let-live approach. They can go on and say whatever they're gonna say, and we'll be here to catch their wounded when they fall. But sometimes it's too much. It is sinful to hoard God's love and choose who we divvy it out to. It's sinful 'cause we start to put ourselves in God's position. But it's also just plain mean, and it pushes people away from the thing they so desperately need, Christians pushing people away from God. I'm not even sure the part of Christianity embracing that kind of hate, rejecting the Beatitudes for being too weak, delighting in Jesus putting a woman down, I'm not sure that can

still be called Christianity. And I know, that's a hard claim to make. I'm sure the same could be said of me. Actually, I know the same's been said of me. I've read all about it in the comments sections. But the hate-filled, hate-fueled thing masquerading as Christianity is unrecognizable. I just can't see how we're the same. So, that's why Jesus and the d-word bother me. I wish he'd said something different. I wish he'd embraced her when she showed up. I wish he'd greeted her. I wish he'd fallen on his knees and washed her feet. But he didn't.

If there's anything to take from this story that gives me hope, it's that through the conversation, Jesus changed his tack. Some say he learned or he needed the challenge or she had to get the words just right. But the thing I hold onto is that Jesus was already preaching a gospel of love before he got there. The Pharisees and Sadducees said no good Hebrew should go anywhere near those unclean Canaanites, but Jesus didn't just happen on one, he went to their land. So, that's something, I guess. He carries his own context with him and responds as most Hebrew men of the time would've. But that gospel of love can't get tamped down by context and prejudice and nasty language. Jesus says his message is for the house of Israel, but the foreign woman calls Jesus her Lord! He may not be ready for it, but she is. And with that exchange, something (I don't know what it is, exactly) something changes. He goes from insulting her to recognizing something new. An expansion of what God's love could mean.

And that's where my sticking point is now. So much of the Christianity in this world has got it backwards. We see more and more Christians closing the circle, drawing hard lines determining how small God's love is. And it shrinks and festers and turns meaner and meaner and meaner and meaner. When actually the harder thing, the more faithful thing is expanding love beyond what we initially intended, beyond what we thought possible, beyond what we understood. None of that's bigger than God, and none of that's bigger than God's love. No matter who you are or what categories you fit into or don't, God's love is for you, and no person, no priest, no church gets to change that. God's love is for you.

I don't know, I can't un-dog this story. I can't clean up the exchange and sweep Jesus' words under the rug, but maybe there's still a glimmer of hope in the whole complicated mess. The glimmer

that no matter what people try to make this gift of faith into, God's love wins out. Always. And if it hasn't won out yet, then it's not over. That's where I find hope. In spite of evil masquerading, in spite of the growing popularity of hatred, in spite of all the nasty names we call each other, there is always God's love. And no matter how much I think I've got a handle on it, it's always bigger than I think. None of us knows where that love ends. And if we think we do, we better figure out who we're rejecting by drawing a line. God's love doesn't draw a line. It draws us in. All of us munched up with the last folks we thought deserved it or wanted it or even cared at all. There is no distinction. There's just love. Ever-growing, all-inclusive, deeply challenging love. And that's hard. That's harder than kicking folks out. It's harder than opening our doors to the supposedly unclean. When religion affirms our sensibilities, it's easy and vacuous and fruitless.

There's a challenge here, but it's not for an ancient woman at an ancient well. It's for us. The challenge to love beyond what's easy, to love in fullness, to bear fruit that bears more fruit and more fruit still. The challenge to love like God does, to love every bit of humanity, yes, every bit. We start here, practice here. We gather with folks we see during the week and folks we avoid in the grocery store. We leave doors unlocked for whoever needs it, desirable and deplorable alike. We make ya coffee if you sleep on our couches, we get ya a jacket if you're cold, we pray for your doctors when you're sick, and we bring ya casseroles even if you don't like casseroles. I'll even pet your dog. There's a lot we do to show our love, but the real change is the invisible movement of our hearts. Right at the core of this place, love grows, and love gives life with every pulsing beat. In spite of evil masquerading, in spite of growing hatred, in spite of all the nasty things we do, God's love's always bigger. And God's love's always getting bigger. No matter who you are or what categories you fit into or don't, God's love is for you. And no person, no priest, no church can ever change that. God's love is for you.



**A Call for the Choir  
(Fall 2023)**

Yes, it's hard to believe it's that time again... Time for schoolbooks, falling leaves, and - of course - SINGING IN THE CHOIR. Now, I say this without wistfulness, because the choir at St. Thomas' is a real joy in my life. And why not? We work on beautiful music, genuinely like each other, and share a whole lot of laughs. We probably have more fun than you're supposed to have in a church choir. But that's a part of why I look forward to seeing my favorite people again, every Sunday morning at 9:00 am for rehearsals (right before the 10:00 am service).

However, there is one thing, in regards to the choir, that I wish. Over the past few years, we have lost some beloved choir members - either to passing, or simply moving away. And it is with wistfulness that I say this. The choir is a longtime institution at St. Thomas', one that began long before me, and one that I hope will continue to thrive long after I'm gone. It's part of our church history, and I don't believe I'm alone in recognizing the place of importance music has in St. Thomas' Sunday worship.

That being said, my wish is to actually expand the choir - to see it continually grow. I'm hoping that this will be the year you might consider giving it a try. It is a most welcoming place to reside on

Sunday mornings. And, whether you're young or old, amateur or professional, a sight-reader or a shower hummer - you are welcome!

Yes - schoolbooks are beginning to reappear and leaves are starting to fall. Change is palpable all around us, so this could be the perfect time to join. Come be a part of the music and the fun we share on Sunday mornings - beginning this year on September 10th. I guarantee that it will soon be a real joy in your life...

And why not?

—Dianne McDowell

**Upcoming Events & Meetings**

**September 10th:** Sunday School begins!

**9:00 AM:** Teen Class

**9:45 AM:** Godly Play & Nursery

**Following the service:** Adult Forum

**September 18th: 10 AM** Building Commission Meeting

**12 PM** Outreach Meeting

**September 20th:** Wardens Meeting

**September 24th:** Annual Meeting

**Save the Date**

**October 8:** Blessing of the Animals

**A Quote**

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as if everything is.

—Albert Einstein



## Financial Ask for 2023

You eagle-eyed vestry minute perusers will have noticed that for this year only, the Vestry approved a deficit in our budget of \$15,000. The Vestry and I would be so grateful if you would consider making an additional gift to help us bring this year's operating budget into balance.

For a little background, the Vestry approved this deficit as a one-time, single-year anomaly in response to the impact of the pandemic. Our attendance numbers have dropped to almost half of what they were in 2019 from an average of 81 on a typical Sunday to 44 at the end of 2022. In previous years, we have worked diligently to keep our operating budget balanced, and we're using this unusual year to bridge us back to a balanced budget.

Fortunately, we have not faced this issue before, but the challenges of the pandemic finally came home to roost in funding the 2023 Operating Budget. Pledges and other donations have gone a long way in supporting the ministries of St. Thomas', and other sources continue to fund the building projects currently underway. We are so grateful for your generosity and for the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that keep this wonderful place going.

But we are still carrying that \$15,000 deficit in our Operating Budget. We need to lean on the parish's generosity a bit more to help us reach a level of sustainability that brings us to the end of the year and lays a solid foundation for the future.

You'll also notice that we are investing in specific areas, namely in the care of our buildings and expansion of the duties of our personnel. We find ourselves in a moment of optimistic realism.

The pandemic did much to bring about scarcity, but we are determined to live into God's abundance. That was the philosophy of last year's vestry. This year's vestry has taken a similar approach in thinking about opportunities to foster growth and expansion, growth that ultimately will lead us to a more sustainable situation in time.

We certainly understand that this is a significant request of an already generous congregation, and

not all will be able to contribute. That is okay. If you cannot give financially, know that this place is set aside for all of us equally. If you are able to help us bring down that deficit, please prayerfully consider making an extra contribution prior to the end of the year with the designation of "Deficit Appeal."

With deep gratitude,

Fr. Brooks & The Vestry of St. Thomas'



### Progress Outside

St. Thomas' looks like a brand new church! The front walkway is finished, the new sign is up, the paint is tantalizingly close to being finished, a ton of rotten wood has been replaced, and the roof is getting cleaner one section at a time. The conversion to natural gas for the Rectory furnace, and the mold abatement in the Church and Parish Hall basements are on the docket. Soon the Great Summer Construction Festival of 2023 will come to a close. Thank you so much for your patience, and keep an eye out for more projects down the line!

—Fr. Brooks

## St. Thomas' Episcopal Church Vestry Minutes June 25, 2023

*Present:* Debbie Barker, John Bowen, Brooks Cato (presiding), Maureen Ghent, Connie Harsh, John Orr, Jane Welsh

*Absent:* Susan Beattie, Wynn Egginton, Emily Hutton-Hughes, Valerie Morkevicius, Anne Perring

### *Call to Order*

The meeting began at 11:43 a.m. in the parish hall. Connie Harsh led the opening prayer.

[*Please note:* Because there wasn't a quorum at the meeting, an email containing all of the motions passed provisionally was sent to vestry members on Monday, June 26<sup>th</sup>. All members of the vestry weighed in on June 26<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> to approve *all* of the motions recorded in the minutes below. As a result, they are listed as provisionally approved at the meeting and formally approved by the follow-up email.]

### *Clerk's Report*

The minutes of the May 28<sup>th</sup> vestry meeting were approved provisionally as submitted. (Moved by Debbie Barker; seconded by John Orr.) Formally approved by email vote.

### *Treasurer's Report*

John Bowen submitted the following report to the vestry members:

“Investment accounts remain stable. The checking account balance has dipped below **\$20,000** which reflects the continued lag in pledge income which now stands at 79% of year-to-date budget. The Budget and Finance Commission discussed temporarily borrowing from the St. Thomas' Endowment Account to prevent any gaps as we expect some large expenditures on church maintenance in the next few weeks. The Vestry is reminded that a **\$17,500** deficit was added to the Gifts income line. We currently stand at **\$1035**.

The annual audit is underway and will be completed in August. Giving Statements will be sent in the coming month.” Jane Welsh asked whether some parishioners aren't paying their pledges. Debbie Barker responded that while the

Budget & Finance Commission does send out periodic giving statements, the commission does not typically contact pledges otherwise.

The Treasurer's Report was received provisionally as submitted. (Moved by Jane Welsh; seconded by Maureen Ghent.) The Report was formally received by email vote.

### *Rector's Report*

Brooks Cato stated that his remarks would be divided into four parts. First, he commented that he was very pleased with all of the activity that the parish was generating, despite the fact that we are supposed to still be in “sabbath time.” He listed the many projects completed, or now underway, with a special shout-out to Eric Muller for re-hanging the pastors' photos in the parish hall. Everyone thought they look terrific. Second, he wanted to thank Fr. Jason Hage and Pastor Bryant Clark for their collegiality as ministers in the village of Hamilton. (Fr. Hage is currently moving to a different church in Marcellus.) Third, Brooks reported that he had received an anonymous letter of complaint concerning the Pride Flag that is now hanging outside of the church. It is typed and unsigned, and there is a mailing label on the envelope. The letter was mailed from Syracuse. Otherwise, there has been quite a lot of positive feedback concerning the flag. Finally, Brooks wanted to thank, in advance, Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Norwich, which donated the funds to cover the costs of the hotdogs, buns, condiments, and paper hotdog “boat” holders for the Fourth-of-July Hotdog Give-Away.

### *Wardens' Report*

Debbie Barker wanted to thank the Buildings Commission for the impressive amount of work they had managed to complete already this summer, as well as for their work on those projects that are in progress and in planning. Jane Welsh had nothing to add at this point in the meeting.

### *Commission Reports*

- *Buildings:* Brooks Cato informed vestry members that Eric Muller will join the Buildings Commission, replacing Hannah McClennen for the rest of her term. Brooks then presented the proposal (sent to vestry members in advance) from Green Home Solutions totaling **\$2,144.12** for mold abatement in the basement furnace room, which includes

removal of drywall, as well as removal of mold and treatment of all effected surfaces. Jane Welsh moved that the vestry approve **\$2150** to cover the costs and that these funds should be taken from the Buildings budget, even if they have to overspend their budget by some amount. John Orr seconded. The motion carried, provisionally. The motion was passed formally by email vote.

#### Old Business

- *Land Sale:* Jane Welsh explained that “we have the court order, papers have been signed and we are waiting on the Buyers’ attorney to agree on a closing date.”
- *Safe Church Training:* Anne Perring was away from the meeting. There was nothing more to add.
- *New Vestry Slate:* Brooks offered a summary of procedures for vestry members. Jane Welsh reported that “the ball is already rolling.” After some brief discussion, it was decided that the wardens and the outgoing vestry members should meet as a group.
- *Auction Progress:* John Orr reported that there is now a committee established to manage the auction planning. They had met and discussed the timing, setting the date for October 7<sup>th</sup>. They had also discussed the use of space inside and outside of the parish hall, perhaps extending outside space with the rental of a tent. The idea of having live music was appealing as well. They were investigating—in broad strokes—how to handle the food component. Whether to have silent and/or live auctions in the course of the event was also a topic to be addressed. Where to find a professional auctioneer is being investigated. The content of the auction (furniture? art? entertainment? other kinds of items?) needs to be decided. John cautioned vestry members that every component of the planning was significant and that parishioners needed time to decide carefully what they might donate. Vestry members were extremely pleased to hear that so much productive thinking had already gone into the planning process. Connie Harsh noted that October 7<sup>th</sup> falls during Colgate’s Fall Term Break (perhaps making it an inconvenient date), and also that the autumn Jewish holidays needed to be considered.

- *Contact List:* Brooks Cato stated that work continues on.
- *Display Case:* There was no news on this project.

#### New Business

- *Allocation of Steffenhagen Funds to Building Projects:* Brooks Cato asked, in consultation with the Budget & Finance Commission (and with our Treasurer, John Bowen), that there be a formal motion to allocate the Steffenhagen Funds to upcoming building projects. Maureen Ghent made a formal motion to do so; Debbie Barker seconded the motion. The motion passed provisionally at the meeting and formally by email vote.
- *Transfer of Funds to NBT Checking Account:* Brooks Cato Reported that the Budget & Finance Commission had requested that **\$40,000** from the St. Thomas’ Fund be moved to the NBT checking account to cover projects that are currently underway until the funds from the land sale arrive. Then the money will be transferred back into the St. Thomas’ Fund. Jane Welsh moved to transfer the funds, with the understanding that the money will be redeposited in the St. Thomas’ Fund when the funds from the land sale arrive. Debbie Barker seconded the motion. The vestry voted provisionally to approve it. It was passed formally by email vote
- *Task Force on the State of Membership in the Episcopal Church:* Brooks Cato explained that an invitation to participate had been sent to select parishes, including St. Thomas’. Unhappily, this required the establishment of a small local task force in a short period of time. (Paperwork was due on June 30<sup>th</sup>.) Brooks proposed that he and the wardens, joined by Adger Williams, Martha Berry, and Leah Schmitt serve as that group. Connie Harsh moved that the vestry approve of this group as the task force; Maureen Ghent seconded the motion. The motion passed provisionally at the meeting and formally by email vote.
- *Core Priorities Discussion (Increasing Participation in Commissions, limited to 10 minutes):* Brooks Cato opened the conversation by suggesting that this is a

question bound up in the issues surrounding attendance. John Orr proposed that one idea might be to have a “Commission Fair” in the Fall, when everyone is back. “Invite everyone in and let persons mingle and get the word out. It’s also a communications issue. We could get information out to the parish on a more regular basis,” John noted. John Bowen added that Sunday church services now compete with all sorts of activities, including children’s athletic practices and games. “Also, with people working from home they tend to work around the clock. It’s difficult to compete with that,” he said. Brooks Cato summarized by stating that “St. Thomas’ isn’t in a dire situation, but it’s an issue that could become a problem. We need to keep churning on this to see what more could be done.”

- Final announcements were made regarding upcoming events of interest to the parish.
- *Next meeting:* The next vestry meeting was set for August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 11:30 a.m. (The vestry doesn’t customarily meet in July.)
- *Prayer Leader:* Maureen Ghent offered to lead prayer at the opening of the next vestry meeting.

Because there was no further business Debbie Barker moved to conclude the meeting; Maureen Ghent seconded. The meeting ended at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Cerasano, Clerk

### Looking for Contributors

Interested in adding something to our monthly newsletter? We're 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.



### Annual Parish Picnic 8/27/2023

**Special thanks** to Millie Franklin and the Parish Life Commission for putting on such a wonderful picnic! Extra thanks go to table carriers, chair arrangers, dish bringers, and lunch eaters. We had a wonderful time and felt like our old selves again!

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### A Helping Hand by Tom Brackett

The following is to invite you to read my story, *A Helping Hand*. I have placed it in the church library, so you may read it. In order to help you determine your interest, I will tell you a little about it.

It is a fictional story about an Animist couple, driven from their hill-tribe homes by a military invasion, and how they come to accommodate themselves to a more modern society. It deals primarily with, love, creation, music, and the purpose of life, and is directed to my children. As a reader you would essentially be listening in as an old man gives his children a late lesson in life. I should also mention that it is short, only 56 pages.

I will be happy to discuss it with any reader.

—Tom Brackett



## Announcement of Death

Molly Bartlett's Obituary can be found at the following link:

<https://obits.oregonlive.com/us/obituaries/oregon/name/mary-bartlett-obituary?id=52552057>

Dear Congregates and Friends of St. Thomas',

On the occasion of the passing of one of our former members, I wish to remind you of the participation of Colgate's president and his wife in St. Thomas' Church. Tom Bartlett became President of Colgate in 1969, and he and his wife Molly with their three sons—Tom, Richard and Paul—joined the fellowship of St. Thomas' shortly after they arrived in Hamilton.

The '70's were difficult years for our church. Jim Ford notes in his history our vestry's statement: "Due to financial difficulties, we will not, in all probability, be able to have a full-time Rector in 1979." However, Molly was a very dedicated parishioner and worked hard to support our church. She joined the vestry and became a warden of our church very early on. She may have been the first woman to do so.

I regret to announce Molly died this past July 22. I am certain she and Tom will be happy to receive your prayers and well wishes.

—Tom Brackett



## Sunset

Here is a beautiful sunset on Lake Ontario where we spend our summers.

—Jana Laxa

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## My Nightly Prayer

"Mighty Spirit of Light that shines through  
The Cosmos, Draw my Flame closer in  
harmony to Thee.

Lift up my fire from out of the darkness,  
magnet of fire that is One with The All.

Lift up my Soul Thou Mighty & Potent, Child  
of The Light, turn not away.

Draw me in power to melt in Thy furnace, one  
with All Things & All Things in one.

Fire of the lifestream & one with The Brain!"

—Taken from *Compendium of The Emerald Tablets* by  
Billy Carson



## Open: Not Just on Sunday

Our “old pictures group” met Friday morning in the parish hall, and were pleasantly surprised to find Millie offering us nut bread and coffee. She introduced us to the person who had spent the night in the parish hall; This is her story, as written by Millie.

I seldom go to the parish hall on Friday; however, this Friday I did, arriving around 9:30 am. Barb Hicks and Leah were trying to understand why this person wanted to find a bus that would take her to the “Tri Cities” area (Binghamton, Vestal, and Endicott). I am familiar with that area, so I offered to take her into the other room and sort things out.

Two weeks prior, this 62-year-old woman had been taken by ambulance from Binghamton to the hospital in Rome. Why? is unknown. After two weeks she was released, according to her, with no means of transportation home. She was walking Route 26 when this "guardian angel" (her words), picked her up and delivered her to St. Thomas' saying, “this will be a safe place to stay the night and someone will help you in the morning.”

After much discussion, my niece and I decided that, instead of leaving her waiting on a bench at the bus stop in Norwich, we would take her home to Endicott, and so our journey began. It was a beautiful, bright, sunny day so my niece suggested we go to lunch. We made a stop at Price Chopper in Norwich and our journey continued. The lady asked to make a stop at Catholic Charities in order to pick up her key to her apartment. Upon our arrival, we were surprised to learn that they had been looking for her since she left the hospital. Apparently Catholic Charities had sent a taxi to pick her up. According to the cab driver she got in and then got out. She denied this. Our journey ended there. We left this lovely lady in a safe place and we thanked the lord that we could be of service.

I know God put me in the parish hall at that

time on that day to help someone in need.

The following week, Leah received a call in the office from a woman from ACT mental health services in the Binghamton area. She wanted to verify that the woman from last week, Dawn, had spent the night here at St. Thomas'. Once confirmed, she told Leah that Dawn is one of their clients. She has been afraid to be in her apartment and has since been moved to a facility she feels comfortable in. The woman on the phone wanted to say thank you for getting her there safely and thank you for doing God's work!

P.S. In my conversations with this 62-year-old woman, we realized I had had her as a counselee when I was doing my internship in Guidance at Chenango Forks Jr. Sr. High School 45+ years ago.

—Millie Franklin & Elizabeth Brackett





# CAP'S FAMILY FUN FEST

FEATURING OUR 5TH ANNUAL DUCK  
DERBY, BASKET RAFFLES, A CORN HOLE  
TOURNAMENT, FOOD TRUCKS, PALETTE  
GIVEAWAY, MUSIC, AND FREE GAMES  
FOR KIDS!



Join our cornhole  
tournament!  
\$25/team  
Register and pay at  
[www.capmadco.org](http://www.capmadco.org)  
Winning team takes  
home \$250 & a  
trophy!



**SEPT 9**  
**11AM**  
**-2 PM**

**FREE ADMISSION!**  
RAFFLE TICKETS FOR SALE AT THE DOOR  
1001 New Market Dr  
Canastota, NY 13032  
Bring a lawn chair or blanket and stay a while!



FOR DUCK DERBY TICKETS OR CORNHOLE SIGNUP,  
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.CAPMADCO.ORG](http://WWW.CAPMADCO.ORG)



### 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.



SCHMITT DANCE STUDIO *We are getting ready!*

DANCE CLASS SCHEDULE & REGISTRATION INFO COMING SOON

NEW SEASON  
NEW LOCATION  
NEW OFFERINGS

12 EAST MAIN ST.  
EARLVILLE, NY

SCHMITT DANCE STUDIO CLASSES STARTING IN THE FALL!

CONTACT MISS LEAH TO ENROLL:  
SCHMITTSISTERSDANCE@GMAIL.COM  
315-750-6040  
FACEBOOK.COM/SCHMITTSISTERSDANCE

### Happening in the Area: AA Meetings in Hamilton

TIME	NAME	LOCATION / GROUP	ADDRESS / PLATFORM	REGION
Sunday, 7:00 PM	<u>Morrisville Serenity</u>	<u>Morrisville Serenity</u>	100 Eaton Street	Hamilton
Monday, 8:00 PM	<u>Hamilton On The Green</u>	<u>Hamilton On The Green</u>	27 Broad Street	Hamilton
Friday, 8:00 PM	<u>Hamilton On The Green</u>	<u>Hamilton On The Green</u>	27 Broad Street	Hamilton

## Prayers of the People

### As of September 6th

**For those in need:** Edith Allen, Leslie Andersen, Tom Bartlett, Irene Brown, Frank Cost, Aster Dinku, Joan Fales, Don Fenner, Justin Fitzgerald, Jerry & Roseann Fitzgerald, Lisa Gee and her children, Daniel Ghent, The Rev. Elizabeth Gillett, Kristen Gregory, Kaia Harding, Amanda Harlan, Susan Hopper, Marlene Houck, Christopher Johnson, Sandra Jones, Janna Keser, Kerry Linden, Patrick McGraw, John Novak, Pat Osowski, Anthony & Vincent Pacillo, Joe Rupp, Candace Schult, Mark Spearing, Patricia Tayntor, Ed Vantine, David Vinopal, Deb Willis, Joan Winkler, David, Gert, Jane, Janice, Lance, Nancy, Nick, Paul, Rebecca, Scot, Thomas, Vicky, Grace, Chad, Nancy, Justin and Shasta.

**For the Departed:** May Humphrey (07/10), June Schaupp (07/17), Cynthia Hackman (07/31), Molly Bartlett (07/22), Lee Anne Miller (08/16), Noelle Muenckler (08/16), Carolyn Dearnaley (08/20), Betsy Vantine (08/28).

### 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 at the back of the church. 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

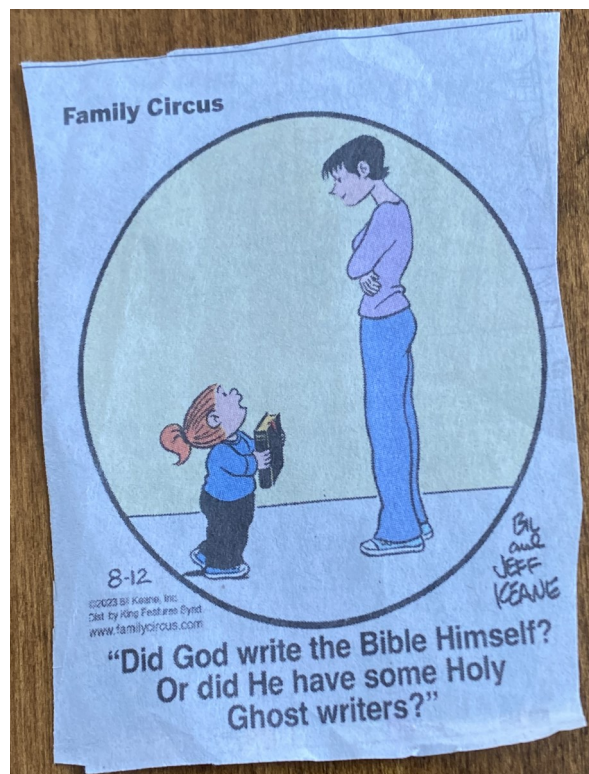
## September Thanksgivings

**Birthdays:** Tristan Martin (09/01), Rachel Knapp (09/02), Gwyneth Davies (09/03), Nancy Schult (09/05), Brooks Cato (09/07), Autum Rhoades (09/07), Jonas Morkevicius (09/08), Alec Strohmeyer (09/09), Michelle Landstrom (09/10), Elizabeth Gillett (09/11), Ian Moore (09/11), Eden Hubbard (09/11), Linden Muller (09/12), Susannah Davies (09/13), Mea Hubbard (09/13), Isaac Hubbard (09/18), Edward Scheinman (09/19), James Ford (09/20), Rebecca Hubbard (09/21), Lara Scott (09/23), Loxie Davie (09/24), Michael Clough (09/26), Matas Morkevicius (09/26), James Balakian (09/29).

**Baptism Anniversaries:** John Novak (09/15), Deborah Klenck (09/29).

**Marriage Anniversaries:** Sheila & Adrien Catania (09/03), Deb & Steve Barker (09/04), Rose & John Novak (09/11), Leigh Yardley & Bruce Moseley (09/21), Nancy & Tom Schmitt (09/25), Wynn & Everett Egginton (09/27).

### On the Lighter Side







**ACP** Affordable Connectivity Program

Save up to \$30 a month on your internet service bill

**Need Help or More Information?**  
Contact Michael at Community Action Partnership  
Email: [mloveless@capmadco.org](mailto:mloveless@capmadco.org) Phone: 315-949-4231

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a new federal program that helps low income families afford the cost of having internet service at home.

**ACP Participants Receive:**

- Up to a \$30/month discount on your internet service
- Up to a \$75/month discount if your household is on qualifying Tribal lands
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)

**Who Qualifies?**

There are four ways your household can qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP):

- Based on your household income
- If you or your child or dependent participate in certain government assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, or other programs
- If you or your child or dependent already receives a Lifeline benefit
- You may also qualify for the ACP through a participating internet provider's existing low-income program.

**If you or someone in your household participates in one of these programs you are automatically eligible for ACP:**

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit
- Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program, including at U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Eligibility Provision schools
- Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year

**Enroll Today**

[www.affordableconnectivity.gov](http://www.affordableconnectivity.gov)



**St. Thomas' Episcopal Church**  
**Scheduled to Serve**  
**September 2023**

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church  
 12 1/2 Madison St.  
 Hamilton, NY 13346

Telephone/Fax: 315-824-1745  
 E-Mail: stchurch@cnymail.com

DATE	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS
September 3	OT Jane Welsh NT Ellie Weyer	Wynn Egginton	Ed Page	Wynn Egginton	Liz Brackett	Barbara Bowen
September 10 <i>Rite One</i>	OT Adger Williams NT Debbie Barker	Susan Cerasano	Ed page	Wynn Egginton	Erin Loranty	Barbara Bowen
September 17	OT Martha Berry NT Barbara Bowen	Maureen Ghent	Ed Page	Susan Beattie	Erin Loranty	Barbara Bowen
September 24	OT Maureen Fox NT Kristin Strohmeyer	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Susan Beattie	Erin Loranty	Barbara Bowen



September 2023

# Qidings

Address Service Requested

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Hamilton, NY 13346

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