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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

Happy Easter!

I gotta say, these last few years, the idea of Resurrection has felt both further and closer than ever before. In some ways, the world we're living in just seems so distant from the world of justice and peace our scriptures talk so much about.

But in other deeply meaningful ways, this world is giving us so many opportunities to see the beauty of new life in spite of itself. Maybe it's because of all those shortcomings that grace shines through so beautifully.

I didn't talk about it much during Lent, but my discipline this year was, as Mr. Rogers put it, "to look for the helpers." Whenever the world goes wild or tragedy strikes, God is easiest to find in the people offering their assistance, sometimes at great cost to themselves. When the shortcomings seem too great and evil too near, look for the helpers. When hope seems furthest, look for the helpers.

I gotta tell you, that was a particularly difficult discipline. I think we're primed, maybe even

convinced not to see that good breakthrough. Terrifying headlines are way more interesting than feel-good stories, but dear Lord, do we need those feel-good stories!

Looking for all that good has been so hard that I'm trying to keep at it. It's giving me life, and it's pushing me to be better. And I think it's hard because it goes against some part of my nature, or at least, it goes against something deeply ingrained. My default is an eye for the negative, and though that is heavy, there's a comfort to the familiarity.

But all this looking for life and good and help, it's difficult. I'm much happier, but every instance feels foreign. And I think that's a brutal commentary on our world. We are primed to take note of the bad, which leads us to look for the bad, which leads us to find the bad. Meanwhile, the good putters along, changing the world unseen.

I don't know about y'all, but I need that change. We need to see it, we need to hear about it, and we need to feel it deep in our bones. And once it's in our bones, maybe we can make it real here, too.

—Brooks+

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Sabbath Book

Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now by Walter Brueggemann

Recommended by the Rev. Molly Payne-Hardin
Rector of Trinity Episcopal Church, Watertown

Brueggemann speaks to a 24/7 society of consumption, a society in which we live to achieve, accomplish, perform, and possess. We want more, own more, use more, eat more, and drink more. Keeping the Sabbath allows us to break this restless cycle and focus on what is truly important: God, other people, all life.

—Fr. Brooks

Join the Conversation Bible Study

In April, we're reading 2 Thessalonians and Colossians.

Where: 2 Thessalonians and Colossians are New Testament epistles.

What to Watch for: There's a lot to unpack.

References: A familiarity with Paul's letters will be helpful for understanding the epistles, but it's not necessary.

Content: Those epistles hope to instruct their readers in the "proper" way of doing church.

Lectionary: 2 Thessalonians shows up in the Lectionary three times at the end of Year C. Colossians appears about twice as often, also in Year C.

—Fr. Brooks

Fr. Brooks' Sabbatical Update

Thanks to the tireless work of our Jr. Warden, Martha Berry, we will have clergy coverage for 9 out of the 12 Sundays while Fr. Brooks is on sabbatical. Our supply clergy are The Rev. Canon Megan Castellan, The Rev. Jim Corl, and The Rev. Holly Eden. Debbie Barker and Susan Cerasano have graciously agreed to lead morning prayer for the remaining Sundays. Stay tuned for more information!

Ramshaw Scholarship

Every year, St. Thomas' invites applications from high school seniors connected to our church as they prepare for what lies ahead.

The Ramshaw Scholarship awards a one-time gift of \$750, and applicants need to answer the following questions:

1. What has St. Thomas' meant to you?
2. What are your plans for the future?

Applications are due back to the church office by April 24, 2024.

A Prayer

May we recognize ourselves and each other as temples of the Holy Spirit, worthy and meant to be cherished.

—Sojourners

Nave Gazing

Welcome to the Great Fifty Days of Easter!

That's right! Just like Christmas is a whole season, Easter is, too.

Our identity as Christians is centered on the events at the end (and new beginning) of Jesus' life. So much so, in fact, that the church decided a single day, octave, or even a full month wouldn't be enough to honor both the place of Easter in our common life or the sacrifice and miracle of Resurrection embodied by Jesus.

Put differently, of course, without Christmas, we wouldn't have Jesus. But without Easter, we probably wouldn't have Christianity. Without the Resurrection, most people would've seen Jesus as just another street preacher, even if he did stir up some trouble there at the end. Without the empty tomb, without the appearance on the shoreline, without the upper room, the garden, or the Apostles, without all that: His story would've ended just like everyone else's—with the permanence of the grave.

But the Gospels tell a different story. The Gospels tell of his miraculous defeat of death. We set aside an entire 50 days to remember those many miracles and reflect on how our own lives are changed through the events we just enacted. But why 50?

As it turns out, there's a good chance the church decided on 50 thanks to the old idea of a Year of Jubilee. In Leviticus, there's a cycle of years laid out that govern the lives of God's people. Commerce and civic life pattered along like normal most of the time, but every 7th year, all agricultural work stopped. The fields lay fallow. The people rested, and any produce that grew on its own could be harvested by the poor. It was a time for a little bit of equality and justice to soak in.

After the 7th cycle of 7 years -- in the 50th year -- they established the Year of Jubilee. At this point, the societal slate got wiped clean. They forgave debts, freed servants and slaves, and returned their privately owned land.

This pattern was a reminder that all things belong to God: from the people to the land and everything in-between. No one could own what belonged to God, and reminders of that fact were all too necessary. So, when the Jubilee arrived, all was set right again.

For what it's worth, the number seven has its significance centered on the story of Creation. It was a perfect number associated with completion and fullness. seven years was perfect and full, and seven cycles of seven years was extra-special perfect and extra-special full. The 50th year was the Sabbath of all Sabbaths.

So, when it comes time for us to celebrate the cross, the tomb, and the Risen Christ, we mirror that "trumpet blast of liberty" in the Jubilee with our own kind of Jubilee Season in Easter. Fifty Great Days of completion, fullness, and reminders of perfection. And 50 Great Days to consider what justice, equality, and a world made perfect might entail. Happy Easter!

—Fr. Brooks

Easter Message

...The love of God has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Death no longer holds its sting; death no longer is the final word. We too are invited to life everlasting. We too are invited to move beyond death to the hope of eternal life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So wherever you are on your journey and however you might believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I hope that this Easter you will befriend your fear and your amazement, that you'll enter into this gospel narrative and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the love of God that is with you...

—Bishop DeDe Duncan-Probe

Good Neighbor Grants

This February, we awarded four grants totaling almost \$200,000! Using these funds, Madison Lane will rework the wetland path to the east of their buildings, Two-by-Two Nursery School will improve outdoor programming and provide outdoor clothing for their students, and Friendship Inn will purchase and install a dishwasher. We're especially proud to award the bulk of this round of grants to the Hamilton Food Cupboard to purchase and construct a new distribution site that includes a greenhouse and a demonstration kitchen.

Good Neighbor Grants are funded by an anonymous gift specifically allocated for this kind of outreach work. For more information, please visit the Outreach page of our website:

<https://www.stthomashamilton.org/outreach>

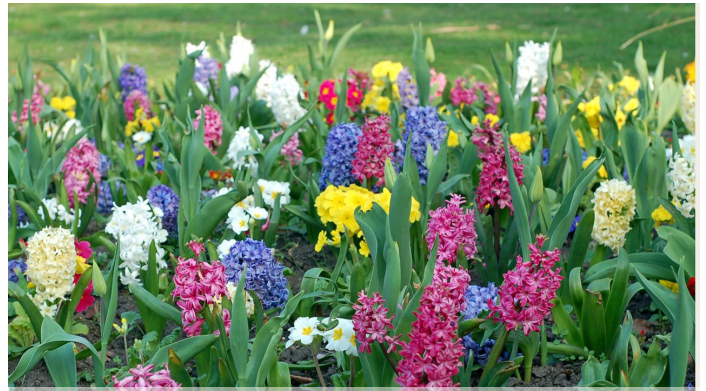
Outreach News

The Outreach Committee thanks everyone who gave so generously to our three **special Lenten Collections**, or, as Adger refers to them "Speckled Collections." We raised \$1,185 for **Community Action Partnership of Madison County**, \$2,025 for the **Hamilton Food Cupboard**, and \$280 for Episcopal Relief and Development-Middle East fund. Below are the links to each program's website.

[CAP capmadco.org](http://CAP.capmadco.org)

Hamiltonfoodcupboard.org

episcopalrelief.org/product/middle-east/



The Blessings of Spring

There are many blessings,
that each new Spring brings,
you can see it bloom about
and hear the song it sings.

With winters bleakness over,
and brighter days ahead
comes promises of new life
Springtime loves to spread.

As God unfolds the flowers,
and their buds begin to show
He sends to us the promise
His care for us, we will know.

He sends us the robin song,
with the promise to provide
that under His might wing
we have a place to hide.

He melts the snowy covers,
and sends the refreshing rain
sprinkling us with His grace
we have a place to hide.

God has given to all His Son,
to shed upon us a new light
and the real blessing of Spring
is to keep Jesus in your sight!

—Deborah Ann Belka,

<https://poetrybydeborahann.wordpress.com>

Upcoming Events

April 26, 7 PM: Friday Night Lights Open Mic

May 12: Gospel Eucharist & Fr. Brooks' last Sunday before sabbatical

May 16: No Bible Study

May 23: Bible Study with Fr. Steve

August 12: Fr. Brooks returns from sabbatical

Hamilton Ecumenical Youth Group (HEY)

HEY is a group of 6th through 12th graders from the various churches in and around our village. When HEY comes up in the calendar, clergy and students gather for food, games, and a spiritual element to the evening. If that last part's a little scary, here are some examples of things we've talked about: Jesus would love trick-or-treating, St. Nick's and Mother Mary's record in boxing matches, and the connection between Fortnite and King David. As we're pulling this great group back together, dates aren't set in stone just yet so keep your eyes open for upcoming HEY days!

A Blessing for When There's No Cure for Being Human

Come help us in our humanity. Help us enjoy all the beauty that is here, the sweetness that comes to us unbidden. The light that gives us eyes to see. It's not all up to us, thank heaven.

—Kate Bowler, *There's No Cure for Being Human*

New Life, Stronger Than Before

...Resurrection testifies to the metamorphosis of the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith. It is about coming to grips with the transformed and transforming presence of Christ then, now, and always. Once that happens, life is never again the same. Life begins anew.

To say, "I believe in Jesus Christ...who rose from the dead," then, is to say I believe that the Resurrection goes on and on and on forever. Every time Jesus rises in our own hearts in new ways, the Resurrection happens again. Every time we see Jesus where we did not recognize him before—in the faces of the poor, in the love of the unloved in the revelatory moments of life, Jesus rises anew. But that is not all. The real proof of the Resurrection lies not in the transformation of Jesus alone, but the transformation awaiting us who accept it...

—from *In Search of Belief* by Joan Chittister

On the Lighter Side

"My goodness, Roberta, they're just adorable ... And what precious Easter outfits!"



Easter Sunday
The Rev. Brooks Cato
March 31, 2024

Happy Easter!

Y'all sure do clean up nice. The days of sugar, long church, sugar, egg hunts, sugar, and hours laying on the couch with a groaning belly, those were the days. Easter was stubborn cowlicks and ironed shirts and baskets full of plastic grass and chocolate bunnies eaten ears first. I love those memories, but, as you might've guessed, Easter's shifted for me. I'll still eat enough sugar to get a bellyache, but all that Easter used to be has taken to singing backup for the headliner. That's Jesus. Coming back from the grave, he's done the impossible. It's the women who find him, or don't. He's not where they laid him, and that doesn't make a lick of sense. The dead stay dead, but Jesus is gone. Was it grave robbers? The chief priest? The Romans?

There's several versions of this story, but Mark's might be my favorite. In all the others, there's the empty tomb, and then the story wraps up as neat as a Faberge egg. Jesus surprises his followers, the story resolves, and they all lived happily ever after. Well, kinda. But in Mark, the original story stops right where we did today. "They went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." I gotta be honest, that feels appropriate. We know the story well enough that we expect the tomb to be empty. But for them, they'd never seen this before. The dead refusing to stay dead's a horrifying thought. No wonder they're seized by terror. I would be. And I actually love that Mark doesn't try to fix that fear. He leaves us there wondering what to do next. We've set aside the sugar, the egg hunts, the well-trod story, and all we're left with is a grave emptied of its dread contents and fear rising in our bellies.

Years after Jesus' death, years after the tomb lay empty the fear didn't go away. In time, they may've begun to understand what happened, but their everyday lives looked mostly the same. Followers of Jesus still had to be careful, and Rome still weighed heavy. By the year 70, tensions grew so hot in the area that the Romans crushed Jerusalem. The people fought back, sometimes admirably, but in the end, they were brutally brought to heel. The ruling Romans then placed a

massive statue of an eagle—the symbol of the empire's conquering legion—they tore down the temple and stacked a statue of an eagle where the altar used to be. The message was clear: Rome is greater than your God. Now, Rome's pretty much always the bad guy in scripture. Before them, the Greeks were bad. Before them, it was the Babylonians. Before them, the Egyptians. Anytime there's a ruling power, God's people are at odds with them. Why? Well, it's not just about self-governance. It's about justice, freedom, dignity, self-determination, and the ability to worship who you want like you want. But when Rome (and all those others before them) conquered, they went for the religious jugular. Throughout scripture, there's a running theme of resisting the creeping powers that be in exchange for serving the most vulnerable in society, whoever that may be. Lepers, widows, orphans, and the poor get special attention. The ones that are never in the right? Empires. No matter how much they try to wrap themselves in glory or mislead the people, those wolves in sheep's clothing always get exposed and always lose. It'd be great if the world was that straightforward, but most of the time we're like those folks staring at the gaping tomb, terrified of what may come.

Did y'all see the hubbub last week about this new Bible coming out? I don't think it's a coincidence that last week was Holy Week. It was supposed to be the most sacred stretch of days, turning a laser focus onto the last days of Jesus before the empire tortured that peaceful man to death. But smack in the middle of all that, this thing appeared. Called the "God Bless the USA Bible," it contains the King James translation, the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, and the lyrics to Lee Greenwood's Christian Nationalist anthem, "God Bless the USA." As if that wasn't bad enough, the cover features an embossed American flag wrapping around the sacred text.

Now, you may be wondering why this is a problem. Oh buddy, I promised the choir I wouldn't go longer than a couple hours preaching this morning, so I'll try to keep it brief. Where to start? Well, for one thing, God did not bless the USA, at least, God did not bless this nation anymore than any other. Putting all those distinctly American documents in with the Bible suggests that the Founders wanted this to be a Christian nation; they patently did not. It also elevates secular documents to the level of the sacred. And

y'all, much as I like most of those ideals, they ain't scripture. On the off chance you need the reminder, when our scriptures were written, the USA didn't exist. The USA doesn't show up in scripture, but, if it did, it wouldn't be the Promised Land. It'd be Rome. Or Babylon. Or Egypt. It sure wouldn't be a tiny backwater struggling to survive. It'd be the boot on that backwater's neck. I know, our history's a mixed bag. There are lots of good things we can point to. It's fine to be patriotic; it's fine to love where you're from. But it's not fine to ignore inconvenient evils in order to feel better about our past or, if we're honest, our present.

Let me come at this a little differently. Let's step back and try a somewhat anachronistic thought experiment. Rewind to the year 70. After decades of resisting, Rome's overcome your defenses. You've lost kith and kin to their sword, your place of worship is gone, you're afraid to leave the house on the decent chance you'd run into a centurion that woke up on the wrong side of the bed. When you finally do work up the courage to take a walk and see what remains, a massive, shining eagle stands proud where your God once did. And then the emperor steps out of the shadows, hands you a Bible with his toga wrapped around it, and says, "It's ok. We're on the same side here." Just 'cause it's a Bible doesn't make it right. It makes it a mockery.

That's what we're talking about here. It may be an America problem, it may be bigger than that. But it's our problem now. It's a distraction from what Christianity's about, and that's our unwavering dedication to speak truth to power. Not what power wants to hear, but the real truth. And the truth we speak isn't meant to rule the land, it doesn't even claim a flag. (I realize, for what it's worth, that I'm preaching all of this in front of a flag for the country and a flag for the church. Perhaps neither is appropriate.) The truth we speak calls all of us. We seek justice and peace and defend the dignity of every human being. We're called to the places where those things fail. We feed the hungry. We tend to the sick. We visit the imprisoned. We embrace the foreigner. We love the least lovable neighbors. We house the poor. I've even heard it half-jokingly said that Jesus himself offered free healthcare! And in case you think I'm making this stuff up, start looking at stained glass when you go into churches. My seminary has a depiction of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who tried to bring down the Nazi regime. A church I served down South depicts Jesus claiming his peaceful reign in place of Roman Centurions sleeping alongside

American Soldiers. Shoot, that window right there, that woman risked the wrath of a king to feed the poor. Wrap your Bible in that! 'cause if you're brown or poor or queer, a Bible wrapped in the American Flag probably isn't meant for you.

I don't know, the news about that American Bible, at first I rolled my eyes. Then I got mad. I've worked my way through most of the stages of grief but I just can't accept it. I don't think we should. We're staring at a new reality that moves so fast we can't keep up. Y'all, I feel a lot like those women standing before the empty tomb. I want a neat conclusion to this story. I want the good guys to win. I want empires to crumble and the oppressed to breathe free. But instead we're here, watching our homeland teeter on the edge of self-destruction. There's a whole swath of Christianity that needs to be reminded of what Christianity's really about, and they're growing fast. They're growing so fast and are so loud that the long-standing teachings of Christianity are starting to sound made up to too many ears. Did you know, for example, that the Bible explicitly prohibits the rich from owning more than one house? Sure does. It also says that, when all things are made right, they're gonna be ground to dust while the poor occupy their many homes instead. That's orthodoxy. Whatever's unfolding out there is madness, cherry picked and wrapped in the flag. Do not conflate the two.

Now, in a short moment, we're going to baptize someone dear to this congregation. Genesis, I'm in awe of your decision. I was baptized as a kid. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't understand the promises made on my behalf. I got to grow into them as I grew into this world. But you? You're choosing the hard path. You're choosing to step into that open tomb and stand before the weight of empires. But you're not alone. There's quite a few of us standing there already, and we need you at our side. It's a brave promise you make today. And for the rest of us, we're not just watching her. We're making promises, too. Promises to support Genesis, sure, but also promises to resist the evils of this world and promises to love those crushed by them. It is no insignificant thing we do today. With one little splash, we change the world. Or at least we hope to. Because we don't know how this ends, not yet. We may be afraid. We may feel like there's nothing but emptiness where faith once lay. But Easter makes a different claim. Today, our faith is risen and with it, stubborn hope blossoms.

Easter Sunday Guest March 31, 2024

Fr. Brooks had a “guest assistant” on Easter Sunday! Cillian, Leah Schmitt’s son, happily joined Fr. Brooks as he gave his sermon.

Photo credit: Jana Laxa



Let’s Scrabble!

When: Tuesdays from 5-8 pm beginning April 9

Where: St. Thomas' Parish Hall

What to bring: \$5 to cover club expenses, Scrabble board, tiles, and racks if you got 'em.

Hope to see you there!

Make a Donation Online

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 in the “Gift note/designation” line be sure to type pledge, deficit appeal, or wherever you’d like your donation to apply.

Scripture Lesson

for lo, the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

—Song of Solomon 2:11-12

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.

Still Me: Accepting Alzheimer's Without Losing Yourself

Rebecca Chopp, Colgate University's 15th president, was on campus for the Arts, Creativity, and Innovation Weekend to discuss her book, *Still Me: Accepting Alzheimer's Without Losing Yourself* with Douglas Johnson, dean of academic and curricular affairs; William R. Kenan Jr., professor of psychological and brain sciences, and Ellen Kraly, professor of geography and environmental studies, emerita.

Chopp received her B.A. from Kansas Wesleyan University, a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from St. Paul School of Theology and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Her scholarship centers on religion and American culture. After Colgate, she became President of Swarthmore and then Chancellor at University of Denver. She retired in 2019 after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Since then she helped launch Voices for Alzheimer's, an advocacy group, with Phil Gutis, wrote her book *Still Me* and gave a TED talk about her journey of living well with Alzheimer's. Rebecca sits on the Board of the Colorado Alzheimer's Association and joined the Early Stage Advisory Board of the Alzheimer's Association of America in 2023.

Rebecca Chopp never expected a routine annual checkup to uncover symptoms that ultimately revealed she has early-stage Alzheimer's. After retiring in 2019 as the 18th and first female chancellor of the University of Denver, she became an Alzheimer's activist and educator. She co-founded Voices of Alzheimer's and today serves on the board of the national Alzheimer's Association. She is a frequent speaker and writer on timely diagnosis, research for a cure, access and affordability of drugs, and lifestyle intervention for those with Alzheimer's.

Before Chopp's diagnosis, she was a widely published author and editor, an ordained minister, and a renowned academic in the fields of education, philosophy, religion and feminism. Prior to leading the University of Denver, she was president of Swarthmore College and Colgate University. Earlier in her career she taught at

Candler School of Theology at Emory University, served as provost at Emory, and as a dean at Yale. Since retiring, Chopp enjoys painting classical portraits and abstracts, hiking with her dog, reading, and spending time with family and friends.

MFF Publishing is proud to support *Still Me*. This breakthrough book, Chopp's fifth, is about how patients can live well and find joy after an Alzheimer's diagnosis is a must-read, not only for patients but also for family members, healthcare professionals and anyone interested in maintaining a healthy brain as they age. The book was so eagerly anticipated that it became an Amazon best-seller during the pre-sale period!

Copies of her book are available in the Colgate Bookstore and online.

<https://www.amazon.com/Still-Me-Accepting-Alzheimers-Yourself-ebook/dp/B0CT5YGY4Y?nodl=1&dplnkId=21f6641f-d9de-40d0-8ddc-788add598d4b>

T-Shirts for Sale



St. Thomas' T-shirts are available in the office. Pay what you can or we're now asking \$10. Feeling generous? Offset someone else's cost at another \$10! **Available sizes:** Adult S-XXL

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church

Vestry Minutes

February 25, 2024

Present: Susan Beattie, Martha Berry, John Bowen, Brooks Cato (presiding), Maureen Ghent, Connie Harsh, Kerry Linden, John Orr, Anne Perring, Jane Welsh

Absent: Wynn Egginton, Valerie Morkevicius, Rose Novak

Call to Order

The meeting began at 11:40 a.m. in the parish hall. Maureen Ghent led the opening prayer.

Clerk's Report

The minutes of the January 28th vestry meeting were approved as submitted. (Moved by Jane Welsh; seconded by Martha Berry.)

Treasurer's Report

John Bowen submitted the following report to the vestry members:

"I did not circulate a Treasurer's Report data sheet due to a few lingering errors from the new year transition. I will send as soon as those corrections are made. There were no unusual expenses or activity in the accounts except for the transfer of the large and generous Schapp bequest into the checking account. Disposition of those funds will be discussed later in the meeting. The Balance Sheet, which was circulated, shows continued stability.

The Parochial Report has been completed and is submitted to the Vestry today.

Giving Statements for the year 2023 were distributed.

The annual audit, under a revised format, will be conducted in coming months. This year we will have an outside review which is now required every two years."

John Orr asked whether the end-of-year statements had gone out. John Bowen replied that they had. John Orr stated that he hadn't received his. John Bowen replied that a statement would be printed out for him.

Susan Beattie moved that the Treasurer's Report be received as submitted; Jane Welsh seconded the motion. The Report was received unanimously.

Rector's Report

Brooks Cato noted that he particularly wanted to make two points. First, a new AA group will be starting at St. Thomas'. They will meet on Sunday afternoons at 3:00 pm in the Unicorn Suite. This will bolster the other groups that already meet on weekday evenings at the Baptist Church and at Colgate University. Second, Brooks talked about what a good time he had filling out the parochial report this year, in part because our attendance is so stable; and it is very nearly back to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, it is difficult to register exactly how stable Zoom attendance is. At the moment this seems to be around 19 persons on a Sunday. One reason it has risen is because Cathy Lamphier and Mia Martineau visit Nan Schmitt to watch the service together, and some other folks who live nearby are joining them. This is a lovely addition to our Zoom community.

Wardens' Report

Jane Welsh and Martha Berry had nothing to add at this point in the meeting.

Commission Reports

- *Buildings (Condition Report from Crawford & Stearns):* Brooks Cato reported that, thankfully, although the report mentioned many elements of our church, parish hall, and rectory that will need to be addressed in the future, nothing is pressing. The report, which is lengthy, will take some time to digest. Jane Welsh commented that it is incredibly thorough. She thought that the photos of the church are breathtaking and wondered whether we could procure copies of them so that we could use them for publicity and perhaps in other ways. Brooks commented that although vestry members had received the entire report by e-file, there were two hard copies in circulation that should come back to the office in the event that someone wants to borrow a hard copy.
- *Budget & Finance:* The vestry needed to pass a resolution to move the funds from the Schapp Bequest (currently located in the NBT checking account) into the UIF Historic Preservation Account. (At a previous meeting the vestry voted to take **\$13,468** from the original **\$200,000**, so the vestry was moving **\$186,532**.) The resolution

read: “Be it resolved on this 25th day of February, 2024, that at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Vestry of St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church, the Vestry approved the transfer of **\$186,532** from the NBT checking account to the UIF Historic Preservation Account. And be it further resolved that the aforementioned funds be earmarked for the Capital Maintenance Fund as previously designated by the Vestry.” The resolution was moved by Susan Beattie; seconded by Maureen Ghent. The resolution carried unanimously.

Old Business

- *Safe Church:* Anne Perring continues to monitor the status of those few who are still needing to complete the program.
- *1835 Bible Display Case:* There is no new information to report.
- *Sabbatical 2024:* Brooks Cato shared a few details of his plans for sabbatical with vestry members, which include attending a training program to learn how to build dry walls, going to his 20th high school reunion, and joining family members on a trip to Montreal for a celebration of his sister’s graduation for her Master’s degree. (Many congratulations!) Martha Berry, who has been moving mountains to find supply clergy, was pleased to inform the vestry that all but three Sundays have coverage. She will continue to see whether the remaining vacancies can be filled.

New Business

- *Rectory Shower Leak:* During the January vestry meeting Brooks Cato explained that the upstairs shower in the rectory had developed a leak. Aaron Payne had been called to examine the situation and he submitted an estimate of **\$1,000** (which he approximated on the high side in case he discovered additional problems as he replaced the valves and piping that are specified in the estimates). The vestry had asked for a second estimate which would cover an entire tub and shower replacement and this came in at **\$6,940**. Now, in light of the building report (just received) by Crawford & Stearns vestry members thought there might be some reason to think about the pipes in the bathroom more generally. The vestry discussed various options. They agreed that, in

the end, it probably made sense to do the work properly now, even if it meant a large investment than the original estimate. John Orr suggested that the vestry should look at an estimate for the rest of the bathroom (in addition to the tub and shower). The vestry signaled its formal approval of the estimate for **\$6940** to replace the tub and shower (moved by Maureen Ghent; seconded by Susan Beattie; the motion carried). They also agreed to look at an estimate for the rest of the bathroom at the March meeting.

- *Good Neighbor Grants:* The committee received five proposals and recommended four of them for vestry approval. (The fifth was turned down because it was outside of the geographical area covered by the grants.) The projects approved by the vestry by vote were as follows:

1. Hamilton Food Cupboard: toward the construction of a new building, **\$150,000**
2. Two by Two Nursery: to improve the outdoor area and for children’s clothing, **\$26,600**
3. Friendship Inn: for the purchase and installation of a commercial dishwasher, **\$15,137**
4. (+ additional installation costs if justified)
5. Madison Lane: for trail repairs from damage done through natural causes, **\$7,500**

Each grant was voted on separately, as follows:

#1 (Moved by Jane Welsh, seconded by Anne Perring; motion carried.)

#2 (Moved by Susan Beattie, seconded by Jane Welsh; motion carried)

#3 (Moved by Anne Perring, seconded by Jane Welsh; motion carried)

#4 (Moved by Maureen Ghent; seconded by John Orr; motion carried)

The total amount recommended by the Good Neighbor Fund and approved by the vestry was **\$199,237**. Additionally, the vestry approved the allocation of **\$7,500** for Outreach (approved at the December, 2023 meeting). The final motion, moved by John Orr and seconded by Susan Beattie, read:

Continued from Page 11

“Be it resolved, on the 25th day of February, 2024, that at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Vestry of St. Thomas’ Church, the Vestry approved the transfer of **\$206,737** from the MML Good Neighbor Fund to the NBT checking account to be distributed as follows:

\$150,000 to the Hamilton Food Cupboard

\$26,600 to the Two by Two Nursery School

\$15,137 to Friendship Inn

\$7,500 to Madison Lane

\$7,500 to remain in St. Thomas’ NBT Checking Account.”

- *Parochial Report:* Brooks Cato explained how the form for filing the report has evolved over time. The narrative recorded across the form is really a means of showing how the parish is working in all areas. John Bowen noted that it really is an impressive form, despite the fact that filling it out presents challenges. John Orr moved that the vestry accept the report as submitted; Maureen Ghent seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.

Core Priorities: Housing and Social Service Needs

Brooks Cato opened the discussion by offering a brief overview of where St. Thomas’ fits in in terms of housing and as a “sanctuary” in Hamilton. He noted the limited options in Southern Madison County. Currently, the parish hall doesn’t offer a place where people can sleep comfortably and safely. There isn’t a lock on the outside door. There are other places within social services that St. Thomas’ works with, and the church is doing everything that we can do at the moment; however, when people need help they tend to come to St. Thomas’. John Orr asked for further clarification of the term “sanctuary,” as perhaps on the legal designation of the term. Brooks Cato explained that it refers, most generally, to church property and to the buildings standing within the church property. He went on to explain further that the social work system is large. Although we might want to help, one of the problems we face is that there are many cracks in the system that make it difficult to navigate for everyone. John Orr wondered whether there were other churches within the diocese that were able to do more for unhoused people at the moment and whether speaking to them might assist us in considering next steps. Brooks responded that while it is not possible now, it would be good to have a social worker on staff. Perhaps even having a social worker who would hold

office hours at St. Thomas’ one day a week would be a very useful addition. Connie Harsh noted that Brooks had referred to “cracks” in the system. Would it be possible to enumerate some of them? Perhaps St. Thomas’s could decide how to address some of these. Brooks Cato extended his explanation. In Little Rock, Arkansas, men had difficulties finding housing. Here, the situation is similar. Women and women with children have a much easier time finding housing. Yet many organizations don’t want to work with unhoused men. More needs to be done. Also, typically the discretionary fund is constituted by donations that come in through funeral services and so on, but what’s in there isn’t enough to cover what it now occurring. Susan Beattie suggested that perhaps this need should be made known more widely to the parish. If people knew about such a need they could support it. Maureen Ghent commented that perhaps we could explore a collaboration with other churches. Brooks agreed, or with other organizations, although some are selective about access to care. Susan Beattie then asked, “Is it something that can be dealt with one thing at a time?” Brooks replied in the affirmative; he thought so. John Orr asked if it wouldn’t be useful to have a list of possibilities—immediate and long-term—that the vestry could consider to lend more structure to the conversation. Brooks Cato agreed. He ended the discussion by adding that if he reached out to other organizations, perhaps he could also discover more and then bring all this back to the vestry for the next meeting. Vestry members stated that they would wait until the next discussion, hopefully to deepen their understanding of the issues at hand.

- *Announcements:* Announcements of importance to the parish were made.
- *Next meeting:* Given the way holy days fall next vestry meeting will be on April 7th, 2024.
- *Prayer Leader:* Kerry Linden offered to lead prayer at the opening of the next vestry meeting.

At this point Susan Beattie moved to conclude the meeting; Anne Perring seconded. The meeting ended at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Cerasano, Clerk

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.



Coffee Hour Host

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, and you just bring some goodies! If you have any questions, you can reach out to Leah in the office.

Worth Repeating

There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.

—Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962)

On the Lighter Side



A Prayer

Lord, break down the walls we have built around our hearts. Give us hearts of flesh that beat to the rhythms of justice.

—Sojourners

AA Meetings at St. Thomas'

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church is pleased to host an **open** meeting of Alcoholic Anonymous.

Group Name: 12 ½ Group of AA

Place: St. Thomas' Parish House, Godly Play Room. (Building behind the church, first room on the right).

Time: Sunday's at 3:00 PM



UPCOMING EVENTS

Hello April

**ADULT LINE DANCE NIGHT TBA
\$10 ADMIN**

**ADULT BUTT-ERFLY PAINT&SIP
APRIL 27 4-6 PM**

**\$65 OR \$60 IF YOU SIGN UP WITH A FRIEND
INCLUDES ALL MATERIALS, TUMBLER CUP,
INSTRUCTIONS, A SPICY DANCE LESSON, &
GOODIES TO SHARE. BYOBOTTLE**

**ANNUAL DANCE RECITAL JUNE 16, 2 PM
SHERBURNE-EARLVILLE HS AUDITORIUM
\$5 ADMIN**

CONTACT FOR DETAILS ON EVENTS: SCHMITTDANCE@GMAIL.COM

Happening in the Area: AA Meetings in Hamilton, NY

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
Sunday, 3:00 PM	<u>12 ½ Group of AA</u>	<u>St. Thomas' Parish House.</u> First door on the right	12 ½ Madison Street	Hamilton

Prayers of the People

As of April 1st

For those in need: Edith Allen, Leslie Andersen, Aster Dinku, Andrea Duncan-Tanner, Joan Fales, Justin Fitzgerald, Barbara Frost, Lisa Gee and her children, Kaia Harding, Amanda Harlan, John Hart, Nancy Heck, John Hull, Christopher Johnson, Angela Jones, Sandra Jones, Kerry Linden, Deb Moudarres, Pat Osowski, Wilma Peters, Joe Rupp, Candace Schult, Mark Spearing, Patricia Tayntor, Ed Vantine, Chris Warren, Deb Willis, Joan Winkler, Pavla Zakova-Laney, Deb, Bill, & their family, Jerry & Roseann Fitzgerald, Anthony & Vincent Pacillo, William & Elena Muenckler, Pat & Damon Simonds, Melanie & Michael Clough, Charles & Susan, Cynthia & her family, the Schmitt Family, Angela, Brian, David, Diane, Gordon, James, Jane, Janice, Jim, Mary, Nick, Paula, Paul, Scot, Brice, Cassie, Charles, Dan, Grace, Kate, Nicole, Ryan, Travis, Jordan, Andrea, Russ, Evelyn, Ashley, and Taylor.

For the Departed: Lee MacDuffie, Nancy Schmitt, Marlene Houck, Emily O. Marshall.



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

April Thanksgivings

Birthdays: Brendon Fountain (04/01), Virginia Sakal (04/01), Andrew Fountain (04/03), Leigh Yardley (04/05), Jaxon Keller (04/05), Everett Egginton (04/06), Michael Keller (04/06), John Keller (04/08), Karen Marriam (04/09), Elizabeth Dromgold Bouk (04/10), Sophia Balakian (04/15), Nora Dakosty (04/15), Kate Foss (04/17), Kevin Schult (04/18), Barbara Bowen (04/21), Jeffrey Monty (04/21), Samuel Williams (04/21), Martin Michelson (04/22), Michael Sitts (04/23).

Baptism Anniversaries: Loxie Davie (04), 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), Isadora Catania (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 Strohmeyer (04/01), Barbara & John Bowem (04/04), Maureen & Chuck Fox (04/14), Jana Laxa & David Sturges (04/19).

A Prayer

We will not lose hope, even as we live in this weary world. For we have faith in your goodness, God, and conviction in your power.

—Sojourners

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Scheduled to Serve
April 2024

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

315-824-1745
 stchurch@cnymail.com
 stchurchonline.org

DATE	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOM-
APRIL 7	OT Debbie Barker NT Martha Berry	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Susan Beattie	Sally Orr	Linda Jenks
APRIL 14	OT Maureen Fox NT Rose Novak	Susan Cerasano	Ed Page	Emily HH	Sally Orr	Linda Jenks
APRIL 21	OT John Orr NT Ellie Weyer	Maureen Ghent	Ed Page	Ellie Weyer	Sally Orr	Linda Jenks
APRIL 28	OT Lynn Staley NT Jane Welsh	Wynn Egginton	Ed Page	Ellie Weyer	Sally Orr	Linda Jenks



Qidings
April 2024

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