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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

Just a few months ago, St. Thomas' took a little bit of a gamble when we decided to invest more deliberately in our Youth Christian Education Program. Leah, Zja'kyla, Abby, and I lead classes every Sunday during the school year with the Teen Class meeting before services and the combined Nursery and Godly Play classroom during the first half of the services. It's always fun to see all these kids around the church, and I'm encouraged by the growth we're already seeing each week. In the second half of this year, we've already had at least seven new children fill our classes! Of course, with the kids comes the rest of the family, too, and we're just as excited to welcome all those new folks to our community.



I'm losing count of the number of phone calls and emails we receive in the office asking us the same two questions: 1) Do we have a children's program? and 2) Are we a growing church? Thanks to that gamble, we can confidently say "yes" to both! In other words, we're offering what folks are looking for. I'm hopeful we can keep this going!

St. Thomas' is growing healthier by the day. The moment all those kids come pouring back into the church around the Peace is quickly becoming my favorite part of the service. I love the sounds of life filling our church, and it's a beautiful thing to see nonagenarians and

yearlings (and everyone in-between) greeting each other in the name of God.

I've also really come to love the space St. Thomas' fills as a sort of surrogate family structure in Hamilton. This can be such a transient community, and my heart warms when I learn one of y'all has adopted a Colgate student, a new family, a cooing baby, or even a transplanted priest as one of your own.

These are just a couple out of a thousand ways St. Thomas' loves God and loves neighbor, and it is a beautiful thing to behold. Keep on loving those kids and the wonderful

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folks that bring 'em! And if you are one of the amazing people that brings your kids, thank you! We're a fuller depiction of the image of God because of you and yours.

So, for continued growth and vitality, thanks be to God!

—Brooks+



Sabbath Book

Out of Solitude by Henri Nouwen

This collection of meditations and sermons encourages us to reflect on the Christian life both in the church and in our regular lives. On a sentimental note, the book was a favorite of the Rev. Elizabeth Gillett, and she gave Fr. Brooks a copy when he arrived at St. Thomas'!

—Fr. Brooks

Join the Conversation Bible Study

In December and January, we're reading Romans and Proverbs.

Where: Romans is the sixth book of the New Testament. Proverbs is right after the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament.

What to Watch for: Romans is Paul's latest and longest letter. Proverbs is one of the most unique books of scripture.

References: In Romans, Paul appeals to both a Greek and Hebrew audience. Proverbs pulls on the Wisdom tradition, which puts heavy emphasis on the Spirit of God.

Content: Romans presents Paul at his most theologically and rhetorically mature. Proverbs views the world as fairly black and white and assumes a life well lived is a faithful one.

Lectionary: Romans provides many of our readings in Year A, but only Chapter 8 gets read in full. Proverbs appears in the Lectionary rarely: Four times in the Summer of Year B and twice in the Summer of Year C. There is also an option to read from Proverbs at the Easter Vigil.

—Fr. Brooks

Sabbatical Announcement

After seven years at St. Thomas', Fr. Brooks will be taking a sabbatical in the Summer of 2024. Stay tuned for more to come, including information about his plans, pastoral coverage at St. Thomas', and the beginning and end dates.

Nave Gazing

It's always a shame when the calendar forgets to check with me before putting a year's worth of days in order. If I had my way, the Gregorian calendar and the Liturgical calendar would work together. As it is, they don't always make life easier.

This Advent and Christmas are timed especially trickily. We always observe four Sundays of Advent beginning four Sundays before Christmas Day, and -- this should come as no surprise -- Christmas Day is always December 25th. This year we'll have the observance of the Fourth Sunday of Advent on the morning of December 24th and Christmas Eve that same evening. It'll be a chock-full day of Jesus and will surely ask a whole lot out of our volunteers. Sometimes it's tough welcoming Christ into the world.

As tough as this disagreeable collision of calendars can be, I appreciate how the squeeze emphasizes our theology. See, one of the primary aspects of Advent is the waiting required. When Christmas Day falls further from that last Sunday of Advent, the emphasis on sacred patience is there, but when it falls on Monday (with Christmas Eve on Sunday) the waiting becomes especially difficult. Christmas is so close at 10:00 am on December 24th you can almost touch it, and if you can almost touch it, it's tempting to stretch a little more and grab hold early. It takes a special amount of discipline to keep on waiting those last few hours before the change happens.

Think of it this way: Imagine baking brownies, and when the timer gets to two minutes remaining, you're so close! What could it possibly hurt to go ahead and take 'em out early? Much as I love an extra gooey brownie, the batch won't actually be ready. That transition from Advent IV to Christmas Eve is the same. It'll still be a wonderful celebration if you jump ahead, but the full richness of the holiday is magnified by a little extra time, a little extra waiting, and a little extra anticipation.

—Fr. Brooks



Interfaith Holiday Project

Specifically requesting donations of shampoo, conditioner, bodywash, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and Lego sets.

You can also make a monetary donation. All donations can be sent to Interfaith Holiday Project, P. O. Box 134, Hamilton, NY 13346. All donations are tax deductible. Your contribution makes it possible for this work to continue, and because we are all volunteers, every penny goes directly to the families in need. Please let Lauren Marshall know if you are interested in helping our local community again this holiday season. We need all the donations by Wednesday, December 6. Lauren is happy to collect all the items and store them until distribution.

Contact Lauren at: 315-228-6960

www.colgatebookstore.com

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.

**Sermon for the Twenty-fourth
Sunday After Pentecost:
Matthew 25:1-13**

November 12, 2023
The Rev. Brooks Cato

As I was getting ready to preach this morning, I stumbled on an old spreadsheet, the one Becca and I used to plan our wedding. It was fun to relive the guest list and reception menu, but what stuck out was the huge pile of work that went into that day. I guess I'd forgotten what it took. People gathered from all over the country, some from even farther. We organized the right number of beds for the right number of guests. We even made sure no previously married couples got rooms next to their exes.

But my favorite story about preparing for that wedding came from my own Bachelor of Arts brain. I decided to fold 1,000 paper cranes to hang all around the venue. My sister found a frayed old dictionary with 1,400 tea stained pages. I figured one crane per page. At that rate, I could mess up a few times and still end up with plenty. So, I started folding months ahead of time. Sometimes I tossed out a square when a dictionary word wouldn't make the cut, like philanderer or divorcee or, since I knew I was marrying up, to settle. Once censored and folded, each delicate beauty landed in a giant Hefty bag. I finished about five days before the wedding, but I had this sneaking suspicion that something wasn't adding up. So I dumped out all those cranes and counted. I figure by now y'all with Bachelor of Science brains know where this is going. You see, a 1,400-page dictionary does not have 1,400 pieces of paper. It's only got half that 'cause they're numbered on both sides. I did not have 1,000 paper cranes give or take a few mistakes. I had 700. I was so sure I had it right, and not just right but right with some wiggle room!

Most of y'all know that I like to plan and organize well ahead of time. I figure, if I can plan diligently, then when Murphy's Law shows up and something goes wonky, I'm ready. Everything else can run itself while I focus on the doorknob that fell off, or at least find Ed so he can take care of it. Y'all, we've been planning diligently every week since the Parish Picnic back in August. Dianne, I don't have a clue how many hours you've poured into rehearsals and music selection and conversations with families. And choir, y'all are

doing an amazing job filling this place to the rafters. Altar Guild, your work's among the most visible on display at the focal point of our service, but you do your work invisibly. I wish more folks knew how much you do. Flower Children, this church is beautiful, but I'm amazed every time a new arrangement embellishes the space. Who knew it could get even prettier in here? Y'all did, of course, and you've made sure the rest of us get to enjoy it, too. Readers and Eucharistic Ministers and Ushers; Zoom workers and Sunday Schoolers and Fiddlers; Susan, and Ed, and Leah, and Barb, our services couldn't happen without you showing up and all the prep you do before you arrive.

And Parish Life, my god, you folks have gotta be beat. Millie, Linda, Joan, Gina, and all the folks whose work I never see (and the ones I do and regrettably have slipped my mind), you've kept us fed and happy and magnified joy every time we gather here. Since the end of August, Parish Life has put on our outdoor Parish Picnic, the Annual Meeting feast, the Jazz Eucharist Special Coffee Hour, and no fewer than four funeral receptions. On top of that, they served hundreds of meals at Friendship Inn and made sure we had refreshments after church every single Sunday. Every one of those events required hours of prep work, more cooking than an Army canteen, an Olympic event's worth of chair stacking, and so many gallons of coffee, it'd give a horse the shakes. I know there are folks I'm forgetting who've put in extra work this year. I apologize. Vestryfolk've stepped up, Buildings folks, and all the rest of y'all, too. Even just getting here on a Sunday can be work. The wrestling match to get the kids ready, the debate when the alarm goes off on the one day you might could sleep in, the internet wrangling when Zoom is the better option, it's all taxing, and yet y'all keep showing up. There's always something funky to make the day harder than it should be. But that's what all this preparation's for. It smoothes the way in places we anticipate need smoothin', and it leaves room to focus on the places we can't. And yet, you keep coming. Thank you.

Now, I gotta admit, looking at that "Kingdom of Heaven is like" story from Jesus, I see a lot of St. Thomas' in the first half. The folks that Jesus says have got the right of it, that's us. On our best days, we are what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. But I don't love the second bit, the part where there's folks that didn't

do their job of preparing so they're out of luck. I mean, sure, I shouldn't suffer because you forgot to bring extra lamp oil, but it still makes me sit funny. Because there's a whole lot of St. Thomas' that would rather give up their seat or split the last donut with you. Shoot, we even keep reading glasses at the back in case you forgot yours. I told you we're prepared. The truth is, I wish Jesus's parable was about helping each other so none of us miss the bridegroom's arrival. But it's not. It's about being prepared or not being prepared at your own peril. At St. Thomas', you can rely on the kindness of the stranger, but that's not the case everywhere. Here, yes, you can find a whole lot of kind people, and we'll make space for you to come back and get it right next week. But when the Kingdom of Heaven comes, we all need to be ready regardless of where we are. And what does ready look like? I don't know. I mean, if I think of yesterday and the many ways this church honored her former priest, we sure were ready. Along with the hundred people filling the pews, I'm pretty sure Jesus showed up, too. And when he did, I'm pretty sure he got the welcome he deserved. Even on that sad occasion, the Kingdom of Heaven was well prepared. I don't know if that's it. I don't know if that's enough. And "enough" is a mighty scary word. I already mentioned the enormous amount of work y'all've been doing. I think we have done enough, at least for now. And we've all earned some rest. It might even be time to turn out our lamps for a minute, or at least sneak in a nap!

Today, our Stewardship Drive comes to a close. We've heard some beautiful appeals, we've sent out letters, we've collected a few returned cards already. Even if you have sent in your cards, though, I'd like to ask y'all to do something. Take some time today and over the next few days, weeks, or months -- however long it takes -- take some time and see if you can't find a place to step into St. Thomas' a little closer. The seen and unseen volunteers' lamps are still burning bright, but even if they wouldn't admit it themselves, they could use someone fresh to tag in. Maybe you can help in the kitchen, the sacristy, the choir loft. If you're like me and are mostly devoid of marketable skills, maybe you can help stack chairs and fold bulletins. And if you're swamped right now preparing for your own obligations, that's ok. But remember us, and when your life opens some

space, maybe step in closer then. And if you just need to ride the pews for a while, that's fine. We're prepared for that, too.

Back when I was getting ready for my wedding and making basic mathematical errors, I was in a difficult spot. I had five days to fold 300 cranes, and I was fresh out of dictionary pages. I didn't know what to do, but my friends stepped up. They didn't know how they needed to be ready for the wedding, but they knew to be ready. So I sat, surrounded by people I loved, and we folded for days. One of 'em found my crossword puzzles and made cranes from those. One found colorful paper at a craft store. Another pilfered through recycling bins for discarded newspapers. We folded until our joints locked up, but you know what? We got 'em finished. And the day was gorgeous, and the cranes looked perfect, and nobody knew.

I still have some paper cranes at the house. They remind me of the marriage I entered that day, but they also bring back images of helping hands, of preparations gone wrong, and of the joy of working with people I love. I don't have any cranes from St. Thomas', but I do have you. And I have the many, many works we've done together and the beauty of preparation behind each one. Y'all, I don't know what we're preparing for, but with your faithful diligence I do know, whatever it is, when Christ shows up, he's gonna get the greeting he longs for and the love he wants for us. He's also gonna get a red welcome folder, an invitation to come back next

Pledge Cards

If you have not yet returned your pledge card, please send it in or drop it off at the office by December 7th so the Vestry can finalize the budget for 2024. If you have not received a pledge card, let us know, and we'll happily help you out!

Upcoming Events

- December 8, 7 PM:** Colgate's Lessons & Carols
- December 9:** Arts at the Palace Gala
- December 10:** Lessons & Carols at St. Thomas'
- December 17:** Vestry Meeting & Ugly Sweater Decorating Party
- December 24, 10 AM:** Advent IV Service
- 4:15 PM:** Caroling
- 4:30 PM:** Christmas Eve Service
- December 25, 10 AM:** Morning Prayer
- December 25-29:** Office Closed

Save the Dates

- January 6:** Rehearsal for the Children's Epiphany Pageant
- January 7:** Epiphany Pageant
- January 21:** Service for Christian Unity
- January 28:** Vestry Meeting

SCHMITT DANCE STUDIO 12 EAST MAIN ST. EARLVILLE, NY

DANCE CLASSES HAVE STARTED, BUT REGISTRATION IS STILL OPEN!

Register Now!

FACEBOOK.COM/SCHMITTDANCESTUDIO
 SCHMITTDANCE@GMAIL.COM
 315-750-6040

Happening in the Area: AA Meetings in Hamilton

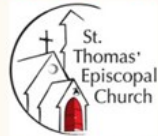
TIME	NAME	LOCATION / GROUP	ADDRESS / PLATFORM	REGION
Sunday, 7:00 PM	<u>Morrisville Serenity</u>	<u>Morrisville Serenity</u>	100 Eaton Street	Hamilton
Monday, 8:00 PM	<u>Hamilton On The Green</u>	<u>Hamilton On The Green</u>	27 Broad Street	Hamilton
Friday, 8:00 PM	<u>Hamilton On The Green</u>	<u>Hamilton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



YOU'RE INVITED!

UGLY SWEATER DECORATING PARTY

DECEMBER 17, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM



IN THE PARISH HOUSE
12 1/2 MADISON ST
HAMILTON, NY

ALL AGES ARE WELCOME
DECORATING MATERIALS PROVIDED

*BRING YOUR OWN SWEATER
*WE WILL HAVE SOME ON HAND IF YOU DON'T
HAVE ONE TO BRING

THE STAR MOVIE WILL ALSO BE PLAYING!

EYC, our Youth Group, is hosting an Ugly Sweater Decorating Party! All ages are welcome. Decorating materials will be provided. We ask that you bring your own sweater; However, we will have some on hand if you don't have one to bring. We plan to have a movie playing for extra fun! This is an event for the whole family and your friends.

Ugly sweaters can be worn to the 10 AM service on December 24th!

Donations are welcome! Any craft materials you'd like to donate for creating our "ugly" sweaters and any extra sweaters for someone who may not have one (bows, pompoms, ribbon, hot glue sticks, gems, etc.). **Donations can be dropped off to the Church office.**

Prayers of the People

As of December 4th

For those in need: Edith Allen, Leslie Andersen, Tom Bartlett, Irene Brown, Aster Dinku, Joan Fales, Don Fenner, Justin Fitzgerald, Jerry & Roseann Fitzgerald, Barbara Frost, Lisa Gee and her children, Kristen Gregory, Kaia Harding, Amanda Harlan, John Hart, Nancy Heck, Marlene Houck, Oliver Jenks, Christopher Johnson, Sandra Jones, Kerry Linden, Patrick McGraw, Deb Moudarres, William & Elena Muenckler, Pat Osowski, Anthony & Vincent Pacillo, Joe Rupp, Candace Schult, Mark Spearing, Pat & Damon Simonds, Patricia Tayntor, Ed Vantine, Chris Warren, Deb Willis, Joan Winkler, Charles & Susan, David, Jane, Janice, Lance, Nancy, Nick, Paula, Paul, Rebecca, Scot, Vicky, Grace, Ryan, Nicole, Charles, Cassie, Dan, Kate, Brice, and Travis.

For the Departed: Samuel N. McClure, Tyler Stith.



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

December & January

Thanksgivings

Birthdays: Barbara Hicks (12/02), Brooke Speer (12/04), Rhea Muller (12/07), Sally Brackett (12/10), John Catania (12/10), Layla Hubbard (12/11), Emilija Morkevicius (12/11), Allen Schult (12/13), Deb Barker (12/17), Steve Barker (12/17), Fay Cole (12/19), Nolan Dye (12/21), Lynn Staley (12/14), Robert Maziarz (12/28), Madelyn Knapp (12/31), Stanley Dakosty (01/02), Bruce Rivington (01/05), Simon Williams (01/07), Jane Scheinman (01/09), Shannon Strohmeier (01/09), Kennedy Gilgan (01/10), Janice Frutiger (01/13), Jana Laxa (01/14), Isadora Catania (01/14), Susan Trueworthy (01/15), Sena Etefa (01/16), Linda Jenks (01/17), Melanie Martin (01/17), Taylor McDowell (01/20), Millie Franklin (01/22), Nicolas Catania (01/22), Morgan Davies (01/23), Madison DeAngelis (01/24), David Sturges (01/25), Gary Fountain (01/27), Laura Trueworthy (01/29), Brian Rivington (01/31).

Baptism Anniversaries: Edward Scheinman, Lara Scott (12/01), Michelle Landstrom (12/02), Daniel Jerome (12/03), Rebecca Hubbard (12/13), Tom Brackett (12/21), Ed Page (12/22), Susan Trueworthy (12/24), Laura Schmitt (12/24), Susan Cerasano (12/27), Helen Kababian (12/27).

Marriage Anniversaries: Robert Maziarz & Robert Weaver (12/14), Abby Palko & John Hayden (12/18), Julie & Andrew Hengst (12/19), Dee & Michael Keller (12/31).

A Quote

“Blessed are the happiness makers!”

—Henry Ward Beecher

A Prayer

Lord God, we turn our eyes to you. May we stand firm in our faith, and choose love where others choose hate.

—Sojourners

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church

Vestry Minutes

October 22, 2023

Present: Susan Beattie, Martha Berry, John Bowen, Brooks Cato (presiding), Wynn Egginton, Connie Harsh, Kerry Linden, Valerie Morkevicius, Rose Novak, John Orr, Anne Perring, Jane Welsh

Absent: Maureen Ghent

Visiting: Sally Orr

Call to Order

The meeting began at 11:32 a.m. in the parish hall. Valerie Morkevicius led the opening prayer.

Clerk's Report

The minutes of the August 27th vestry meeting were approved as submitted. (Moved by Jane Welsh; seconded by Wynn Egginton.) There were no minutes in September because the Annual Meeting took the place of the vestry meeting.

Treasurer's Report

John Bowen submitted the following report to the vestry members:

“Finances remain stable. Pledge payments are at a healthy 93% of YTD budget and plate income is rising. There were no unexpected expenses. There was an overwhelming response to the recent gift appeal which has closed to planned budget deficit. Over the summer we withdrew **\$40,000** from the St. Thomas' Endowment Fund to cover the cash flow bulge of expenses related to the planned building maintenance and improvements of recent months. Most of those expenses have been paid. With the catch up in pledges and additional gifts, we plan to restore those funds to the Endowment before the year end.

The new Vestry was given a brief tour of Treasurer's Report and Balance Sheet documents.

In other Budget and Finance news-

Planning for the 2024 budget is underway.

The Steffenhagen Fund was created many years

ago for the benefit of St. Thomas' but was held in trust at NBT Bank out of any control or direction by the church. Neither NBT Bank nor St. Thomas' have been happy with the arrangement. After some long-awaited legal wrangling, the fund has now been released to control by St. Thomas' Church.

Land sale proceeds have been deposited with St. Thomas'." Wynn Egginton moved that the Treasurer's Report be received as submitted. Valerie Morkevicius seconded. The report was received as submitted.

Rector's Report

Brooks Cato stated that his report would be brief. He informed those present that vestry packets are in preparation for new members. When they are ready the office will notify persons involved so that they can pick them up. Next, Brooks wanted to note that from the beginning of September there have been seven deaths in the parish, as well as a greater-than-normal series of deaths across the village and the surrounding communities. These factors are influencing persons within the parish enormously. Brooks asked that all vestry members keep this in mind and in their prayers. He also brought the vestry up to date with a few ongoing small building projects. In closing, Brooks reminded vestry members of the upcoming funeral on November 11th at 10:30 for the Rev. Elizabeth Gillett who had formerly been rector of St. Thomas' Church.

Wardens' Report

Jane Welsh commented that much had been accomplished during the previous year and that she is looking forward to the upcoming year's accomplishments. Martha Berry noted that the renewed exterior of St. Thomas' Church had been featured at the diocesan convention where before-and-after photos were made available to everyone. John Orr also raised highlights of the convention, stating that the address by Catherine Meeks (author of *The Night is Long but Light Comes in the Morning*) was exceptionally good, and that Martha Berry, in her role as Chancellor, had done an outstanding job of getting all of the attendees through the maze of voting issues. Finally, he announced that St. Thomas' clerk had been voted on to the diocesan (low traffic) disciplinary committee. There had been over 170 persons attending the convention, John said.

Commission Reports

- *Stewardship:* Brooks Cato reminded vestry members that a letter needed to be mailed out to all congregants. Also, three speakers (one for each Sunday, ending on Stewardship Sunday) needed to be found, and then a group of volunteers (to help with the mailing preparation for the letter). Jane Welsh reminded everyone that another group of people will need to send out thank-you notes to those who pledge when the process has concluded. At the end of the discussion, Martha Berry, Wynn Egginton, and Jane Welsh offered to speak in church on the three consecutive Sundays. November 12th will be Stewardship Sunday.

Old Business

- *Step and Rail for Lectern:* Brooks Cato announced that an email vote, taken on September 27th-28th, approved a proposal that a set of rails and a step would be constructed to fit the area behind the ambo. It is now finished and will soon be installed, making it safer for lectors to ascend and descend the step. [Update: Brooks notified vestry members in an email of Wednesday, October 25th that the installation had been completed. Here he stated: “We have just installed a new step and railing at the lectern, which should make things a little more safe and secure up there. Rather than moving the step out of the way, if you need to adjust the step, we'll leave that to you as you approach the lectern. That'll be a little smoother and less busy. It should be easy to simply lift the stair up or lay it down without having to move it off to one side. If you do need assistance, please let Susan or me know ahead of the service. Thank you so much, and let me know how it works out!”]
- *Deficit Appeal:* Brooks Cato reported that there were 41 individuals who have already contributed to the appeal and some checks are still coming in. The response has been phenomenal. The vestry members expressed their gratitude to all who have been so generous.
- *Safe Church Training:* Anne Perring reminded vestry members that she is still the point person for this online program. She invited new members to get in touch with her so that they can get going as soon as possible.
- *1835 Bible Display Case:* Brooks Cato informed the vestry that when he had been in Bouckville looking for office furniture he had seen two

display cases that seemed appropriate for the Bible, but that each would require a separate base. He was wondering whether the vestry would perhaps be interested in empowering one of their members to look for an antique display case in Bouckville. Vestry members discussed the appropriate procedures and the monetary limit (**\$250**) that would be required for such a venture. When a likely case is found, photos will be taken and sent to vestry members for final approval.

- Connie Harsh noted that perhaps the space originally chosen for the case, at the back of the church, should be reconsidered, especially with the movement of so many persons in and out of the vesting room. She wondered whether some space in the parish hall might be better suited as a place where people could peruse the items in the case. Others agreed. Brooks Cato said that he could see this as a good choice in that the display case might become the nucleus of a small St. Thomas’ museum.

New Business

- *Good Neighbor Grant Proposals:* Brooks Cato presented three grant proposals, recommended by the Good Neighbor Grant Committee, for vestry approval. They were: the Impact Project (**\$10,600**, for a Dump Trailer to remove construction waste), the Foodbank of Central New York (**\$12,000**, for a Mobile Food Pantry), and the Fiver Children’s Foundation (**\$5,000**, for a revision, staff training, and implementation with a racial and gender equity lens of their “Whole Self” program). These are organizations that St. Thomas’ Outreach Commission has supported in the past. The total funds requested totaled **\$27,600**. Susan Beattie moved to approve all three proposals; Valerie Morkevicius seconded. The motion carried.
- *Executive Session:* Here the vestry went into Executive session to discuss an issue involving a work bonus. Following the conversation, the vestry returned to public session.
- *Core Priorities Discussion (Estate Planning, limited to 10 minutes):* Sally Orr, who has a background in fundraising, offered vestry members an overview of planned giving within

Continued from Page 10

- the context of parish communities, whereby parishioners are asked to include St. Thomas' in their estate plan. She noted that one of the reasons that she likes these kinds of gifts is because they are very loving gifts that look both forward and backward. "You can't write a check to God," she said, "but you can write a check to your church." John Orr added that, in their prior experience, this often starts with a general appeal to everybody in the parish. It doesn't have to involve only parishioners with large sums of money, he commented. Nor is it to be confused with a capital campaign. The important
- thing is to get numbers of people involved. Brooks Cato stated that he envisioned a group
- of persons getting together initially to create a packet of materials that interested parishioners could review. Brooks then reminded vestry members of the death-and-dying class that he had been part of toward the end of the COVID period. Might it be a good idea to re-run the class along with planned giving options? Some vestry members agreed that this would be very useful.

Jane Welsh, seeking clarity, wondered whether starting a planned giving program could have a negative impact on running a capital campaign in the near future. How do these two activities fit together? Sally Orr explained that these two activities aren't necessarily occurring in parallel time frames or competing with one another. Brooks Cato asked whether funds that were earmarked as part of an estate plan could be used earlier if need arises. Sally Orr thought that this seemed like an anomaly, that normally gifts earmarked as part of an estate plan are set aside only for the future. Brooks again reminded the vestry of the enormous generosity of parishioners during the recent Deficit Appeal. Martha Berry moved that the vestry should explore a planned giving program for St. Thomas' parish. Rose Novak seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

- Final announcements were made regarding upcoming events of interest to the parish, including a reminder of the funeral for Rev. Elizabeth Gillett on November 11th at 10:30 a.m.
- *Next meeting:* The next vestry meeting will be on December 3rd. (This will be the

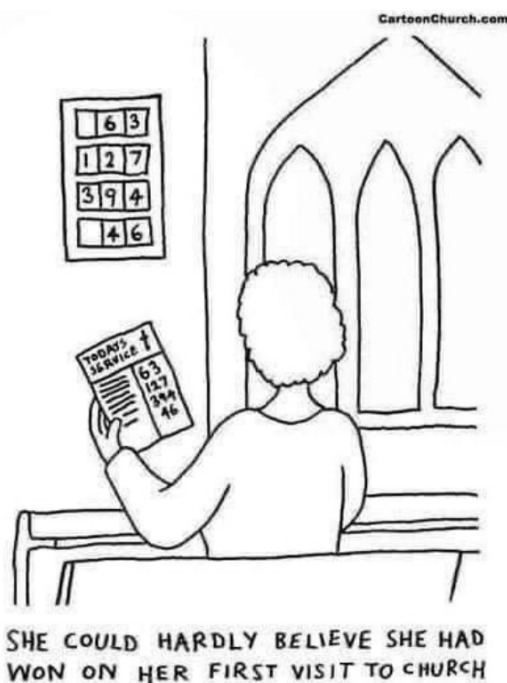
November meeting.) The December meeting will fall on December 17th.

- *Prayer Leader:* Kerry Linden offered to lead prayer at the opening of the next vestry meeting on December 3rd.

Because there was no further business Susan Beattie moved to conclude the meeting; Wynn Egginton seconded. The meeting ended at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Cerasano, Clerk

On the Lighter Side



In Memory of Teddy Engle

To those of you who knew my Uncle Ted, I wanted to reach out and share some of my thoughts with you. Ted was a dedicated member of St. Thomas. He looked forward to Sunday mornings being with people who always made him feel welcome. He truly loved God.

As children, my siblings were very fortunate to live close to our grandparents. Along with my grandparents, he frequently came to our home and would have dinner with us. He also joined us on many summer vacations. I remember that he always seemed to have these sporty cars.

Uncle Ted was a real character. He had a great sense of humor. We all remember being teased by him, but in a playful manner. Over the years, we shared many laughs.

For many years, my uncle bought and sold antiques. He shared this love with his father. I used to love seeing all the beautiful pieces he had in his home.

Gardening was something he genuinely enjoyed. He took loving care with his garden. As he became more housebound, he was still enjoying looking through the window at the beauty of the garden.

As he became more and more housebound, he became very close to my older sister, Lee Anne. He had also become close to Lee Anne's children, and grandchildren. She checked in on him and made sure that his needs were met. We all took turns calling him, every week. I loved those chats.

We all felt blessed to have him as a part of our lives. He was at my mother's home, with us, when she passed away. He was her only sibling.

To know my uncle was to love him. He was a kind sweet man. We miss him. He'll always be remembered with love.

—In love, Sharon Peckham

A Prayer

Lord, as we grieve the loss of our loved ones, remind of us the hope we have in knowing you have prepared a place for them.

—Sojourners

Thank You

I just wanted to thank all the wonderful parishioners and the Vestry for the support I received when Dan passed away. It's wonderful to be part of a community who supports the members in such a giving way. I really appreciate all who reached out to comfort me during this difficult time. Thank you.

—Maureen Ghent

Thank You to St. Thomas'

Thank you sincerely for the very kind note of sympathy you mailed to Susan, Elizabeth's family, and myself. It was a comfort and a prayerful moment in my day. I have sent its message to Susan in Baltimore and placed it where she will find it when she returns. God bless you all as you share the spirit of our Lord with all those your work reaches.

—The Rev. John LaVoe



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9TH AT 6 PM



ARTS AT THE PALACE ANNUAL GALA & FUNDRAISER

SPONSORED BY THE COLGATE INN AND HOTEL ONESEVENTIVE

OPEN BAR AND CATERING PROVIDED BY THE COLGATE INN

MUSIC BY AMANDA ROGERS AND LOS BLANCOS

SILENT AUCTION

THEMED ATTIRE HIGHLY ENCOURAGED

PURCHASE TICKETS ONLINE AT ARTSATTHEPALACE.ORG

A Surprising Break-In

On the morning of December 3rd, Fr. Brooks found evidence of an invasion of sorts at St. Thomas'. Both the belltower room and the vesting room were found in a state of great disarray, but mysteriously nothing was missing. Who would break into a church, make a mess, and not take anything? When he turned around, Fr. Brooks found the cutest culprit in the history of Breaking and Entering.



When we say "All Are Welcome," we mean it!

A Prayer

God, let our love for each other reflect the breadth and depth and height and length of your love.

—Sojourners

Good Neighbor Grant

A couple of years ago, St. Thomas' received a \$500,000 gift specifically to support outreach activities that address issues of income inequality or racism, provide support for refugees, aid to those with diverse sexual preference and gender identities, and other issues related to power disparities within our community.

This Fall, we received our first three applications for these Good Neighbor Grants, and the Vestry approved all three. With the receipt of these grants totaling \$27,600, nearby organizations can meet the needs of their target populations with renewed creativity.

The Impact Project will use their grant money to purchase a dump trailer to remove debris from work sites. The Fiver Children's Foundation will use their grant money to fund a retooling of their curriculum in regards to racial equity at several levels of their organization. The Food Bank of Central New York will use their grant money to establish a mobile food pantry.

If you know of an organization within our diocese that could benefit from these grants, applications are due by January 31, 2024. All relevant information can be found on our website: <https://www.stthomashamilton.org/outreach>

Farmworker Holiday Baskets

St. Thomas' will be a site for collecting cold weather gear for the Farmworker Holiday Baskets. A box for donations will be in the Parish House. The baskets will be organized on Thursday, 12/21, at 7:00 PM in the Godly Play room in the Parish House. The baskets will be distributed on Friday, 12/22. If you have any questions, you can contact

Margaret Wehrer at

wehrerklingamans@gmail.com



The Advent Wreath

First flame alight to bring us hope.
Flickering on this advent wreath.
Lighting the dark in which we grope,
Leading us on to new belief.

Faith is the theme of candle two,
Urging us on to Bethlehem!
A child is born; the dawn breaks through,
While angels sing. Let's join with them

In ringing out the sound of joy.
This is the theme of advent three,
As shepherd's wonder at this boy;
One born to set the nations free.

We then light candle number four,
This flame our prayer for lasting peace,
That by the love which this child brings,
All war and conflict might yet cease.

There is one candle left to light,
As we begin our Christmas Day.
It is that one of dazzling white,
Hope, faith, joy, peace be yours I pray.

—The Revd Steve Sheridan,
the vicar of Chester St Oswald & St
Thomas of Canterbury

A Prayer

God, let our lives point to you. We worship you
not with empty words, but with marching feet
and helping hands.

—Sojourners

People in Our Parish: An Interview with Wendy Everard

Wendy Everard grew up in Cheektowaga, New York, outside of Buffalo, in a Polish Catholic community. She went to church every week and attended parochial school from fifth-grade up. She has always liked church and attended Saint James Catholic Church in Cazenovia for a time. She came to St. Thomas' in the last year, seeking a more inclusive church community and has not been disappointed by the great welcoming atmosphere extended by every single person she has met here. She says, "I have never been to a church as welcoming as St. Thomas'. That's why I love it here and will keep coming." She says that Brooks is the best preacher she has ever heard. Last Easter, she exclaimed as much to the young woman in the pew next to her, and Becca agreed, saying she might be prejudiced, being the preacher's wife!

Since 2000, Wendy has been teaching tenth to twelfth-grade English in Cazenovia. Her favorite is her Advanced Placement unit on Cazenovia connections to the Fugitive Slave Law, specifically the 1850 two-day convention, including Gerritt Smith of Peterboro and Frederick Douglass, which was the largest Fugitive Slave Law convention in the country. Her students go to Peterboro and write a research paper, then give a tour of the town's sites. She also teaches a college writing unit and a creative writing elective for English 12, which includes graphic novels and podcasting. She teaches persuasion and rhetoric in AP language class by reading Frederick Douglass' autobiography.

She also writes articles about education for journals and enjoys giving presentations at conferences. Her first presentation was at Colgate for NYSFEA, the NYS Foundations of Education Association. She has presented on the abolition unit that she teaches at the NYS Reading Association Conference.

Wendy didn't always know she wanted to be a teacher. She started at Canisius College, majoring in English and psychology, with a

focus on feminist literary criticism and multiculturalism, then transferred to the University at Buffalo, where she received her B.A. in English and Masters of Teaching, while pursuing a concentration in multicultural feminist literary studies. She did an English honors thesis and thought about becoming a university professor, but she didn't want to move far away from her family with whom she is close. In the summers, she helps out her brother with her mom, in Buffalo.

She learned that she liked working with teens at the Lake Chautauqua Lutheran summer camp. She also ran a YWCA camp in East Aurora and spent time at a few other camps, before getting her certification in seventh to twelfth-grade teaching. At Cazenovia High School, she advises the Sanctuary Club, which is the LGBTQ support group.

Wendy met her husband, Jim, while teaching in Malone, New York. He works with the Department of Environmental Conservation in Cortland, as a fisheries biologist. She jokes that he is the Darwinist in the family. They live in Erieville. Wendy's older daughter, Allie, 20, follows in her mother's footsteps as an English major at UB. She is a junior planning to get her masters in library media studies. Her younger daughter, Emily, is a high school senior who was just accepted to UB. Both of her girls are active in social justice and she hopes to get them to join her at St. Thomas'.

She is three years from retirement, but may choose to stay on a bit longer, as she transitions to getting more incrementally involved in volunteer activities. She is active on the board of the National Abolition Hall of Fame in Peterboro, with Dot Wiltsie, and helped out this summer at the Summer Emancipation Days. She co-founded the ARC-C, an Anti-Racism Coalition of Cazenovia, in spring 2020, in the wake of the killing of George Floyd. ARC-C also drafted an Anti-Hate Resolution with the town. She helped organize a Chalk the Walk event for Cazenovia College students to decorate local sidewalks with supportive slogans for students of color who make up one-third of the student population. She is also a member of the Cazenovia Community Garden group, which plants and maintains the garden behind the library.

Wendy is in Hamilton a lot and has worked with several Colgate Masters of Teaching and teacher

certification students in her classroom. She finds that they are well prepared as they plan, collaborate, and grade together, and have tons of fun. She says the Colgate Department of Education is awesome and she has learned innovative ideas from faculty. She met Suzanne Spring, from HARC - Hamilton Anti-Racism Coalition, through an on-line book group, and Rebecca Downing, from Colgate, is an ARC-C member. She raves about participating in the NEH Summer Institute with Graham Hodges of Colgate. The select group of educators traveled the New York State, Massachusetts, and Vermont, visiting landmarks and museums, reading, and listening to abolition experts. She says it was better than a graduate class and participants stay in touch, sharing teaching ideas with educators from all over the country.

She loves to write poetry and travel with her family, including their Corgi, Sprout, in the summer. Some favorite places are Maine and Massachusetts, as well as forays into New York City with her girls.

We are thrilled to have Wendy as a wonderful new member in the St. Thomas' family and her education background and social justice activism fit right in with the ethos of our church. She is here to stay, thanks to the warm welcome she continues to receive. If you haven't met Wendy yet, do introduce yourself at coffee hour. You will be delighted!

—Kerry Linden

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.



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

Free Coffee Tuesdays

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. Hot cocoa & tea are also available. All ages welcome!



St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Scheduled to Serve
December 2023

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

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

DATE	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS
December 3	OT Rose Novak NT Kerry Linden	Barbara Bowen	Ed Page	Wynn Egginton	Jana Laxa	Colleen McNerney
December 10 <i>Rite One</i>	1st Martha Berry 2nd Kristin Strohmeier 3rd Adger Williams 4th Maureen Ghent (5th Brooks)	Susan Cerasano	Ed page	Wynn Egginton	Jana Laxa	Colleen McNerney
December 17	OT John Orr NT Lynn Staley	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Ellie Weyer	Jana Laxa	Colleen McNerney
December 24 <i>10 AM</i>	OT Emily Hutton-Hughes	Maureen Ghent	Ed Page	Linda Jenks	Jana Laxa	Colleen McNerney
December 24 <i>4:15 PM</i>	OT Adger Williams	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Linda Jenks	Jana Laxa	Colleen McNerney
December 31	OT Ellie Weyer	Maureen Ghent	Ed Page	Colleen McNerney	Jana Laxa	Colleen McNerney

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Scheduled to Serve
January 2024
(Tentative)

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 Hamilton, NY 13346

315-824-1745
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DATE	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS
January 7	OT Debbie Barker NT Martha Berry	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Susan Beattie	Jana Laxa	Linda Jenks
January 14 <i>Rite One</i>	OT Maureen Fox NT John Orr	Susan Cerasano	Ed page	Susan Beattie	Jana Laxa	Linda Jenks
January 21	OT Maureen Ghent NT Linda Jenks	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Ellie Weyer	Jana Laxa	Linda Jenks
January 28	OT Kerry Linden NT Emily Hutton-	Maureen Ghent	Ed Page	Emily Hutton- Hughes	Jana Laxa	Linda Jenks



Qidings
December 2023 | January 2024

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