

May 2026

12 ½ Madison St.  
Hamilton, NY 13346  
315-824-1745 (for fax also)  
E-Mail: stchurch@cnymail.com  
Website: StThomasHamilton.org



# Tidings

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

## The Rector's Column

The Bishop is coming; the Bishop is coming!!!

Batten down the tabernacle, fluff those bouquets, and get ready for a fine Sunday at the end of the month!

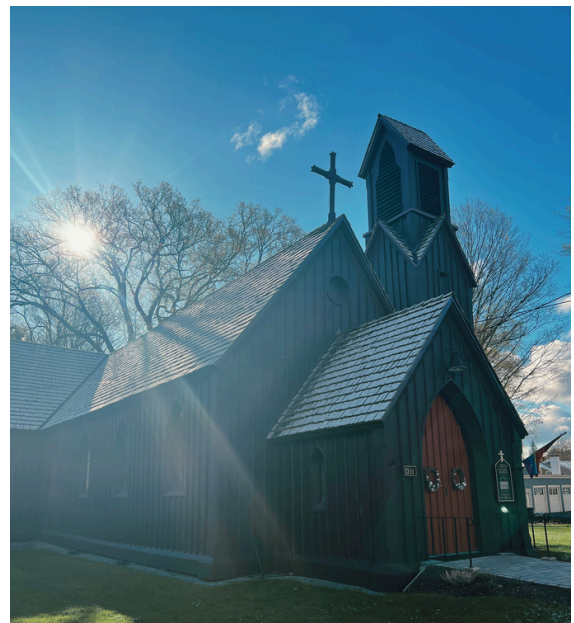
On May 31st, the Rt. Rev. DeDe Duncan-Probe (pronounced pro-bee) will celebrate Trinity Sunday at St. Thomas' for our Gospel Eucharist and a whole slew of Confirmations. It's gonna be a grand time not only to welcome her back to Hamilton but also to show off how well our little parish is bouncing back from the difficulties of years past.

As exciting as the occasion is, it also offers a moment to reflect on what we've persevered through as a congregation: the ravages of the pandemic, the challenges of online services, my disability leave, far too many parishioners gone, financial uncertainty, and staff changes, to name a mere handful. By the end of 2022, we were only seeing around 45 people on the average Sunday, and counting Zoom attendance, we were still below 50. These days, we're seeing around 60 on a Sunday -- 70 with all the folks on Zoom added to the count! That's one heck of a turnaround, and it's only been possible because of the people of St. Thomas' diligence. We're now seeing a new household most Sundays, and some of those even come back after trying us out!

Like so many churches and institutions, we've had a hard run of things this decade, and I couldn't be more proud to invite Bishop DeDe to come and see how we've rebuilt.

So, please join us on May 31st for what promises to be one humdinger of a service, welcome the Bishop with the warmth that makes this place so special, and show her how a rebuilding congregation can come to thrive again.

Brooks+





# Tidings

## **OFFICE HOURS:**

Monday-Friday 9:00 am -1:00 pm

## **RECTOR:**

The Rev. Brooks A. Cato                    501-554-1236  
brooks.cato@gmail.com

## **DIRECTOR OF MUSIC:**

Dianne Adams McDowell            315-750-6027

## **PARISH ADMINISTRATOR & FAMILY MINISTRIES:**

Leah Brockway                            315-750-6040

## **WARDENS:**

Jane Welsh '26                            315-824-3070  
Debbie Barker '27                        315-691-6203

## **VESTRY MEMBERS:**

Connie Harsh '26                        315-824-2183  
John Orr '26                                610-716-2501  
Kerry Linden '26                        315-825-5543  
Rose Novak '27                            315-824-2082  
Valerie Morkevicius '27                312-218-1389  
Jana Laxa '27                                315-750-9111  
Mike Loranty '28                        716-440-3087  
Kate Hooks '28                            206-353-4906  
Martha Berry '28                        315-824-2543

## **CLERK OF VESTRY:**

Susan Cerasano                        315-824-1037

## **TREASURER:**

John Bowen                                315-824-4118

## **SEXTON:**

Barbara Hicks                        315-269-5471

## **TIDINGS EDITOR:**

Rose Novak                                315-824-2082  
rnovakhamilton@gmail.com



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## Nave Gazing

The Bishop is coming! Great! What's a bishop?

I'm glad you asked! The Episcopal Church is what's sometimes known as a hierarchical denomination, which is just a fancy way of saying that we have levels of authority in the way we're organized. Obviously God's on top while the earthly authority of our denomination is centered on bishops. This is where we get our name, actually. Episkopos is the Greek word for bishop.

Our Catechism says bishops are ministers of the church along with lay people, priests, and deacons. Bishops represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese. They guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; proclaim the Word of God; act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and ordain others to continue Christ's ministry. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 855)

In practice, a bishop is for the whole diocese what a priest is for a local parish. Where Fr. Brooks leads, oversees, and cares for the flock in and around Hamilton, Bishop DeDe leads, oversees, and cares for over 70 church entities from Waverly to Alexandria Bay and Barneveld to Waterloo. Her flock consists of all of us Episcopalians, lay and clergy, as well as all of the non-Episcopopeople who live in the geographical area covered by the Diocese of Central New York. It is the sole responsibility of bishops to perform the sacraments of ordination and confirmation (and its associated rites).

An interesting piece of Biblical and Church History: there are no Christian priests in the Bible! Bishops and deacons are mentioned, but priests were a later development. Initially, bishops traveled to every church in their diocese frequently, often all on the same Sunday. As Christianity grew rapidly, however, that became increasingly more difficult, and bishops couldn't be physically present everywhere at once, a problem they still have yet to solve. They needed a kind of substitute or proxy to run the show in their absence, and priests sprang up to fill that role.

We still view the relationship of the priesthood to the episcopate in a similar way. Bishops ordain priests to tend local parishes in their absence, and priests serve at the pleasure of the bishop. This is part of why bishops are involved in the search process for new clergy! It's also why, when the bishop comes to places like St. Thomas', she doesn't come as a visitor. She comes as the chief priest returning to one of her many parishes. As the chief priest, she leads the service, preaches, and celebrates the Eucharist not because of our deference to her lofty office but because she is in charge of St. Thomas'! Fr. Brooks can only lead a Sunday service because she's left him to keep things running while she's elsewhere.

So, when Bishop DeDe returns to St. Thomas' on May 31st, she returns to tend to one portion of her flock, not as a visitor but as the chief pastor of this incredible church. And what a treat it is to welcome her back home!

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## On the Lighter Side

REVERENDFUN.COM COPYRIGHT BIBLE GATEWAY



OOH, DO THAT BISHOP THING WHERE YOU MOVE DIAGONALLY

02-08-2010

## Ramshaw Scholarship Application

Every year, St. Thomas' awards a \$750 scholarship to graduating high school seniors to help further their education. Initially created by Molly and Warren Ramshaw and the Vestry of St. Thomas', we're delighted to send our youth into the world with some assistance from this loving community. Completed applications are due back to the office by May 20th and will be considered for approval at the May 24th Vestry Meeting.

The application is below:

St. Thomas' Graduating Senior Scholarship Application

Student's Name

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High School

---

Graduation Year

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Please prepare an essay to respond to the following questions:

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



## Upcoming Events

**May 25:** Church office closed

**May 31:** 10 am Gospel Eucharist with Bishop, the Rt. Rev. DeDe Duncan-Probe

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## Joy as Resistance Survey

Rodney Agnant and Fr. Brooks are looking for feedback on the Joy as Resistance Class they taught during Lent. If you attended any of the sessions, please take a few minutes to fill out this form and let us know how it went!

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeq964\\_P4aBbOhzvt8kC5\\_eFPyIFbAlTEHQex7x6lKh0RxJcw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeq964_P4aBbOhzvt8kC5_eFPyIFbAlTEHQex7x6lKh0RxJcw/viewform)

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## Zoom Etiquette

St. Thomas' Church is pleased to see so many folks on Zoom each week during our Sunday 10 am services. To help keep the focus on the service itself, all participants will have their audio and video automatically turned off, but the chat will be left open.



## After-School Art Program Scholarships

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

- Thursday (6-9 years old) or Friday (9-11 years old) from 3:00 to 5:00 pm
- There is a bus from HCS to the Arts Center (16 Broad Street, Hamilton)
- No monetary commitment for kids that receive the scholarships
- Aimed at elementary-aged kids with an interest in art
- First priority will be low-income families, but eligibility is not necessarily limited to low-income families
- Questions should be directed to Kathy Herold either by phone or email  
315-368-4453  
[hamiltoncenterforthearts@gmail.com](mailto:hamiltoncenterforthearts@gmail.com)  
[www.hamiltoncenterforthearts.com](http://www.hamiltoncenterforthearts.com)

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## Coffee Hour Hosts

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



## Join the Conversation: Bible Study

In our romp through The Apocrypha, we're continuing with the book of Tobit. If we finish before the month runs out, next up will be Judith!

The Apocryphal books are all over the place, and we tend not to hear much from them in the Sunday Lectionary. So, this class is a great chance to learn a bit more about the context around our scriptures. And if you miss a session or can't make it on Thursday mornings, you can always catch up on the previous week's lesson with the Zoom recordings shared in the Notices.

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## A Prayer

Precious light of hope, keep us from going dim when the limits of our own hope wear down.

– Sojourners

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## Scripture Lesson

Holy One, don't let our awareness ebb. Keep our eyes fixed and our hearts ready to do your will of love. Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him."

– Acts 10:34-35

## E-motion Grief

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

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

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

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



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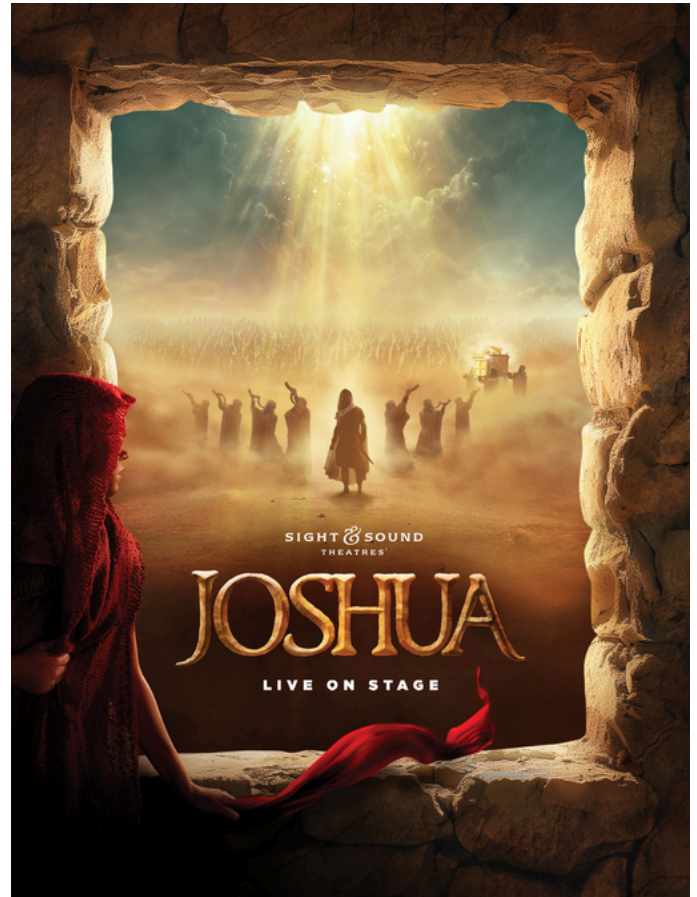
## Opportunity to Support Immigrant-Aid Agencies



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

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

## Joshua Live on Stage



*Joshua* in Lancaster, PA  
July 27 - 28, 2026

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

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

## May Thanksgivings

### Birthdays:

Adger Williams (05/01), Diane Rich Krause (05/06), Kristin Strohmeyer (05/06), Bruce Moseley (05/06), Andrea Gunther (05/11), Kenji Yoshino (05/12), William Strohmeyer (05/14), Hal Stevens (05/15), Daniel Keller (05/18), Nora Hughes (05/18), Leah Brockway (05/21), Iris Brockway (05/22), Emily Hutton-Hughes (05/22), Elsie Brockway (05/27), Deborah Radford (05/31).

### Baptism Anniversaries:

Kerri McCue (05/05), Adriana Catania (05/05), Alessandra Catania (05/05), Sicily Catania (05/05), Georgina Godfrey (05/06), Brian Rivington (05/10), Jessica Dakosty (05/13), David Dudrick (05/14), Simon Williams (05/15), Barbara Frost (05/16), Lucy Michelson (05/19), Jane Scheinman (05/19), Nolan Dye (05/19), Everett Egginton (05/21), Alec Strohmeyer (05/22), Gemma Godfrey (05/24), Barbara Hicks (05/27), Kevin Schult (05/28).

### Marriage Anniversaries:

Edward & Barbara Page (05/01), Dianne & James McDowell (05/11), Susannah Davies & Michael Glaviano (05/13), Melissa & Morgan Davies (05/14).

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## A Prayer

Wondrous God, fuel our appetite to learn about the natural glories of this world to resist the attempts at its ruination.

--Sojourners

## Prayers of the People as of May 11th

### For those in need:

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

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## Membership

Interested in being Confirmed, Received, or Reaffirming your Baptismal Vows when the Bishop comes to St. Thomas'? Let Fr. Brooks know by May 17th to get everything in order! Not sure what any of that means? Come to class on Sundays after Coffee Hour this month, and all will be revealed!

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## A Prayer

God Most High, if the world is caught in ruinous lows, beckon us to heights of proactive discipleship.

--Sojourners

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

*Present:* Debbie Barker, Brooks Cato (presiding), Connie Harsh, Kate Hooks, Jana Laxa, Mike Loranty, Rose Novak, John Orr, Jane Welsh

*Absent:* Martha Berry, John Bowen, Kerry Linden, Valerie Morkevicius

### *Call to Order*

The meeting began at 11:57 a.m. in the parish hall. John Orr opened the meeting with a prayer.

### *Clerk's Report*

The minutes/summary report of the February 22nd meeting were approved as submitted in final draft. Approval was moved by Jana Laxa; seconded by Kate Hooks.

### *Treasurer's Report*

Brooks Cato reassured the vestry that everything seemed to be in order. John Bowen reported the following on email: "I do not have printed reports for you this month. Both individuals who are able to prepare those reports were out of town before all data was available in the Church Windows accounting program. I have reviewed all February NBT, UIF, and MML statements. Payments and deposits appear in order. There were no unexpected expenses. The end February NBT account balances were:

General Checking **\$77,992**

Rector's Disc. **\$1,076**

Migrant Disc. **\$14,299**

The UIF and MML accounts all had modest gains."

\*\*[Owing to the absence of the Treasurer, there was no formal motion to receive the report; but neither was any opposition voiced at the meeting.]

### *Rector's Report*

Brooks Cato stated that it seemed like "the fastest Lent on record" because the weeks seem to have flown by. He expressed his gratitude to the Altar Guild for the excellent job all had done at the "polishing party" held the previous day. Also, thanks are due to the others who had joined in to assist them. Everything seemed to go without a hitch.

### *Wardens' Report*

Jane Welsh commented that she was really looking forward to Easter and the lovely service that has become part of the tradition at St. Thomas'. Debbie Barker stated that she is grateful for all of the work, in many corners of the parish, that goes into preparations for Easter Sunday and the Lenten period leading up to Easter. She also wanted to thank Parish Life (and their helpers) for putting together such a lovely Newcomers' Reception.

### *Commission Reports*

- Rectory Building Project: Brooks Cato was eager to report that the next day he would be meeting with the painters who will be undertaking the exterior work on the rectory. As the next step he planned to contact Bruce Ward and Brian Treffeison to request that they come to the rectory so that all of them could review a final list of items that need to be addressed on the interior of the building.

### *Old Business*

- Directory Update: Brooks Cato informed the vestry that this was scheduled for the upcoming week because he had to reschedule an earlier meeting owing to illness.
- Security Camera Update: Mike Loranty reviewed details of what he had proposed at the February meeting. He agreed to write up a more formal proposal regarding the equipment and other costs involved to be presented at the April meeting. An issue

- emerged regarding the light at the front of the church and when it is set to turn on. Brooks agreed to investigate this further so that the new installation will be workable with the church's current set-up. In addition, Jane Welsh cautioned those who are handling this project to be aware of legislation governing installations of this kind. (There are environmental, and other, implications.)

#### *New Business*

- *Good Neighbor Grants:* Brooks Cato was thrilled to announce that there had been four grant proposals in the current cycle and that the committee had recommended that all be funded. In several cases the committee rounded up the requests to a slightly higher amount because these are niche groups who are addressing pressing needs. The four proposals were: 1) The Community Wellness Center (to fund scholarships for low income seniors; **\$5120** requested and **\$5120** granted); 2) It Takes a Village Diaper Outreach/ Madison and Oneida Counties (funds baby diapers for needy persons; **\$5200** requested and **\$5500** granted); 3) Morrisville Community Church Food Pantry (to fund 50 backpacks and school supplies for the Morrisville-Eaton and Stockbridge Valley School Districts; **\$3000** requested and **\$3200** granted); 4) National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum (to fund the creation of a part-time Museum and Communications Coordinator, who will essentially be NAHOF's first paid staff member; **\$54,023** requested and **\$55,000** granted). The total for all four grants is **\$68,820**. Jane Welsh moved approval of all grants; John Orr seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- *Kitchen Windows Replacement:* Brooks Cato informed vestry members that he had pursued the bid, in part, because Renewal by Andersen happened to be offering a 30% discount. Also, many issues with the windows have developed. The windows in the kitchen are particularly difficult to move up and down and there are issues of heat leakage as well. The three pairs are counted as six separate windows and will be casement windows (with cranks), making them easier to manipulate and more heat efficient. A donation will pay for part of the cost, with the rest taken out of the Capital Maintenance Fund. The final bid came to \$23,583, which includes the cost of the windows and installation. Connie Harsh, who looked into the company, asked whether we would receive an extra 5% discount if we allowed the company to put an advertising sign on the easement. Brooks stated that he would ask and see. Debbie Barker moved that the vestry accept the bid, using the donation and taking any excess funds out of the Capital Maintenance Fund. Jane Welsh seconded the motion. The Motion passed unanimously.

#### *Announcements*

- *Announcements:* Announcements were made, including the details for the Palm Sunday and Easter Week services. The New Episcopalians class begins on April 12<sup>th</sup>. Bishop DeDe will join St. Thomas' for a Gospel Eucharist on May 31<sup>st</sup>.
- *Next meeting:* The next vestry meeting is set for April 26<sup>th</sup>.
- *Prayer Leader:* Rose Novak volunteered to offer prayer at the opening of the April meeting.

Debbie Barker moved to end the meeting; Mike Loranty seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 12:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Cerasano, Clerk

## Tidings Interview

### Joyful Association with Abby Palko and John Hayden

Although Abby, John, and their child, Michael, had lived in Virginia for seven years, it didn't feel like home. Abby was directing the women's center at the University of Virginia, and she was ready for a new professional challenge. So when Michael asked, in October of their sophomore year, "When are we moving?" Abby started looking for new opportunities.

When a friend of Abby's asked where they would go if they could live anywhere, Michael and John said New York City or Paris. They had already spent 12 years in Indiana. Michael was born in South Bend and they were nine when they moved to Virginia. Closer to home, they considered Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Massachusetts and New Jersey, where they both have family and where they met. Abby started interviewing. After Zoom interviews for the position of Director of the Residential Commons Program and a Colgate campus visit, she told John and Michael to please be sure they were willing to live in a small town. Once she got the job here, they considered Norwich and Cazenovia, but they really wanted to live in the community where she worked. Plus, in Hamilton, she could walk to work.

Abby and John were raising Michael in the Catholic Church while struggling with the disconnect between what they were hearing in the homilies and their family's values. After a particularly painful sermon in January 2017, when the Gospel reading was the Beatitudes, but the homily was an anti-woman screed, 10-year old Michael asked, "Why are we still Catholic?" They started going to an Episcopal church two weeks later. Abby says, "I wasn't done with Jesus. I was done with the man-made rules that ignore what Jesus actually said."

They moved to Hamilton on August 1, 2023 and came to St. Thomas' that Sunday. Abby had done her research. She knew they wanted an Episcopal church, so when thinking about what town to move to, she checked out churches online and read sermons. Brooks' sermons made it clear that there was a social justice bent at St. Thomas'. She doesn't need a sermon that is super academic; they need one that is deeply human. She appreciates that Brooks connects to your hearts, rather than trying to prove his intellect. And Hamilton Central School was the only school that returned her call about the openness of the school culture.

Abby has a younger sister and two brothers. She spent 22 years in Catholic schools, from first to 12th grade, then undergraduate at Chestnut Hill College and her Doctorate in literature at Notre Dame, where she took her first faculty position. John has an older brother, two older sisters, and a younger sister. Their family were Christmas and Easter Catholics and he was not confirmed. He and Abby met at Rutgers University in New Jersey, where Abby did her Masters, while teaching middle school English, and where John got his undergraduate degree in English. They met at a writing workshop, where John was taking a class in poetry. They both continue to write fiction. Abby co-facilitates the Writers Accountability Group at Arts at the Palace.

John worked in a medical supply company from 1981 to 2000. Most of the people in the Rutgers writing workshop were teachers and he learned that there was a need. Through the alternate route to certification, he started teaching high school English in Burlington City, New Jersey. He got his masters in English, starting at Rutgers and finishing at Indiana University, South Bend. In South Bend, he taught in a Catholic school, mostly 11th grade English, where the students were the most engaged and mature. After he had an accident in 2012, the school took him back part-time and he taught until 2016.

Continued from Page 10

After going into semi-retirement, he's now subbing at Hamilton Central School, Stockbridge, and Madison, a couple of times a month, as young as 6th grade, in English, social studies, math, and special education.

After graduating from HCS, Michael started at Alfred University in the fall. They love the nine telescopes at Alfred. They're on the newspaper and behind the scenes in the drama club. They just declared a philosophy major, with a concentration in religious studies, plus a theater production minor.

Here in Hamilton, Abby and John continue to read a lot. In town, Abby does needlework with the Handwork Group, and they are both in the Hamilton Public Library book club. John enjoys writing and has been helping with the sets for HCS plays and musicals. Together they attend about half of the Living Writers presentations. When the time is right, they plan to take the New Episcopalian's Class at St. Thomas' and be received into the Episcopal Church. And we will be here to celebrate with them!

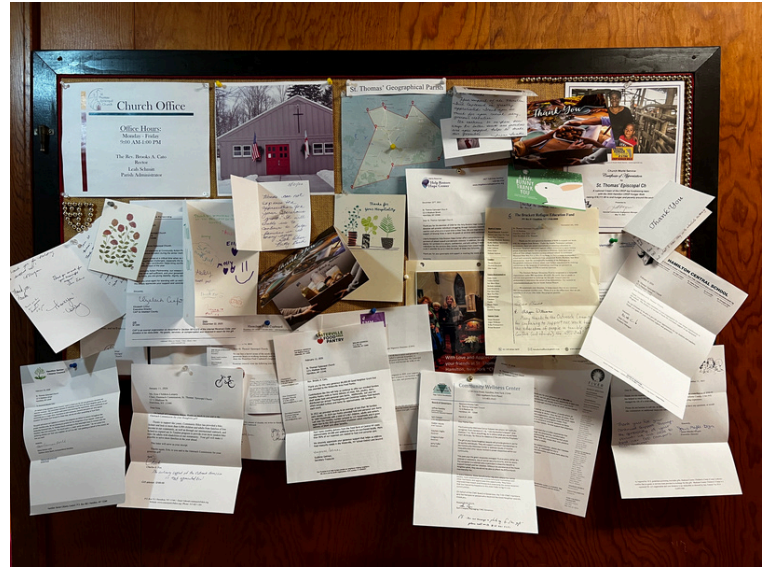
- Kerry Linden

### Scripture Lesson

Keep alert; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

- 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

## Happy Highlight The Parish House Thank You Board



As you walk past the office in our Parish House, you'll notice a bulletin board with an abundance of letters, pictures, and cards. When we receive note of thanks for something our church or parishioners have done for the greater good, we proudly display it on our bulletin board outside of the office. We appreciate the time taken to give thanks and we are happy to let our parish shine. As you can see, this year, we are *full* of gratitude!

### Looking for Contributors

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



## Sermon for Easter Sunday:

April 5, 2026

The Rev. Brooks Cato

Happy Easter! You know, Easter's an impossible thing. As if God taking on a human body three and one-half months ago wasn't impossible enough, today we come together to celebrate the dead and buried back on their feet. And not only do we see Jesus full of breath again, in the coming weeks, he'll walk through walls, show off his scars, levitate all the way to heaven, and even join his friends for a lakeside fish fry. But none of those are even the most impossible thing we remember during Easter! Jesus appears before a couple of women first -- Mary Magdalene and "the other" Mary -- and when they go and tell the disciples -- a room full of men -- the men actually listen to them! (Sidebar: I kinda feel bad for "the other Mary." Imagine being one of the first people to see Jesus rise from the dead, and history just remembers you as "the other one".) But yeah, we're celebrating impossible things today. The grave has lost its sting, death and decay pose no threat, grief is shattered by unfathomable relief and tangible joy. Things which were cast down are raised up, old things made new, eggs magically appear on lawns. I'm reminded of the White Queen's line from *Through the Looking Glass*: "Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast!"

The thing with Easter is, while it is a joyous occasion (as evidenced by your fancy clothes and this beautifully decorated church), while it is a joyous occasion, we miss some of what this day meant the first time around. See, on that first Easter, nobody knew it was Easter. It was just a regular day, not even the Sabbath, a Sunday before Sundays were Sundays. The only thing that made that day notable was the burial a few days earlier. People'd been waiting for a messiah for a long time, and while some thought Jesus fit the bill, dying kinda put a damper on that. No, that first Easter, the Marys simply went to see the tomb, visit his grave, and pay their respects. Over the course of Holy Week, we've imagined ourselves in their shoes, mourning the loss of not only a leader but a dear friend. But affecting as those services've

been, as faithfully and deeply as we've walked their path, it was their path we walked. And we knew Easter waited on the other side. But they didn't. They didn't know he'd be back, in spite of everything he'd told them. They didn't know that 2,000 years later we'd look forward to Easter every year. They didn't know their sorrows would be eased, their pain lifted, their heartbreak mended.

No, what they knew was that the people in power won. The influence of religious leaders combined with the strength of the empire made for an impossible adversary. They knew they'd glimpsed something special in the life of Jesus, but that glimpse of something special was now among the treasured memories of their lives, but simply, memories. Where we've had the advantage of hearing the story before, they lived it in real time, and as desolate as the last few days've been, I can only imagine the ecstatic disbelief that came with that first glimpse of the risen Christ. We've gotta understand, this meant more than seeing an old friend again. This meant more than the impossible defeat of death. This meant more than the fulfillment of scriptures, vindicated belief, or even the power of God over death. This meant the impossible adversary did not win. The combined power of empire and religion held no sway where once they seemed to hold it all. Easter testified that no matter how terrible things get, bad news is never the last news.

I can imagine few things more important for us to remember. We know Easter'll come around again. We know the story of Jesus, we know the ending, we may even know where we fit in all that. But while we're not living with the uncertain darkness of Christ in the tomb, we are living with plenty of uncertain darkness. Religions are dressing up in the robes of empire all over again, and some religious leaders embrace that unholy alliance. Just last week, the spiritual advisor to the White House compared the death and resurrection of Jesus to the president. Because Jesus sacrificed himself, you see, America is guaranteed military victory. That we've gotten to a place where such a comparison could be made is abhorrent, yes, but it also casts an enormous shadow over today's celebration. The same kinds of forces that put Jesus on the cross back then now use his peaceful sacrifice to justify wars

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today. Y'all, a golden calf doesn't have to be a literal golden calf. It could be any number of things that attempt to replace God. A golden-hoofed goat covered in \$100 bills, hypothetically speaking of course, a particular political affiliation or commitment to war or profit or a single person.

The Bible calls this sorta thing idolatry. People, money, power, destruction, greed, gleeful oppression -- they all place some failing of the human spirit above the teachings of scripture. And that's condemned all over scripture. There's Revelation, where a figure categorically opposed to the teachings of Christ gets all the accolades only God should receive. There's Lamentations where a people wail as their city's leveled and their children slaughtered. There's prophet after prophet lambasting the rich and the perversely powerful as the ones who pose the greatest threats to the people of God. There's Jesus himself who favors the poor and the oppressed, the Tower of Babel where hubris is the downfall of humanity, even Eden where the word "no" gets ignored.

Every day we wake under an impossibly dark shadow with no way forward. We're witnesses to a large-scale affront to the moral and ethical system modeled by Jesus, and many cheer the downfall of what our nation and our faith purport to stand for simply because the ones cashing in on everything crashing down wrap themselves in the flag and claim the name of Jesus for themselves. Their act is about as convincing as a barn cat putting up a sign that says "mice get free hugs," but their promises carry just enough seductive temptation to get away with murder...and worse. And by being just tempting enough, they've convinced far too many that the greatest threat to our safety is the existence of minorities (sometimes tiny minorities) rather than the clear rise of fascism wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross.

Now, I know I may've just lost some of y'all for coming off too political, but we're not talking about who you should vote for. We're talking about the soul of our nation, the integrity of the name of Christianity, the undue suffering of innocents, and the slashing of social support networks in favor of funding and justifying ego-boosting conquest at home and abroad. I'm not talking about who you

vote for, I'm talking about what kind of people we want to be, what kind of values we want to stand for, what kind of grace and mercy we want to model. I'm talking about light shining in darkness, and as you people of St. Thomas' have heard me say before, from the Gospel of John, when light shines in the darkness, the darkness comprehends it not. And that, that is what Easter's about. Light shining in the darkness. As far back as Aristotle, maybe even further, we've known that evil carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Evil's so ravenous that the corruption, the ruthlessness, the greed that helps you get ahead in befouled systems inevitably consumes itself. And while evil's distracted by its unflagging appetite for more, light shines, quietly, perhaps, but light shines. Evil may seem insurmountable, but Easter people always win.

Ya know, I wonder what Mary Magdalene and The Other One imagined their remaining days would hold when they were certain the empire had won and hope was buried. I wonder what ways forward they held to, what their escape plan was if things got even worse, where they'd flee to, or how long they imagined they could hold out before the crushing power of empire came for them, too. I wonder, but I'm glad we didn't get that part of the story. I'm glad we got the story of Easter instead. The story of the impossible, the impotence of weak leaders claiming to be strong, and the evergreen lesson that no matter how bad the news gets, it's never the last news. And so we can say, "Alleluia! Christ is risen!"

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## Scripture Lesson

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them.

– Ephesians 5:11



## Planting a Garden for Daily Living

Plant Three rows of peas:

- Peace of mind
- Peace of heart
- Peace of soul

Plant four rows of squash:

- Squash gossip
- Squash indifference
- Squash grumbling
- Squash selfishness

Plant four rows lettuce:

- Lettuce be faithful
- Lettuce be kind
- Lettuce be patient
- Lettuce really love one another

No garden without turnips:

- Turnip for meetings
- Turnip for service
- Turnip to help one another

To conclude our garden we must have thyme:

- Thyme for each other
- Thyme for family
- Thyme for friends

Water freely with patience and cultivate with love.

There is much fruit in your garden because you reap what you sow.

—Robert Marlow, Herkimer CCE



## Free Coffee

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



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## Free St. Thomas' T-Shirts

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





## Flowers for the Altar

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

Thank you.

—Rose Novak & Jana Laxa for the Flower Guild

## Online Donations

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

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

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

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## AA Meetings in Hamilton

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

May Schedule of Servers

MAY	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS	COFFEE HOUR HOSTS
3	1st: Martha Berry 2nd: Joan ford	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Kate Hooks	Liz Brackett	Jana Laxa	Rose Novak
10 Rite One	1st: maureen Fox 2nd: Emily Hutton-Hughes	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Emily Hutton-Hughes	Liz Brackett	Jana Laxa	Jana Laxa
17	1st: Wynn Egginton 2nd: Kerry Linden	Barbara Bowen	Ed Page	Kim Cataldo	Liz Brackett	Jana Laxa	Anne Perring
24	1st: John Orr 2nd: Rose Novak	Susan Cerasano	Ed Page	Susan Beattie	Liz Brackett	Debbie Barker	Parish Life
31 Gospel Eucharist & Bishop Visit	1st: Adger Williams 2nd: Lynn Staley	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Susan Beattie	Liz Brackett	Linda Jenks	Parish Life



May 2026

**Quinquagesima**

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