



Tidings

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

The Rector's Column

Most of y'all've heard me say this, but I love Lent. I really do. I'm not going around auto-flagellating or anything, but I love that Lent has such a clear purpose. As a community, we're working our way through all sorts of stuff, and as individuals, we're working our way through all sorts of stuff, and all at the same time, we know we're doing this on our own and together, and a kinship blossoms in that shared commitment to various disciplines. Apologies for the run-on. Put simply, we're all in this together.

I can think of little else so encouraging than that statement: we're all in this together. No grief, no loss, no anger, no joy, no celebrations, no sadness, no accomplishments come without someone to hold you up, to hold me up. We share all that it is to be us in this place. Every time we sit down at a full table or scooch into a shared pew, we join a moment of our life to this community. Even those farther afield, stay connected through Zoom and newsletters.

And this community extends well beyond the Sunday morning crew. In our recently submitted Parochial Report, we realized that St. Thomas' serves, in one form or another, around 85-100 people every week not counting those of us that call this place home. From meals to legal fees, we're supporting so many people, and St. T's has gained a reputation as a safe place to come when no one else will make room.

That's about as good a compliment, as good an endorsement as any we'll ever receive. It reminds me of a saying: "you can't get into Heaven without a letter of recommendation from the oppressed." I'm no St. Peter, and I can't reserve y'all any spots, but I'd say the safety St. Thomas' represents for so many people is a good indication we're well on our way.

I know Lent is hard, and life is hard, and the news is particularly hard these days. I know that, so I just want to take this chance to brag on y'all. St. Thomas', you are doing some very, very good work, and people are noticing. I could not be more proud to be your priest, and I am grateful for your support, your faithfulness, your heart for justice, and your appeals to mercy. Thank you for being this community defined by the longing for a better world, better lives, and better selves. Thank God we're all in this together!

See? Lent's not all bad!

Brooks+



St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Hamilton, NY

Anchored in hope.
Growing in love.



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

IN THIS ISSUE:

The Rector's Column	1
In This Issue	2
Nave Gazing On the Lighter Side	3-4
Scholarships for After School Art Program Special Collections for Lent Upcoming Events Holy Week Polishing Party Coffee Hour Hosts	5
Join the Conversation: Bible Study Opportunity to Support Immigrant Aid Agencies E-Motion Grief	6
A Prayer for Lent Prayers of the People March Thanksgivings	7
January Vestry Minutes Summary Free St. Thomas' T-Shirts	8
Sermon for Ash Wednesday	9-10
Looking for Contributors Free Coffee	10
Flowers for the Altar Online Donations AA Meetings in Hamilton	11
March Servers	12



A Prayer

Holy Spirit, in this time of turmoil, show us how to thoughtfully offer our gifts in service of the collective good.

—Sojourners

Nave Gazing

I need to own up to a pet peeve. I have a really hard time with folks who use Christianity to justify being mean. Where I grew up, this was super common. Admittedly, I'm painting with a pretty broad brush here, but most people around there were Christian, so the folks who used their Christianity to justify meanness were mostly being mean to other Christians.

I had a friend who got grounded every time he got a B in class because he was "failing the commandment to honor your father and mother." My sisters' classmate, who happened to be black, found a threatening note and a noose in her school locker "because she bore the mark of Cain." Another friend was banished from her youth group when a rumor spread that she'd gotten a little too close to her boyfriend, nevermind if that rumor was true and nevermind if she needed support in place of judgment.

Even in the Bible Belt, believe it or not, there are people who aren't Christian, even people who don't belong to any faith at all. Those non-churchy types were a different kind of target. They weren't Christian, so they didn't feel obligated to live by our rules, and that was, as you may have guessed, bad. Those folks that weren't Christian fell into three categories. The first was potential converts; they could be saved. The second was good people that weren't Christian, like Ghandi; they probably wouldn't embrace Christ, but it was still worth trying. The third were evil or demonic; they couldn't be saved.

And that last group -- the evil, demonic types -- were not just a threat to faithful Christians but also a threat to the entire world. Left unaddressed, the argument went, they would tear down halls of faith and seek to mislead unwary human souls to the eternal tortures of Hell.

In other words, not only were Christians supposed to try to lead people to Christ, they were also supposed to do battle with evil. And a demon could be anyone, even someone who attended church. I was called a demon on more than one occasion, once just for having long hair! The Episcopal Church

has been called demonic because of its willingness to see the humanity of queer people. That same friend that got grounded for "bad" grades got labeled as demonic for talking back to people in authority because God is king, and respecting people in authority is practice for respecting God, so if you don't respect people in authority, you don't respect God. (I know, it's convoluted, but that's really how this stuff went!)

Demons could be anywhere, so you had to stay vigilant. And vigilance meant not just calling out evil when you saw it but also doing everything in your power to prevent evil from spreading. So, solely by virtue of not being willing to convert to Christianity, regular people became demons in their eyes. And demons must be stopped.

If you think of the world as made up of a great diversity of humanity complete with different approaches to understanding God, there's no inherent threat from other traditions. But if your understanding of God says that anything not Christian is potentially demonic, then other ways of being suddenly become very dangerous indeed.

This is a huge part of why Muslims and Jews are targeted. It's also why the queer community is targeted. A trans person reading at a library wouldn't be seen as community service; it would be seen as a demonic influence leading your child down the path of damnation. A bombing spree in the Middle East is portrayed as a sacred task because you're not bombing people; even the collateral damage of children at school becomes acceptable because non-Christian children were likely demonic, too. The important word isn't "children;" it's "non-Christian." See how this framework functions?

Continued on Page 4

Continued from Page 3

I'm not relaying this to you so you'll start to see the world in terms of potential converts and demonic forces. I want you to understand why some kinds of arguments fail to change certain minds. It's not because what we say isn't compelling, or well-reasoned, or sometimes even Biblical; it's that demons are wily and can misuse our compelling, well-reasoned, sometimes even Biblical arguments to mislead the faithful few.

But take heart! It's not impossible to get through; it just takes some extra work to get there. Knowing scripture helps, though it won't solve everything. Living a life modeled on Christ helps, too; people see the fruits of your labors. Loving those folks can't be done enough; it's very rare indeed to bully someone into a true change of heart.

There are literally thousands of kinds of Christianity, and this article only deals with a couple. But the theological rubber is hitting the road for just about all kinds of Christians at once. What we've claimed to stand for, who we say we love, who we say we serve, how we live all that out -- this was all a lot easier when things were generally good, and it's all a lot harder now that enemies are real, exploitation runs rampant, and a handful of people oppress and profit in the same swish of a pen.

One aspect of our theology that we absolutely cannot lose sight of is that good ol' imago dei, that unique sliver of the image of God every person carries. No matter what we do, no matter the consequences we must face, no matter the evils we've done or that are done on our behalf, no matter what, we cannot lose that image of God, and we cannot lose the fact that we are human. We are not demons;

neither are they. We are humans, people. And the importance of that claim cannot be overstated. We are humans dealing with humans. It doesn't matter if they give us the same grace, we carry it all the same.

On the Lighter Side

Episcopalian Once Again Gives Up Reading Bible For Lent



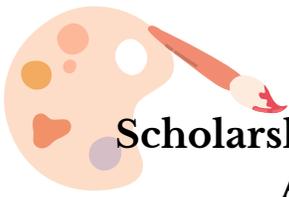
 The Babylon Bee
February 23 at 6:09 PM · 🌐
"I won't read it even once."
<https://buff.ly/CknPCCL>

BabylonBee.com

Consider This

A journey toward justice is one we take together—rooted in faith, sustained by hope, and strengthened by community.

— Sojourners



Scholarships for After School Art Program

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

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

Special Collections for Lent

Every Sunday in Lent, the Outreach Commission takes up a collection for different groups who serve our neighbors near and far. Here is a list of who we'll be supporting:

- February 22nd** - St. Thomas' Migrant Discretionary Fund
March 1st - Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY
March 8th - The Center
March 15th - International Refugee Assistance Project
March 22nd - Indivisible
March 29th - Hamilton Food Cupboard



Upcoming Events

- March 15th**: Bring A Friend to Church Day & Special Coffee Hour to Honor our Newcomers
March 21st: Holy Week Polishing Party
March 22nd: Vestry Meeting
March 28th: Rally on the Village Green
March 29th: Palm Sunday
April 2nd: Maundy Thursday 5:30 pm Service
April 3rd: Good Friday 5:30 pm Service
April 5th: Easter Sunday
April 6th: Church Office Closed

Holy Week Polishing Party

Saturday, March 21st 9:00 - 10:30 am
Volunteers wanted!

Help the Altar Guild shine up all the brass and silver in honor of Holy Week. Please email Emily at ehutton@colgate.edu if you are able to lend a helping hand.

Coffee Hour Hosts

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



Join the Conversation: Bible Study

Thanks to way too much snow and ice falling on Wednesday nights and Thursday mornings, we're still working our way through the Lord of the Rings movies. We'll likely finish The Two Towers in the next couple of weeks and pick up with the final installment, The Return of the King in the middle of the month. While all three movies received Academy Awards, The Return of the King secured 11 Oscars, winning in every category in which it was nominated. Just for some perspective, only two other films have received 11 Academy Awards which puts the third movie in the same rarefied cinematic category as Ben-Hur and Titanic.

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>

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>



A Prayer

God who is love, widen our own capacity to love so that our actions are an echo that reflect you.

– Sojourners

Scripture Lesson

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

– John 13:34-35

A Whisper That Reaches the Divine

In whispers low, prayers ascend,
In Lent's quiet, to God we bend,
Each word, a hopeful tend,
In prayer, our souls mend.

Softly spoken in the night,
Prayers carry our inner plight,
In Lent, they shine a light,
Guiding us to what is right.

In every whisper, faith's embrace,
In each plea, God's grace,
In Lent, a sacred space,
In prayer, we find our place.

– Author Unknown



A Prayer

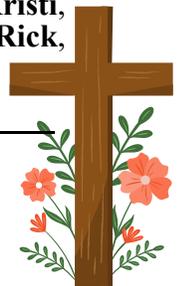
Almighty God, place our fears into an ocean of love and mercy. Nudge us closer to the water so we can gaze at the depths that sustain unity.

– Sojourners

Prayers of the People as of March 4th

For those in need:

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



March Thanksgivings

Birthdays:

Jessica Dakosty (03/02), Barbara Page (03/04), Kristen Meadows (03/08), Dylan Lopez (03/10), Ginger Flor (03/11), Charles Wickert (03/11), George Geier IV (03/12), Jessica Rivington (03/16), Thomas Schmitt (03/17), Dee Keller (03/23), Wanda Warren Berry (03/25), George Geier III (03/27), Melanie Clough (03/28), Max Conti Porta (03/30), Tommy Dakosty (03/30).

Baptism Anniversaries:

Susan Trueworthy (03/12), Dee Keller (03/17), Andrew Hengst (03/19), Allen Schult (03/20), Debbie Radford (03/23), Kathleen Catania (03/26), Melanie Clough (03/29), Jennifer DeAngelis (03/31).

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church Vestry Minutes Summary January 25, 2026

Note: There was no formal, in-person meeting owing to the snowstorm, so a summary was compiled instead.

On January 24th, Brooks Cato sent the following email to the wardens and vestry, summarizing what would have been reported if the meeting scheduled for Sunday, January 25th had not been cancelled due to extreme weather warnings.

He wrote: "Thanks to the weather and travel warnings, I'm cancelling this month's vestry meeting. There's only one thing that we need to vote on, so please **REPLY ALL** to this message with your vote to approve the December minutes." In the next two days, all vestry members and the wardens wrote to approve the December 21st minutes.

Following this, Brooks Cato continued: "A quick rundown to keep everyone in the loop from the Agenda:

- With a high balance in the NBT checking account, Budget & Finance will be transferring \$40,000 to the St. Thomas' Endowment.
- Our 2025 End-of-Year numbers were solid. The Average Sunday Attendance in-person increased to 58 and adding Zoom in gets us up to 70.
- The Rectory Building Project is progressing slowly.
- The second round of photos for the Directory will be this coming Tuesday [weather allowing.] [Clerk's note: The weather was still difficult on the 27th so the photographers came instead on Friday, the 30th.]

- Mike Loranty is looking into more security camera information.
- Our Stewardship Drive currently sits at 73 pledging households for a total of \$229,575. That includes pledges from 13 households that've never pledged before!
- The Parochial Report is underway and will need to be approved at our February meeting.
- The February edition of Tidings will have a financial focus again [as it did in 2025].
- Please refer to the agenda [sent Thursday, January 22nd] for relevant upcoming dates."

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Cerasano, Clerk

Free St. Thomas' T-Shirts

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



Sermon for Ash Wednesday: February 18, 2026 The Rev. Brooks Cato

Life is hard. Lent is hard. Both are hard enough in normal times, and then we go and drop all sorts of baggage on 'em. Things like shame and guilt and a whole should-load of stuff we either put on ourselves or other people so generously put on us (as though we didn't have enough to carry on our own). I'm reminded of the command to "love your neighbor as yourself." Yes, it's important and a fine guide to how we're instructed to encounter, serve, even love others. Great. But if any part of you is like me, sometimes I wonder if my neighbors deserve that, deserve to be loved like I love myself. And no, I don't mean "are they good enough." I mean, am I good enough. If I love my neighbors as I love myself, is that really a gift to them? Or does that actually mean all the shames and guilts and shoulds I carry become expectations I lay on them? Put differently, I've got some days that are worse than others, and if I caught myself saying the things I say to myself to someone else, I'd be mortified. For a lot of us, it's a whole lot harder to love ourselves than it is to love our neighbors. "Love your neighbor as yourself" works wonderfully for some, but sometimes it's just as important to turn it around and love ourselves as we love our neighbors.

This Ash Wednesday, I don't think we need a lot of reminders of our mortality or the parts of us that need repair or the broken relationships that need mending. It's impossible to escape the long list of examples permeating every phone screen, computer screen, TV screen. Brokenness? Yeah, we know from brokenness. Y'all don't need beating over the head with hard truths; today's liturgy does enough of that. So instead, I want to share with you what my Lenten discipline is going to be, well, my second discipline after the one I mentioned Sunday.

Loving my neighbor comes relatively easy. Loving myself, that one's for my therapist. Loving my enemy? Oh, now that one's hard, and because it's so hard, that's probably where I need to dig in the most.

And the fact that I hate saying it outloud and it makes me scrunch up my face like I smelled something rotten, that's about as good an indication as any that I need to work on this. So, I'm gonna work on loving my enemy. To be clear, loving enemies doesn't mean they become above reproach. It doesn't remove the need for consequences or even my call for consequences. It means seeking to find the person, broken or wounded or whatever they are, seeking the person underneath all the reprehensible things I see in them. It just might be they have a hard time loving their neighbors 'cause they lack love, too. I don't quite know what the practices look like just yet. Ever the procrastinator, I'm still working this out, but I know what I'll be practicing toward. I'm reminded of a modern mini-parable, though. Two men walking down the sidewalk see a homeless man sitting on the ground. One looks at the other and says, "there but by the grace of God, go I." The other stops and says, "no, you've got it wrong. He IS you. You're no better, no different. You are him, and he is you. He has the same feelings, same fears, same hungers you do. And maybe if you could see that, you'd learn to love him".

It's so easy to see anger, fear, panic, whatever, it's so easy to see in my enemy's faces, even in their actions. And it's so easy to condemn it when they act from that place, as though I've never been angry, afraid, or panicked. But of course, I have been. These days, it's a whole lot easier to get that way. But when I do it, it's justified, at least, that's what I've gotten in the habit of telling myself. There's a new-ish word coined in a book called *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows* that I think gets at this idea. The word is "sonder," and it's a noun. You ever heard that word, "sonder?" Sonder is "the feeling one has on realizing that every other individual one sees has a life as full and real as one's own, in which they are the central character and others, including oneself, have secondary or insignificant roles." I've had a profound sense of sonder lately when it comes to all the horror we've been witnessing, but most of it's been directed at the ones being targeted. The perspective

Continued from Page 9

from their shoes is far too easy to imagine, and it's been disturbingly fascinating to hear experiences so distant from my own. But something in my soul resists the concept of sonder when it comes to the people in masks. And if ever there was an argument for taking those damn masks off, it's the way the masks remove their humanity, both for them and for those who face them. They need to be reminded that they are human as much as I need to be reminded that they are human.

When we put those ashes on here shortly, we'll be marking ourselves with our own marker of humanity. Those ashes remind us that nothing here is permanent, maybe not even humanity's tendency to fall under the thrall of fear and anger and greed. People, systems, philosophies, hatreds die. And while we move in this wilderness where reminders of death abound, remember we do this with the confidence that Easter is just 40 short days away. It's not that long to love.

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.

Scripture Lesson

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:15



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!



Scripture Lesson

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

– Peter 4:10



Flowers for the Altar

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

Thank you.

—Rose Novak & Jana Laxa for the Flower Guild

Online Donations

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

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

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

AA Meetings in Hamilton

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

March Schedule of Servers

MARCH	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS	COFFEE HOUR HOSTS
1	1st: Martha Berry 2nd: Adger Williams	Wynn Egginton	Ed Page	Susan Beattie	Michelle Coluzzi	Linda Jenks	Kate Lucey
8 Rite One	1st: Wynn Egginton 2nd: Debbie Barker	Susan Cerasano	Ed Page	Susan Beattie	Michelle Coluzzi	Linda Jenks	Millie Franklin & Cathy Lamphier
15	1st: Jane Welsh 2nd: Maureen Fox	Barbara Bowen	Ed Page	Linda Jenks	Michelle Coluzzi	Debbie Barker	Parish Life
22	1st: Kristen Strohmeier 2nd: Emily Hutton-Hughes	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Colleen Mcnerney	Michelle Coluzzi	Debbie Barker	Liz Brackett & Linda Jenks
29	1st: Jane Welsh 2nd: Lynn Staley	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Linda Jenks	Michelle Coluzzi	Linda Jenks	Kate Smith



March 2026

Quidnys

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