



Tidings

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

The Rector's Column

What a whirlwind the past month, six months, year, years (decade?) have been! I know I'm not the only one looking forward to the slower days of summer. Maybe the heat'll get old and the humidity overly sticky, but these long days and peeper-serenaded nights are just exactly what I've been needing.

I'll keep it brief this time around, but I encourage y'all to seek out those things that enrich your life this summer and do them as fully as you're able. Lord knows joy is a rare quantity, so maybe these school-free months carved out of the calendar invite us into a sort of joy treasure hunt. I'm not telling you to pretend to be happier than you are or to wear a joyful mask; I'm telling you to seek out true joy and make the space and the time for that joy to get in.

The year ahead, especially the turmoil drumming in the background, promises to bring its own difficulties, so best to fill your batteries with whatever keeps you going now. You know I'll be at my wall as much as weather allows, and you know that new puppy of ours will ride along wherever she'll let me take her. What will that be for you? What can you do, where can you go that reliably brings you joy?

Jesus, sure. Churchy stuff, obviously. But what else, and where else? Do that, go there, and share the joy you find!

+ Brooks

Enjoy the Little Things



Photo Credit: Leah Brockway

A Prayer

"Our talents are the gift that God gave us...What we make of them is our gift back to God."

— Leo Buscaglia



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

Why do we have all these different initiation rites like Baptism, Confirmation, and in some other denominations, First Communion? It's a fair question 'cause we've found ourselves in a weird place with the historical development of those rites.

Some liken the practice of baptism in the early church world to a Jewish rite of purification which, admittedly, sounds similar to the eventual Christian rite. The difference, though, is that the purification rite was done when someone was simply ritually unclean -- a physical bath for (mostly) physical purification rather than an initiation.

When John the Baptist came along, he also baptized as a sort of purification, though for him, the focus was on repentance rather than ritual purity. It was the Great Commission at the end of the Gospel of Matthew that defined baptism as an initiation in addition to (or in place of, depending on who you ask) a rite of purification.

In the Book of Acts, Paul encountered a group of believers baptized by John, and when he asked them "into what were you baptized?" they had no idea what he was talking about. Their baptisms pointed to the coming of Jesus and emphasized repentance, so it was up to Paul to baptize them into the Body of Christ. There are several baptisms-as-initiations in the Acts of the Apostles, especially the story of Peter who made new Christians by the thousands!

Fast-forward to the era of the early church, circa 200s AD. Baptism remained the way to be initiated into the church, but it looked a little different. The rite began outside the church building, and the candidate for baptism entered the front doors where a large baptismal pool waited just inside. They removed their street clothes, were fully submerged in the water, and then donned white robes to symbolize their physical and spiritual cleanliness. From there, they made their way into the nave of the church where they received communion for the first time, and because bishops were the primary ministers of parishes at that early of parishes at that early stage, the bishop gave them a special blessing acknowledging them as the newest sheep of their flocks.

Maybe you see where this is going? The original rite had all three pieces wrapped into a single service. Eventually, bishops couldn't be present at all their churches every week, so priests were introduced as proxies to guide churches in the bishop's absence. Priests baptized but the bishop's blessing split off. You'd just have to wait until the next time the bishop came to your town when all the folks who'd been baptized since the last time the bishop came around filled the church and got blessed all at once. Some traveling bishops even had oil stocks built into their saddles allowing them to pronounce that bishop-y blessing on the baptized lining the side of the road without ever stopping to get off their horse!

In time, fewer people were baptized as converts to Christianity and more were baptized as babies born into the faith. As more were baptized as babies, the rite moving straight from the font to the communion rail became less practical since babies don't do so well with solid food. So, a new rite sprang up to fill that gap, and what would become First Communion emerged.

That's all well and good, but it raises a pretty significant theological question: if Baptism is the full initiation into Christ's Body the Church, then why do we need a secondary (or secondary and tertiary, if you grew up with First Communion) rite of initiation? Was something about baptism incomplete?

Well, no. Except, maybe? Prior to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, baptism, confirmation, and the theological claims of each were kept pretty well separate. Baptism was all about initiation, yes, as well as dying to sin and rising again with Christ. Confirmation was a mature, publication affirmation of the promises made in baptism and included a prayer promising the gifts of the Spirit.

Continued on Page 4

Continued from Page 3

But in all their wisdom, the authors of the Prayer Book made it weird. They added a couple of words to the definition of baptism -- "full initiation" -- and took the prayer out of confirmation that promised the gifts of the Spirit and moved it into the baptism service. This left confirmation as a shell of a rite with the primary theological purpose up in the air.

I still think it's valuable as a rite to welcome those who come from different denominations, and the invitation to make a mature, public affirmation of faith is significant. But if we're trying to understand how baptism and confirmation are related, it's very difficult to explain without ending up in theological quandaries. Was baptism insufficient on its own, so confirmation had to occur to complete the process? Were the promised graces of confirmation inaccessible to those who'd only been baptized? If confirmation fell away altogether, would bishops even have jobs anymore? (And yes, those are all debates theologians are still having!)

Sometimes our rites develop in beautiful and inspiring ways, but sometimes we just stumble into what we've got and do our best. The ongoing debates and confusion surrounding our initiation rites are a little of both: beautiful, inspiring head-scratchers.

PS Just for fun: the earliest occurrence of the root word for baptism comes from a recipe for making pickles! To make a pickle, fully submerge the vegetable in a vinegar brine. A partial dip won't do the trick, so baptize it! I love this root because in baptism, we say we are inextricably changed and cannot go back to a state of being unbaptized, just like a pickle can't turn back into a fresh cucumber. We're pickled for Christ!

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



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.

Announcement from Leah Brockway

Dear parishioners,

My time as St. Thomas' Parish Administrator is coming to an end. Working here has meant so much to me in so many ways, and I hold that title near to my heart. I'm incredibly grateful for the people I've had the privilege of working with. This office is much more than a workplace; it's a true community and I'm so thankful for the support and friendships I've built here.

After much thought and consideration, I've decided to open a new chapter and will be taking on a position at Colgate University. This was certainly not an easy decision, as I truly value the work I do here. I will miss it very much, but I'm excited to step into the role of the Administrative Department Coordinator for Residential Life.

My last day in St. Thomas' office will be June 18th. Even though I won't be the one emailing you on a regular basis anymore, you will still see me and my family around as we remain parishioners. I grew up in this church, and now I get to watch my children grow up here. I plan to be involved where I can with St. Thomas' events as well, so don't worry, you're not completely getting rid of me! I take great comfort in knowing that my family and I will always be a part of St. Thomas' community.

I am certain my children will continue to see the Parish House as a "home away from home." Though they may be barefoot, I hope they continue to play in comfort with peace and joy in this space.

Thank you to everyone at St. Thomas', and I'll see you in the pews.

– Leah Brockway



Calling all Volunteers for the 4th of July "Great Hotdog Giveaway"



It may be hard to believe but the 4th of July is just around the corner and that means the annual Hamilton 4th of July parade will be upon us shortly. I am guessing the festivities this year will be even more spectacular as we celebrate 250 years!

Of course, this day would not be complete without St. Thomas' "Great Hotdog Giveaway". Our hotdog extravaganza has definitely grown in popularity over the last few years, and we know this year will be no exception.

We are once again looking for volunteers to assist with setting up, grilling, and distributing hotdogs. Set-up will begin about 9:00 am and we expect clean-up to occur around 1:00 pm.

If you are willing and able to contribute some of your time to assist in any way, please reach out to Deb Barker (dbtigger@frontiernet.net) or Father Brooks and let them know your availability. We are deeply grateful for any assistance in making our "Great Hotdog Giveaway" another meaningful gift to our community!



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

www.hamiltoncenterforthearts.com

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 or 518-369-3384.



Join the Conversation: Bible Study

Our journey through the Apocrypha continues with the second half of Judith, and once we've finished her story, we'll shift to the collection of Greek additions to the Book of Esther. From double chiasmic structures to anachronistic monarchies, these books are prime examples of the weirdness of the Apocryphal books and the sometimes sensible, sometimes nonsensical process of canonization.

Bishop's Podcast and Recommendations

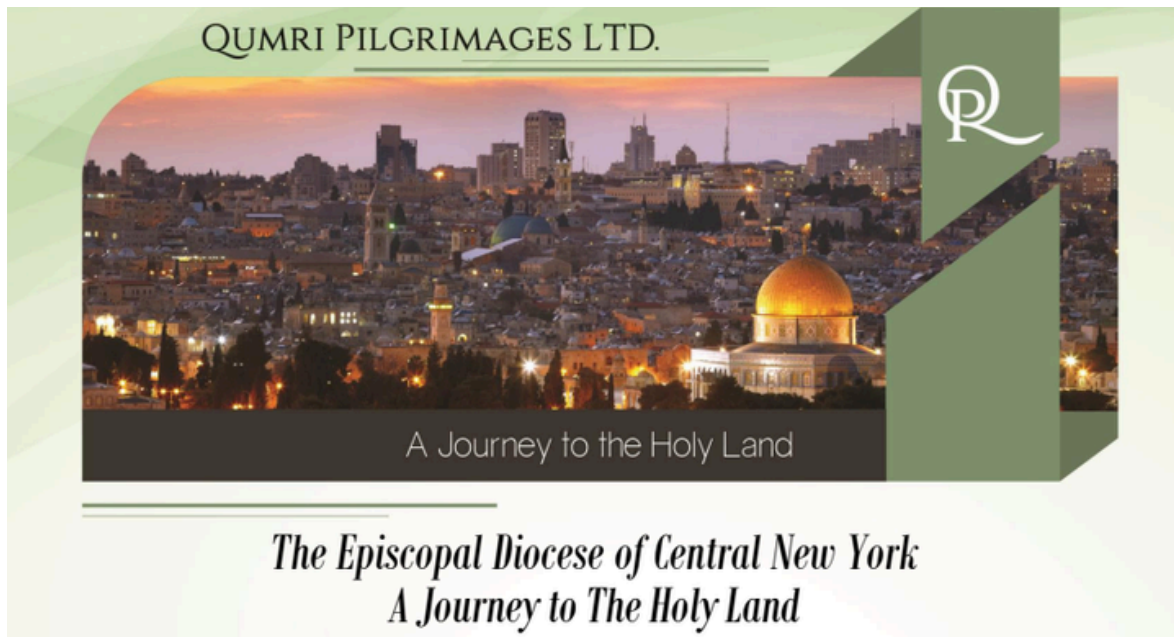
When Bishop DeDe was with us at the end of May, she suggested a few ways to stay plugged in with the goings-on around the Diocese and the larger Episcopal Church. You can find those here:

- **The Messenger** - The Diocese of Central New York's weekly newsletter
<https://cnyepiscopal.org/news-events/messenger/>

- **@cnyepiscopal** - The Diocese's YouTube Channel where you can join Bishop DeDe for a virtual coffee every Tuesday morning
<https://www.youtube.com/@cnyepiscopal>

- **Speaking of Faith** - Bishop DeDe's podcast
<https://cnyepiscopal.org/speaking-of-faith/>

- **For the Rest of Us** - Canon Megan Castellan's podcast
<https://cnyepiscopal.org/for-the-rest-of-us/>



Invitation to Pilgrimage

I'm writing to invite you to an exciting faith formation opportunity. Our diocesan pilgrimage to the Holy Land is going this year, August 17-28, 2026. I would love for you to join us. This is a wonderful opportunity to experience the culture, the places, and the landscape that formed Jesus and his disciples, and learn about the intangible elements of geography that shaped the world of the Scriptures. We will travel to Jerusalem and Nazareth, as well as the smaller towns and villages where Jesus taught, ministered, and lived.

But the Holy Land is not a museum enclosed in amber. We will also hear from the people who live and work there—Israeli and Palestinian—about what their lives are like. We will meet with Palestinian Anglicans, and worship with them, and we will learn about the issues that affect their lives. Our faith is an incarnate one—God comes among us in a particular time and place and context, and learning about the context of our sibling Anglicans and how they live out their faith can be life-changing.

Links to the proposal and the itinerary are below. The cost of the trip, minus air fare, is \$3000.

The only additional costs to you are soda, if you want to pay for it, at meals, and an entirely optional single room fee. Right now, airfare to Tel Aviv is trending cheaper than it has in the past—you can book a round trip from the NYC area for under \$2000 for these dates.

If you feel called to go, but money is an obstacle, please reach out to me and Bishop DeDe. Scholarship money is available.

If you'd like more information, or just to talk about this opportunity--Iyad Qumri, our tour guide, will be visiting CNY June 12-14. You are invited to have dinner with us on June 12 at Grace, Syracuse from 5-8pm or at St. John's, Ithaca on June 14 from 5-8pm, to learn more. Please RSVP here.

For me, my pilgrimage to the Holy Land has been the North Star that has oriented my faith and ministry for over twenty years. It transformed my understanding of God, myself, and what the Christian life means. I would love for you to join us and experience this for yourself.

In peace,
Rev. Canon Megan Castellan

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iTMvfj11Z3vuKDhhgzZtCubsjiQvIdU-/view?usp=sharing>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1srYAIyC00-a6IzcixWX-r8a4pMPckz2x/view?usp=sharing>

Manisha Sinha Press Release

Manisha Sinha Press Release: Manisha Sinha will present "A New History of Slavery and Emancipation" as a way to commemorate Juneteenth, Friday, June 19th, at 7pm at the Catherine Cummings Theatre, 16 Lincklaen Street, Cazenovia, NY. The talk is free and open to the public. Sales of her books and a book signing will follow. Pre-registration is encouraged using QR code or by visiting the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum website (<https://www.nationalabolitionhalloffameandmuseum.org>).

Sinha researches and writes about the global histories of slavery, abolition, and feminism and the history and legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The recipient of a recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 2022, her numerous books include *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, which won the Frederick Douglass Book Prize and was long listed for the National Book Award for Non-Fiction, and most recently, *The Rise and Fall of the Second American Republic: Reconstruction, 1860-1920*. Reviews of her books have appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, among others. She has been interviewed by the national and international press, and has written for *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Time Magazine*, *CNN*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Nation*, and *The Huffington Post*. Sinha is currently the Draper Chair in American History at the University of Connecticut after teaching at the University of Massachusetts for over twenty years where she was awarded the Chancellor's Medal, the highest honor bestowed on faculty.

This event is sponsored by the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum, located in Peterboro, NY, which honors American abolitionists and abolition history. The museum is open to the public weekends 12 - 4PM June through October. The NAHOF website lists an exciting range of programming for 2026 as well as resources focused on NAHOF's mission which, Honors antislavery abolitionists, their work to end slavery, and the legacy of that struggle, and strives to complete the second and ongoing abolition - the moral conviction to end racism. For more information, please contact nahofm1835@gmail.com



Thank You, Lord

Oh Lord, we come to you in June
To thank you for the past half year
For your grace and blessings, we attune
Through every smile and every tear

We praise you for the warmth of summer
And gentle breezes fill our lungs
We pray your love will always number
Cause in you alone our heart has sung.

Singing a Journey of Freedom: Songs of Slavery and Emancipation



Tuesday, June 16, 7PM
Hope Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church
751 South Street, Utica, NY

Free and open to the public
Reception following

Please consider a donation of non-perishable food to the Hope Chapel Food Program

*Sponsored by the National Abolition
Hall of Fame and Museum, Peterboro, NY*

Register using QR code or
at <https://www.nationalabolitionhalloffameandmuseum.org>



Singing a Journey of Freedom: Songs of Slavery and Emancipation Concert

**7 PM, June 16th, Hope Chapel A.M.E.
Zion Church, 751 South St. Utica, NY.**

This event is free, all are welcome!

Led by Dr. Kathy Bullock, the concert features the duo Mat Callahan and Yvonne Moore, and the Jubalo Singers performing works drawn from the Songs of Slavery and Emancipation project—a book, CD, and film by Mat Callahan, about songs of resistance, hope, and freedom composed more than a century ago and arranged for modern audiences.

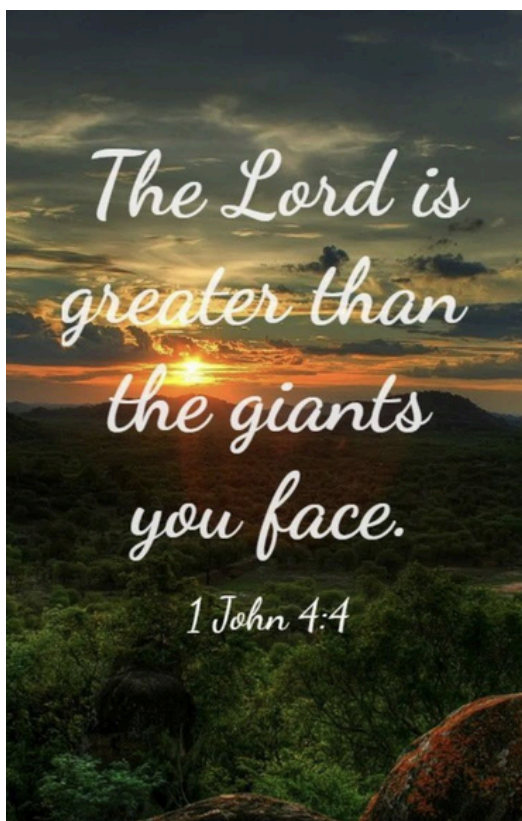
“These songs were buried for over a century, but they never lost their power.” Says Dr. Bullock, “Traveling the actual routes of the Underground Railroad—standing in the places where enslaved people sang, prayed, and fled toward freedom—transforms this music from history into lived experience. This tour is an invitation to hear those voices again, together.”

Underground Railroad stops include Lexington, KY; Cleveland, OH; Niagara Falls, NY; Peterboro, NY; Lake Placid, NY; Greensboro, VT; Northampton, MA; Torrington, CT; and Harper’s Ferry, WV. At each site, concerts and workshops will celebrate the music’s historical context and its enduring call for justice. The tour coincides with America’s 250th anniversary, focusing the national story on the voices of those who sang for true liberty.

The National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum, located in Peterboro, NY, is pleased to sponsor this event and equally pleased to collaborate with Reverend Baugh and Hope Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church to bring this concert to the community. A reception will follow the concert.

Registration is suggested via QR code or by visiting the National Abolition Hall of Fame website, www.nationalabolitionhalloffameandmuseum.org. Please consider bringing a donation of non-perishable food to support the Hope Chapel Food Program.

A Quote



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).

June Thanksgivings

Birthdays:

Philip Michelson (06/05), Drew Brockway (05/06), Morgan Donahue (06/06), Janet O'Flynn (06/10), Sharon Stevens (06/10), Karen Baase (06/13), Peter Balakian (06/13), Maureen Fox (06/16), Susan Cerasano (06/17), Max Michelson (06/17), Mollie Michelson (06/18), Andrew Robertson (06/19), Mattison Gunther (06/22), Jon Speer (06/25), Anne Perry (06/26), Alexander Linden (06/29).

Baptism Anniversaries:

Jessica Rivington (06/03), Linden Muller (06/09), George Geier III (06/14), Barbara Page (06/17), Paul Schult (06/20), Courtney Trueworthy (06/23), Maxwell Johnson (06/25).

Marriage Anniversaries:

Garry & Tracy Fountain (06/03), Susan & George Geier III (06/03), Rachel & Jeff Knapp (06/05), Fay & Harold Cole (06/12), Christine & Jeffrey Tuttle (06/22), Janet & Donnel O'Flynn (06/28), Pamela Novak & Manuel Lopez Zafra (06/28).

A Quote

“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.”

– Winston Churchill

Prayers of the People as of June 3rd

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, 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.

For the Departed: Dana Wratten

A Quote

“God sent his singers upon the earth, with songs of sadness & of mirth, that they might touch the hearts of men, & bring them back to heaven again.”

– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church Vestry Minutes Summary April 26, 2026

Present: Debbie Barker, Martha Berry, Brooks Cato (presiding), Connie Harsh, Kate Hooks, Jana Laxa, Kerry Linden, Mike Loranty, Valerie Morkevicius, Rose Novak, John Orr, Jane Welsh

On Zoom: John Bowen

Call to Order

The meeting began at 11:42 a.m. in the parish hall. Rose Novak opened the meeting with a prayer.

Clerk's Report

The minutes of the March 22nd meeting were approved as submitted in final draft. Approval was moved by Debbie Barker; seconded by John Orr.

Treasurer's Report

John Bowen reported the following:

— In general:

“There were some notable figures and one major issue in the current reports which I will begin to explain below. Pledge Income remained ahead of schedule largely due to some early bulk pledge payments. There was an unusually large Non-Designated Income of \$16,000. Special Collections were strong in March. The expense side was impacted by the seasonally adjusted village utility prices and lingering cold weather. Clergy Expenses and Property/Casualty Insurance lines were unusually high and require further explanation below. The Balance Sheet showed decline in all UIF accounts and the MML account. March was a generally down month in the stock market.

The Balance Sheet showed a negative balance in the NBT Checking account. This was an artifact resulting from the time gap between Church Windows data and real time bank balances. Checks written in Church Windows show immediately as a debit to the account before they are signed, mailed, and cashed by billers. If checks are written before deposits are entered into Church Windows, balances may appear dangerously low, or even negative. The actual NBT balance on 3/31 was **\$26,889.96.**”

—Benefits Bill Pay Problem:

The Treasurer continued his Report: “In Fall 2025, as directed by the Diocese, St. Thomas’ transitioned to an electronic format, Benefits Bill Pay, for payment of clergy pension, health insurance, and church property & liability insurance. We missed several payments, following the transition, in late 2025. We made up those payments in January 2026. That catch up made us right with billing but will appear as excess Clergy Expense and Property Ins. on the Treasurer’s Report for the remainder of the year, a minor annoyance for bookkeeping.

A much bigger, and potentially damaging, issue occurred at the end of March when we were electronically billed and paid a bill of **\$37,648**. This came to light during the week of 4/19.

Fortunately, we had funds to cover this excess payment and the NBT balance never went below **\$20,000**. We have been promised a refund check of **\$34,958** (the excess over the correct bill) due to arrive this week.

I will be reviewing all invoices, statements, and processes associated with this account to see that all prior billing is correct, corrective action is taken, and place safeguards against recurrence.”

There was a motion by Jane Welsh to receive the Treasurer’s Report; Valerie Morkevicius seconded the motion. The vestry voted to approve the motion.

Rector's Report

Brooks Cato commented that it seemed a long time since Easter, even though it was only a few weeks back. He wanted to thank everyone who worked to make Easter “happen,” from Dianne and the musicians through to Parish Life. Additionally, Brooks noted that Bishop Duncan-Probe will be with us at the May 31st gospel service. On this occasion a substantial group of persons will be confirmed, reaffirmed, and received by the Bishop. One of them remarked to Brooks that when they first entered the church, on a weekday when nobody was around, that it “smelled like church” and seemed like a welcoming environment, even though the building was empty at the time.

Wardens' Report

Jane Welsh stated that she wanted to offer a shout-out to Valerie Morkevicius for her excellent presentation on “Just War.” She also thought that the Easter Week services had been remarkable. Debbie Barker shared these sentiments, stating that this year’s services were really lovely.

Commission Reports

Rectory Building Project: Brooks Cato stated that he would probably have more to report at the next meeting. For the moment, he has phoned Birdsell (painters) and again requested a quote for the exterior painting of the rectory. He has also contacted Brian Treiffesen and asked him to come by so that they can do a walk-through of the rectory. Additionally, Brooks mentioned that he had repaired some damage to the fencing in the backyard of the rectory. Lastly, the dryer in the rectory is making high-pitched noises, but Brooks has attempted to see whether he could address the issue himself. If this continues, more professional help might have to be called in. In a short discussion that followed, Brooks suggested that Connie Harsh and Valerie Morkevicius would work with the Buildings Commission to explore renewable energy options for the church.

Old Business

- *Directory Update:* Brooks Cato spoke with the company preparing the directory. He has opted for the simplest design they offer and hopes that soon we will receive proofs so that we can check the contact information for accuracy.
- *Security Camera Update:* Mike Loranty confirmed the details of the system that would make sense for St. Thomas’. (Mike walked the vestry through this information at the March meeting.) Brooks noted two locations at which the cameras could be mounted. Debbie Barker made a motion to spend up to \$750 for the project, with the understanding that there might also be some incidental costs that come with the installation of the system. Valerie Morkevicius seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- *Kitchen Windows:* Brooks Cato reported that the new kitchen windows are being manufactured and, hopefully, they will be installed sometime over the summer. As it turns out, the original donations for the stove should cover much of the cost. The original donor has offered to provide further assistance if they do not.

New Business

- *Ramshaw Scholarships:* Brooks Cato reminded the vestry that this is the time of the year when the vestry begins to gather paperwork for the annual scholarship awards, which are normally given out in June. We will be advertising details in Tidings.
- *Convention Delegates:* The annual diocesan convention will take place on October 17th in Watertown. Debbie Barker and John Orr offered to serve as delegates. Jane Welsh moved that the vestry confirm these nominees; Martha Berry seconded the motion. The vestry voted to approve the delegates.

Continued from Page 13

- *Volunteer Appreciation:* The vestry briefly discussed ways to acknowledge all of the wonderful work that is being done across the parish to make the St. Thomas' community flourish.
- *Announcements:* Announcements were made. These included the Ellie Weyer funeral, which is scheduled for May 9th. Friday Night Lights is returning soon. Debbie Barker mentioned that there are still spaces for the Robin Wall Kimmerer event sponsored by the diocese, but registration is required.
- *Next meeting:* The next vestry meeting is set for May 24th.
- *Prayer Leader:* Kerry Linden volunteered to offer prayer at the opening of the May meeting.

Jane Welsh moved to end the meeting; everyone seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 12:33 p.m.

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 and wear it with pride!



Happy Highlight



Congrats to the 11 candidates confirmed, received, or reaffirmed by Bishop DeDe Duncan-Probe! That's our biggest class in almost 20 years!

Photo Credit: Beth MacKinnon

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.



Dental Drive

The Oral Health Partnership of Madison County is hosting a Dental Drive to help stock local food pantries with essential oral health supplies! Donated toothbrushes, toothpaste, and dental floss can be left in the labeled box in the entryway of the church through June 12.



A Quote

June's Warm Embrace: As the days grow warmer in June, may you feel God's loving embrace wrapped around you, providing comfort and strength.

– thinkaboutsuchthings.com



Upcoming Events

St. Thomas' Summer Schedule Begins

June 14: Rally on the Village Green at 1:00 pm

June 28: Vestry Meeting



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!



Sermon for the Sixth Sunday of Easter: I Peter 3:13-22 & John 14:15-21:

The Rev. Brooks Cato

Every so often, a line from those readings sticks out in a way I've never noticed before. This week it's I Peter: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you." An accounting for the hope that is in me? Doesn't that assume there is hope within me? I know I should have hope that all things'll be made right, goodness will prevail, God's in control, etc. etc. etc. I may not always be a good Christian, but I'm always human, and humans can have a hard time with hope. There's so much that keeps us up at night, turns our hairs white, and cuts into our life spans. But Christian tradition stakes a particular claim to hope. Hope that all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well...for the universe, sure, for our species, maybe, but not so surely for me as an individual. That's pretty scary and isn't exactly the most hope-breeding thought.

But there's more going with Christian hope here than just "what's in it for me." I mean, yes, there's the peace which passes understanding, the love of God, the meaning everyday life gets imbued with, that sort of stuff's personally satisfying and enriching, but the real beauty of this Body is what it does in relationship with God and the world. God's bigger than my interests, and Christianity's bigger than me. And the great Body of Christ of which each of us are part, it's bigger than the individuals that make it. We're part of something bigger. And this big, ancient, new Body intended to serve God and serve neighbor, it's at its best when each of us are, too. But as just one part, what can any one person do to make a difference? Our Bible stories are chock full of one person doing stuff for good or for ill that makes a difference. Jesus is just one man (albeit a rather significant one). Pilate's just one man. So were Cain, and Adam, and Paul who blamed Adam for the entire fallen state of humanity. Sarah made a difference as just one woman. So did Mary and Elizabeth and Deborah. But those pretty significant protagonists (and antagonists) are immortalized in scripture.

The big names make for wonderful stories, but when it comes down to our big world and our great Body, most of us aren't listed that high in the playbill. I'm not. Most of us aren't. We're just people. Or, to use the language of Paul, not all of us are eyes or heads or hands. Some of us are gall bladders and tailbones and pinky toenails. But small as we may be, insignificant as our actions may feel, we're still part of a Body that does great things. Our history's smeared with main characters with miraculous stories, significant figures whose witness inspires us with that main character energy and a whole lot more influence than most of us'll ever muster. But extraordinary witness from extraordinary people isn't all that surprising. Inspiring, perhaps, but we expect the greats to be great.

I'm more interested in the smaller saints of our calendar. (Saints in the Episcopal Church, by the way, aren't perfect people. They're regular people that responded to their world with extraordinary faith.) We don't expect -- or we're less likely to expect -- the mundane to be special. And y'all, we've got a whole calendar of those kinds of mundane saints! There's Emily Marlbone Morgan, a layperson who advocated for the working poor, especially working women, and helped them take vacations that otherwise would've been out of reach: saint of the church. Or James Solomon Russell, a once enslaved man who earned an education, became a priest, teacher, and church planter: saint of the church. Or Marina the Monk, born a woman probably in the 5th Century AD, who lived as a faithful male monk with a male name and a male haircut: saint of the church. Much to the chagrin of Thomas Cranmer, there's almost as many of these saints as there are days in the year. Our Body cares what everyday people get up to, people who fix what needs fixing or approach their regular life like it's the sacred calling it is. One person may not change the whole world, but one person can affect part of it. We are those everyday saints. We may feel too small to matter or make a difference, but in this Body, we're no less important than the tiniest bit of salt keeping cells in equilibrium, no less helpful than lipids surrounding nerve fibers, no less sacred than rods and cones lining the back of an eye. Millions of tiny parts make up this great

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Body, a network within a network not just alive but thriving, resisting, meeting horrors and joys with grace and, yes, even with hope, and doing it together.

I know this may sound like a different kind of sermon than what I've been preaching lately, but it's not, not really. We've watched as one man's made a lot of difference. If you're anything like me, when that late night doomscroll takes over, I feel smaller and smaller as the enormities of this era wash over me. Intellectually, I know it's not on me. Spiritually, I know it's not on me, either. But still, despair works its way in, and if I'm not careful, instead of trying to figure out how to be helpful, I question if anything I would do would even matter. And then I remember a forgettable saint, or one of you asks what you can do, and I'm jolted out of my wallow and reminded that, oh yeah, I'm supposed to help instill some hope or something, but where exactly am I supposed to find it to show you? Turns out, it's in the same places you find hope. In lovely people helping their little corners, aware of but not consumed by great evils. My body can't do much against those great evils, but our Body can.

Jesus says, "if you love me, you will keep my commandments." He doesn't say, "and that'll fix everything." We gotta trust that other parts of this Body are keeping his commandments, too. Lungs breathing without thought, feet taking us where we're needed most, hands serving, hearts pumping, mitochondria powerhousing. All these quotidian saints working together've got great potential to change the world a corner at a time, and maybe even instill some hope while we're at it. And so many ache for that hope right now. I don't know how much we can give them, but I know every last one of us living with that ember of hope still burning in spite of all the reasons it shouldn't, I know that kind of stubborn hope is contagious. The litany of headlines isn't a reason to let that ember suffocate; that litany's a signpost pointing us to those who need our hope the most.

What a relief it is to know we don't have to save the world. But we do have to hold onto hope. That hope'll carry our small stories to places and people we can't imagine, and those stories and the hope they carry may just be the boost one of those main characters needs. Or maybe one of you will be that main character, that hero or heroine, supported by forgettable, inconsequential, world-shattering witnesses riding the pews. Maybe. So don't lose hope. Get angry, feel your heart break, stand for mercy and justice, but don't lose hope.

On the Lighter Side





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

June Schedule of Servers

JUNE	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS	COFFEE HOUR HOSTS
7	1st: Jane Welsh 2nd: Joan ford	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Kim Cataldo	Diane Rich Krause	Jana Laxa	Linda Jenks
14 Rite One	1st: Martha Berry 2nd: Linda Jenks	Barbara Bowen	Ed Page	Colleen McNeerney	Diane Rich Krause	Linda Jenks	Anne Perring
21	1st: Marueen Fox 2nd: Debbie Barker	Susan Cerasano	Ed Page	Colleen McNeerney	Diane Rich Krause	Debbie Barker	Sheila Hathaway
28	1st: Kerry Linden 2nd: Kristen Strohmeier	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Kate Hooks	Diane Rich Krause	Colleen McNeerney	Kate Lucey



Orderings

June 2026

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