November 2026

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

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church

Tidings

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

The Rector's Column

With all the uncertainty in the ether these days, I suspect y'all're as on-edge about the prospects of the future as I am. I'll keep it brief this month and let the Prayer Book do the talking. Almighty God, to whom we must account for all our powers and privileges: Guide the people of the United States in the election of officials and representatives; that, by faithful administration and wise laws, the rights of all may be protected and our nation enabled to fulfill your purposes; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer, p 821; Prayer for an Election)



Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer, p 820; Prayer for our Country)



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

Rector:
The Rev. Brooks A. Cato
Brooks.cato@gmail.com

Director Of Music:
Dianne Adams McDowell

Parish Administrator & Christian Ed:
Kristyn Crossway

Wardens:
Debbie Barker, Sr.
Mike Loranty, Jr.

Vestry Members:
Connie Harsh ‘27
Valerie Morkevicius ‘27
Jana Laxa ‘27
Aiden Smith ’28
Kate Hooks ‘28
Martha Berry ‘28
Becky Mosella ‘29
Lynn Cooper ‘29
Evelyn Hart ‘29

Clerk Of Vestry:
Susan Cerasano.

Treasurer:
John Bowen

Sexton:
Barbara Hicks

Tidings Editor:
This could be YOU!

In This Issue:

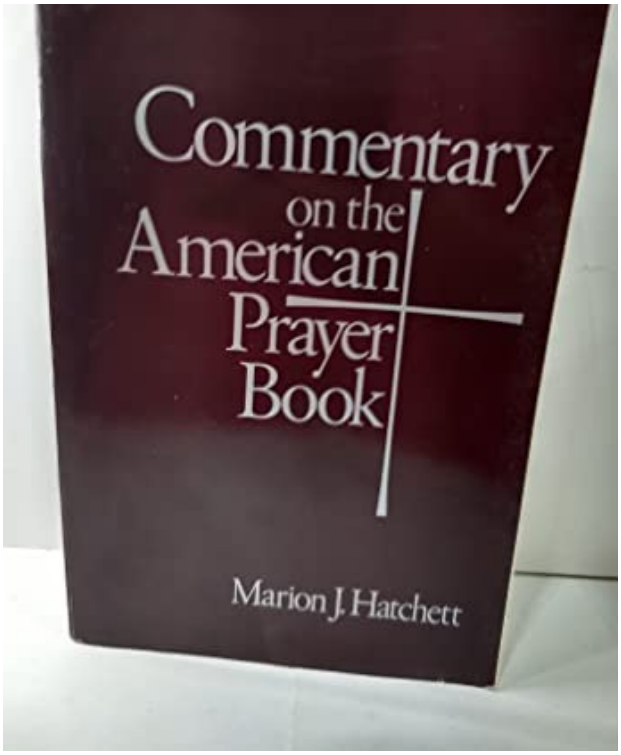
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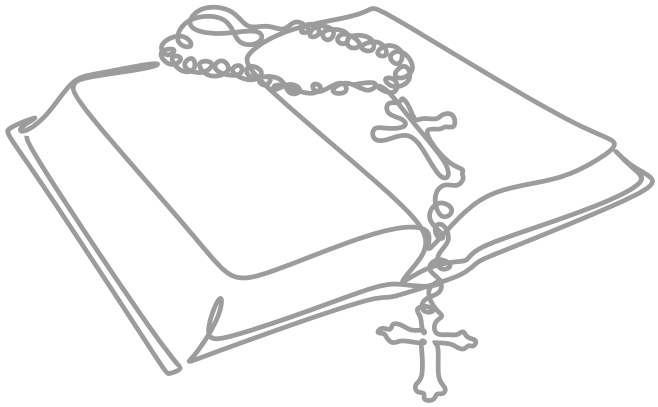


Nave Gazing

There's a reference book Episcopal seminarians keep close at hand, and while it's somewhat lacking in plot and character development, it's an incredible resource to help understand the Prayer Book and how it got that way. Marion Hatchett's Commentary on the American Prayer Book was published shortly after the release of the "new" 1979 Book of Common Prayer we use every Sunday. Hatchett was an Episcopal priest and a seminary professor; the bulk of his career was spent teaching liturgy and music at the School of Theology at Sewanee. As one of the primary crafters of both the 1979 BCP and the 1982 Hymnal, he was well-positioned to produce such an in-depth work on the end result. We keep a copy in the Parish Hall Library for your very own perusal! The two prayers on the first page of this newsletter have different histories, but they didn't emerge out of thin air! The Prayer for an Election has a shorter story. It was written for inclusion in Prayers New and Old, a collection of prayers published by Forward Movement (the same folks that do the Forward Day by Day we keep in the back of the church) in the late 1950s.

The other, the Prayer for our Country, has a longer story. As Hatchett describes it, "Though this prayer has sometimes been attributed to George Washington, it was written in 1882 by the Rev. George Lyman Locke during a visit at the home of William Reed Huntington, the most active member of the commision for Prayer Book revision which issued the Book of 1892. Included in the 1883 proposals in the service for Thanksgiving Day, this prayer did not enter the Prayer Book until 1928, when it was accepted in the emended form." True, the book can be a tad dry and sometimes includes more information than you may need (and sometimes less than you'd like), but if you've got a liturgical itch needs scratching, feel free to sit with our copy and absorb some niche Episcopal history!





On The Lighter Side

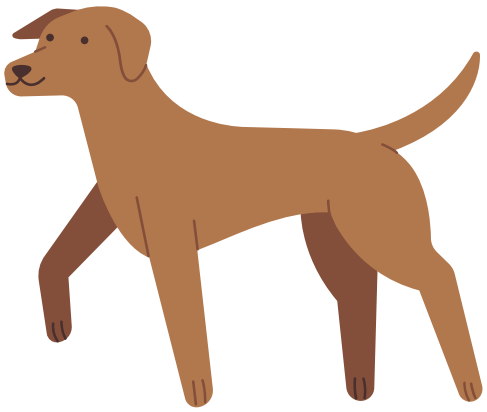


"Yikes! Somebody ask him if they take plastic."



The CARTOON KRONICLES

Maybelle the Parish House Pup approved today's joke.



Eco Friendly News

St. Thomas' and the Hamilton Library have started a community compost pile behind the Parish Hall! It's easiest to access the compost from the Madison Lane side of the church property, and we require only fruit and veggie scraps.
No meat, no oils, no salt, and no plastic bags, please!











Upcoming Events & Information:



Village Clay is hosting a **sip n paint fundraiser** to benefit **Chenango Water Exercise Group** on Monday, November 9th. 🎨 to reserve your spot this month before the event, please email Madelyn Lorraine at cweg2020@gmail.com.

Looking for a warm meal?

Pancake breakfast at Madison Methodist Church. Offering pancakes, sausage, scrambled eggs, home fried potatoes, beverages. Also featuring speciality pancakes and assorted toppings. Free will offering. Last breakfast in 2026!



Thanksgiving bags **need to be returned to the church by November 16th**



List of items for the bag:

- Cranberry Sauce
- Turkey Gravy
- Stuffing Mix
- Canned Corn
- Canned Green Beans
- Mashed Potato Mix
- BOXED Bread Mix
- BOXED Pie Crust
- Pie Filling

OPTIONAL Items:

- Soup
- Peanut Butter
- Jelly
- Oatmeal Variety Pack

Helpful Resources for November

HEAP Enrollment begins November 2nd 2026.

According to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the 2026–2027 Regular HEAP benefit will begin accepting applications November 2, 2026. HEAP can help you offset the ever growing cost of heating your home. You can apply by fax, by mail, in person, or through the official NYS portal (myBenefits.ny.gov)

Madison Healthy @ Home program

Madison Healthy @ home program offers comprehensive healthy home assessments. Homes are assessed and repairs/renovations are done where health and safety issues have been identified. Priority is given to privately owned, low-income rental and/or owner- occupied housing, especially in units and/or buildings where families with children, older adults sixty-two (62) years and older, or families with persons with disabilities.







Vestry Minutes
August 23, 2026

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

Call to Order:
The meeting began at 11:41 a.m. in the parish hall. Brooks Cato opened the meeting with prayer.

Clerk's Report:
Kate Hooks moved that the minutes of the June 28th meeting be approved as submitted. Jane Welsh seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report
John Bowen submitted the following Report:
"I am holding off circulating the July Treasurer's Report until data entry and corrections in Church Windows are complete. I have reviewed bills and payments. All are up to date and there are no surprises. Kristyn is coming up to speed on the bookkeeping end of Church Windows. She has made remarkable progress in meeting the challenge of an unwieldy program.
The Balance Sheet for July showed small declines across investments in step with the general market. I will send full reports later in the week when they are complete.
We are moving $30,000 from the Historic Preservation UIF account to cover the expenses approved by the Vestry for Rectory painting.
The Budget and Finance Commission completed the annual audit to be submitted later in the meeting.
We will be starting to sketch out a 2027 budget over the next few weeks."
Valerie Morkevicius moved that the Report be received as submitted; Debbie Barker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Rector's Report:
Brooks Cato shared a note from Linda Jenks, thanking the vestry for organizing the parish picnic while she is away. Thanks too to Katie Smith who has taken on a substantial share of this organizing work. Additionally, Brooks announced that he was in the process of applying for two grants which, if successful, would help to defray the costs of the ongoing church projects. More information will be announced in due time.

Wardens' Report:
Debbie Barker wished to thank the members of the choir who come each Sunday, during the summer, to sing. Although it is a more informal season, their participation adds greatly to the service, she stated. Brooks Cato concurred and expressed his own thanks for the music that is part of the weekly service. Jane then commented on how nice it is that all is well with the church, overall, at this moment.

Commission Reports
Rectory Building Project: Brooks Cato brought vestry members up to date regarding the current work on the rectory. He noted that he had received a quote from the painters for $1050 to cover the costs of carpentry work. This is well within the approved budget for the repairs. Brooks then explained that he hadn't yet received a final quotation for the repairs on the masonry work, the difficulty being that some small jobs can be handled by the painters while other repairs will require a mason. Brooks also cautioned the vestry that a new problem had emerged, namely that the walls adjacent to the stairs which lead down through the Bilco doors into the basement were beginning to collapse in one area. Apparently, this is caused by cracked cinder blocks. The final problem relates to the pitch of the roof over the garage. The latter needs to be corrected by a professional roofer. In terms of the interior of the rectory, there is a substantial list of small, but significant repairs that need to be made. Initially, Brooks suggested that paying $70/hr.

Continuation of Commission Report:

for actual work (a rate suggested by Brian Treffeisen) plus the costs of the materials might be the best way to address this group of renovations. He asked that the vestry approve a budget for $15,000 (covering labor and materials) for this portion of the work, with an increase, if needed, once the initial sum is spent. Brief discussion followed, and the vestry concluded that setting a slightly higher cap might be more useful. Debbie Barker moved that the cap be set at $20,000 for Phase 1 of the work, with funding to be extended thereafter, if needed. Martha Berry seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Annual Audit Report: Debbie Barker who, along with Adger Williams and Rick Geier, led the preparation of the Report, reviewed the essential elements of the document. She noted that the parish needed to work on two matters. The first consists of a review of the parish insurance, for which an inventory of the properties (including furnishings and other items, both clerical and secular) needs to be prepared. No such document seems to have been created previously; however, Kate Hooks and others have thankfully agreed to prepare one and Kate has even developed a spread sheet so that the list will be in good order. ("It's coming along quite quickly," Kate said.) Then Debbie Barker explained thathe second matter that needs to be addressed involves the necessity of having a policy statement on file explaining how the plate is handled. In fact, St. Thomas' has had a procedure in place for some time, but there must also be a written policy in place. The good news is that a formal policy is in draft currently, even though it needs to be completed and filed. In conclusion, Debbie Barker was pleased to note that the cash section agreed, to the penny, with St. Thomas' financial records. Nevertheless, she admitted that we need to complete the things that were left undone following last year's audit. John Orr wondered why the tasks had been allowed to go unaddressed. Debbie Barker stated that they escaped the notice of the parish auditors, mostly because they were never assigned to any specific person. On a related note, through his diocesan committee work, John Orr informed the vestry of certain future changes in the reporting
of "human remains interred on the property"—specifically Item 14 on page 7 under the heading "Questions for Leadership." Because answering this item (and others) can be bypassed if there have been no changes from the previous year's audit, this option has led to numerous information gaps. The Property Committee of the Diocese is investigating these issues. At the end, John Bowen congratulated those who had prepared the Audit Report, as did the vestry members.

Old Business:

Directory Update: Brooks Cato reported that the project is ongoing, but some progress is being made.

Security Camera Update: Brooks Cato stated that the cameras still need to be installed. It was decided that perhaps Brian Treffeisen could provide support and/or guidance here.

Stewardship Sunday & Speakers: Brooks Cato announced that Stewardship Sunday will be on October 25th, with parishioners to speak on the three Sundays in advance of that. He commented that this year, given the rising costs of fuel and other items, it will be significant to remind donors that extra assistance would be appreciated. Jane Welsh stated that the church has often been pleasantly surprised in the past when an appeal for increased need went out.

Continuation of Vestry Minutes:

Debbie Barker commented that this is one of the places in which a good audit report can help to remind parishioners of the many areas into which funding goes. Connie Harsh asked whether some guidance could be provided for Sunday speakers; amongst other things, perhaps areas of emphasis and a time limit could be suggested.

New Business:

Vestry Formation: Brooks Cato again corrected the list of those rotating off the vestry as including John Orr, Kerry Linden, Rose Novak, and Jane Welsh. He reviewed where the state of play seems to be. As of the meeting, the committee was in the process of finalizing the slate.

Christian Education: Brooks Cato was pleased to inform vestry members that Kristyn Crossway has volunteered to take on Christian Education. When asked whether this would require additional compensation Brooks explained that the activities "fall within her current number of hours," so her salary will remain the same. Brooks also mentioned that he had received an email containing the names of some students that might be willing to help on Sunday mornings.

Announcements: Announcements were made. Brooks Cato reminded everyone of the parish picnic on August 30th.

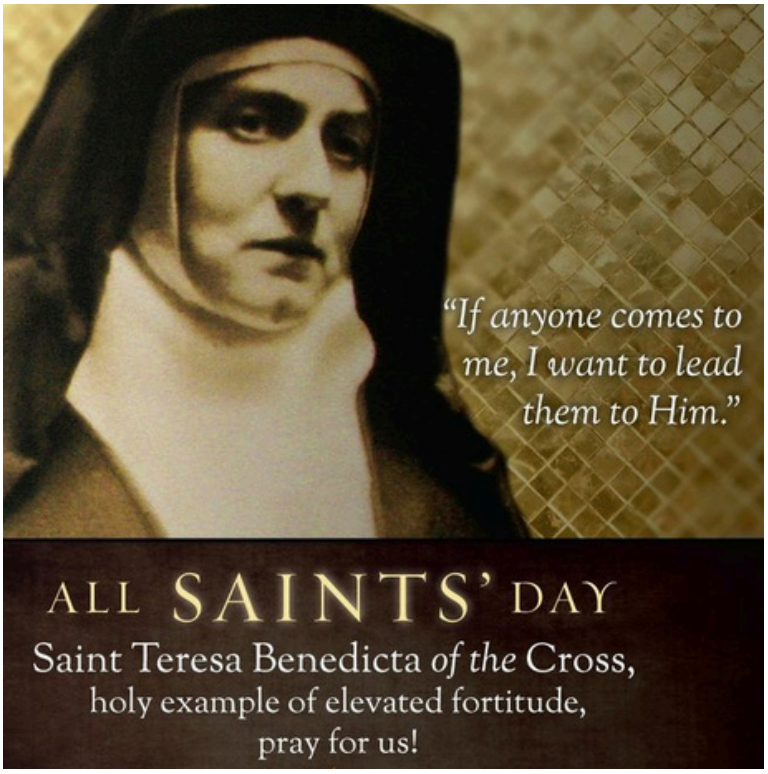
Annual Meeting: The meeting will be held on September 27th.

Debbie Barker moved to end the meeting; Jane Welsh seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 12:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Cerasano, Clerk









Prayers of the People as of Oct. 20th.

Ian Blanchard, Emily Carroll, Nan Dietrich, Loxie Davie, Everett Egginton, Kristen Ellis, Joan Fales, Lisa Gee & her children, Laura Ginter, Kaia Harding, Amanda Harlan, Michelle Heavner, Mike Hicks, David Hollis, Elizabeth Jones, Barb Kershaw, Hanna Kopecka, Everson Lamphier, Josephine Leposky, Mason McDowell, Pat Osowski, Jacob Rozbruch, Diny Rupp, Joe Rupp, Lynn Ryan, Patricia Tayntor, Paula Tayntor, Marilyn Thie, Ed Vantine, Becky Vinopal, Christine Watkins, Wanda Warren Berry, Deb Willis; the Blum Family, the family of David Day, The Dorgan family, Jerry & Roseann Fitzgerald, Anthony & Vincent Pacillo; Carol, Dylan, Gordon, Jan, Janice, Micaela, Paula, Scot, Shannon, and Susan.



Nady is still searching for a living liver donor

Several generous people have already come forward for Nady, but so far none have been a suitable match. This includes family in the U.S. and Egypt. Fill out the University of Rochester Liver Transplant Program's short, confidential form using the QR code on here. You can indicate that you would like to donate to Nady Abdal-Ghaffar. The family appreciates all who consider helping.



AA Meetings in Hamilton

TIME	NAME	LOCATION / GROUP	ADDRESS / PLATFORM	REGION
Monday, 7:00 PM	Hamilton on the Green	Hamilton on the Green — First Baptist Church	113 Broad Street 27 Broad Street	Hamilton
Wednesday, 7:00 PM	Colgate University	Shaw Wellness Institute	13 Oak Drive	Hamilton
Friday, 7:00 PM	Hamilton on the Green	Hamilton on the Green — First Baptist Church	113 Broad Street 27 Broad Street	Hamilton

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.

—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.

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!

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.



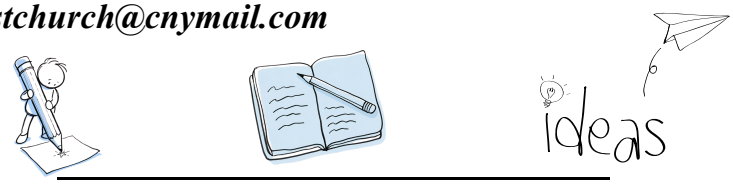
Zoom Etiquette

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.

Looking for Contributors

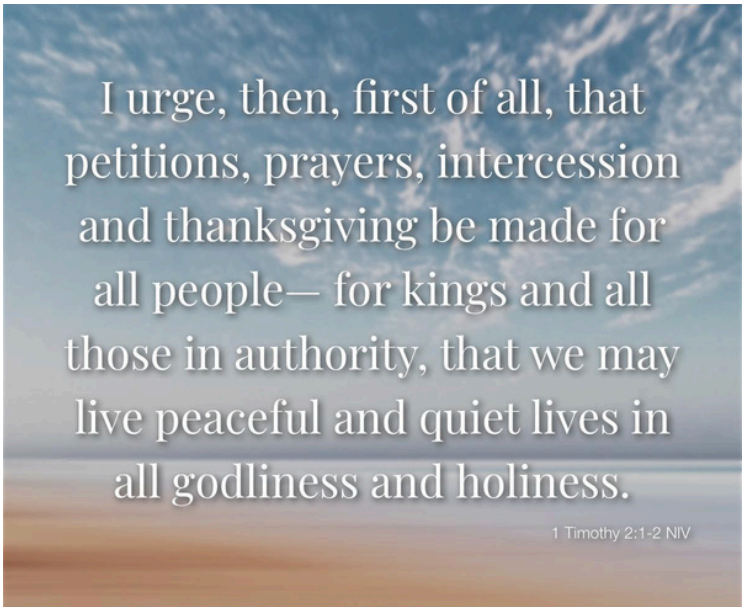
Interested in adding something to our monthly newsletter? We're always looking for contributors to spice up *Tidings* and add some variety! Pictures, poems, articles, book reviews, insights -- anything that's brought you closer to God. Please make submissions to the Church Office by the 20th of each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

We also need a new editor! If you think it's the right job for you, please contact Kristyn at stchurch@cnymail.com



Bible Study

The Wisdom of Solomon continues to guide our conversations in Bible Study, and we're finding ourselves digging into not just the words of the book but also the many places those words lead our curious minds. Join the fun every Thursday morning at 9:30 in-person or on Zoom!



Sermon for the Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost: Matthew 22:1-14
The Rev. Brooks Cato

Around this time last year, I watched a man get shot on live television. Earlier this year, I watched two people get shot while acting with kindness. I watched people that look like me (and more that don't) get dragged away by untrained men with covered faces. I watched as a tree older than my country was felled. I watched the wealthy broadcast their decadence. I watched books get banned by the thousands. I watched my neighbors deny evidence of torture done by our own people against our own people, and I watched their denials turn from justifying cruelty as a necessary evil to embracing cruelty as a necessary good. I watched children cry for their parents in courtrooms, I watched good people weigh who they could afford to stand up for, what was worth risking their safety for, what was worth risking their family's safety for. I watched a politician lie about immigrants eating pets and say he'd be happy to lie again if it furthered his cause. I watched people lap up the lie anyway. I watched trans people bear the weight of society's failings. I watched people reject the advice of scientists in favor of the ramblings of a syphilitic wrecking ball. I watched allies distance themselves. I watched the erosion of our nation's status. I watched the reality of this nation become a mockery of its founding. I watched the people we entrust with expertise get rejected in favor of vibes. I watched predatory, manipulative, abusive tactics deployed against regular people. I watched distrust replace goodwill, cruelty replace kindness, domination and sadism replace the better angels of our nature. I watched an unslakable thirst for suffering grow at the heart of all this rot. It grows bigger and hungrier, and the only thing that can stave off the hunger a little longer is the pain of those fed to it.

And like all things that consume so recklessly, there won't be enough of those we feed to this beast, so we're going to have to decide who to feed it next. And as I watch, the plausible deniability that everything's actually okay convinces many that all those rumors are just rumors, but at some point plausible deniability just becomes denial. With the Statue of Liberty one of our greatest allies sent a signal into the world on our behalf that we strive to be a lighthouse for the downtrodden, and with the plaque at its base, we repeated that invitation: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." The Mother of Exiles stands proud. Even when we've fallen short of that New Colossus, we've aspired to embody her. We continue to shine that invitation into the darkness, but that invitation's starting to sound a bit more like bait. But y'all know all that. You know what you've watched. You know what you've seen. And if your head isn't in the sand, you know where this is going.

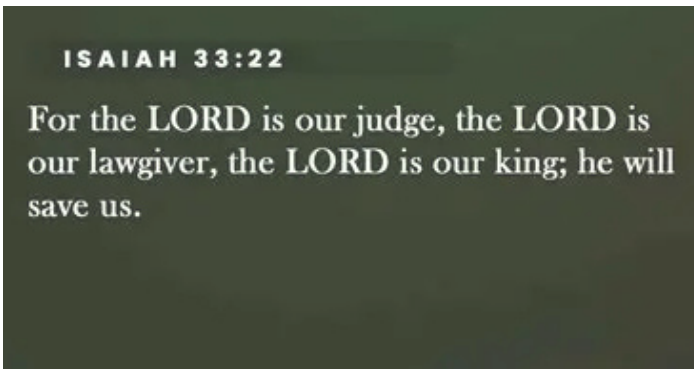
Before we go any further, today's parable needs some unpacking. It's easy to assume that if Jesus tells a parable, he's telling us how things should be. But not always. Remember that The Kingdom of Heaven is two things at once: it's that fully realized utopia we sure would like to get to, AND it's the not-yet world we live in now. The Kingdom of Heaven is where we do the business of living. So when Jesus says, "the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son," it's easy to assume the story that follows is about God, Jesus, and the people who rejected Jesus' invitation. But that assumption doesn't make sense; you end up with no one interested in Jesus, God burning down cities for the insult, and people only showing up through coercion, and even they're in danger of God's wrath for something they can't help.

This parable makes much more sense if this is an earthly king in the not-fully realized world. This is how things are, not how they should be. People don't reject invitations from beloved kings, but they sure can come up with excuses when he's not liked. And his son must've been a piece of work, too, for no one to consider the favor they'd garner by buttering up the royal family. At the very least, you'd expect some social climbers, but not even they show up. And we quickly understand why he's so disliked when rejections arrive in place of the usual sycophants. The king kills 'em and burns down their city. And when he replaces them with random people off the street, he's furious that one of those last-minute filler guests had the audacity to feast in anything shy of coat and tails. And for this great offense, the man is bound and cast into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

If that's our model, if that's our God, get me out of these robes and let's close up shop 'cause all that does is reinforce the cruelty we've been watching. That's saying we want your tired, your poor, your huddled masses bound hand and foot and cast into prisons in other countries or camps in our own. If only they'd immigrated the right way; if only they'd worn the right jacket. Oh, we know that kind of god all too well, a false idol king worried only with what he can gain from self-agrandizing, self-enriching abuse. In other words, this isn't the "wouldn't it be great if things were like this" kind of parable; it's the "isn't it awful things are like this" kind. At this banquet, you can chat with your coworkers about the execution you watched last night; you can learn new ways to belittle your enemies; you can toss someone out for wearing the wrong clothes or carrying the wrong papers or carrying the right papers suspiciously or caring how human beings are treated or loving your neighbor or quoting scripture or simply asking what Jesus would do.

The goodness I was raised on, flawed though it was, and the moral appeal to that goodness simply doesn't carry the weight it once did. What is true, what is just, what is honorable matters less than the idols cast before our eyes. I've watched as those idols that are so clearly idols've metastasized, consuming goodness and calling the resulting refuse morality.

But I've also watched as good people've pushed back. I've watched impassioned speeches. I've watched communities draw closer. I've watched love and hope slow attacks. I've watched propaganda fail. I've watched you stand in frightening places, and I've watched you feed frightened people. I've watched a lot in this Kingdom, and while it's certainly not where we want to end up, there's much here to remind us of the good that still can be. I've watched you clothe the naked, feed the hungry, defend the oppressed. I've watched you reject idols, I've watched you give when giving's hard, I've watched you sigh at headlines and somehow still find joy with each other. I've watched this banquet, and while one king still threatens with bloviating audacity, another promises there's hope yet in your hearts, kindness yet on your lips, and justice yet at your hands.



November Schedule of Servers

November	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS	COFFEE HOUR HOSTS
1st	1st:Adger Williams 2nd: Kristin Strohmeyer	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Emily H.H	Jana Laxa	Linda Jenks	Parish Life
8th	1st:Martha Berry 2nd:Rose Novak	Barbara Bowen	Ed Page	Emily H.H.	Jana Laxa	Debbie Barker	Parish Life
15th	1st:Joan Ford 2nd:John Orr	Wynn Egginton	Ed Page	Colleen McNerney	Diane Rich Krause	Linda Jenks	Erin Childers Loranty
22nd	1st:Kerry Linden 2nd:Emily H.H	Susan Cerasano	Ed Page	Colleen McNerney	Diane + Jana	Colleen McNerney	Maureen Fox
29th	1st:Maureen Fox 2nd:Jane Welsh	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Kate Hooks	Diane + Jana	Colleen McNerney	TBD

St Thomas's Episcopal Church
12 ½ Madison St.
Hamilton, NY 13346

Tidings

November 2026

