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Tidings



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

The Rector's Column

It's about this time of year that I start to get anxious. I love Fall. I love Winter. Leaves and snow filling the sky and piling up; it's all just so beautiful. I'm ready for sweaters and hot tea and blankets and cozy socks and hot soup.

November brings the Jazz Eucharist (which I love). It brings Thanksgiving (which I also love). And it brings a reminder that when big box stores started putting their decorations out in August, maybe they didn't have such a ridiculous Christmas head start as it once seemed. I'm still no fan of pre-Labor Day Christmas trees, but when November hits, I always wonder how we got here so fast.

There's a lot coming at us. November will bring its own obligations, and December, the year's end, and a new year's beginning all wait just around the corner. While it may seem like an impossible task, I'm going to try to find little moments for deep breaths this month. Maybe we all could use a pause in the many whirlwinds tossing us around. I suspect most of us are so busy that even cherishing a moment seems laughable. Who even has free moments anymore? Amen to that.

With that in mind, I'd like to invite y'all to try something with me this November. There's this old monastic practice where you say a short prayer or take a deep breath when you do some predetermined mundane thing. The classic example is to tie that prayer or breath to an everyday object you know you'll encounter often, like a doorknob, a light switch, or your car keys. Every time you touch that thing, take a deep breath and say your one-line prayer. Maybe it's as simple as "All shall be well," or you could get wild and go with "Thank you." You can always make up your own, too, so long as you remember it!

Maybe this November we've all got so much going that it's hard to imagine doing anything new. But especially when we're busy, we need to figure out ways to bring God into our everyday lives, even when our everyday lives aren't beatific visions. They're usually hectic and full. But maybe with this practice, we'll find God in a month's collection of tiny moments and everyday things.

—Brooks+

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Join the Conversation Bible Study

In October, we're tackling a few books: Hosea, First Thessalonians, and Romans.

Where: Hosea is among the minor prophets towards the end of the Old Testament. First Thessalonians squeezed into the New Testament with the Epistles. Romans is right after Acts in the New Testament.

What to Watch for: Hosea leans into God's love for God's people. First Thessalonians is an unusually warm letter from Paul. Romans is a deep theological treatise from Paul.

References: In Romans especially, Paul makes heavy use of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Content: Hosea wants the people to turn back to God. And Paul -- this is gonna sound wild -- also wants the people to turn back to God.

Lectionary: Hosea we might hear once a year. We encounter First Thessalonians predominantly at the end of Year A (this month!). Romans provides many of our readings in Year A as well, but only Chapter 8 gets read in full.

—Fr. Brooks

Sabbath Book

Traveling Mercies by Anne Lamott

This series of essays reflect on the difficulties of squaring being a Christian with being a regular ol' person out in the world. Lamott deals with loss, parenthood, dreadlocks, and a whole slew of other things. Delightful, moving, and accessible!

—Fr. Brooks

Nave Gazing

As most of you know, we've had more than our fair share of funerals at St. Thomas' this Fall. In our bulletins for those services, we always reprint a note from the Book of Common Prayer explaining the theology behind the service.

You'll find the Note on page 507. The entire thing is worth inwardly digesting, but for our purposes this month, I'm particularly interested in the very first sentence: "The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy." There are several pieces to unpack in this brief statement.

First, the service is a liturgy. It's a sacred event set aside for churches to do, and we put on those sacred events both for our own congregation and for the public. And, being a liturgy, there are set ways the service can be done. We've got options, but we don't have complete free rein.

Second, the service is "for the dead." As it turns out, this is a somewhat theologically complicated claim. There are many who claim the funeral service is for the living, and while there's definitely some truth in that, it doesn't paint the full picture. The majority of the prayers in the burial services center on the deceased. Depending on your understanding of things like Purgatory, prayers for the dead may feel like the most natural thing or the most horrendous thing in the world. In addition, while the prayers are centered on the deceased, they do refer back to us and our grief, joy, and love.

Finally, the service is "an Easter liturgy." The burial of the dead is entirely centered on our "sure and certain hope" in the story of Jesus and how it affects our lives. The Resurrection of Jesus and our own eventual resurrection play central roles, and there is significant emphasis on the arrival into the Paradise of God.

With such an emphasis on Resurrection, there are also symbols in the church that are attached to Easter-y things, namely white hangings and vestments along with the Paschal Candle. White symbolizes purity and holiness, and it's also used at Baptisms and Major Feast Days, such as All Saints', Christmas, and Easter. White is also the color of Jesus' burial garments. Vesting our church

and ourselves in white connects us to Christ's birth, life, death, and burial. And as we are buried with Christ, we are raised with Christ, too. White is used at several of the significant liturgical life events, marking nearly every stage of our existence with that connection to Christ's death and eventual Resurrection.

And, no matter how old you are or what kind of life you lived, it's the same vestments, the same prayers, the same candle for everyone. We're all in this together, one community celebrating, mourning, and rejoicing as a dedicated body.

—Fr. Brooks

Adult Confirmation Class

Interested in being Confirmed? Need a refresher on the Episco-basics? Just want a chance to hang out with some of the coolest folks Hamilton has to offer? Reach out to Fr. Brooks for more info!

It's Time to "FALL BACK!"

Daylight Savings Ends Sunday, November 5th

Jesus Christ would you look at the time



Hamilton Interfaith Thanksgiving Baskets

Share the love of Jesus by feeding local families in need this November.

Approximately 120 area families need Thanksgiving dinner this year, and our church can help! This is a coordinated effort between seven Hamilton churches, local businesses, and the Hamilton Food Cupboard. Distribution will occur on Nov 18th.

- All Thanksgiving tote bags have been taken. Way to go!!!!
- By Sunday November 12, return your tote full of Thanksgiving groceries to the pew at the back of the church. **Please avoid deliveries on the morning of Nov 11 when a funeral will take place.**

Checks for the purchase of turkeys are welcome. Suggested donation \$30. Make checks payable to St. Thomas' Episcopal Church with "Thanksgiving" in the memo. Put them in the offertory plate or in the designated gift box at the back of the church. **Deadline Nov 12.**

Make a Donation Online

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

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

When you go to the link above, you will fill out the donation form. In the Parish section, select "Hamilton: St. Thomas' Episcopal Church" and in the "Gift note/designation" line be sure to type pledge, deficit appeal, or wherever you'd like your donation to apply.

**Sermon for the Twenty-first
Sunday after Pentecost: Matthew
25: 15-22**

Proper 24

October 22, 2023

The Rev. Brooks Cato

I finished my high school career at an international boarding school, and one of the most beautiful things I've ever witnessed came from a pair of my classmates. Typically, in that two-year program, second-years were assigned first-year roommates. You needed someone to show you the ropes, teach you where things were, help you find the best times to sneak out. I never did that, of course, but theoretically that's what second-years were for. In my year, a student from Israel and another from Palestine became fast friends. They were drawn to each other by a sort of wary curiosity and ended up inseparable. And then, when it came time to request roommates for the coming year, they requested each other. And the school gave them their wish. Two kids entered this place with a history of being told they were mortal enemies, and they begged to live side-by-side while they could. Graduation was a heartbreaker. I've never cried harder than I did at graduations there. I got so close to so many people in such a short time, and then they all scattered to the far ends of Creation, possibly never to be seen again. But for the Israeli and Palestinian roommates, it was worse. Because they went home to the same corner of the world. And neither knew what would come of their friendship, but they both knew that required military service waited for one of them.

I've been trying desperately not to preach about this. I suppose I've been hoping beyond hope that things would change enough before I got around to saying something up here that I wouldn't need to say anything up here. But, that's just not the case. As Father Steve would say, I am very full of feelings. I'm angry. And I'm scared. And I'm heartbroken. I'm not confused, but I feel like I have to tell people I am. And I'm about as certain as I can be that I know what Jesus would say, but I'm wary about that confidence, and I'm trying to be extra careful about stepping on theological toes. I don't know if I'm any good at that, but I'm trying. If you're anything like me, you've seen horrendous pictures that you can't remove from your mind. You

imagine what you would do if you were in that situation. You thank God you aren't. Your heart breaks, and you wish there was something you could do. And your heart breaks again when you realize there's not much you can do. When governments go to battle, it's the regular people who suffer, always. It's not incidental collateral damage. It's whatever the governments involved have deemed an acceptable level of loss of human life. People in power know their citizenry is vulnerable and still, the world goes to war. News about Israel and Palestine is on my mind constantly. Even if you try to escape it, the news won't let you. Social media won't let you. And, my apologies, but this morning's preacher won't let you, either. It's actually because the stream of information, commentary, visuals, and opinions floods our lives that I feel compelled to say something, so please, bear with me.

I am not Jewish, neither by faith nor by family. I am not Muslim, and I am not Arab. I am American, and I am Christian. And that means there's a lot of my own stuff that doesn't apply. What Christian scripture says we should do doesn't apply to people that aren't Christian. So right away, my judgments about the situation argued from a Christian framework aren't all that helpful. And, I'm American. I have Opinions. This shouldn't surprise anyone. I have thoughts on how the world should be, but I've never lived in a context anything like the Middle East. I did visit Jerusalem, Palestine, and a whole bunch of the Israeli countryside on a pilgrimage ten years ago, but I only experienced a sliver. And what I witnessed was a combination of beautiful and abysmal. But, there are some things I do know, in spite of all those caveats. I know, for example, that The People of God, regardless of which People of God we're talking about, The People of God are always held to a higher standard by their religion. Muslims say God is fundamentally kind and loving. Jews say the greatest commandments are love God and love your neighbor. We say God is love. At that level there's not much difference. Everything else is detail. Or it should be.

This conflict is both new and old at the same time. It goes back a year, 50 years, 75 years, a millennia or three. Just depends on when you start keeping count. It goes all the way back to Abraham and a miraculous promise with a terrible spat of intrafamily jealousy. It goes back to so many offspring that the stars pale in

comparison. But the problem isn't just age-old fights. You know this. There's plenty of new developments, plenty of new jealousies and miracles and battles. To make it all worse, the entirety of the planet seems to be an expert. We each know exactly what Israel should do or the Palestinians or whoever pulls strings behind the scenes or not so behind the scenes. And the other side isn't just wrong, they're evil. And if you agree with them, then you must be evil, too. But that's just not so. There's an immense amount of terrible things happening, and it's happening and has happened from just about every direction. I am deeply suspicious of any reporting that puts all the blame or excuses all the actions of one side. If we could, and I know that's a big if, but if we could imagine the same things unfolding between two different peoples, maybe it'd be easier to sort out. It seems we're all suddenly way more invested than we've ever been before. Some of that, I think, has to do with the images we're seeing. War is horrifying, and it's difficult to process even so called "just" war. But, as a dingy bumper sticker I got from a trust-fund hippie in my college days says, "War is not Christ's way."

Like I said before, for people that don't follow Christ, that has no bearing on how they live. But we do, so it does. War is not Christ's way. Y'all know about "Turn the other cheek" and "thou shalt not kill." But expand that further. Injustice in this world doesn't have to end in killing. It often does, but it doesn't have to. Look to the unraveling of Apartheid in South Africa for how it can be done through Christ. Look at the reconciliation projects in Rwanda between people whose family members were killed and the men that killed them. Look to the Christmas Truce of 1914 European trenches. Peace can find a way to break through and wither horrific, cyclical, and systematic violence. You know, the primary mission of the Anglican Cathedral of Jerusalem, the primary mission is not to convert folks. It's to step into the breach and work for reconciliation. It's an extraordinary and dangerous mission, but they're committed regardless of what it costs them. We're immensely fortunate to live here. I was born in a weird part of Arkansas, but I wasn't born into war. I was born in a country that I love and that breaks my heart, but I wasn't born for war. I was born into division and hatred, but I wasn't born for slaughter. I don't even know if I can say "Thank God for that." Saying that says something I can't sign up

for about folks that were born elsewhere. But I can express my relief and my sadness and my disgust, and God will listen.

I've heard "render unto Caesar" my whole life. The Pharisees try to trick Jesus and he turns their trick into a theological opportunity. What's God's is God's and what's Caesar's is Caesar's. I've always kinda taken that to mean you should pay your taxes and do earthly things that don't amount to much 'cause in the scheme of things God's got bigger fish to fry. I'm not saying that's wrong, but I do wonder. Sure, taxes, we all need to pay our own share. It's the cost of living in a society. But what else do we render unto Caesar? Loyalty? We're sometimes too good at that. Patriotism? Sometimes patriotism means blindly following the will of the state, and that's no good. But sometimes patriotism means calling out Caesar's faults so the state can become the best version of itself, "a more perfect union" as the Founders said. At the same time, I also deeply value the separation of church and state. I don't want Christian Rule. Far too often, Christian Rule means a particular kind of Christian, and history has shown the horrific things a political machine masquerading as Christianity puts into and onto this world. No, I want a nation that makes space for my religion as well as anyone else's because that arrangement assures everyone has a place. But, the hard truth is that, while we profess the separation of church and state, we do a pretty poor job of putting it into practice. Instead, whoever's in charge has a lot of space to keep every other religion separated from the state while promoting the interest of their own. The result is that, while we say there's a separation, our country is run primarily by Christians rendering a whole lot to Caesar and not enough to God. Maybe there's a way to use that position, delicately, by reminding our Christ-professing siblings what Christ wanted done.

I've taken the liberty of compiling a totally incomplete list of relevant Biblical passages. I suspect these will be lovely to hear and also exceedingly difficult to enact. And also, maybe they're easy to hear in relation to most everything but exceedingly difficult to believe in relation to Israel and Palestine.

Leviticus - "I will grant peace in the land," God says.

Numbers - "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Psalms - There's a bunch in Psalms, so we'll just do a few: "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety." and "The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace." and "Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." and "the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity." and "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other."

Proverbs - "Those who promote peace have joy."

Matthew - "Blessed are the peacemakers."

John - "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you."

Romans - "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.... Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace."

Galatians - "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

Ephesians - "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."

Colossians - "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another ... And over all these virtues put on love."

First Thessalonians - "Live in peace with each other."

James - "The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."

Jesus knew, the writers of scripture knew that what they were saying was crazy. It makes no sense at all given the way our world works. Arguments get settled with fights, governments go to battle, and eventually new borders get drawn and the history books say everyone lived happily ever after. But they don't. Resentment festers, old wounds rankle, and the cycle begins again. But the Ghandis, the TuTus, the Mandelas of this world insist there is a better way than our knee-jerk brutality. And that better way is peace, and the promotion of peace is pacifism. And pacifism is the way of Christ. I want to make a distinction clear. There are two words that sound very much alike that are very different. Passivism, that's with an s and a v, passivism means inactivity. The world spins and we let it happen. But pacifism, that's with a c and an f, pacifism comes from the word "pace," it means actively promoting peace. And actively promoting peace was Christ's way. And it's our way. It is work, and it is beauty. The painful movie "Hacksaw Ridge" explores Christ's peace in the impossible time of war. It's heroic and idiotic and just plain crazy. And that's exactly, exactly what we're called to do. Render unto Caesar, but do not render him your hatred or your desire for revenge or your deep sense of injustice. Render those to God, and then work through Christ to turn that deserved vitriol to the true and active pursuit of peace. Throughout history, there is nothing, absolutely nothing that neutralizes hate more deeply than love.

I have absolutely no clue what little ol' me in little ol' Hamilton can do about Israel and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine, Syria or Afghanistan or any other place rife with the hot terror of war. But I do know how God expects me to respond. And that's with love, with hope, and with peace. As the final line of Morning Prayer puts it, and as we've all heard before, "the glory of God working in us does infinitely more than we can ask or imagine." I don't pretend to know how it works, but I know it does work. And I hope against hope, trust against trust, pray unceasingly that peace will prevail.

All Saints' Dedication

November 5, 2023

We dedicate this year's All Saints' Sunday Jazz Eucharist to the loving memory of St. Thomas' former rector, The Rev. Elizabeth Gillett. Elizabeth served as our rector from 1988 to 1998 and returned as our interim rector in 2015 to 2016. It was Elizabeth who had the idea of celebrating All Saints' with jazz and commissioned Dianne & Jim to compose special music for this service. The All Saints' Sunday Jazz Eucharist quickly became a yearly tradition at St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Hamilton, NY.

—Fr. Brooks

Funeral Service for The Rev. Elizabeth Gillett

The service will be held on Saturday, November 11th at 10:30 AM.

Upcoming Events

November 5: All Saints' Jazz Eucharist & Baptism of Elsie, Cillian, & Chris Brockway

November 12: Stewardship Sunday

November 14: SOMAC at HCS auditorium

November 23-24: Office Closed

November 27, 9 AM: Wardens' Meeting

November 27, 10 AM: Buildings Commission

Sunday School continues

9:00 AM: Teen Class

9:45 AM: Godly Play & Nursery

Following the service: Adult Forum

Call for a Ceasefire Now

“People of faith and goodwill can organize and address our governments to call for humanitarian aid to flow freely to those in desperate need in Gaza; for the release of all hostages; for an end to all targeting of children and other civilians; and for a de-escalation of violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.”

—Presiding Bishop Michael Curry

The escalation of violence in the Holy Land continues, with what the BBC described as “total chaos” in Gaza after a night of bombing and a ground invasion.

In this moment of violence and destruction, we urge you to lift your voices and strongly urge the President and your representatives in Congress to call for a humanitarian truce, as voted for by the United Nations General Assembly. Desperately needed humanitarian aid must reach the people of Gaza so that more life is not lost.

We also urge all of you to pray. We pray for God's comfort and mercy to reach all those who are afraid, who suffer and are in pain, who grieve, and those who have been cut off from loved ones.

In his opening remarks to the Executive Council this past week, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry said, “Prayer matters and makes a difference. We must pray. So, pray for wisdom and moral courage for world leaders so that violence does not beget more violence—because violence doesn't work, and violence will not bring about a just and sustainable and enduring peace.”

We ask for your prayers. We ask for your action.

—Episcopal Public Policy Network

Save the Date

December 3: November Vestry Meeting

December 24, 10 AM: Advent for Service

4:15 PM: Caroling

4:30 PM: Christmas Eve Service

December 25, 10 AM: Morning Prayer

December 25-29: Office Closed

Prayers of the People As of October 31st

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

For the Departed: Janice Fudzinski, Daniel Ghent, Joanne Coté, The Rt. Rev. David B. Joslin.



Flowers for the Altar

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

Thank you.

—Rose Novak & Jana Laxa for the Flower Guild

November Thanksgivings

Birthdays: Julie Dudrick (11/09), Jane Welsh (11/10), Dianne McDowell (11/10), Christina Althause (11/10), Tracey Fountain (11/15), Mason McDowell (11/17), Paul Schult (11/19), Scott Rivington (11/22), Lauren Mettler (11/24), Edward Boyd (11/27), Nancy Schmitt (11/28), Laura Schmitt (11/28).

Baptism Anniversaries: Sierra Barker (11/01), Shannon Strohmeier (11/01), Jon Speer (11/03), Eden Hubbard (11/03), Alexander Linden (11/04), Viviana Linden (11/04), Jaxson Keller (11/05), Autum Rhoades (11/05), Hayden Zahn (11/06), Isaac Hubbard (11/06), Mea Hubbard (11/06), Ginger Flor (11/07), Brooke Speer (11/14), Emily Waight (11/20), Leah Schmitt (11/22), Adger Williams (11/28).

Marriage Anniversaries: Deborah & Thomas Klenck (11/27).

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.

On the Lighter Side



St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
August Vestry Minutes
August 27, 2023

Present: John Bowen, Brooks Cato (presiding), Wynn Egginton, Maureen Ghent, Connie Harsh, Emily Hutton-Hughes, Valerie Morkevicius, John Orr, Anne Perring, Jane Welsh

Absent: Debbie Barker, Susan Beattie

Call to Order

The meeting began at 11:42 a.m. in the parish hall. Maureen Ghent led the opening prayer.

Clerk's Report

The minutes of the June 25th vestry meeting were approved as submitted. (Moved by Jane Welsh; seconded by Emily Hutton-Hughes.)

Treasurer's Report

John Bowen submitted the following report to the vestry members:

“The Balance Sheet shows gains in all the investment accounts. The **\$40,000** temporary withdrawal from the St. Thomas' Endowment Account remains. The NBT Checking Account balance remains volatile due to large influxes and expenses related to the summer maintenance projects that are at last taking shape. **\$15,000** in grant money designated for those projects came in last month. Money from the land sale and liquidation of the Steffenhagen Account will also aid in covering those expenses.

Pledge income improved in July and is now at 87% of YTD budget. The ‘Gifts’ line, which was created to cover the budget deficit of **\$17,500**, is now **\$2,374**, or 23% of YTD budget. The YTD deficit remains high, but improved from last month.

The Budget and Finance Commission devoted June and July to the annual audit. The report has been submitted. The audit, while done internally, is done in a manner that would make it very difficult to hide any malfeasance on the part of church officers. The audit next year, as required periodically by the Diocese, will be conducted by an outside professional. No serious issues were uncovered by the 2023 audit.”

The Treasurer's Report was received as submitted. (Moved by Valerie Morkevicius; seconded by John Orr.) The Report was

formally received by email vote.

Rector's Report

Noting that it was summer, Brooks Cato informed vestry members that he had been busy tracking various building projects that were in the pipeline. The walkway had been completed, the painters were making great progress in beautifying the outside of the church and parish hall, and the rectory was finally connected to the natural gas pipeline. The good news is that there had been less carpentry repair on the outside of the church than had been anticipated, and the carpenter had been able to replace the cross at the top of the building. In tracking attendance Brooks had found that our summer numbers are now higher than they had been at the end of last year, which is a positive trend, and recently a few new people have joined the church as well. John Orr wondered whether there had been any more response to the Pride Flag in front of the church, outside of the one negative letter that was mailed anonymously from Syracuse. Brooks responded that we have attracted four new people, all of whom have told Brooks, without any prompting from him, that they have come to St. Thomas' because of the Pride Flag. Lastly, Brooks wanted to share that he was thrilled with the rich tones of the paint color and the way that it looks on the building. Jane Welsh observed that it even seems to make the roof look better and that once more of the roof is cleaned the overall appearance will be further improved. Other vestry members echoed Brooks' and Jane's sentiments.

Wardens' Report

Jane Welsh stated that she had been prepared to say something about how “extraordinary” the church was looking with its new paint and the new walkway lined with flowers but this had already been expressed by others.

Commission Reports

- *Worship:* Brooks Cato reiterated the results of the parish survey, noting that there are not resources, at this time, for an 8:00 a.m. service. For the moment, the parish will offer one service at 10:00 a.m. When the Worship Commission discussed how much help was needed to mount a single service, Brooks noted how surprisingly formidable it was, so much so that an article will soon appear in *Tidings*, outlining this. John Orr commended the notice that had been released to the parish by the

Commission for both its stylistic presentation and content. John Bowen seconded this sentiment, stating that it was also optimistic. Connie Harsh asked for a fuller sense of what might have been understood when some survey responders had asked for “more music.” Brooks suggested that it could mean that the Rite 2 service could return to more of the “sung service” or that perhaps more guest musicians might be invited to contribute to some services. Jane Welsh added that it might mean that the amount of music would be expanded to that which was done before Covid. Brooks added that on September 10th the choir returns to its normal routine this year.

- *Audit:* Brooks Cato, with Treasurer John Bowen, presented the annual audit that had been prepared and circulated to vestry members in advance of the meeting. John Bowen noted that an external audit would be schedule within the normal time frame, but that this year it was handled by an internal group. There were no questions. John Orr moved that the audit be accepted; Jane Welsh seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

- *Update on Building Projects:* Brooks Cato reported that the painting, carpentry, and walkway had all been paid for already. The natural gas transition still needs to be paid for. Replacing the wooden cross hadn't been anticipated; however, it would not raise the amount spent greatly. So far, all of the projects had gone quite smoothly.
- *Land Sale:* Brooks Cato had informed the vestry and the parish, at large, that the land sale had finally been concluded. The final total was at c. **\$68,800.**
- *Safe Church Training:* Anne Perring reported that a few current vestry members were still in process, but at the end of their training, while the persons who would be new to the vestry, at the end of September, would need to begin the training from the beginning. She kindly volunteered to stay “on board” as the point person to keep everyone on track with the process.
- *New Vestry Slate:* Brooks reported that John Orr, Rose Novak, and Kerry Linden have all agreed to come on as vestry members. Martha Berry has kindly agreed to serve as Junior Warden.
- *Display Case:* A request for vestry approval of the display case proposal had been sent around on email on August 10th; however, vestry members were concerned about the vague estimate given on labor as determined by the number of hours it might take to build the case. Some vestry members felt that a more specific estimate—or, at least a tighter range of the number of hours—might be given. Emily Hutton-Hughes noted that she had forwarded the emails that she had received from Scott to the vestry members and it seemed unlikely that he could provide anything more specific. Jane Welsh felt that she would be better able to evaluate the proposal if it contained a more precise estimate of labor. Some other vestry members expressed similar sentiments. A discussion ensued as to how best to ask for a more specific estimate. Connie Harsh noted that by approaching Scott and setting an upper limit on the cost of the project the vestry had essentially committed itself to spending that amount. Jane Welsh felt that, nevertheless, it was not unreasonable to ask for a better-defined estimate of labor. Valerie Morkevicius added that the vestry must be able to justify the costs to the parish and this should be communicated clearly to Scott before we agree to a final contract. Emily Hutton-Hughes agreed to return to Scott and attempt to get a more specific estimate on the cost of labor. All vestry members agree on the costs of the materials as they are set out in the proposal.
- *Auction Update:* Brooks Cato reminded vestry members that the Auction Committee met and decided that they would table this project until 2024 when they would have more time for planning and coordination with the Stewardship Commission.
- *Record of Vestry Email Exchanges/Votes/Reports since June 25th vestry meeting:* 1) On July 11th vestry members received an email from Brooks Cato notifying them that the Auction Committee had decided to table this project for this autumn. 2) On August 1st vestry members were asked to vote their approval by email so that Brooks Cato could write a ministry grant to the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York for **\$5,000** to go toward the purchase of a van for the Ukrainian family. (The process began in mid-May when St. Thomas' and other churches collected **\$3315** to begin a fund for this purpose.) The vestry vote “yes” unanimously. 3) On August 10th, as

Continued from Page 10

report above under Old Business, vestry members received the finalized proposal from Scott for the display case and were asked to approve it by email vote. The proposal was not approved at this time. Vestry members felt that the materials budget was reasonable, but that the labor portion of the proposal required further discussion.

New Business

- *Executive Session:* At this point in the meeting the vestry entered Executive Session. After careful consideration, the Vestry approved a resolution to increase Leah Schmitt's responsibilities to include the role of Christian Education Director.
- *Core Priorities Discussion (Gifts Line Item & Closing the Deficit, limited to 10 minutes):* Brooks Cato opened the conversation by offering some background. When the auction had been tabled for 2023 other suggestions were made for closing the deficit, a one-time planned deficit which was estimated to come out at **\$15,000**. Some persons even suggested that parishioners should immediately be apprised of the fact that there is a shortfall so that they can consider how they, and the parish might join together to address it. Maureen Ghent stated that she felt strongly that this should be announced now, in advance of the General Meeting, in the wake of so many wonderful improvements that parishioners can see around them. Jane Welsh and Valerie Morkevicius both spoke about the importance of highlighting the many good things that are occurring within the parish currently. Brooks suggested that a written communication should be prepared that can be released in various forms. Some vestry members agreed to speak at services about the issue. In the end Jane Welsh and Wynn Egginton, assisted by Anne Perring and Valerie Morkevicius, will write up a letter. Jane Welsh commented that various versions are needed: something should be prepared in the form of a letter that can be mailed, a statement that can be read at services, and an announcement for *Tidings*. From his vantage point as Treasurer, John Bowen responded that it would be useful if parishioners could give sooner (rather than later) to close the gap in the budget, if at all possible. John Orr added that ideally the letter should be signed by the entire vestry and all agreed. The vestry will

meet in the next few months to look carefully, with the Budget & Finance Commission, over the budget for 2024.

- Final announcements were made regarding upcoming events of interest to the parish.
- *Next meeting:* The next vestry meeting was left open because the vestry doesn't usually meet in September. Instead the General Meeting will be held on September 24th.
- *Prayer Leader:* Valerie Morkevicius offered to lead prayer at the opening of the next vestry meeting, whether it is scheduled for September or October.

Because there was no further business everyone moved to conclude the meeting; everyone seconded. The meeting ended at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Cerasano, Clerk

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Progress Outside

The work continues! The Church roof is nearly moss-free and the old Fuel Oil tank will be removed from the Rectory basement "soon and very soon," as the old hymn says.

—Fr. Brooks



Fight

Our prayers should never be bland, perfunctory, passionless words, words, words. Our prayers should express our deepest longings, our struggles, our anger, our anguish. Bring it all to the fight. 'I won't let you go Lord, until you bless me.' We should bring everything we know about ourselves. Lay it all before God.

—Br. Geoffrey Tristram, SSJE (Society of St. John the Evangelist)

A Prayer

God, you have led generations before us through the darkest valley. Lead us now.

—Sojourners

Photo Submitted by Harvey Eaves

Harvey is the nephew of a parishioner. He does landscaping and enjoys photos of landscapes.



The Top 10 Reasons To Be An Episcopalian According to Robin Williams

10. No snake handling.
9. You can believe in dinosaurs.
8. Male and female God created them; male and female we ordain them.
7. You don't have to check your brains at the door.
6. Pew aerobics.
5. Church year is color-coded.
4. Free wine on Sunday.
3. All of the pageantry – none of the guilt.
2. You don't have to know how to swim to get baptized.

And the Number One reason to be an Episcopalian:

1. No matter what you believe, there's bound to be at least one other Episcopalian who agrees with you.

Halloween Coffee Hour Gratitude

A big thank you goes to the Christian Education students for hosting a Halloween-themed Coffee Hour on Sunday, October 29th! The treats were wonderfully decorated and plated. It was enjoyed by all!



Free Coffee Tuesdays

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



T-Shirt Sale



St. Thomas' T-shirts are available in the office. Pay what you can or we're now asking \$10. Feeling generous? Offset someone else's cost at another \$10!

Available sizes: Adult S-XXL

Happening in the Area: AA Meetings in Hamilton

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

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Scheduled to Serve
November 2023

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

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

DATE	LECTOR	LEM	USHER	ALTAR GUILD	FLOWER GUILD	NEWCOMERS
November 5 <i>All Saints</i> <i>Daylight Savings ends</i>	OT Emily Hutton-Hughes NT Jane Welsh	Debbie Barker	Ed Page	Emily Hutton-Hughes	Liz Brackett	Linda Jenks
November 12 <i>Rite One</i>	OT Ellie Weyter NT Adger Williams	Susan Cerasano	Ed page	Jane Welsh	Liz Brackett	Linda Jenks
November 19	OT Debbie Barker NT Barbara Bowen	Amy Jerome	Ed Page	Linda Jenks	Liz Brackett	Linda Jenks
November 26	OT Maureen Fox NT Linda Jenks	Maureen Ghent	Ed Page	Linda Jenks	Liz Brackett	Linda Jenks



November 2023

Readings

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