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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

Lord, have mercy, where has the time gone? I don't know if this is true for any of y'all, but for me, in a year when so much has happened, I can barely remember what we've done since last Advent began.

I know the world has tumbled around us. I know we've held fast while all sorts of winds of change have blown our way. I know we've continued to be faithful and even have adopted a forward-looking mindset these days.

But beyond that, I really can't remember much. It's like 2021 has been this black hole. Maybe it's because I'm just so focused on survival and making it to the next day? Or maybe it's because everything is changing so rapidly and so often that my memories don't have a steady surface to latch onto? Or maybe memories just slide off my brain a little easier these days than I'd like to admit?

Whatever the reason, Advent lends us the opportunity to pause and take stock. I know, this can be the worst possible moment to pause much of anything as the holiday whirlwinds swirl. Maybe the 12 Days of the Christmas Season are a better time to pause. Or maybe you only get a few moments here and there, tiny breaths taken after you pull into the driveway but before you walk inside.

Whenever we can find those moments, big or small, quiet or surrounded by chaos, take them. God finds us wherever we are, in that plentiful chaos or in that rare stillness, God can squeeze in. I'm hoping that with a few extra moments for quiet breaths and a couple of extra seconds before I get out of the car, I'm hoping my memories of this year will have a better chance to stick. And with them, maybe, just maybe God will squeeze in a little more.

'Tis the season, after all, for God to squeeze into tiny spaces, tiny mangers, tiny hearts, and tiny moments of peace and of chaos.

That's what the Christ Child's name means, after all, no matter what: Emmanuel. God is with us.

In God's love,

Brooks+

Congratulations to Emily Hutton-Hughes!

Congratulations to our Team Captain, Emily Hutton-Hughes, who led our Team Highroad Walkers! The National CROP Hunger Walk Celebration was held virtually on December 7 at 8 PM.

Bible Blurb

Where: Twenty-sixth book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament.

What to Watch for: Written during the Babylonian exile, this prophet has much to say in veiled language.

References: You need to know that the Babylonian Empire has conquered Israel and Judah and sent the people into exile. Also, it wouldn't hurt to have a sense of the importance of God's Covenant with the people.

Content: One intense fever dream of prophecy after another, Ezekiel is a mind-bending look at God, God's royal court, God's hope for God's people with all sorts of unimaginable creatures along the way.

Lectionary: The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel occurs in the Lectionary very rarely, but it has a prominent place in the Easter Vigil service with the "Dry Bones" reading.

BONUS: One answer to why angels always begin their messages with the phrase, "Be not afraid." Y'all, these things are freaky.

--Fr. Brooks +

On the Lighter Side



Nave Gazing

A lot of what we talk about in this little corner of the *Tidings* has to do with what goes on inside the walls of our church, but this month, I'd like to bring our liturgies a bit closer to home. There's an old custom called "Chalking the Door" that can be a neat way to weave our Christian story and our lives at home together.

Every year on the Feast of the Epiphany--January 6--we remember the arrival of the Three Kings, Wise Men, or Magi (they go by different titles, depending on who you ask). In a lot of ways, this part of the story is a culmination of what Christmas is about. With the arrival of these three kings, the world beyond Israel recognizes Jesus as Lord and even the most powerful bend the knee.

For centuries, people have been using this moment in the fledgling days of a new year to remind themselves of Christ's role in their lives, to remember the beauty of that star pointing towards truth, and to remember the gifts they bring to serve Christ. They've done this by Chalking the Door. It's a simple thing, really, but a sweet and beautiful moment to share with family and close friends.

There's no official liturgy for the tradition, but you can use the following prayers as a guide.

"May all who come to our home this year rejoice to find Christ living among us; and may we seek and serve, in everyone we meet, that same Jesus who is your incarnate Word, now and forever. Amen.

God of heaven and earth, you revealed your only-begotten son to every nation by the guidance of a star. Bless this house and all who inhabit it. Fill us with the light of Christ, that our concern for others may reflect your love. We ask this through Christ our Savior. Amen

Loving God, bless this household. May we be blessed with health, goodness of heart, gentleness, and abiding in your will. We ask this through Christ our Savior. Amen."

Once the prayers are finished, write the following in chalk.

20+C+M+B+22

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The numbers represent the year, the plus signs are crosses, and the letters are the initials of the traditional names of the Wise Men: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. Some say the letters may also be an abbreviation of the Latin phrase *Christus Mansionem Benedicat* or "May Christ bless this home."

Some people write over the door, some on the frame, some on the door itself. I've even seen this scribbled on the mail slot! It's a simple way to invite God's blessing on our homes and our lives, and a daily reminder of the promises we've made. It might even invite a conversation about who we are, and bless those who visit us!

May Christ bless you and your homes this and every year.

--Fr. Brooks+



Forum for the Future Kicks Off Strategic Planning

On Sunday, November 14, about 40 St. Thomas parishioners gathered to take the initial step in our parish-wide effort to explore who we are and who we want to be. By all accounts, "Forum for the Future" was an inspiring and engaging exercise – one that will ultimately lead to a five-year strategic plan that will function as a blueprint for carrying out our mission.

The Rev. Canon Carrie Schofield-Broadbent, who served as facilitator for the Forum, began by stimulating our brains with a deeply felt sermon, complete with broken pottery. (You had to be there!) After a short break at the end of the service, we launched into the Forum. In addition to laying the theological groundwork for the workshop, Canon Carrie posed two thought-provoking questions for our consideration during smaller breakout sessions.

What is essential to St. Thomas' identity? In other words: What, if you took it away, would make St. Thomas 'so different that it just wouldn't feel like St. Thomas' anymore?

If we imagine God has many dreams for St. Thomas', what might one of those dreams be?

Four separate groups spent close to an hour in careful deliberation in both the Church and Parish Hall. Comments were recorded on easel paper, and all attendees came back to discuss the "findings" for an hour. Attendees tried to identify common themes among the distinct groups' responses and identify shared aspirations. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) will digest and evaluate all this input over the next few months.

If you did not attend the Forum, you can still participate! If you would like to respond to those questions above, please send replies to John Orr (johnhorr@gmail.com).

Other near-term action steps include the Commissions of the parish getting involved during their winter meetings: discussing and prioritizing goals for the next five years, and developing working plans, timetables, and budgets to

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**Sermon for the
First Sunday of Advent:
The Rev. Brooks Cato**

Happy New Year! I know it's a little weird, but you heard me right. Today is the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of the New Year in the church's calendar. I'm pretty sure I make this joke just about every First Sunday of Advent, so I'm guessing by now, a few of you are getting tired of what I always say this time of year. Most years, I've talked about how our calendar centers on the sun for Christmas and the moon for Easter. And to get ourselves ready for the many moments of Christ's life that we're going to mark in the coming months, we start the year a little early. There's a lot of sacredness headed our way, and we need a solid foundation to meet that sacredness from. Most years, I'd spend some time talking about penitence right about now, too. I'd talk about how penitence has gotten a bad rap and rightfully so. Too many folks making penitence into a cudgel over the years have ruined the idea for a lot of us. And that's a shame. Because penitence isn't about beating yourself up or having the church weigh you down with guilt. Penitence is about recognizing the ways you can go about living your life and moving in this world a little better. No one flinches at the idea of a New Year's Resolution in the secular calendar. But in the church calendar, we get all hinky about it. Most years, I'd try to make the whole idea of penitence a little more palatable by comparing the process of penitence to getting your home ready to welcome a guest. We all have some dust bunnies piling up in a corner of the living room. Or maybe there's that embarrassing spider web clinging to the window frame - the web isn't all that bad, the spider's doing you a favor with all those bugs, but the husks piling up on the sill underneath have gotten a little gross. You know your guest is coming sometime after they get off work, maybe, but you don't know exactly when, so best get ready now.

And that's the idea behind Advent. You take some time now to get the place ready, to get you ready. But like some great cosmic plumber, we know he's coming, we just don't know exactly when. So we tidy ourselves up now. We start our resolutions a month ahead of his ETA, and by the

time the time arrives, we're ready to put our best foot forward, hopefully a little wiser, a little better, a little more present than the last time around. All that's what I would say most years. Shoot, all that's what I have said most years. But this year feels a little different. We just hosted some family from Arkansas, my sister and her two kids, and we did a crash clean of the house, getting at stubborn baseboard lint and even scrubbing the leaves of a houseplant to get 'em all shiny and pest-free. It was a great visit.

But I noticed something kind of cool this time around. See, I spent so much time scrubbing and vacuuming and hiding homeless junk in closets that when they got here, I was actually able to be completely with them. No dust bunny distractions rolling across the carpet, no worry that they'd see the spot in the sink that had been annoying me but not enough to actually do anything about it, just 100% there with them in the space I'd made ready. That was great. But after we dropped them off at the airport and made our way back home, there was a different kind of cleaning that needed to happen. By the way, to my sister Lara, if you are reading this, I love you dearly. Your kids are great, you're awesome, and this is not meant to be a dig on you; it's just the reality of guests.

There was a different kind of cleaning that had to happen this year, and wouldn't you know it, this cleaning came right on the eve of Advent. So, of course, I couldn't help but make the connection. This year, in addition to getting the house ready to welcome company, we've had to do some tidying up to set the house back after the company left. Of course, we had to strip the beds and wash some linens. There were extra towels and washcloths to go through the laundry. Furniture needed to be rearranged, floors needed to be swept, and re-swept. The dining room table got a couple of passes of wood soap. And Rosie the Robot Vacuum has been running pretty much nonstop. Even the dogs are recovering from these wonderful guests, passed out for days since their departure.

All that to say, in years past when I've talked about Advent, I've spent so much time focusing on the preparation for the coming of Jesus. And

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then when Christmas comes, I've spent a lot of energy focusing on the much-anticipated arrival. But I've almost never talked about what happens after, when the dust settles, when the guests leave, when you return home to a strangely empty house and tidy up not with anticipation but with an acute sense of absence, a mourning not what never was but what was and has since gone. There's an immense gratitude, a fullness even, but also a bit of anguish. Clearing the sheets to get a bed ready for a loved one, that's exciting! My sister's gonna sleep here! How can I make this just right for her? But clearing the sheets after they're gone? With a full heart and an empty guestroom, there's a sadness there. My sister slept here, and in the middle of the night, her daughter crept through the dark house tracing the turns of 200-year old architecture with her hand just to sneak into the room and crawl into the safety of her mom's bed. And now, we strip all that away and wash out their memory not in anticipation of anyone so much as just putting things back the way they were before the visit even happened. And that's where I'm entering Advent, with a question about this new year, this new season, this new Christmas on the horizon and this new Easter moon already waxing in the distance. How many years have I prepared for the coming of Christ only to set things back to how they used to be after the stable, the young mother, the silent father have come and gone? How many cycles through these readings, how many candles lit, how many blue robes and Silent Nights and poinsettia giveaways have I actually made space to change me? I suppose part of the mystery of all this is the ways we are changed by these sorts of rhythms and encounters without really knowing we've been changed. But what I'm getting at is a little different. I think I've been hyper-focused on tidying up my soul in order to create the most welcoming vessel possible, and that's not altogether a bad thing. But I've been focused on the front end, the first embrace, the tour of the house, the "here's where you can find snacks in the middle of the night" part. And this year, I'm more curious about the "ok, now what," parts. The "now that you're here and know where everything is, now what," part. The "we've run out of things to show you and it's time to just sit" part. The "we've all finally gotten comfortable enough to put our best foot back where it belongs

and just be with each other" part. Even the "driving away from the airport with the guests boarding their plane" part.

What happens now? When the anticipation of the big event is done, what fills the calm that follows? What do we turn our excitement toward next? After all the tidying and resetting and catch-up snoozing is done, what do we anticipate coming into our lives the next time, and how do we make ourselves ready for that? We are certainly changed by the last encounter, but how remains a mystery. So, if I have an Advent New Year's Resolution, I suppose it's just that. To anticipate the other side of the excitement, to prepare for the life that waits on the far side of miracle, maybe even to listen for the call of how we will be changed. I have no idea what that looks like, the calm after the storm, but I'm excited and I can't wait. But as the calendar moves and Christ comes in his own time, wait we must.

A Christmas Prayer

Loving Father,
 help us remember the birth of Jesus,
 that we may share in the song of the angels,
 the gladness of the shepherds,
 and worship of the wise men.
 Close the door of hate
 and open the door of love all over the world.
 Let kindness come with every gift
 and good desires with every greeting.
 Deliver us from evil by the blessing
 which Christ brings,
 and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
 make us happy to be thy children,
 and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
 with grateful thoughts,
 forgiving and forgiven,
 for Jesus' sake.
 Amen.

--By Robert Louis Stevenson

Mid-York Interfaith Holiday Project

Since 1982, your generous support has made it possible for more than 110 families and resident homes to have a special holiday. We are again asking for essential non-food items: new clothes, shoes, boots, hats, mittens, toys, and food baskets for a holiday meal and beyond. A donation of \$55 can give a child essential items. Please consider making a monetary donation this year. All donations can be sent to **Interfaith Holiday Project, P. O. Box 134, Hamilton, NY 13346**. All donations are tax deductible. Your donation benefits children in the Madison and Hamilton school districts.

Before the Paling of the Stars

Before the paling of the stars,
Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cock crow,
Jesus Christ was born:
Born in a stable,
Cradled in a manger,
In the world his hands had made
Born a stranger.
Priest and king lay fast asleep
In Jerusalem;
Young and old lay fast asleep
In crowded Bethlehem;
Saint and angel, ox and ass,
Kept a watch together
Before the Christmas daybreak
In the winter weather.
Jesus on his mother's breast
In the stable cold,
Spotless lamb of God was he,
Shepherd of the fold:
Let us kneel with Mary maid,
With Joseph bent and hoary,
With saint and angel, ox and ass,
To hail the King of Glory.

--By Christina Georgina Rossetti

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meet those goals. In the spring, the SPC will begin to develop a comprehensive report incorporating all feedback. The Committee will continue to communicate with the Parish on its progress.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Forum for their ideas, enthusiasm, and support. We are off to a great start!

John H. Orr, Chairperson
Strategic Planning Committee

Announcement for End-of-Year Giving

As we near the end of 2021, the hard-working volunteers who receive, record, and deposit contributions have three requests. (1) It would be really helpful if most year-end contributions could be made by the last Sunday in December (12/26). (2) If possible, contributions sent by mail should be sent so that they arrive before December 31. Please note that per IRS regulations, the postmarked date on the envelope determines the tax year of the contribution, not the date written on the check. (3) Please avoid making on-line contributions via the diocesan site in the last week or two of December. The processing of these contributions by the diocese is sometimes slow such that there can be a sizable gap in time between when a contribution is made and we receive the statement from the diocese. These requests are being made to facilitate the smooth accounting of the end-of-year contributions so that the year-end giving statements can be prepared in a timely way in early January. However, we understand circumstances that may necessitate late arriving contributions. We are very appreciative of all contributions to the ministry of St. Thomas' regardless of the timing and method of submission. Thank you for your continued support of St. Thomas' and best wishes for a good December and a Happy Merry Christmas!

- Your Budget & Finance Commission



At long last, we are ready to begin our much-anticipated Swatch Madness -- the process by which our parish is going to pick the new color of paint for the church building! You should be seeing the bracket up in the church soon, and once in place, voting will occur every Sunday until the winner is declared!

Just a quick run-down of the rules:

- The bracket match-ups are (mostly) randomized.
- Images of the upcoming match-up will be emailed out in The Notices every week so you can come to the polls prepared.
- Anyone present in church or on zoom on a Sunday will be able to cast a vote.
- One vote per match-up only! No ballot-stuffing allowed!
- Votes do not have to come from members. Invite your friends, invite your enemies, invite folks with opinions, and we'll let 'em all vote!
- Donations to help pay for the new paint will be accepted throughout this process, but donations do not equal more chances to vote!

We are delighted to get this process underway and look forward to seeing what the entire community of St. Thomas' chooses!

[The following meeting was conducted online, via Zoom, due to conditions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.]

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church Vestry Minutes October 20, 2021

Opening Devotions

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm. Jana Laxa read the opening devotion. Anne Perring filled in for the clerk taking minutes. The minutes of September were approved as submitted (moved by John Orr; seconded by Erin Loranty).

Treasurer's Report

Rick Geier noted that there is no Report yet. Normally, at this time of the year he would report how the parish is doing ytd and relative to previous years. Then he would report the balance sheets in different accounts. The Report is generated through Church Windows. Our version expired at the end of 2020 and hadn't been updated recently; the old version could not roll over. A software upgrade was undertaken in early 2021 and not everything came over smoothly, complicated by COVID, so it is taking quite a while to get the parish financial software functional again. We can now cut checks at least, so it is coming along.

Sor now, we just have the Balance Sheet. Focusing on the NBT checking account, which is used to pay financial commitments, we are at **\$571,686**. It is very high because we have a **\$500k** gift that will be transferred out in the near future. In a normal year that would be **\$71,686**. For context we can compare this to where we began the year. As of January 1st, we were at **\$71k**; but shortly after we transferred **\$20k** out so we are really in good shape this year.

Then Rick drew attention to some notes at the bottom of the page indicating recent charges. (The Church Windows upgrade required a concurrent computer upgrade so those charges are noted.) He then explained that the second half of the balance sheet shows how top half is divvied up across vestry categories, as well as donor-driven.

Rick drew attention to two other items: 1) We have received employee retention tax credits for 2021. We also re-filed for 2nd-4th quarters of 2020. This will be ~**\$17k** when it comes through. Received communications from IRS stating that it has been processed but Rick isn't sure how, so he

is going to wait a little while and then follow up. 2) Third quarter giving statements are due to come out. He stated that they really want to get those out since they couldn't do one for the second quarter, given the Church Windows issue. The new statement will look a little different so Rick explained that he wants to write an explanatory letter to go with the it. He expects to get those out next Wednesday. The next item on the agenda for B & F is to start preparing the 2022 budget; they will start that in November.

Rector's Report

Brooks Cato welcomed new vestry members: Susan Beattie, Anne Perring, and Valerie Morkevicius. Deb Barker is our new junior warden. He noted that the vestry is in charge of all things temporal and the rector in charge of all things spiritual. The relationship is a bit like a board of directors and the executive director, except the rector is also the chair of the board. Fr. Brooks referred vestry members to the vestry handbook. The rector's role covers how services happen, arrangements of pastoral care. The vestry covers money and serves as lay leadership within the parish.

Brooks Cato reported that a lot is going on at church in the past month. Groups are back to using the building for meetings. Big events since annual meeting were Ed Sitts's funeral and Ed and Marsha Sitts's interment in memorial garden. On that day the rain waited until everybody was at the gravesite and then there was a torrential downpour. An honor guard of nine was in attendance from Fort Drum; they did everything in the downpour. Brooks Cato asked whether there was anything he should know about. There was no response.

Wardens' Report

Hannah McClennen, in her new role as Sr. Warden, had nothing much to report. She welcomed new members and stated that she looked forward to being on the vestry as a warden. Deb Barker (Jr. Warden) had nothing new to report for the past 2 weeks as junior warden. Deb stated that she is honored to be representing the parish she recognizes that it will be different, given the challenges of COVID and figuring out how we move on from here, but looks forward to working with the vestry.

Anne Perring asked what the wardens do. Brooks

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Cato answered: according to Constitution of Canons for the Episcopal Church it is assumed that there are wardens, but their precise role is vague. There is a mention that they are the lay-people who make sure that services happen. They are not necessarily leaders of services, but they ensure the events. In Arkansas, senior warden was rector's lay equivalent; the junior warden handled all building-related concerns. (Kind of like what Ed Page does currently at St. Thomas'). Along the Atlantic, some churches have a rector's warden and a people's warden.

Brooks Cato continued: at St. Thomas' wardens are councilors to the rector in a deeper way than the larger vestry. It is usually expected that Jr. Warden will become Sr. Warden after the first year. The rector meets with the wardens prior to each vestry meeting to help generate the agenda for the meeting and it is an opportunity to discuss more sensitive material and share information from the wardens that the rector may not know. In the event of a sale of property, the wardens and the clerk would sign along with the Rector. Vestry meetings are generally public; however, there are occasions where we would ask observers to step out for sensitive topics and then also stop taking minutes. This is not a confidential venue, but we try to be diplomatic in discussing the meetings with people who aren't present. If there are times when vestry members hear things from members of the congregation that the rector should know, they should pass them along.

Commission Reports

Outreach

Brooks Cato reported that the Crop Walk was a major success. The goal was \$9100 (to match last year). They thought we would struggle to meet it. Emily Hutton-Hughes and Susan Beattie set a sky-high goal of \$12,000 and as of today we have \$16,000+. Brooks was so floored he was shocked into saying "you guys." Great work from Emily, Susan and Jana Laxa hitting the pavement. And possibly that's not even the most impressive number, we got donations from 90-120 households. Which is more than there are households in the congregation and implies a really meaningful level of outreach. Susan Beattie thinks there are two drivers. Once we hit the top 100 congregations there was an incentive to aim even higher. Also, this was a good avenue for

Outreach because the Crop Walk, although it is a "church thing," there are a lot of people who care about hunger. We should pay attention to the fact that we have hit something to which people really respond.

Newcomer's Commission

Brooks Cato filled in the vestry, stating that Linda Jenks and Deb Barker have been talking about setting up a new commission to welcome people in, and also, once they've been coming, to help them get them involved in other activities. There was a comment from a recent arrival that she had had a different experience where if she could ask a question she felt very welcome but she always had to reach out first. It would be great if we could flip that around. Fr. Brooks asks if anyone moves to form this welcoming commission. Jana Laxa moved, Heidi Riley seconded; no further discussion, so moved.

Brooks Cato interjected a final note about commissions:

We should divvy up people to serve as liaisons to committees, basic duties are sitting in on committee meetings and reporting back. He then went through the list of openings to be filled.

Budget and Finance liaison is currently Heidi Riley, but she feels that it's not getting the attention it deserves due to a conflict between her work schedule and the committee's meeting times. Asks if anyone else would like to take over as liaison. No takers right now, but we can keep thinking about alternatives.

Buildings Commission is understaffed and needs new members. Brooks requested someone to sit in with them and report back. Meetings are intermittent, typically during a weekday. Susan Beattie volunteered.

Christian Education: Currently there is no chair. Sheila Catania was chair but they expanded their family business and she has had to step back. Deb Barker would be willing to liaise, but doesn't want to chair another commission.

External Communications – Helen Keabian moved away and left the chair vacant. Also, website administration is involved. John Orr volunteered.

Flower guild – Hannah McClennen volunteered.
Outreach – Erin Loranty has been doing it together with someone else. They will continue.
Parish life – Susan Beattie volunteered.
Drivers – We have no liaison, but Fr. Brooks doesn't think we need to have regular reports from them.
Worship Commission – Brooks typically serves as liaison. The commission includes chairs of flowers, music, Christian Education, and acolytes.
Newcomer's Commission – Probably should assign a liaison soon, but we don't need to do it yet.

New Business

Stewardship: Brooks Cato stated that this used to be led by another committee, but last year it was shifted onto the vestry. Typically, All Saints Sunday is the time to turn pledge cards in. We need to take a look at when we want to get the cards back in and come up with a plan for spreading the word.

Brooks Cato thinks the parish retreat might work well with communications, which would be Nov. 14th. Deb asked what we have typically done. Brooks responds: for three weeks of Sundays leading up to the deadline we have people speak during the Sunday service, after the peace. John Orr asked whether that's really a good overlap (retreat and ingathering). If it would boost numbers for the retreat he would support it; but is that how it would work? Brooks responded: let's go for November 14th. Deb Barker pointed out that, from a budgeting standpoint, it is helpful to get pledges in in early November. That's better than waiting any longer.

OOPS: Brooks Cato realized that the vestry members had skipped the "Old Business" portion of the meeting.

Old Business

Strategic Plan: John Orr provided some background on the Plan and the Planning Committee. There has been movement in the past year to think about a strategic plan for the parish. John offered a timeline and overview of what we are doing. He thought it would be a good exercise for St. Thomas', having not done it this way in the past. Going through a planning program brings out activity; it is forward thinking; and it is generally

good for a parish. A committee was formed in early summer, consisting of Adam Wickert, Lynn Staley, Leah Schmitt, John Novak, Terry Monty, and Barbara Bowen.

The Rev. Carey Scofield-Broadbent is helping in her role as Canon and will be the facilitator for the upcoming retreat. The SPC started meeting in August about what kind of parish feedback is needed for developing a plan. The plan will be developed with lots of input and then presented to the vestry as a 5-year strategic plan. The charge from the vestry was very specific.

Progress to date: The retreat will be on Sunday, Nov. 14th. The Canon will present the sermon and then the parish will meet for the retreat following the 9:00 service. Commissions will meet afterward on their own time; they will come up with their own goals and deliver timetables and budgets to the Strategic Planning Committee. The Committee will then assemble all of the above into a cohesive document.

John concluded by noting that communications for the "Forum for the future" will include: a poster in the next week or so (in the parish hall); mentions in weekly emails; writeups on the website; Sunday handouts at church. John proposed a meeting of commission heads (10/31 after service) in advance of the retreat so they can be clear on expectations. They need to get thinking about things they haven't considered yet. They will be provided a template for reports, which will come back over the next 4-6 months. The ultimate goal is to develop three good attainable goals with a timeline. The vestry will get yearly reports to help them keep the process moving forward. A brief summary of the timeline would go like this: 10/31 commission meeting, 11/14 retreat, after that, God knows. Brooks Cato noted that he actually has very little involvement in the planning process, other than putting out the word. He wants this to get people talking who don't normally talk and to set goals that belong to the community.

Signs and banner: Brooks Cato reported that the metal signs around town are in bad shape, but we are slowly getting them replaced. The banner has been designed: "Our hearts and doors are open to all." Melissa Davies, Lara Scott, and Jana Laxa are working on the painting. Jana reports that the

Continued from Page 8

canvas has been waxed and stretched and they are meeting tomorrow to start putting things on it.

Video and recording technology: Brooks Cato reported that the long-term goal is to get cameras mounted on purlins; the same electrician (Kevin) who is working on that is also going to install some track lighting in the back of the church. We are waiting on materials to arrive, and installation will happen shortly after.

Waterline for Memorial Garden: Brooks Cato noted that the Garden Commission currently carries water by hand. We are trying to get water extended from old house hookup at #12 back to the Memorial Garden. We have one more shot to get it done before winter, but if it doesn't happen soon it will become a first goal in the Spring.

Back to New Business

Church property: Brooks Cato stated that, originally, it was clearly communicated that we could use the land until we decided to sell it for a capital project to support main church buildings. Fr Brooks worries that the limited-time-only nature of the ownership has gotten lost in the messaging of late and wants the vestry to remember that the original plan was to sell the property once the vestry came up with a plan as to how to use the funds from the sale. He reminded vestry members that when the parish decides to sell the property they will need permission from the diocesan standing committee to both list property and then accept an offer. Final approval has to go to NYS Supreme Court. Brooks is currently on the standing committee, but we should anticipate that it is a longer process than we might expect. Hannah asked about acreage. Brooks Cato explained that it is 20.5 acres with hillside, partially wooded, a very nice piece of land. Based on comps, we could reasonably expect it to sell for between **\$60-100k**, depending on how long we are willing to wait on a sale. This is an item that should be on the radar of the vestry.

Vestry meeting time – Brooks Cato inquired whether we want to keep vestry meetings on Wednesday evenings. Would it be preferable to meet on a Sunday after a service instead? Vestry should think about it between now and the November meeting, which will happen as usual on the 3rd Wednesday.

Upcoming dates:

Next Wednesday is confirmation at St. Thomas': Heidi Riley, Nikki Moore, and Jake Abel will be confirmed.

Commission Chair Meeting: 10/31

Save the date: 11/14 (Forum for the Future)

Next vestry meeting: 11/17

Person to offer opening devotion at the November vestry meeting: Heidi Riley. Motion to adjourn by Deb Barker (and everyone); seconded by Susan Beattie.

The meeting ended at 8:34 p.m

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Perring (Clerk, *pro tem*)

1619 Podcast Discussion Series

When did the United States become a country? 1492? 1776? 1783? A growing number of historians say that 1619, the date when enslaved persons were first brought to America, is the true date of our founding. Please join HAARC, the Hamilton Area Anti-Racism Coalition, for a six-part discussion series on the *1619 Podcast: A New American Origin Story*, produced by Nikole Hannah-Jones and the *New York Times*. As the *Christian Century* states, "In this alternative telling of the nation's founding, slavery was not an aberration; it was integral to the economic and political foundation of the nation" (11/17/21). Carlos Lozada of the *Washington Post* calls the project "a powerful and memorable work, one that launched a seismic national debate over the legacy of slavery and enduring racial injustice in American life" (11/20/21).

We'll discuss Episode One of the podcast via Zoom **on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, at 7:00 pm.**

Please register at:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0rduGvpjoiHN2W9L7QjYC6MofUe2-dx458](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0rduGvpjoiHN2W9L7QjYC6MofUe2-dx458)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.



Official Youth Presence General Convention 2022

The Episcopal Church invites high school students interested in participating in the church's 80th General Convention this summer to apply to become a member of the Official Youth Presence, a group that attends and interacts in committee hearings and floor debates.

Up to two youth from each of the church's nine provinces will be selected to attend the convention July 4-14 in Baltimore, Maryland. Members must also participate in orientation and training March 31 to April 2 in Baltimore.

Applications and nomination forms are due by **Dec. 23**. Nominators must not be related to the applicant. If you are interested, please check out the below website and let Fr. Brooks know if you'd like to be nominated!

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/youth-ministries>

Did you know?

Santa is real! Saint Nicholas was a Bishop in modern-day Turkey way back in the 3rd and 4th Centuries. He was known for his work as a pious and giving church leader and also for a particularly nasty rumble with a priest named Arius. His red robes originated as bishop's vestments and evolved in time into the more cuddly versions we see today!

A rare depiction of the time Frodo, Merry, and Pippin ran into Jesus on their way back to the Shire.



Did you know? Part 2

The original liturgical color for Advent and Lent wasn't purple or blue; it was black! Early vestments used natural dyes, and black was a notoriously difficult color to achieve and to preserve. Industrious vestment makers used the natural dyes produced by mollusks to create black vestments, but in time, the deep black inevitably faded. In the Mediterranean world -- like those churches centered on Rome, for example -- the black dye faded into purple. But in the English world, the mollusks used were a different species, so the black faded to blue instead!

Bonus trivia: the same reason accounts for why bishops' shirts are purple! They started out wearing black when they were ordained as priests, but after many years of wear and fading, they ended up with purple shirts where the black used to be!

A Prayer

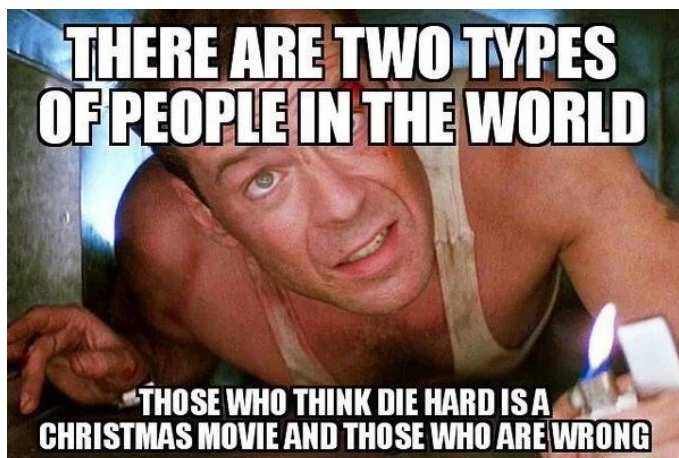
In my coming and going, may my actions embody your spirit of love.

--Sojourners

Worth Repeating

Your ordinary acts of love and hope point to the extraordinary promise that every human life is of inestimable value.

--Desmond Tutu



Colgate Lessons and Carols Cancelled

Unfortunately, A Festival of Lessons and Carols, originally scheduled for Friday Dec. 10 at 7 p.m., has been canceled due to sudden and unavoidable scheduling conflicts among our performers. We hope to return to this longstanding Colgate tradition next year. In the meanwhile, we wish you all the best of the season and invite you to watch this archived edition of the service, via Colgate's Livestream channel: <https://livestream.com/colgateuniversity/2020lessonsandcarols>



Arts at the Palace is a nonprofit community arts organization based at the Palace Theater in Hamilton, New York.

Arts at the Palace, Inc.
19 Utica Street (Location)
PO Box 177 (Mailing)
Hamilton, NY 13346
(315) 824-1420

director@artsatthepalace.org

December Performances

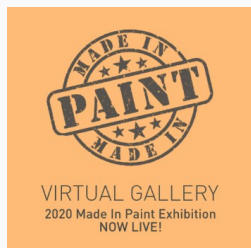
December 11, 7 PM, Modern Jazz Group

December 18, 12 Noon, Jazz at Noon
Holiday Edition with Rick and Julie
Montalbano

December 19, 2 PM, Women Writers
Reading Event.



The Sam and Adele Golden Foundation for the Arts



Contact Details:

Sam & Adele Golden
Foundation for the Arts, Inc.
237 Bell Road, New Berlin, NY 13411
Phone: (607) 431-8765



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**It's still
not too late to join for the
2021-22 Season! Registration for
dance classes is ongoing, but will
close in January. The registration
form, schedule, class descriptions,
and more details can be found on
the website,**

[<https://sites.google.com/view/schmittsistersdance>](https://sites.google.com/view/schmittsistersdance)

**YES there will be a Recital this
year!**

**You can also book a private party
(birthday, bridesmaid, or other
private event) Just email us with
your request.**

SchmittSistersDance@gmail.com
315-750-6040

[Facebook.com/SchmittSistersDance](https://www.facebook.com/SchmittSistersDance)

Owners/Instructors

Leah Schmitt and Jessica Schmitt Dakosty
Offering a variety of classes
for ages 3-Adult

Ponder This

In nature nothing exists alone.

--Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962)

A Prayer

Help me to find new and creative ways to
serve my neighbors, even in these difficult mo-
ments.

--Sojourners

December Thanksgivings

Birthdays: Barbara Hicks (12/2), John Catania (12/10), Layla Hubbard (12/11), Allen Schult (12/13), Debra Barker (12/17), Steve Barker (12/17), Fay Cole (12/19), Lynn Staley (12/24), Robert Maziarz (12/28), Madelyn Knapp (12/31).

Wedding Anniversaries: Robert Maziarz & George Weaver (12/14), Dee & Michael Keller (12/31).

Baptism Anniversaries: Lara Scott (12/01), Michelle Landstrom (12/2), Danniell Jerome (12/03), Becky Hubbard (12/13), Tom Brackett (12/21), Edward Page (12/22), Laura Schmitt (12/24), Susan Cerasano (12/27), Helen Kebabian (12/27).

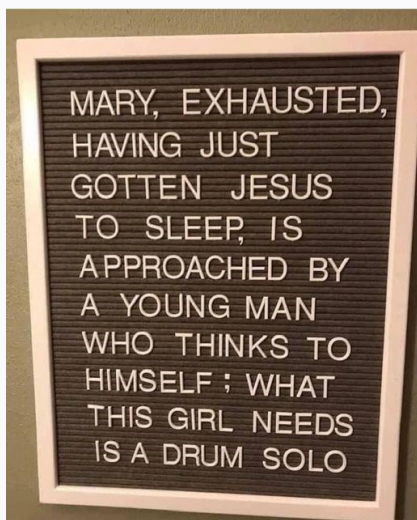
January Thanksgivings

Birthdays: Stan Dakosty (1/2), Bruce Rivington (1/5), Simon Williams (1/7), Shannon Strohmeier (1/9), Kennedy Gilgan (1/10), Janice Frutiger (1/13), Jana Laxa (1/14), Isadora Catania (1/14), Linda Jenks (1/17), Taylor McDowell (1/20), Millie Franklin (1/22), Nicolas Catania (1/22), Morgan Davies (1/23), Madison DeAngelis (1/24), David Sturges (1/25), Laura Trueworthy (1/29), Brian Rivington (1/31).

Wedding Anniversaries:

Baptism Anniversaries: Susannah Davies (1/1), Lucien Catania (1/3), Debra Barker (1/4), Dawn LaFrance (1/11), Zachary LaFrance (1/11), Layla Hubbard (1/11), Jamie Rivington (1/12), Rocco Catania (1/18), Kristen Meadows (1/29).

On the Lighter Side



Prayers of the People

For those in need: Amanda Bastia, Andrea Florentino, Richard & Barbara Barnhart, Phil Bisselle, John Brown, Emma Chapman, Pam Cristiano, Barbara Crysedale, Esther Davis, Teddy Engle, Joan Fales, Jerry & Roseann Fitzgerald, Kate Foss, Emma Forbes, Danny & Anne Foust, Maureen Fox, Mary Frances, Daniel Ghent, Miles Goodrich, Marlene Houck, Tammy Hutchinson, Allen Jones, Danielle Jones, Laura Jones, Janna Keser, Paul Keser, Beth Komaromi & Family, Harvey Jones, Anne Leimkuhler, Jeannie McCabe, Liam Meyer, Anthony & Vincent Pacillo, Bill Pratt, Diane Rich, Debbie Radford Moudarres, Joni Resnick, John Richmond, June Schaupp, Sheryl Scott, Candace Schult, Mark Spearing, Keith Stage, Carol Strozyk, Noah Scarafile, Steve Scarafile, Debra Talbott, Marilyn Upton, Chris Warren, Deb Willis, Ryan Wilson, Sue & Ben, Joan & Tom Winkler, Judy, Brett, Brianna, Camila, Donnie, Cesar & Paula, Corrine, Jenn, Jeff, Lisa, Lois, Robin, Mary Lou, Lauren, Melissa, Mikhail, Nick & Vanessa, Rebecca, Robin, Sandra, Sean, Sue & Ben, Colgate Professors, Staff, and Students, Second Grade students at S-E.

For the departed: Dick Frost, John Peterson, Shari Rodgers, Ford Seymour.

December –January at St. Thomas'

Regular Weekly Events

Holy Eucharist: Sundays, 9 AM.

Friendship Inn Community Meal: Mondays, 5 PM, Parish Hall, Take-outs only.

Bible Study: Thursdays, 9:30 AM. Now in person and on Zoom.

Special Events

Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24, Rite 2, Great Festival of Christmas, 4:30 PM, preceded by carol sing-a-long, 4:15 PM.

Christmas Day, Saturday, December 25 at 9 AM, Morning Prayer on Zoom.

Sunday, January 2, Christmas Pageant.

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Scheduled to Serve
December 2021

Date	Lectors	Chalice Bearer	Usher	Altar Guild	Flower Guild
December 5	9 AM Rose Novak	9 AM Deb Barker	9 AM Edward Page	Wynn Eggington	Jana Laxa
December 12	9 AM Hannah McClennen	9 AM Maureen Ghent	9 AM Edward Page	Wynn Eggington	Jana Laxa
December 19	9 AM Lynn Staley	9 AM Barbara Bowen	9 AM Edward Page	Susan Beattie	Jana Laxa
December 24	9 AM Adger Williams	9 AM Deb Barker	9 AM Edward Page	Emily Hutton – Hughes	All Members
December 25 9 am Morning Prayer on Zoom				Emily Hutton- Hughes	Jana Laxa
December 26	Jake Abell	Maureen Ghent	Edward Page	Emily Hutton- Hughes	Jana Laxa

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

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Scheduled to Serve
January 2022

Telephone/Fax: 315-824-1745
 E-Mail: stchurch@crnymail.com
 Website: stchurchonline.org

Date	Lectors	Chalice Bearer	Usher	Altar Guild	Flower Guild
January 2	9 AM Martha Berry	9 AM Barbara Bowen	9 AM Edward Page	Susan Beattie	TBA
January 9	9 AM Amy Jerome	9 AM Amy Jerome	9 AM Edward Page	Jane Welsh	TBA
January 16	9 AM Everett Egginton	9 AM Wynn Egginton	9 AM Edward Page	Jane Welsh	TBA
January 23	9 AM Barbara Bowen	Maureen Ghent	9 AM Edward Page	TBA	TBA
January 30	9 AM Adger Williams	9 AM Debbie Barker	9 AM Edward Page	TBA	TBA



December 2021-January 20222

Qidings

Address Service Requested

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

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