

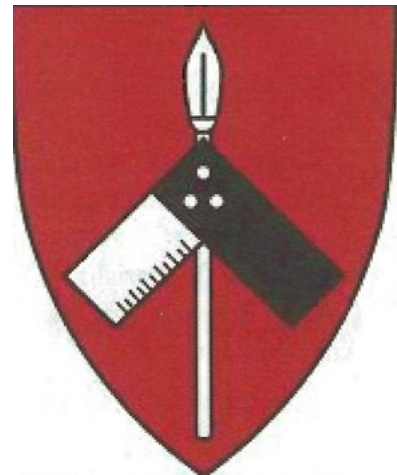
Saint Thomas Episcopal Church of Battle Creek

Established in 1842

2023 Annual Report & Ministry Review

16 East Van Buren Street
Battle Creek, Michigan 49017

Phone (269) 965-2244
www.StThomasBC.org



Agenda
181st Annual Parish Meeting
January 21, 2024

- Call to Order & Opening Prayer

- Certificate of Quorum (50 qualified voters present)

St. Thomas By-Laws Article I. Section 2: Voting members shall be limited to members, aged sixteen (16) and above in good standing as defined by the Canons of General Convention of the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church sets certain criteria for what constitutes membership. These are outlined in Title I, Canon 17 of the Constitution and Canons:

1. All baptized persons, no matter where they were baptized, whose record of baptism is recorded in this church, are considered members of this church.
2. All members who have received Holy Communion at least three (3) times during the years are considered communicant members.
3. All communicants who for the previous year have “been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God” are considered communicants in good standing.

- Appointments

Secretary: Melissa Tuttle

Parliamentarian: Roy Hillman

Validation: Ross Dingwall

Teller: Kent Bieberich

- Approval of the Minutes of the 180th Annual Parish Meeting, January 22, 2023

- Election of Vestry Members and Convention Delegates

Vestry Members:

3-year terms: Jill Ebeling, Claire Nickerson, & Mark Olmstead

Delegates to Convention:

2-Year Terms, approved: Karmel Addis, Nathan Isaacs

1-Year Term Alternate: TBD

- Reports:

Deacon: Rev. Trish Harris

Budget & Finance: Charles Grantier, Treasurer

Property: Franz Schirk, Junior Warden

Vestry: Kathy Dingwall, Senior Warden

State of the Parish, Fr. Rick Stravers, Priest-in-Charge

Discernment Committee: Elizabeth Neumeyer

- Closing Prayer & Eucharist

Minutes from the 180th Annual Meeting
St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Battle Creek, Michigan
Sunday, January 22, 2023

- Call to Order & Opening Prayer
 - Kathy Dingwall, senior warden, welcomed the membership to the 180th annual meeting at the 10 a.m. service on Sunday, January 22, 2023.
 - Rick Stravers, priest-in-charge, opened the annual meeting with a prayer.
- Certificate of Quorum (50 qualified voters present)
- Kathy asked everyone to stand, look around and give themselves and those around them a standing ovation. “We made it through 2022 and we’re here to talk about it,” she said. “We’re ready to take that step into the future.”
- Kathy explained the participation of those logged into the annual meeting remotely through the AV system.
- **Appointments were read for the meeting:**
Secretary: Karmel Addis
Parliamentarian: Roy Hillman
Validation: Ross Dingwall
Tellers: Karen Keese, Hans Prechtel (who wasn’t present)
- **Approval of Minutes from the 179th Annual Parish Meeting on January 30, 2022**
- **Election of Candidates to the Vestry and Convention Delegates**
Vestry Members:
Elected to 3-year terms: Karmel Addis, Brenda Hillman, Lori Kiess, Megan Phelan.
Delegates to Diocesan Convention:
2-year term: TBD (1 delegate needed)
1-year term: Mary Bourgeois
- **Reports:**
 - **Stewardship & Fundraising:**
 - Charles Grantier, treasurer, thanked parishioners for their generosity in giving to the financial boost during the summer when budgeting shortfalls became a concern.
 - 2022 stewardship campaign exceeded its original goal with a pledge amount of \$226,715.65 for 2023.
 - He directed the congregation’s attention to the budget v. actual for 2022 in the Annual Report, specifically the bottom line number 2022 actual which is much greater spent than the budgeted amount.
 - The parish has been supplementing budget shortfalls with principal from the endowments, and counting this as revenue, but he explained that it is not revenue.
 - He believes in the importance of transparency and best practices, and no longer classifying endowment monies as revenue is a good idea. He thinks perhaps an individual audit is in order.
 - This explained distribution of the endowment was for repair of the flat roofs.
 - In the future, they hope to discontinue taking distributions from endowment principal as it is unsustainable.

- The endowments saw a gain of almost \$16,000 in 2022.
- He thanked Melissa Wank for her work as bookkeeper.

- **Outreach/Facilities Management**

- Franz Schirk, who is serving as temporary junior warden in John Lendel's place while he recovers from a stroke, presented the report.
- There were two projects in 2022:
 - Repair of the flat roofs over kitchen, lounge, second story and elevator. Leaks in all the roofs to the point that ceiling plaster was coming down.
 - Bids were sought. Tichenor Roofing, the selected company, came in October and tore off the old roof and replaced it with a membrane roof.
 - John Lendel was astute at working on guarantees, such as a guarantee of 20 years on workmanship and 20 years on materials.
 - Renovation of the chapel is the 2nd major project.
 - The commission looked for an architect to oversee the project, followed by an engineering and restoration company which did a structural assessment by going into the roof above the chapel.
 - The good news is that the roof is in good shape structurally, but the brickwork and capstones have a lot of damage from water. Capstones need to be replaced and brickwork needs work around the whole chapel.
 - This project is on schedule for the construction company in spring 2023. After that, there will be work done on the inside of the chapel.

- **State of the Transition Report:**

- Kathy Dingwall, Senior Warden, expressed appreciation to those who submitted articles for the Annual report and did it on time. It indicates the church is doing well.
- Canon James, who visited St. Thomas in October, said we're in the season of transition – a process a church goes through when a rector leaves.
- Kathy said there will be an ongoing effort to try to be as transparent as possible about the interim and rector searches. Please pay attention to the website, e-news, Realm, but we can provide hard copies if necessary. Anyone who has difficulty receiving information should contact the church.
- Now that Fr. Brian is no longer with us, the transition is in full swing. For supply clergy, we couldn't be happier with the Rev. Rick Stravers, who is supply priest while we look for an interim.
- The next step is finding an interim, and the transition team is working on that. Currently we have one candidate, but are still asking everyone to think about someone they might know who may want to be an interim.
- At the February meeting, the new vestry will be to determine who will sit on the search committee.
- Once the Search Committee begins meeting, there will be a team formed for the purpose of creating a parish profile. The parish looks at the identity of the church, the needs of the church, what's important to us as a faith community, and what kind of person we need in a rector.
- We'll be working with a new canon missionary through the diocese, the Rev. Val Ambrose, who served as our priest while Father Brian was on sabbatical. She will help us with the candidates.

- The candidates are vetted by the diocese before they come to the search committee.
- Once candidate interviews have started, the process has to be confidential.
- Kathy expressed the importance of taking plenty of time to allow the process of rector selection to work. Mistakes can be costly, financially and emotionally. She asked for the parish's patience.

Maya Lawrence asked how long the church can operate without a priest. The answer that many congregations operate without a regular priest.

Jodi Nickerson moved to close the meeting. Quinn Nickerson seconded.

The meeting was concluded with a closing prayer by Liz Neumeyer.

Kathy formally closed the meeting, and the service continued with the Eucharist.

Respectfully submitted,

Karmel Addis
karmel@bcppg.com

STATE OF THE PARISH REPORT

Dear Partners at St Thomas:

The parish began an important transition this year. Following Christmas services in 2022, Fr Brian Coleman departed as rector after 14 years of faithful service. In January, I joined you as regular supply priest and in July, I accepted your call to serve as Interim Rector.

My first big tasks were to support the parish's worship and ministry while I learned more about your parish life and practices.

Many teams and individuals make our gatherings on Sunday mornings times of reverence, learning, love, and gratitude: the office volunteers who prepare the materials, the members of the Altar Chapter who organize all the elements of our worship, the many people who serve in our liturgy as greeters, ushers, singers, musicians, readers, intercessors, preachers, subdeacons, deacon, Eucharistic ministers, and AV techs. I am deeply grateful for all the leaders who prepare and lead our worship and for your practice of gathering in the love of God for faithful and enriching common prayer.

We can celebrate many other ways the love of God is received and shared among us: through providing assistance to our struggling neighbors; by caring for members of our parish community who are ill; by maintaining the beautiful practice of the Daily Office; by preaching the good news of God in Christ; by recognizing and including our young leaders in worship; and by our dedicated Parish Discernment Team for their work seeking new rector for this parish.

Our Treasurer, Charles Grantier, bookkeeper, Melissa Wank, and I have been working hard to enhance financial management tools and practices. We spent many hours together preparing a detailed, transparent budget to assist our parish leaders in managing the financial component of our parish life and to prepare for an audit in the coming months.

The parish has also been faithful in repairing and maintaining our building this year, focusing especially on the needs of our beautiful chapel.

Healthy ministry requires balancing the call to serve with the availability of leaders and volunteers to do the serving. After an admirable decision-making process, key leaders involved in the Breakfast Program decided it was time to bring that ministry to a close. In Eucharist we recognized and gave thanks for all the people who were served in this ministry and for all who worked and gave to make this ministry possible.

In the wake of the decision to discontinue the Breakfast Program, two new ministries were born that fit better with the parish's current resources. First, we launched Laundry Love, a weekly program of support and relationship-building at a local laundromat, and, second, we will, starting in January 2024, prepare and serve a monthly meal at the SHARE Center, a drop-in center for people with a variety of basic and important life needs. We also continued our long history of providing many, many boxes of food for families in need at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

I have also been humbled and blessed to see the way this parish takes care of parish members when they need support and assistance. Our pastoral care team and an *ad hoc* crew of dedicated helpers have provided amazing amounts of help to a large number of our fellow parishioners throughout this year. This is a key practice of the love of God.

We conducted burial services for current and past parish members, and others, and we cared for families and friends of those who lost loved ones. Important people in the life of our parish passed away this year: Val Miller, Deve Grabe, Pat Peterson, Tom Kyvig, and Jenny Isaacs. We thank God for these sisters and brothers and release them to the love of God.

We have been served by faithful, dedicated, and committed parish leaders this year.

I express my profound gratitude to Kathy Dingwall for her faithful service as Senior Warden, and to John Lendel and Franz Schirk for their faithful service as Junior Wardens. I am also grateful to our vestry members for their faithful and devoted service to the people and mission of St Thomas.

Finally, I want to thank all of you — each of you — for seeking the good news of God in Christ and for opening your heart to the treasure of God's love. You have been a great blessing to me and, more importantly, to each other and our community.

In the love of God, I thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Fr. Rick Stravers
rstravers@gmail.com

WORSHIP

Worship is at the center of our faith community helping us to strengthen our relationships with God and with each other in our daily lives.

As a church, worship is our primary outreach. We offer prayer and praise for and on behalf of the wider community. At St. Thomas our worship engages all our senses and is enriched by the grandeur of our buildings, the dignity of our liturgies and beautiful music. We keep the feasts of the Christian Calendar and our lives are shaped by the seasons of the liturgical year.

In worship we:

Proclaim — We show forth the Good News of the Gospel through preaching, music, liturgy, scripture readings and prayer:

Celebrate — We regularly gather at the Lord's Table to participate in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. Though many, we are one body because we all share in one bread, one cup:

Experience — We worship God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, conscious of both the presence and transcendence of God.

Acolytes

The ministry of the acolyte is a serving ministry of the Church that comes from ancient times. From those days until now acolytes have been faithful and conscientious persons who serve as part of the liturgy and Holy Eucharist and find a place serving God at the altar. It is an honor to be one who serves, and truly a vital ministry to God and God's people.

Something worth doing is rarely without the challenges that offer us immense growth personally and spiritually. 2023 has been one of exciting growth and learning for the acolyte team. It is likely you have noticed a few additional faces serving in 2023. We have gladly welcomed back a few acolytes who had previously served, as well as new acolytes exploring their ministry. It remains a humbling, and an honorable task to continue in the ministry of serving as an acolyte. We have all grown in new ways even if serving in the same role as we continue to transition as a community. We continue our calling to step up in new ways and drop back in others, as the needs shift. Through it all, we bless each other as we lead and learn together. We remain patient and kind with one another and show love to every individual crossing our path. Specifically in 2023, we have new torch bearers and crucifers as well as a new Thurifer. With the addition of Youth Leaders' Sundays, we realize new ways to deepen our communion with one another.

Prayerful Call to Action:

These wonderful roles can be filled by those ranging from school age to retired and seasoned participants. Please, prayerfully consider joining our team.

Roles, Responsibilities and Participants:

Acolytes serve at each of the weekly services, including Evensong. The weekly Sub-Deacons currently include Jodi Nickerson, Hans Prechtel, Karmel Puzzuoli, and Becky Squires. Serving as crucifers are Charles Grantier, Nathan Isaacs, Claire Nickerson, Jodi Nickerson, Quinn Nickerson, Mark Olmstead, Keith Philips, and Mahkhi Carpenter, who is in training. Charles and Nathan have been wonderfully dependable as crucifer for Evensong services. Mahkhi and Aleise Carpenter, and Kellan and Grady Petronsky have mastered the ministry of torch bearing and our faces light up when we see them vested. Nathan Isaacs has added to his acolyte skill set by training as Thurifer and Mark

Olmstead is always is gracious to serve in this ministry as well. Speaking of expanding skill sets, Mahkhi also demonstrated great talent in flying the dove. There may be others I've forgotten to mention who have participated and/or stepped up throughout the year, and if you are one of those folks, please know you are greatly appreciated.

While assisting the Clergy in various roles, blending into our worship experience, lighting candles and ensuring the space is prepared for all parishioners to worship, our God is glorified as each acolyte brings their own personality and knowledge of tasks to complete each responsibility with reverence and also with fun. Knowing reverence is important, we strive to make serving an experience that is fulfilling, centering, and exciting. The Acolyte team contributes to the vast vitality of our parish through its weekly service. Knowledge, focus, and flexibility are a few of the qualities required of an Acolyte for each Eucharist and Evensong at which they serve. These qualities can enhance the desire to serve, not only our parish each week, but also in our schools, places of employment, homes and other outreach opportunities. Additionally, I know that it has inspired a heart for service in many of the young people who participate in the program. We are building a team that enjoys service and strives to understand why we "do what we do." Our hope is for sustained growth in 2024, both in numbers and depth of understanding. **Please consider being a part of this growing ministry!** Contact Jodi Nickerson for details.

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi L. Nickerson
jodilnickerson@gmail.com

Altar Guild

The ministry of the Altar Guild centers around the importance and beauty of the liturgy. Altar Guild members understand that every worship service reflects the Church's devotion to the love of our Lord, our Christian beliefs and our liturgical traditions.

As of January 2023, the St. Thomas Altar Guild has fourteen members, including two on-leave, three on-call members, and one new member. These members work closely with each other to prepare the Church for the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments held within the Church's Liturgical space. Members strive to create a welcoming environment for everyone who participates in St. Thomas worship services. Members build a sacred trust with one another and the clergy. They cherish the beauty of each service. They are humbled by their ministry.

Altar Guild members include:

Mary Bourgeois, on call	Elsie Gibson	Keith Phillips
Bev Case, on leave	Bob Harberts	Noreen Sidnam
Jill Ebeling	Brenda Hillman	Heather Wiley
Monica Gray	Julie McDonald	Nicole Wiley, on-call
Kathy Dingwall, on leave	Apollo Nickerson, on call	Mira Wuerges

Working with Rev. Rick has been a joy for the Altar Guild members. He appreciates and celebrates the traditions of St. Thomas. He always shows his sincere thanks for the dedication and love shown by the Altar Guild members.

This year, as in previous years, the preparation for two of the Church's major seasons, Easter and Christmas, went extremely well. Everything came together because of the commitment shown by the volunteers and the Altar Guild members.

Many parishioners, who are not members of the Altar Guild, gladly volunteer to assist the Altar Guild with special projects such as decorating the Church, changing banners, and heavy lifting projects.

Monica Gray resigned from the Altar Guild this year. She has taken immaculate care of the Altar Guild linens for many years. Thank you, Monica, for your devotion to St. Thomas. Elsie Gibson has volunteered to continue the fine care Monica has given the linens.

In closing, prayerful thanks is given to the families and friends of the Altar Guild members. Their support is vital to the members as they seek to strengthen their faith and Christian beliefs through their service to God, our clergy, and our parishioners.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Harberts,
Altar Guild Director
robertharberts@mac.com

AV Tech Team

The Audio-Visual Tech Team is responsible for the livestreaming of the services in the Sanctuary: we move the cameras, add captions to label the different parts of the service, and hit the big "Go Live" button. Team members serve at one or two services each month to help get our message out to the world: to our members watching from home, to members who have moved or are traveling, and to anyone curious about what we have to offer.

While we deal with very technical aspects of the service, the job gives us the chance to be the eyes and ears of the congregation. We get to know the order of service intimately; we highlight the offerings of everyone in the service. I love that team members get to be expressive in choosing whether to zoom in on a participant, or keeping a wide shot to show the whole church community. We get to share our worship with the world.

In 2023, we continued refining our understanding of the Audio aspects of the services: practicing quick adjustments for audio mishaps and incorporating more frequent mic checks for celebrants. New team members will start their training with just the visual aspects, and add audio as they get more comfortable.

This year our members streamed 74 services to our YouTube and Facebook channels. Our team members are Franz Schirk, Joerg Himmelreich, Bob Hibbard, Karmel Addis, and A.J. Puzzuoli. We would love another member or two to join our team! If you're interested in this cool, behind-the-scenes role, I'd love to get you trained and shadowing a service!

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Stark
stark.alexis@gmail.com

Daily Office Officiants

The Daily Office team has been quietly dedicated to ensuring there is continuous and consistent Prayer being offered to God on behalf of the St Thomas Parish. We pray Morning and Evening Prayer five days a week, although no longer on the weekends. We have found there is greater flexibility and coverage this way, so that absences and vacations can be more easily accommodated.

The core group from last year has maintained their selected times, with some modification. We have added Fr Rick to a monthly offering. This helps a lot. A couple of people from the Diocese also join us regularly, both in participation and the occasional Officiating. A big thank you to Alexis Stark, who has led us to using a “new” platform (the same one used for Sunday services) which has given greater ease and quality to each Office. She has always been available for tutoring and technical support. The app we now use is more secure, as fewer people (10) at any one time can be active participants. This approach allows for “remote” officiating, that is from home or elsewhere: we enjoy the same audio and video quality as when screening from the Chapel. (The remote option is as easy to use as though from the Church).

We are always open to additional new members. We ask you to prayerfully reflect on joining us in this ministry, even if it is only on a monthly basis

Respectfully submitted,

Keith Phillips
solitarymonk51@gmail.com

Deacon

In my second year as a deacon, I found myself settling into a rhythm. My time has been divided between liturgical duties, outreach ministry, diocesan responsibilities and enriching my spiritual life through prayer, contemplation, and spiritual reading and journaling. It’s beautiful to find a healthy balance! The following is a snapshot of the services that I have been engaged in over 2023:

- *Walked with St. Thomas and Trinity Marshall parishioners in the Battle Creek PRIDE parade.
- *Coordinated a booth at the Battle Creek PRIDE festival with volunteers from St. Thomas, Resurrection, and Trinity Marshall.
- *Wrote two prayers each quarter for the *World in Prayer* team.
- *Taught Life Skills at the Share Center (ended in September 2023).
- *Volunteered at Ministry with Community in Kalamazoo one morning each week where I engaged with people struggling with homelessness, poverty, mental illness, and addiction.
- *Conducted *Point in Time* interviews with people struggling with homelessness.
- *Led some of the Daily Offices & coordinated the weekly schedule for the team.
- *Led Spiritual Chat & Compline (ended in March 2023).
- *Led community luncheons and explored grief in the winter of 2023.

- *Coordinated St. Thomas Breakfast volunteers.
- *Coordinated a booth at the Stand Down event where we engaged with veterans, people struggling with homelessness, poverty, mental health issues, and addiction; handed out socks & toiletries.
- *Coordinated a booth at the Bruin Blast to promote the St. Thomas Laundry Love ministry and seek volunteers.
- *Visited with parishioners and other people who were ill or struggling with life issues. Visits took place in homes, hospitals, and rehab facilities and often included communion.
- *Visited with parishioners and others in the community interested in establishing relationship.
- *Met with community collaborators.
- *Attended the Diocesan Convention and presented the St. Thomas Laundry Love ministry.
- *Was a member of the Pastoral Care team.
- *Served at the altar and other liturgical services to include evensong, baptisms, funerals, and ordinations.
- *Served on the Deacon's Council.
- *Served on the Commission on Ministry.
- *Attended local diocesan trainings.
- *Completed a nine-month course on Pastoral Care.
- *Coordinated the St. Thomas Laundry Love ministry (please see St. Thomas Laundry Love report).

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, deacon
Deacon@stthomasbc.org

Discernment Committee

The Discernment Committee has met weekly since our commissioning on April 16, 2023 and our meetings began on May 8. There is a Discernment Committee Bulletin Board on the south side of the parish hallway for news that we can share with you. A chronology of our meetings is there as well as a summary of the survey results. There is also a larger print version of the survey results in the office. The members of the Discernment Committee are Rita Bailey, Charles Grantier, Nathan Isaacs, Kyle Lendel, Liz Neumeyer, Yvette Petti, and Hans Prechtel.

A few people have asked if we are interviewing candidates yet. No, we are not because we have to make sure we have a solid base first. We were also told that the time frame for hiring a new rector is from 18 to 24 months. We are following the advice of God in Isaiah 28:16 in which the Lord said to make "a sure foundation. Whoever believes will not be in haste." (ESV) This is reinforced by Jesus in the Gospels as well as by the Apostle Paul.

We needed to be sure the survey asked you the right questions. Although we had models from the 2008 group as well as from Canon Ambrose, we had to consider the church and parishioners in 2023. Then we completed the survey and provided it to you in various ways. We extended the deadline to get as many responses as possible. At that point we had to compile, interpret, and summarize the results. Once we had the results, our task was to portray them accurately in a Parish Profile. Again, we had models from 2008 as well as some sent to us by Canon Tracie Little. We used a wonderful guide from a diocese in England on how to set up a profile. As authors, all seven of us, we have to portray our parish and its needs to a potential rector. We had to get this right because choosing a new rector and them choosing us has been based on solid information.

In December of 2023, the Parish Profile was approved by the Vestry and the diocese. We will put it on the St. Thomas website as well as having a copy in the office once it is approved. Only then, will the material be available to prospective priests.

We are also still working on various forms that have to be completed. One is the Office of Transitional Ministry form. Prospective rectors will read this form, and they will fill out a corresponding form. Canon Tracie called this a sort of “dating app” to ensure a good match. There is also an optional form for a group of canons in the eastern part of the U.S. that Canon Tracie belongs to. This group is also important as they are likely to know rectors interested in applying or they might encourage a rector to consider applying. We also consider this an important way to connect with a potential rector.

This is all methodical work, but as we said above, we want a sure foundation and we will not be in haste. We thank you for your faith in us and ask for your prayers for our team and for all the people of St. Thomas Parish. Our meetings will resume in January, 2024.

“Therefore says the Lord God, “See I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. One who trusts will not panic.” Isaiah 28:16 (NRSV)

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Lendel
klendel@umich.edu

Elizabeth Neumeyer, Co-chairs
neumeyere@yahoo.com

Greeters

Our greeters welcome newcomers, visitors, as well as our regular parishioners with a friendly smile and warm hello. They are the first face most of us see when we walk through the door and that makes their position an important one. They are there to answer questions or give someone a hand, and they assist the Ushers as needed. Currently, we have four greeters: Brenda Hillman, Lorraine Petter, Emilie Cummins, and Monica Gray. It is a simple but important ministry with the power to be a friendly face to the newcomer or seasoned member. If you could give your time to such a worthwhile ministry, please see Brenda Hillman.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Hillman
royhillman@aol.com

Lectors & Intercessors

Our church is supported each Sunday by a great group of volunteers who read lessons and lead prayers. The lectors read the New Testament lesson during Sunday mass, both New and Old Testament lessons during Evensong, and whatever lesson assigned during special services.

The Intercessor reads the prayers of the people during Sunday mass. They may use one of the prayers found in the prayer book or may develop their own prayers depending on the season.

The following individuals support this ministry: Karmel Addis, Kent Bieberich, Kathy Dingwall, The Rev. Mark Engle, Sharon Engle, Charles Grantier, Liz Neumeyer, Jodi Nickerson, Claire Nickerson, Sandy Nordmark, Mark Olmstead, Kellan Petronski, Yvette Petti, Megan Phelan, Keith Phillips, Hans Prechtel, and Becky Squires.

We are always looking for additional volunteers. Anyone who is interested will be given training as well as whatever resources are available to assist you such as The Lectionary Page and Preparing For Sunday. If you are interested in becoming a lector or intercessor, please see Fr. Rick Stravers, Becky Squires, or Kathy Dingwall.

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Squires
beckys141@live.com

Music Ministry

2023 was another strong year for the St. Thomas Music Ministry with consistent participation and some modest growth in both the children and adult choirs. The winter/spring season was filled with quality music offered in worship as we began our transitional time with interim clergy. The Choral Evensong schedule was lessened a bit and, in general, the choirs appreciated the slight break in time commitments and musical responsibilities.

The choir enjoyed a well-earned summer hiatus after nearly two-years of continuous singing due to the England trip in 2022. And while we realize the congregation misses the musical contribution, this time away is essential for vocal and mental health.

The Fall began by saying goodbye to two adult choir members who have either retired from the choir (Sue Saunders) or chosen to explore other opportunities (Mary Bourgeois). I am deeply grateful to each of these women for their dedication, musical excellence, and devotion to this parish. We added two former choristers to the ranks of the adult choir: Apollo Nickerson has been a wonderful addition to the alto section and Claire Nickerson, back in town following her undergraduate degree, is a delight in the soprano section. I think it says something wonderful about the church when young people want to stay or return to such active participation. Additionally, we continue to be blessed by several of our musical friends who join us for services of Choral Evensong and choir tours (noted by *).

While the weekly Eucharist is our primary focus, we continue to offer monthly services of Choral Evensong with responsibilities divided between the Choral Scholars, the St. Thomas Choir (adults) and the St. Thomas Choristers. We are indeed fortunate and blessed to have such extremely talented,

dedicated and hard-working individuals who love St. Thomas Church giving of their time. May God bless this ministry with the support it needs to flourish and help grow the parish.

2023 Adult Choir

<u>Sopranos</u>	<u>Altos</u>	<u>Tenors</u>	<u>Basses</u>
Claire Nickerson	Mary Bourgeois	Charles Grantier*	Sam Gantt*
Marguerite Grupke†	Wanza Grantier†	Nathan Isaacs	Brooks Grantier†
Yvette Petti	Chris Kosmowski†	Wayne Kukuk†	Eric Rifenburgh
McKenzie Schafer*	Apollo Nickerson	Leon Robert	
Denise Slaby	Alexis Stark*		

*Choral Scholar

†Guest Singer

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen G. White, PhD
Director of Music
music@StThomasBC.org

Preaching Circle

St. Thomas has a Preaching Circle made up of lay and ordained members who feel called to preach. The members of the Circle include: Sharon Engle, Trish Harris, Liz Neumeyer, and Keith Phillips. They meet informally to share their sermon ideas as well as sharing rough drafts on line. Father Rick asked the Preaching Circle to preach at least one a month as well as help with Christmas and Easter services. Parish response to the program has been positive.

Respectively submitted

Elizabeth Neumeyer
neumeyere@yahoo.com

Ushers

Our four Usher teams provide a valuable service that is often overlooked. They serve on Sundays by being sure that doors are locked and unlocked when needed and also monitor the flow of people who may come late to the service. They are also there to handle any possible disruptions to the service. They oversee communion by taking up the elements, passing the plate, and by ensuring that everyone proceeds easily through the eucharist. They also serve at special services, like funerals, and musical presentations; and they help our greeters when needed.

Our current list of Ushers is Ross Dingwall, Bernie Squires, John Lendel, Ken Suprenant, Joe Cummins, Lorie Kiess, Tom Kiess and Judy Gray. Some of these folks serve more than once a month. I

would also like to thank those who fill in when needed. We are sometimes short of ushers, several of whom fly south in the winter months. If you would like to join this important ministry, please talk to Roy Hillman.

Respectfully submitted,

Roy Hillman
royhillman27@gmail.com

Young Leader's Sunday

This past year a group of us met to talk about how we can recognize, support, include, and love our young parish members, which includes nineteen teenagers and children.

We decided to invite them to fill as many roles in the liturgy as possible on the second Sunday of each month. We call this "Young Leaders Sunday." We also are welcoming them to serve other Sundays if they are interested and available.

This fall, we invited our young members to gather in the lounge for a special "Cider and Donuts Coffee Hour." At this meeting, we got to know each other better and we talked about the various roles in worship our young members could play. Then we asked them which ways they would like to serve.

We are so happy to have these wonderful young people leading us as choristers, crucifers, torch bearers, lectors, intercessors, ushers, and greeters. They bring a joyful and inspiring presence to our worship.

Our young leaders are a rich blessing for all of us. Their leadership in worship and presence in our midst has been a great delight to us and, we hope, a rewarding experience for them.

Respectfully submitted,

Fr. Rick Stravers
rstravers@gmail.com

YOUTH

We are called to nurture our children through teaching them about the Gospel and of God's eternal love for them and all creation. We seek to help our children grow in the knowledge and love of God, to increase in faith, and to love whatever is just and true and good.

We also recognize that children have gifts to offer us and our community by their presence, their questions, their honesty, and their special, intuitive sense of God.

Our work with young people includes:

Education — We provide a safe and nurturing environment for learning meaningful and relevant lessons about God's love and Christ's mission to our world.

Music — We offer a spirited environment where music is embraced, studied and celebrated as a gift from God, and where children are encouraged to offer their prayers and praise to God.

Ministry — We challenge our youth to use their talents in the service of God and others through church activities and in the wider community.

Breakfast Book Club

We have offered a series of books for both adults and children for the last 10 years. Since we no longer are having the Breakfast Program at St. Thomas, I am giving many of the books I accumulated to other groups. Many Bibles and devotional books for children have been sent to the Sudanese Grace Episcopal Church in Grand Rapids. They have many children of all ages. This connection is thanks to Mary Bourgeois. Safe Place, Inasmuch House, and Charitable Union also use children's books so I will take some there.

In order to keep some books available, I have asked the Vestry for permission to have a Little Free Bible Library along with a Little Free Food Pantry. We are currently looking at designs and locations for this. I will keep Bibles at both adult and children's levels as well as devotionals to stock the Little Free Bible Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Neumeyer
neumeyere@yahoo.com

Chorister Program

The St. Thomas Chorister program continues to be one of the primary mechanisms for the spiritual growth and education of our young people. Through the consistency of weekly rehearsals, participation in the varied worship experiences offered by St. Thomas Church, and travel, our young people receive a musical and spiritual experience unrivaled in our geographic area.

While the nature of the program involves the loss of choristers through graduation, we celebrate the addition of three new choristers. These young people have already become integral parts of our musical and spiritual family. It is a delight to welcome their parents as active participants in the life of the Church.

2023 Choristers

Evelyn Bradtke
Amelia Burton
Aleise Carpenter

Jenesis Cooley-Sabin
Paige Cooley-Sabin
Faye Grupke

Quinn Nickerson
Emilyn Vining
Nicole Wiley

Our program is open to any child beginning approximately aged 7 – boys remain in the program until voice change, and girls are able to remain in the program through high school graduation. Once boys and girls reach high school, they have the option of joining the adult choir. We welcome children and families regardless of their faith background or experience and are eager to share the rich musical heritage of our Anglican Choral Tradition. We fully understand that what we offer is unique and challenging, but firmly believe the musical and spiritual education received is well worth the time, energy, and commitment.

I am extremely proud of the progress these choristers have made both as young musicians and as leaders. I look forward to the continued development of this group and to providing them with positively life-changing musical and spiritual experiences. This program would not be possible without the parents and grandparents who support it and transport their children to rehearsals and services. A huge debt of gratitude goes to these parents for making this part of their child's upbringing a priority, and to the parish vestry for providing funding and support for this ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Stephen White
Director of Music
music@StThomasBC.org

Post Franklin Food-Pack Program

Again in 2023, St. Thomas had the opportunity to support the Food-Pack Program as part of our outreach to the children of our community. Together with First United Methodist, First Congregational, and St. Philip Catholic Church, we coordinated the delivery of food packs on Thursdays during the school year. Each church contributed approximately \$1000 to the purchase of the food packs from the Food Bank of Southwest Michigan and then delivered the packs to the school. The packs provide the students and their families with some nutritious food for the weekend when school meals are not available. As of December 21, 2023, we, along with the other 3 churches, delivered more than 1000 food packs to the very grateful students at Post Franklin School for the years 2022 and 2023. The contents varied, but could include cereal, canned fruit/vegetables, canned pasta, juice, canned milk, peanut butter, and healthy snacks. This is a project that involves very little time but has a big impact on children who may not have food for the weekend.

Increasing individual church support is going to be paramount to the continued success of this very vital program. We will be looking for ways to increase our parish financial support and hope you will think of ways you can contribute. We greatly appreciate the Vestry support of this program by including at least a portion of the funds in the annual budget.

I invite anyone who would like to experience a put-a-smile-on-your-face opportunity to please contact me. Thank you for your generosity and support of the Food Pack Program and to Hans Prechtel, Bernie Squires, and church friend Jim Randall for their continued help in serve the needs of the children and their families at Post Franklin School.

Respectfully submitted,

Ross Dingwall
rossdingwall@outlook.com

Sunday School

With post-pandemic concerns largely behind us in 2023, formal Sunday school and youth-focused programs at St Thomas continued to be on pause in 2023, primarily due to a lack of Sunday School teachers and volunteers to run a formal program. But even given that huge challenge, efforts were still made to support our young people over the year, and many great things took place!

In January, 2023, Lori Kiess met with Mackenzie Knill, Director of Children, Youth and Young Adult Formation for the Dioceses and they discussed the challenges facing St. Thomas. They did a deep dive into what resources the Dioceses could provide us, absent a formal Youth program. From that meeting, Lori compiled an extensive list of events and activities taking place regionally through the entire year, not just our young people but also inter-generational and family-focused opportunities as well. This list was posted on Realm in February so families and parishioners could take advantage of this wealth of information.

Through most of 2023, we continued to hold a youth 5:00 pm afternoon service on the last Sunday of the month, led by Father Rick Stravers and Deacon Trish Harris. As Father Rick became our interim priest, he made it a priority to address how we can increase support for our children and young people. In May, he announced plans to form a group of interested individuals to further these efforts, as well as continuing youth services. Please see Father Rick's annual report on [St Thomas Young Leaders](#) for more details on his insights and goals for supporting our kids and young persons.

In October, St Thomas participated in Holy Hikes at Woodland Park, Battle Creek with a small contingent hiking on a rainy Sunday, but still enjoying a lovely new perspective on different ways to worship outside the church walls and into nature. We committed to making this an annual event and look forward to increased participation, especially increased participation from our young people.

Early October also saw the first meeting by Father Rick with our young people for cider and donuts after Sunday service, so he could get to know our amazing kids and more monthly meetings were anticipated. Trunk or Treat returned and saw many of our young people turn out for what was a really fun afternoon serving the community.

While a "formal" Sunday School program hasn't yet returned, you can see our children and youth clearly continue to be nurtured by our St Thomas parish family and they continue to thrive spiritually. We look forward to more of these beautiful opportunities and developments in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Kiess
lori.kiess@yahoo.com

Discipleship

Discipleship means answering God's call to share his love with the world in our daily lives, helping to transform ourselves and our communities.

Each of us is called by God to ministry, we are ordained in baptism to live our covenant as agents of the Kingdom of God and ambassadors of Christ in the world. We seek to discern our vocation through reflection in study, prayer and in our relationships and experiences.

We grow in discipleship through:

Formation—We allow ourselves to question, ponder and struggle with the meaning of the Gospel in the company of God and others.

Friendship — We bring the healing ministry of Christ to all members of the parish, while building a strong and healthy parish community.

Service— We communicate the mission and ministry of this parish to the wider community, inviting others to join us. Through our outreach programs we help those in need and serve Christ in them.

Church Library

The church library is in two locations, in the Lounge and by the elevator entrance. I do not keep statistics as it is totally on the honor system. However, I do know that people are taking books as I have to keep refilling the shelves. I added a large number of Bibles with various translations. This was the result of our Hospitality Inventory. Bibles adapted for children are also there. The same is true of a number of devotionals. These are mostly by the elevator entrance.

I do not keep popular novels in stock as I do not have enough room for that. The only novels I accept are those with a religious theme, like *The Robe* or *Exodus*.

Respectfully submitted

Elizabeth Neumeyer
neumeyere@yahoo.com

Coffee Hour

Coffee hour has resumed after COVID restrictions were dropped. Coffee hour is often humorously referred to as the 8th Sacrament. Indeed, it is important for community connections. Coffee is provided with donations requested for the cost. Various groups bring assorted goodies. We continue to follow the traditional coffee hour schedule. January and August are covered by Ushers. March and June are done by the Vestry. St. Mary's Circle does April and October. Volunteers from the congregation are asked to cover Sundays in February, May, July, September, November, and December. A sign-up sheet is provided on the table as you enter the parish hall. It is important to emphasize that coffee hour is not a brunch. A simple set of snacks of some sort is sufficient. Fifth Sundays are covered by a potluck. Reminders are put in the lesson sheet announcements.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Neumeyer
neumeyere@yahoo.com

Communications

St. Thomas continues using consistent and modern means of communication to keep the people of the parish informed. The primary means of communications are the St. Thomas website, email newsletters through Constant Contact, Facebook and live-streaming, Realm internal communications and the traditionally printed *NewSpirit* newsletter.

The St. Thomas website StThomasBC.org received 1,794 unique visitors and 91 returning visitors. Our website is hosted by Wix which provides all the software and editing capabilities online, so at any given time, anyone can log in and update the website with the login and password. This is important for any congregation to have easily accessible editing capability if one person should no longer be able to continue managing website changes. New pages are added to reflect the changing events and dynamics happening in the congregation.

Constant Contact email marketing has been utilized at St. Thomas since 2009. Currently, there are 341 contacts who receive emails from St. Thomas, with an open rate of 36%. In 2023, 63 email newsletters were sent through Constant Contact. The e-news is especially important since the *NewSpirit* newsletter is sent out quarterly, and the parish e-news keeps the congregation informed between those issues.

Realm, which uses ACS software, is the means by which the congregation keeps up on internal communication, i.e. those who are established members of St. Thomas. It allows for messaging to the entire congregation as well as specific groups, such as the Vestry and those who serve on the Sunday worship schedule. Use of Realm has helped to recruit more individuals to serve in worship roles with flexibility to meet members' schedules.

The *NewSpirit* has been St. Thomas's print newsletter for decades, and continues to be published quarterly. The congregation submits articles, photos and announcements, and it is very much a living history of the life of the congregation. It is mailed out by a local company because now the USPS requires bulk mailings to be processed electronically. It goes out to over 200 households who have a current or past relationship with St. Thomas.

St. Thomas maintains a Facebook page with nearly 700 followers. The weekly e-news is posted there, as well as live-streamed worship services and the Daily Offices.

Respectfully submitted,

Karmel Addis
karmel@bcppg.com

Companions in Christ

The Companions in Christ is a many decades old group from St. Thomas. It is a group of approximately twelve ladies who have a rich history together and wanted to keep their bonds of friendship going by studying religious books together. We read a select book out loud together once a month and discuss the meaning it has in our lives and what we think it all means.

We celebrate each other's birthdays by meeting for lunch when possible and support each other mentally and spiritually. We have four new members this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Bertha Varga
ernienbert979@comcast.net

Emilie Cummins
emiliecummins8@gmail.com

The Count Team

Most Monday mornings about 9 a.m., you will find two members of the Count Team in the middle office preparing the weekly deposit of donations. Two people are required for this ministry each week. There are four teams of two; the fifth week, responsibility is rotated. This ministry demands accuracy, dedication, confidentiality, and careful attention to detail. We are responsible for recording individual donations, preparing the deposit form, and making a copy of all checks to be kept for verification. We are aided by an electronic form kept in the shared drive on the office computer. This form is updated annually by Melissa Wank, the bookkeeper. Donated funds must not be kept in the safe for an extended period of time.

The team of counters consists of Sue Saunders, Karen Keese, Mira Wuerges, Kyle Lendel, Roy Hillman, Hans Prechtel, and Noreen Sidnam. We are always looking for additional people to share in this ministry. If you are so inclined, please contact Noreen Sidnam. The time requirement is no more than two hours a week. We appreciate the trust the Parish places in us. It is truly our honor and privilege.

Respectfully submitted,

Noreen Sidnam, Chair
tnsidnam@comcast.net

Holiday Food Baskets

The Holiday Food Basket program of St Thomas is a ministry dedicated to serving those in need within our community. We arrange to supply food for Thanksgiving as well as Christmas.

For Thanksgiving, St Thomas prepared food boxes and arranged for delivery or pickup by 70 households.

For Christmas, we partnered with Santa's Helper to reach more families while keeping our costs down. Santa's Helpers purchased all the food for Christmas in return for the use of the former PRIDE room which they used for food storage (St Thomas also covered the cost of electricity for their freezers that operated two months of the year).

When it came to issuing the food on December 16th, St Thomas volunteers loaded and delivered boxes for 11 families plus 3 family pickups while Santa's Helpers handled issuing food for nearly 250 additional families that came to pick up the boxes from St Thomas.

We will meet with the leader of Santa's Helper in early 2024 and determine if we should renew our partnership (probable) and identify process improvements.

We were able to serve so many people because of the great support we had from the Parish. In addition to the donations of parishioners, our volunteers served to call families with instructions for pickup/deliveries, order food, pack the food boxes, and help with deliveries/pickups. Our volunteers

performed in an outstanding manner while making the effort enjoyable for all. Thank you so much for making these good works possible.

Respectfully submitted,

St Thomas Holiday Basket Program Coordinating Team

Bob Harberts
robertharberts@mac.com

Mike Regner
mike.regner@gmail.com

Ken Surprenant
kesbc6@gmail.com

Pastoral Care

This year the Pastoral Care Team has added to what we have been routinely doing. In addition to sending cards, making phone calls, and visiting shut ins, we are working towards licensure in the Diocese and ensuring we are in compliance with the Diocese requirements for anyone working with children or vulnerable adults in our Parish. This makes us Licensed Eucharistic Visitors.

Conversations with Canon Val Ambrose before she retired made us aware of the upcoming requirement of ensuring that we all have some experience for Racial Healing/Awareness. She explained that it was on the agendas of the Standing Committees and will be a requirement for all Parish leaders in the future. This requirement may be met by attending workshops or doing recommended reading and making the Diocesan Office aware of it. She recommended the following book, *The Church Cracked Open, Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community*, by Reverend Stephanie Spellers. The biography says “she serves as Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry’s Canon for Evangelism, Reconciliation, and Creation, helping Episcopalians to share good news and cross boundaries as part of the Jesus Movement. A former church planter and seminary faculty member... she lives in New York City.” Canon Val helped me organize this for our Pastoral Care Team and the Sermon Circle Members. We have added 30 minutes at the end of the monthly meetings and do one chapter per month. Liz Neumeyer is facilitating our discussions. When we finish the book, we will all sign a statement that we have done the reading/discussion and it will be on file in the Diocesan office.

We have completed the Introduction and 6 chapters so far. We have 2 questions to think about after reading the chapter and then we discuss it as a group. Our discussions have been interesting and we often go longer as a result! Many thoughts about diversity and God’s plan, what the scriptures say, and our everyday experiences have come out. There are 8 total chapters and a Conclusion. The Sermon Circle Members have been invited to join us for the discussions.

As Pastoral Care Members, Fr. Brian gave us basic training and the only other thing we needed to be licensed was to do the Safe Church training online and have the background check. Sermon Circle Members were also “Grandmother/Grandfathered in for the training. Several members have completed what they needed for licensure. Liz Neumeyer, Karen Keese, Elizabeth Schirk, and Emilie Cummins have licenses. Deacon Trish Harris was already qualified. We visit and take Eucharist in pairs to our shut ins. The Sermon Circle members give sermons.

We developed a team prayer this year in keeping with our *RenewalWorks* initiative which we say together at the opening of our meeting.

Our current team members are: Deacon Trish Harris, Elizabeth Schirk, Emilie Cummins, Deb

Olmstead, and Linda Morrison. Others have stepped up to help with phone calls and meals when there has been an extra number of ill or hospitalized parishioners. Thank you to all who help us! Remember to let us know if someone has surgery or is ill so we can send cards and help with meals and visits if needed. If you notify the office, the volunteers will let us know.

If you are interested in joining our Pastoral Care Team, we welcome you! See a team any member!

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Keese
karen.keese@gmail.com

The Reception Committee

The Reception Committee is supervised by Noreen Sidnam with Becky Squires as backup. Many others are called upon to assist when needed. All are volunteers who are more than willing to help. I will not attempt to name everyone for fear of forgetting someone, but please know that you all are appreciated more than words can express. Thank you all who make our ministry a success.

Our principle function is to plan, prepare and serve funeral luncheons. We are, however, available for other receptions of the Parish. Our ministry is clearly one of service. We are honored to be able to provide this service to families of our treasured members. Families are asked to reimburse the cost of the food if they are able. Funeral receptions were prepared for Valerie Miller, Jenny Isaacs and Tom Kyvig. We provided the reception after the Easter Vigil, provided the cake for the choir recognition Sunday coffee hour and for the graduates coffee hour, and for the cookie and punch reception after Lessons and Carols.

This committee is not funded by the Parish budget, but only by donations to the restricted account for this purpose. We are grateful for the support which enables us to continue to provide this ministry. If you have questions about this ministry, please feel free to ask and if you should feel called to help us, by all means, let us know. You will be welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Noreen Sidnam
tnnsidnam@comcast.net

RenewalWorks

With the guidance of our former rector, Fr. Brian Coleman, the St. Thomas family undertook *RenewalWorks* as a journey to bring us individually and as a group closer to God. We undertook a self-assessment and identified four specific focus areas in which to exert our efforts. Around each area, we then formed a working group. Following are the status reports of each group. Some of their initiatives have been realized and implemented. It is now up to each of us to use the products of their work in our daily lives.

I. Develop a Saint Thomas Parish Prayer - (Liz Neumeyer, Karen Keese, Sue Shafe, & Ross Dingwall)

In 2023, the Prayer Committee focused on encouraging all organizations in St. Thomas to begin and end every parish meeting with a prayer or appropriate scripture reading. These efforts have been

quite successful. To assist, the group had created several prayers, tailored for specific events and organizations.

Looking ahead to 2024, the Committee will publish its prayers as part of the consolidated *RenewalWorks* booklet and will also make them available as wallet-sized cards.

Another plan is to continue to emphasize the role of prayer as part of a Lenten discussion group along with the Rule of Life.

II. Develop a Saint Thomas Rule of Life - (Trish Harris, Liz Neumeyer, & Franz Schirk)

The Rule of Life working group developed the following Rule of Life to help the Saint Thomas congregation achieve the *RenewalWorks* goal of fostering a church culture devoted to strengthening our spiritual growth in the love of God and our neighbor.

With the help of God, St. Thomas parishioners will strive to:

1. Pray and worship regularly. *“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.”* (Thess. 5: 16)
2. Serve and share generously. *“Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices, God is well pleased.”* (Hebrews 13: 16)
3. Promote and practice hospitality. *“Contribute to the needs of saints, extend hospitality.”* (Romans 12: 13)
4. Explore and apply scripture. *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”* (Psalms 119: 105).
5. Rest and restore body and mind. *“Come to me, all you that are weary, and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11: 28)

The Rule serves as a guide to the St. Thomas family as a whole and as a starting point for each of us to develop a personal Rule of Life. Its elements are based in scripture providing a shared routine of spiritual practices to establish and maintain a relationship with God.

After presenting the Rule of Life to the congregation at the end of the previous year, 2023 saw its publication and dissemination in several formats. As framed posters, it is displayed prominently in several locations in the church; and as pocket-sized cards, it is available for each of us to carry and apply. The Rule also takes an important place on the bulletin board dedicated to keeping the congregation abreast of what is happening in *RenewalWorks*. Finally, the Rule will be included in an overall *RenewalWorks* booklet when it is published.

III. Instructed Eucharist - (Hans Prechtel, Judy Gray, Kent Bieberich, & Brenda Hillman)

The Instructed Eucharist working group developed a two-part presentation.

1. A sermon on the institution of the Eucharist and its development from the time of Jesus to the present day. The sermon is ready for presentation at any time, pending coordination with Fr. Rick.
2. Preparation for an actual instructed Eucharist to be performed at a service during Lent in 2024. Details will be worked out with Fr. Rick after the New Year.

IV. Connect with Other Churches - (Bob Harberts, Barb Hibiske, & John Lendel)

Informal contacts with other churches in the community are and have been ongoing throughout the year. They demonstrate a spirit of openness and outreach among our congregation. The Committee recognizes, commends, and encourages these initiatives and will work with our clergy to further expand upon the contacts and cooperation they have created.

The following examples, fostered largely through Deacon Trish and others, have produced encouraging results and events. The following stand out in particular:

First, the visit from members of our sister parish, The Church of the Resurrection, and their contribution to the music program during our Sunday Eucharist. It was a wonderful opportunity to share time both during the service and afterwards during coffee hour. Later that month, we also paired up with Trinity Marshall and Resurrection for the Pride Festival.

In October, Lori Keese organized our participation in Holy Hikes, a ministry of an Eastern Diocese deacon that brought together members of many of the community's churches in a relaxed, out-of-doors setting to share fellowship and prayer.

At Thanksgiving, St. Thomas parishioners were invited to visit and participate in an ecumenical service at Trinity Lutheran Church. The service was well attended and again offered an opportunity to foster mutual understanding and future cooperation.

Several churches came alongside us to help with the breakfast program and the Christmas breakfast. Finally, several people from other congregations have joined up to help support us in making the Laundry Love ministry a success.

All these interactions help foster closer relationships and shared experiences between St. Thomas and other churches in our community. The Committee thanks all who have taken part.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Schirk
eschirk11@gmail.com

St. Mary's Circle

St. Mary's Circle is a women's service organization that meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month in the lounge. 2023 saw us back in the swing of things following the pandemic. Earlier this year, we took a field trip to the Battle Creek Regional History Museum where we had a very interesting presentation on Sojourner Truth. In May, we held a very successful Cinco de Mayo party for the parish. And, in October, we held a Harvest Festival to raise money for the Share Center. With the ending of the Breakfast Program, we have decided to take them on as an annual service project. We also continued to package women's personal care products for the Charitable Union. We usually hold several cookie/bake sales throughout the year, which we hope to reinstate in 2024. Our officers are Brenda Hillman, President; Deb Olmstead, Vice-President; Karen Keese, Treasurer; and Julie McDonald, Secretary. All women of St. Thomas are welcome to join us.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Hillman
royhillman@aol.com

St. Thomas Laundry Love

The St. Thomas Laundry Love ministry was born out of a desire to connect with the people of Battle Creek and assist them in meeting a basic need: clean laundry. There are many people in Battle Creek who struggle to meet all their needs given their current income. Laundry is often pushed to the side out of necessity and the St. Thomas Laundry Love ministry addresses this issue with love and compassion.

Laundry Love is a national program and partners with St. Thomas Laundry Love, offering unlimited free detergent from Earth Breeze, who donates their detergent to Laundry Love. Laundry Love national offers quarterly meetings for support, encouragement and community. St. Thomas sends statistical information to Laundry Love national after each St. Thomas Laundry Love session.

The St. Thomas Laundry Love received a grant from the Bishop Whittemore Foundation in June. Other funding for this ministry has come from St. Thomas, parishioners and individuals in the community.

At the time of his report, the St. Thomas Laundry Love has met for ten sessions. We assisted 331 guests and the children, spouses, and friends who accompanied them. Guests washed items for a total of 751 people. The total number of loads completed during the first ten sessions: 1,203.

There have been thirteen volunteers who have dedicated their time, love and energy to the St. Thomas Laundry Love ministry. Five of the volunteers are from the Battle Creek community, not affiliated with the St. Thomas parish.

It is my hope that the St. Thomas Laundry Love will continue to flourish during 2024. I am exploring other grant opportunities and fundraising options. I am also seeking to increase the volunteer pool. I completed an interview for On the Ground, a local newspaper to highlight this beautiful ministry.

St. Thomas Laundry Love is doing much more than paying for laundry. We are fostering love and relationships with the people of Battle Creek.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, deacon
Deacon@stthomasbc.org

St. Thomas Night Out

The third Monday of each month, parishioners gather for dinner at a local restaurant. This is a purely social event, where here is no agenda except to enjoy the fellowship. Depending on weather and circumstances, we have had as few as eight people and as many as twenty-six. Reservations are requested so that we can advise the restaurant how many to expect. We try not to visit the same place two months in a row.

This past year we chose not to meet in November or December. The restaurants we did visit were J.B's Whiskey Creek, Clara's on the River, Miller's Time Out, the Moonraker, and Lucky Rooster. We changed our meeting night for one month to visit Territorial Brewing. It is a fun time and good to have a chance to visit with our church friends. Please consider joining us.

Respectfully submitted,

Noreen Sidnam
ttnsidnam@comcast.net

St. Thomas Vestry

OFFICERS OF THE VESTRY

Kathy Dingwall, Senior Warden

Franz Schirk, Junior Warden

Becky Squires, Clerk

Charles Grantier, Treasurer

VESTRY MEMBERS

Term Expires Jan 2025

Kathy Dingwall

Charles Grantier

Franz Schirk

Term Expires Jan 2026

Karmel Addis

Brenda Hillman

Lori Kiess

Megan Phelan

Term Expires Jan 2027

Jill Ebeling

Claire Nickerson

Mark Olmstead

Senior Warden's Report

2023 has been a year of accomplishments and challenges here at St. Thomas. In January, we faced the uncertainty of life without a full-time rector, and the Transition Team began its search for an interim rector to serve our needs until we could find one to serve us full time. In the meantime, we were fortunate to have Fr. Rick Stravers step in as our supply priest — and even more fortunate when in the spring, he agreed to apply for the position of Priest-in-Charge. It didn't take long to celebrate his return to our midst as the much loved leader of St. Thomas.

Summer days saw our parking lot filled with cranes and scaffolding as an engineering company began the process of shoring up the exterior of the chapel to save it from eventual collapse. It is an expensive project involving much sacrifice.

In late August, after much prayerful consideration and discussion, we decided to discontinue our long-standing community outreach known as the Breakfast Program. With costs increasing and other options available to the people we were serving, we looked for other programs that might fill a need we hadn't addressed. Happily, we found two options. The first turned out to be the St. Thomas Laundry Love Program, which through partnering with a local laundromat helps provide laundry services to the wider community. Laundry Love not only helps people with a basic need but helps build self-esteem as well. The second option is a monthly breakfast that we at St. Thomas provide through the Share Center allowing us to continue an outreach that many of us feel strongly about — feeding those in need.

In the fall, a group of parents and clergy were looking for a way to make the Eucharistic experience more meaningful for our young people. After listening to the kids and pooling ideas and resources, *Young Leaders' Sunday* was born and after a most successful beginning has a regular place on the 2nd Sunday of the month. It is like a breath of fresh air watching the children, young adults, and adults serve together at the altar.

Along with the ups and downs that have come our way, there have been three constants that come to mind. The first is the work of our compassionate Pastoral Team. St. Thomas has had its share of parishioners in need of loving care and support whether it be from COVID, routine illnesses, major

health issues, or just difficulty getting around. And, the one ever-present partner in this process is always the Pastoral Team. With cards, calls, casseroles, rides to and from church, visits, communion or just letting the rest of us know what's going on, they have created a network that functions like a well-oiled human machine. As one who has been on the receiving end of their compassion, I say thank you for the self-less work I see you do all over our church.

The Second is the unfailing leadership of our Priest-in-Charge, Interim Rector, The Rev. Rick Stravers, or just Rick to most of us. Every Sunday, he touches us with his warmth and his love and giving us the strength and the courage to steady on. From his bountiful welcome to his gentle sermons, he is always there for us in ways we may not even realize. — a smile, a hug or a squeeze on the arm let us know that things are going to be all right. We are indeed lucky to share our time with him.

And, last but not least, the third constant we have enjoyed this year has come from the strength and the commitment of one of our most valuable assets — The Discernment Committee. Without a lot of fanfare, these seven men and women have bonded together to become a cohesive and highly functional working committee. From the beginning, they have worked quietly behind the scenes collecting and sifting data from the parish, listening to and discussing important questions with parishioners, inventorying pictures of the life of this parish — all enabling them to create a state-of-the-art, vestry-approved, parish profile. It has been a collaborative effort and if you don't see a lot of evidence of it, it's because it isn't time yet. The discernment process is a process of orderly steps taken with great care and understanding. Don't be discouraged if you haven't heard or seen anything; that's normal. It's just not time yet. Be assured that you can be proud of the Discernment Committee — they are doing it the right way.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for the help you've given me and the support I've always felt. It has been a pleasure and a considerable honor to have been your Senior Warden for these past years.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Dingwall
kat.dingwall@outlook.com

Junior Warden's Report

To begin, I must thank all those who helped me make the quick adjustment when I took over as Junior Warden from John Lendel. John himself is at the top of that thank you list. Much of what the Facility Commission accomplished this year built on work John had already begun. The Commission for 2023 included John Lendel, Megan Phelan, Ross Dingwall, Roy Hillman, Bernie Squires, Lori Kiess, Mike Regner, Hans Prechtel and Franz Schirk (Actg. Jr. Warden).

In his 2022 Junior Warden's Report, John Lendel emphasized the need for a proactive approach to maintaining the St. Thomas buildings and grounds. While we have still had to react to immediate problems as they arose, we tried to follow John's lead and stay a step ahead of them.

The major facilities project for 2023 was the chapel restoration. Phase One focused on masonry and stone repairs to the exterior of the chapel. The goal was to make it once again water and weather tight. Work involved one main and two sub-contractors and ran from mid-August to the end of October. It was completed on time and within budget.

Along with scheduled repairs, we took advantage of exterior access to the windows above the high altar to have those windows cleaned outside and their frames stripped and repainted. They now match the other stained glass windows.

With the exterior chapel work completed, we can now think through what comes next. Phase Two will focus on the chapel interior. To begin, we, as a congregation, need to consider and plan how we want to use the chapel in future. How do we best structure the space for those uses? And then, how do we want the chapel to look inside? We look forward to a lively parish conversation on this subject in 2024.

The Commission is working together with the Stewardship and Fundraising Commission on several ideas to generate some new external revenue from our facilities. Initial thoughts revolve around office space and parking lot use. Any other ideas are also welcome. More to come as the plans mature.

Meanwhile, maintenance and repair tasks never stop. The Facilities Commission prepared and ranked a list of projects for both the church and the rectory. We will periodically review the list and amend it as some items are completed and new ones arise. We have already begun working some tasks on the list and will continue to address more in 2024 as funds and volunteer involvement allow. Details are in the Commission report below.

An incident with the air conditioning system in the sanctuary again reminded us to be proactive. To forestall future air conditioning problems we are instituting a regular maintenance program to also include the mini split AC units throughout the building.

To help make the St. Thomas buildings as energy efficient as we can, we are converting our old fluorescent lights to LED lights as the old ones fail or as other opportunities present themselves. This project will be on-going.

A new contract has been signed for cleaning services. A three-ring binder is available in the church office to record any specific cleaning problems you find. Please help the cleaner by identifying problems of which you are aware.

A contract to have the church parking lot sealed and restriped was signed. So far, the contractor has cleaned and filled most of the cracks to help prevent winter damage. The rest of the job will be completed in spring 2024 when weather again allows.

We are grateful for Ross Dingwall and his “Dirt Crew” for their continued support in maintaining the grounds around the church and rectory. Their annual spring and autumn clean-up days keep St. Thomas looking good. The Crew is always in need of additional hands. All are welcome to participate. Please let Ross know if you are willing to take part.

Rectory

After Fr. Brian left, rather than leaving the rectory as an unoccupied building, we offered its use to our music director, Dr. White, until a new rector needs it. It is a mutually useful arrangement in which St. Thomas benefits by having the building occupied. This greatly reduces the chance for vandalism and other problems that potentially afflict empty homes.

For more detailed information, please refer to the Outreach and Facilities Management report below.

REMEMBER WE NEED YOUR HELP!!

Respectfully submitted,

Franz Schirk
franz.schirk@gmail.com

Commission Reports

Parish Growth & Development

In 2023, the Parish Growth & Development Commission members were Kathy Dingwall, Brenda Hillman, Maya Lawrence and Lori Kiess and over the year during their meetings, the Team did a tremendous amount of brainstorming and looking for fresh ideas with the overall focus of:

- Being welcoming to newcomers
- Supporting our parish children and young people
- Engaging and supporting the community and the parish through outreach and inclusion

The following is a brief summary taken chronologically over 2023 and is an overview of these wonderful efforts and outcomes.

January:

- The Commission members are seated.

February:

- Implemented the use of non-alcoholic wine and gluten-free wafers at communion to be more inclusive of the needs of all communicants.
- Implemented the availability of coloring books and crayon packets to welcome young visitors to our services.
- Announced the start of Youth-focused Sundays, to be planned for one Sunday each month.

May:

- Collaborated with the Stewardship & Fundraising Commission to raise awareness of ongoing funding needs and the impact of shortfalls for costs of weekly altar flowers. Through an article in the NewSpirit, raised up the need for ongoing funding and the joy of donating to celebrate and honor loved ones and special occasions.

June:

- PG&D renews its commitment to support of our children and young people by looking for opportunities to involve youth in Sunday services; work with Outreach & Facility Management to address needed maintenance to Sunday school classrooms; plan possible inter-generational events for the parish and our young people through outings such as “Holy Hikes.”

August:

- PG&D meeting this month resulted in a list of exciting ideas to look at implement this year and next such as:
 - ◆ Harvest Fest idea to support The Share Center, continuing important work formerly done by Breakfast Program.
 - ◆ Place greater focus to better our efforts at welcoming newcomers.

- ◆ Look for opportunities to implement future fund raising and connecting with the community

October:

- Formed the “St Thomas Young Leaders” support group with Father Rick, parents, grandparents and other supporters of our youth (see additional details on this amazing work in Father Ricks’ annual report “Young Leaders Sunday.”)
- Attended “Holy Hikes” October 14th at Woodland Park, Battle Creek and committed to attend in 2024.
- Harvest Fest came to fruition by St Mary’s Circle October 29th with wonderful collection of funds and items to benefit The Share Center
- Held “Trunk or Treat” on October 29th with a big and enthusiastic turnout by our community! Added new use of our photo-boards and will look forward to this again in 2024.

November:

- Formalized for “Young Leaders” support group with our first meeting November 5th with commitment to future meetings the first Sunday of each month.
- Planned first “Young Leaders” Sunday November 12th with our young people serving at 10 am service.
- Continued work with the Vestry on the importance of being welcoming to newcomers by our introductions to visitors and invitation to fellowship at coffee hour; address ways to remove obstacles to being more welcoming.

As we look back we feel very proud of the good work completed by the team and so many others at St Thomas and we look forward to the New Year ahead where these efforts will continue to develop, grow and flourish. Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Kiess
Lori.Kiess@yahoo.com

Outreach & Facility Management

For 2023, the commission included Franz Schirk (Acting Jr. Warden), John Lendel, Megan Phelan, Ross Dingwall, Roy Hillman, Bernie Squires, Lori Kiess, Mike Regner, and Hans Prechtel.

In his 2022 Junior Warden’s Report, John Lendel emphasized the need for a proactive approach to maintaining the St. Thomas buildings and grounds. While we have nevertheless had to react to immediate problems as they arose, we tried to follow John’s lead and stay a step ahead of them.

The major facilities project for 2023 was the chapel restoration. Phase One consisted of masonry and stone repair to the exterior of the chapel and part of the sanctuary, along with necessary chapel floor reinforcement. The main contractor began work in mid-August and finished by the end of October.

We are pleased with their work and thank them for their ready cooperation throughout. This work also necessitated the involvement of two other contractors, one to perform related roof work and one to make related adjustments to the plumbing ventilation. Both contractors completed their work on time and within budget.

We also took advantage of a unique opportunity. With scaffolding already on the roof for the chapel project, we had the exterior wood frames of the three stained glass windows above the high altar stripped and repainted. It was a good chance to prolong the life of these important windows and help prevent more substantial repair work in future.

With the exterior chapel work completed we can now think through what comes next. Phase Two will focus on the chapel interior. To begin, we, as a congregation, need to consider and plan how we want to use the chapel in future? How do we best structure the space for those uses? And then, how do we want the chapel to look inside? We look forward to a lively parish conversation on this subject in 2024.

Meanwhile, other opportunities present themselves from time to time. A good example is the mural with the St. Thomas quote above the old sacristy door which was donated by a parishioner. We have asked the artist who painted it to return and enhance the text to make it more legible from everywhere

Another opportunity project, funding also donated by a parishioner, is the placement of hand holds for the steps either side of the altar, a need of long standing. The concept for this project was developed with the cooperation of the rector and music director. It is now in the design phase. Implementation is planned for 2024.

Maintenance and repair tasks never stop.

As part of preparing our input to the 2024 St. Thomas budget, the Facilities Commission met in September to prepare and rank a list of projects for both the church and the rectory. We will periodically review the list and amend it as some items are completed and new ones arise. We have already begun working some tasks on the list and will continue to address more in 2024 as funds and volunteer involvement allow.

After an incident with the air conditioning system in the sanctuary we had the heat exchange coils professionally cleaned and air filters installed where none were previously. This greatly improved AC efficiency and flow. To forestall future such problems a regular maintenance schedule and contract is planned, to also include the mini split AC units throughout the building.

To help make the St. Thomas buildings as energy efficient as an old building can be made, we are converting our old fluorescent lights to LED lights as the old ones fail or as other opportunities present themselves. This project will be on-going.

A new contract has been signed for cleaning services in the church. With the lifting of COVID restrictions the company was finally able to hire a new person to take care of cleaning. A three ring binder is available in the church office to record any specific cleaning problems encountered. Please help the cleaner by identifying any problems of which you are aware.

A contract to have the church parking lot sealed and restriped was signed. Partly because of the presence of construction equipment during the chapel renovation, we were unable have this project

fully completed in 2023. However, the contractor has cleaned and filled most of the cracks to help prevent winter damage. The job of surface sealing, striping and numbering will be completed in spring 2024.

Regarding the parking lot, the Commission is working together with the Stewardship and Fundraising Commission to develop a plan to enhance the revenues generated by the parking lot. Initial ideas revolve around space numbering and appropriate signage. More to come as the plans mature.

We have stayed on target with all required building inspections and reports. No major issues were identified.

We are grateful for Ross Dingwall and his “Dirt Crew” for their continued support in maintaining the grounds around the church and rectory. Their annual spring and autumn cleanup days keep St. Thomas looking good. The Crew is always in need of additional hands. All are welcome to participate.

Rectory

After Fr. Brian left, rather than leaving the rectory as an unoccupied building, we offered its use to our music director, Dr. White, until a new rector needs it. It is a mutually useful arrangement in which St. Thomas benefits by having the building occupied. This greatly reduces the chance for vandalism and other problems that potentially afflict empty homes.

Until recently St. Thomas paid a monthly rental for the water softener in the rectory. To eliminate this expense we purchased and installed a new water softener. It will pay for itself in savings in about three years. The only expense going forward will be for salt.

Respectfully submitted,

Franz Schirk
franz.shirk@gmail.com

Stewardship and Fundraising

As 2023 came to an end, St. Thomas found itself in a comfortable financial position, but future challenges are on the horizon. Throughout the year, the Stewardship and Fundraising Commission has endeavored to be careful and faithful stewards of the parish’s resources. We look forward to the work of managing St. Thomas’s resources in 2024, as well as planning for a stable and sustainable future.

The commission is exceedingly grateful for the extraordinary generosity of the St. Thomas community in 2023. People from the parish and beyond gave magnanimously to the breakfast program, Laundry Love, and our other outreach programs. Many members have also increased their pledges for 2024. However, due to the passing of some members, our pledging has fallen short of the goal. Addressing this shortfall will be a high priority for the Stewardship and Fundraising Commission in the months ahead.

The 2024 budget is the result of a collaborative effort between the commission, Fr. Rick Stravers, and various stakeholders in the parish. Although we could not increase every budget line, several are larger than in 2023. This is due to the temporary absence of a full-time rector’s salary, pension, and insurance obligations. For instance, we thought it prudent to include more money for building repair and maintenance in anticipation of calling a new rector.

The vestry requested one major disbursement from endowments in 2022 for the chapel restoration project. This work was completed on time and on budget by our contractors.

As part of our rector search process, St. Thomas will undergo a financial review by an outside accounting firm in early 2024. The parish can be assured that our books are in order, and we feel confident that the review will find few, if any, issues with our bookkeeping and financial controls. This is largely due to the diligent and professional work of our bookkeeper, Melissa Wank. The Stewardship and Fundraising Commission, and the parish as a whole, owe her their gratitude.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Grantier, Treasurer
cgrantier@gmail.com

2024 Stewardship Campaign

Our annual giving campaign for 2024 adopted the theme, “Rooted in Abundance.” We set our goal at \$225,000, the same goal as in 2023. The campaign included letters from the treasurer, senior warden, and priest-in-charge, Sunday morning remarks from members of the parish, and pledge packets delivered to each household.

In contrast to our 2023 stewardship campaign, which exceeded its goal, our 2024 campaign has fallen \$41,634.00 short. This is significant. Some regular pledging members have recently passed away and others have left the parish. Others have not yet renewed their pledge for 2024. The vestry will need to consider how to address this shortfall.

On the other hand, many members have increased their pledges for 2024. The generosity of the St. Thomas community continues to be astounding and shows faith and confidence in our parish. This year may be a rough patch, but I feel confident that we can secure a sustainable and abundant future for St. Thomas.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Grantier, Stewardship Campaign Chair
cgrantier@gmail.com

	<u>Total Pledge</u>
24 Pledges increased	\$87,854.00
18 Pledges unchanged	\$49,360.00
14 Pledges decreased	\$38,172.00
13 Pledges not yet renewed for 2024	
5 New pledges submitted during this campaign	\$7,980.00
61 Pledges for 2024	\$183,366.00

2023 Restricted Accounts

Accounts		Beginning Balance	Debits	Credits	Ending Balance
80002	Memorial	3,527.24	0.00	25.00	3,552.24
80006	Bldg & Cap Improvements	8,696.03	0.00	0.00	8,696.03
80010	Back Pack Ministry	0.00	0.00	1,600.00	1,600.00
80011	Altar Flowers	(179.26)	(5,369.28)	4,405.90	(1,142.64)
80013	Music Program	11,203.30	(15,439.80)	10,304.46	6,067.96
80015	Summer Youth Music Program	97.47	0.00	0.00	97.47
80020	Choir Trip	6,903.73	(4,021.50)	4,050.00	6,932.23
80025	Deacon's Discretionary Fund	280.16	(160.00)	834.00	954.16
80026	Endowment Contributions	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
80027	Reception Committee	2,879.19	(1,089.07)	1,151.78	2,941.90
80028	Chapel Restoration	10,343.50	0.00	0.00	10,343.50
80031	Rector's Discretionary Fund	1,896.77	(412.83)	465.61	1,949.55
80032	Church of Jerusalem	0.00	0.00	56.00	56.00
80033	Holiday Baskets	1,663.24	(2,332.81)	3,200.00	2,530.43
80040	Breakfast Program	6,860.13	(20,169.58)	13,309.45	0.00
80050	Church Window Frames	15,325.42	(2,190.33)	350.00	13,485.09
80064	Venture Crew 4316	924.01	(982.00)	1,029.00	971.01
80100	Instrument Maintenance	0.00	(920.00)	100.00	(820.00)
80141	Laundry Love	0.00	(6,253.23)	18,398.30	12,145.07
80142	Community Outreach	0.00	0.00	2,500.00	2,500.00
80500	Restricted In/Out	0.00	(430.00)	430.00	0.00
80109	Begg Bequest	5,771.43	0.00	0.00	5,771.43
80110	Bldg & Capital Improvements	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
80112	Holtom Scholarship	5,144.17	0.00	2,151.96	7,296.13
80113	Seminarian Support	1,948.26	0.00	2,151.96	4,100.22
80116	Memorial-Unrestricted	0.00	(925.00)	1,356.00	431.00
80023	Altar-Reserve Funds	2,641.35	(928.95)	507.84	2,220.24
80128	General In/Out	(70.00)	(100.00)	470.00	300.00
80129	Pre-Paid Pledge	23,557.61	(23,557.61)	9,400.00	9,400.00
80132	St Thomas Booster	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
80140	Contingency	4,846.23	0.00	0.00	4,846.23
	TOTALS	\$114,359.98	(\$85,281.99)	\$78,247.26	\$107,325.25

St. Thomas Episcopal Church 2024 Budget

Accounts	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Revenues			
Offerings			
5-00-01 - Loose Plate	2,000.00	1,969.87	1,500.00
5-00-04 - Pledges	225,000.00	196,884.96	225,000.00
5-00-05 - Non-pledge Offerings	10,000.00	6,858.09	10,000.00
5-00-08 - Special Offerings	4,000.00	1,070.00	4,000.00
Total Offerings	241,000.00	206,782.92	240,500.00
Other Revenue			
5-01-01 - Fund Raising	1,500.00	0.00	0.00
5-01-02 - Miscellaneous Income ⁽¹⁾	29,000.00	1,350.48	0.00
5-01-03 - Rental Income	8,000.00	8,065.00	10,000.00
5-01-07 - Initial Offering	30.00	147.63	90.00
5-01-09 - Initial Offering - Envelopes	0.00	202.00	0.00
5-01-10 - Interest Income	0.00	22.99	25.00
5-02-11 - Fees (Weddings, Funerals)	1,000.00	400.00	0.00
5-02-12 - Grants	5,000.00	0.00	0.00
5-02-14 - Coffee Hour Donations	(line added for 2024)		550.00
Total Other Revenue	44,530.00	10,188.10	10,665.00
Dividend Income from Endowments			
5-03-04 - St. Thomas (BC Found.)	500.00	630.00	630.00
5-03-05 - Laimbeer (BC Found.)	500.00	950.00	950.00
5-03-05 - Humiston (BC Found.)	0.00	1,320.00	1,320.00
Total Endowments	1,000.00	2,900.00	2,900.00
Total Revenues	286,530.00	219,871.02	254,065.00

2024 Budget (continued)

Accounts	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Expenses			
Diocese			
6-00-01 - Diocesan Pledge	37,300.00	37,260.00	40,234.00
6-00-02 - Diocesan Convention	400.00	397.13	1,500.00
Total Diocese	37,700.00	37,657.13	41,734.00
Personnel			
6-01-01 - Rector	35,250.00	35,250.00	0.00
6-01-02 - Administrative Support	16,070.00	19,344.31	19,594.00
6-01-03 - Interim Clergy	24,000.00	20,508.40	42,800.00
6-01-04 - Music Director	59,000.00	59,000.16	59,000.00
6-01-07 - FICA Taxes	4,500.00	6,193.34	6,300.00
6-01-08 - SECA-Rector	2,700.00	3,126.96	0.00
6-01-09 - Payroll Expense	400.00	635.23	650.00
6-01-10 - Pension-Clergy & Interim	9,400.00	10,196.26	1,725.00
6-01-11 - Pension-Lay Employees	5,300.00	5,310.00	5,310.00
6-01-12 - Ins.-Group Medical	19,250.00	20,293.00	13,200.00
6-01-13 - Long Term Disability Clergy	350.00	199.44	0.00
6-01-14 - Ins.-Life/Clergy	300.00	144.00	0.00
6-01-15 - Workers Comp.	250.00	327.00	300.00
6-01-17 - Continuing Ed.-Rector	0.00	0.00	0.00
6-01-18 - Mileage	1,500.00	0.00	500.00
6-01-19 - Continuing Ed.-Mus. Dir.	1,000.00	968.96	1,200.00
Total Personnel	179,270.00	181,497.06	150,579.00
Discipleship			
6-02-01 - Pastoral Care	500.00	0.00	300.00
6-02-02 - Advertising-Evangelism	900.00	823.35	900.00
6-02-03 - Stewardship/Planned Giving	500.00	0.00	240.00
6-02-05 - Adult Formation	500.00	173.73	500.00
6-02-08 - Backpack Program ⁽²⁾	0.00	1,500.00	0.00
6-02-09 - Holiday Baskets ⁽²⁾	2,500.00	0.00	0.00
6-02-11 - Breakfast Program	5,000.00	0.00	(now inactive)
6-02-16 - Deacon's Ministries	1,500.00	1,000.00	1,500.00
6-02-17 - Coffee Expense	0.00		1,000.00
6-02-18 - Communication Newsletters	0.00		2,500.00
Total Discipleship	11,400.00	3,497.08	6,940.00

2024 Budget (continued)

Accounts	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Worship			
6-03-03 - Printing	2,400.00	1,553.56	2,400.00
6-03-05 - Altar Supplies	3,800.00	3,562.04	3,800.00
6-03-06 - Instru. Maintenance	2,125.00	1,960.00	3,000.00
6-03-07 - Organist Sub	600.00	750.00	600.00
6-03-08 - Clergy Supply	1,000.00	701.84	1,500.00
6-03-09 - Worship-Other	800.00	567.40	300.00
6-03-10 - Offering Envelopes	300.00	0.00	0.00
6-03-12 - Choral Scholar	7,665.00	6,970.00	8,000.00
6-03-39 - Acolytes	200.00	0.00	200.00
6-03-40 - Music Supplies	250.00	116.04	250.00
6-03-45 Audio Visual	(line added for 2024)		300.00
Total Worship	19,140.00	16,180.88	20,350.00
Youth			
6-04-02 - Chorister Program	250.00	199.81	500.00
6-04-06 - Youth Formation	0.00	0.00	200.00
Total Youth	250.00	199.81	700.00
Administration			
6-05-01 - Supplies	1,200.00	1,191.94	1,200.00
6-05-02 - Online Service	4,500.00	4,431.49	4,500.00
6-05-03 - Telephone & Internet	2,500.00	2,319.10	2,500.00
6-05-04 - Postage	800.00	467.50	800.00
6-05-07 - Bank Fees & Supplies	500.00	488.75	420.00
6-05-08 - Vestry	0.00	0.00	0.00
6-05-10 - Admin-Other	500.00	1,724.81	300.00
6-05-14 - Rector Search	10,000.00	715.80	2,500.00
6-06-06 - Printer Lease	(moved from Building & Grounds section)		2,750.00
6-06-08 - Property Taxes (Printer)			170.00
Total Administration	20,000.00	11,339.39	15,140.00

2024 Budget (continued)

Accounts	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Building & Grounds			
6-06-01 - Electric-Parish	13,500.00	12,714.18	12,500.00
6-06-02 - Gas-Parish	10,000.00	8,771.20	10,000.00
6-06-03 - Water/Sewer-Parish	2,700.00	2,962.85	2,700.00
6-06-04 - Refuse	1,750.00	1,958.95	1,750.00
6-06-05 - Insurance	17,000.00	18,463.25	17,800.00
6-06-06 - Printer Lease	3,000.00	2,740.56	(moved to Administration)
6-06-08 - Property Taxes (Printer)	120.00	166.60	
6-06-07 - Furniture, Fixtures	0.00	0.00	0.00
6-06-09 - Cleaning Supplies	0.00	0.00	0.00
6-06-10 - Maintenance-Church	9,000.00	9,580.27	11,740.00
6-06-11 - Snow Removal	1,500.00	1,630.00	3,600.00
6-06-12 - Pest Control	1,200.00	1,157.00	1,200.00
6-06-13 - Security System	800.00	693.96	800.00
6-06-14 - Kitchen Supplies	500.00	310.18	300.00
6-06-16 - Elevator Services	2,700.00	2,663.52	2,700.00
6-06-17 - Cleaning Service	8,200.00	9,204.00	9,552.00
6-06-18 - Yard Maintenance	1,100.00	728.25	720.00
6-06-20 - Chapel Restoration	130,128.00	49,743.00	0.00
Total Building & Grounds	203,198.00	123,487.77	75,362.00
Rectory			
6-06-25 - Maintenance-Rectory	1,000.00	2,332.91	1,000.00
6-06-26 - Gas-Rectory ⁽³⁾	1,500.00	1,003.69	0.00
6-06-27 - Electric-Rectory ⁽³⁾	1,500.00	479.38	0.00
6-06-28 - Water, Sewer, Garbage-Rectory ⁽³⁾	1,200.00	708.26	0.00
6-06-29 - Water Treatment-Rectory ⁽³⁾	0.00	270.00	0.00
6-06-30 - Security System-Rectory	0.00	0.00	0.00
6-06-40 - Pest Control Rectory	500.00	539.00	550.00
6-06-32 - Snow Removal-Rectory	(lines added for 2024)		720.00
6-06-33 - Yard Maintenance-Rectory			990.00
Total Rectory	5,700.00	5,333.24	3,260.00
Total Expenses	476,658.00	379,192.36	314,065.00

2024 Budget (continued)

Accounts	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Endowment Distributions			
1-01-02 - St. Thomas Endowment ⁽⁴⁾	170,128.00	170,128.00	40,000.00
1-01-01 - Fr. Simms Endowment	20,000.00	20,000.00	20,000.00
Total Endowment Distributions	190,128.00	190,128.00	60,000.00
Grand Total (Revenue - Expenses + Distributions)	\$0.00	\$30,806.66	\$0.00

The 2024 budget was adopted by the St. Thomas Vestry at a meeting held Thursday, November 16, 2023.

NOTES:

- (1) Insurance payments received from Fr. Brian Coleman's disability claim were erroneously budgeted for 2023 in line 5-01-02 (Miscellaneous Income).
- (2) The Backpack Program and Holiday Baskets are currently funded entirely by donations and do not need to be included in the operating budget.
- (3) Rectory utilities and water treatment are being paid for by the current occupant.
- (4) Our 2023 distributions from the St. Thomas Endowment were comprised of \$40,000.00 to supplement the operating budget and \$130,128.00 for the chapel restoration project.

Trust Investment Committee Report & St. Thomas Trust Fund Trustees

St. Thomas Episcopal Church has two endowment trust funds – the St. Thomas Trust Fund and the Father Simms Trust Fund. The trust funds are invested through the guidance of the St. Thomas Investment Committee. The Trust Investment Committee discusses and monitors the performance of the funds with representatives of the Episcopal Church Foundation and State Street Bank.

The trustees of the St. Thomas Endowment trust are Senior Warden Kathy Dingwall, Lori Kiess, Gillian Ebeling, Kent Bieberich and one open position. The St. Thomas vestry is the trustee of the Father Simms Trust. The Trust Investment Committee includes the five trustees of the St. Thomas Endowment as well as Father Rick Stravers, Priest-in-charge, and Charles Grantier, St. Thomas Treasurer.

In 2023 a request was made by the Vestry to transfer \$40,000 from the St. Thomas Trust to the General Operations Budget. This is consistent with the previous 2022 request and was approved. The Vestry approved a transfer of \$20,000 from the Fr. Simms Trust to the General Operations Budget. The St. Thomas Fund paid \$46,800 in 2023 for the exterior chapel work. The remaining \$83,328 will be paid early in 2024. We anticipate further requests for funds as the interior chapel work is started.

The Trust Fund balances are as follows:

	<u>12-31-22</u>	<u>12-31-23</u>
St. Thomas Fund	\$847,459	\$924,504.97
Fr. Simms Fund	<u>\$395,310</u>	<u>\$434,827.97</u>
Total	\$1,242,769	\$1,359,332.94

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Ebeling
 ebelingg@att.net

Parish Statistics

Members as of December 31, 2023 — 329

Increases:

Baptisms: 0

Decreases: 4 Total — 3 members

Deaths:

Valerie Miller (*long-time member*)

Pat Peterson (*long-time member*)

Larry Dillon (*former member*)

Tom Kyvig (*long-time member*)