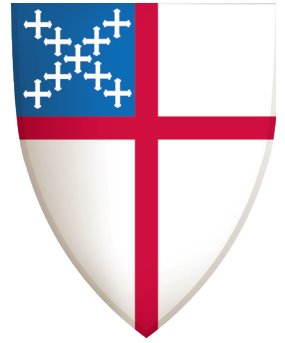


The NewSpirit

Being a Light to the World: Worship • Youth • Discipleship

St. Thomas Episcopal Church Battle Creek, Michigan

March 2021



Getting Back to Normal

by Fr. Brian Coleman

I look at this map almost every day. It documents the risk of transmission of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, county by county across the United States. Our diocesan leadership has

established that once the map shows no less than fifty counties in the yellow and green zones for a period of seven consecutive days, we will begin the process of transitioning to in-person worship, albeit with all of the precautions we have become so accustomed to, like mask-wearing, physical distancing and sanitizing. When our county turned red last October, indicating that the risk of transmission of the virus was at

its highest level, I made the determination in consultation with the staff and vestry to suspend in-person gatherings at St. Thomas. Very soon thereafter, the diocese required all churches to suspend in-person gatherings. Currently, Calhoun County is orange, but may soon change to

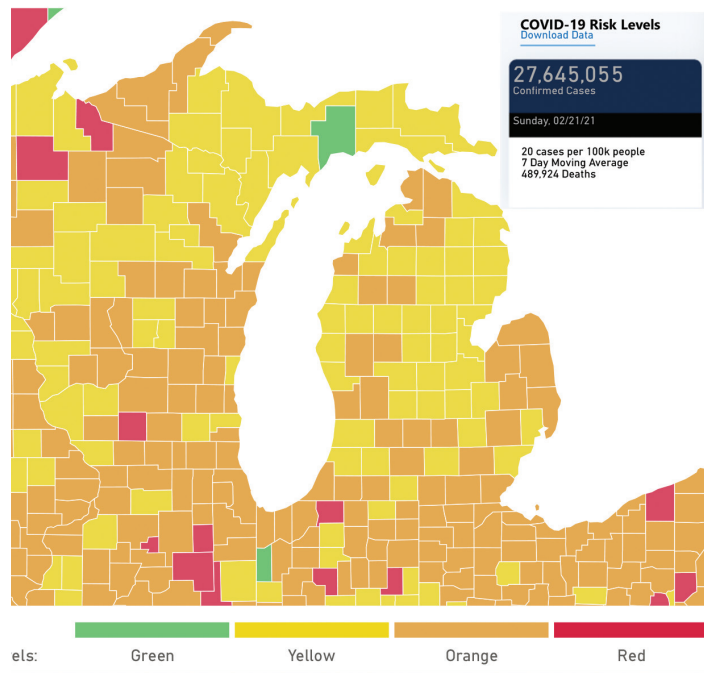
yellow, indicating that the risk of infection is decreasing in our area. Of course, this could change and infection rates could rise if the new coronavirus variants spread more rapidly than the dominant strain,

It was in mid-March last year that we began to take measures to ensure the safety of our parishioners and the wider community by restricting our

activities. We were in the midst of Lent, and our observance of Holy Week was radically altered.

The church building was closed, and all activities were moved online. We adapted quickly and started climbing the steep learning curve of broadcast technology and live-streaming. Since then we have overcome many obstacles and enabled our parishioners to participate in liturgy, fellowship and learning remotely. As we anticipate an end to the pandemic, it is important

for us as a community to explore the impacts our experiences have had on us, both positive and negative. What do we want to continue doing? What do we want to change? What do we want to stop doing? What has been effective, and what has not?



vaccinations are stalled, or folks stop practicing the safety measures that have stemmed the tide of infections during the pandemic. I sincerely hope we continue moving in the right direction and that we will soon be allowed to resume in-person worship at St. Thomas, perhaps even before Easter.

continued on p. 2

One of the practices from last summer that seemed popular, was our outdoor worship. This was an adaptation necessitated by the virus which people enjoyed, and which had the added benefit of showing the wider community that we were still here and engaged in worship. A kind of soft evangelism, if you will. I anticipate that we will have opportunities for outdoor worship again this year, perhaps as early as Easter Day! The long-range weather forecast is predicting warmer than normal temperatures for Spring, so watch for more details about that.

When we get the green-light from the diocese to resume in-person worship we will inform the parish through the normal modes of

communication. Attendance will have to be limited to 25% of capacity, or to ensure that parishioners can maintain six feet of physical distance between individuals or households. Additional capacity will be available in the chapel, parish hall and lounge. I am excited about the prospect of being able to resume in-person worship, and I so look forward to seeing everyone in church again. I am also grateful for your patience and willingness to sacrifice for the safety of others during the times of greatest risk.

We seem to be coming to the end of what has been a very long and dark tunnel. We grieve the loss of dear ones who have died, and we

are conscious of the magnitude of grief for the over 500,000 lives lost to the virus. There will no doubt be further pain to endure and sacrifices to make, but just like the Season of Lent eventually comes to an end and terminates in the joy of Easter, so too will this pandemic eventually come to an end and be crowned with the joy of renewal and rebirth.



Recommended Podcast: Strange New World

Understanding Easter: Ten ways of looking at the cross

From Fr. Brian:

Last year I stumbled across a podcast called *Strange New World* produced by a progressive Christian media company called Salt. The podcast was a four-part series on understanding Christmas, and explored the ways that the four Gospels approach the origin stories of Jesus. Listening to the broadcasts was a real eye-opener, and I found it revelatory. It helped me to understand more deeply than ever before the meaning of Christmas and the Incarnation.

Now the same producers are working on a new series called *Understanding Easter: Ten ways of looking at the Cross*. I highly recommend this series as a way to

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engage with scripture during Lent and to prepare for the message of renewal and reconciliation that comes at Easter. Each episode is very well produced, easy to listen to, and will leave you wanting to hear more.

Strange New World is a show about understanding the Bible,

the world's most influential, misunderstood book — a podcast tailor-made for skeptics, believers, and everybody in between. It is hosted by Matthew Myer Boulton, who's spent twenty years teaching the Bible and theology to students at Harvard Divinity School and seminaries in New England and the Midwest.

The podcast is available online at saltproject.org/podcast-strange-new-world.

For experienced podcast listeners, it can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, or Google Podcasts under *Strange New World*.

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

by Dr. Stephen White, Director of Music

St. Thomas has a long history of offering quality music for the parish and the broader community. For 92 years the foundation for that ministry has been the pipe organ installed by Ernest M. Skinner. This instrument, the firm's Op. 788, is a relatively small instrument with only 16 ranks of pipes spread over two manuals and pedal. The genius of E.M. Skinner, however, was how he voiced the instrument for the room in which it lives. Anyone who has been present in worship realizes the instrument is fully capable of accompanying a congregation singing at full voice without any difficulties.

The instrument underwent restoration during the tenure of Jackie Stilger and continues to serve the parish as it nears its 100th year. It is cared for by Ken Holden and Stephen Warner (the team that

conducted its restoration) and, as with anything of its age, it requires



regular maintenance, tuning and care. The instrument is housed in two chambers (one at the front and one in the bell tower) and controlled by a detached console. I've often said that the pipe organ is like a "living" part of the building because it requires air to "come

alive" with sound. Pipe organs, among the oldest of instruments, are essentially a set of whistles. The size, shape and material help to give each pipe its distinctive sound. The accompanying pictures from inside the organ chamber show the variety of pipes within Op. 788.

Battle Creek was a popular location for Skinner pipe organs due to the personal friendship between W.K. Kellogg and Ernest M. Skinner. At one point there were at least five Skinner instruments in and around Battle Creek, including in Mr. Kellogg's home on Gull Lake. That instrument, as well as the instrument at

First Presbyterian Church are no longer in existence, however three instruments still exist: St. Thomas Episcopal, St. Philip RC and WK Kellogg Auditorium.

RenewalWorks Team needs your prayers

Our Parish RenewalWorks Process is well underway, and many of you took the Spiritual Life Inventory last month to give us a snapshot of how our parish is situated in terms of Spiritual Renewal. Over the course of the next two months the Workshop Team will be meeting (via Zoom) on Sunday afternoons to explore the responses to the inventory and make plans for the future renewal of our parish and its ministry. Please pray

for these individuals in their work, and for our vestry who will receive the recommendations of the worship team when their discernment is complete.

Workshop Team Members:

Kathy Dingwall (Co-Facilitator)
Elizabeth Schirk (Co-Facilitator)
Sue Shafe (Administrator)
Ginny Baldwin
Kent Bieberich

Douglas Chapel
Brian Coleman
Ross Dingwall
Sue Edmond
Judy Gray
Robert Harberts
Brenda Hillman
Lori Kiess
Franz Schirk
Noreen Sidman

**Styrofoam
Collection**

3/13/2021

9 a.m.

**until truck is full
Department
of Public Works
Kendall St.**

This Year is Dark, but We Still Need Lent

by Adam Russell Taylor, Sojourners sojo.net

I'm a latecomer to Lent. It wasn't until I joined Sojourners in my first role as senior political director in 2004 that I learned from my Catholic colleagues the significance of this 40-day liturgical season in which we spiritually travel with Jesus through his fasting in the desert. In 2021, this time of reflection — so often marked by what we give up — comes amid what already feels like a dark, cold, and perilous winter.

Many of us are still giving up the ability to worship together in person. A virus that we prayed would be quickly vanquished has become a much more permanent fixture in our lives, causing so much loss and hardship. In the Bay Area and elsewhere, we've seen an alarming surge of xenophobic violence against Asian Americans in recent weeks that has left one person dead and many more injured. Since the onset of the COVID pandemic in the U.S. a year ago, the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council has documented nearly 3,000 incidents of anti-Asian hate across 47 states and the District of Columbia. In Texas and northern Mexico, millions have not had power for days as a result of unprecedented stress on the power grid due to severe cold that the region almost never experiences. Scientists have long warned us that climate change is responsible for more extreme weather events, and this storm is another sobering example.

It can feel overwhelming to find ourselves in the Lenten season

for the second time since this pandemic hit, with many of us finding either much more or much less time for quiet, contemplative spiritual disciplines. Ash Wednesday, when we remember our own mortality, feels particularly timely, given the thousands of people dying from the pandemic every single day — a loss compounded by pandemic-related limitations on how we grieve and honor their lives. Even the ritual itself necessarily looks different this year, with congregations across the country adopting a variety of modified approaches, from silently sprinkling ashes on parishioners' hands to encouraging worshippers to pick up small boxes of ashes at the church to self-administer at home.

In light of these trying and extraordinary times, I asked a handful of colleagues and pastors to share their own reflections on how we can best enter into this Lenten season and what we can learn from a time typically marked by prayer, fasting, repentance, and self-examination.

Rev. Brandee Mimitzraiem, pastor of Mighty Quinn Chapel AME in Lincoln, Neb., shared this powerful reflection:

"We have spent so much time fearing getting sick, fearing dying, fearing everything, and calling our attempts to stay healthy a 'sacrifice,' that we cannot see how refusing to be Divine, refusing to hasten death, refusing to participate in making

others die before God is ready for them, is not a sacrifice — it is part of what it means to be interconnected. All of the things that we give up to be human and to be human responsibly, are not the same things that we give up in order to recognize that we are not God and that we need God. The purpose of Lent is to give up stuff so that we recognize we are fully human in need of a savior, so that by the time we get to Easter we are not confused about why we need Jesus. Leaning into spiritual disciplines that help to draw [us] closer to God gives both the spiritual fortitude for this time and enables us to experience fuller versions of our humanity, that we are acknowledging the majesty of God at the same time, so that it is not one or the other."

In reflecting on how to step into this season of Lent as we are already experiencing such grief, my colleague and Sojourners magazine editor Jim Rice put it well:

"Lent is often understood as just a time to 'give up something.' Of course, the deeper purpose has always been to take a step back from our day-to-day habits and entanglements, to atone for our sins (and in particular the ongoing, often unthinking, ways we interact with the people around us, our world, and with God). Lent gives us a chance to reflect deeply on the way our imperfect selves (the 'flesh,' as Paul puts it) get in the way of our spiritual growth (hence the focus

on mortification of the flesh – fasting, ‘giving up’ physical pleasures, etc. – to focus on our spiritual lives).

In these times of COVID-19 – times that have involved so much ‘giving up,’ so much suffering – many have talked about approaching Lent differently, emphasizing not giving up or self-sacrifice but something else (taking care of oneself, say). But the heart of Lent is unchanged. Yes, we can and should acknowledge – and grieve – for all the losses we’ve suffered. That’s very appropriate, and needed. But the true, profound core of Lenten disciplines is not about giving up at all – it’s about drawing closer to God (and closer to others, to a just world, to a better and more faithful walk of discipleship). So on the one hand, yes: We’ve (collectively and, for many, individually) gone through and are going through some very difficult times. In that context, our Lenten soul-searching may be and feel different than in past years. But our spiritual work is the same: Look at the things in our lives that separate us from a ‘closer walk with thee’ and endeavor to follow ever-more-faithfully in Jesus’ footsteps.”

The former national chaplain of my own beloved fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., and senior pastor of St. Joseph AME Church in Durham, N.C., Rev. Dr. Jonathan C. Augustine emphasized that Lent is a season to stretch our understanding and commitment to worship:

“So many pastors have become

production supervisors and video producers, with worship that is intentionally celebratory, as liturgists divert worshipers’ attention from losses to instead celebrate God’s goodness. This has been especially true during Black History Month. On this Ash Wednesday, however, we have the opportunity to introspectively appreciate that Jesus’ unparalleled sacrifice (and suffering) were his path to the celebration of the Resurrection. As we all are already sacrificing so much, we should be encouraged by Jesus’ example and be reminded of Lent’s biggest lesson: both liturgy and life are cyclical. This season of sacrifice will not last forever.”

Rev. Aaron Graham, pastor of the District Church in Washington, D.C., offered this prayer:

“I hear the Lord saying “my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” This pandemic has made so many of us weak. I haven’t been able to be with my people gathered in one place in almost a year ... I can’t wait to regather. And yet going through this Lenten season ensures that we come face to face with our weakness so that we don’t miss the risen Christ. God says when I’m weak I’m actually strong. I am trusting and believing that we will come out of these difficult days stronger as a church and a nation. I’m trusting that faith will win out over fear.”

Lent reminds us that we don’t have to fear or hide from our weaknesses and vulnerabilities. We can find our strength in and through them.

In the season of Lent, I continually come back to my favorite devotion by the great theologian and mystic Howard Thurman who wrote, “How good it is to center down! To sit quietly and see one’s self pass by! The streets of our minds seethe with endless traffic; Our spirits resound with clashings, with noisy silences, While something deep within hungers and thirsts for the still moment and the resting lull.”

By centering down in this season of Lent, we can see with a more sanctified imagination the baggage that is weighing us down and preventing us from being more fully human. We can see with new eyes all that is separating us from God’s gravitational grace and unconditional love. We can better gain the resilience that will be needed to get through what we pray will be the final months of this pandemic and tap into the courage we will need to reimagine and then co-create a radically more just nation and world. In these 40 days we can hold onto the promise that Christ can and will make “all things new” as we approach resurrection Sunday and celebrate Christ’s victory over sin, injustice, sickness, and even death itself.

– Rev. Adam Russell Taylor is president of Sojourners and the author of *Mobilizing Hope: Faith-Inspired Activism for a Post Civil Rights Generation*.

Pledge Update

As of end of February 2021

Budget: \$36,280

Actual: \$31,500

Deficit: \$4,780

February 2021 Vestry Report

Here is the latest news from the February vestry meeting held on February 18th.

We continue to work on resolving our tax issue with the new rectory and our IRS issue regarding 990 filings. We hope to have both issues resolved in our favor.

The vestry approved the 2020 Parochial Report and elected Becky Squires as the alternate convention delegate. The vestry had to do this as we were unable to vote at the annual meeting.

Parish Growth & Development reported that Renewal Works is on track and the team will be doing orientation on February 21st for the workshops.

Stewardship & Fund Raising noted that financial reports were provided to the vestry and that all is well.

They also informed all that a St. Patrick's virtual fund raiser is being planned. Stay tuned for details.

Outreach & Facility Management are continuing work on the restoration of the rose window. They are also prioritizing the work that needs to be done on the chapel including the new carpet and roof/ceiling repair. They also noted that we have several leaks from the flat roofs and that there are some cracked windows in the classrooms on the second floor.

An additional sump pump for the boiler room is being installed and the Squireses donated their stimulus money to fund the pump and the labor to put it in.

Fr. Brian reported that he continues to do parish check-ins and that he chose not to have a Lenten program this year. He also

discussed Renewal Works and that the workshops will start in March and a report will come to the vestry in April. Fr. also noted that John Moore, his husband, will become a U.S. citizen on February 22nd. Congratulations John!

The vestry spent some time discussing when we will be able to get back to in-person services. We are following the rules set by the bishops and bishop representatives in the state.

Hans Prechtel notified us that all the outside doors are working again!

I have posted the approved January vestry minutes on REALM for all to see. Our next meeting will be March 18, 2021.

Becky Squires, Clerk



Virtual St. Patrick's Pub Night

Since the virtual Chili Cook-Off was a success, we are following up with a Virtual St. Patrick's Pub Night.

We'd like to encourage you to order take-out from Territorial Brewing Company, come home and log-in to the Zoom meeting entertainment and fellowship. There will be one of the famous quizzes from Father Brian. If you want actual cottage pie or

corned beef with cabbage and real beer, Charles Grantier tells me that TBC will have it! You can give them your support in this difficult time, while also continuing to support to the outreach efforts of the church through your Pub Night donation.

Zoom links will be posted in Realm and through e-mail notifications, or e-mail Father Brian for the link at rector@stthomasbc.org.

Friday, March 19th
6-8 p.m.

**Suggested Pub Night
Donations
(based on actual pub nights)**

Pub Night: \$10.00 admission
15.00 admission
+ additional raffle tickets

20.00 admission + beer
25.00 admission + more beer

Annual Food Bank Challenge

From Mike Regner and the South Michigan Food Bank

In 2020, St. Thomas Episcopal Church worked with South Michigan Food Bank to provide meals to families in need. We are so thankful for the outpouring of support shown to us as we meet the increased call for help throughout the pandemic! But our work isn't done. Through this year and as COVID-19 continues, we remain committed to feeding our community.

If you're looking for a way to fight hunger, join the movement now. This spring, South Michigan Food Bank is holding its annual Food Bank Challenge; they'll contribute a 10% match for your donation made April 1, 2021 – May 31, 2021. By designating your contribution to **St. Thomas**, the church will have a greater amount of credit with the food bank during the time of holiday baskets.

You can donate online at smfoodbank.org/donate or by sending a check to South Michigan Food Bank, 5451 Wayne Road, Battle Creek, MI 49037.

For your gift to be matched please include:

1. St. Thomas Episcopal Church and "FBC"
2. For online donations include this in the notes section
3. For donations sent via mail include either in the check memo or complete and include the attached form

As always, thank you for your generosity, your support, and your heart for helping us feed our neighbors in need.

*With thanks and appreciation,
Mike Regner*

Source: Feeding America at feedingamerica.org →

Hunger in the time of COVID

- Food insecurity in Calhoun County has risen over 6% since 2018, from 14.3% to 20%.
- Households with children are more likely to be food insecure. In 2018, 11.2 million children (1 in 7), lived in a food-insecure household.
- As closures caused by the coronavirus led to a rise in unemployment and poverty, more people have experienced food insecurity.
- A significant rise in unemployment over the year (+7.6 percentage points) and a corresponding rise in child poverty (+5.0 percentage points) would result in a total of 18.0 million children (1 in 4) experiencing food insecurity.
- Many households that experience food insecurity do not qualify for federal nutrition programs and need to rely on their local food banks and other hunger relief organizations for support.



10% MATCH FOR DONATIONS MADE IN APRIL & MAY, 2021.

Mail this completed form to: South Michigan Food Bank,
5451 Wayne Rd., Battle Creek, MI 49037

☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Ms. ☐ Miss

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name of Agency to receive gift and 10% match:

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of:

- ☐ \$10 = 60 meals ☐ \$20 = 120 meals ☐ \$30 = 180 meals
☐ \$40 = 240 meals ☐ \$50 = 300 meals ☐ \$100 = 600 meals
☐ Other: _____

Make checks payable to South Michigan Food Bank or donate by:

☐ Visa ☐ American Express ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

Credit card no. _____

*3-digit verification code _____ Expiration _____

(*Located on the signature panel on the back of your credit card)

Signature _____

**Donations can also be made online by going to
smfoodbank.org/donate**

ST. THOMAS
Episcopal
CHURCH



16 E. Van Buren Street
Battle Creek, MI
49017-3916

Phone (269) 965-2244
www.StThomasBC.org
Office Hours: Monday-Friday
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

The Rev. Brian Coleman
Rector

Dr. Stephen White
Director of Music

Denise Genise
Bookkeeper

Karmel Addis
Communications

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Battle Creek, MI
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March Happenings

Sunday, March 7, **Choral Evensong**, 5 p.m.
Wednesday, March 10, **Preaching Circle**, 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 13 **Styrofoam Collection** at Department of Public Works
on Kendall St., 9:00 a.m.
Thursday, March 18, **Vestry Meeting**, 6 p.m.
Friday, March 19, **St. Patrick's "Stay-at-home" Pub Night**, 6-8 p.m.
Friday, March 19, **Feast of St. Joseph**
Sunday, March 21, **Choral Evensong**, 5:00 p.m.
Thursday, March 25, **Feast of the Annunciation**

All live-stream services are broadcast to the St. Thomas YouTube Channel,
Facebook Page and website

All Zoom meeting links are included in the announcements in the Sunday
bulletin and on Realm.

St. Thomas worship services are broadcast on AccessVision, Channel 16, at
5 p.m. on Sundays, and re-broadcast at 7 p.m. on Fridays. Evensong is now
broadcast on Wednesdays at 5 p.m.

Worship & Study

Sundays Livestream

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
5:00 p.m. Evensong (1st & 3rd Sundays)
StThomasBC.org/online-church
The St. Thomas YouTube Channel
St. Thomas Facebook page

Coffee hour on Zoom

NOW at 10:30 a.m.

E-mail rector@stthomasbc.org
to receive an invitation.

NEW TIMES!

Morning and Evening Prayer Online
Monday-Saturday
9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

On Zoom at 6:30

iBelieve Class, First Wednesdays
The Good Book Club, Third Wednesdays
Reading the Spiritual Classics,
Fourth Wednesdays