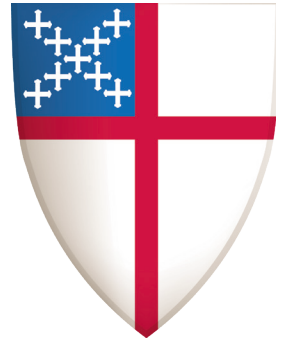


The NewSpirit

Being a Light to the World: Worship • Youth • Discipleship
St. Thomas Episcopal Church Battle Creek, Michigan

May 2021



Will you come back to church?

by Fr. Brian Coleman

For some of you this may seem like a ridiculous question. Of course, you will come back to church, the sooner the better! But for others the pandemic and consequent hiatus from in-person church attendance may have caused a shift in thinking.

I have expressed from the beginning of our time of being unable to worship inside the church the importance I place on the gathering of the community; how integral it is to our identity as Christians, and how much is lost by relying solely on remote connections. It has always been the case, since Jesus's first appearance to his disciples in the upper room after the resurrection (John 20:19-23), that Christians gather for worship, prayer and fellowship. Indeed, part of our baptismal promise is to participate "in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers" (BCP pg. 304). And yet, the availability of on-line worship, Zoom fellowship, and other virtual church offerings have caused some to question the value of gathering in community, pandemic or not. I fear that some will never

return to the kind of engagement with Christian community that we saw before the pandemic.

I certainly hope that I am wrong in my suspicions and that we will see everyone from St. Thomas return to the pews when we resume in-person worship in the near future. I have sorely missed our Sunday mornings together, seeing your faces, singing, praying, laughing, and learning together. Nothing compares to the experience of being in that beautiful space with all of you. Still some of you may have lingering concerns about the safety of gathering and the risk of transmitting or contracting the virus. By far the best way to ensure everyone's safety is to get vaccinated. Once you have been fully vaccinated your risk of infection is dramatically reduced. In fact you are at greater risk of



dying in a car accident than from COVID-19, once vaccinated.

And then there's the health benefits of attending church in-person: according to a 2017 Vanderbilt University health study, "People who attend services at a church, synagogue or mosque are less stressed and live longer." In fact, middle-aged (ages 40 to 65) adults – both men and women – who attend

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Will you come back to church, cont. from p. 1

church or other houses of worship reduce their risk for mortality by 55 percent.

Our resumption of in-person worship has actually already begun. We are all currently welcome to attend services outside in the parking lot on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. Outdoor activities are very low risk in terms of spreading the virus. It is also possible to watch the broadcast of the services from church in the Lounge, Parish Hall and Chapel, in person. We have a wonderful system and dedicated audio/visual technicians who make this possible each Sunday. As

has been the case throughout the pandemic, parishioners are also welcome to use the church on their own throughout the week and at their own convenience for personal prayer and reflection.

As infection rates decrease and the pandemic abates we will also resume in-person attendance in the church, slowly and deliberately. Soon weekday chapel services will resume on Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. and Fridays at 12:00 p.m. This summer, as temperatures rise, we will likely move the Sunday morning outdoor service to 9:00 a.m. and the indoor services will

be held in the church at 10:30 a.m. I sincerely hope by then we will be able to allow attendance indoors.

It has been a long time since we have been able to gather as we would like. I know this has taken a toll on me and I imagine it has on many of you also. I am grateful for the patience and support shown by many as we have navigated our way through these uncharted waters. I am excited about the future and hope that you will come back to church and join us in worship. See you soon!



JUNE 4TH!

BATTLE CREEK BOMBERS
FAITH NIGHT

Join us the Battle Creek Bombers at C.O. Brown Stadium on Friday, June 4th as the Bombers host the Kalamazoo Growlers at 6:35 p.m. The theme for the evening is Faith Night as churches from around the area gather to connect and share their fellowship. Call or e-mail Fr. Brian if you are interested in going to the game. \$9 includes a reserved seat and a BC Bombers hat.

Choir Pilgrimage Update

by Dr. Stephen White, Director of Music

With the ongoing COVID pandemic, the Choir Tour originally scheduled for 2020 at Winchester Cathedral, and rescheduled to 2021 at Gloucester Cathedral, has been postponed (yet again) to July/August 2022. We are hoping that this postponement will allow all to travel safely and focus on making beautiful music and spiritual connections. The updated tour will include a couple of days sight-seeing in London (Windsor Castle, City of London), attending Choral Evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral, choral residencies at Bath Abbey and Bristol Cathedrals (where we will sing daily services), a day trip to Wales, other sight-seeing excursions, and plenty of free time to explore Bath and Bristol.

The original tour group included singers, chaperones, and choir friends. The upside of this additional postponement is that it gives more parishioners and friends an opportunity to join us in our musical, spiritual and cultural journey. If you've ever wanted to



Bristol Cathedral, formally the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, is the Church of England cathedral in the city of Bristol, England.

spend time traveling with great friends and experience our faith heritage along with the many delights of Souther England, then perhaps you'll consider joining us. Please let me know if you are interested and I'll be happy to discuss details.

Trip Information:

Dates: July 27-August 8, 2022
Location: London, Bath, and Bristol
Cost: \$3500.00/person (estimated) includes airfare, ground transportation, hotel, entry fees to group sight-seeing venues, daily breakfast and select other dinners.

I hope you'll consider joining us!



Bath Abbey in Bath, Somerset, England

Pledge Update

As of end of April 2021

Budget: \$72,194

Actual: \$72,518

Surplus: \$324

Starr Commonwealth Housing Migrant Children

Almost 200 children that have been separated from their families at the US-Mexico border are staying at the Starr Commonwealth campus in Albion.

There are currently 190 staying there, but as many as 240 children could be housed there. They are all boys ages 5-17.

Starr Commonwealth has 17 cottages that can house the children and caregivers, and its campus includes a gym, cafeteria, school building, chapel, ball field, track and lakeside park.

Each cottage is set up for two or three children in a bedroom, a kitchen, dining room and rec room, as well as multiple bathrooms and showers.

Starr Commonwealth was a former private non-profit that provided residential programs for at-risk youth. The organization said it would provide bilingual caregivers with a background in child development to care for the kids.

The organization expected each child to stay 30 days or less.

The health department said the Albion site would initially provide potentially lifesaving services that are consistent with the standard of an emergency response for disasters or other humanitarian situations, which meant clean and comfortable sleeping quarters, meals, toiletries, laundry, and access to medical services.

March Vestry Meeting

Our March vestry meeting was called to order on Thursday, March 18 by Senior Warden Noreen Sidnam.

Under New Business, we discussed purchase of a new funeral vestment set. Our current set is not complete, and is not in good condition. Our wish is to memorialize those in our parish who have passed during the coronavirus pandemic, and it is thought that a new vestment set would properly dignify funeral services at St. Thomas. The price for the complete set runs several thousand dollars; however, funds are to pay for the set from a bequest, in addition to funds from other unrestricted memorials. On November 6, 2021 we will hold a formal memorial service for all who passed while the church was closed. A motion was made to purchase the new vestment set, seconded, and passed.

We then discussed the Phase II opening of the parish for in-person worship. We are starting outdoor services on Sunday, March 21st, and will continue to livestream as well. Fr. Brian expressed hesitancy to start indoor worship gathering until Calhoun County shows marked improvement in rates of coronavirus infection.

Holy Week services were discussed; no indoor services will be offered to parishioner due to the pandemic; there will be outdoor services available to all, pending weather. RenewalWorks® was discussed; the task force is currently examining the survey results—there were 70 respondents to the survey! Well done, St. Thomasites!

The vestry will not meet in April. Fr. Brian gave a blessing, and the meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

— submitted by Hans Prechtel

Donations for Migrant Children

We are collecting hygiene items once again for the 240 migrant boys age 5-17 that are being housed at Starr Commonwealth's Albion campus. There is a big blue container that is well-labeled in the parish office for anyone who would like to make a donation. This collection for **toothbrushes**, **toothpaste** and **washcloths** will be until the last Sunday in May.



E-mail Jill Goodsell if you have questions: jillgoodsell56@gmail.com

RenewalWorks Update

April 2021

by Sue Shafe



I want to thank everyone who completed the Spiritual Life Inventory in January and everyone who has been praying for the workshop participants and process. You have helped make this process rewarding. The workshops will be ending in a couple of weeks with a report to the vestry to follow.

I want to thank the workshop facilitators and participants for your commitment, dedication, flexibility and sharing: Kathy Dingwall, co-facilitator; Elizabeth Schirk, co-facilitator; Brian Coleman, spiritual guide and AV guy; also, Ginny Baldwin, Kent Bieberich, Douglas Chapel, Ross Dingwall, Sue Edmond, Judy Gray, Robert Harberts, Lori Kiess, Franz Schirk, Noreen Sidman and Sue Shafe. We have become quite the experienced “Zoomers.”

The materials, written and visual

provided by RenewalWorks® have been very helpful in giving us direction; adjustments have been needed due to “zooming.” We have provided some overviews of the material in previous Newspirit information.

We have looked at the process of spiritual journey, areas where there may be complacency in ourselves and as a parish. Each of our workshops began and ended with scripture reflection and prayer – key ingredients we learned are part of spiritually vital congregations.

RenewalWorks® broke down a very inclusive 65 page analysis of our 70-some Spiritual Life Inventories into two parts, helping us unpack the data, make comparisons and see trends with other Episcopal churches. They also directed us to utilize resources provided by General Convention. Our areas

of strength and potential areas for growth were reflected upon, personally and as a parish.

I was a skeptic about attempting this process with our inability to gather in person and while it required adjustments, for me (and I think other participants), it has been a beneficial process. Whether looking at it as an individual or as a parish, reviewing our Episcopal beliefs and practices, spiritual lives and journeys, has movement, but it has all been possible in the comfort of my home wearing my comfy clothes.

Please contact me if you would like copies of any of the materials we used. Sue Shafe sueashafe@att.net (269) 789-0590

I want to close with Michele Reid’s quote from December’s Newspirit of St. Paul, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2 NRSV Peace be with you.

More information on RenewalWorks can be found at renewalworks.org.

Join us for outdoor worship Sundays at 10:30 a.m. at the elevator entrance of the parking lot. Bring a comfortable chair.



Rising STD Trends in Michigan & Calhoun County

Undiagnosed STDs can do serious harm to your body, and you can pass an STD on to your sexual partners even if you don't have any symptoms. The only way to know for certain whether you have an STD is through regular testing, which is why several sources in Battle Creek and nearby communities offer free or low-cost STD testing to individuals looking for peace of mind.

Chlamydia is the most reported STD in the Calhoun County, although there was a drop in cases during 2019. While the county has fewer gonorrhea cases and even fewer syphilis infections, these STDs increased in 2019.

Calhoun County documented nearly 950 chlamydia cases in 2019, resulting in an infection rate of 705.9 per 100,000 residents. Although showing an 11% drop in cases from 2018, overall, the county has reported a 4% increase since 2014 and nearly a 20.5% rise since 2009. Chlamydia infections have historically been higher among women, which remained true in 2019, with almost 67% of all diagnoses documented in females compared to 33% in men. Both sexes saw lower numbers in 2019 than the previous year, but female cases only dropped 7% while male cases dropped 18%.

Gonorrhea cases in Calhoun County were about 9% higher in 2019 compared to 2018. Due to a significant number of infections reported in 2009, gonorrhea cases were 43% higher in 2019 than

they were 10 years ago. Gonorrhea incidents dropped by more than half in 2011 then started rising again; case numbers in 2019 were 149% higher than they were just five years ago. Gonorrhea infections have been higher among women than men since 2002, but the numbers have been relatively close. In 2019, females made up 53.5% of all cases while men accounted for 46.5%.

Syphilis infections have much lower case counts than chlamydia or gonorrhea, but documented cases of this STD are spiking in the county and statewide. In 2019, syphilis infections in all stages jumped by more than 128.5% compared to the previous year. Syphilis infections in the county have been higher in men than women since 2005, with 84% of the 2019 syphilis infections in all stages among men, along with 100% of all primary and secondary infections.

Between 2007 and 2019, only one documented primary and secondary syphilis infection was reported in a woman. Statewide, the highest incidence of syphilis tends to be among older adults, with the 30 to 44 age group accounting for nearly 37% of all primary and secondary syphilis infections. The 25 to 29 age group represented about 24% of the remaining cases, and the 45-plus age group comprised approximately 19.5%. While case counts are higher in older people, the actual rate of infection is higher among younger groups.

The Calhoun County Public Health Department (CCPHD)

Clinic in Battle Creek offers free HIV and hepatitis B and C testing and low-cost chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, trichomonas, and herpes testing. Confidential services are available to individuals aged 13 or older, with photo identification required. You may be asked to provide proof of income if you're requesting a sliding scale fee. CCPHD accepts private insurance and Medicaid. Appointments are required, with current clinic hours Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 12:35 p.m. and Fridays from 8 a.m. to noon.

**190 East Michigan Avenue
Battle Creek, MI 49014
(269) 969-6370**

Planned Parenthood operates the Kalamazoo Health Center, located 24 miles from Battle Creek. The Center provides HIV testing and chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, genital warts, syphilis, bacterial vaginosis, and trichomoniasis testing and treatment. It offers HPV vaccines, condoms, and STD/ safer sex education. Appointments are required, and walk-ins aren't accepted. If you don't have insurance, you may qualify for a state-funded program or lower fee scale. Clinic hours are Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursday and Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**4201 West Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
(269) 372-1200**

Creation Care

The Episcopal Church's Covenant for the Care of Creation is a commitment to practice loving formation, liberating advocacy and life-giving conversation as individuals, congregations, ministries and dioceses. Explore the Covenant and sign up for the newsletter and opportunities to formally adopt the Covenant at episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care

51 ways to restore our Earth

Earthday.org has offered 51 actions and tips to make a difference, every day of the year. Here are just a few:

- Pick up trash while enjoying your outdoor activities. It is a great way to save that plastic bottle cap from the landfill while you are on your morning walk!
- Be a part of the change. Change your diet to fight climate change! Try participating in meatless Mondays!
- Advocate for governments to make climate change and climate literacy a core feature of school curriculum across the globe.
- Stop deforestation by supporting companies that take an active role against it.
- Plastic pollution is one of the most important environmental problems that we face today. Break free from single-use plastics! Use a reusable water bottle. If possible buy products in glass or paper. Glass products are easily reused and paper is a much friendlier product to the environment.
- Contact your representative and tell them that the health of people and the planet should be the top priority.
- Consumer demand for renewable energy sources is one of the most immediate actions you can take to lower your carbon footprint and restore our earth. Call your utility and ask for green power.
- Most people by now know that single-use plastic grocery bags are going the way of the dinosaurs. Although they are billed for their "convenience," they are extremely inconvenient for the planet. Pledge to use a reusable grocery bag.
- Buy local food to reduce the distance from farm to fork. Buy straight from the farm, frequent your local farmers' market, or join a local food co-op.
- Practice sustainable fashion! Donate your old clothes and home goods instead of throwing them out. When you need something, consider buying used items. Used does not always mean unfashionable!
- Save electricity and turn off lights when you leave the room.

*Recycle styrofoam at St. Thomas!
There is a collection bin at the
elevator entrance of St. Thomas
for take-out containers. (No
construction styrofoam please).*

Upcoming Local Recycling Events



Household Hazardous Waste Collection

County Building, Marshall

Saturday, May 22

9:00 a.m. to Noon

Limited to residential material generated by Calhoun County residents

Items Accepted: Oil-based paint, fuels (must be in approved container), solvents, acids, bases, pesticides, household cleaners, metallic mercury, medications, sharps, household batteries, fluorescent light bulbs, smoke detectors, motor oils, antifreeze, propane cylinders, fire extinguishers, aerosol cans and PCB-containing lamp ballasts. NO latex paint will be unloaded.

Scrap Tire Collection

Athens Township Offices, 130 E.

Burr Oak St., Athens

Monday, June 14

Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Calhoun County residents may bring up to 10 passenger vehicle tires. No over-sized tires or business-related tires will be unloaded. No early drop-off. Event may end early if the semitrailer fills before 5 p.m.

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

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Battle Creek, MI
Permit No. 734

Return Service Requested

May Happenings

Saturday, May 1st - Feast of Ss. Philip and James
Sunday, May 2nd - Evensong, 5 p.m.
Wednesday, May 5th - iBelieve Class, 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 9th - Mothers' Day
Wednesday, May 12th - Preaching Circle, 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 13th - Chrism Mass, Lansing
(Renewal of Ordination Vows), 3 p.m.
Ascension Day Mass, 7 p.m.
Sunday, May 15th - Evensong, 5 p.m.
Wednesday, May 19th - Good Book Club, 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, May 20th - St. Thomas Vestry, 6:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 23rd - Feast of Pentecost
Wednesday, May 25th - Reading the Spiritual Classics, 6:30 p.m.
Monday, May 31st - Feast of the Visitation



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 Online

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

Sundays In Person (Outdoors)

10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist
At the elevator entrance;
bring a chair.

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