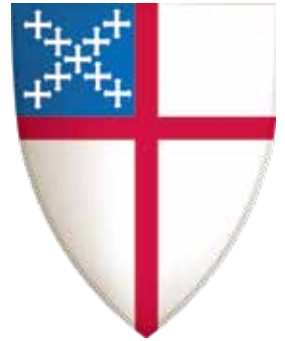


The NewSpirit

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

October 2021



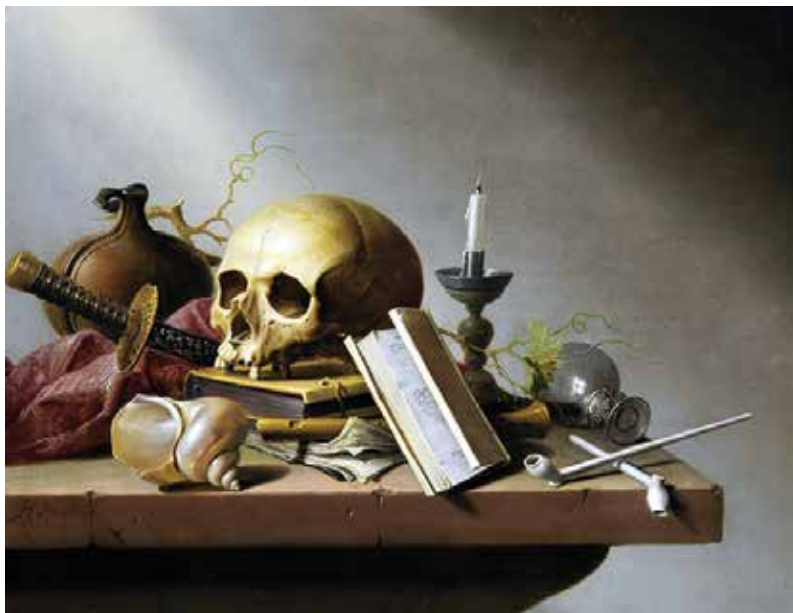
Memento Mori

by Fr. Brian Coleman

For centuries, Christians have practiced a spiritual discipline which calls them to contemplate their own death. Tokens and symbols of death called Memento Mori, Latin for “remember that you must die,” adorn graves, churches, portraits, and other personal belongings as far back as records can be traced. This spiritual practice has helped countless believers face the reality that all life ends in death, which in turn transforms the way we approach life. The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that “to your faithful people, O Lord, [in death] life is changed not ended.” This is a fundamental belief of Christians in the face of the unavoidable reality that all living creatures must one day face.

During the course of the coronavirus pandemic, the reality of death has arguably been more present than ever before. Since the beginning of the pandemic over 4.8

million deaths have been recorded worldwide. In the United States, which has the highest death toll of any other single nation in the world, nearly 700,000 people have



Harmen Steenwijck (fl. ca. 1628-1656), “Vanitas” (photo: Public Domain)

died from COVID-19. The grief surrounding these deaths has been compounded by restrictions placed on visiting the sick and dying, limits on the size of gatherings for those who mourn, and even, in some cases, the prohibition against holding funeral services altogether.

Here at St. Thomas we have not

been immune from or unaffected by the effects of the pandemic. We have not been able to properly mourn the loss of beloved members of St. Thomas who have died

during the pandemic.

Members of our families and close friends have died from COVID-19. We have all been touched by grief and death, and perhaps we have been more mindful of our own mortality as a result.

In order to give opportunity for our community to remember the toll that the coronavirus has taken, to memorialize our dead, and to support one another in our grief,

a special Requiem Eucharist will be held at St. Thomas on Saturday, November 6 at 11 a.m. The St. Thomas Choir will sing Gabriel Fauré’s Requiem in D minor, Opus 48, with instrumentalists including harp, violin, and cello. At this service we will remember those of our community who have died over the course of the pandemic, and the

lives lost to COVID-19. New funeral vestments designed and fabricated by the Holy Rood Guild as a memorial to those who have died, will also be dedicated. After the service we hope to have a luncheon reception where folks will have the opportunity to gather, share stories, comfort one another, and celebrate the lives of those who have gone before us. Those members of our community who have died during the pandemic include: Jerry Peterson, Shirley Hibbard, Ernie Varga, Randy Kopf, Karen Suggs, Pete Shaw, Gladys Holstrom, George Vallillee, Kay Phares, Audra Nickerson and Bob Ludlow.

At its best, the practice of contemplating death, even our own death, will lead us to live our lives more intentionally and more fully, putting into action the words of the Swiss moral philosopher Henri Frédéric Amiel who said, "Life is short and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are travelling the dark journey with us. So be swift to love, make haste to be kind." Or as the psalmist put it: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom." (Psalm 90:12)

Salute to Ralph & Audra Nickerson

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the overwhelming generosity and foresight demonstrated by Dr. Ralph and the Rev. Audra Nickerson in their gift of the Ralph Nickerson Marital Trust to St. Thomas Episcopal Church.

Sixty percent of the trust was designated for the St. Thomas Endowment Fund, and forty percent to St. Gregory's Abbey in Three Rivers, Michigan.

In late September, just over \$575,000 was deposited in the St. Thomas Endowment Fund held at State Street Bank and Trust. At their September meeting, the St. Thomas Vestry voted to gratefully receive this bequest and requested that the trustees of the endowment fund allocate sufficient funds from the bequest to accomplish the restoration of the chapel as a fitting

memorial for Ralph and Audra Nickerson. It is our hope that this work will be underway in the near future.

Ralph and Audra were stalwart members of St. Thomas Church for many years.

Ralph was an optometrist in Battle Creek and a founding partner of Vision Services LLC. Audra was ordained a vocational deacon and served St. Thomas faithfully for several years before her retirement from ministry.

Together they had one daughter Deborah who predeceased Audra in 2008.

Their generosity has transformed our ministry through the gift of the elevator and other building modifications for the disabled

Lector/Intercessor Training

The Lector/Intercessor Training will be 10a.m. to noon on Saturday, October 9th.

This is for all those currently participating in the ministry and those who might like to consider.

We will learn some fundamentals and it is helpful to hear the resources others make use of.

Contact Fr. Brian or Sue Shafe for more information.



in 2011, and this recent gift will ensure that their legacy of sustaining our ministry continues for generations to come.

If you would like to make a legacy gift to St. Thomas, or want to find out more about remembering St. Thomas in your will or estate planning, please contact a member of the Legacy Planning Committee: Bob Harberts, Kent Bieberich, or Liz Neumeyer for more details.

When in our music, God is glorified...

by Stephen White, PhD, Director of Music

You know those moments when you hear a song and can only remember the first few words – or perhaps only a portion of the refrain? Well, that happens with hymns, as well. How often have you thought “oh, I know this one” only to get through the first phrase and realize you can’t remember the rest? Well, the title of this article are words that fit into this category. These opening words of Hymn 420 (tune: Engleberg) are often followed by humming, etc. Why is it that we can’t remember? Some might argue that we “just don’t sing the hymn often enough,” while others might say “our music director always plays the unfamiliar hymns – that’s why I don’t remember.”

I might suggest that we generally think of hymns based on their melody rather than on their texts.

If I were to say the names of some familiar pieces (*Silent Night...* *Amazing Grace*), what pops into your head first? The melody or the

words? If you are like me (which most of us are), I bet you hear the melody (the music) and the words come next. There is nothing wrong with this – it is how we are wired from the very beginning.

Many mothers play music or sing to their yet-to-be-born infants, and then many infant’s cribs have music devices to help soothe, entertain, etc. Our childhoods are filled with music and then, at some point, other elements of life seem to take over – yet music is always there..... even if in the background. Stop and think about a typical day – I bet music is there for much of it!

As we re-enter our liturgical life together and congregational song gradually again becomes an important part of our spiritual and worship experience, I encourage each of us to spend time exploring the text of the hymns we sing – look at the hymn board before the service, turn to that page and read the text as a means of preparing for worship or personal meditation.

When in our music God is glorified (Hymn 420) has other verses that speak volumes to me, yet many seem to forget they are there:

*How often, making music, we
have found a new dimension in
the world of sound,*

*as worship moved us to a more
profound alleluia (v. 2)*

*So has the Church, in liturgy and
song, in faith and love, through
centuries of wrong,
borne witness to the truth in every
tongue (v. 3)*

*And did not Jesus sing a psalm
that night when utmost evil strove
against the Light? (v. 4)*

*Let all rejoice who have a voice to
raise!
And may God give us faith to sing
always – Alleluia! (v. 5)*

Soli Deo Gloria!



The choir returned to worship (outdoors) on Sunday, September 12th.

Rose Window Restoration

by Hans Prechtel



Joy to the World!

After 8 months of waiting anticipation, the Rose Window has been restored and installed!

The window, the oldest of its kind at St. Thomas dating from circa 1876, took four days to be reconstructed in its original configuration; each piece of stained glass was cleaned, re-stained and re-leaded; all the wood trim was re-painted and all cracks in the wood were repaired.

An acrylic backing was installed to protect the window from outside elements, insuring the window's



durability for the next century or so. The cost of the project amounted to \$37,654, which was fully covered by contributions both current and from years past! The resulting effect of the reconstruction is that the window is astonishingly beautiful and orders of magnitude brighter than before.

Please come to church and see for yourself the spectacular beauty of this treasured window.

Now there are only 17 more that need immediate work, so please think about a contribution to the Window Restoration Fund!



A re-dedication ceremony for the restored rose window is planned for a Sunday morning later in the Autumn when we return indoors for worship.

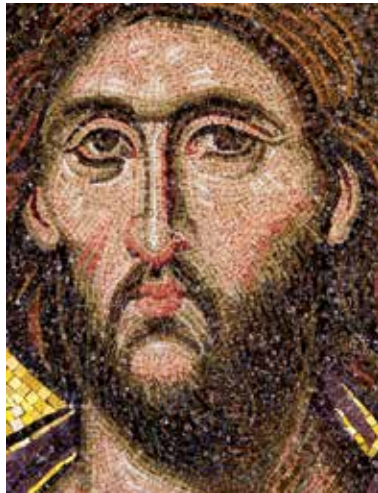
Adult Formation Classes

iBelieve Class

"Understanding Jesus"

The iBelieve Classes offered on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m., in the Lounge and on Zoom will explore the topic, "Understanding Jesus."

Each meeting will include listening to the podcast *Strange New World*, by Mathew Myer Bolton and the Emmy award-winning team of SALT. Described as "a podcast tailor-made for skeptics, believers, and everybody in between," the six-part series explores the ways that Jesus and his disciples came to understand what it meant for him to be the Messiah, and how that differed from the expectations of the cultural and religious majority.



The first class will take place on Wednesday, October 6th. To participate remotely, find the Zoom link in the eNews and on Realm.

Reading the Spiritual Classics

Revelations of Divine Love

Explore the writings of Julian of Norwich (pronounced NOR-itch) as we delve into her spiritual classic *Revelations of Divine Love*.

Julian of Norwich (1343 – after 1416), was an English anchoress of the Middle Ages. She wrote the best-known surviving book in the English language written by a mystic, *Revelations of Divine Love*, which is also the earliest surviving book in English known to be written by a woman. Participants are welcome to read any version or translation of Julian's *Revelations* or *Showings*, as they are also known. The first session will take place on October 27, at 7 p.m. in the Lounge and on



Zoom. To participate remotely, find the Zoom link in the eNews and on Realm.

The Good Book Club



Have you ever struggled to understand the meaning of a Bible verse or story? Have you ever wondered how the various books of the Bible and the stories they contain are related to one another? Have you ever asked what God wants you to learn from the Bible, or what message there might be in the lessons read in church on Sundays? If you have entertained any of these questions, then you might find the Good Book Club is right up your alley.

Many of us are intimidated by the Bible. It seems too distant, too difficult to understand, and too long. The Good Book Club is a twenty-six session, all-ages curriculum that uncovers the vast, sweeping story of God's extraordinary love for ordinary people, in a clear and easy-to-follow format.

Each month (third Wednesdays of the month), participants read selections from the Bible, with passages excerpted and condensed by biblical scholars for easier reading. On this journey through the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, participants learn that the hope God offered to the faithful in ages past is the very same hope to which God is calling us today. Through thought-provoking questions in the curriculum and weekly group discussions, participants examine all of the highlights of the biblical narrative—and learn how the pieces of the story fit together.

Each session is designed to be approximately an hour long, utilizing a largely discussion-based format. Participants can join in-person or on Zoom (see the Zoom link in the eNews or in Realm) and are asked to read each week to prepare for the discussion. Sessions correspond to the chapters in the course companion book *The Path: A Journey Through the Bible*, available as a free printable or downloadable resource. The Path is also available for purchase from Forward Movement Press.

From the Stewardship & Fundraising Commission

If it's good to be together, it must be bad to be apart. And yet: the truth is that life has always been a rhythm of separation and togetherness, exile and return. We may prefer the "return" bit, the "bring you back to this place" bit, but that doesn't mean separation isn't part of the story.

Experiences of separation are at least as old as the ancient stories of the Garden of Eden, the Israelites' exile in Babylon, and the parable of the Prodigal Son. Jesus and his followers were separated by betrayal and death, and then reunited by forgiveness and newness of life. Even on our most "normal" days, our lives are a rhythm of gathering and dispersing, coming together and going apart, calls to worship and benedictions.

Remember for example the time when, a few years ago, when we had to abandon worship inside our church building while structural engineers built supports to keep the walls from falling down. We

were blessed to be able to join with fellow Episcopalians at the Church of the resurrection during that time of exile.



This past year has been another profound experience of this ancient pattern, and as challenging as it's been, we can take solace in the knowledge that our ancestors, too, experienced seasons of exile. And here's the point: thanks to this history, over time our faith — and our church — has been built to help us live through such seasons with grace and hope.

At our core, St. Thomas is a community of reunion, homecoming, and return. Now more than ever, in a world full of exile, our congregation stands as a beacon of hope, welcome, and radical hospitality.

With all of this in mind, we invite you to join us in giving thanks for all the resources — spiritual, theological, physical, and financial — that support this indispensable work. And as we look ahead to our upcoming Annual Giving Campaign we invite you to pray with us over the coming weeks for open hearts, open minds, and open arms as we explore the theme of our campaign: A Future with Hope. Over the coming weeks we will be sending out pledge packets which will include information about supporting our ministry and pledge cards to bring back to in-person or online worship on Giving Sunday, November 7. Together, we'll fill out the cards; and together, we'll celebrate God's beautiful gift of "a future with hope."

Pledge Update

As of 9-26-2021

Budget \$169,944.47

Actual \$162,282.04

Deficit \$7,662.43

Monthly Children and Youth Service

On the fourth Sunday of each month, we are planning to host a special service for children and youth of the parish, their families and friends.

We will gather in church for an all-age worship service including fun activities at 5 p.m. We will also provide a meal and opportunity for fellowship.

Children of all ages are welcome and we hope that this will supplement the formation opportunities already available to our young people through Sunday school, the Chorister Program, and engagement in other worship and outreach ministries at St. Thomas.

News from the St. Thomas Vestry

by Noreen Sidnam, Senior Warden

Here we are, September already. Seems like we were just starting summer, and just like that – a snap of the finger or a blink of an eye – the season has changed and we are in the midst of our fall activities and church services.

The Vestry did not meet in July or August, however, the various commissions were busy planning for the Stewardship Campaign, and taking care of the physical building and making sure newcomers were welcomed. We were able to begin having coffee hour again and things felt almost normal. Then unfortunately, Calhoun County turned red again regarding COVID infections and we made the decision to have outside services.

At the Vestry meeting in June we discussed the needed changes

in the by-laws, specifically allowing for electronic meetings when needed. A committee has been appointed. We were permitted to have coffee hour, and the Outreach and Facility Management Commission made arrangements to reorganize the space to accommodate both the breakfast program set-up and the tables for coffee hour. The need to begin discussion of the Stewardship program for this year was mentioned.

Sadly, Randy Widener offered his resignation from the Vestry. It was accepted. It is time to think about who will serve on the vestry next year. If you are so inclined, please let Father Brian know. Personally, I find vestry service one of the ways I can serve my church in a beneficial and rewarding way.

The results of the Renewal Works workshops was presented by Kathy Dingwall, co-facilitator of the Renewal Works process. There is much good information obtained through this process and we as a Vestry are anxious to choose one or two major projects and move forward. Expect to hear much more from us regarding Renewal Works very soon.

The narrative from the discernment committee regarding Michele Reid's sense of call to the diaconate was received by the Vestry with gratitude and we affirm Michele's sense of call. However the vestry will re-visit the signing of the diocesan form at a later date.

We expect to have a fruitful and busy time, come along for the ride!

October Happenings

October 1st

Feast of St. Michael & All Angels (tr.)
Holy Eucharist, 12 p.m.

October 6th

iBelieve Class, "Understanding Jesus",
7 p.m.

October 9th

Lector and Intercessor Training,
10 a.m.

October 13th

Preaching Circle, 7 p.m.

October 20th

The Good Book Club, 7 p.m.

October 21st

Vestry, 6 p.m.

October 22nd

Feast of St. Luke (tr.)
Holy Eucharist and Healing Service,
12 p.m.

October 24th

Children & Youth Service, 5 p.m.
Pumpkin-decorating
& Halloween Festivities

October 27th

Reading the Spiritual Classics
(Julian of Norwich)

October 29th-30th

Diocesan Convention in Lansing



Looking Ahead:

November 1st

All Saints' Day Holy Eucharist, 7 p.m.

November 6th

Pandemic Requiem Eucharist, 11 a.m.

November 7th

All Saints' Sunday Holy Eucharist
with Baptisms, 10 a.m.

November 28th

Children & Youth Service, 5 p.m.
Making an Advent Wreath

December 26th

Children & Youth Service, 5 p.m.
Sharing our Gifts



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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Return Service Requested

Parish Schedule

Sundays

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
5:00 p.m. Evening Worship

Weekdays Live-Streamed

Monday – Saturday
9:00 a.m. Morning Prayer
5:00 p.m. Evening Prayer

Wednesdays

Chorister Rehearsal, 4:30 p.m.
Adult Choir Rehearsal, 7 p.m.
Adult Formation classes, 7:00 p.m.

Fridays

11:00 a.m. Bible Study in the Lounge
12:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist

Saturdays

8:30-10:00 a.m. Breakfast Program

Office Hours

Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.



Worship Services & Morning/
Evening Prayer are Live-streamed
on the St. Thomas Facebook and
YouTube Channels.

St. Thomas Sunday 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 broadcast
on Wednesdays at 5 p.m.