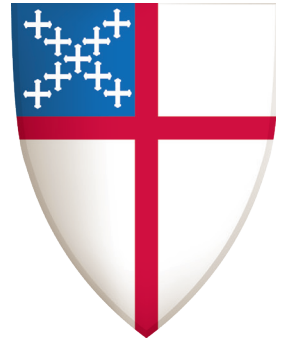


# The NewSpirit

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

November 2020



## Getting Souls to the Polls

by Fr. Brian Coleman

I believe that as Christians, we are called to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God, “on earth as it is in heaven.” The kingdom of this world is a long way from becoming the Kingdom of God, and yet Jesus calls us to the work of ministry “for the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” Our ministry is in the world, though not of the world. For me this has always meant engaging in the political process, participating in elections, campaigning and voting for candidates who share my values, praying for elected leaders (even the ones I disagree with), protesting against injustice and evil, and organizing for social change.

As we come to the end of another election cycle, I have been saddened by the polarization that characterizes our society. I worry that we have reached a dangerous precipice when putting a candidate’s sign in your yard might result in the loss of relationships with neighbors and friends. I

am discouraged when people on opposite sides of an argument aren’t capable of engaging in discussion without resorting to ridicule or dehumanization. I

is interpreted as weakness and civility has all but disappeared.

I think that this sad state of affairs has something, in part, to do with the fact that mainline Christians have ceded so much ground to Evangelicals. We have forfeited our role in the political arena, and it has been usurped by more radical and less conciliatory groups. We have for too long shied away from politics and been afraid to grapple with the messy reality of partisanship at the risk of causing offense or stepping on toes.

So, I want to encourage you to reclaim some of that lost ground as a follower of Jesus. As you engage in the electoral process: Pray over your ballot. Take Jesus into the polling booth with you. Who would he have your support? What would he want you to do with the power you have as a citizen in this democracy? Let your Christian values inform your action this election.

*continued on p. 2*



lament how many of us exist in echo chambers unable to appreciate nuance and lacking all humility with respect to our own ideas and opinions.

I used to really enjoy politics. Now I find it all so cringeworthy. Perhaps because partisanship in American politics has become a zero-sum game where compromise

*Souls to the Polls, cont. from p. 1*

It's not hard to understand the values that Jesus asks us to adopt and espouse in our day to day lives: Look at the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12), listen to the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46) or to any parable of Jesus for that matter. Read about how the first Christians engaged in their society and culture in the Acts of the Apostles. These are all antidotes to the poisonous and toxic mess we find ourselves in over two thousand years later.

Here his how one commentator put it, "The good news of the Gospel is

that there is a wider, deeper, more beautiful politics, bigger than any particular party or policy, which

# VOTE *faithfully*

Jesus and the prophets before him call us to live out. And here's the challenge of the Gospel: in these final days leading up to November 3rd, and in subsequent days, try making a special effort to reach out and connect with someone you

disagree with in terms of partisan politics — not to argue with them, but to see how they're doing, and to let them know that you're thinking about them in this crazy, difficult, polarized time. Tell them, that even though you disagree, you think of them as a neighbor, as part of your community, as a child of God created in the image of God. For if there's anything we need during this fragmented time of so many cracks and chasms, it's kindness and connection. A hundred little bridges, a thousand little threads, a million tiny repairs in our communal fabric that must, one day soon, be made whole."

## Absentee ballot deadlines

Request:  
Received by Oct. 30 by 5:00 p.m.

Return by mail:  
Received by Nov. 3

Return in person:  
Nov. 3 by 8:00 p.m.

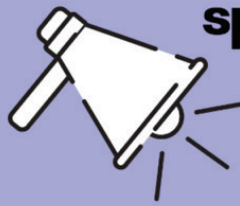
## Early voting at your local city or township clerk's office

Sep. 24 - Nov. 2,  
but dates and hours may vary  
based on where you live.

## In-Person Voting

The polls are open from 7 a.m. to  
8 p.m. for all elections.

**If you plan to vote in person on Nov. 3,  
remember these healthy practices to  
protect yourself, and help stop the  
spread of COVID-19:**



**Wear a mask.**

**Wash your hands before entering &  
after leaving the polling place.**

**Use hand sanitizer while at the polls.**

**Cover coughs & sneezes.**

**Keep at least 6 feet of distance  
between you & others.**

**Vote safely, Calhoun County!**





# I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

by Dr. Stephen White, Director of Music

The work of the St. Thomas Choirs continues in new and exciting ways as we continue to deal with the health pandemic. The Choral Scholars, serving as the foundation, have allowed the services of Choral Evensong to resume on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month at 5pm. While no in-person congregation is allowed at present, we are delighted to offer these services to the Glory of God and to the broader community via livestream. The Choral Scholars sing the service on the 1st Sunday of the month and work with their respective sections to offer the service rotationally on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

We are also excited to have our choristers working diligently on a weekly basis in an in-person/virtual hybrid schedule. They continue to work on their RSCM (Royal

School of Church Music) training materials, as well as music which will be offered in Choral Evensong on the first Sunday of December. In addition, we are delighted to welcome two brand new novice choristers.

All rehearsals are held as small groups with physical distancing, masks, and room ventilation. Additionally, the length of rehearsals has been shortened to half the time normally spent on a weekly basis. We are blessed to

have such talented and dedicated members of this ministry and we hope that these current music offerings are edifying to the souls of our parishioners and all who may hear them. We do, however, look forward to the day we are all able to worship with choral anthems and robust congregational hymn singing - until then we will continue our work in small and meaningful ways.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*



*Thanks to Tom and Lori Kiess for their efforts to beautify the church grounds this Fall. They are seen here rejuvenating the iris beds on the south side of the nave.*

# St. Thomas Annual Giving Campaign Underway

This year has reminded us in so many ways of the strength and closeness of our community. Even in the months in which we were physically distant and unable to gather in person, the Spirit kept us together, connecting us. Many in the media or in our society kept referring to our churches as “closed,” but we were never closed — we continued following the Gospel call to live in love with our neighbors, finding ever new ways to seek and serve Christ in all people.

I want to share a story about a particular moment this year in which our generosity of spirit and strength was clear. The continuation of the breakfast program even in the midst of a pandemic, showed the community that we could serve and help those

people who needed it most as the body of Christ in the world.



This is one of many stories that speak to the love we bear for each other and the world around us. As we look to the year to come, we are more committed than ever to the ministry and love we share with our community and our neighbors. Our ministry is funded through the gifts of its members — your generous offerings given in grace and love. This year we are asking for every member to take part in our giving campaign by making a pledge. Pledge packets will be mailed to parishioners around November 12, and we are asking that they be returned no later than

November 29, to be dedicated on the altar at that Sunday’s worship service.

We will be hearing messages of Faith-Filled Generosity as we move through the weeks of this year’s giving

campaign. The Gospel is rich with examples of how our faith kindles our love for each other and our Christian responsibility to share our love with the world. I invite you and your household to pray and learn, taking these weeks to consider how your generous response to God’s call has been shaped by this community and the friends who gather with you. Thank you for being a part of St. Thomas and for your faithful, faith-filled gift to our annual campaign.

*In the spirit of generosity and love,  
Noreen Sidnam, Senior Warden*

## October 2020 Vestry Report

The Vestry of St Thomas had a relatively brief meeting on October 15th, but several important items were discussed.

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be front of mind, and its impacts on our church are no exception.

Fortunately, we have successfully installed new AV equipment throughout the building to facilitate socially-distanced worship and meetings. The October 15th Vestry meeting was the first use of the lounge equipment for a

hybrid in-person/remote meeting. The Vestry has also developed a COVID-19 contingency plan to be used in the eventuality that Fr Brian becomes ill.

Numerous individuals have been hard at work on building maintenance issues. In the Garth, general maintenance and clean-up took place in September, and there will be additional upcoming winterization work. The porch facing Van Buren St was painted. Perhaps most excitingly, we are on track for restoration work on the Rose Window to take place in November.

Looking ahead, our Renewal Works team is diligently working towards a January kick-off, when a Spiritual Life Inventory will be sent out.

There will also be openings on the Vestry in January. Four positions are available, and while the Vestry’s nominating committee will brainstorm potential candidates to approach, any member of the parish who is interested in a great opportunity to serve the church is encouraged to express their interest to any Vestry member.

*submitted by Douglas Chapel*



# Parish Vitality and Spiritual Renewal

by Sue Shafe

Last month in the *NewSpirit* we introduced you to RenewalWorks. As we continue to organize and plan for our launch of the program the organizing and planning team wanted to keep the parish updated.

Our launch date for the Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI) will be mid-to late January. The congregation completes this anonymous individual survey which is available for a three week period. The SLI is designed help individuals learn where they are in their spiritual journey and provide data where the church can help in their journey. RenewalWorks staff compile data to help the church in future planning.

Zoom workshops begin two to three weeks after the SLI closes. Sessions begin and end with prayer. There are facilitator and participant guides to walk the workshop team through each session. Michele Reid and Elizabeth Schirk will be our co-facilitators. We need volunteers to participate consistently in the four workshops; this workshop team resembles a clergy search committee.

## **Workshop 1:**

### **Where have we been?**

The main topic for discussion is spiritual growth. Workshop exercises help team members reflect on the dynamic nature of their own faith and the role played by their church and clergy in supporting and encouraging spiritual growth.

## **Workshop 2:**

### **Where are we now?**

The workshop team looks at the compiled SLI data from our congregation, along with basic information on demographics for our church and area. Individual responses to the SLI are not known to the team. This session builds a picture of where our church is now that can be used as we consider new ways to help our church grow in love of God and neighbor.

## **Workshop 3:**

### **Where do we feel called to go?**

Using RenewalWorks research and our congregation's data, this session focuses on how our church can encourage and support spiritual growth. The team explores five best practice principles found in spiritually vital churches and considers how those principles can be applied to our congregation.

## **Workshop 4:**

### **How will we get there?**

After reviewing what we've learned, the team develops concrete next steps and action items for refocusing on spiritual growth to present to the vestry and congregation. Team members consider their individual commitments to spiritual growth, and close the series with thanksgiving to God for this time and work together and with hope for its impact on the future.

More information on RenewalWorks can be found at [renewalworks.org](http://renewalworks.org).

Your participation in RenewalWorks is vital. Please contact us with your interest, to participate in the workshops or with any questions.

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# Holding on to Hope

## A National Service for Healing and Wholeness

Presiding Bishop and National Cathedral Host Live-streamed Prayers on Nov. 1

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry will lead a live-streamed prayer service from Washington National Cathedral, Holding on to Hope: A National Service for Healing and Wholeness, on All Saints Sunday, November 1, at 4:00-5:30 p.m. EST. In the midst of pandemic, racial reckoning, and a historic election, the live-streamed service will gather Americans for prayer, song, lament, hope, and a call to love God and neighbor.

The service will feature an ecumenical and multifaith array of voices, musical offerings, and prayers. Using a combination of live and visually stunning pre-recorded elements gathered from across the nation, the service will be live streamed in English and Spanish.

“The Washington National Cathedral has gathered Americans for prayer at the death of presidents, after terrible tragedies like 9/11, and in moments of joy and hope for our nation and our world,” says Bishop Curry, “As the people of the United States cast their votes for the office of president and many other offices throughout the land, we gather to pray to the God who is the Creator of us all. We pray that we might learn to stand and hold each other’s hands as the children of God.”

In addition to Bishop Curry’s sermon, the service will include reflections from Father James Martin, a noted Roman Catholic commentator on American life and values, and Valarie Kaur, an inspiring Sikh author, filmmaker and civil rights attorney. The gathering will be officiated by

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*As the people of the United States cast their votes for the office of president and many other offices throughout the land, we gather to pray to the God who is the Creator of us all. We pray that we might learn to stand and hold each other’s hands as the children of God.”*

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– PRESIDING BISHOP MICHAEL CURRY

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Washington’s Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, Cathedral Dean Randy Hollerith, and Reverend Stephanie Spellers, Canon to the Presiding Bishop.

Prayers for the nation will come from leaders like Eboo Patel, founder and president of Interfaith Youth Core (IFY); Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Rabbi Shoshana Conover of Temple Sholom, Chicago; and Shane Claiborne, speaker, activist, and best-selling author. Music from

The Coro de la Cathedral of Christ Church Cathedral-Indianapolis and Washington National Cathedral will help to lift and open hearts.

A live prayer hotline in English and Spanish will be open during the service, staffed by Episcopal clergy and chaplains, in partnership with Virginia Theological Seminary and General Theological Seminary. The hotline will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST from November 1 to November 5.

Watch the service on this webpage: [episcopalchurch.org/holding-hope](https://episcopalchurch.org/holding-hope).

A live stream embed code is provided on the

web page and available to any congregation that would like to add the stream to their own website or Facebook page. Congregations are invited to host watch-parties as part of their All Saints’ Day observance and Election Day preparations.

To receive a reminder about this service, text HOLDING to 51555 (standard messaging and data rates apply).

# RenewalWorks and Our Spiritual Journey

by Ginny Baldwin

In the beginning of 2021, just after Christmas, the congregation of St. Thomas will embark on one of its most important journeys as a parish. We will be taking part in RenewalWorks, a program that will guide our congregation to renew and re-examine Jesus's greatest message: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself." With this beginning, we will create a fresh plan for reaching out to one another, our Battle Creek community and beyond.

## Spiritual Life Inventory

RenewalWorks Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI) is at the heart of the RenewalWorks program and begins the process. The anonymous inventory will give us each an opportunity to examine our spiritual lives and ask *Where am I on my journey, where have I been, where do I feel called to go, and how do I get there?* After the anonymous thirty-minute surveys are complete, they will be studied and our answers will be used to create a complete picture of the spiritual vitality of St. Thomas and help us make spiritual growth a priority in our church life.

The survey can be taken on-line or on paper. Our goal for the inventory is 100% participation.

## What is a Spiritual Journey?

Spiritual journeys are as various as people on the earth. No one path is the right one. No path is better than another. We each find our individual way of increasing and sustaining our relationship with God. I've written down some thoughts about how a spiritual life might manifest itself. It may be hazy for some and clear for others. It may be illusive or present, sometimes lost and sometimes found, often a comfort, sometimes a struggle, and frequently swept aside in our busy everyday lives.

As we begin our Spiritual Life Inventory, it may be helpful to take some quiet time for reflection. We might reflect on how our relationship with God began and how it continues. We may ask how our spiritual lives increase our love for God, neighbors, family, friends or chosen family. We might allow ourselves to feel how Sundays at St. Thomas spiritually ground us: the inspiration of the Eucharist, the words of the liturgy, the music, Father Brian's homily and the comfort of a prayerful and loving community that surrounds us.

Some may find their journey expresses itself when they read the Bible or partake in Lectio Divina by randomly opening the Bible and focusing on the first sentence or paragraph that is found. Reading about theology and prayer and spirituality are other paths. Prayer and meditation might be

active in your life. And we have all experienced moments of grace, healing expressions of gratitude and unexpected kindness, both given and received.

Some might imagine that they are part of a crowd in the Holy Land listening to Jesus speak his parables. Some might have experienced God's holiness when they stop to appreciate the diversity of creation. Others might enrich their spiritual journey by experiencing God's presence in the cosmos, from stars to comets, leaving them with religious awe and connection. Like all of this, time in the out-of-doors can bring the experience of God's sanctity and guide our spiritual lives. God welcomes each spiritual journey wherever and however it expresses itself.

The RenewalWorks team looks forward to exploring together our parish's spiritual life and seeking to create a fresh path to loving God and our neighbors.

## StThomasBC.org

Live-Streaming Worship

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Indepth reading on Sunday

Scripture

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ST. THOMAS  
*Episcopal*  
CHURCH



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

Phone (269) 965-2244  
[www.StThomasBC.org](http://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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## Online Worship

### Sundays Online

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist  
[StThomasBC.org/online-church](http://StThomasBC.org/online-church)  
The St. Thomas YouTube Channel  
St. Thomas Facebook page

Coffee hour on Zoom at 11:00 a.m.  
E-mail [rector@stthomasbc.org](mailto:rector@stthomasbc.org)  
to receive an invitation.

Morning and Evening Prayer Online  
Monday-Saturday  
8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.  
on Zoom and live-streamed  
to YouTube, Facebook  
and the St. Thomas website.

Mid-week Eucharists have been suspended.

The reserve sacrament is available in the chapel for those who wish to receive communion  
after having participated in on-line worship.



## Holiday Meals and Fellowship in Corona-tide

Would you be interested in participating in a program to bring parishioners together remotely for holiday meals and fellowship utilizing Zoom, Facebook Groups, or some other online meeting facility? There will be many who, due to the restrictions on social gatherings, will have no other social interaction during the holidays.

If you are interested or have ideas, please contact Fr. Brian to join in the planning process. We will aim to help people connect at Thanksgiving and Christmas.