

The NewSpirit

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

St. Thomas Episcopal Church Battle Creek, Michigan

June 2020



When are we coming back to church?

by Father Brian Coleman

When are we going to be able to come back to church? This is the question at the forefront of everyone's mind. While I would love to be able to give a definitive answer, there isn't one at this point, and even when the bishop allows in-person gatherings for worship again – whenever that may be – some will decide that it still isn't safe for them to return to church. Indeed, for those who are especially vulnerable due to underlying health conditions, it may not be advisable to return to church until effective treatments are available, or until they are vaccinated against the virus.

Nevertheless, we are planning for what church will look like in the aftermath of the pandemic and I wanted to take a moment to share with you some thoughts about how we might approach gathering for worship in the future. First, the vestry has committed to continuing live-streaming of worship services into the future for those who want to continue to engage with our worship online. Live-streaming has come to be an important tool for evangelism,

and it has the added benefit of extending our congregation beyond the proximity of our building.

In considering returning to worship in church we should always have in mind what we can do to help slow the spread of the virus and stop its transmission. This will require correctly wearing properly-fitted, cloth face masks in the church building at all times. It will prevent us from hugging or shaking hands. We will need to maintain physical distance, no less than six feet. Frequent hand-washing and the use of hand sanitizer will be essential. Each of us will have to be especially mindful of how we use the facilities of the building, what we touch, and how to clean those surfaces with sterilizing wipes. In other words, each of us needs to clean as we go.



St. Thomas in springtime – May 15, 2020.

Photo by Dr. Stephen White

Hymnals and prayerbooks will be removed from the pews to avoid cross-contamination. Bulletins will be all-inclusive, one-use only and parishioners who can will be encouraged to access the service on their smartphones and tablets instead of using a bulletin. Singing, because of the forced projection of air required, is one of the most dangerous activities with respect to spreading the virus,

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so while our services will not be without music, we will not be able to sing hymns in church for some time. Loud speaking has the same risk, so responses will need to be said quietly, if at all.

Because of the need for physical distancing, a number of pews in the church will be roped off and seating will be restricted. This will limit the number of worshippers who can be accommodated in the nave. To remedy this, the worship services will be broadcast to the parish hall and possibly the chapel where additional space will be made available for those who wish to attend in-person. If necessary, we could also increase the number of services held on Sundays to allow for all who wish to attend, keeping in mind the need to clean the worship space between services and the amount of time and volunteers

that would require.

Passing the peace, passing the collection plate, and passing the common cup will be suspended for now. We will, no doubt, find other meaningful ways to share the worship experience and incorporate new customs and practices that address our desire to be connected and share our love for God and each other.

Other practicalities that will be addressed in the coming weeks include ensuring our HVAC systems are as effective as possible in preventing the spread of the virus, and that our cleaning services are robust enough to ensure the safe use of our facilities.

Built into the plan for reentry is the acknowledgment that we may need to reintroduce restrictions should there be an uncontrolled outbreak

of the virus. Of course, if you are feeling ill or have symptoms like fever, cough or shortness of breath, you should stay at home and self-quarantine to prevent transmission of the disease, and if symptoms worsen seek medical help.

Ultimately we want to return to church as soon and as safely as possible, ensuring that those who do attend worship are confident in the precautions that have been taken and that those who wish to stay home can remain connected to our community through our presence online.

This will be a painstaking, deliberate and costly process.

Your patience, diligence and generosity will ensure our efforts are successful. ■

Pledge Update

Budget: \$76,235
Actual: \$71,704
Deficit: \$4,531

StThomasBC.org

See all worship videos

Sign up for e-news

Indepth reading on Sunday

Scripture

Give online

Music Update

by Dr. Stephen White

As you have most likely heard, the choir pilgrimage to France and England has been postponed until 2021. We are disappointed that this was necessary, however the safety and health of everyone involved is of paramount importance.

We are fortunate to have found a cathedral host for 2021 and look forward to spending a week singing daily services at Chester Cathedral.

We are hopeful that we will be able to resume singing in advance of that, although much discussion

continues to take place about the risks of singing in community.

As we head into the final month of our choral year, the choirs are working on a virtual surprise for the parish. We hope you will find it both enjoyable and spiritually meaningful - our ministry continues, albeit in a different way, during this time of physical separation and we are blessed to be able to still offer our gifts to God.

Soli Deo Gloria!



Want to support the St. Thomas's efforts to live-stream our worship services and facilitate the return to in-person gatherings for church? Our technology upgrade in preparation for worship after the COVID-19 pandemic is not without cost. If you would like to make a special donation to help us pay for this essential, but unplanned expense please make tax-deductible donations to St. Thomas designated for the 21st Century Fund. We are seeking to raise approximately \$8,000, and your generosity is deeply-appreciated.

Worship Online. Stay Connected.



- Sunday worship at 9 a.m. with music, scripture, prayers and sermon live on Youtube.
- Virtual Coffee Hour via Zoom, Sundays at 10 a.m.
- Bible Study on Fridays via Zoom at 11 a.m.
- Fr. Brian's Mid-Week Check-in videos
- Communicate with other parishioners and the congregation-at-large via Realm.

Our online worship services are now being broadcast on Access Vision, the public access channel for Battle Creek. Services will air on Channel 16 on Sundays at 5 p.m., and then re-air on Fridays at 7 p.m. The worship services that air are from the previous week's lectionary readings. Times can change at the discretion of AccessVision. See p. 7 for an article about getting more comfortable with technology.

Church History Projects

Architecture and Stained Glass

by Liz Neumeyer

This is just to report the progress of continued church history including architectural features and especially stained glass. The fall semester of 2019 I received a \$2,000 grant from the Kellogg Community College Foundation to work with our photography professor, Ryan Flathau, to have his students photograph the buildings at the corner of Van Buren and Capital. This is my favorite intersection because there are architectural examples from four time periods in earlier history.

Willard Library is classical revival in a traditional Greek style while Miller-Stone (the old YWCA) is more Roman. St. Philip is a lovely example of Romanesque Revival as St. Thomas is of Gothic Revival. I used to take my students down there to show them the “past in the present.” However, I wanted photos to make a power point in case of bad weather as well as being able to point out more features. Because I am no photographer, I needed help and Ryan’s students came forward with great photos of the exteriors plus interiors of St. Philip and St. Thomas.

Retired KCC professor Martin Hubbard also aided us. This June and July we were to have an exhibit of the 30 best photos out of about 700 at the Art Center of Battle Creek. KCC’s Michelle Wilson also made a PowerPoint so I could use it for fundraising and education.

However, COVID-19 has derailed the opening and the exhibit is cancelled until later.

The project to follow was to concentrate on a short history booklet of St. Thomas that we could give to new parishioners. Up until now we have given them the 175th Anniversary Calendar done by Linda Gregory and Karen Keese. Karen and I thought putting the information and selected photos in a booklet would work better for the future than the calendar.

Prior to this I was also going to pay for the reprinting of the stained glass booklet done by St. Thomas parishioner Betty Balogh back in the 1990s. I thought this would be an easy and quick way to get something out about the windows. Alas, I should have known nothing is ever that easy because the KCC printers I consulted with told me the colors would not reproduce well from just copying the book. Since the stained glass is so striking, I started looking for other photos with no luck at first. Eventually I discovered there were indeed very professional photos done by former St. Thomas member, Martin Hubbard. The students also got some good photos of the interior although they got less of the stained glass. There are good selections to use.

As I accumulated the material, I realized that I could add a great

deal more to Betty’s book. Since George McKay advised her, I asked him to go with me to each window again in 2018 and took more notes. Then a serious illness and surgery derailed me. Even though I was spared, I decided to concentrate on writing up my own family history for my younger siblings about our father’s World War II experiences in France and Germany as well as what our early farm was like. I will return to the booklet(s) by next year.

All this detail is by way of informing people that Karen Keese and I are working on the stained glass history, but can do little right now due to COVID-19.

We hoped to use the material in a booklet or booklets and PowerPoint form to raise money for the continued restoration of the windows. It would take a lot of close work with other people and I can’t risk that now since by age and underlying conditions, I am at risk.

By the time the COVID 19 flattens and/or there is a vaccine, I can do that. For now I will just concentrate on continuing the research on the stained glass history and symbolism. People have been inquiring if anything has been done. This is to update everyone. ■



Episcopal Word of the Month: Rogation

by Liz Neumeyer

In our service on May 17th, Father Brian referred to *rogation*. The word comes from Latin *rogatio* meaning “to ask.”

The three days before the Ascension are called Rogation Days because the parishes prayed for protection from calamities. Dating from the 6th century, it was protection from agricultural disasters but expanded over time to protection from pestilence, disease, economic woes and any type of natural disaster.

In England priests would process

with parishioners around the parish fields. Litanies (intercessory prayers) were recited. It is not practiced much in churches now. Perhaps we should take this up again with COVID-19!

Just as a reminder, Ascension is the 40th day after Easter Sunday commemorating Jesus Christ’s ascension to heaven. This year it falls on Thursday, May 21. ■



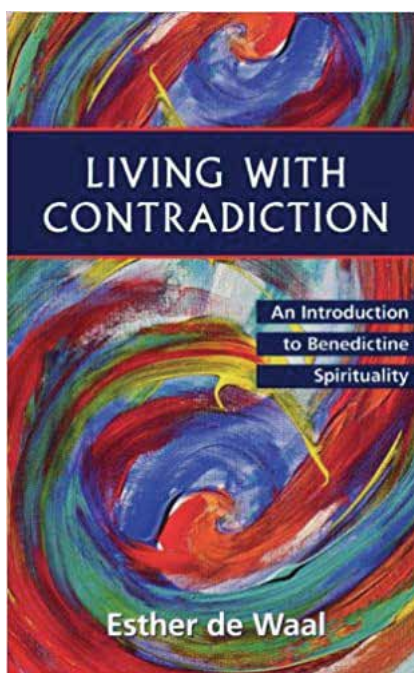
Rogation Days began to appear in Christianity in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Book Discussion Group

Living with Contradiction discussion begins June 9th

Fr. Brian will lead a book discussion group on Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m., beginning June 9th. The text by Esther de Waal, *Living with Contradiction*, is an introduction and exploration of the Rule of St. Benedict.

These simple and inviting reflections take as their starting point our search for wholeness in a world that is fragmented and increasingly polarized. Many people today struggle to balance the demands of professional and personal lives, and find little satisfaction or peacefulness in either. Yet the ancient wisdom of St. Benedict offers a clear and helpful pathway that leads directly to healing, transformation and new life.



During the coronavirus pandemic, many have felt adrift and unable to focus, feeling a lack of structure and no meaningful routine to anchor ourselves emotionally, spiritually or psychologically. One

possible remedy is a Rule of Life. Of course, we probably will not become Benedictine monks, but we can all certainly benefit from the wisdom of the ordering of life as proposed by St. Benedict.

Written in de Waal’s inimitable style, this book is for old friends of the Rule of St. Benedict and novices alike. Holding up segments of the Rule, de Waal’s meditations on Benedict’s words illuminate the wisdom of the Rule not only for those of Benedict’s time, but for all of us today as well.

Join us as we explore this book together. Meetings will take place on Zoom. If you are interested in taking part, order the book and watch for the Zoom invitation on our website or on Realm. ■

Finding Peace

The Sanctuary and Chapel are open to those who need contemplative silence and peaceful prayer.

by Kathy Dingwall

Who would have believed that in 2020, the ordinary lives of people everywhere would be turned upside down in a matter of a few short months? And, who would imagine that this might go on into 2021! Our vocabulary is now peppered with the regular use of words like *unprecedented* and *pandemic*. Once seldom-heard, now they ring out from every news commentator and headline.

We've learned about social distancing, sheltering-in-place, and donning a mask when in public. Eating out now means ordering curbside from the few restaurants that remain open, getting together with friends involves using the telephone, and watching your grandchild graduate from high school or college means planning a drive-by ceremony. But, perhaps the most unwelcome change has come with the closing of places of worship, depriving many of us of the comfort we crave in the sanctuaries we've

around their phones or computers by joining a Zoom Meeting.

During this time, Ross and I learned to manage our time and activities like a lot of other people – going for walks, tackling projects, watching TV, trying to stay connected with friends and family as best we can. And then, something happened that changed everything! Our very good friend Karen Suggs fell dangerously ill, and suddenly we were desperate to be there for her. Visiting her was out of the question and calling her was a poor option because she was so ill. We prayed for her, but we needed more. We needed to be at church – *in the sanctuary* that had fostered our first days of friendship – where we had sat together Sunday mornings listening to the words of Fr. Brian, hugging each other during the peace, and standing side by side at the communion rail.

And so, we went for the first time on a Friday. We had just learned that the chemotherapy scheduled for Karen on the following Tuesday was risky at best. We walked into the church where the sanctuary doors were open, and inside, the air was still and cool. Immediately, we could feel the solace begin to envelop us. Fr. Brian had emailed a prayer to say for Karen and we knelt in the pew and said it. The words

were powerful in their simplicity and the act of kneeling and speaking them in solitude was overwhelmingly comforting. We



sat for many minutes before rising to enter the chapel where Fr. Brian had set out communion wafers. On the way, we stopped to light candles – one for Karen and more for other parishioners whom we knew were ill or in need of a special prayer. After taking communion and replacing spent candles, we left feeling a lightness – as if we weren't carrying this terrible sorrow alone. It was a peaceful feeling.

Most of all, we felt a connection with God. A little more than eight months ago, we were blessed to be in the presence of God's power in our lives, and it changed us in many ways. It taught us that engaging in prayer and contemplation in the sanctuary we love holds a special significance in our lives. Since then, we've made this visit to the quiet serenity of St. Thomas a part of what we do each week. It has become our place of solace as we pray for those we love as well as our quiet space in this life of unprecedented upheaval. It gives us a sense of receiving the peace of God's love in our lives. ■



come to believe will always be there. Church services are now streamed using Zoom, and afterwards, parishioners gather for fellowship

Embracing Technology (even if you hate it)

by Karmel Addis

I know a lot of people, especially older people, dislike computers, smartphones, and anything internet-related.

I do get it. I embarked upon my adult life with a \$200 Smith Corona electric typewriter and a bottle of Liquid Paper. In the early 90s I still wrote some of my college papers by hand – standard practice. I imagine that my particular time on this planet (middle Generation X) is the last of the low-tech (1950s-1990s). In that time, household technology didn't change all that much between what my grandparents had and I had. I grew up with a party telephone line and five TV channels – two UHF and three VHF. (Being from rural Kansas could also be responsible for this).

At school, I tried to take a computer science class as part of my degree requirement, but the graduate student who taught it wrote on one of my papers: "Your highest grade on any of your assignments is a D. You should drop this class before you fail." It was cutthroat, but he was right.

After I finished crying on the front steps, I walked to the administrative building and dropped the class.

But just a few years later, computers had become more user-friendly. I got my first job out of college designing wedding invitations and birth announcements on a computer.

Computers began to then dominate the rest of my work life as I navigated new workplaces.

But my early experiences help me understand how many people feel about embarking on a relationship with computer technology. It is scary, and there is a giant fear of failing at

something that seems completely foreign and possibly dangerous.

The pandemic, however, is causing rapid shifts in our culture.

Older people and those with certain health conditions are at risk of serious complications and higher mortality from COVID-19, so avoiding others is important.

At the same time, isolation is something we all feel. It is unhealthy. Many of us worry how difficult this time away from church is for our friends and fellow parishioners, how devastated and cut off they must feel.

Enter technology. Enter tablets, smartphones and computers.

I know low-tekkies can learn to use these items, because I just taught a reluctant octogenarian how to use a tablet.

She's 86. She loves to read. She's gotten her groceries at Meijer for the last 60 years. She swims in the therapy pool at the YMCA twice a week. When the pandemic hit, the library and the Y closed. Her adult children strongly requested that she allow them to go to Meijer for her, to keep her safe.

When she was given the newest and best Amazon Kindle Fire tablet for her birthday, she said, irritably, "Okay?" and looked annoyed. And it was a rough start. She clearly didn't like it. She couldn't understand why the keyboard disappeared, how she got back to where she was before, and she banged the touch screen with her finger frustratedly and said it was "touchy."

The Kindle didn't make sense, and she ran a narrative in her head that she

was too old to learn it, anyway.

I discovered more than technical assistance, she needed reassurance. I told her that she was as smart as anyone else, and if anyone could learn it, she could. She reads voraciously and puts together 5,000-piece puzzles. Nothing wrong with a brain like that!

Now, she's read over 10 Maeve Binchy books on her Kindle, and is able to shop for her own groceries online using Shipt through Meijer. She's not in love with technology but she's made peace with it, at least for now. It has expanded her independence, and kept her from boredom.

For the past few months, technology is the weak replacement for face-to-face relationships at St. Thomas, enabling communication among the congregation. It has deep downsides, but right now, I would encourage people who are leery of it to give it a try, ask for help, and take advantage of what it has to offer so life can be easier during a time of physical separation.

The famous lecturer Brené Brown says that it's normal to experience bad feelings when we're doing something for the first time. We organize our lives around never having to learn something new, so that we don't have to experience that feeling of inadequacy.

"When we have no relevant experience or expertise, the vulnerability, uncertainty, and fear of these firsts can be overwhelming. Yet, showing up and pushing ourselves past the awkward stage is how we get braver."

We are discussing developing a tech support team at St. Thomas for those who feel less comfortable with technology. We will keep you posted!



ST. THOMAS
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Return Service Requested

Parish Schedule

Sundays

8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist

*Childcare available for infants and toddlers
from 9:30 a.m., upstairs in the church*

Coffee reception following the 10:00 a.m. service.

5:00 p.m. Choral Evensong (first and third Sunday)
Parish Council Meeting (third Sunday)

Wednesday Chapel

6:00 a.m. Morning Prayer

7:00 p.m. Evening Prayer

Wednesdays

6:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist

Fridays

11:00 a.m. Bible Study in the Lounge

12:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist

Office Hours

Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

SUSPENDED



Special thanks to The St. Thomas Dirt Crew who beautified the Garth at the end of May. They worked to spread mulch and cut-back plants in preparation for the summer. The Dirt Crew includes Hans Prechtel, Ross and Kathy Dingwall, Mike Regner, Bernie Squires and Karen Suggs (in absentia).