



## Team Thomas Tidings

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**August 2020**

### **From Canon Ernie Bennett:**

St. Thomas is turning another corner in its long history. Like any parish, you have had high points and low points and lots in-between. One of the exercises I enjoyed doing with congregations as Canon to the Bishop was a timeline, constructed by old timers and newcomers listing their experiences with the church, identifying the milestones they recall, and then reflecting on what that meant for them. In that same vein, I'd like to repeat something I shared in our weekly mailing from this past Sunday. It would surely be one of the points along the way of our timeline.

Whenever the Rector of a parish leaves, it is a traumatic event. This is true under the best of circumstances, and it is especially true when circumstances are not so good. That's where we find ourselves at the moment. Pastor Kathryn is a good priest with many gifts. In the Letter from Bishop Brewer terminating her tenure as your Rector, the Bishop clearly articulates, "The personal dignity of the Rev Jeffrey is hereby affirmed." The Vestry simply concluded, the Bishop concurred, and I agree that she is simply not the right fit for St. Thomas. Although there are loose ends to be dealt with, the parish is ready to move forward. Please help us do that.

In a way, we have been retracing something of our timeline as a people of God by zooming out over the centuries to the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel, with names like Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, and Rebecca and Joseph. I hope you are reading some of the backdrop of these stories in the Book of Genesis (to get the full story you could start at Genesis, chapter 12). And I hope you are joining us in worship either live or online. Please don't allow yourself to fall out of the routine of worship and Bible study. I know it would be easy to become a COVID backslider! Let's stay in touch with one another and keep nurturing our spiritual lives. We are still writing the story of St. Thomas, Eustis.

Canon Ernie Bennett

### **From our Senior Warden:**

To the people of St. Thomas:

Well, now I can tell you the "rest of the story" insofar as I am allowed by the Canons. Please note that according to the Constitution and Canons, (Canon XVII, Section 8) "Meetings of the Vestry are open to all members of the Parish except that executive (closed) meetings of the Vestry meetings may be held for personnel matters or with the consent of the Ecclesiastical Authority."

It is my opinion that, by extension, also means that only limited information discussed in these closed meetings can be disseminated to the general parish membership. Obviously, the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Rev. Kathryn and St. Thomas is a first -class personnel matter. The basic reason for this canonical restriction is for the protection of both parties. So here goes!

As Chairman of the Search Committee, I can say that the entire committee was excited about getting an experienced priest to come to our church. The fact that she was a woman was an added bonus in that we had never had a woman priest at St. Thomas. Rev. Kathryn received a unanimous Search Committee vote to offer her the Rector's position. She accepted the offer.

Very soon after Rev. Kathryn took over as Rector, we began experiencing some "bumps in the road" but we attributed those to differences in background, culture, style of leadership, staff and volunteer management and related areas. We believed we could work out those differences to the benefit of all parties. Rev. Kathryn did have some good ideas with regard to reinvigorating our church (Catechesis) and attracting some younger people as well as some other changes in existing programs.

As time progressed, we began to realize more and more that Rev. Kathryn's style of leadership, treatment of staff and volunteers and general approach to personnel matters just were not going to work at St. Thomas. She was counseled both by myself and the Diocese several times with regard to these matters. The counselling did not have the desired effect. I personally went to Orlando and met with Bishop Brewer several times seeking possible solutions to the ongoing problems. Initially, I recommended to the Bishop that we have patience. I still believed we could work things out. Unfortunately, such was not the case and by then, some long -time members of our Parish were leaving St. Thomas.

After several more months, we began to realize that the situation was becoming intolerable and that stronger, more direct action with regard to Rev. Kathryn's tenure as Rector at St. Thomas was required. This action was required for the good of both St. Thomas and Rev. Kathryn. By then it was apparent that St. Thomas was not the place for Rev. Kathryn. However, she might be a valuable asset in some other ministry. That matter would be up to Bishop Brewer, not the Vestry of St. Thomas.

When the results of the first year Mutual Ministry Review (MMR) conducted by the Vestry and Rev. Kathryn were compiled it was clear that it would be necessary to request dissolution of the pastoral relationship between Rev. Kathryn and St. Thomas. Canon Ernie Bennett conducted a review and discussion of the MMR results in the presence of the Vestry and Rev Kathryn. A vote to request the Dioceses for dissolution of the pastoral relationship passed with all nine members of the Vestry voting yes and Rev. Kathryn voting no.

I subsequently sent a letter to Bishop Brewer requesting action on the dissolution. From that point on, it was between Bishop Brewer and Rev. Kathryn. Bishop Brewer was required to go through certain steps and procedures in order to comply with the Canons. After all appropriate

procedures were completed, he rendered a godly judgement. Even though I read excerpts from his final judgement last Sunday I will include them as follows:

“It deeply grieves me to offer this godly judgment. The difficulties between St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Eustis, Florida and her Rector, the Rev Kathryn Jeffrey, requires that I take this action. I have duly taken into consideration the facts and circumstances. I have consulted with the parties involved. I have consulted with the Standing Committee. It is my hope that this judgement will work for the good of both the parish of St. Thomas, Eustis, and the Rev Kathryn Jeffrey.

In accordance with Canon III.9.15, I have reached a godly judgment regarding the request by the Vestry of St. Thomas Episcopal Church for a dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the Reverend Kathryn G. Jeffrey. The following terms and conditions seem just and compassionate to me as final arbiter and judge:

1. The Reverend Kathryn G. Jeffrey’s tenure as Rector of the parish is hereby terminated, effective 5:00 pm Saturday, August 1.
2. The personal dignity of the Rev Jeffrey is hereby affirmed.
3. Having reported this dissolution to the Secretary of the Convention, this matter is closed. This comes with my sincerest prayers that God heal all involved and redeem these circumstances for the furtherance of His Kingdom.

Blessings and Peace,

+Gregory O. Brewer”

As Bishop Brewer clearly stated in his godly judgement, “.....this matter is closed.”

We wish Rev. Kathryn the best in her future endeavors and now it is time for St. Thomas to move on. And that folks, if the “rest of the story”. GO TEAM THOMAS!!!

Respectfully,

Leon Stricklen, Senior Warden

**Message from our Junior Warden: Beverly Cox**

Calling all artists: Leonardo da Vinci, Ansel Adams, Frida Kahlo, Hokusai, Tiffany. Calling all St. Thomas artists: Do you have a drawing, sketch, painting, collage, photograph, stained glass piece you can share with the church community? We are looking to display your artwork in the church office. Why use thrift shop art when we have our own resident artists? If you have an item that is ready for display and that you can permanently part with, call Bev Cox at 352.406.1580.

**Notes from our Treasurer: Matthew Robertson**

Thank you for keeping up with your pledges. It is much appreciated. Our bills still keep coming in and your pledges are greatly appreciated.

**Messages from our Deacon: Janet Clarke**

A View from The Bridge:

Recently I was reminded of an old saying, “The family that prays together stays together”. We, at St. Thomas, have always thought of ourselves as family. So, let us keep on praying together, whether at home, on-line or in church so that we may stay together until such time as we can be together. God bless each member of the family of St. Thomas. Faithfully yours, Deacon Janet.

P.S. Do you remember from where that saying above came? I believe it was from an old radio program “The Family Hour”. It’s keeping me up!

**Dates to Note in August:**

**We wish a very happy birthday to:**

- |                       |                      |                         |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 02- Marie Fentz       | 10 Evelyn Wright and | 22 Chuck Clarke         |
| 07 Jimmie Clark       | Susie Roberts        | 23 Sonia Carter         |
| 08- Sally Hartenstein | 21 Juliana Wright    | 26 Margery Prentice and |
| 09 Monika Potter      |                      | Gwen Boreske            |

**We wish a very happy anniversary to:**

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 02 Richard and Joanna Cotter and | 15 Jeff and Pam Ray       |
| Coleman and Shirley Holt         | 24 Jack and Wendy Geeslin |
| 08 Dennis and Sally Hartenstein  |                           |

**PRAYER LISTS:** We will be updating our prayer list each week. Please call or email the church office to place someone on the list in the bulletin.

For immediate prayers for those who are ill or in need, please email Nancy Conley at [nancyjohn90@centurylink.net](mailto:nancyjohn90@centurylink.net) or call her at 352-350-4184 to be placed on the **PRAYER CHAIN**.

**And More News:**

We will be holding **one Sunday Service at 9:00am during the months of August and September**. The Sanctuary will hold approximately 50 people with social distancing. Please wear your mask! The Sunday service will be **live streamed** on our Facebook page if you cannot attend in person. See the link below. We will also hold Thursday Healing Services at 10:00 am in the Sanctuary.

**TECHNOLOGY:** There is a new design for the St. Thomas website at <https://stthomaseustis.com/>. Please take a peek and keep coming back for more information. Group leaders, if you want to have a page for your mission, please contact Suzy Burlock and a page will be designed for the website.

**Here is the link to the new Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/StThomasEustis/> We will put notices and announcements on this page; please LIKE the page and share posts of photos you take at events! (Just a note, you do not have to have a Facebook account to be able to view the live video).

As we move forward, there will be more technology improvements that will benefit our services and expand our online presence as well as help those who can't come to services during this pandemic. Blessings! Suzy Burlock

The Thursday 10:00am **HEALING SERVICE** is back! Please mark your calendar to attend this spiritual experience with Canon Ernie.

Our current **OFFICE HOURS** are 10:00am to 2:00pm Monday through Thursday. The Office phone number is 352-357-4358. Please leave a message if the office is closed.

**We have a new secretary for the Office!!!** Margaret Emerson has agreed to come out of retirement and take our part-time secretary job. Margaret has just retired from being a teacher and guidance counselor with the Lake County School System. She and her husband, Jeff, live in Leesburg and she has two daughters and a granddaughter. Margaret serves as a lay eucharistic minister and also on our altar guild. Please give her a warm Team Thomas welcome to her new job.

In case of an **emergency, contact:**

Deacon Janet Clark for **pastoral concerns** (352-728-0929)

Beverly Cox for **buildings and grounds concerns** (352-406-1580)

**FOOD DONATIONS:** We have many needy families in our community, especially at this time, so please bring in non-perishable food items and place them in the receptacle in the entryway. Jack Geeslin will be taking our donations to the St. Mary's Food Distribution Center every two weeks.

The **THRIFT SHOP** remains closed at this time. If you want a private shopping time, please contact Sandy Pettitt or Gail Norris. You must wear a mask! Call Sandra Pettitt at 352-551-4225 for more information

Very Special **THANK YOU's** to:

Lauren and Leon Stricklen, Bill Kieran, Matthew Robertson,  
Beverly Cox and Nancy Conley for their packing and moving skills!!!



In lieu of flowers for Marjorie Carter, the family has created a Go Fund Me Account for donations to Feed America Campaign. Go to <https://www.gofundme.com/f/marjorie-carter-memorial-campaign-feeding-america>. Or if you prefer you may write a check to St. Thomas for donations at local foodbanks.

**The Lord bless and keep you all.**