

ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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In Earnest: Canon Ernie Bennett

As most of you know, I have been appointed by Bishop Gregory O. Brewer as your Priest-in-Charge on an interim basis. I am already known by many of you since, before my retirement, I served as Canon to the Ordinary for 21 years. I am serving for two months during a voluntary Administrative Leave of your Rector, the Reverend Kathryn Jeffrey. Bishop Brewer requested this Leave in response to a request by your Vestry to end her ministry as your Rector. That request is now being carefully considered by the Bishop and Standing Committee of the Diocese (an elected counsel of advice), a process that could take roughly 60 days to come to a conclusion.

As I have already shared, Pastor Kate has committed no crime, nor has she violated her ordination vows. She has done many good things here and she has many obvious gifts and talents. The question that the Vestry has wrestled with, and now the Bishop is considering, is whether your Rector has the requisite gifts and abilities needed at this unique parish that we know and love as St. Thomas, Eustis. In other words, is she the right fit for this congregation? Are we able to move forward together or have we reached a point where we need to move apart?

So we can relate to each other more fully, it might be helpful if I share a little of my background. I was ordained in the Diocese of South Florida in 1968, just a year and a half before the diocese was split into Central Florida (our diocese), Southeast Florida and Southwest Florida. I am married to Roz, we have two grown sons, two lovely daughters-in-law and two grandsons. (More about these remarkable people another time.)

I am pleased to report that you have an excellent Vestry. They will fill an increasingly critical role during my time with you. Virtually every decision about the life of the parish, except those specifically assigned to the clergy, will go through them. This might seem clumsy for a while, and there will be the inevitable conflict as we work together, but I have every confidence that they will lead us well. We do not have all the answers, but I can promise that I will do the best job I can with you and for you.

I am excited about serving as Priest-in-Charge. This is a great parish and you have talented folks doing all kinds of ministry. Please cut each other some additional slack, and exercise godly patience with one another. If you hurt someone's feelings, screw up your courage and say: "I'm sorry". If someone hurts your feelings, let it go. We are all doing the best we can, and we all love the Lord and this congregation.

Thanks for allowing me to be here, and thanks for the opportunity to serve with you! Canon Ernie Bennett

Notes from our Senior Warden: Leon Stricklen

It is a new day for St. Thomas. We have experienced some recent tough times, but in true St. Thomas fashion we have come through them and are still a strong community church. We just need some time to heal now. That process is going to be greatly facilitated by the appointment of Canon Ernie Bennet as our Priest in Charge. I met Ernie when we were selecting Chris Hardman as our Rector many years ago. He will do a great job in guiding us along our new path to rebuilding this church. I am thankful that he accepted this assignment and I know we all look forward to working together with Canon Ernie during his time here.

Message from our Junior Warden: Beverly Cox

Do you remember Bob Vila and his show This Old House? I am reminded that St. Thomas is This Old Church. One of our former rector's Chris Hardman, said the walls were soaked in prayers. I know I have left some prayers in that old church over the decades. I want to thank all the contributors to St. Thomas who make it possible to care for our church campus. Stewardship is not just taking in money, it is caring for the things we have been given.....such as This Old Church. God bless you all.

Notes from our Treasurer: Matthew Robertson

Big thank you to the parish. Folks continue to provide strong support of their pledge commitments by mailing in, dropping off and attending. Through June the church is running a year to-date positive balance in operating results. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. We are halfway through 2020 and look forward to your continued generosity. Many thanks. The Treasury Team

Messages from our Deacon: Janet Clarke

If you know of anyone, especially someone who contracted the virus, who is ill or depressed and would benefit from having a **PRAYER SHAWL**, please call Deacon Janet Clarke or the office at (352) 357-4358.

We all know what it means to be in "shut-down mode" and, although church services have resumed, there are many of our parishioners who are still unable to attend, but would love to be remembered. **A FRIENDLY CALL** to see how they are doing and let them know that they are remembered would be so welcomed! Currently I am setting up a roster of people willing to make just two phone calls; it would only take a few minutes of your time to make each call and it would mean so much to those on the receiving end! Please call me (728-0929) to say you would be happy to make those two phone calls.

I am delighted to be able to resume my article, **A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE**, for the Newsletter. Today I would like to share some of my opportunities that are still around us, even during this "stay-at-home" period. When March came and I found time on my hands, I got around to cleaning out drawers and closets; then organizing my sewing and knitting supplies (things to do I had been keeping on the "back burner"). When all was said and done,, I felt that my time had been well spent and I saw my "reclusive time" as an opportunity. Those projects now accomplished, I looked for another "opportunity". My "morning coffee with Jesus" was easily extended in time. I became more relaxed and I found myself enjoying the company of Jesus as I prayed Morning Prayer followed by some serious Bible study. Why did I ever think I did not have this kind of time before? What was so important that I couldn't spend almost two hours each morning with my Lord? Priorities! Being shut-in has been a real opportunity to nourish my spiritual life. My priorities have changed! I see this current time as time for golden

opportunities. I have realized that many old doors have been closed, but I now know that there are new doors waiting to open for me-if I just look. Have a cup of coffee or tea, invite Jesus to join you, spend some time with Him in prayer and look forward to whatever opportunities He sends your way. May God bless you all and keep you well. Faithfully yours, Deacon Janet.

Dates to Note in July:

While Canon Ernie spends valuable time with his family, Canon Scott Holcombe will conduct Sunday Service on July 19th.

Bishop Gregory O. Brewer will be conducting the service on July 26th along with Canon Ernie Bennett.

July Birthdays:

01- Mae Johnson	08- Winnie Luche	19- Edward Sigler
04- Suzy Burlock	10 Evelyn Fields	25- Kevin Bailey
06- Sean Lahey	16- Bill Robertson	28- Gail Carlson
08- June Christiansen	18- Thelma Martin	

PRAYER LISTS: We will be creating a new prayer list at the beginning of each month. Please call or email the church office to place someone on the list. In order to print this list in the newsletter, we will need first and last name by the first of each month.

For immediate prayers for those who are ill or in need, please email Nancy Conley at nancyjohn90@centurylink.net to be placed on the **PRAYER CHAIN**.

Our **MILITARY LIST** will be done the same way, updated at the beginning of each month. Email or contact the office each month to put **active** duty military and **active** first responders on the list.

And More News:

We will be holding **one Sunday Service at 9:00am during the months of July and August**. The Sanctuary will hold approximately 50 people with social distancing. Please wear your mask!

If you do not feel it is safe to attend, you can view the **Service online** at www.stthomaseustis.com after 6:00pm on Sundays.

The Thursday 10:00am **HEALING SERVICE** is cancelled during the month of July, but will resume in the Sanctuary on August 6th. We are working to make it available for those who want to participate off-site, also. More news on this later.

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.

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

Deacon Janet Clark for **pastoral concerns** (352-728-0929)
Beverly Cox for **buildings and ground 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. Since there is an abundance of items already on hand and little storage room, please do not donate items until further notice, which we all hope will be soon!

The ALTAR GUILD thanks all of the wonderful volunteers who cheerfully fulfill their duties each week and we welcome Terry Oldman and Carol Ann Luche to our guild. We send very special thanks to Sally Hartenstein and Naomi Townsend for the absolutely beautiful flower arrangements this year!

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

Diane Mullen for Office duties
Lauren Stricklen for the Bulletins

Ginny Kieran for the Newsletter
Susy Burlock for filming and posting online

Note: We are searching for a new **CHURCH SECRETARY**. If you know of anyone with excellent computer skills and a great personality who would be interested in working 16 hours per week, please have them send a resume to stthomasec@earthlink.net

Stay safe and continue to pray for our church, our nation, and the world.