



Team Thomas Tidings

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September 2020

From Canon Ernie Bennett: In Ernest

If you have been hanging around the Episcopal Church for any length of time, you know that the new year officially starts with the First Sunday of Advent. The secular calendar tells us that the year begins on January 1. But I harbor a secret notion that the year really begins on Labor Day. And it is coming up soon!

This year it all seems so strange for one simple reason. It is strange! We are in the middle of a global pandemic, an election cycle with more anxiety than you can shake a stick at, and an economic downturn – if not by the measure of the stock market, then by business closures and massive unemployment. And St. Thomas, the church that we all love, has suffered a major blow that we are just now able to begin to put behind us. A strange time indeed!

Now I could utter some simple platitudes and leave it at that. Trouble with that, you are not a congregation that is taken in by simplistic, empty words. It's one of the things that I find so refreshing – we have so many people that tell it like it is, or at least tell it like they see it! I can't help but feel that's how we live into the legacy of our patron saint, Thomas. It is that authenticity that makes us struggle from time to time. But it is also that authenticity that God requires of us if we are to be made whole and remain whole.

I sense that we are turning a corner, and I am excited about being here to watch that happen and to be a part of that happening! Please deal tenderly with one another. Don't get seduced by the anxiety of the world and the easy promises we hear almost everywhere we turn these days. In this new day, know that we are standing on the holy ground of Moses and the prophets of old. Know that we are standing on the holy ground of our ancestors, who braved tough times while they too sought the Lord.

One of my favorite passages of scripture is from Psalm 137. I'll quote from the King James version, not because it is my favorite, but because in this instance I think it captures the whimsical nature of the situation. The people were in exile in Babylon, captive of a nation more powerful than they were. And their captors obviously liked to torment them. Here's what they said: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?"

How indeed will we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? I'll tell you how.

We will screw up our courage and sing out boldly as if our life depended on it, because it does. We will reclaim our first love and join with all the Saints, "who from their labors rest". We will own our failures

and our doubts as we once more put on the whole armor of God. St. Thomas is a church of promise. Believe me, that's the truth. And our best days are just around the corner.

An additional note from Canon Ernie:

This week's gospel reading is Matthew 18:15-20. It contains counsel on dealing with conflict in churches, all of places. Conflict, as we all know, is inevitable and can be used for good or ill; it can lead to constructive change or destruction tearing apart. This Sunday we'll take a look at what Jesus has to say on the subject. I look forward to being with you hopefully in person. If for some reason you can't be with us physically, please tune in live on Facebook

Canon Ernie

From The Vestry:

On August 15th, the Vestry participated in a workshop with a facilitator in order to discuss "where we are now" and "where we want to go" as your elected body. It was a great place to start since we were left in a transition phase again. Your Vestry members have been working diligently to get organized and work with our wonderful Priest in Charge, Canon Ernie Bennett and other Diocesan personal as we begin the search for a new priest.

One of the first things we were asked was "Why are you here, doing what you are doing at St. Thomas?" After many stories and much discussion, we agreed that our mission statement should be: **"A traditional Episcopal Church where you can worship God with a sense of belonging."** We all believed that God has put us here for a reason and a purpose. We all feel that sense of belonging to this wonderful old church. We hope you do too, because we need all of you to know that we need each and every one of you in order to move forward with our goal of growing our church and serving with our time and talents in God's work. As Canon Ernie often says, "God is weaving wonderful things in our lives."

The Vestry is organizing itself into six major teams which cover most of the activities of the church. Each committee has a Vestry Team Leader. There are several subcommittees that fall under each team. We need you help in serving on these subcommittees to organize, work together, and get the work of the church done! We are asking team leaders to meet with committee chairpersons to come up with "a reason for being", goals, and activities. Eventually we will also want standard operating procedures for each subcommittee. We want to be organized enough so that when we return to normal operations, we can hit the ground running. This organization will also allow us to train up new leaders when some "retire" or move away.

The major teams and the team leaders are listed below. Many of you already serve as a chairperson for a committee and we hope you continue to do so. For others, think about your time and talents and where you can best serve God, and call the team leader to volunteer your services.

The Worship Team and the Christian Education Team are chaired by the Rector. In this case, they are in the able hands of. Canon Ernie who met with individual chairs and will schedule a meeting with each team in the near future.

The **Stewardship Team** is led by the Senior Warden, Leon Stricklen. This team includes the Treasury Team, Budgets & Investments, Technology, Pledging and Fundraising.

Buildings & Grounds fall to Junior Warden, Diane Mullen who was elected to fulfill Beverly Cox's term. She will assemble a team to cover general maintenance, cleaning, grounds, and other projects.

Outreach is chaired by Nancy Conley. This team includes the Thrift Shop, Summer Harvest, food bank collections, school connections, and Episcopal Children's Services.

Parish Life will be headed by Monika Potter. Parish Life includes, special events, kitchen, bereavement, weddings. Shut-in and hospital visits, newcomers, MOST, Daughters of the King, and several others.

The newest team is called **Church Safety**. The co-chairs are Bill Kieran and Gail Carlson. This team will cover our health, safety, and disaster plans.

We hope this reorganization will help us all work together rather than in silos. As a team of diverse personalities and abilities and ideas we can do more. We need your help. Search your heart, review your talents, find your passion. Can you write thank you notes, can you make phone calls, can you proofread? We need it all. We cannot do it alone, but working together, we can do anything. Help make St. Thomas a place where we can all worship God with a sense of belonging.

Diane Mullen
Vestry Clerk

Other News

Since March we have been busy cleaning and organizing the Parish Hall. Chairs, carpets and tables have been cleaned and sanitized. Kitchen storage has been reorganized. The Sanctuary got a thorough cleaning, including the carpet. We removed all books for your safety following Diocesan guidelines for in-person worship. Bill and Ginny Kieran worked tirelessly with their teams to get this done.

We are in the process of cleaning up our church office and getting reorganized. We could not have survived without the help of our wonderful people who stepped in and gave of their time and talents. Lauren Stricklen is a master at typing the bulletins, Nancy Conley, proofreads and copies two programs per week as well as her Treasury Team and other duties. Maryann Winslow and Kathy Easter help assemble the Sunday bulletin. Nancy also assists with the Healing Service on Thursday morning. Ginny

Kieran has assisted with our monthly newsletters, entitled *Team Thomas Tidings*, as well as serving as Altar Guild Director. Beverly Cox has cleaned, fixed up, and worked hard to get our buildings and grounds in better shape. Diane Squire has served as our Covid 19 coordinator ordering supplies and training personnel. Diane Squire is also helping Diane Mullen in reviewing and organizing all files in the office. This is a monumental task and will take months! Suzy Burlock continues to record our service and manage the Facebook page and website. Rev. Janet Clarke has been an invaluable help and source of wisdom in serving as our deacon. Canon Ernie Bennett has been a source of inspiration and calm in the midst of chaos. We are truly blessed to have such a wonderful person serving as our priest in charge.

The good news is that we expect to repaint and update the flooring in the office building. Sandy Pettitt, decorator extraordinaire, got bored because the Thrift Shop is still closed and volunteered to chair the office updating committee. We hope this process will be complete by November 1. If you wish to help with ideas or financially, call Sandy. She is busy getting estimates now.

The other good news is that we found the perfect person to be our part-time secretary. Margaret Emerson just retired from the Lake County School System and was bored!!! She has learned the routine quickly and is super friendly and efficient. She will man the office from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm Monday through Thursday. The Office is closed on Fridays. In addition, Margaret is a LEM, a member of our Altar Guild, a lector, and will be our School Liaison with the local schools for outreach.

The other good news is that we have two of the most dedicated people on our vestry that I have ever had the pleasure to work with. And they both work tirelessly and for free! The first is our fearless leader, Senior Warden, Leon Stricklen. He has dedicated his life to this church, but especially in the last six months. He deserves our patience and understanding for all of his time, talents, efforts and dedication. The second special person is our Treasurer, Matthew Robertson, and his team, Vicki Tubb and Nancy Conley. They have taken our bill paying, pledge recording, budgeting, insurance and business affairs in hand and work tirelessly on our behalf again with no pay! Believe me we are in good hands!

As you can see, even though we only have one service on Sunday and one on Thursday, many people have been working behind the scenes to keep us up and running during the Covid crisis. Believe me it takes a village. Thanks to all who have helped or volunteered to help or who have even been kind! Keep us all in your prayers.

The Diocese of Central Florida has now moved to phase three regarding COVID. To view phase three information, go to the link below:

http://www.cfdiocese.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/08/Central_FL_Phase_III_Guidelines_08262020.pdf

Messages from our Deacon: Janet Clarke

A View From The Bridge: Visioning, Envisioning, Looking Forward

The COVID virus seems to be subsiding so it is time to do some visioning about returning to our regular ministries and programs here at St. Thomas. I, for one, am envisioning a time in October or November, when I will be able to have our annual Fall Quiet Day. It is already in the making. The theme this year will be, "Show Me The Way". I am looking forward to this spiritual time with you. I hope you are too.

Faithfully yours,
Deacon Janet

Dates to Note in September:

We wish a very happy birthday to:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 06 Lauren Stricklen | 17 Douglas "DJ" Johnson |
| Rob Wilhelm | 20 Sophia Carter |
| 14 Gail Norris | Sofia Lahey |
| Suzanne Leclair | 23 Michael Ladd |
| Adrian Carter | 25 Ginny Kieran |
| 15 Blossom Mahoney | |

We wish a very happy anniversary to:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 03 Bill and June Christiansen | 19 Pete and Kelly Ortiz |
| 06 Jeff and Margaret Emerson | 27 Tony and Marilyn Gorden |

Upcoming Dates for Vestry Meetings:

Sunday, August 20, 2020 at 10:15am (regular meeting)
Saturday, September 26, 2020 from 9am-1pm in the Parish Hall (workshop)

PRAYER LISTS: We continue to update our prayer list each week. Please call or email Margaret in 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 or call her at 352-350-4184 to be placed on the **PRAYER CHAIN**.

And More News:

We currently have **one Sunday Service at 9:00am during the month of September**. The Sanctuary will hold approximately 50 people with social distancing. Please wear your mask! The Sunday service is being **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.

<https://www.facebook.com/StThomasEustis/>



Regarding Facebook...Please be sure to like our St. Thomas Facebook page. You can watch our live services here each week. Watching on Facebook live every Sunday helps to keep us in our Sunday routine and will keep each of us connected to our St. Thomas Family. Announcements and notices are on this page. We would love for you to share photos to our Facebook page as well. Suzy Burlock has done a fantastic job of making this available to us. **Let's see how many likes our page can get!**

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.

FLOWERS: There are still a few dates available for the altar flower donations. Available dates are: 9/13, 10/04, 10/18, 10/25, 11/22, and 11/29. Please sign up in the vestibule or call Margaret at the church office if you would like to reserve one of these dates.

Sally Hartenstein is wondering who would be interested in learning stained glass. She would like a count of people, if any, that would like to pursue the classes. Nothing has been established yet, so the day or time is up for conversation. You can contact Sally at 352-874-2220. Please leave a message so I can get back with you. Thank you, faithfully, Sally

The Thursday 10:00am **HEALING SERVICE** continues each week! Please mark your calendar to attend this spiritual experience with Canon Ernie. If you are unable to attend our Sunday service, this is a perfect opportunity to worship in a smaller setting.

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 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**

Our Thrift Store is reopening! Please come by and shop with us beginning Thursday, September 10, 2020. You must wear a mask! Thrift store hours are Thursday and Friday 9am-3am and Saturday 9am to noon.

The Lord bless and keep you all.

Vestry Members:

Leon Stricklen, Sr. Warden, Diane Mullen, Jr. Warden, Matthew Robinson, Treasurer, Gail Carlson, Nancy Conley (Asst. Treasurer), Bill Kieran, Cynthia Lenninger, George Pawliczak, Monika Potter, Vicki Tubb (Asst. Treasurer)