

CANTERBURY TALES

DECEMBER 2023

Vicar

The Rev. Sharon Sheffield

Bishop's Committee

Allen Stout, Bishop's Warden

Shelley Arnold, People's Warden

Andrea Utzman, Clerk

Lynne Richmond, Minutes

Secretary

Lance Brooks, Treasurer

John Mitchell, Bookkeeper

Jane Gordon-Topper

Camelia Jolly

Jeremy Richmond

Sue Williams

Minister of Music & Organist

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CHRISTMAS DAY

December 25

Advent Lessons & Carols and Dinner

Please come to Advent Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 17 at 3:00pm, and then stay for a delicious Advent Dinner. Lessons and Carols is, of course, free and open to all. Dinner is a minimum \$10 donation; we want to be sure everyone can attend who wants to attend, and you are always welcome to donate more if you wish. **Please RSVP for dinner** by signing up in the narthex or emailing the church office by December 10.

QUILT RAFFLE

Deborah Wright has made and donated a gorgeous Christmas quilt as a fundraiser. Raffle tickets are \$5 and can be purchased through Advent Lessons & Carols on December 17. The winning ticket will be drawn at the Advent Dinner; winner need not be present to win. Thank you, Deborah, for an outstanding fundraiser, and thank you to everyone who contributes to the raffle.



HURRAY FOR ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL HOLIDAY FAIR!

Despite the threat of rain, we had another wonderful Holiday Fair and Bake Sale. We continue to attract new vendors, as well as maintaining a solid core of regulars. Our tables were full of tasty treats, craft items, and collectibles, and a good time was had by everyone. So far we have raised close to \$1800, and the number continues to grow as the last few items find homes. Thank you to everyone who contributed their work, wealth, and wisdom to the event.





BOOK DRIVE RECAP



Once again we exceeded expectations with our annual Veterans Day Book Drive. We received almost sixty books for active military posts and VA hospitals. The Heinlein for Heroes program is grateful for our generosity and our care for those who serve our country. Thank you to everyone who took part to make life better for those who serve us and our country.

Bishop's Warden Report

We are now in the liturgical season of Advent, as we prepare for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Bishop's Committee is winding up the fiscal and operational year, and preparing for 2024. Work continues on making the roof waterproof, we are preparing the 2024 draft budget, and the schedule is packed with fellowship and worship opportunities in the month to come!

St Thomas of Canterbury is on the move!!!

We are continuing to move on the "Path to Parish."

At our most recent Bishop's Committee meeting, we learned that we made about \$1600 on the Holiday Craft and Bake Sale. Final accounting continues. We discussed the December 17 Lessons & Carols and Buffet (please RSVP for the buffet). We heard a report that we are continuing the search for an organist to play at the 8:00 service, as Marc Skuster has moved. We discussed the hedges in the front of the church to decide whether or not to remove them. The Committee decided to retain and to trim them.

We also heard a report that the parking lot lights are not properly timed, as they keep turning on during the day. We will look into having an electrician evaluate our overall electrical system to make sure that we have proper panels, adequate electrical safety, and to perhaps fix the timing issue.

For new business, the monthly budget report will be organized to remove some unnecessary line items (merging them with other lines). We discussed approving a new renter, but decided against this particular applicant because we want to ensure that Larkin Hall is available for St Thomas events every Wednesday night. We set the date for the **Annual Meeting for February 4, 2024**, with a single service that day at 9:00. Finally, we approved Rick Fridrick's request to advertise a possible cruise for next Fall. The proposed cruise would be around England, and would include St Thomas people and other Episcopalians. Rick's company would donate \$100 per cruiser to St Thomas. More details to come on this.

So, as you can see, a lot is going on around St Thomas. But please; remember that much of what we do is dependent on having the **budget** to support it. We are putting together the draft budget now, so if you have not submitted **your pledge card** yet, please do so as soon as possible. If you normally make donations, but don't usually submit a pledge card, please submit a card this year. It is much easier for us to create a dependable budget using formal pledges than by estimating based on last year's collections.

Have a great Advent and Christmas, and I'll be in touch again just before Epiphany in January.

Allen Stout, Bishop's Warden

Prayer Books and Bulletins

Several people have asked recently “if we will ever go back to using the prayer book.” Full-text bulletins are here to stay, both because they are more user-friendly for newcomers, and because our online worshipping community needs access to our liturgy. But there’s no reason that you can’t use a Prayer Book if you are more comfortable doing so! Except for the occasions when we use one of the Eucharistic Prayers that is not in the 1979 Prayer Book, or a seasonal Prayers of the People, everything in our service is also in the BCP. So feel free to use either a prayer book or the bulletin, whichever feels better to you. - Mother Sharon

Pledge Drive Wrap-up

Our “Path to Parish: Rooted in Abundance” pledge campaign has concluded. The Bishop’s Committee and Mother Sharon thank everyone who has turned in a pledge card. Your support for the St. Thomas family and ministries is greatly appreciated! If you have not yet turned in a pledge card, please do so as soon as you prayerfully can. The Bishop’s Committee will use the next two months to craft the proposed 2023 budget, which will be approved at the Annual Meeting, and your pledge helps the Committee make the most accurate budget possible.

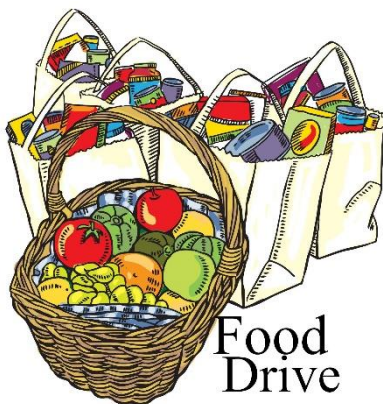
Year-End Donation Reminder

Donations for the 2023 tax year need to be received and deposited by December 31. As this is a Sunday, please help our volunteer counters by making sure your donations are in the church office no later than December 27. St. Thomas will gratefully accept donations at any time, but the IRS is not quite as lenient! Thanks again for your support.

A Reminder from the Hospitality Committee

We all enjoy sharing treats after our services – it's a special part of our fellowship together. Lately the same people have been providing for everyone. We encourage you to sign up for coffee hour and bring whatever appeals to you. It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive! The signup sheet can be found either in the narthex or Larkin Hall.

ADVENT FOOD DRIVE



Our annual food drive has become a big part of our **Advent** journey at St. Thomas. The local food banks get lots of donations in December, and then have a big drop-off in January. Let's make sure our neighbors have full pantries in January, too! Please fill a box or bag with staples (rice, beans, canned fruits and vegetables, cereal, etc.) during December and then bring it to church on December

31 or January 7. We will get the food where it needs to go! Please remember to check the expiration dates before you bring your donations, as food banks are not allowed to distribute food that is past its expiration date.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS



Donations for our annual display of poinsettias and Christmas flowers will be gratefully accepted between now and Christmas. Envelopes will be available to make your donations in thanksgiving for something in your life, or in honor or memory of friends and loved ones. Please note that in order to be listed in the Christmas bulletins, your **donations need to be received in the church office by December 17.**

HOLIDAY CLOSURES

The church office will be **closed December 26, and January 1-2**, for the Christmas and New Year's holidays. In order to give our clergy some real time off, we will not livestream Morning and Evening Prayer December 26-28. As always, Mother Sharon will be available by cell phone for pastoral emergencies. Stay safe and enjoy the holidays!

Mark Your Calendars! Our Annual Meeting will be Sunday, February 4. We will have our usual combined service at 9:00am, and then adjourn to Larkin Hall for a potluck brunch and our meeting. More information will be in the January Canterbury Tales, but mark your calendars now so you don't miss the meeting.

HOLIDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE



Please mark your calendars and spend some time at St. Thomas as we celebrate the Incarnation.

CHRISTMAS EVE PAGEANT & EUCHARIST

Sunday, December 24, 6:30pm –
sung

CHRISTMAS DAY EUCHARIST

Monday, December 25, 9:00am – *sung*

We will have services as usual at 8:00 and 10:15 on Sunday, December 24 and Sunday, December 31.

EPIPHANY LESSONS & CAROLS

Saturday, January 6, 4:00pm at St. Gregory's

THE BISHOP'S COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU!!

As you know, we elect new members to the Bishop's Committee at the annual meeting. We have two members rotating off in January, and one two-year term to complete, so we need willing people to step up and help guide St. Thomas for the next three years. Please talk with Allen Stout or Mother Sharon if you have questions or feel called to put your name forward for nomination. Thank you for your prayerful discernment.

Works and Grace: A Meditation

Our November lectionary readings included some of my favorites. In particular, we read from Matthew 25, part of what is called by some scholars the “End Times Discourse.” Jesus does a lot of teaching in the Gospel of Matthew, and these teachings are collected into five “discourses,” including the Sermon on the Mount, and this End Times Discourse. In the latter discourse, centered around Matthew 25, Jesus teaches about salvation and judgment.

In our recent reading, Jesus explains how he will judge people in the end. He says that he will divide us into the sheep and the goats, where the sheep will be saved and the goats will be punished. The basis for His decision will be how we treated the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it (or did not do it) to one of the least of these, you did it (or did not do it) to me” (MT 25:31-46).

I did not realize, until it was demonstrated in the lectionary, that in this passage, Jesus was repeating a lesson written by the Prophet Ezekiel, that God will separate the fat sheep (goats) from the lean sheep (sheep), and that He will judge them according to their deeds, or their “works.”

So what does this mean for present theological discussions? One of the questions that was central in the Reformation split between the Roman Catholic Church and those who would be called Protestants (protesting against the Catholic Church’s dogmas and actions) was the question of salvation. Are we saved by doing good works, or are we saved by faith in Jesus Christ? Martin Luther coined the phrase, *sola fide* (faith alone) to argue that while works might manifest a real change in a person’s life, it is faith alone that leads to salvation. The Catholic Church continues to put particular emphasis on what we do, or works. It is incorrect to believe that Catholics believe that works can lead to salvation, but they do argue that faith PLUS works is necessary.

Which brings us to the readings mentioned above. Jesus, in the End Times Discourse does not mention that believing in Him (Jesus) will lead to salvation, but it is stated elsewhere, and particularly in the Gospel of John. But Jesus, here, does make a rather stark and clear statement (buttressed by Ezekiel) that faith without works is not enough.

We are saved by Grace, given freely by God through Jesus Christ. We can call that **unmerited Grace**. But are we really called to accept that Grace for ourselves but the to hoard it? Or are we called to share it with every other creature in God’s creation, or at least every other person who is in need? I might call this “**wasted Grace**.” Psalm 23 says that “my cup runneth over.” Should I not share my overflow with my neighbor who is hungry? Or the refugee at my border who, though inconvenient, is still one of God’s creatures? If I turn my face from her, do I risk facing Jesus who will say that I failed to help Him when He needed me? Will he tell me that I wasted the Grace He bestowed on me? As in the parable of the talents, will I be that servant who buried the talent that God gave me, returning nothing in interest? Or, should I take action to help the refugee and return that interest to my Master when He calls? After all, she is Him.

What do you think?

Allen Stout



Birthdays

Pam Pezone 12/1, Carole Pilgrim 12/3,
Allen Stout 12/4, Paul Jovanovic 12/7,
Mercedes Tapia 12/10, Becky Ruiz 12/16,
Val Lopez Mendoza 12/20,
Liz Pezone 12/21,
Michael J. Drakulich 12/28



The world, especially the people of the United States, and for peace all over the world and wherever there is oppression or trouble.

Serving in the Armed Forces at home and around the world: members of the U.S. Army: **Adam** and Boston; the U.S. Marine Corps: Sean, Adelangel and Jesse; the U.S. Air Force: Jordan, Joshua and Carlos; the U.S. Navy: **Jonathan**; and the U.S. Coast Guard: **Jennifer** and Corey.

The protection and guidance of Parishioners and Friends: Bertha, Ariana, Alyssa, Ana, Deb, Joey and his mothers Beth and Jan, Penny and her family, Chris and his family, Daniel, Becky, Sandra, Alex, Josef, Brandon, Rosie, Nathan, Paul, Gayle's doctor, Patricia's children, Sarah S., Ginny, Pam, Charlene, baby Jordan's family, Melissa, Doreen, Vicky, Pam, Liz and Mary.

The healing of Parishioners and friends: **Karen, Liz, Carlene, Becky, Samantha, Patrick, Allyson, Allen, Joanne, Rosie, Jim, Bill, Lillian,** Linda M., Diana, Susanne, Ana, Rae Ann, Kathy, Linda O., Gingi, Michael, Kathryn, Asgeir and Rosa, Eric, Mary Ellen, Beverly, Paige, Diane, Toni, Pat, Harper, Lessa, Becky, Dean, Rachel, Jane, Laura, Tori, Lance, Karen, Terry, Jared, Scott, Jeff, Jim L., Lu, Richard, Cindy, Jason, Gayle, Lori, Nancy W., Janice, Patricia B., Carolyn, Carmen, Ruben, David F., Melanie, Elizabeth, David, Jessica, Maria, Patrick, Patricia, Alan C., Russ, Amanda, Father Michael, Vivian, Kenobi, Eduardo, Bishop Curry, Eve, Stacey D., Dean, Wilver, Belinda and support for all families and friends caring for loved ones, the people of Ukraine, India, Vietnam, Peru, Nigeria, Haiti, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Myanmar and all parishioners and friends with health problems.

Homebound and Special Needs: **Karen, Samantha** and the homeless, the poor and the unemployed, affordable housing for families, the end of COVID-19, Ebola, AIDS, and Cancer in the world, and for those suffering from mental illness.

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