

Saint Thomas Church



The Rector's Chronicle

Lent 2017

My dear friends,

December was extremely full of events, both liturgical and festive. Our music has been wonderful and many of you have commented that after only a matter of weeks in post, Daniel Hyde is producing a wonderful rich sound from the choir; we are certainly blessed to have him with us as our Director of Music. Since their return from Christmas vacation, the boy choristers have visited South Carolina on a recruitment tour.

It is so important to raise awareness of our choral tradition and, in particular, our remarkable Choir School. Father Wallace tells me that he has already had responses to our several appeals for boy choristers and also from girls who wish to be part of the girl chorister course later this year.

After several weeks of the daily round of services we now turn towards Lent and Holy Week. Our music is not just offered to the glory of God, it engages with the liturgical action in such a way as to help us participate in the liturgy. This may seem a contradiction for those who are used to church worship where the congregation joins in most of the singing with the choir, but the Anglican choral tradition brings together words, music, and symbolic action in such a way as to speak to people on different levels.

As we journey together through Lent, and Holy Week in particular, we can enter more deeply into the mystery of our faith. Elsewhere in this *Chronicle* I share a poem written by a webcast listener that says something about our shared experience bringing us closer to God and each other.



A celebration of the stained glass

On February 26, the Sunday next before Lent, we will give thanks for the completion of the stained glass restoration project. This project has taken many, many years to complete. As you know, prudent management of funds meant that the project came in well under budget and we were able to complete all the works required by the Landmarks Commission,



complete all stone repairs, and even clean the exterior of the building. I must pay tribute to all those who had the vision to see this project through and, in particular, Bill Wright, Julie Sloan, Barbara Pettus, and Angel Estrada.

I invite you to come and hear about the project on the afternoon of February 26. We begin with an illustrated talk and then give thanks in a Festal Evensong at which our preacher will be Fr. Andrew Mead, *Rector Emeritus*, who presided over much of this project while he was Rector.

2:45pm. Introductions by the Rector and Bill Wright followed by an **illustrated talk** by Julie Sloan, stained glass consultant.

3:45pm Organ preludes.

4:00pm Festal Evensong with the rededication of the stained glass; preacher, Father Andrew Mead.

Changes in the Usher Corps

After 20 years faithful service as Head Usher, Michael Charles is retiring. Leading the Usher corps is no easy task – our ushers not only welcome people and ensure they have everything they need, they also need to cope with medical issues, tourists who want to take pictures rather than worship with us, and, working with our security team, deal with safety, difficult



people, emergencies and the potential evacuation of the building; in addition they marshal the congregation for the reception of Holy Communion and they also help with Sunday coffee hour. What some of you may not know is that they not only welcome people for the Sunday services but also the weekday sung services too. The wardens and I are extremely grateful to Michael for his dedication to this role and his good humor. Before he took on the role, his husband Michael Margolin was head usher, so it really has been ‘in the family’.



I am very pleased to announce that our new Head Usher is to be Timothy Higdon. Timothy has been ushering since his arrival in our parish and his former role in the US Army has given him an attention to detail and the ability to work well with our security teams. His strong faith and his hope to enlarge the usher corps and make it more diverse, with the chance for people to offer their services on a rota basis rather than every week, will help us hugely. We are already talking about training and growing the corps. If you are interested in any of this, please have a word with me or with Timothy.

The transition from Michael to Timothy has been seamless and it has not gone unnoticed that there is even continuity in the sporting of a fine white beard!

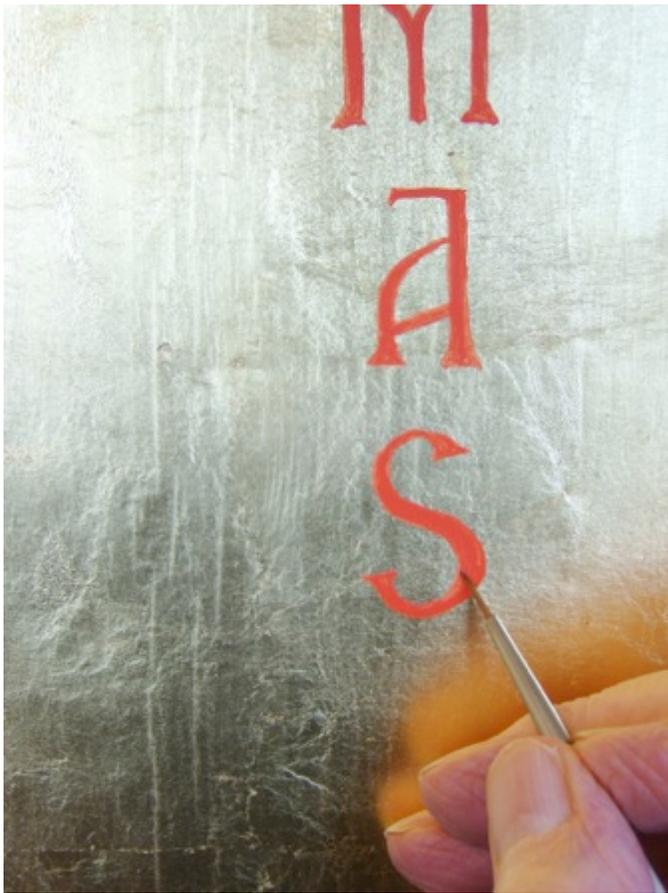
Timothy has written this pen picture:

Timothy Higdon has 30 years of leadership and management experience in nonprofits, military and the private sector. Timothy joined the Episcopal Church in 2005 and has served

the Church in many capacities including as an Interim Vice President of External Affairs for Episcopal Relief and Development, Senior Warden and vestryman of Grace Church in Newark, NJ and as a volunteer in many capacities at the Church of St Mary the Virgin. Timothy joined St Thomas Church 5th Avenue two years ago and has been active in the usher corps.

Timothy is a former Army Major who served eighteen years in the US Army Corps of Engineers. He holds degrees from Indiana University (B.S.) and New York University (M.P.A.).

The icon is written...



The icon of Saint Thomas, which I mentioned in my last Chronicle which is a gift from Exeter Cathedral parishioners, has been completed sooner than anticipated. The iconographer has been praying and fasting as he painted the icon and he added parts of the inscriptions on the feast day of Saint Thomas (December 21) and final letters on Christmas Day. It is now drying and will arrive in the USA in the summer ready for a 'hallowing' at our Patronal Feast in September. Soon, there will be a dedicated web page, which will have information on how an icon is 'written' and lots of photographs.

The ordination of Michael Horvath

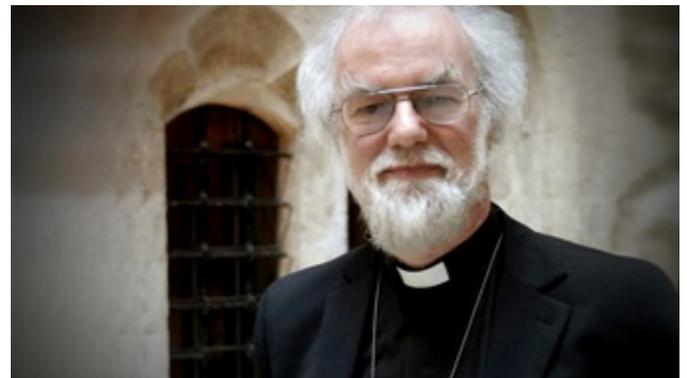
Our Wisdom Year Seminarian, Michael, is to be ordained a deacon on **Saturday, March 4** at the Cathedral of St John the Divine at **10:30am**. A number of parishioners have said that they wish to attend and Fr Spurlock and I will also be there. I am going to ask the Cathedral if we can sit as a group so please let [Amy Cheresnowski](#) know if you want to attend; over 20 of us are going already.

Lent and Holy Week

Handy postcards will be available soon with all the details for our Lent services and our celebration of Holy Week.

This year's Sunday 4pm evensong sermon series is entitled **"Praying with holy men and women"** and the resident clergy will explore the spirituality of *Polycarp, Thérèse of Lisieux, Henri Nouwen, Augustine of Hippo, and Michael Ramsey*.

Confessions will be heard on **Ash Wednesday** from 11am – 12pm and 3:15-5:15pm, and on the following **Saturdays** from 11am-12pm: March 11, 18, 25 and April 1, 8. On **Good Friday**, April 14, a priest will be available from 10:30-11:30am, 3:00-5:00 pm and at the conclusion of the 5:30pm liturgy.



In **Holy Week** we will welcome **Archbishop Rowan Williams** who will give addresses and preach each day through Good Friday. Please mark your calendars now. He will preach on **Palm Sunday at 11am**, and give an address after a short *Solemn Mass* on **Monday and Tuesday**, and before the office of *Tenebrae* on **Wednesday**. He will preach at the **Maundy Thursday** and **Good Friday** liturgies. All those services begin at 5:30pm. His theme is **'Transforming Power: the Cross of Christ and the Kingdoms of the World'**

Those of you who belong to the Theology email group will also be excited to learn from Fr Daniels that in March the Sunday class begins a study of Rowan Williams' recent book *The Tragic Imagination* during March.

Archbishop Rowan is also a poet as well as an internationally renowned theologian; he has a comforting and pastoral manner of preaching and teaching that many people can relate to.

*Under the dark trees, there he stands, there he stands;
shall he not draw my eyes?
I thought I knew a little
how he compels, beyond all things, but now
he stands there in the shadows. It will be Oh, such a daybreak,
such bright morning,
when I shall wake to see him
as he is.*

The High Altar candlesticks in memory of Father Andrew...

...will be removed from the altar during Lent; they will return at Easter. I am delighted that due to the generosity of three parishioners, the Colliers, who have carved the new organ case, have made some new simple wooden candlesticks. These will match the existing woodwork of the choir and sanctuary and we will be able to use them for requiems, memorials and funerals.

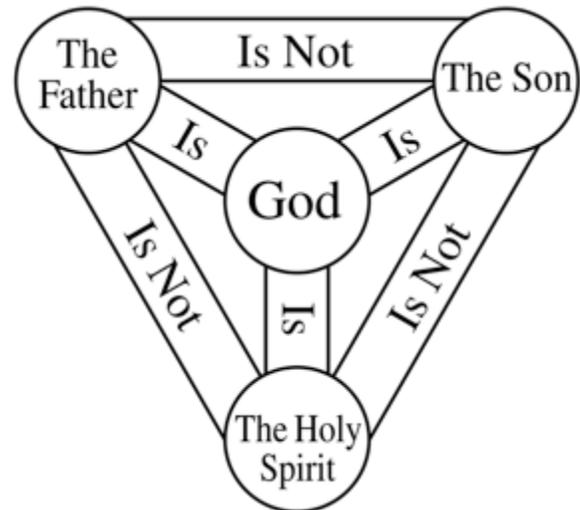
I am also very grateful to two other parishioners who are funding the creation of a new green altar frontal and set of vestments for use in the summer months, and the replacement of the very worn red frontal.

Occasionally I am asked if there are other things that the church needs that could be bought in memory or as a particular thanksgiving. Andrew Kimsey, our Head Verger, Ann Kaplan and I will compile a list which will be available should any others wish to give something beautiful or repair something in the church.

The Rector's Christian Doctrine Class and a change of date.

Because of complications with Alison's and my immigration status, and the very long wait time we are experiencing in the green card process, we find it necessary to attend interviews at the US Embassy in

London when we travel to attend our daughter's wedding in May. The immigration lawyers have advised us of the need to allow enough time for new visas to be issued and our passports returned, otherwise we will not be allowed back in the country! This means that I will have to be absent for two Sundays in May and we will have to postpone the Bishop's visitation to the fall. Since our senior boy choristers will be leaving us in June I will make alternative arrangements for confirmation and receptions and will advise you in due course.



I was recently sent this lovely poem by Celeste Phillips, a member of our web congregation, in response to the idea of the doctrine class being made up of pilgrims *on the Way*. I asked her if I could share it with you all:

Confirmation Class

Oh, what a motley crew were we,
in search of the Holy Trinity -
Bankers, teachers, bureaucrats, housewives, doctors,
diplomats.
Down the Ancient Way we came,
Led by angels yet unnamed,
our pilgrim longings all the same.
From Rome and Jung and Aldersgate,
Our paths converged, our common fate
To meet in that Great Liturgy, which moved our
souls to long to be
Among the saints of Canterbury.

Thank you, Celeste.

Organ installation

You will have noticed the large steel work that is emerging from the south organ chamber. The Colliers have almost completed the woodwork for the new case and Dobsons will begin the installation on May 3. After Holy Week, scaffolding will be erected on both sides of the choir to be ready for the installation, which will take approximately five months. Because of the huge number of parts and pipes, the organ builders will require a dedicated workspace and secure storage area. We have agreed that the back half of the Chantry Chapel will be given over to the organ builders plus that part of the narthex near the 53rd Street entrance. This will allow the installation to have minimal impact on the main part of the nave. There will still be room for up to 60 people in the Chantry even with this arrangement.

I know that we have lived with scaffolding for the past two years, and that we have only just completed the window project, but we are now in the latter stages of this final part of our major capital projects. It will be exciting to see the new case appear and there will be heightened expectation as we start to hear the organ, quite literally, being given **voice** in the latter part of the year and in the spring.

During the installation itself we shall provide interpretive materials in the narthex and the church so that visitors and parishioners can engage with this exciting project.

Because of the workspace and storage area, we will need to re-locate the statue of our Lady of Fifth Avenue. We will move her into the back of the nave where there is currently a large icon of the Blessed Virgin. It has been pointed out by a number of people that, in her new location, she will present the Christ child to all our visitors as they enter so this will help offset the disruption caused by the installation of this great new instrument.

Mr Hyde, the Headmaster and I have begun discussions on how we can celebrate a **'Year of Music'** from September 2018 to the summer of 2019. At the beginning of that 'year' we shall dedicate our new organ and in 2019 we shall celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of our choir school. This will be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our great choral foundation and its choir school.

Spring Lecture

'Condemned into Redemption: Understanding the Crucifixion.'

On Wednesday, March 8, 2017, at 6:30pm
The Rev. Fleming Rutledge is the speaker for the Spring Theology Lecture this year. Her most recent book, *Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ*, has been highly praised across the ecumenical spectrum, garnering praise from many quarters.



I hope that many of us will make the effort to attend this lecture, which will be a good preparation for Holy Week.

An invitation to join volunteers from Trinity Church, Wall Street

Trinity Church Wall Street engages people in mission with partners in Panama, Burundi, Haiti, New Orleans, and right here in New York City. In 2017 Trinity invites St. Thomas' parishioners to join in this ministry. On Sunday, February 19, during Coffee Hour, a group of parishioners heard from Willem Brans and Maggy Laraque, Trinity's Program Manager for Mission and Service Engagement Trips.

Here are the 2017 trip dates and locations:

New Orleans: March 9-12

Haiti: April 26-May 1 (Space is available)

Panama: June 21-26

New York City – Hour Children: July 14 – August 11 (Fridays only)

Burundi: Date TBA –possibly in October

The Sistine Chapel Choir



Recently Maestro Massimo Pallombella, the Director of the Sistine Chapel Choir, visited us with his colleagues. The choir is touring the United States in the Fall and Mr. Hyde and I are delighted that they will be with us at Saint Thomas Church on **Sunday, September 17** to sing evensong with our own choir; we will be joined by friends from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese. Please mark your calendars for this important ecumenical event.

In preparation for this I am also delighted to tell you that **Archbishop Sir David Moxon**, the Director of the Anglican Center in Rome, will be our preacher on Sunday, April 30. It is 50 years since the signing of the Common Declaration between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey, when the XI Rector of Saint Thomas Church, Father John Andrew, was the chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Although there are still obstacles to full reunion, nevertheless, more work is being done together now than ever before and Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin recently signed a new declaration committing ourselves to work together in spite of our differences.

The John Scott Memorial Scholarship

If you have not heard, I am delighted to inform you that we have reached our target of \$500,000 in support of *The John Scott Memorial Scholarship*.

The story of our success began well over a year ago when my dream of having Sir Simon Rattle conduct the last of the yearlong series of concerts in honor of John Scott's memory became a reality.

Following a number of significant initial gifts, many of our Friends of Music, pledging parishioners, alumni, choir school parents and faculty and music

lovers from around the world have made contributions to the scholarship. Then, in January, with the realization that we were within sight of our goal, one of our founding contributors - *Ron Thomas* - **doubled** his gift from the '*William C. Stubing Trust*', which brought us to the finish line.

Seniors' Lunch



The seniors had a splendid Valentine's Day lunch in February and were entertained by pianist Mark York. He was most recently seen as Jim Dale's sidekick and onstage pianist in *Just Jim Dale* in New York at the Roundabout Theatre and in London at The Vaudeville Theatre. Mark is currently working as musical coordinator for Jerry Herman on the 2017 revival of *Hello, Dolly!* starring Bette Midler. We were delighted to have him with us and everyone enjoyed singing songs from Broadway.

Finally,

In December I also celebrated the 30th anniversary of my ordination as a priest and wish to thank all of you who sent me good wishes.

Affectionately,

your priest,

www.saintthomaschurch.org