

# Saint Thomas Church



## The Rector's Chronicle *Advent 2017*

My dear friends,

The **Thanksgiving Day** celebration in church was very special and over 400 people attended mass. I continue to be grateful to Robbie Giannetta and his colleagues who not only keep a watchful eye on our church and its community, but also ensure that parishioners can gain access to the church when there are parades in the city.

Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue are aglow with Christmas Cheer and the Rockefeller Christmas Tree has been lighted. Christmas seems to be around the corner and, of course, it does seem a little more rushed this year. When Christmas Day falls on a Monday, it means that we only have three weeks in the Advent Season because the Fourth Sunday of Advent becomes Christmas Eve. This puts a great deal of pressure on the choir and the staff but I am pleased that we are able to have all our special carol services in addition to the **Christmas Liturgies**. However, on December 24, there will be no 8am or 9am masses. On December 31 (New Year's Eve) there will be no 4pm Choral Evensong. Do pick up the handy postcard available in the narthex or Parish House.

**Epiphany** is a wonderful feast and falls on a Saturday in 2018 so we will keep it on Sunday, January 7, with the gentlemen of the choir singing some beautiful music. The boys return the next day and we will have our Epiphany Processions on Sunday, January 14 at 11am and 4pm.

Talking of Processions...

## The Season of Advent

On Sunday, December 3, we had two Advent Processions. Beginning in the darkness, the Choir sang the traditional Mattins Responsory adapted to

music by Palestrina but hidden from view in the Great Staircase.



Although the liturgical color for Advent and Lent is purple, Advent has a very different character. It is a season of preparation but not penitential in the same way as Lent; for that reason you will notice that the word Alleluia is used and sung frequently in hymns. It is a wonderful season that has two major themes: the first half of Advent is concerned with the Second Coming of Christ when he will come as judge and make all things new. This first theme is explored through apocalyptic scripture readings and we hear some of the challenging prophecies of John the Baptist. The season then shifts gear, as it were, as we move closer to the celebration of the Nativity of Christ and we celebrate his birth in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago and we think about the birth of John the Baptist and the Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This means that there are two kind of Advent hymns that we sing in Church – those that tell of the Second Coming such as, *Lo, he comes with clouds descending* or *Hark! The glad sound* and those that tell of the first coming of Jesus in Bethlehem, such as *On Jordan's bank* or *Redeemer of the nations, come*.

The last days of Advent are marked with special *antiphons* used before and after the *Magnificat*, the canticle of Mary, used at evening prayer and sung by

the choir at Evensong. They are affectionately known as ‘The Great O’s’ because each antiphon starts with a vocative – **O** Sapientia (O Wisdom), **O** Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse) etc. Each antiphon then contains a plea to the Lord, **Come!** They are the inspiration for that most famous of Advent hymns *O come, O come, Emmanuel* which we sang on Advent Sunday at 11am and 4pm and will sing again on the Fourth Sunday of Advent at 11am.

The two themes of Advent are summed up in the words embroidered on the altar frontal: *Adveniat Regnum Tuum*, which means ‘thy kingdom come.’

We welcomed a good friend of our parish and regular worshipper when she is not acting as Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Long Island, Bishop Geralyn Wolf. Bishop Geralyn preached at the 11am and 4pm Advent Processions. Geralyn was XII Bishop of Rhode Island until her retirement in 2012. She thanked the congregation for providing New York with an oasis of peace and calm in this bustling metropolis.



Advent comes as the days become shorter and the nights longer. Alongside the two biblical themes we also experience the contrast of light and darkness; we

light candles on the Advent wreath and many anthems tell of the light breaking forth in the darkness. That particular theme will culminate at Midnight Mass when we will hear the Gospel of the Shepherds watching over their flocks by night and a vision of the glory of the Lord.

## Light a candle in the darkness

We are often asked by visitors and parishioners if it possible to **light a candle** in Saint Thomas Church as a symbol of prayer. Many years ago, it was possible to light a candle at the Shrine of our Lady of Fifth



Avenue, but the arrangement was not safe and had to be removed.

Since then, safer ways of lighting candles have been developed and I am delighted that Tom and Esther Kamm have provided some stands for our church so that people can light a candle in prayer. They will be in Church during Advent, an appropriate time of the Church’s year to introduce this ancient and now popular practice across all the churches, both protestant and catholic.

Sometimes we may be lost for words – when we are sad, or troubled, or grieving - and a symbolic action can aid us in our prayer. Lighting a candle is a symbol of that prayer and a reminder to others who come into the church that prayers have been offered. Our beautiful church is an oasis of prayer and stillness in this great but noisy and frenetic city.

A candle is also a ‘sacramental’ – an outward sign of something hidden; it burns brightly but, in so doing, it consumes itself! Our lives are offered, like our prayer, to God just as he offered his Son, the Light of the World, who died to save us all.

If you are interested, the system we have chosen is very simple and the candles burn for about two hours before they extinguish themselves – it is the safest system around but also very beautiful with the small candles lit in colored glasses.

## Burns Night

On Thursday, January 25, we will celebrate all things Scottish and honor the memory of the Scottish Bard *Robert Burns* with a Parish **Dinner Dance** with a difference! Scottish themed food, a Haggis, bagpipes, and a band with caller to teach us Scottish Country Dancing.

We are grateful to Scott Black Johnston, the senior pastor of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, for allowing us to use their beautiful *Bonnell Hall* with its fine dance floor. Tickets are priced at \$60 to include food, drink, and the band. Alternatively, you can book a whole table of eight for \$450. See the website for further details.

## Angel Tree

I am delighted to inform you that all the Tags from our Angel Tree were taken by the end of coffee hour on Advent Sunday and \$2200 raised in donations to purchase gifts. This year we are helping children who stay with their mothers at one of the Safe Horizon Shelters for victims of domestic violence as well as children from Saint Margaret's Episcopal Church in the Bronx.



If you took a tag, please remember to bring the gift you choose, unwrapped, to the parish house by Sunday, December 17 with that tag so we can identify it. The Young Adults Group will, once again, help to wrap the gifts on December 19 between 12pm and 7pm.

(Right) *Fr Sean Wallace at the St Francis Day Blessing of the animals at the Church of the Resurrection*

## Young Adults Christmas Party

The Young Adults Christmas Party will be held at the Rectory on Sunday, December 17, at 7 p.m. If interested in attending, please email [youngadults@SaintThomasChurch.org](mailto:youngadults@SaintThomasChurch.org) or call April Chapman at 212.757.7013.

## Sunday School News

Mother Alison Turner has volunteered to continue coordinating the Sunday School until the summer of 2018, and will present a plan to the Vestry for its future development. I am very pleased that we have a growing number of Sunday School Volunteers. If you have a teaching background and are interested, please contact Mother Turner at [ATurner@SaintThoamsChurch.org](mailto:ATurner@SaintThoamsChurch.org). Naturally, volunteers will have all the usual safeguarding checks, if it is agreed that they are suitable to work with Sunday School and Youth ministry.

The Annual **Christmas Pageant** will be held on Sunday, December 17 at 1pm at which members of the Sunday School will present a traditional nativity Play. Then, on Thursday, December 21 at 5:30pm, we will have our **Crèche Service**. This short service is designed for children and young families. Children from our Sunday School and the Boy Choristers will take an active part.

## News about our Chantry Priests

Saint Thomas Church offers, on average, 19 masses a week. For some time now, we have not been at our usual complement of four full time priests, and we have relied heavily on the ministry of our honorary assisting priests, affectionately known by the medieval title of *Chantry Priests*. Recently, **Father Sean Wallace**,



who has been the mainstay of our group of assisting priests for over 10 years, accepted the post of Interim rector at a church in the Diocese of Long Island. With his move away from Manhattan we have said a fond farewell. Many of you have benefited from his faithful and prayerful ministry; I am so grateful for his commitment to Saint Thomas Church over these past years.

Just as I was worrying about how we would cover the weekday masses, two priests have offered to help us in the short term; **Father Nathan Ritter**, who used to regularly celebrate here some time ago, and **Mother Alison Turner** have both volunteered to assist. My full-time priestly colleagues and the Wardens are very grateful to them both.

## Holy Week 2018

Following the successful visit of Rowan Williams this year, I am pleased to give you advance notice of our Holy Week preachers for 2018.



The 'Three Hours' Devotion on Good Friday (12noon-3pm) will be led by our good friend, **The Rev. Fleming Rutledge** who will give seven addresses on the Last Words from the Cross. Fleming's most recent award-winning book *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* has been received to critical acclaim and she has also written a book on the Seven Last Words from the Cross. Fleming gave a splendid lecture here earlier in the year; she occasionally worships with us and it will be an honor to have her grace the pulpit of Saint Thomas Church as she continues to inspire and nurture preachers after 21 years in parish ministry herself. Some of her books are available in our bookshop.

The preacher for the Triduum Services at 5:30pm (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil) and the Easter Day Mass at 8am will be **Father Mark McIntosh**, Professor of Spirituality at Loyola University, Chicago, and formerly Canon Theologian for Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold.



Professor McIntosh is renowned for his beautiful and sensitive preaching; he last preached at Saint Thomas Church at my Institution in October 2014. I had the privilege of studying with Mark in Oxford when we were both seminarians at St Stephen's House in the early 1980's. Mark was then attached to Saint Thomas Church when he was studying at the General Theological Seminary during the Rectorship of Father John Andrew, and he has fond memories of our parish. Prior to taking up the post at Loyola University, he was a Canon professor of Theology at Durham University, in the United Kingdom. Mark tells me that he thinks he might be the only non-Roman Catholic who shares in the formation of Jesuits.

## Doctrine Class

If you are new to Saint Thomas Church, or wish to be baptized and/or confirmed, or received from another Church into the Episcopal Church, then this class is designed for you.

A systematic treatment of the essentials of the Christian faith, as received through the Catholic heritage of Anglicanism within the Episcopal Church, the class meets on Tuesdays at 6:30pm for one hour from January to May.

In 2018, I am delighted that David Daniel, our Evangelism Coordinator, will assist me during this course. I notice that the two previous Rectors were awarded honorary degrees of *Doctor of Divinity* by Nashotah House. I was asked by someone, recently,

if I also had a 'D.D.' as that degree is known. "Yes!" I said, "My D.D. is David Daniel!" I have asked David if he will share how our church building and its traditions relate to the topic being taught each week.

**The Doctrine Class is open to all** and you do not have to be looking for baptism or membership to attend. It would be good if a few regular parishioners made a commitment to attend and got to know some of our new folk in order to support them on their journey of faith.

For more details or to register, please contact David at [welcome@SaintThomasChurch.org](mailto:welcome@SaintThomasChurch.org).

The topics and dates are as follows:

**Jan 09:**

**God the Father:** Creation, the fall, and what it means to be "made in God's image."

**Jan 16:**

**God the Son:** Incarnation, atonement, and glory.

**Jan 23:**

**God the Holy Spirit:** Being "fully alive" with the gifts of the Spirit.

**Jan 30:**

**The Trinity:** The Church Community reflects our belief in God as "Three in One."

**Feb 6:**

**The Holy Bible:** "The Word of the Lord."

**Feb13:**

**'The Christian Exodus':** An introduction to Lent and Holy Week.

*Ash Wednesday is February 14 – Lent begins*

**Feb 20:**

**The History of the Church 1:** From house church to established religion.

**Feb 27:**

**The History of the Church 2:** Reformation, Anglicanism, and the Oxford Movement.

**Mar 6:**

**An Introduction to the Sacramental Life of the Church:** Baptism and Confirmation.

**Mar 13:**

**"They recognized him in the breaking of the bread":** The Eucharist at the heart of our common life.

**Mar 20:**

**When things go wrong:** Confession and healing.

*Holy Week is March 25-April 1*

**Apr 10:**

**Relationships:** Marriage, commitment, and religious communities.

**Apr 17:**

**Mission and Ministry:** Vocation, Ordination, and the mission of the Church.

**Apr 24:**

**Hope:** Death, eternal life, Mary and the Communion of Saints.

**May 1:**

**Prayer:** From silence to symbolic action.

**May 8:**

**Rehearsal** for those who are to be received or confirmed.

*The Confirmation and Reception Service will be held on Sunday, May 13 at 11am.*

## Finally



Alison and I wish all of you a very **Happy Christmas** and pray that the New Year will bring joy and peace to our local community and to our world. If you are in the city over Christmas, we look forward to seeing you in church; if you are away, then we will pray for your safe journeys and look forward to seeing you at Epiphany.

Affectionately,

Carl

Your priest and pastor.

*Picture above – 'The Adoration of the Magi' from the Stairwell leading to the Gallery.*

WINTER  
2017

# CONCERTS *at* SAINT THOMAS

BENJAMIN BRITTEN  
**A CEREMONY  
OF CAROLS**

DECEMBER 14, 2017  
THURSDAY at 5:30 pm

The Boys of the Saint Thomas Choir  
with

BRIDGET KIBBEY, *harp*

DANIEL HYDE, *conductor*

TICKET INFORMATION

[concerts@saintthomaschurch.org](mailto:concerts@saintthomaschurch.org)

(212) 664-9360

Music Office at One West 53rd Street

[www.saintthomaschurch.org](http://www.saintthomaschurch.org)

“...the music is tremulous and  
surprisingly complex...”