

Saint Thomas Church



The Rector's Chronicle

Lent 2016

My dear friends,

In a recent sermon, Father Austin reminded us that Lent is an old English word for *spring*. It is a lovely coincidence that, in many countries of the northern hemisphere, Lent and spring coincide. Even though we have had very changeable weather recently with a -23 degree wind-chill followed only a week later by temperatures in the mid 60's, nevertheless I see many signs of new life as I walk to church or walk Bertie in Central Park; spring bulbs are already growing in spite of the cold and new birds seem to be arriving. The approach of spring has normally been associated with spring-cleaning at home and throwing away unwanted things. In the church community, the practice of making one's confession is, quite simply, that - getting rid of unwanted things.

Sometimes, when we are sorting things for a clear-out we come across items that cause painful memories; again, confession is a way of dealing with those kinds of memories. Instead of hiding them away so they cannot be seen, we bring them into the light and, accompanied by a priest, sort them out once and for all. I have always found hearing confessions deeply moving and humbling. Of course, all your priests make their confession themselves but I still love the old way of ending the sacrament of Reconciliation when the priest says to the penitent, now forgiven, "*Go in peace, the Lord has put away your sins, and pray for me, a sinner too.*" - all of us are in need of God's grace. In addition to making an appointment, you can come to the Resurrection Chapel any Saturday in Lent from 11am – 12pm or on Good Friday from 3:30-4:30pm and sit or kneel in a quite and private space.

Holy Week

One of the glories of worship at Saint Thomas Church is the very full observance of Holy Week that

we can all enjoy here; there really is a sense of being on a journey and it makes Lent all the more meaningful. I am often asked how I cope with all the services and I smile to myself because, when I worked in an English Cathedral we had even more services including the Chrism Mass with the renewal of ministerial vows and the blessing of three oils, a Diocesan baptisms and confirmations at the Easter Vigil, and the Old Choristers' Day on Easter Monday with two further solemn choral services. As Canon Precentor I had a lot of organizing to do so, here, for the first time for many years, I am able to enter fully into the week and to pray my way through it.



Last year I preached the whole of Holy Week; this year, I have asked **Father Austin** to preach at the great liturgies of the Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday at 5:30pm). In addition, I am delighted that **The Very Rev'd Andrew McGowan**, Dean and President of Berkeley School of Divinity at Yale, will preach the Three-hours devotion at 12pm on Good Friday.

Please do note the times of the Holy Week services this year and journey with us through the week. At the very least, I hope that parishioners will attend on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday at 5:30pm, and one of the Easter masses on Easter Day and/or the Easter Vigil.

Professor Daniel Hyde



Photo Hugh Warwick

The big news of early 2016 was, of course, the announcement of the call of the new Organist and Director of Music. I want to pay tribute to the hard work of the Search Committee and, in particular, the chairmanship of Kenneth Koen. The process was thorough, transparent and fair and we had applicants from all around the world. After a full week of interviews with four highly talented candidates who directed the choir and played the organs, Dan emerged as the top choice. He comes to us from Magdalen College, Oxford, where he holds the ancient title *Informator Choristarum*. He is also Associate Professor in the Faculty of Music. Already, internationally renowned for his skill as a choral director and organist, we are delighted that he has accepted the call.

The choir of Magdalen College, Oxford, was founded in 1480 and they still sing six services per week. The Mattins and Evensong responses by Bernard Rose, one of Dan's predecessors, are based on the distinctive clock chime of Magdalen's elegant tower. Whilst rehearsing the choir during the interview week, Dan was suddenly thrown when he heard our own bells strike the same tune!

You can find out more about Daniel on our website.

Taylor & Boody Organ

You may have noticed that, over the past few weeks, the organ builders have been working on the organ in the gallery. Named the *Loening-Hancock Organ*, it is an exceptional baroque-style instrument built in the great Northern European tradition of the 17th and 18th centuries and dedicated in 1996. However, you may not have known that the organ was not completed to its full specifications, which included a third manual division and additional stops. With the removal of the great organ in the summer in preparation for the installation of the Miller-Scott Organ, and with the knowledge that it would be two years before that organ was built, we obtained a quotation from the organ builders, Taylor & Boody of Virginia, to complete the instrument according to its original design. Once we discovered that there was talk of retirement of the original organ builders this seemed an opportune moment. At the same time, the Church sold Father Andrew's apartment, which we owned and we were able to use some of the proceeds to pay for the work. Ben Sheen and Stephen Buzard inaugurated the newly completed organ on **Saturday, March 5 at 2pm** when they began a concert series of the complete organ works of J. S. Bach.

New York premiere

On Thursday, March 18. David Hill will direct the choir in the New York Premiere of James MacMillan's **'Seven last words from the cross'**. This is a powerful and evocative piece. Together with music from the renaissance composer John Taverner, and Sir John Tavener who died in 2013, this promises to be a spectacular evening. Remember that you can now choose your seats online and you can print out your own ticket or even bring the ticket on your mobile device for scanning at the door.



detail of Leonard Brumer (Delft 1596-1674) 'The Descent from the Cross' which hangs in the Rectory, a gift of Christian Keesee.

Le Chemin de la Croix

Originally a set of improvisations played during a reading of Paul Claudel's verse meditations on the fourteen Stations of the Cross, *Le Chemin de la Croix* became one of Marcel Dupré's favorite pieces. He played it every year during Lent at Saint-Sulpice in Paris. Benjamin Sheen will perform this on **Monday, March 21 at 6:30pm** and Betsy Ashton will read the poems between each musical meditation.

German Baroque Music for Passiontide

Jolle Greenleaf and Molly Quinn of the New York City-based early music ensemble *TENET* join forces with the viol quartet *Parthenia* and Benjamin Sheen and Stephen Buzard for a beautiful hour of musical meditation on **Tuesday, March 22, at 6:30pm**.

Easter Basket Drive

We are beginning to prepare Easter baskets and new clothing for children in need, including children staying with their mothers at a shelter for victims of domestic abuse. If you would like to contribute to this effort, please bring wrapped Easter candy, especially chocolate bunnies and foil covered chocolate eggs, to the Parish House by March 14. To make a clothing donation, please contact Linda Morfi at lmorfi@SaintThomasChurch.org, or speak to Susan Clearwater for specific sizes and items needed. You may also make a check out to the church earmarked "Easter Baskets" and place it in the offering plate.

Every Member Canvass

At the time of writing, 29% of existing pledgers have increased their 2016 pledge by 10% or more; thank you to all of you who have pledged so far. The EMC Committee and I are reaching out to those of you who pledged for 2015 but have not yet pledged for 2016, and encourage you to do so; as I have said before, EMC could easily stand for *Every member counts*. None of us can take for granted our beautiful church, fellowship, teaching, liturgy and music. We have been living beyond our means for many years and we need to find a way to balance our budget. If you have not yet pledged, your pledge can make a difference and prevent us from dipping into our invested funds more than is wise. As Lent moves to Holy Week, please review your level of giving; several people have already adjusted their pledge this Lent.

Father Andrew Memorial Candlesticks



Photo Richard Baird: Pouring the molten bronze into the mold; note the space-suit-like protective clothing!

The candlesticks in memory of Father John Andrew now have been completed by specialists in the art of casting architectural and ornamental metal objects. Historical Arts and Casting Inc. is a family business which began 43 years ago with the restoration of the ZCMI Department Store's cast-iron façade in Salt Lake City. This was one of the first cast-iron restorations in the country. Three brothers, David, Richard and Robert, worked with their father, Stephen Baird, a restoration architect. Recommended to Saint Thomas Church by Dennis Collier Jr, the master carpenter working on the new Miller-Scott organ case, the Baird family has worked on this project since Christmas. The color of the new candlesticks has been selected carefully to match the existing 100-year-old pair. You can see amazing images of their fine work on the website.

The Vestry is very grateful to a number of parishioners and friends of Father Andrew, including Bishop John O'Hara who was with Father Andrew the night he collapsed, for their generosity in funding this small project with personal gifts so that it was **no cost to the Church**.

Father Andrew adorned Saint Thomas Church with beautiful furnishings and enhanced the glories of its liturgy and music for which it is still renowned. The candlesticks will, therefore, be a fitting memorial to him and sit alongside the exquisite textiles he had commissioned during his time as XI Rector. You will be able to inspect the candlesticks before Holy Week. They will be first used at the Easter Vigil and dedicated on Easter Day at 11am.

Sunday School and families with children new to Saint Thomas Church

Save these dates: **Saturday, April 23** for a gathering at the Rectory with your babies and children, and **Sunday, June 5** for a picnic in Central Park. Further details will be available from Sarah Cornwell in due course or contact me via my secretary. Speaking of my secretary...

Douglas Robbe

After 20 years working as the Rector's secretary, Douglas has announced that he intends to retire this summer after his 70th birthday. Douglas has been a rock for me during my first year and a half and I will always be grateful for his loyalty, good humor and wise counsel. We will find a way to say farewell to him later in the year but I am glad that he will remain



a parishioner. Douglas writes:

"When Fr. Mead told me he was retiring I told him that I wanted to remain to be able to provide a period of transition for the new Rector and help whoever was called to settle in. It has been two years and I have enjoyed working with Father Turner. However, I am not getting any younger and I feel the time has come to retire. My intention is to divide my time between my cottage on the coast of Maine and New York City. It has been a wonderful time and I have enjoyed being a part of what I like to call 'Team Saint Thomas.'"

A very special concert

I am excited to announce a special **extra concert** at Saint Thomas Church. At the time of John Scott's death I was in touch with a number of his friends and former colleagues. I asked one of them if he would be willing to conduct a concert in John's memory and I am delighted to tell you that he has agreed. **Sir**

Simon Rattle will conduct our choir and the Orchestra of St Luke's in the final memorial concert of the season. The program includes Elgar's *Serenade for Strings* and Vaughan William's exquisite *The Lark Ascending*. Our new Director of Music, Dan Hyde, will have just arrived and so this will also be his inaugural concert at the Church and he will work with Simon Rattle and play the organ. By happy coincidence, Simon Rattle's nephew is a chorister at Magdalen College. This special concert will honor the memory of John Scott and begin a new chapter in the life of music here at Saint Thomas Church. All money raised will go towards a scholarship to support a chorister in need. The evening concert is on **Sunday, September 18**. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to welcome one of the world's leading orchestral conductors to our church. When I talked to Sir Simon after the Matthew Passion performances with the *Berliner Philharmoniker* in New York a year ago, at which our boy choristers sang, he told me that they were the best choristers with whom he had ever worked; praise indeed! Sir Simon has requested that the last piece to be performed in the concert will be the Fauré Requiem.

The great flood!

Speaking of the boy choristers, they have just enjoyed an extra long mid-term break due to a burst sprinkler pipe at the school on Valentine's Day. Despite the valiant efforts of many members of the staff to quell the tide, several rooms (including the gym, rec room and administration offices) were badly flooded and are currently out of commission. Clean-up is underway and restoration will begin shortly; our insurance will cover this. Classrooms, dormitory rooms and the all important dining room and kitchen are intact.

Finally...

The late Father Kenneth Leech once said "*The cross is not a problem to be understood but a mystery into which we enter.*" Here, at Saint Thomas Church, the liturgy, the music, and the symbolic action help us enter into that mystery in Holy Week. By entering into the mystery of the cross, the joy of the resurrection is even more profound. May our journeying together this Holy Week bind us together in love and with a common purpose.

Affectionately,

Father Carl Turner