

Saint Thomas Church



The Rector's Chronicle

September 2016

My dear friends,

I hope that you have all had a lovely summer; Alison and I had a very enjoyable vacation during which we were able to see family, friends, and former colleagues as well as have time for ourselves to rest. I was delighted by the warm welcome I received on my return and in the past few weeks we have had some lovely masses and coffee hours, with some excellent music by the gentlemen of the choir, visiting choirs and an absolutely splendid girls' course. Now we prepare to welcome back our boy choristers, including a number of new probationers, and a new Director of Music. What a feast we have in store this term! Immediately, may I draw to your attention the following dates for your calendars:

September 11 – A celebration of our Patronal Feast to welcome back the choristers: Sunday school resumes.

September 18 – Sunday adult education Classes resume and Sir Simon Rattle conducts a Benefit Concert.

September 25 – First Sunday Evensong at 4pm with a commissioning ceremony for Daniel Hyde.

September 30 – Social: Caribbean Evening – 6:30pm

October 2 – Feast of Dedication and launch of 2017 Annual Appeal (formerly Every Member Canvass)

October 27 – Concert: Haydn's *Creation* – 7:30pm

November 1 – All Saints' Day 5:30pm Solemn Mass

November 2 – All Souls' Day 5:30pm Requiem Mass

New Theology Program

Over the summer, plans have been made for the continuation and development of our adult education program. I am delighted to tell you that **Father Joel Daniels** will be taking on responsibility for this work and this will be an important element of his work as *Associate for Evangelism* for it brings together elements

of mission and formation – moving people 'from the street to the altar' and deepening peoples' faith. He will be working with an **adult education committee** chaired by **Professor Jeremy Waldron**, which began meeting in the summer. Fr Daniels will deliver some of the program himself as he is going the lead the first Sunday 10am course that will resume on **Sunday, September 18**. The class will be a Bible study on the book of Revelation, with the title *The End: Reading Revelation theologically*.



Fr Daniels is more than qualified to lead our program of adult education. At the first meeting of the committee, Professor Waldron talked about how our program at Saint Thomas Church 'raises up' – by which I think he meant that the standard of theological inquiry and teaching is high, but also that such inquiry and teaching *deepens the faith* of individuals and broadens their horizons. I know that Fr Daniels is committed to doing both of these things.

The subjects for smaller 3-4 session **courses** and Fall and Spring **Lectures** are being discussed. I am very pleased that the Deans of the three seminaries with

which we are associated (Berkeley at Yale, the General Theological Seminary, and Nashotah House) are all keen to support our program and the Deans of Berkeley and General have agreed to attend committee meetings or send faculty as support. This kind of networking is important to our future development and there are other institutions and universities that we can work with. A fascinating example of this is a class from the history department of *John Jay College of Criminal Justice* which is coming to Saint Thomas for an afternoon symposium on the Daily Office and will then attend Evensong – we shall have an interesting time discussing the psalms!

The **Rector's Christian Doctrine Class** will commence in January 2017; if you are interested in becoming a member of Saint Thomas Church or being baptized and/or confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church then please think about coming. Meanwhile **Christian Doctrine II**, taught by Fr Daniels, continues – this class is for those who have attended a previous year's Christian Doctrine Class and takes people deeper into the mystery of our faith.

Fr Spurlock's **Bible Study** continues every Friday and the **Young Adults of Saint Thomas** have a number of events happening this term.

Fr Daniels' first book has just been published; the latest in the series *Studies in Episcopal and Anglican Theology* published by Peter Lang. Its title is **Theology, Tragedy, and Suffering in Nature: Toward a Realist Doctrine of Creation**. I hope that we will hear more from Fr Daniels on this subject. The topic is very apposite as it links into the theme of our **Concerts Series** for 2016-17. Last year, Pope Francis published an encyclical on the environment called *Laudato Si' – On care for our common home*. A number of parishioners asked about this theme and the music department have responded by taking creation as the overarching theme of the concerts series.

Professor Waldron is happy to receive thoughts and ideas for future courses, talks and seminars – please email them to him at **AdultEducation@SaintThomasChurch.org**. We cannot, of course, guarantee that any ideas are implemented.

Simon Rattle Conducts

Expectation is high with this special pre-season concert at which, arguably, the world's leading orchestral conductor will direct the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys and the Orchestra of St Luke's. This concert brings to a close the yearlong period of mourning for John Scott but also inaugurates the ministry of his successor, Daniel Hyde, who has now moved to New York from Magdalen College, Oxford. The concert on September 18 is already almost sold out but there are still premium view tickets available.

When I asked Sir Simon if he would be willing to come to Saint Thomas Church to honor John's memory, he offered to come whilst in New York and on his day-off from his engagements at the Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall. This speaks volumes about his respect for John and our choral foundation. In 2014, the choristers performed for Sir Simon with the Berliner Philharmoniker in his performance of the *St Matthew Passion* here in New York; after the performance, Sir Simon told me that the boys were the best he had worked with and hoped that we could collaborate again. To that end, he decided that the Fauré Requiem would be the most appropriate choral piece for this concert.



We have added two quintessential English pieces to honor John – *The Lark Ascending* by R. Vaughan Williams and Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*. The first piece, written for solo violin and strings is

extraordinarily delicate and will be skillfully performed by the orchestra's concertmaster, Krista Bennion Feeney. After Elgar's stirring and sonorous serenade, our newly appointed Director of Music, Daniel Hyde, will perform on the Church's *Loening-Hancock Organ*, playing J.S. Bach's Prelude and Fugue in G Major, BWV 541.

This concert not only honors John and welcomes Daniel, it is also being used to create a scholarship in John Scott's memory to help boys in need attend the Choir School. We are attempting to raise \$500,000 and, as of September 1, we had broken the \$300,000 target. All proceeds after minimal costs will go towards this scholarship. A number of Saint Thomas parishioners and supporters have made significant gifts ranging between \$10,000 and \$25,000. If we could match some of those with just a few more major contributions, we will be almost at our goal.

Daniel Hyde



Over the past few weeks, Daniel has been working hard with the music department getting ready for the return of the choristers on September 11. He will direct the choir for the first time in a service at the 11am mass on September 11. There will be a special **Coffee Hour** after that service – please come to welcome Daniel as he begins his new ministry amongst us.

We will formally commission Mr Hyde for his work as Organist and Director of Music at the first Sunday Choral Evensong of the term, which will be on **Sunday, September 25 at 4pm**. Please mark your calendars and bring friends to evensong so that we can formally inaugurate his ministry amongst us.

Mr Hyde's first organ recital will be on **Sunday, November 6 at 5:15pm**.

Stephen Buzard

On August 28 we bade a fond farewell to **Stephen Buzard** who has been called to be Director of Music of St James' Episcopal Cathedral in Chicago. We have all benefited so much from Stephen's enthusiasm and skill. I am not surprised that he has been headhunted, but he has also 'caught the bug' and so enjoyed being in a leadership position; this move is very natural for him. We will, however, miss him and Lieve who have been very committed members of our congregation.

Benjamin Sheen

With Stephen moving on, and in consultation with Daniel Hyde and the Standing Committee, I have appointed Ben as *Associate Organist* in recognition of his commitment to the Church and his considerable skill. This role, more senior than his previous, befits his status and his accomplishments thus far. For the time being we will work with two organists, bringing in a third only when necessary. Mr Hyde will advise me, and the Standing Committee, of the kind of 'third post' needed in due course.

Wisdom Year Seminarian



I am very pleased that **Michael Horvath**, a seminarian in his senior year at The General Theological Seminary here in New York, is to be attached to us for a year. Michael is a candidate for the priesthood from the Diocese of New York; a former lawyer, he brings a number of gifts and skills to the parish as well as an enthusiasm to be fully involved. His normal working days will be Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday. He will have liturgical duties

in the sanctuary and you will sometimes see him acting as Subdeacon. He will be preaching, assisting the clergy with pastoral care, teaching, and will be involved in some administrative work. Because of his skills he will also work with the Strategic Planning Core Group. He has already made an impression on the Young Adults of Saint Thomas Group and we look forward to his involvement in our parish. You can help Michael with his formation by getting to know him and there is no better way than by offering him hospitality and welcome. We are blessed in having a small restricted endowment fund to assist seminarians at GTS – this fund last helped Father Daniels in his formation – so this placement is of little financial cost to the parish but we will gain much from it.

Christmas *and* Easter in September?

Our patron is the apostle Saint Thomas and his appearance in the Gospels and the very particular occasions we read about him are inspiring to this day. Above the High Altar is a beautiful sculptural representation of Thomas in the Upper Room with Jesus and the other disciples – now that it is lit for the first time, one can see the intensity of this scene and Thomas' reaction to meeting the Risen Lord; he is falling to his knees and exclaiming the famous words 'My Lord and my God!' (see John 20:19-29).

Unfortunately, the traditional feast day of our Patron is December 21 and, like many churches dedicated to Saint Thomas it is almost impossible to have a full celebration of his feast day, with appropriate parish activities, due to the close proximity of Christmas and, in this church, the very busy musical program at that time of year. Fortunately, for many churches dedicated to Saint Thomas throughout the world, he also has an alternative feast day but, alas, this does not help us here in the US and at Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue – for it is July 3! The choristers have left for the year and it is the day before Independence Day.

Over the past few years we have attempted to celebrate our patron by merging his feast with our Feast of Dedication in October. However, this is also the day that the annual appeal for pledges is made and to have three important themes celebrated at once is not always easy. The clergy discussed this many months ago and Fr Austin made a brilliant suggestion of finding a regular Sunday in the year when we could remember St Thomas with our full choir and have a

real sense of celebration; the most appropriate Sunday seemed, to us, to be the first Sunday of the singing term in September. It can never be interrupted by another feast day and the choir will always be present. The Bishop allows such celebrations for pastoral reasons and we are trying this for the first time this year.



So, we will be singing that wonderful Easter hymn 'O sons and daughters let us sing!' which tells the story of Thomas as well as the stirring 'Come labor on' which will inspire us as a parish at the beginning of a new choral season to love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ and recognize him in his Eucharistic presence as our Lord and our God.

9/11 Commemorations

September 11 is also the 15th anniversary of the terrorist attacks and there will be a special service at Saint Patrick's Cathedral on September 10. As we do not have evensong on September 11 we will have a short act of commemoration. This will take place at the 9/11 memorial near the pulpit, after Holy Communion and before the blessing and dismissal; thus, we shall pause for a moment in our celebrations to recall that tragic day, pray for victims and survivors, but pray in hopefulness for Christ's peace to reign in our hearts.

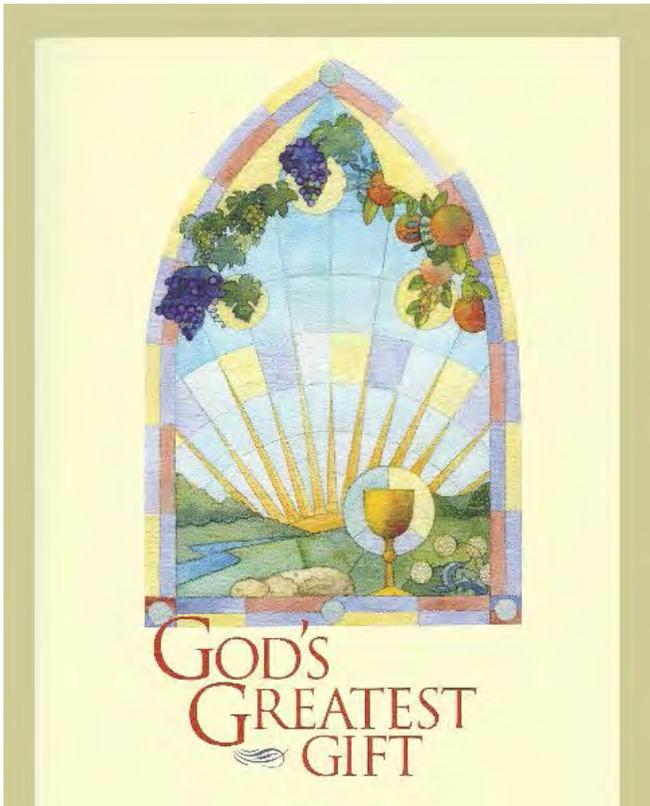
Sunday School resumes

Sarah Cornwell ably leads our growing Sunday school under the direction of Fr Spurlock. Sunday school resumes on September 11 and there will be a picnic

for families after the 11am service, weather permitting.

In the spring we had a very lovely gathering of Sunday school families at the Rectory with Fr Spurlock and Sarah. During the afternoon, while the children had some activities, we explored the nurture of children and young people and, in particular, how children are nurtured in their faith through receiving Holy Communion.

As you may well be aware, the Episcopal Church welcomes all the baptized to receive Holy Communion at the Eucharist. The reality at Saint Thomas Church is that some parents encourage this from an early age but others, often who come to us from another Church tradition, do not until their children have been prepared.



From September until late October, there will be a class **Sunday mornings at 10 a.m.** for children who already receive Communion and who wish to know more, and those who are being prepared for their first Communion. They will be using a structured course called 'God's Greatest Gift' which explores all the themes within the Eucharist as 'gifts': *The Gift of Creation; The Gift of Life; The Gift of Baptism; The Gift of God's Word; The Gift of Friendship; The Gift of Forgiveness; The Gift of Peace; The Gift of Joy; The Greatest Gift (Eucharist); Our Gift to God.* The children will each

have a workbook that they complete and parents have their own guide. Fr Spurlock and Sarah are pleased that the Rev. Alison Turner has agreed to join them in co-leading these classes.

On the feast of Christ the King we will mark the completion of the course during mass with all of the children receiving communion together along with their families. The feast of Christ the King is, traditionally, the day when pledges are offered to God – what a wonderful day for us to be encouraged as a parish family by our own children as they deepen their faith in Jesus Christ.

The glass is exquisite...

In my last Chronicle I mentioned that the stained glass restoration project was nearing completion. As I am writing this, the 'sheds' and shuttering around all the windows are being removed and the restored windows are really spectacular! We will have a celebration of the stained glass project in the spring.

Because the glass in Andrew Hall is now so beautiful and clean, after discussions with the staff and those who serve refreshments for coffee hour, we are going to move the coffee hour after the 11am mass to Andrew Hall from September 11; it will be such a delight to be in the Hall with natural light flooding in through beautiful windows.

...but the scaffolding continues to go up!

I said to the staff the other day that we appear to be slowly going into 'stealth-mode' as a building! It is now almost impossible to see the Church with the scaffolding and netting. Thankfully, this will be down in the fall and the building will be clean and stone repairs completed. However, we must prepare ourselves for an extended period of scaffolding *inside* the Church as the organ project moves to its final stages. Over the summer, the old organ has been removed, the old case and choir stalls cleaned, and steel has been installed in the South Chamber to support the new organ case. Scaffolding will be present on and off over the coming months and then for an extended period in 2017 for the installation of the new case and the organ itself. Please bear with us as this last great capital project of recent years comes to its completion. I will have been Rector for four years before I have a church free of scaffolding!

Strategic Planning

After the Vestry had an away day in May 2015 I wrote to you about the setting up of a strategic planning group that was to help the Rector and Vestry plan our vision, our finances, and our human resources appropriately for the next five years and beyond. The project was put on hold last December but has now re-started and the group has begun its work in earnest. Already, three meetings of the core group have happened and a 'mapping exercise' looking at our location, demographic trends and using census data is nearly complete.

In the coming months we will be involving parishioners in our work and all pledging members will have a chance to participate in an in-depth survey. We will also have a number of focus groups that will explore a range of topics. More details about this will be available before Christmas.

Are the clergy really that tired?

Well, we love our work here but it can be quite tiring standing for the whole of Sunday mass, which is sometimes the case when the celebrant is also the preacher, and my arthritic knee does not help. We have a very beautifully carved wooden *sedilia* at Saint Thomas Church and you will see the Sacred Ministers using it in the traditional way at sung celebrations of the Eucharist during the Liturgy of the Word.

'Feeling hot, hot hot!'

No, this notice is not about the air-conditioning unit, which is extraordinarily efficient, but about our next social event at Saint Thomas Church. Continuing the theme of celebrating the many different countries and cultures represented by our parishioners we are going to have a **Caribbean Evening** on September 30. I am thrilled that a number of parishioners are working together to provide some wonderful food, which is being coordinated by our very own Eddie Thomas. In addition to firm favorites, Curried Goat and Jerk Chicken, there will be less spicy food and some wonderful Caribbean punch. I am told that there will be music and dancing so I am sure it will be a terrific evening. We are encouraging everyone to dress colorfully so, gentlemen, now is the time to reach into the back of your wardrobes and bring out those Caribbean and South American shirts that you bought on holiday, but have never dared to wear in public!



Quiz Night

Start planning your teams for our, now, annual trivia night to be held on Friday, November 4.

Mass Cards

If you would like a mass offered for someone who has died, or a requiem on an anniversary, we have some new cards with an image from the Chapel of the Resurrection; please ask reception or the vergers.

Finally,

As a new choral year begins there is much to be thankful for at Saint Thomas Church; I look forward to seeing those of you who are returning from other places and from vacations and it will be good to hear your stories; we have had some lovely summer masses and fellowship here at Saint Thomas Church. Alison joins me in saying, "Welcome back!" to our choristers and to those of you who have been away during the summer.

May the love and the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ surround you and your loved ones.

Affectionately,

your priest,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cal Turner". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

www.saintthomaschurch.org

Photo credits:

Sir Simon Rattle: Johann Sebastian Hanel

Daniel Hyde: Hugh Warwick