

Saint Thomas Church



The Rector's Chronicle

Michaelmas 2015

My dear friends,

This Chronicle marks the completion of my first year as Rector of Saint Thomas Church; it has been a year of challenges and opportunities. I have recently composed a letter for the 2014 Yearbook and I read a number of former Rectors' letters to help me prepare. One letter by Father Andrew, written in 1991, contained some words which caught my eye; "*My colleagues and I continually hope for 'the feeling of family' in this great church*". It is clear to me that, through the years of my predecessor Father Mead, this hope is becoming a reality. Alison and I have truly felt that we have arrived at a Church that is not only vibrant but 'a family' that is growing and developing and changing. Thank you for making my first year as Rector so memorable; the many acts of kindness and generosity have made our move to New York fulfilling. At the end of our vacation this summer, Alison said to me "I want to go home" and I said, "I miss being in Saint Thomas Church!" The sense of relief to be back in the rectory was palpable – we have made our transition; we are glad to be here; this place feels like home.



Father Mead and the Rector on his first anniversary

A year of challenges...

The year ended with the sudden and unexpected death of John Scott. John was only the fifth Organist and Director of Music at Saint Thomas since 1913, when T. Tertius Noble arrived on the scene.

There are some who are describing John's death as a 'crisis' for Saint Thomas Church. After a year of working with John I know that he would be horrified to hear such a description. Yes, it is true that he was remarkable and, undoubtedly, the leading light in the great choral tradition of our churches and cathedrals throughout the world. But to suggest that we are in crisis is to imply that without John we will find it difficult to carry on. Certainly, we have had a tragedy and lost a dear friend, colleague and inspirational Organist and Director of Music; Lily has lost her beloved husband and their son will never meet his father. It is a tragedy but it is not a crisis, for Saint Thomas Church is a community of faith – the same faith that inspired John in his music ministry as Father Mead reminded us in his inspirational homily at John's funeral. Now John is part of the great tradition of organists of Saint Thomas Church, stretching back to T. Tertius Noble who had the vision to establish a choir school here in the first place. His successors steadily built on that foundation and the likes of Gerre Hancock gave new meaning to the phrase 'musical excellence.' John did not begin the choir here, nor did he re-invent the tradition. John knew that he was part of something bigger and built on the strengths of his predecessors. We will do the same; to do any less would not be to honor his memory. John's musical legacy is huge and will be a great gift to his successor. The many, many choristers and gentlemen of the several choirs he has directed in different places have been formed by him; the young organists whom he mentored, including his last two assistants whose skills will now be thoroughly tested

in ways they never expected, will now take his passion and energy forward. Many of us have moved from shock into sadness and we now move forward in hope as John Scott would have wanted, and we are all the better for having known him and loved him.



All of us hold Lily and Arthur, John and Lily's son, in our thoughts and our prayers at this time. We also pray for John's family overseas. We will care for Lily in these coming months in the best way we can. Please also pray for me, the Headmaster and the Vestry as we plan for the future. Support our music program, our choir and our young organists whom, I am glad to say, have 'broad shoulders' encouraged by John Scott.

The concert series...

The 2015-16 concert series that John had devised will now be performed in his memory and the first concert will be dedicated to him. The first concert of the series is very poignant because John chose an *unfinished* work by a musical genius of his time, Mozart. Mozart's Requiem will be performed together with Haydn's expansive work known as the 'Nelson Mass'. I have agreed with the music department that it will be most appropriate to invite *guest conductors* to direct the choir and orchestras this season. Our choir will be accompanied by the Orchestra of St Luke's and directed by *Andrew Nethsingha*, Director of Music of Saint John's College, Cambridge – where John studied music. The first concert will be on **Thursday, November 12** and the new on-line ticketing system is now available for FOM donors and will be available for the general public on October 1. This enables you to buy tickets, select your own seat and print off your ticket on our website.

Remembering Father Andrew

The *beginning* of my first year as Rector was also marked by the death of Father Andrew, XI Rector of Saint Thomas Church. Much has been written about Father Andrew's great ministry and it has been said that Father Andrew and Gerre Hancock ensured the continuation of the Choir School and the choral tradition at Saint Thomas Church. In December of last year I suggested to the Vestry that we should think about a memorial to John Andrew and one that would be a fitting tribute to his ministry. Father Andrew's great legacy is the liturgical tradition that we now take for granted. He made the liturgy as beautiful as the church building and, in particular, introduced color, texture and movement in the form of vestments, beautiful texts and symbolic action. In the spirit of his great love of liturgy and this church building I am pleased to say that we will be refurbishing the High Altar cross and candlesticks and commissioning four more exact replicas of the existing candlesticks to make a set of six.

In one of the conversations I had with him when I arrived I asked him why there were only two candles on the High Altar of Saint Thomas Church. He remarked that he felt sure that Cram and Goodhue had designed the great reredos and altar to have more than two candles, as is traditional in many Episcopal Churches, and that he had thought that one of his successors might be able to accomplish this and encouraged me to do so during my time here. The Vestry and I feel that this will be a fitting memorial to Father Andrew and add to the beauty of the church that he so loved. An American foundry that specializes in high quality historical and artistic casting will make the new candlesticks. Thanks to the generosity of a number of parishioners, the candlesticks have been commissioned at no cost to the parish and I am very grateful to those who have contributed to this project.



With challenges come opportunities...

The Music of Saint Thomas Church continues and we welcome a number of new boys to join our choir and its school. That brings me to our Sunday school provision:



Many of you have commented about the large number of children who came into church on September 13 at the offertory following the registration and breakfast and what a wonderful sight it was. At the moment we have a small but growing number of young families and a number of children newly born, or about to be born. This 'baby boom' reminds us of the importance of children in our midst. Unless we form children in our great liturgical and choral tradition they will never come to appreciate it.

Some people say that children are important because they are the 'future church'. I believe that children are important because they *are* the church and involving them in our worship is a means of building up the church community. One way of doing this is to ensure that our Sunday school meets in an appropriate way. This term has seen the move of Sunday school to 11am, which allows parents to worship in Church while their children meet. The children then join us at the offertory and receive Holy Communion with their families. Children may arrive at Sunday school any time after 10:30am and this allows parents the time to pray and be still before mass and enjoy the organ preludes. Our Sunday School coordinator, Sarah Cornwell, is off to a great start and we look forward to further developments which will strengthen Saint Thomas Church and its children's and youth programs.

Planning our future

At the start of my second year as Rector the Vestry has begun a yearlong project to create a five-year strategic plan. A small group will work with key staff from Saint Thomas Church to articulate this plan so that we can share and own our vision for the future and plan accordingly. One of the most useful things to come out of a five-year plan is the ability to think about the resources needed in the coming years. The plan is not just about vision but, rather, making the vision a reality through appropriate stewardship of finances and human resources. The core group would like to have input from the regular members of Saint Thomas Church and you will have the chance to participate in the coming months.

On Sunday, November 1, the feast of All Saints, The Rt Rev'd Michael B. Curry will be installed as the 27th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church in the National Cathedral at Washington. We pray for Bishop Curry as he prepares to lead our church and take us forward in mission and unity.

Flower Guild

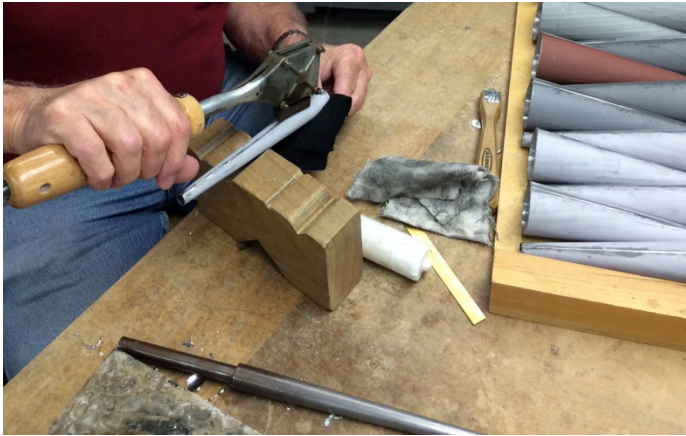
I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul



Rueckwald and his small team for the beautiful flower arrangements that we enjoy each week in church and which also add to the beauty of our worship. Arranging and caring for flowers in a church as large as Saint Thomas Fifth Avenue is time-consuming and we have decided to found a new guild to take this work forward. We are looking for volunteers to form the **Saint Thomas Church Flower Guild**. We are looking not only for people who have some experience with flower-arranging, but also for people to *care* for the flowers during the week – topping up water, spraying them, removing dead flowers and leaves etc. If you are interested in joining this new guild, please send me an email.

The Organ Project

At the time of writing, work is well underway in both the Dobson factory and the Colliers' woodworking studio. Ranks of pipes are being made, the internal components of the organ, such as wind-chests and swell boxes, are being assembled and intricate carving of the new case is being completed. I am pleased to say that, again with the generosity of parishioners and friends of the parish, we have now raised approximately 75% of the cost of the organ which is due to be completed by Easter 2018.



Building community...

The Hospitality Committee has some fun events planned for this fall and winter. Following the success of last year's **Quiz Night**, there will be another held on Friday, October 23 at 6:30pm at the **Choir School on West 58th Street**. I am grateful to the Headmaster for making this possible since the last Quiz Night in Andrew Hall sold out and many people were disappointed not to obtain tickets. As last time, we invite you to form teams of up to eight people and we will also form some teams on Quiz Night. The evening includes food and drink and the cost is \$25 per person. Places are secured only by a check, made out to Saint Thomas Church, and left at reception or mailed to Ann Hall Kaplan.

On **Sunday, December 13**, we will have a Scandinavian themed evening at the **rectory** to celebrate the feast of **Santa Lucia**, so popular in the countries of Northern Europe in the depths of winter. There will be a **Smörgåsbord** of food and, hopefully, some Santa Lucia traditions. Tickets for this event will be available in November.

Finally...

As the weather suddenly becomes noticeably cooler we look forward to some wonderful celebrations in church. In addition to our usual practice of keeping the feast on the closest Sunday, Michaelmas will also be celebrated with a Festal Eucharist on Tuesday, September 29 at 5:30pm. Wednesday, October 28 is the feast of SS Simon and Jude and there will be, again, a Festal Eucharist at 5:30pm. Sunday, November 1 is All Saints' Day and a red-letter day in the Episcopal Calendar. There will be a Solemn Eucharist and procession at 11am and our preacher at Solemn Evensong at 4pm will be **The Rt Revd Graham Kings**, newly appointed Mission Theologian for the Anglican Communion. The following Sunday, November 8, we move from the glory of the saints to a reminder of our human mortality with **Remembrance Day**. There will be a Solemn Requiem at 11am with the beautiful setting by Durufle. At 4pm, representatives of the Patriotic Societies and Armed Forces join us for our annual Remembrance Day Evensong.

We also have a number of theological courses through the fall, and a lecture by **Karina Martin Hogan**, Associate Professor of Theology at Fordham University on **Wednesday, September 30, 2015, at 6:30pm**. Professor Hogan's lecture is entitled, "*2 Esdras: The Apocryphal Apocalypse*" and promises to be extremely stimulating. The lecture is free and I encourage you to attend. As usual, the lecture will be followed by a reception in the parish house.

As I begin my second year as Rector, Alison and I thank you all for your many good wishes. May the joy and love of Jesus Christ surround you and your loved ones.

Affectionately,

Father Carl Turner

