

Saint Thomas Church



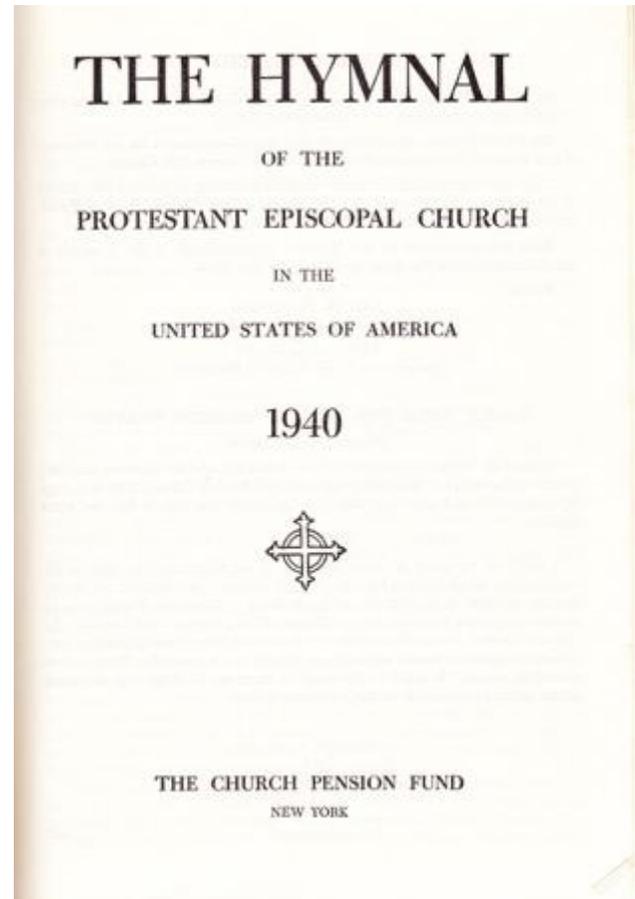
The Rector's Chronicle *Summer 2017*

My dear friends,

As you are reading this, the Choir School will be on its summer recess and many of you have shared plans of all kinds of summer trips or visiting family. Still many more of you remain in and around New York City and Saint Thomas Church will continue to be a haven of quiet spirituality each week. A reminder that the daily masses continue, visiting choirs or the Gentlemen of the Choir provide beautiful music for the Sunday 11am service and adult education continues with the classes on Sundays at 10 and Bible study on Fridays at 12:45. In August we will have a seniors' lunch and there is a young adults' supper party planned for early September.

It was a delight having **Dr. Rowan Williams** with us in Holy Week; his gentle presence and pastoral sensitivity added much to what is already a very full and deep observance of Holy Week. We are waiting for transcripts of his sermons. After discussions with colleagues in various departments, I have decided that we will continue the 5:30pm Solemn Eucharists on Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week which were well attended.

I am always glad to receive suggestions of **hymns** from the 1982 or 1940 hymnals that we have not sung in a while. If any of you have knowledge of the official supplements to our hymn books and know of hymnody or chants that would be a good addition to our worship, again, please let me or Mr. Hyde know. We cannot, of course, guarantee that we will use them! Hymnody is an important part of the Anglican tradition but, as many of you know, over half of the members of the Episcopal Church have come from other traditions and bring with them all kinds of experience, including music in the Liturgy.



Those of you who attend the 9am mass on Sundays have said how much you still miss the junior choristers singing. As explained last year, with a smaller group of choristers it is really important that they have the opportunity to practice together with the seniors and that was becoming difficult. Also, being the youngest means that the day is very long for them. I think we have all noticed that Mr. Hyde's decision to remove the choristers from the 9am mass has hugely improved the quality of their singing, they are less tired, and they are much more motivated. The Wardens and I recently discussed the content of the 9am service with Mr. Hyde and Fr. Wallace and we recognize that, for those of you who have made the 9am mass 'your service' there is something

missing. The boys will not be returning yet to the 9am service and we will think creatively with the other clergy about how we can ensure that the 9am Eucharist is a fulfilling and enriching experience for those attending. I am open to suggestions and eager to receive thoughts and ideas.

The Organ Project is currently in full swing and several areas of the church have been taken over as the installation of the organ begins. It was a thrilling moment a couple of weeks ago to see the impost hoisted into place. The impost is the key part of any organ case – it supports the organ above it and is the link to any divisions below. It gives the organ builder an excuse for beautiful carving and, in our case, we have two inscriptions: “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord” from Psalm 150 and, in the center, at the request of the late John Scott, “*Soli Deo Gloria*” which was the inscription JS Bach often used on his compositions. It is Latin for “Glory to God alone” which is a reminder to all of us that our music is, first and foremost, given to the glory of God. The arrival of the impost reminded me of the laying of a foundation stone and so, with Mr. Estrada acting as my guardian angel, I climbed the scaffolding in my robes, carrying my prayer book and holy water. It was a very poignant moment to say a prayer of dedication and bless the impost since Daniel Hyde

was playing Bach on the Taylor and Boody Organ at the same time. The large pipes and casework currently in the nave will become less intrusive as they are installed in the coming weeks. It is still our hope that the scaffolding will come down in early September but we then begin the next exciting stage – the tonal finishing or voicing of the organ which will take many months. At that stage, the inscriptions will become a reality - *Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!*

We have said farewell to several staff members recently; Joseph Gioe has retired from the Development Office though he says that he will be back regularly to help as a volunteer, and Stacey Evans, also from that department. We said farewell to Sarah Cornwell after two very productive years as Sunday School coordinator so that she can be with her family on weekends. Congratulations to Sarah and James who are expecting their third child. Fr. Spurlock is exploring how we develop Sarah’s role in the future.

Many of you are aware that I had to return to the UK for a little longer than planned due to problems with our immigration status and the change from visa to green card. I am pleased to say that all has been resolved but it did mean an extra week and a bit in the UK. While I was there I organized a full program of visits and meetings in addition to the ones I was originally attending and was able to share information about our parish, deepen links, and promote our Choir School. For those who are not aware:

- I met with Jonathan Marsden, the Director of the Royal Collection and some of his staff at Buckingham Palace.
- I also met with Oliver Urquhart Irvine, the Queen’s Librarian at Windsor Castle. Both meetings were to discuss collaboration with us in the future including collaboration on art and music and possible internship exchanges. They are visiting New York in the fall.
- I met with Canon Paul Wright, the Sub Dean of the Chapels Royal and heard about a proposed visit of the choir of the Chapels Royal to the USA in 2019.
- I preached at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London and then met with Dr Sam Wells, the Rector, and his Director of Music. They are to be a link-parish following a partnership between the Diocese of New York and the Diocese of London and, in addition to a very involved concert series also have an exemplary outreach project that works with the homeless. They are eager to learn from us, and I



am eager to learn about their approach to outreach.

- I attended a special event in Westminster Abbey for my old seminary, St Stephen's House, Oxford, and met with the Dean of Westminster, who will visit us to preach in the next year. I prayed for you all at the shrine of St Edward the Confessor (his image is in the center of the exterior façade of our church).
- I spent two days at St Stephen's House, Oxford, where I gave a lecture, met with seminarians and with faculty.
- I also visited Winchester Cathedral and prayed for you all at the shrine of St Swithun.
- I met with Stephen Knott, the Assistant Chief of Staff of Lambeth Palace and discussed his work with the Archbishop of Canterbury; Archbishop Justin has said that he would like to visit us some time in the future when he is in New York.
- I met with Alastair Bruce who is an historical advisor for film and television (The King's Speech, Downton Abbey) and is the chief Royal Herald; he has agreed to give some talks here at Saint Thomas when he next visits Alison and me.
- I preached on Ascension Day at St James' Church, Exeter.

My time ended with my postponed Easter weekend break which allowed me to celebrate my youngest daughter's wedding at Exeter Cathedral. Alison and I thank you for all your good wishes; the weekend was very memorable even though it seemed odd, at first, being 'on the other side' as the father of the bride but it was very moving walking my daughter up the aisle of Exeter Cathedral as the sun shone brightly. The weekend was full of little surprises such as Alison being asked to give the homily at the wedding.

Talking of outreach, it is always a joy to meet with the many regular soup kitchen volunteers who gather on a Saturday morning; I must pay tribute to Frank, Jean, Rita, Hazel and all those who, tirelessly, provide bagged lunches for around 330 homeless people and people in need each week. I mentioned the work of St Martin-in-the-Fields and I hope that we will hear more about their various projects in the coming years. In the meantime, I am regularly asked by people if there are other forms of outreach that Saint Thomas Church parishioners can be involved with. We already have a number of smaller projects such as the 'Angel Tree' or the 'back to school' project but perhaps there are others.



I met recently with Robert Radtke, the Executive Director of Episcopal Relief and Development (a charity that we have supported especially in the area of disaster relief) and he reminded me that one of our greatest forms of outreach is the work of our choir school and the way it changes children's lives. That being said, parishioners cannot easily be involved as volunteers in that kind of work. I am pleased to say that, in the fall, he and his staff have offered to organize several sessions for us to share with interested parishioners some of the work they are doing; I hope this will become a forum for new initiatives for which there is real energy to make a difference but also the reality to make them sustainable. More about this later in the year.

In the meantime, I am pleased to announce an experimental project which is a cooperation between Saint Thomas Church, St Patrick's Cathedral, and



Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. For the next year, St Patrick's and Saint Thomas Church (from funds restricted for charitable work only) will make a small contribution to enable the qualified **social worker** currently employed part-time at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church to become full time and work with all three churches. John Sheehan will have an office base at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and we will be able to make referrals there. A principal part of the work will be with the homeless, dealing with issues of poverty, and mental health issues. Over the next year he will also explore with Linda Morfi and her counterpart at St Patrick's how best to meet the needs of parishioners too, such as the elderly who are becoming frailer or in need. We have set up a small steering group to meet with John regularly and in the fall, John will also have a gathering of interested parishioners to explore areas of mutual concern in the areas of social care. It may very well be that this initiative releases a lot of energy and engages with parishioners seeking ways of getting more involved.

We have had some splendid **social events** including Springtime in Italy and the annual Seniors' Tea at the Rectory which was a kind of 'inside garden party' because there were some splendid hats; even Bertie had a good time!



The graduation ceremonies for our three Grade 8 choristers were very enjoyable and a good number of you came to the 98th commencement exercises in the church. We wish Dylan, Carl, and Ian well in their new schools and hope that they will come back to visit us often. We heard a stirring and encouraging speech from the Headmaster of St James School, Maryland; The Rev'd. Dr. Stuart Dunnan is headmaster of America's oldest Episcopal co-

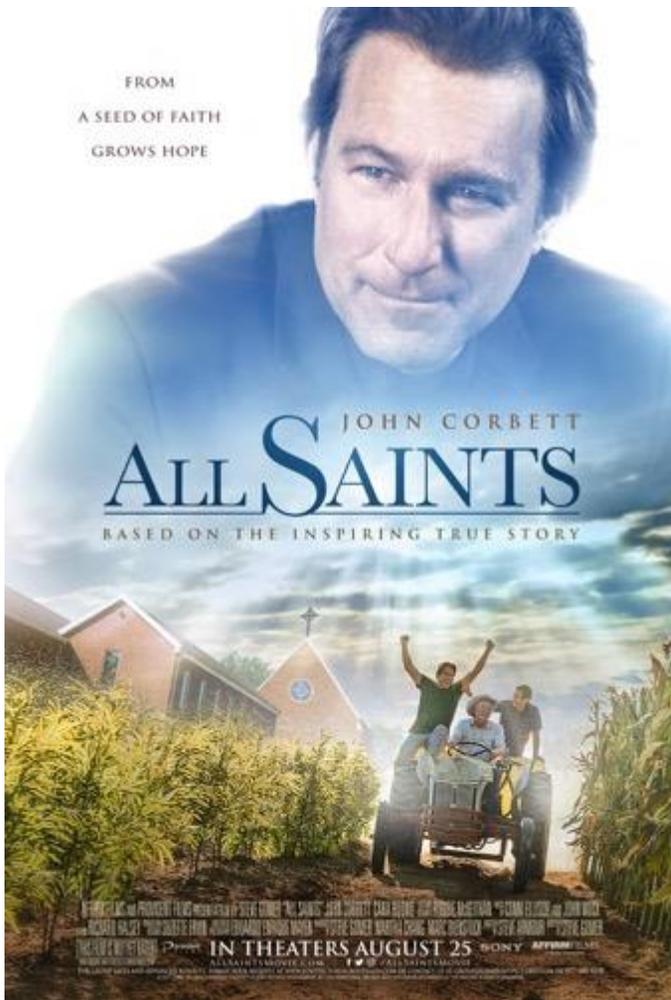
educational boarding school based on the English model in 1842. Fr. Dunnan explains that *"Tradition is still very much a part of the fabric of our school. Morning chapel, along with family-style meals, are time-honored institutions, as is our honor code and our high expectations for community involvement and personal behavior. In these ways, we seek to prepare young men and women both for academic success in college and to be leaders for good in the world."*



That reminds me very much of the ethos of our own Choir School and the importance that Fr. Wallace places on the whole experience of living in community as much as academic or sporting achievement. Fr. Wallace is now having a well-earned sabbatical and will return to the Choir School in January 2018; we wish him safe travels in the coming months.

Meanwhile, back in the USA, a **film** is to be released on August 25 by Sony pictures that tells of the interplay between a church in Tennessee struggling to survive and a group of refugees from Myanmar. This true story of the life of All Saints Episcopal Church, Smyrna, will be of particular interest to parishioners since it tells the story of Fr Spurlock's Rectorship of that church and how he and Aimee built a community modelled on Christian charity and the values of the Kingdom, which not only saved the desperate situation of these helpless refugees but also re-energized the church. Soon to be accompanied by a book, this film will be a testament to the tradition of the Episcopal Church to stand up for the marginalized and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ through compassionate acts and not just words. It is typical of my dear colleague Michael, that he kept Sony's intention to produce a film very quiet until he could not keep it private anymore; Fr. Michael is a priest of huge integrity and deep

spirituality and I am delighted that this amazing story is to be told.



Those of you who attend one or more of the daily masses will soon notice a new face; **Fr. Ben DeHart** is the Associate Rector at Calvary-St. George and has offered to help us out in the Chantry Chapel on weekdays. I am very glad to welcome his assistance at this time.

Congratulations to two members of staff who have recently been **married**: Amy Cheresnowski, my assistant, has married Mike and Andrew Kimsey, our Head Verger, has married Kyle. In August we send our best wishes to Patrick Fennig, Music Department Librarian and a Gentleman of the Choir, who marries his fiancée Elizabeth.

Save the dates! We welcome back the choristers on September 10 which we will keep as our **patronal festival**. In the afternoon at 4pm we welcome Fr. Matthew Mead, the son of the Rector Emeritus and Rector of Christ Church, Pelham, to be our preacher. During that evensong, we will dedicate and **hallow**

the new icon of St Thomas which is a gift from members of the congregation of Exeter Cathedral. I am delighted that an old colleague, Fr. Ian Morter, who recently retired as Canon Pastor, will be present. I hope that we will have representatives of the Orthodox Churches with us for evensong. After it is hallowed, we will place the icon at the back of the nave where, with its lustrous gold leaf, it will be a beautiful sight in the darkness during the week.

On September 17 at 4pm there will be a Festal Evensong sung jointly by our own choir and the **Choir of the Sistine Chapel, Rome**. This will be a significant ecumenical event and very appropriate following the successful visit of Archbishop David Moxon, the director of the Anglican Center in Rome, to us a few weeks ago.



Also, bearing in mind that this event sells out each year, November 3 is the date for our annual **Quiz Night** at the Choir School so over the summer please think about your teams!

On the traditional date for the feast of Corpus Christi, that is the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, I preached at **St Clement's, Philadelphia**. St Clement's, like us, is famous for its very traditional liturgy and music though I have to say that the liturgy was a lot more complicated than ours! I was welcomed very warmly by Fr Rick Alton, whom many of you will remember from the days when he was a curate at Saint Thomas Church with Fr. Andrew. I will invite Fr. Alton back to preach during the coming year.

Well, summer brings long days and the pace of life is a little slower at Saint Thomas Church. Here's something to think about if you are travelling this summer; why not send a postcard to the parish office – address it to the Rector and Wardens and we will put them on a board so we can see all the many

different places that are being visited. Remember to take our greetings to the churches that you visit and bring back your prayer requests. By the way, even if you are a long way from Saint Thomas Church, if you need prayers offered then go to the website and at the top of each page (or the bottom if on a mobile device) you will see a tab that says **Prayer Request**. If you click on it you can send us a request for prayer and that prayer will be offered each day from Monday to Friday of the week it is received.

During the summer, the altar and the vestments are dressed in green which is the color of growth. Sometimes called 'ordinary time', there is nothing ordinary about it at all – ordinary time comes from the Latin word for *ordered* time in which, Sunday by Sunday, we work our way through the Gospel (this year it is Matthew) stories and nurture our faith. There are two feasts in August that I want to draw your attention to: On **August 6** we keep the beautiful feast of the Transfiguration when we remember Jesus climbing the mountain with Peter, James, and John and being transfigured in their sight. It is also Hiroshima Day, so there is a poignancy as we recall the power and destruction that human beings can exert through war and the legacy of war, and our vocation to be shining lights in the world by being Christ-like in all that we do or say.

The following Sunday, **August 13**, we honor the role of Mary in salvation history and her place in the life of the Church by anticipating her major feast on August 15. Mary is often described as a type of the Church and I think that is a good description; as she first did at Cana in Galilee, she points to Jesus still and says "Do whatever he tells you." (see John 2:1-12). She bore him in her womb and encourages us to share in her vocation as the God-bearer by taking Jesus to a waiting world. Standing at the foot of the cross, she bore witness to her son's saving death and suffered her own 'martyrdom' thus encouraging us all to be witnesses. After the Resurrection and Ascension, we read in the Acts of the Apostles that she was present with the first followers of Jesus praying and awaiting the gift of the Holy Spirit; her role encourages us to be ever receptive to God's Word and to allow the Holy Spirit to overshadow us so that we can truly magnify the Lord. I hope that you will all make the effort to come to mass on August 13 and bring friends. We will have some cake at coffee hour that day to have a mid-August celebration.



Taddeo Gaddi, Florence painted around 1340-45, now in Staatliche Museen, Berlin

On August 1, I shall be celebrating mass in the Holy House of the Anglican Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham and I shall be praying for you all there. Shortly before that I shall baptize my grandson, Edward, in Exeter Cathedral so my vacation to see my family this year will be very special.

Whether you are in New York for the next few weeks or away, Alison and I assure you of our prayers for you and your loved ones.

Affectionately, your priest and pastor,

Cal Turner