December 2018-January 2019

12 1/2 Madison St.
Hamilton, NY 13346
315-824-1745 (for fax also)
E-Mail: stchurch@cnymail.com
Website: StThomasHamilton.org

OFFICE HOURS:
Tuesday-Friday
8:30 am -1:30 pm

RECTOR:
The Rev. Brooks A. Cato 501-554-1236
brooks.cato@gmail.com

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC:
Dianne Adams McDowell 315-684-7215

PARISH ADMINISTRATOR:
Nancy Schmitt 315-750-0251

WARDENS:
Jane Welsh 315-824-3070
Ellie Weyter 315-824-2591

VESTRY MEMBERS:
Susan Geier '19 315-824-9181
Michael Sitts '19 315-761-6725
Terry Monty '19 315-824-1313
Kerry Linden '20 315-825-5543
Luke Marshall '20 315-824-3007
David Sturges '20 315-750-9112
Sheila Catania '21 315-345-1837
Michelle Landstrom '21 781-392-6204
Lee Anne Miller '21 315-525-7250

CLERK OF THE VESTRY:
Susan Cerasano 315-824-1037

TREASURER:
Nancy Schult 315-824-9574

SEXTON:
Barbara J. Hicks 607-244-3397

TIDINGS CO-EDITORS:
Kerry Linden 315-825-5543
kerrylinden68@gmail.com
Rose Novak 315-824-2082
rnovakhamilton@gmail.com

IN THIS ISSUE:

The Rector's Column	1
2019 Pledge Update	1
Advent Lessons & Carols	1
Nave Gazing	2
Bible Blurb	2
October Vestry Minutes	3
Conversations on Race: Is It Okay to Be White?	4
Farmworkers and Hamilton Manor Holiday Gift Basket Collection	5
Festive Flowers for Christmas	5
Sermon for 26 Pentecost: Mark 13:1-8	6
A Review of Stephen Nissenbaum's *The Battle for Christmas*	8
Christmas Eve Worship at St. Thomas'	9
Bishop's Advent Bible Study	9
H.E.Y.!	9
A Circle of Quiet: An Advent Respite with The Rev. Elizabeth Gillett	9
Jazz @ Noon in January 2019	10
Parishioners Star in Local Theater	10
AATP Presents Winter at the Palace	10
Stop—Look—Feel Watercolors by Jana Kolowrat Laxa	10
December & January at St. Thomas'	11
Prayers of the People	11
Thanksgivings	11
December Calendar of Servers	12
January Calendar of Servers	13

Tidings

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church is an inclusive and worshipping Christian community that accepts the challenge of living the Gospel.

The Rector's Column

I can't believe it's Advent already. I could've sworn that we'd only just celebrated Easter a few weeks ago, or that summer had only just gotten here, or even that school only just started. But here we are, entering my third winter in the frozen tundra, and I'm surprised by another year speeding by and coming to a close.

For someone that promised to saunter with y'all, we sure have sped through time together, haven't we? So thank God for the Season of Advent! We have a month built in at one of the busiest times of the year to slow down a bit and reflect on where we've been, where we're going, and what's headed our way.

Advent gives us the chance and maybe even the small beats of silence to remind us of those things. A year closes, and we see where we've been. We remember folks dear to us who have died and dwell in memories of them for a spell. A year begins, and we peek ahead, anticipating all the wonderful things the next years or weeks or days hold. What a joy it can be to live in this world.

Most importantly, we steal our moments for what's coming into our world, because what's coming is Christ. Jesus, the child, entering delicately, but also Jesus, the Redeemer, crashing in to deliver justice and peace.

I can't believe it's that time already. Our cycle begins again. Snows fall, spirits renew, Christ returns. May you find some peace of your own in that cycle. May you slow down where you can. May you pause and breathe, and in this season, may you grow closer to Christ.■

Faithfully yours,
Brooks+

2019 Pledge Update

Thank you to all those who have submitted their 2019 pledge card. As of Stewardship Sunday, we have received 47 pledges for 2019 for a total of $133,780! We thank *all y'all* for your generosity. If you haven't yet returned a pledge card, please do so either in the offering plate, in person, or by mail. Extra cards are available at the entrance of the church.

Advent Lessons & Carols

This Sunday, December 9
10 AM
St. Thomas'

Come join us at St. Thomas' as we celebrate the second Sunday of Advent with a service of Lessons and Carols. Many thanks go to Dianne McDowell and the St. Thomas' Choir for this beautiful music.

Nave Gazing

Happy New Year!

With a December/January combined newsletter, you might think I've written this column to be read on January 1st. Clever though you may be, I've pulled a fast one this time.

See, in liturgical churches, we follow a calendar of the year that is mostly independent of the secular calendar, with only a handful of exceptions. Christmas occurs on December 25th, always, but Easter, you may have noticed, moves around. All Saints' is always November 1st, or the Sunday immediately after, but Christ the King travels, too. And while the rest of the world would have you eat your hog jowl and black-eyed peas at the beginning of January, the church celebrates the new year with the First Sunday of Advent.

At the beginning of Advent, we turn our attention to the anticipation of Jesus Christ entering our world. In a strange way, our attention is hyper focused, but it points in two directions simultaneously. We look back and remember the anticipation Mary and the People of God had while they waited for Jesus to be born. And we look forward, imagining the anticipation of people yet to come as they wait for Christ to return triumphant.

As usual, we, the People of God right now, we are stuck in the middle, looking backwards and forwards at the same time (now there's an image for all of us to keep in mind as we get caught up in the holiday whirlwind!). But we have our own anticipation now, a third anticipation in the Advent mix. We wait for Jesus to enter our individual lives.

There's a very real invitation each of us is called to make as we hear these old, familiar stories. It's an invitation to invite Christ in a little closer. Advent is our chance to make preparations for that invitation and to look for glimpses of his arrival as we wait.

So Happy New Year! May you see Jesus and know Christ in abundance!■

--Fr. Brooks+

Bible Blurb

After a month's hard slog through the wilderness, we're jumping way ahead for the month of December to the Gospel According to Luke!

Where: Third book of the New Testament.

What to Watch For: This message of God's is for the Gentiles, too! Women are in the club, and strange things happen in the sky.

References: Tons. Now we're back in the New Testament, and so many of those stories echo into the story of Jesus.

Content: Nothing short of the life of Christ!

Lectionary: Luke appears in almost its entirety in Year C in our Lectionary, the liturgical year we're beginning now!

For January, we'll go back to Moses and the People of God wandering in the wilderness for the Book of Leviticus!

Where: Third book of the Hebrew Scriptures.

What to Watch For: Lots and lots of laws that might sound off-putting to our modern ears. Try to imagine how each law would make sense for a people on the move.

References: We're back following the Moses story thread, so there's lots tying us all the way back to Genesis.

Content: Lord, yes, there's a lot going on. Leviticus is the law in relation to priestly, ritual things. As a liturgical people ourselves, this codification of how God's people ought to live is fodder for great discussion!

Lectionary: Leviticus shows up a whooping three times in the Lectionary, but it's effectively the same reading every time. Leviticus isn't the most popular book for modern preachers, it would seem.

Read on, good people, and God bless!■

--Fr. Brooks+

Vestry Minutes
October 18, 2018

Call to Order and Opening Devotions
The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM. Jane Welsh offered the opening devotion.

Clerk's Report
The minutes of September 18 were approved with one correction.

Treasurer's Report
Nancy Schult highlighted the significant portions of the report for the new vestry members. In terms of the format in which the parish assets are reported, Nancy also noted that there is some discussion about moving two UIF funds to "vestry designated," instead of grouping them with "UIF/ Donor-restricted" funds; however, no decision has been made. The Treasurer's Report was received as submitted.

Rector's Report
Brooks Cato, reflecting upon the events at the Annual meeting, explained that he saw his report in that setting as a kind of "pep rally" to energize parishioners for the work that we all have to do in the future. Given the energy and talent within the congregation, he stated that he is excited about what the church can accomplish. Brooks presented some information about the Learning Communities Initiative, a program designed to enhance the link between churches and the communities in which they are situated. He outlined the kind of training sessions, and other preparations, that are required. Vestry members were interested, but asked for more information so that they could determine whether undertaking such a program is feasible for St. Thomas'. The discussion of Learning Communities will continue at the November vestry meeting.

Wardens' Reports
Jane Welsh reminded the vestry of the need to choose liaisons with parish commissions (which can be done at the November meeting). She expressed her excitement for the coming year and is looking forward to what St. Thomas' will be able to accomplish. Ellie Weyter commented that she is likewise looking forward to the coming year.

Commission Reports
Stewardship: Michael Sitts reported that the Stewardship Commission would be kicking off their campaign on the following Sunday. He would be making some general remarks and then two other parishioners would be making remarks on subsequent Sundays. As was the custom, a letter would follow in the mail to parishioners in November.

Old Business
Church Renovation and Yard Work: Brooks Cato reported on the progress of the water abatement and fencing project, which is moving along nicely. There is now new gravel on the driveway and the skirting on the church is being replaced. The stairs outside the north door are completed, but, at the time of the meeting, Landscapes East hadn't yet installed the handrails. The rain had created problems with the scheduling of various renovations. There was some hope that the sidewalk to the parish hall would be finished just as soon as some dry weather allowed the workmen to get back to pouring concrete. The second installment of **$10,000** has now been paid, with the final cost being estimated at **$91,000**.

New Business
Parish Directory: A question was raised about the possibility of a new parish directory. Brooks Cato explained that, for reasons of privacy and safety, copies of the directory would no longer be available in the back of the church. Instead, Nan will have copies available in the parish office for anyone who wants one.

November Prayer Leader: Michael Sitts will lead the opening devotion at the next vestry meeting.

November meeting date: Owing to the placement of Thanksgiving on the calendar, the next vestry meeting will take place on November 28.

Announcements were made and the meeting ended at 8:31 PM.■

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Cerasano, Clerk

Conversations on Race

We are grateful to Dr. Ryan Solomon, Assistant Professor of Writing and Rhetoric at Colgate, for being our Special Guest contributor this month and for the challenge he puts before us.

--Fr. Brooks+

Is it Okay to Be White?

A crucial change in how we tackle racism has been the move away from understanding racism as the outcome of individual attitudes to understanding racism as a cultural and institutional force. This, in turn, has led to engagement with "whiteness" as a cultural phenomenon – i.e. how white, western identity, values, and practices become normalized and taken for granted in a way that advantages white people over people of color, both those born in the United States and outside. That move is important because it implicates all white individuals in the problem of racism. No longer is racism an issue that exists over there, wherever we encounter those who are explicitly racist. Instead, even those of us who are well-intentioned, and who are not ostensibly prejudiced, have to recognize the way in which we participate in prevailing cultural and institutional systems that reinforce racial inequality. In other words, each of us has a personal responsibility for the ongoing problem of racism in the United States.

But there is increasing push back to this effort to confront "whiteness" and expand accountability for racism. This is in part because it is hard for many of us to accept a responsibility for an injustice that seems to conflict with our own understanding of ourselves as good and just people. We can't necessarily see the direct line between the opportunities we enjoy and the discrimination that others experience. Many of us have been taught not to see color and to treat others with respect, even as we intuitively recognize that we live in a society that values people differently, most obviously based on the color of their skin. Being implicated in the problem of racism therefore challenges our sense of ourselves, which leads to defensiveness and even denial. Look how far we have come in America, it is argued. The problem can't be well-intentioned white people. Rather the problem is activists, especially black activists, who are unfairly targeting the whole white community for something that is the outcome of the attitudes and actions of a few. The majority of white people, by implication, are victims of racist accusations. Moreover, many white people have it just as bad as people of color in America, but no one is talking about the marginalization of poor whites. That problem, then, is our tendency to make everything about race.

These sentiments are embodied in a set of anonymous posters that appeared across the Colgate campus late this past Halloween night. The posters, which declared that, "It is OK to be White," make a decontextualized claim about the victimhood of white people. White people have nothing to be embarrassed about, the posters imply. They are being unfairly attacked. They should be proud of their white identity. Colgate created controversy by choosing to take the posters down before students arrived on campus the next morning. The posters, at their best, reflect a concern about political correctness on college campuses and the challenge of speaking out against a commonsense – in this case, the "commonsense" that whiteness implies the subordination of individuals of color. So the posters raise a question about the difficulty of talking together about issues we may fundamentally disagree about. At its worst, though, the posters embody a denial of the privileges that white people enjoy, as well as the ongoing discrimination that people of color experience. Black people are not victims, it is argued. White people are the true victims. Importantly, this denial undermines the very possibility of dialogue about race. The concerns of people of color are discounted. The veracity of their experience is discounted. The power of white people in determining how conversations about race in America are dictated is discounted. The only experience of victimhood that matters is the victimhood of white people, which effectively serves to re-center the power of white people. Such a response is the very embodiment of racial inequality and proof of the cultural power of whiteness. It is worth noting that the idea for putting the posters up on university campuses (the posters didn't only appear at Colgate) originated out of an alt-right chat group, 4dChan, whose very aim was to antagonize liberals and create outrage.

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

Moreover, a white supremacist organization designed the posters. As such, these posters, which seem innocuous on the surface, speak to the dangerous power of "whiteness" as a cultural phenomenon.

If we are truly interested in confronting racism in America, those of us who benefit from white privilege need to resist our natural response to become defensive and to feel like victims when we are implicated in the problem of racism. We need to be open to listening the concerns of individuals of color, even if that may make us uncomfortable. We need to be willing to give up the power that our white identity provides, so that we can empower those who are marginalized by "whiteness." What might help us to do this difficult work, ironically, is to realize that we are victims – victims of "whiteness." The power we hold over others is self-destructive. The inequality that "whiteness" justifies harms us all. The path to redemption, then, is to "lift up the hands that hang down." "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."■

--Dr. Ryan Solomon

Farmworkers and Hamilton Manor Holiday Gift Basket Collection

The Hamilton Interfaith Service Group (HISG) is once again putting together gift packages for the 15 farmworker groups (40 workers) and 12 Hamilton Manor residents. Items needed for the farmworkers are winter clothing, food, Spanish Bibles, and toiletries (hand lotion, lip balm, etc.) which St. Thomas' is asked to collect. Items needed for the senior citizens include candy, puzzles, greeting cards and stamps, craft supplies, and books. Please put your donations in the box located at the entrance of the church by Thursday, December 20. The baskets will be assembled at St. Thomas' on Friday, December 21.■

Coffee Hour and Flower Chart Schedules for 2019 are ready for sign-ups in the Parish Hall!

Christmas Poem

Says a country legend told every year:
Go to the barn on Christmas Eve and see
what the creatures do as that long night tips over.
Down on their knees they will go, the fire
of an old memory whistling through their minds!

[So] I went. Wrapped to my eyes against the cold
I creaked back the barn door and peered in.
From town the church bells spilled their midnight music,
and the beasts listened –
yet they lay in their stalls like stone.

Oh the heretics!
Not to remember Bethlehem,
or the star as bright as a sun,
or the child born on a bed of straw!
To know only of the dissolving Now!

Still they drowsed on –
citizens of the pure, the physical world,
they loomed in the dark: powerful
of body, peaceful of mind,
innocent of history.

Brothers! I whispered. It is Christmas!
And you are no heretics, but a miracle,
immaculate still as when you thundered forth
on the morning of creation!
As for Bethlehem, that blazing star

still sailed the dark, but only looked for me.
Caught in its light, listening again to its story,
I curled against some sleepy beast, who nuzzled
my hair as though I were a child, and warmed me
the best it could all night.

--Mary Oliver (born 1935) is an American poet. She has won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. *The New York Times* described her as "far and away, this country's best-selling poet."

Festive Flowers for Christmas

Christmas Flower Envelopes for memorials and gifts are included in this issue of *Tidings* and are also available at the entrance of the church. Monies received will help the Flower Guild purchase beautiful poinsettias, wreaths and greenery for the altar and sanctuary.

Please use the envelope to submit your contribution with the names of the persons you wish to honor by December 20 so that the names can be listed in the Christmas Eve order of service.■

Sermon for the 26th Sunday After Pentecost: Mark 13:1-8

The first storm I remember surviving came when I was still real young. I'm sure there were big storms before that, mostly because part of my memory of that first storm involves knowing what to do when a big storm hit! Anyway, my mom, sisters, and I were living in my grandma's house by then. Grandma had moved out of that ranch-style house and into a duplex so Mom and us kids would have a good place to stay until we got back on our feet after the divorce. It was a great house, complete with two bathrooms and a long hall perfect for sliding down in socked feet. But there was a problem with that house: it had a basement, but to get there, you had to go outside. Of course, the entrance to the house and the entrance to the basement were clear on opposite ends of that long, ranch-style building. On a nice day, that wouldn't've been a problem. You'd just stroll on by the garden, the sweet poppies Mom said not to eat " 'cause they were made out of heroin" and the chestnut tree that dropped spiky land mines hidden in the grass. Around the far edge, under a cherry tree the fruit of which would take a few more years for me to discover, around that far end of the house, a covered wheelchair ramp sloped down to a spider-covered door with old leaves piled up at its base. Like I said, on a normal day, no big deal. Open the door, hop over the pile, and land just inside on a hard-packed dirt floor. I remember the ceilings being low but was so little back then that I never had to duck.

Lining the walls were long, simple shelves made of unfinished wood with raw edges. Those shelves held hundreds of old mason jars full of canned vegetables. Even with those low ceilings, the shelves must've been 8 or 10 high, floor to ceiling, wall to wall food stores. On the far wall, there was an opening into a much smaller room separated by a doorway, but no door hung from the remnants of rusted out hinges. I'm sure it was probably where the water heater lived, but my memory keeps that room empty, dirt floor, low ceiling, maybe the walls were old brick, but it was hard to say where the brick stopped and dirt began. One more wall further back, and there was a gaping hole. "The Crawl Space" Mom called it, but somehow it took on a more ominous feel than its name suggested. I never went back there. Even my curious, world exploring mind was too afraid to go back there. After all, who knew what that hole held? But even in the daytime, that dank, well stocked basement gave me the willies. The dirt didn't bother me. The weird hole in the empty back room certainly did. But what really creeped me out were all those old jars, dusty tops and occasionally milky contents. I knew enough to know what they meant. I knew enough to know that they meant we'd never be hungry as long as we had access to those jars, but in a weird way, I think that's what scared me. If we don't have anything to worry about anymore, why do we need all that food stored up? What does Grandma know that she's not telling us?

Now, when big storms came, we'd have to go through that whole process of getting from the front door, past the poppies and the chestnut, under the cherry tree, down the ramp, through the spiders and the leaves, and into the creepy jar room, but we'd have to do it at full speed, sprinting through rain and hail, with sirens blaring from the fire department around the corner, and an unseen freight train roaring from the clouds. And inevitably, we'd have to do all this at night. Well, that first big storm that blows in my memory was one of those nights. Just as we cleared the leaves and the small lake forming against the door's threshold, mom pulled the chain for the swinging lightbulb. A flicker of light illuminated those jars, the dirt, the back room and the yawning crawl space, and then it popped. The power went out, and we stood there, afraid to move. Mom, ever the hero, managed to find an emergency candle she'd squirreled away, and we huddled until what felt like the end of time. The dancing light might've been pretty under different circumstances, but that night, that solitary candle gave the room a sinister feel. Mason jars held death and disease. The walls wept, shadows moved in the distant back room like a hidden intruder plotting our downfall. Even the dirt floor betrayed us. Once dry and dusty, the floor was now damp with water rising from deep below and seeping in from under the door.

But all that was just ambiance for my little brain. 'Cause I spent that little eternity staring at the abyss in the back room from the relative safety of my jar-room seat. I didn't know what I was watching for, but I knew it would be big and bad and creeping but somehow fast, and I knew it

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

would mean the end for me and my family and maybe even the whole world, and not even the security those mason jars represented would keep us safe. If Grandma knew so much, why couldn't she have put those shelves across that crawl space hole, like some sort of talisman-laden fence to ward off whatever crept on the other side? Now, obviously, we survived that night, and many more like 'em. But I never went in that basement unless I had to, and I never liked the look of those old mason jars again.

Times have changed, I suppose. Grandma's gone, but her stores of home-canned vegetables are still around, assuming the fella that bought her house hasn't ventured downstairs and purged all reminders of previous occupants. Mom's still got emergency candles squirreled away all over the house, but she doesn't need a basement all that much where she lives these days. And I've come to like the look of mason jars again. I like that I can store up some sense of security and recall the peace of working in the kitchen with those close to me. I don't even mind crawl spaces all that much, long as I've got a good headlamp and fresh batteries. But there is a disturbance that has stayed with me, one I'm sure each of us has felt at some point. There's still the haunting insecurity of the unknown, some gap in our knowledge, a maw of darkness waiting just beyond our vision that knows something of the world we don't. Who knows what those holes hold?

Sometimes I wonder if the disciples travelling with Jesus shared that sense. Here they are, walking with God Incarnate, sure and certain security even in a raging storm, but there's more to him than they can see, some glimpse of eternity at the far end of his being. And while they trust him and know him and even love him, they can't understand what lies on the other side, where brick and dirt stop and unknowing begins. Most of the time, they love being around him, but every so often, he shines some light a little further than they can comfortably see, and what they see is no comfort, at least not yet. Because what Jesus shows them is the reality of this world. His light exposing humanity's hubris, where even the greatest structures will one day fall. A hundred years, a thousand, ten thousand, even, but human permanence is no permanence through the eyes of God.

It takes some time, I think, to grow comfortable with the certainty that, even in our impermanence, God is there. But maybe as we grow comfortable with that certainty, we also grow comfortable with our own uncertainties. See, none of this will last. This too shall pass, yes, but it's more than that somehow. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, the Gospel says, but even those that call for them will not last. But the love of God will. Storms will rage and fear will hold our gaze overly long, but the love of God still shines its light. Maybe it sounds a little apocalyptic, but, well, I suppose it is. Because all things do come to an end, even if we're left with shreds of an old life in one hand and God's love in another, even then there is still comfort. True comfort. Because after all, and especially at the end, who knows what the holy holds?.■

--Fr. Brooks+

Reminder: Sunday sermons are posted on the St. Thomas' website: StThomasHamilton.org

---

On the Lighter Side

Continued from Page 7

A Review of Stephen Nissenbaum's *The Battle for Christmas* New York, 1996

Christmas began as a secular holiday. Secular celebration has always been part of it. Christmas was attached to Roman winter solstice frolicking in earliest times and was not officially designated by the Church as December 25 until the fourth century. Nobody knew the day or season of Jesus' birth, which left the Church free to confirm the popular idea of setting it in the Roman Saturnalia. It gave Christians the opportunity to eat meat, dance, sing, and get drunk like other Romans.

In later centuries most Europeans were hungry most of the year. Food was scarce until harvest; wild game was reserved for aristocrats. After harvest cattle were slaughtered to slow the spring need for cattle feed. The peasants now had time on their hands for feasting, high-jinks and vulgar celebrations. Christian religion took advantage of it, not just for one day but for twelve days or more, with reciprocal gifts, guests, family, and worship. It was a time of peace. War didn't work in winter, and was left for spring.

Stephen Nissenbaum's *The Battle for Christmas* is a detailed account of the cultural and religious struggle in 19th century America between traditional Christmas rowdy discord and modern insistence on gentrified family happiness. Most Americans had ample food year-round, but the solstice and farm free-time were similar to Europe's. After some preliminary friction in Boston, the conflict shifted to New York City—that is, Manhattan—where the population was mushrooming in the 1820s, and included hordes of impoverished residents, who celebrated drunken winter revels. The wealthier gentry responded with an old Dutch hero, St. Nicholas, to celebrate the season with family parties, children's gifts, and tips to beggars. In that context Clement Clarke Moore converted St. Nicholas into Santa Claus and gave Christmas a new, cheerful, romantic hero in "The Night before Christmas," first known as "A Visit from St. Nicholas," published at large in 1827. (pp. 162, 208) But the drunken revels, with fire-crackers, bawdy songs, snowball fights, broken windows, and smashed dishes went on relentlessly. It was a battle for Christmas before the Civil War.

By the 1860s making Christmas an indoor family affair meant giving special gifts selected in the commercial market place. Merchants saw the business, and relied heavily on Christmas advertising. It worked. Sales picked up for the middle classes. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote in 1850 that it was difficult to find Christmas books, pictures, or jewels for people already loaded with them. But it was comparatively easy for parents to delight children. Christmas presents benefitted the economy. Santa Claus was an anti-depressant in hard times.

Nissenbaum makes clear that the battle for Christmas did not occur in the Old South. Like ancient Rome's underprivileged masses, American slaves were desperately poor. Christmas for them was a racist Saturnalia, in which their masters gave them a week of freedom and fed them with banquet food and drink, the better to control them for plantation labor the rest of the year.

The Battle for Christmas is neither pious nor sentimental, but I will conclude with a jolly incident. Wax dolls with eyes that opened and closed were made for Christmas presents as early as 1825. That season a nine-year-old girl screamed that her new doll was alive! We know that excitement was a lasting gift from Santa Claus.■

--Richard Frost

Consider This

Hello, sun in my face. Hello, you who made the morning and spread it over the fields ... Watch, now, how I start the day in happiness, in kindness.

--Mary Oliver (born 1935) is an American poet. She has won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. *The New York Times* described her as "far and away, this country's best-selling poet."

Christmas Eve
Worship at
St. Thomas' Episcopal Church

12 1/2 Madison Street
Hamilton, New York

4:15 PM Carol Sing

4:30 PM Great Festival of Christmas with Holy Eucharist Rite 2

This celebration will include the blessing of the Crèche and Christmas tree, a children's homily, choral offerings, and instrumental music. Younger children are invited to do a special project in the Parish Hall during the adult sermon.

Christmas Day
Worship Service

10:00 AM Holy Eucharist Rite 2
(no music or coffee hour)

Bishop's Advent Bible Study

Can't make it on Thursday mornings but still want to get some more Bible in ya this Advent? Join Bishop DeDe Duncan-Probe of the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York for a live online Bible Study on Thursdays, December 6, 13, & 20 at noon. The bishop and a guest will reflect on the upcoming Sunday's reading from Luke's Gospel, and respond to your questions and comments. Learn how to join in at cnyepiscopal.org/advent-study.■

--Fr. Brooks

Hamilton Ecumenical Youth! H.E.Y.!

All 6-12th Graders Welcome!

Sundays, 4:30-6 PM
Park United Methodist Church

December 2, 16
January 6, 20

A Circle of Quiet: An Advent Respite with The Rev. Elizabeth Gillett

Do you feel as if Christmas is at your throat again? Beginning on **Wednesday, December 5th,** at the Church of the Epiphany, Sherburne, the Rev. Elizabeth Gillett will be offering **A Circle of Quiet,** a meditative candlelit service of Compline (Page 127 of the Book of Common Prayer) at 7PM, in Epiphany's chapel.

The purpose of the service is to be a time of calm and recollection in the midst of the frenzy of the secular "holiday season"; to remember the true reason for celebrating Christmas; and to simply rest in God's love for half-an-hour or so.

Elizabeth will be offering a meditation, as well as periods of silence, interspersed between the prayers and Scripture. She will be offering **A Circle of Quiet** on Wednesdays, December 12th and 19th as well.

The Church of the Epiphany is located at 5 Classic Street, which is a block east of Route 12B, in the heart of Sherburne. The Chapel, which is handicapped accessible, is located on the south side of the church on the side street which intersects Classic Street. Everyone is very welcome.■

A Prayer

God of love, we give thanks for your presence this day. How wonderful it is to be fully seen, known, and loved by you. We rest in the knowledge that you will go with us all the days of our lives. Amen.

--Sojourners

Jazz at Noon
at the Palace Underground

Arts at the PALACE

JAZZ@NOON!
~CONTINUES IN 2019~
SATURDAY, JANUARY 12
12-2 PM

For more information,

Check out the *Arts at the Palace* website:
artsatthepalace.org

Arts at the Palace
19 Utica St.
Hamilton, New York

Parishioners Star in Local Theater

Step back in time and get in the holiday spirit with a radio play performance of the classic, ***It's a Wonderful Life,*** **on Saturday, December 8.** The one-hour show is at 1 PM at the Earlville Opera House and admission is free as part of the Earlville Christmas Festival. Parishioner Kerry Linden takes the role of Mary Bailey in this recreation of a live radio broadcast of the Lux Radio Theater version of the movie.

Vivi Linden, the better-known thespian in the family, will perform in the ensemble of the Hamilton Central School middle school production of ***Mary Poppins*** **on Friday, December 14 and Saturday, December 15**. Both shows are at 7 PM. A small admission price supports the student drama program.

We hope you can come out to enjoy local theater during this holiday season!■

--Kerry Linden

Worth Repeating

Love is the big booming beat which covers up the noise of hate.

--Margaret Cho (born 1968) is an American stand-up comedian, actress, fashion designer, author, and singer-songwriter. Cho is best known for her stand-up routines, through which she critiques social and political problems, especially regarding race and sexuality

WINTER
AT THE PALACE

Winter at the Palace is a gala evening of fine entertainment, specialty foods, and spirits to benefit Arts at the Palace (AATP), Saturday, December 8, 7 PM-11 PM, AATP. The evening will feature a live and silent auction, music performed by the Jess Novak Band, and food and drinks provided by Chartwell's. Email: director@artsatthepalace.org. Advance tickets: $50; At the door: $60.

STOP - LOOK - FEEL

WATERCOLORS
by

JANA KOLOWRAT LAXA

HAMILTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

December 18, 2018 – February 7, 2019

OPENING RECEPTION:
January 7, 2019
4:30-5:30 PM

December at St. Thomas'

Regular Weekly Events

Holy Eucharist: Sundays, 8 AM & 10 AM.

Nursery Care: Sundays, 9:45 AM.

Church School: Sundays, Teen Class, 9 AM; Godly Play (5-11 years), 9:45 AM.

Adult Education Class: Sundays, 11:30 AM.

Friendship Inn Community Meal: Mondays, 5 PM, Parish Hall (Closed December 24 & 31).

Prayer Group: Thursdays, 9:30 AM. All are welcome.

Bible Study: Thursdays, 10 AM. All are welcome.

Choir Rehearsal: Thursdays, 7:30 PM.

Special Events

Advent Lessons & Carols: Sunday, December 9, 10 AM.

H.E.Y!, Sunday, December 2 & 16, 4:30 PM, Park United Methodist Church.

Flower Guild decorates the Church, Sunday, December 23, after the 10 AM service.

Great Festival of Christmas with Holy Eucharist Rite 2, Monday, December 24, 4:30 PM, preceded by a **carol sing-a-long,** 4:15 PM.

Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25, Rite 2, 10 AM (no music).

January at St. Thomas'

Regular Weekly Events

Holy Eucharist: Sundays, 8 AM & 10 AM.

Nursery Care: Sundays, 9:45 AM.

Church School: Sundays, Teen Class, 9 AM; Godly Play (5-11 years), 9:45 AM.

Adult Education Class: Sundays, 11:30 AM.

Friendship Inn Community Meal: Mondays, 5 PM, Parish Hall (St. Thomas' cooks January 7).

Prayer Group: Thursdays, 9:30 AM. All are welcome.

Bible Study: Thursdays, 10 AM. All are welcome.

Choir Rehearsal: Thursdays, 7:30 PM.

Special Events

Epiphany Pageant, Sunday, January 6, 10 AM.

H.E.Y!, Sunday, January 6 & 20, 4:30 PM-6 PM, Park United Methodist Church.

Friday Night Lights, January 25, St. Thomas' Parish Hall.

Prayers of the People

For those in need: Richard Capirci, Sue Cato, Barbara Crysdale, Joan Farmer, Alea Floyd, Alice Frick, Robin Jaycox, Steve Jones, Brenda Jordan, Megan Marshall, Liam Meyer, Karen Neary, Wilma Peters, Mary Putnam, Thaddaeus Rowe, Ella Ryan, June Schaupp, Paul Schupf, Sheryl Scott, Ed Sitts, Bert, Dave & Bev McKay, Don & Maria Searles, The Babinec Family, The Jones Family.

For the departed: Stephanie Anderson, Diane Babinec, Ted Barker, Helen Burrows, Denzil Duncan, Mike Gieryic, Pamela Harvey, Jason Pomeroy, The Rev. Joan Shelton.

December Thanksgivings

Birthdays: Barb Hicks (12/02), John Catania, (12/10), Layla Hubbard (12/11), Allen Schult (12/13), Barbara Bartlett (12/16), Debbie Barker (12/17), Steve Barker (12/17), Fay Cole (12/19), Bev McKay (12/23), Lynn Staley (12/24), Robert Maziarz (12/28), Madelyn Knapp (12/31).

Wedding Anniversaries: Robert Maziarz & George Weaver (12/14), Dee & Michael Keller (12/31) .

Baptism Anniversaries: Edward Scheinman, Lara Scott (12/01), Danny Jerome (12/03), Becky Hubbard (12/13), Tom Brackett (12/21), Edward Page (12/22), Laura Schmitt (12/24), Susan Cerasano (12/27), Helen Kebabian (12/27).

January Thanksgivings

Birthdays: Stan Dakosty (1/02), Bruce Rivington (1/05), Simon Williams (1/07), Jane Scheinman (1/09), Shannon Strohmeyer (1/09), Janice Frutiger (1/13), Isadora Catania, (1/14), Jana Laxa (1/14), Susan Trueworthy (1/15), Taylor McDowell (1/20), Millie Franklin (1/22), Nicolas Catania (1/22), Morgan Davies (1/23), Madison DeAngelis (1/24), David Sturges (1/25), Laura Trueworthy (1/29).

Wedding Anniversaries: Bev & Dave McKay (1/22).

Baptism Anniversaries: Susannah Davies, Lucien Catania (1/03), Debbie Barker (1/04), June Schaupp (1/06), Layla Hubbard (1/11), Jamie Rivington (1/12), Rocco Catania (1/18), Kristen Meadows (1/29).

Scripture Lesson

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

--Amos 5:24

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Scheduled to Serve
December 2018

Date	Lectors	Eucharistic Ministers/ Worship Leaders	Acolytes	Ushers/Greeters	Nursery Helpers	Altar Guild	Flower Guild	Coffee Hour
Dec 2 Advent 1	10 AM Barbara Bowen Tom Brackett	8 AM Susan Cerasano 10 AM Maureen Ghent	10 AM Bergen Linden Erik Geier Sicily Catania Isadora Catania	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM Jana Laxa Luke Marshall **Greeter:** 10 AM Melissa Davies	9:45 AM Nancy Heck	Mea Martineau	Jana Laxa	Irene Brown
Dec 9 Advent 2	10 AM Adger Williams Lynn Staley Linda Jenks Emily Hutton-Hughes	8 AM Evelyn Hart 10 AM Barbara Bowen	10 AM Sam Williams Erik Geier Nick Catania Vivianna Linden	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM Rose & John Novak **Greeter:** 10 AM Nancy Heck	9:45 AM Nan Schmitt	Mea Martineau	Jana Laxa	TBA
Dec 16 Advent 3	10 AM Luke Marshall Lee Anne Miller	8 AM Susan Cerasano 10 AM Debbie Barker	10 AM Erik Geier Bergen Linden Adriana Catania Sicily Catania	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM Rose & John Novak **Greeter:** 10 AM Liz Brackett	9:45 AM Rose Novak	Emily Hutton-Hughes	Jana Laxa	Linda Jenks Madalyn Jones
Dec 23 Advent 4	10 AM Rose Novak Lynn Staley	8 AM Amy Jerome 10 AM Maureen Ghent	10 AM Bergen Linden Sam Williams Isadora Catania Nick Catania	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM Jana Laxa & David Sturges **Greeter:** 10 AM Melissa Davies	9:45 AM Liz Brackett	Emily Hutton-Hughes	Jana Laxa	TBA
Dec 24 Christmas Eve Rite 2	4:30 PM Jane Welsh Kristin Strohmeyer	4:30 PM Debbie Barker	4:30 PM Sam Williams Erik Geier Viviana Linden Adriana Catania	**Ushers:** 4:30 PM TBA **Greeter:** 4:30 PM Nancy Heck	4:00 PM Molly Osborne TBA	Wynn Egginton	All Members	N/A
Dec 25 Christmas Day Rite 2	10 AM TBA	10 AM TBA	10 AM N/A	**Ushers:** 10 AM TBA	10 AM N/A	Emily Hutton-Hughes	All Members	N/A
Dec 30 Christmas 1	10 AM Ellie Weyter Adger Williams	8 AM Evelyn Hart 10 AM Barbara Bowen	10 AM Erik Geier Sam Williams Sicily Catania Isadora Catania	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM TBA **Greeter:** 10 AM Liz Brackett	9:45 AM Nancy Heck	Wynn Egginton	Jana Laxa	Ted Engle Lee Anne Miller

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Scheduled to Serve
January 2019

Date	Lectors	Eucharistic Ministers	Acolytes	Ushers/Greeters	Nursery Helpers	Altar Guild	Flower Guild	Coffee Hour
Jan 6 **Epiphany Pageant/ Youth Liturgy**	10 AM TBA TBA	8 AM Amy Jerome 10 AM Debbie Barker **(Chalice Bearer)** **Prayers of the People:** TBA	10 AM Bergen Linden Erik Geier Adriana Catania Vivianna Linden	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM TBA TBA **Usher Mentors:** Jana Laxa & David Sturges **Offertory Team:** TBA **Greeters:** TBA **Mentor:** Nancy Heck	9:45 AM Rose Novak	Ellie Weyter	Jana Laxa	TBA
Jan 13 **1 Epiphany**	10 AM Sam Williams Tom Brackett	8 AM Susan Cerasano 10 AM Maureen Ghent	10 AM Erik Geier Bergen Linden Sicily Catania June Loranty	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM Rose & John Novak **Greeter:** 10 AM Melissa Davies	9:45 AM Nan Schmitt	Ellie Weyter	Jana Laxa	TBA
Jan 20 **2 Epiphany**	10 AM Linda Jenks Emily Hutton-Hughes	8 AM Evelyn Hart 10 AM Barbara Bowen	10 AM Sam Williams Erik Geier Nick Catania Emilija Morkevicius	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM Erin & Michael Loranty **Greeter:** 10 AM Nancy Heck	9:45 AM Liz Brackett	Elizabeth Gillett	Jana Laxa	TBA
Jan 27 **3 Epiphany**	10 AM Luke Marshall Lee Anne Miller	8 AM Amy Jerome 10 AM Debbie Barker	10 AM Bergen Linden Sam Williams Adriana Catania Ingrida Morkevicius	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM Valorie & Matas Morkevicius **Greeter:** 10 AM Liz Brackett	9:45 AM Nancy Heck	Elizabeth Gillett	Jana Laxa	TBA
Feb 3 **4 Epiphany**	10 AM Lynn Staley Kristin Strohmeyer	8 AM Susan Cerasano 10 AM Maureen Ghent	10 AM Erik Geier Bergen Linden Sicily Catania June Loranty	**Ushers:** 8 AM Edward Page 10 AM TBA **Greeter:** 10 AM Melissa Davies	9:45 AM Nan Schmitt	Susan Beattie	Jana Laxa	TBA

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
12 1/2 Madison St.
Hamilton, NY 13346

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Hamilton, NY 13346
Permit No. 80

Tidings

December 2018-January 2019

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church