



ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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The mission of St. Thomas Church is to make God's love known by who we are, what we practice and how we serve others in Christ's Name.

Dear Friends,

Thursday, October 1, 2020

I hope all is well and healthy with you and your extended families. Here we are, coming back together after having been apart since March.

First and foremost, on behalf of the Vestry, Thank you! There is so much that each of you have done to help us remain strong even with the difficulties of the pandemic. Amid a time when St. Thomas' doors have been closed and our church lives completely disrupted, your commitment and support has been extraordinary to meet the challenges and even fulfil our 2020 pledges. Your stewardship has made all the difference! I believe that what we as a congregation have done, with regards to 2020 pledges, shows the extent of the graciousness, generosity, and love that we hold towards our spiritual community of St. Thomas, each other and the outreach mission we continue to support together.

With all the disruption we have experienced in our church lives, and with not everything back to how it used to be, the operation of the church continues. Especially now, our mission is critical: *to make God's love known by who we are, what we practice and how we serve others in Christ's Name.* Our ability to realize our mission has meant adapting, learning, and changing more...and repeating this every week it seems. On top of that, we are not coming back in the usual start of a program year or our own liturgical life that we love so dearly. Still, our mission and the importance of St. Thomas as a touchstone remains front and center.

The Vestry and Finance Committee continues to work hard to manage expenses in light of all of the work that had to be undertaken to ensure we would be in position to re-open as soon as we were allowed. The extent of deep-cleaning and disinfecting that continues to be undertaken represents a significant increase in staff labor costs. Following the guidelines to resume operations, the church has had to invest in various air purifier systems and ventilation maintenance, as well as additional disinfecting equipment, such as electrostatic sprayers. These are one-time purchases that have been able to be absorbed into the 2020 budget. Labor, however, remains a challenge.

The extent of the incremental labor hours required to allow us to hold our proposed service schedule for this program year is large. The additional hours needed to perform the deep cleaning and disinfecting throughout the church (even aside from St. Thomas Nursery School), between services and during the week has meant an increase the number of hours required for the entire facilities staff and moving one of our staff members to full-time status.

As we now embark upon the 2020-2021 program year, it is time to consider what these extra provisions mean for the 2021 Operating Budget and our Annual Giving Pledge Appeal. The Vestry is asking for your prayerful consideration to increase your family's pledge by 8%, to help cover these increased expenses. Such an increase, along with the continued efforts to control expenses will help ensure that we can continue to maintain a balanced budget, considering our increased staffing costs.

The importance of Annual Giving Pledges and online giving has been seen even more acutely this year. If you currently do not pledge, we ask you to consider doing so. Having everyone participate by making a pledge means we can more accurately budget our resources and share the work of ministry that much more gracefully. Every dollar is honored, valued, and is carefully spent. St. Thomas continues to grow in numbers and vibrancy because of the generosity and commitment of our congregation with our time, talent as well as treasure shared.

As you know, my past custom has always been to talk about our stewardship during a Parish Breakfast and to respond to all questions and comments. We are not able to come together in that manner this year. We are looking at the feasibility of having an abbreviated session in the Sanctuary after services. Regardless, I am always available to answer any questions you may have regarding the budget or financial status of St. Thomas.

I encourage you to contact me directly at (513) 484-5600 or by email: jjdavis@cinci.rr.com

With a grateful heart. God Bless!



Jim Davis, Sr. Warden