



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,

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

I hope all is well and healthy with you and your extended families. I also hope everyone is feeling the excitement with the start of our program year. It is amazing to consider that it has been a full three years since the last time we kicked off the liturgical year with the full array of programming and ministries!!

On behalf of the Vestry, thank you for your continued support on behalf of St. Thomas. Over these last three years there has never been a sense that our strength or commitment within our spiritual community wavered. It is never lost on me nor the members of the Vestry, how blessed and honored we are to serve on behalf of a gracious and loving congregation.

As we now embark upon the 2022-2023 program year, I need to share with you the other dynamics that are playing upon St. Thomas. It will not surprise you how the state of economy has impacted Church finances. I have been struggling on how to share this matter, knowing that all of you are experiencing the same pressures on your own household budgets. We are experiencing an increase of our operating expenses, in line with inflation of 10% in most areas, but harder still with others of 15%+.

As it stands now with known and projected expenses, there is no realistic way to have a balanced budget as we currently stand. We would all agree, a balanced budget is essential to maintain the financial sustainability and ensure our ability to strive to meet our physical and spiritual goals. Our ability to deliver to the St. Thomas Mission Statement *To make God's love known by who we are, what we practice and how we serve others in Christ's name* must be done through fiscal responsibility – as good stewards of limited resources. It is important to acknowledge the hard work of the Finance Committee over these last three years. As you have heard me share with you over these years with the pandemic, St. Thomas has lost revenue streams (e.g. loose plate offerings) that have exceeded \$80,000. We should note that while annual pledging has remained strong, fulfillment of pledges has seen greater volatility in these years; we have had to rely on our cash reserves quite heavily with certain months. The Finance Teams have worked diligently and responsibly in making sure our budget is as lean as practicable. Even with all that work, factoring in current costs levels, the budget cannot be balanced.

The Leadership of St. Thomas has clarity that financial strength only happens through your generosity. The Vestry asks for your prayerful consideration of how you can best support our common mission with our Annual Giving Appeal for 2023. The importance of Annual Giving Pledges and online giving has never been greater. If you currently do not pledge, I invite you to join us and prayerfully consider starting this year as we continue to rebuild. Having everyone participate by making an annual pledge means we can accurately budget our resources as well as share the work of ministry that much more gracefully. Your pledge matters! 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.

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 either by email by email jimjennydavis@gmail.com or by phone at (513) 484-5600. Don't forget to be with us on Sunday, October 9. Father Darren and I will be hosting a Church Town Hall Gathering so that we may personally answer questions or address concerns as we discern how best to support St. Thomas in 2023. Join us for breakfast and this important conversation together. Our pledges will be celebrated and dedicated at the Altar on All Saints' Sunday, November 6.

With a grateful heart. God Bless!

Jim Davis, Sr. Warden