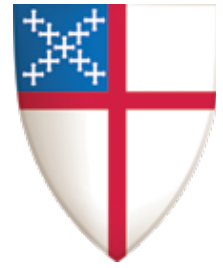


The NewSpirit

Being a Light to the World: Worship • Youth • Discipleship
St. Thomas Episcopal Church Battle Creek, Michigan
Fall 2023



The Birth of a New Ministry: Laundry Love

by the Rev. Patricia Harris

The St. Thomas **Laundry Love** will kick off on Tuesday, Sept. 26th.

The St. Thomas community along with other volunteers will have the opportunity to connect with people who are struggling financially and provide them with free laundry services, as well as build relationships and create a more caring, collaborative community.

The St. Thomas Laundry Love (STLL) is a program built on the national success of the Laundry Love (LL) program, founded in 2003 in Ventura California. The following excerpts are taken from the Laundry Love website (laundrylove.org) to showcase how this laundry ministry was born and the love that is connected to it.:

The story of Laundry Love began with T-Bone (Eric), a houseless gentleman living in Ventura California. In one particular conversation, a question was asked of him: "How can we come alongside your life in a meaningful way?" His response was honest and practical. "If I had clean clothes, I

think people would treat me like a human being."



Laundry organization lives through and detergent. For the past 20 years, Laundry Love has met with volunteers and guests of the community to wash the clothes and bedding of low/no income families and persons across the United States. Laundry Love's approach to hygiene insecurity as a human care initiative creates meaningful moments of shared connection that go beyond clean clothes and creates real community.

Laundry Love seeks to bring economic relief by giving the individual or family the option to redirect funds toward food,

medical, gas or transportation costs as well as other basic, everyday necessities. We believe it's crucial to create a way for all people to live with dignity, and for our guests to be afforded the opportunity — even in seemingly small ways — to care for themselves and their families.

Since 2003, over 2 million loads of laundry and more than 1.5 million people have been served through Laundry Love nationally.

Laundry Love has partnered with Earth Breeze, a laundry detergent company, which donates an unlimited amount of Earth Breeze laundry sheets to each Laundry Love ministry. Each ministry facilitator simply contacts Earth Breeze when they're ready for more laundry sheets and they are sent to the facilitator free of charge.

STLL is partnering with Finish Line Laundromat, which has offered to waive the \$1.50 cost for each laundry card assigned to the STLL. Finish Line is welcoming the STLL into their laundromat on

continued on p. 2

“Laundry Love” cont. from p.1

20th & Territorial, which is just off the bus line.

The STLL will offer free laundry services every Tuesday, (with a few “break days” built in) with up to four loads per family/individual each week. Laundry services will be offered from either 9 a.m.-12 p.m. or 4-7 p.m. on Tuesday in order to accommodate a variety of schedules.

One volunteer will greet guests and document info to include how many loads each guest will be doing that day. Other volunteers will accompany guests to washing machines and dryers and pay with the laundry cards. Guests will be provided with Earth Breeze Eco Sheets, and will also have access to dryer balls, large bags if they need something to put their clean clothes in, drinks, and snacks.

In addition to providing care for those who are struggling financially, STLL will be focused on nurturing relationships. There are a lot of opportunities to creatively fill time in a laundromat, and STLL



intends to make use of this time by building meaningful relationships with others.

I applied and was awarded an \$8,000 grant from the Bishop Whittemore Foundation.

Engaging with one another with love and respect, particularly those who are struggling or suffering, and coming to walk alongside another – these are actions that we can take as followers of Jesus.

St. Thomas is also assisting in funding this new laundry ministry. A total of \$1,000 will be applied to the STLL: \$500 from the deacon’s ministries fund and \$500 from another line item. I have had several conversations with the Kellogg Foundation and have an interview with them later this month.

One of the beautiful characteristics of the Laundry Love ministry is that it is low-maintenance. It requires funds to purchase a limited number of items and

Left to right: Emilie Cummins, Bev Case, Rita Bailey, Monica Gray, Brenda Hillman and Elsie Gibson enjoy at afternoon at Cornwell’s Turkeyville in August.

it requires only a handful of volunteers each week. And yet, the benefits are enormous – for the guests who utilize the Laundry Love services and for the volunteers who accompany others in the “simple but costly” task of doing laundry.

Engaging with one another with love and respect, particularly those who are struggling or suffering, and coming to walk alongside another – these are actions that we can take as followers of Jesus. As simple as it sounds – these are the actions that can change our lives.

How might you become involved in this ministry?

1. Volunteer (I will be posting dates and times on Realm).
2. Donate funds to purchase required items and time for the washers and dryers.
3. Pray for this ministry and for all the people impacted by it.

Thank You for your support.



Pledge Update

From Bookkeeper Melissa Wank for pledges received as of August 17, 2023:

Total Pledges for 2023: \$231,556 Total Received as of 8/17/2023: \$155,701

Pledge Balance: \$75,855

We appear to be in good shape for this point in the year.

Make a Joyful Noise

by Dr. Stephen White, PhD, Director of Music

After a much-needed summer break, the choirs of St. Thomas Church will return to help lead the liturgies on the second Sunday in September. The schedule of Eucharists, monthly Choral Evensong, and the Advent services of Lessons & Carols is set, and the planning of music is complete. We are excited about the year ahead and are very fortunate and blessed to have such dedicated and talented musicians.

There is, however, plenty of room for new faces/voices. If you have ever considered joining the choir, we hope you might consider giving it a try. While the commitment is great, so are the rewards of spiritual growth, strong friendships, and musical & liturgical knowledge. Rehearsals take place each Wednesday from 4:30-6:00pm (choristers) and 7:00-9:00pm (adults). Please speak to any choir member or Dr. White for more information. Additionally, the choirs have been invited to sing Eucharist and Evensong services at St. James Cathedral in Toronto, Canada in June 2024. Stay tuned for more details regarding this travel experience.

A colleague in the Association of Anglican Musicians wrote a brief article I would like to share here in its entirety – I hope every member of the parish considers it seriously

and opens their hearts (and voices) as we all sing praise to God!

Almost weekly I hear churchpeople talk about how they “can’t carry a tune in a bucket” and therefore abstain during hymns. I tell them what I’ll tell anyone:



You hear three distinct layers of sound in church singing:

- 1. Relatively trained voices, in parts when appointed, almost exactly on the beat (this is the choir)*
- 2. Voices of all varieties, generally on the tune (in rare instances in parts), somewhat behind the beat due to the space and natural acoustics (these are the confident congregational singers)*
- 3. A low, gravelly din that doesn't resemble the tune, but includes the words, humming under the first two groups.*

The third group is my favorite part of congregational singing; it's what reminds us that all the people of different stripes in the whole

*room are trying—are *trying*, are participating, are for that moment welded to the Body which they come to share. Without them, it would be a choral concert. But with that corporate hum, there's an electricity that doesn't happen in any other kind of singing.*

This is my plea: if you've set down your bucket, consider grunting something out during the next hymn. Because if you do it, the other 5 or 50 or 100 people just like you will see and will do it too. And then everyone in the room will be in the same boat - lost in wonder, love, and praise!"

– **Gabriel Rhys Simerson,**
Director of Music
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Burke VA

Soli Deo Gloria! ■

Join the Choir!

Come join a great group of volunteer and professional musicians.

Wednesdays from 7-9 p.m.
Sundays from 9-11:30 a.m.
and 3-6 p.m.*

**once per month
for Choral Evensong*

**Great music. Great people.
Great fun.**

Information:
music@StThomasBC.org

Dear Friends,



My summer has been a bit different than I expected.

At the end of June, two days after flying home from my nephew's wedding in Vancouver, British Columbia, I started feeling lousy — and tested positive for Covid. I took the Paxlovid treatment, which helped, but then after getting somewhat better I had a Covid “rebound” and I was pretty sick for another 10 days.



Overall I was down with Covid for a good three weeks. I am super grateful now to be feeling much, much better and I'm glad to be able to get back to work!

The vestry and I have agreed to work on a few initial goals over the next weeks and months. Here they are:

Goal 1 To support the core elements of the ongoing life of this parish: Sunday and mid-week celebrations of Eucharist, pastoral care, and support for parish leaders in their ministries.

Goal 2 To celebrate and communicate about the life of this parish and its ministries, and the good work of the many leaders and volunteers who are doing wonderful Gospel service.

Goal 3 To create a clear and detailed 2024 Budget that can be

used as a guide for the financial dimension of our parish life. We have also begun to plan for an audit of our parish financial practices and records which is now required by our diocese.

We will also be looking ahead to add new goals to this list once we

feel we've made good progress on goals 2 and 3 above.

These new goals might include the following: 1) developing, with parish leaders, a list of improvements we would like to make before the arrival of a new rector; and 2) exploring and implementing ways we can welcome, include, and encourage the children, teenagers, and young adults in our parish.

I look forward to our work together, and especially to the ongoing “work” of gathering on Sunday mornings and Wednesdays at noon to listen to the scriptures, to pray for our needs and those of others, and to celebrate God's welcome to all by making Eucharist together. ■

Gratefully,

Rick

The St. Thomas Choir School



Learn New Skills
No Musical Experience Required
Build Friendships
Travel domestically and internationally

Open to all regardless of faith background. Boys & girls age 8-18 (up to voice change for boys)

Schedule

Wednesdays: Rehearsal from 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Sundays: the Choristers generally sing once or twice per month – usually one Eucharist and one Evensong

The 2023-24 choir year begins on Wednesday, September 6th.

Email

music@StThomasBC.org for information or to enroll your child.



Come, Labor On

Continuing our ministry after the Breakfast Program

by Liz Neumeyer

When Roy Hillman announced that we were not going to continue the Breakfast Program, I thought it was significant that the closing hymn was “Come, labor on.” I knew the decision was coming and have been thinking of how to continue the ministry.

My credo is Matthew 25:40
“Inasmuch as you have done this for the least of these.” I can see how I can still do this and I want to share it with you in hopes that you will join me. The third verse of Come, Labor on says: “Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fear, No arm so weak but may do service here, by feeblest agents may our God fulfill his righteous will.”

Well I hardly consider myself feeble but I can’t do the things I did ten years ago when I joined St. Thomas. I valued the Breakfast Program ministry but I totally agree with the decision to end it in September. We still do other food-related projects like our Holiday Baskets and Backpack Program.

So how am I planning to labor on? There are two groups in town, the Share Center and the Battle Creek Shelter that are doing many of the things we have always supported. The Share Center provides meals three times a day and so does the Battle Creek Shelter. This was not true when we started our Breakfast Program. There are now more food options. These two places need many of the things we collected for our breakfast guests

like socks, gloves, shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, combs and so on. We can keep doing this and I am going to ask St. Mary’s Circle to take the organizing lead in doing this at our church. We will need other people



The Breakfast Program has been a joyful ministry of St. Thomas since 2009, and has served thousands of meals.

to do most of the delivery. Trish has already made connections with the two organizations.

I was amazed that not everyone has heard of the Battle Creek Shelter. It is at 209 East Michigan and was a former lawyer’s office. He built a large pole building in the back for his kids to play basketball. This building now provides shelter for men and women. Their website is out of date as it says only men housed overnight, but this has changed and they provide shelter for women. They have meals, laundry facilities, showers, and provide things like bus passes. They just received a grant to expand the

women’s section.

This was established by the Battle Creek Community Foundation in 2020 in the midst of the pandemic. You can support it monetarily by donating through the Battle Creek Community Foundation. A future plan is to have a separate facility where families with children can find shelter. The Share Center also takes monetary donations.

Of course, there are plenty of other groups to support in whatever way you choose, like my favorite – Charitable Union, but also the Haven/Inasmuch, United Way, and so on. There are food pantries that need help. But the above two come closest to me to what we have been doing. I hope you will be interested in joining me in any way that you can. There are plenty of volunteer ministry opportunities in our community. We will labor on but in a way that fits our capabilities now.



Special thanks to all the volunteers, both from St. Thomas and from other organizations and churches, for their hard work.

Discernment Team News and Notes

by Liz Neumeyer, Discernment Team Co-Chair

The Discernment Team has been meeting weekly (except for Memorial Day week) to develop the parish survey. Canon Tracie Little was here to preside and preach on our fifth Sunday pot luck. Thanks to everyone who came and brought food. We have not had one of our Fifth Sunday pot lucks since Covid. It was good to have the parish together after so long. The team met with Canon Little afterward to get up-to-date on the rest of the process of searching for a new rector. Her guidance is important to our success in finding a faithful leader.

Thanks to all of you for taking the time to fill out the survey. We tried to contact everyone through church attendance, email, Realm and home visits. We reached just over 60%, a preferred standard return rate for surveys, so we are gathering the results. They will go into the Parish Profile which describes our church and what we want in a rector. We have done much of the first part that is history and not dependent on survey answers. We may also use the 2021 RenewalWorks survey information with the agreement of Canons Ambrose and Little.

On Sunday, August 20th, the team will meet to compile the results into a program that shows them in a graph form. In our regular meeting on August 30th, we will have a ZOOM meeting with Canon Little who will give us tips on writing the profile. The Profile

must be accepted by both the vestry and the diocese. Remember if you have good photos, Charles and Nathan set up a box for you to submit them or just bring them to us if they are not digital.

We thank you for your faith in us and ask for your prayers for the team and for all the people of the parish.

Another item we have to deal with is the OTM (Office of Transition Management) document. Canon Little will assist us with this too. Both the prospective rectors and the parishes prepare this and it is rather like a “dating app” to match rector with parish. Once we have candidates, we will proceed to start with written answer process, then move to interviewing, and visiting either via ZOOM or by visiting the rector. This has to be done confidentially and carefully to not divulge to their own congregation that they are searching. Because of this, we cannot tell you anything until a candidate is chosen, not even the number of candidates. Hopefully there will be choice. Perhaps climate change will help make Michigan much more attractive to a new rector.

We thank you for your faith in us and ask for your prayers for the team and for all the people of the

parish. Father Rick has developed one that we will say in each service. The prayer text is: *“Loving God, giver of every good gift, guide our congregation during this transition, that we may grow in our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to each other; and that we may discern the call of a faithful leader to join us on our journey as a church and in our diocese, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”*

We have an excellent Discernment Team: Rita Bailey, Charles Grantier, Nathan Isaacs, Kyle Lendel, Liz Neumeyer, Yvette Petti, and Hans Prechtel. We are working hard to represent you. Our meetings through August are on Wednesday evening. However, since three members are in the choir, we will be changing the day after August when choir rehearsal begins on Wednesday evenings. Before we used Mondays but we have not yet decided on a day. Canon Little’s sabbath is on Monday so we might consider another day and will let you know.



Next *NewSpirit* Deadline

November 15, 2023
for Advent, Christmastide and
Epiphany events

Email to karmel@bcppg.com
Karmel Addis,
NewSpirit editor.

Holy Hikes Comes to Battle Creek!

Holy Hikes is a church-wide eco-ministry network affiliated with the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Communion and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. It was developed with the goal of helping individuals be renewed in their relationship with the earth, the Church, and the Creator. Holy Hikes calls us beyond the walls of comfort, to take a step (or a hike!) towards reunion with the earth and all of its life and beauty. The St. Thomas Parish Growth & Development Commission is coordinating this event for St. Thomas parishioners to participate!

When and Where?

October 14th at 1:00 p.m.
Woodland Park and Nature Preserve
2518 Gethings Rd., Battle Creek
Use the park entrance on Gethings Road.

(Visit their website for information about handicap accessibility and maps.)

What?

Less than 3 mile hike.
Leashed dogs are welcome!

FAQs and Details

How should we pack for a Holy Hike?

For all participants to keep safe and healthy during our hikes, we ask that you pack the following items:

- Water bottle with plenty of water
- Bug spray (look for one that wards off ticks)
- Sunscreen
- (If bringing a dog) Six-foot leash and waste baggies



- (Optional) Bag chair, for fellowship at the trailhead
- Please wear close-toed shoes, comfortable for heavy walking.

Who's invited?

Holy Hikes are open to all – you do not need to be an Episcopalian or a member of a church to join. Bring friends!



There are no age limits to participation, but we do require that any minors (kids under 18) be accompanied by a designated adult.

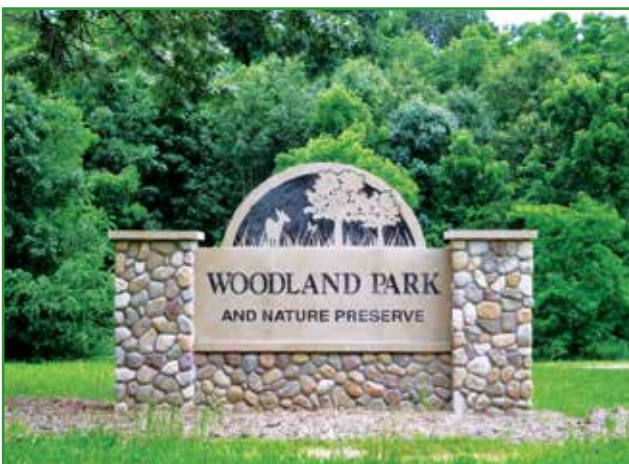
Can my dog come?

Friendly dogs are welcome to join us if permitted by the particular site. In all circumstances, the dog should be leashed (6 ft. max leash) and all waste picked up and removed.

We must RSVP before September 23rd with number of people attending. Please contact any member of the Parish Growth & Development Commission before September 9th if you plan to attend or add your name to the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board across from the office.

Parish Growth & Development

Kathy Dingwall, Brenda Hillman and Lori Kiess



Holy Hikes: Connecting

The salvation of humanity, existence of God's Church on this planet, and the healing of Mother Earth are intricately tied together in one sacred heartbeat. This belief is at the heart of eco-Ministry and guides our work through Holy Hikes®.

"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" – Romans 8:19

ST. THOMAS
Episcopal
CHURCH



16 E. Van Buren Street
Battle Creek, MI 49017-3916
Phone (269) 965-2244
www.StThomasBC.org

The Rev. Rick Stravers
Priest-in-Charge

The Rev. Trish Harris
Deacon

Dr. Stephen White
Director of Music

Kathy Dingwall
Senior Warden

Melissa Wank
Bookkeeper

Keith Phillips
Parish Contemplative

Parish Schedule

Sundays

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist
5:00 p.m. Choral Evensong
(first Sunday of the month
with 4:30 Organ Recital)

Weekdays Live-Streamed

Monday – Friday
9:00 a.m. Morning Prayer
5:00 p.m. Evening Prayer

Wednesdays

11:00 a.m. Bible Study
in the Lounge
12:00 p.m. Holy Eucharist

Office Hours

Monday – Friday
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Calhoun County Celebrates PRIDE!

St. Thomas collaborated with Episcopal parishes in Calhoun County to celebrate Battle Creek PRIDE July 21st-22nd.



Brightly-clad Episcopalians from St. Thomas and Trinity Church in Marshall showed up for the parade, bringing messages of love.



Members of Trinity Church, Marshall and Church of the Resurrection joined us for the festival to staff our booth.

