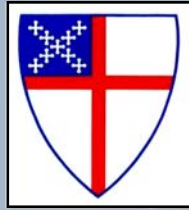


The Builder

Making Disciples for Jesus Christ

St. Thomas's Episcopal Church
(540) 672-3761
Rector: The Rev. Dr. Lin Hutton



www.stthomasorange.org
email: stthomas3@verizon.net
Editor: Ann Wood

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Issue No. 1

From the Pastor

This month we pass through the midst of two Church seasons—the **Season of Epiphany** and the **Season of Lent**. The Season of Epiphany is often called the Season of Light as Christ is made known to the world, first through the adoration of gentiles who traveled from afar to herald a newborn “King of the Jews,” then through the prophecy of John and Jesus’ baptism by John in the River Jordan, then through Jesus’ self-proclamation: “*The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand.*” [Mk 1.15], then through Jesus’ miraculous ability to cast out demons and heal the sick, and lastly in the divine experience of the “Transfiguration of Jesus” as Peter, James and John hear the voice of God affirm “*This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him!*” [Mk 9:7]—all ‘signs’ of the inbreaking and long-awaited Kingdom of God in the very person of Jesus the Christ of God. Yet, during this month we will also pass-through **Ash Wednesday** and the reminder of our transient, mortality. We tread cautiously into the penitential Season of Lent as we remember that, like us, Jesus himself was tempted and that the shadow of the Cross looms over his ministry.

How very different this COVID-19 world is for us and for our ability to worship together as the Body of Christ. Yet I am reminded of what my Church History professor, the late Don Armentrout once noted. He said that as baptized Christians, we serve the Church for the sake of the Kingdom. All too often, he said, people—clergy and laity—see the Church as an end in itself. Rather, the Church is God’s instrument in the world to show the world what the Kingdom of God is like. The Church is a “sign” of the Kingdom; a sign that always points beyond itself. However, a sign is not nearly as important as that to which it points. The Church points beyond itself to the Kingdom of God. The Church announces to the world that the Kingdom of God has arrived and that God is now at work pulling the whole created world toward a Kingdom in which justice will prevail. Our job is to promote that message and that image. That is a powerful message. It is also a message that we Americans faithfully pledge when we conclude our national Pledge of Allegiance and say: “*with liberty and justice for all.*” On January 6, 2021, the chilling image of a man walking through the Halls of Congress with a Confederate battle flag make me question whether we really mean those words. Yet, as Christians, we must not just mean those words; we must commit our life to them.

Under challenging COVID restrictions, we can still promote the Good News of God in Christ by using this fallow time to plant a revolution within ourselves—a revolution of the heart, a revolution that must first start within each of us. During this tense time of pandemic and bitterly divided politics, we Christians can use this time to nurture that heart revolution within us. And we can begin by first asking these questions:

Is it Fair to all people? If not, it is not of God.

Is it Just and/or does it promote Justice for all people? If not, it is not of God.

Is it Merciful? If not, it is not of God.

Is Love present here? If not, it cannot be of God.

Pastor Lin +

For All the Saints...

Emily Malbone Morgan, *Prophetic Witness* ~ February 26, 1937



Miss Emily Malbone Morgan,
Hartford's Novelist and Philanthropist

Emily Malbone Morgan, with the support of Harriet Hastings, was the founder of the **Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross (SCHC)**, in 1884. Begun as an order of Episcopal laywomen rooted in disciplined devotion, SCHC became a strong force for social justice reform during the social gospel era around the turn of the twentieth century. Morgan was born on December 10, 1862, in Hartford, Connecticut. Her family were prominent Hartford citizens and her Anglican roots ran deep on both sides of her family. She never married.

A primary inspiration for Morgan was her friendship with Adelyn Howard. Howard was homebound and because of her confinement sought Morgan's support for both spiritual companionship and as a means by which she could offer intercessory prayer for others. Meeting her friend's need, Morgan called together a small group of women for prayer and companionship. From that beginning, the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross came into being.

Morgan had a particular concern for working women who were tired and restless and who had little hope for a vacation. In response, Morgan, with the help of a growing number of her Companions, developed summer vacation houses across the northeast where working women and their daughters could have some time away for physical and spiritual renewal and refreshment.

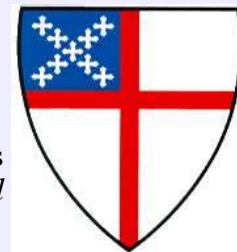
In 1901, the Society established a permanent home in Byfield, Massachusetts. With the construction of new facilities on the site in 1915, it took the name Adelynrood, which continues to exist as the headquarters and retreat center of the Society. At present, SCHC has thirty-one chapters with more than seven hundred Companions, lay and ordained women, serving in six countries.

Emily Malbone Morgan, together with her sisters in the Society of the Companions of the Holy Cross, lived a life of prayer and contemplation, rooted in the tradition, which led to powerful personal and communal commitments to social justice particularly for women.

MORE, "101 Reasons to be an Episcopalian"—

Reason # 43: "We welcome the faithful, the seeker, and the doubter." *Diana Smith, Diocese of Washington*

Reason # 88: "The Bible says we should make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Laughter is as joyful a noise as you'll ever hear and there's a lot of it in an Episcopal church." *David Hunter, Diocese of East Tennessee*



This has been an incredibly Tough Year for our Church and our Church Family although, thankfully, no one has contracted COVID-19.

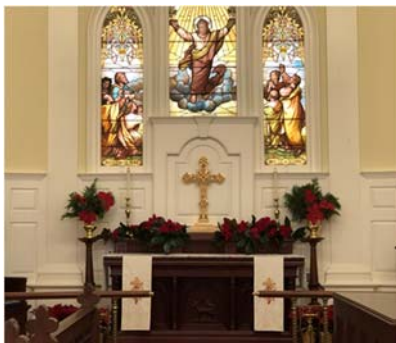
Thank You to everyone who submitted a pledge to the Church. We are especially grateful to the many who increased their pledge.

Sadly, we were not able to hold our usual Commitment Sunday this year, so if you did not turn in your pledge card, please feel free to mail or drop it off at the Church Office.

If you cannot remember if you turned one in, just call John in the Church Office.



Thank You to **Catherine Gillespie** for decorating our **Advent Wreath** this year, to **Anne Meade Falconer** for donating **Magnolia** branches, and to **Virginia Donnelly** who, due to COVID restrictions, single-handedly conducted the Christmas “Greening of the Church.” We still had our **Creche** on the Memorial Table. **Wise Men** still solemnly progressed weekly toward the Creche and the infant Jesus appeared in the manger on Christmas. Despite our COVID-absence, our church looked beautiful.





Ash Wednesday 2021 & COVID-19

This year we will experience an “Ash Wednesday” like no other in our collective experience. Our Bishops have firmly stated that there will be no in person Ash Wednesday Services (indoors or outdoors) nor will there be any “Drive-by” Imposition of Ashes. That does not, however, eliminate one’s ability to commemorate and Impose Ashes on this unique day of “Fast and Special Devotion.” The ceremony takes its roots in the Old Testament, where covering

oneself with sackcloth and ashes was a sign of repentance and is sometimes likened to the annual Jewish day of atonement, *yom kippur*. The imposition of ashes is intended to provide **an outward and visible sign** that we stand before God as sinners doomed to die, and that it is only through God’s merciful gift that we can hope for anything else. This is not a sacrament of the Church and **the Imposition of Ashes does not require either ordination or license**; ashes may be “imposed” by any Christian, including oneself.

You may create your own “ashes” by burning old palms (or any other material like paper or wood) and then grinding the ashes into a fine powder *or* you may pick up a small amount from the Church Office.

If you have a *Book of Common Prayer [BCP]*, the service, readings, & Litany of Penitence begin on page 264. You may also download an “**Ash Wednesday Service Bulletin for Use Alone or in the Company of Others**” from our webpage *or* you pick up a copy from the Church Office.

If you desire to pick up Ashes or Ash Wednesday bulletins, *please call the Church Office FIRST!*

LENT

Wednesday Night Lenten Program via ZOOM at 5pm

During this challenging COVID time, we will strive to provide a Lenten Program for our Parish family. We will **start on Ash Wednesday (February 17)** and **continue through Wednesday of Holy Week (March 31)**, every Wednesday at 5pm.

We will begin with our traditional Lenten cycle of Evening Prayer followed by a brief program of scripture and reflection that will include a weekly Lenten task. Our program is designed to consider *How Our Story fits into God’s Great Story*. We will work within a 40-minute time limit, so prompt sign-in is paramount. For those unable to ZOOM, we will gladly mail the written materials weekly.

How to Participate:

Call the Church Office and tell us if you want to ZOOM or receive a Mailing (of the scripture & reflection).

If you Zoom, you will be added to a Lenten Program email group that will provide you with the weekly link.

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE!

As I reflect on this year's theme "**One Together**," I am reminded of a frequent occurrence from my high school days. As I would be leaving for a basketball game, social event or date, my Mom would say, "Remember who you are!" Of course, the most obvious message was that of a threat. Don't do anything wrong or get into any kind of trouble. But as I think back, I now realize that there was much more in those words -- a deeper, greater message. One that I need to accept even more today.

Remember who you are!

You are a member of a community. This town, school, state and country have given you much -- an identity - - and much is expected in return. We don't live in a vacuum. We need to give back. When we make things better for others, we make things better for ourselves.

Remember who you are!

You are a member of a church, a Sunday School, youth group, prayer circle, or choir. This is your foundation, your source of strength, your reservoir of stored memories and you legacy. Cherish them and nurture them as best you can, for they have supported you and your family especially now that we are not "in-gathering." Memories gives life to the future.

Remember who you are!

You are a child of God. Whether you're feeling high on the mountaintop or low in the valley of despair, God is with us. Many of us have been reminded of this gift during this time of pandemic, isolation, and social distancing. God speaks to us in so many ways. I've heard many say how God's presence has been revealed in 1) moments of beauty from our trees, sky and sounds of birds; and 2 random acts of kindness.

Remember who you are!

There will be times when you forget and don't remember. You get lost. And the road back may be long and difficult, perhaps painful. Open arms always are always waiting. We sometimes resist as we find our way back home. It may take another person to offer clarity. These reflections bring healing, acceptance and forgiveness. We're better for the struggle.

Remember who you are!

You are a Steward-- a caretaker of God's creation. Excited by this challenge, we accept the responsibility to be Jesus's hands and feet in this world. There is so much still to do. There is so much we can be doing. As we look around and pay attention, we can see what is begging for a loving response. May our Time, Talents and Finances be used only to glorify the one who with us always, whether we remember or not!

Barry Barr, Stewardship Co-Chair



February 2021

St. Thomas Church



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 The Presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple	3	4	5	6
7 The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 The Last Sunday after the Epiphany	15 Presidents Day  Office Closed	16	17 Ash Wednesday 5 pm Zoom Evening Prayer Lent Program	18	19	20
21 The First Sunday in Lent 	22	23	24 5 pm Zoom Evening Prayer Lent Program	25 Vestry 5 pm Zoom	26	27
28 The Second Sunday in Lent						



~Birthdays~

02/11 Sarah Soderbergh
02/14 G.W. Gray
02/15 Ginny Dulin
02/18 Sarah Likins
02/19 Sunithi Gnanadoss
02/20 Keith Frick



*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you and be
gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you and give
you peace.*



Food Pantry

Special request for February is **dish detergent, toilet paper, and canned soup**. All food items and cash gifts are always welcome and appreciated. You can drop off donations at the Love Outreach Food Pantry each Tuesday from 9:00-10:30 and on Wednesday from 8:30-12:00. Their mailing address is: Love Outreach Food Pantry, Inc., P.O. Box 788, Orange, 22960. You may also bring any donations to the church to be delivered.



Prayer List

We pray especially for our church's leadership:

Michael, Presiding Bishop; Susan, Bob, & Ted, bishops for this diocese

Please pray for our President, Joe, our Vice President, Kamala, and for the leaders of all the nations of the world that they may lead their respective countries with dignity and respect for all peoples.

Please pray for our Governor, Ralph, and all members of our Virginia Assembly as they seek to navigate this pandemic in our midst.

Please pray for those we love and hold dear: Margaret, Harriet, Anne, Shirley, Barbara, Ellen, Liz, Susie, Tara, Pierce, John, and Ralph

Want to add something to The Builder? Contact Ann Wood at annwood304@gmail.com by February 22, 2020 with your information!

To reach the church office, call 540-672-3761 or email stthomas3@verizon.net

St. Thomas Episcopal Church
119 Caroline Street
Orange, VA 22960

February 2021

