

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, Whitemarsh



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Senior Warden's Report  
Associate's Report  
Financial Summary  
Buildings & Hardscapes  
Music & Liturgy  
Spiritual Formation  
Stewardship Report  
Pastoral Care Report  
Retreat to St. Thomas'  
325th Anniversary  
Summer Carillon Concert  
WMLC & Meeting Center  
History Commission  
The Barn  
Landscape Report  
Preschool Update  
Outreach Report



## SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

This is a difficult report to write because 2023 was a difficult year for our parish. I feel reluctant to recall and report to you the parade of challenging and sad situations we have experienced this year. It would be easier to focus only on high notes, but a painful reality is begging to be named.

What were our challenges in 2023? Vestry, clergy, staff and volunteers played "whack-a-mole" with water issues in the Community Gardens and Preschool; problems with bats, bees, heating systems, trees, and church doors; health crises, resignations, and staff vacancies; balancing the budget and reorganizing financial systems; discussing flags in the church and revitalizing post-pandemic parish life; holding 30 funerals and accompanying Emily along her cancer journey.

Although she was very ill, Emily's spirit accompanied us through the challenges of 2023. During her Easter sermon, she repeatedly exhorted us to live with confidence, hope, and persistence. In the words of the risen Christ, with great emphasis, she said several times, "Do not be afraid! Do NOT be afraid!" This was her gift to us during difficult days.

Yes, 2023 was difficult, and yet, we at St. Thomas' also celebrated many blessings. Throughout the year, Our history commission led us in a series of wonderful events to honor our 325th Anniversary. "Here for God, Here for Good" will forever remind us of who and whose we are. We baptized and confirmed, married and celebrated graduations. Second Saturday Sales at the Barn and Summer Carillon Concerts brought parishioners and community members to our holy hill. The solar panels were dedicated; the Barn was renovated; and the campus was designated an arboretum. Brilliant music and exquisite flowers enhanced our liturgies. Parishioners connected with old friends and made new friends who accompanied them through the ups and downs of 2023.

Grateful for our 325 years of history and committed to being wise stewards of St. Thomas', the Vestry identified three priorities for our parish during our March retreat. Work on these initiatives began in the spring and continues to be our focus as we begin 2024. These are:

1. Alternative Revenue: At St. Thomas' Whitmarsh, as with many parishes, operational and maintenance costs are increasing at a faster pace than financial support from parishioners. In an effort to preserve our worship activities and facilities for future generations without impairing our Endowment, this group identified, evaluated, and is now exploring a variety of investment and funding opportunities that could realistically support our Church.

2. Making New History: In light of the many transitions St. Thomas' has experienced over recent years, building parishioner engagement, optimism, and positive energy is a Vestry priority. To take the pulse of our parish, we held small group conversations and circulated a questionnaire. Specific action steps were identified and are guiding us in our work to enrich parish life.

3. Rector Discernment: Being half-way through our contract with our Priest-in-Charge, the Vestry had to prepare for the day when we will call our next Rector. In light of our love and respect for Emily; and due to the deeply personal nature, and many unknowns of her health journey, we held off on this initiative.

Throughout the spring, summer, and fall we prayed for Emily's return to full health and for God's guidance in our parish life. A Lotsa Helping Hands website, cards, flowers, and meals for the Richards family were some ways we were present to her and her family. As a parish, we sought to respect Emily and Daniel's privacy. We heard the news of treatments; we waited in hope. Then, in early December we received news of complications, that the cancer had spread and Emily's condition was terminal.

In shock, disbelief, and sadness, we read Emily's final message to us. Please see Emily's message on the back of this publication.

As we go forward into 2024 and beyond, I pray we will remember Emily's joyous, triumphant spirit when we encounter difficulties. May Emily's hope and faith in Jesus inspire us as we make new history for future generations of St. Thomas' parishioners. In the words of our baptismal covenant, "We will with God's help!"

Jane Hamilton  
Senior Warden



## ASSOCIATE'S REPORT

I have been at St. Thomas' for almost 2 years, and I am very grateful to be here, serving as priest and pastor through my role of Associate. I love the people of this parish, and I continue to feel blessed working with the leadership of all our great groups of the church, including the Christian Formation and Pastoral Care groups who work hard to form both young people and adults as Christians and pastorally cared for the members of St. Thomas, especially those who were recovering from illnesses or surgery.

I was happy to present to Bishop Gutierrez this past May, sixteen candidates for Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows, eight of whom were teenagers. The Mentors and teachers (including me!) of the youth Confirmation classes worked hard to connect the Confirmands with their baptismal vows.

I enjoy leading fun Chapel services twice a week for the teachers and students of the Preschool. I am so grateful for the great working relationship I have with the Director, Shari Petrakis, whose love and care for her students and staff is very evident.

It was great working with our Priest-in-Charge, the late Rev. Emily Richards as her Associate. After her cancer diagnosis, I worked more closely with her, taking on quite a bit of her duties, especially after she went on medical leave and had her surgery in November. In Emily's absence, I worked diligently with the Senior Warden Jane Hamilton to make sure that the pastoral needs of the parish were met. I am grateful for the hard work of the church staff and Vestry, who carried on the day-to-day operation of the parish with great care.

After Emily passed away at the beginning of 2024, Jane and I reached out to resources from the diocese and from St. Thomas to pastorally care for members of the parish and the church staff who are in mourning for our Priest-in-Charge.

Throughout that time of Emily's absence, I was cared for wonderfully by members of the parish who checked in on me with encouragement and organized meals to help nourish me. I am so thankful to be the recipient of such love and attention.

St. Thomas' now has a new priest in the person of the Rev. David Killeen, as the priest-in-residence. I am helping to assist him in getting oriented to this wonderful parish. I look to the future with hope and with the strong knowledge that our God is with us.

(The Rev. Canon) Lorna H. Williams

Associate for Life-Long Discipleship and Pastoral Care



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The financial results for 2023 were mixed. While both revenue and expenses outperformed our budget expectations, the Church still recorded a deficit of \$253,325 for the year. We continue to exercise effective expense control as our 2023 expenses were lower than they were in 2018. The deficit is attributable almost entirely to the erosion in pledged income and pledging units. Pledged income has declined every year since 2019 and the number of families and individuals making pledges has declined in eight of the last ten years. In 2015 the Church received 378 pledges and by 2023 that number had declined to 206 pledges. The 2024 Stewardship campaign received 186 pledges through early February 2024.

2023 Church Budget vs. Actual

	Budget	Actual	Variance
Revenue	\$1,183,512	\$1,287,726	+\$104,214
Expenses	\$1,543,743	\$1,541,051	+2,702
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$360,241)	(\$253,325)	+\$106,916

Given all the external turmoil and internal turnover during the last five years, there was an expectation that parishioner contributions would decline. In anticipation of these declines, cash reserves were established and held outside of the Endowment. To date, we have been able to fund our deficit without forced securities sales and Endowment withdrawals.

Preschool Results 2023

Revenue	\$777,395
Expenses	\$820,415
Deficit	(\$43,020)

The Preschool experienced a decline of \$87,285 (10%) in year over year revenue from 2022 to 2023. Their 2023 expenses include non-recurring capital expenses of \$72,892, a portion of which will be funded from their money market cash reserves. In 2022 the Preschool received \$191,616 in COVID Cares Act grants compared with \$39,678 in 2023. The Preschool was able to fund its deficit from their cash reserves. Ultimately, the Church is liable for funding any preschool deficits if their cash reserves are depleted.

### Business Office Outsourcing

In April 2023 our Parish Administrator resigned unexpectedly with very little time to transition her responsibilities to the Business Office staff. Her abrupt departure revealed three vulnerabilities; limited visibility into the financial operation of the Church, poor cash management, and the absence of contingency planning.

In response to these operational deficiencies, the Wardens, Finance Committee, and Vestry endorsed a recommendation to outsource and automate a significant portion of St. Thomas' back-office processing to Clifton Larson Allen (CLA). CLA is a professional services firm with a specialty practice in non-profit business operations. They currently provide similar services to several Episcopal parishes and Diocesan entities within DioPA.

The transition to CLA commenced in January 2024 and will result in reduced operational and technology expenses, improved reporting and risk control, and staff support to aid in daily operations. Engaging CLA will also mitigate the impact of staff turnover.

### Alternative Revenue Initiative

To counter the trend in declining financial support from parishioners, the Vestry authorized the establishment of the Alternative Revenue Committee (ARC). The Vestry's mandate to the ARC is to identify, evaluate and implement independent revenue-generating initiatives that are not dependent on financial support from parishioners. Successful initiatives will generate meaningful new mission compatible revenues and cost reductions. The ARC began work in the 2nd quarter of 2023 and is ongoing.



## PRESCHOOL ADDENDUM

The preschool had an excellent year in 2023. The fall and spring semesters had full enrollment in all age groups, totaling 115 children from 2 yr. olds through Pre-K. Additionally, the school hosted a five-week summer camp, the largest and longest session since the summer of 2019.

These great outcomes are reflected in the school's financial results for 2023:

	2023
<b>Preschool Operations:</b>	
Tuition & Fees	\$ 726,780
Instructional Expenses	\$ 653,719
<b>Preschool Operations: Surplus/(Defecit)</b>	<b>\$ 73,061</b>
<b>Non-Operational Items: Revenue / (Expense)</b>	
COVID Grants - Income	\$ 39,678
COVID Grants - Distribution	\$ (37,250)
Interest Income	\$ 4,911
Investment Income	\$ 24,692
Contribution to Church	\$ (62,340)
<b>Non-Operational Items: Surplus/(Defecit)</b>	<b>\$ (30,309)</b>
<b>Net Income excluding Capital Expenses: Surplus/(Defecit)</b>	<b>\$ 42,752</b>

Based on our 2023 results, and the forward-looking strength we see in 2024, the Preschool Board, in conjunction with the Vestry, approved the below Capital Expenses in 2023. These investments were funded through our 2023 Net Income Surplus (see table above), and the Preschool's cash reserves. While a substantial sum, Preschool leadership and the Vestry were comfortable making these investments as they will improve the building and campus for our staff and students for many years to come.

<b>2023 Capital Investments:</b>	
New Flooring (1/3 of School Classrooms)	\$ 19,000
Nature Playscape Pavillion	\$ 19,500
Playground Equipment	\$ 24,000
Fencing Update	\$ 1,000
Retaining Wall & Water Remediation	\$ 7,450
Other Misc. Repairs and Maintenance	\$ 1,942
<b>Total 2023 Capital Investments</b>	<b>\$ 72,892</b>



## BUILDINGS AND HARDSCAPES

For 2023 the Buildings and Hardscapes Commission reviewed multiple projects.

Before we cover the work of the commission, it is important to recognize the work and support that our own Rob Mac has given this year. In a year where our Parish Administrator moved to a new opportunity and both of our long-time ground crew members went out on medical leave, Rob's efforts have not only "kept our heads above water" but caught us up on a few overdue repairs. Thanks, Rob!

Early in the year, the stonework on the bell tower was a prime focus. The concern was heightened due to damage behind one of the wall murals in the sanctuary, which we wanted to be sure was not related to a structural issue. Al Comly arranged for a stonework expert to review the situation. We are in need of work on the stone façade of the Church, but it is not a structural issue. Complete restoration of the stone work has been estimated to cost \$1 million to \$2 million.

Repairs to the church doors, including the non-functional Narthex door were completed in January 2024. Additional damage was addressed by filling in the danged areas and by adding protective color matched kick plates to the outside of the Narthex doors. Multiple doors were also repaired to meet fire and safety requirements for ease of exit. Tim Russell, Peter Burns, John Rodgers, Rob Mac, and Tom Morgan worked on this effort, with Tim, John, and Peter taking the lead.

Thanks to a generous donor, we were able to pave the driveway in front of the Groton House and through the cemetery. We also restored the speed bump in front of Carey Center and Parish House in effort to improve safety on our campus.

Brookes Britcher has been leading an energy study. The Church's HVAC systems need replacement. The study will provide the Vestry with information on choices to replace the systems.

The team also has reviewed the situation created by moisture issues in the pre-school and provided advice on the various bids for repairs.

Finally, we have many valued long time commission members who bring great knowledge of our property, but we have also been fortunate to add new members. Two of our new members, John DePaul and Matt Tucker will be reviewing how we can make more efficient use of our buildings, helping us to identify priorities for repairs.

Submitted by  
Tom Morgan  
Property Warden



## MUSIC AND LITURGY

It seems fitting to contemplate a summary of music and liturgy in 2023, as we have just completed one of the most poignant and remarkable liturgies I have ever witnessed in my entire career: the burial of The Rev'd Emily Richards. We attended to our duty as Christians to bury the dead with the utmost care, reverence, preparation, and joy- true Christian joy in the Resurrection. I then think backwards to November, when we packed this church to celebrate 325 years of the Holy Spirit moving over the face of this holy hill. However, the true glory of music and liturgy at St. Thomas' Whitemarsh lies in two truths, the second flowing from the first.

1. Every soul involved in music-making and liturgy: flower designers, greeters, volunteer singers, readers, and on and on- every soul is inspired to do their work by Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ.
2. Every soul involved in music-making and liturgy understands how their discreet and even seemingly mundane tasks all combine to make a glorious offering to God each Sunday morning, and every thing we do contributes to the building up of the Body and spreading of the Gospel.

The parish choir, in addition to their weekly round of rehearsals and services, prepared music for various Evensongs, Holy Week, Lessons and Carols, and a concert at the Woodmere Museum in Chestnut Hill.

Our choristers continue to rebuild after the pandemic, with a very dedicated group of older choristers and two brand-new novice choristers this year, both 7 years old, and both already excelling at singing and reading music.

We also began a new choir for four to six year olds called "Joyful Noise" which draws from our preschool and other local children. This choir is designed to grow into a feeder choir for choristers and we should begin to see results in three to five years. I say to you as a Philadelphian, "Trust the process."

I continue to be thankful for our relationship with Curtis Institute in providing an Organ Scholar. This year we said goodbye to Oak Martin, who is now finishing his first year of graduate work at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and welcomed Daniel Carrol, a first-year student from Northern Virginia. Daniel has stepped gracefully into the challenges of weekly music-making and is excelling in the role.

Lastly, I would like to thank our Carillonneur, Lisa Lonie, who weekly spreads music far beyond our hill as the bells peal out across Whitemarsh. Lisa is a truly sophisticated musician that complements our musical and liturgical life. Stay tuned for announcements about our summer carillon series and start making your picnic supper plans!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Smith

Minister of Music





## 2023 SPIRITUAL FORMATION UPDATE

For our children and youth formation, we offer Godly Play for ages 4 through fifth grade. Our storytellers and doorkeepers are Sarah Elliott, Will Gillespie, Anne Anspach and Jeff Korn, with Elizabeth Bitterman and Melissa Min helping out as needed. The Youth use videos from The Bible Project with thoughtful lessons and discussions led by our leaders Cheryl Brown, Jeff DuBose, John Rodgers, Amy Weiler, and the recent addition of Stephanie Kuhls. All of these programs are possible through our volunteers, with Sunday School coordinator Rachel Foley.

Rev. Lorna is leading 11 kids in confirmation class this year, with lessons and participation in service projects. Confirmation will be on May 5th at St Thomas' with the Bishop. All of the kids have dedicated mentors working with them, with mentors Cheryl Brown and Laura Thayer committing more of their time to icebreakers and special activities for the kids and parents.

Karen McGlinchey is heading up leading the Youth Group this year. A monthly meeting/activity is planned for the kids, as well as a monthly service project. In January, we had a great group of 11 kids cook for 80 people for the Church of the Advocate.

Sunday Adult Forums and small group discussions have been planned by Wendy Bailey, Roger Clark, Ginger Goodrich and Gratia Leger. The forums provide a venue for us to grow in our faith, connect as a community and to share and discuss information about our parish life. Attendance is typically 20-30 people. The Hospitality Commission has continued to organize hosts who offer coffee and refreshments. Alex Hilliard provides A/V technical support during the forums.

The Lifelong Discipleship Commission was dissolved in Fall of 2023 and adopted a new paradigm of small groups taking on specific tasks that live under a larger umbrella of Spiritual Formation. The objectives of intergenerational spiritual formation are not confined to Sunday mornings. Special weekday/evening programs are designed for the weeks of Advent and Lent. Also, a variety of opportunities are offered at different times on different days during the week, such as on-going bible studies, Morning Prayer groups, weekend retreats, outreach opportunities and labyrinth walks. All of these offerings are communicated through weekly emails, the Sunday service bulletins and/or oral announcements during church.

For more information on Spiritual Formation, please email [discipleship@stthomaswhitemarsh.org](mailto:discipleship@stthomaswhitemarsh.org).

Wendy Bailey, Ginger Goodrich – Adult Formation Chairs  
Sharon Werner, Vestry Liaison

## STEWARDSHIP REPORT

*We believe that all things belong to God, who created all things, and that we are called to be stewards of the gifts God has given us.*

*One of the many great gifts God gave to St. Thomas' in 2023 was the spiritual leadership and grace-filled presence of Reverend Emily Richards. Reverend Emily modeled extraordinary optimism, determination and resilience, qualities that have become especially important to us all in recent years. When the Stewardship Commission met with Reverend Emily to strategize on how better to help St. Thomas' regain its strength as a faithful body of stewards, she shared that our focus had to be on nurturing and growing the loving sense of community that has long sustained our parish. The goal was set to personally connect with as many parishioners as we could manage. A daunting task to say the least. Reverend Emily, Reverend Lorna Williams, Sally Williams, Steve Bitterman and Ginger Goodrich were joined by the entire Vestry in organizing and performing this outreach effort. Add to that a wonderful corps of Stewardship Ambassadors who volunteered to be trained and then join in contacting parishioners. Friends called friends, volunteers spoke with people they didn't know well and connections were made. Concerns were heard, questions answered, and thanks given for gifts of time, talent and treasure. We thank God for Reverend Emily and her love and wisdom and we thank God for the commitment and time that every one of these remarkable volunteers gave to strengthen our bonds to each other and our dedication to our church. Importantly, we celebrate all of you who steward your God given gifts so generously and in so many ways to strengthen St. Thomas'.*

*As other reports will reflect, our ministries are thriving, our attendance is beginning to recover from the post pandemic drop and, while still grieving the loss of Reverend Emily, our spirits seem lifted to a place of renewed optimism and hope. As Emily would say, Grace abides.*

*Financially our annual campaign, as shared in the weekly e-messaging, is moving apace. While we have recorded fewer pledges (16) than this time last year, we have raised more dollars (\$636,189) in total pledges and one-time gifts. St. Thomas' has also received several bequests and planned gifts that help ensure our future. We encourage any and all who have yet to pledge or give to please help make this truly a year of generosity and gratitude. All that we offer financially will be allocated by the Vestry when they set the budget that will support St. Thomas' in fulfilling its mission*

*Thank you so much for all that you offer to God with your support of St Thomas' – your money, your talents, and especially your time.*

*Sally West Williams, Ginger Goodrich, Steve Bitterman*

## PASTORAL CARE

We remember and are deeply grateful for our previous leadership. The following loving and dedicated members are the hearts, hands and feet of the Pastoral Care Commission and its ministries:

*Pastoral Care Commission Chair - Amy Roak Vestry Liaison - Jane Hamilton*

*Birthday Greeting Ministry - Stephanie Teoli-Kuhls Card Ministry - Elizabeth Bitterman*

*Flower Delivery - Eileen Williams Meal Ministry - Laura Thayer*

*Prayer Shawl Ministry - Helen Stephan*

*Silent and Confidential Prayer Ministry - Anita Burke Stephan Ministry - Carol Proud*

All of these ministries are beautiful expressions of God's love through a caring community of volunteers generous in time and compassion for our greater church family. Here is a brief overview of the wonderful work they do.

Black and white photo images of our campus as well as vibrant images of our stained glass windows with a birthday blessing are colorfully hand signed by Stephanie. Each month, she greets between 50-60 parishioners with a birthday card in their mailbox.

Color photos of our church hillside are sent by Elizabeth for hellos, baptism greetings, confirmation congratulations, notes of appreciation, condolences, and a myriad of other reasons we love inventing... Please reach out to Elizabeth to share any occasions that are note-worthy!

Each Sunday, with the exception of Lent, altar flowers are shared with four church recipients and delivered by our group of volunteers organized and inspired by Eileen Williams. She is the marvel behind the Christmas poinsettia and Easter flower delivery. This year we successfully delivered our beautiful Christmas poinsettias at the beginning of December rather than delivering them after the Christmas Eve service. The appreciative recipients were delighted to enjoy them all month long! We welcome new deliverers who would like to help spread our weekly and holiday cheer.

Helen hosts a colorful knitting gathering twice each month where artisans, both within our church community and interested friends with talented hands craft our prayer shawls, prayer squares and baptism blankets.

Many friends in our community and beyond are grateful recipients of these loving and clergy-blessed works of art. The families of our newly baptized are truly amazed when one is handed to them during the baptism service. To hold one of the shawls in your hands is to feel the tender love of our creator. We are truly blessed by the gifts of this community. If you are a knitter, crocheter or curious to learn, we welcome you to join us.

Over 25 faithful members of our silent prayer ministry pray daily in quietude and confidentiality for the many names on our silent prayer list. Updates to this list, which includes those in military service, our clergy, the greater church and grieving families are shared regularly by Anita in a beautifully drafted email and revised quarterly during the year.

Our Stephen Ministers are gently guided by Carol, who coordinates monthly meetings and supports the Stephen Ministers and friendly visitors in their meaningful role. We have several trained ministers available for individuals seeking this personal and spiritual relationship.

Several times a month, our LEVs (Lay Eucharistic Visitors) take communion to members of our church family unable to attend weekly services in person. This ministry is coordinated by Reverend Lorna in addition to the light she shines on all the areas of our pastoral care ministry. Her presence inspires us and our collaboration has continued to improve and streamline pastoral care in our St Thomas' community. We are a friendly and dynamic group that welcomes newcomers and fresh ideas.

Our continued support of an exciting composting initiative has greatly reduced our waste from social events, generated beautiful, fertile soil through Walter B. Saul High School's commercial composting facility and encouraged our community to be mindful of consumption and how to handle food waste responsibly. This initiative has been embraced with enthusiasm across several commissions and we are hopeful for more multi-age and area involvement.

Faithfully submitted,  
St Thomas Pastoral Commission Chair Amy Roak

## RETREAT TO ST. THOMAS'

Our first 7 months marketing St Thomas' as a retreat center is setting up a promising future. We have had 10 bookings, a combination of community events and day retreats, with the spring inquiries picking up.

These first months have targeted getting listed on many retreat and search sites, social media and website set-ups and postings, setting up contracts, pricing, and getting systems in place.

Our future plans include both outside and St Thomas-hosted day retreats and classes with local wellness and spiritual providers, as well as getting the Parish House kitchen licensed. We are also hosting a Promotional/networking event on March 16th from 10 am-12 pm at St Thomas to introduce the space through tours and Q&A and to make community connections

For more information or if you are interested in hosting a class or workshop, reach out through our website at [www.retreattostthomas.org](http://www.retreattostthomas.org) or email [stwretreats@gmail.com](mailto:stwretreats@gmail.com).

Sharon Werner  
Retreat Manager

## ST. THOMAS' 325TH ANNIVERSARY

The year 2023 marked our 325th Anniversary. With enthusiastic support from our beloved Reverend Emily, our year-long celebration centered around the following goals:

- To Build Community, re-energizing our church from the lull of COVID and recent challenges; re-engaging members we have not seen recently, and attracting new members.
- To Focus Forward, envisioning a bright and robust future for the generations to come.
- To Honor St. Thomas' Holiness, recognizing that our hill has been a place of sanctuary for centuries and helping individuals understand the importance of St. Thomas' through our past, present, and future.

The Speaker Series attracted church members as well as the broader community. Events included a presentation by Philip Farmer, a descendant of our church's founding member, Edward Farmer; a trip to The Highlands Mansion & Gardens to hear from Julie Lawson about the Sheaff Family's lasting legacies at St. Thomas'; a Forum led by Native American Cultural Educator, Carla Messinger, who descends from the Lenni Lenape people of our area; a conversation with Historian Dr. David Contosta, placing St. Thomas' in the context of broader world events; and a lecture by Dr. Philip Mead of the Museum of the American Revolution on soldier Joseph Plumb Martin, encamped at Whitmarsh and the surrounding area during the Revolutionary War.

The expanded June Second Saturday Sale recalled the former annual St. Thomas' Country Fair, showcasing quiltmakers and dog agility trials. A special baked goods booth harkening back to the Fair and chaired by Dianne Crookenden, was a huge hit.

Many thanks go to the dedicated members of St. Thomas' History Commission, including Dianne Forman, Sue Anderson, Joyce Shumaker, and Julie Lawson, who shared their archival research at an Adult Forum. The Commission continues to make progress on archiving and developing tours of our cemetery and other points of interest around our campus that will be activated through QR Codes.

A huge thank you goes to Michael Carr, who persevered for an entire year writing the informative and entertaining church-related history briefs published twice weekly in the Friday e-mails and the Sunday Bulletins.

Our celebration culminated on Saturday, November 4th with an All Saints Festival Eucharist to honor Saints past, present, and future. The Right Rev. Daniel G.P. Gutierrez, Bishop of Pennsylvania, along with The Right Rev. Samuel Rodman, Bishop of North Carolina and a former Associate Priest at St. Thomas', officiated the outstanding service, lovingly planned by Reverend Emily, our Minister of Music Michael Smith, and clergy members Rev. Canon Lorna Williams and Rev. Michael Palmisano. The choir performed the world premiere of two pieces commissioned for our anniversary. Michael Smith's hymn, *Climb Up This Hill*, captures parishioners' experiences of coming to St. Thomas' and choir member Hunter Gregory's anthem, *Send Out Thy Light*, encourages those who come here to be the light of Christ in the world. Many former members of St. Thomas' clergy joined us as we celebrated our milestone 325th year at the service and afterward with a well-attended reception.

Grateful, thanks go to the 325th Committee Members: Anne and Phil Anspach, Michael Carr, Rob Hamilton, Mimi and John Kepner, Julie Lawson, Daniel Richards, Pam and Frank Serra, Joyce Shumaker, and Michael Smith. We also recognize staff members Melissa Lynch, Rev. Kristin Woods, and Rob MacNamara, along with Alex Hilliard for their many talents and support.

*St. Thomas' is indeed Here for God, Here for Good.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth & Steve Bitterman

325th Anniversary Co-Chairs





## SUMMER CARILLON CONCERTS



The Summer Concert Series 2023 is celebrated on Tuesday nights in July with fair weather and calming skies – sometimes. Regardless of a few raindrops, “if you host it, they will come”. Enjoyed by hundreds of listeners over four Tuesdays in July, carillonners from here and abroad graced our instrument, along with special performances by other musical groups. We are especially thankful for the support of Michael Lewis in dedicating a memorial concert to his late wife, Karen. The last recital accompanied by a candle lit labyrinth provided the perfect ambiance and ending for the season.

Summer Concerts 2024 will be held every Tuesday in July at 7:00 pm – rain or shine. If you are interested in dedicating a concert night, please contact Lisa Lonie at [www.llonie@hotmail.com](mailto:www.llonie@hotmail.com).

While 2024 marks the 49th anniversary of the concert series, our carillon will celebrate its golden anniversary on Sunday, September 29. It was exactly on the same day and date in 1974 that our bells were first heard and dedicated. We look forward to honoring this milestone in September!

Lisa Lonie  
St. Thomas' Carillonneur

## WHITEMARSH LEARNING AND MEETING CENTER

In its fourth full year of operation, Whitemarsh Learning contributed more than \$45,000 of income to the Church's budget (“net” after expenses) during 2023, of which the Church reinvested \$30,000 into improvements and reserved funds for future contingencies at the building. Continued gift support to the “Schoolhouse Maintenance Fund” received during 2023 will help propel this ministry

Whitemarsh Learning and Meeting Center is an extension of our mission to help our neighbors and ourselves grow through the formation and nurturing of the whole human being: body, mind, and spirit. Whitemarsh Learning sustains itself by delivering quality, affordable workspace, programming, and meeting space to our neighbors who help people in our local community, with an emphasis in serving those who coach and educate within the disciplines of health, wellness, and artistic expression.

2023 marked its second year of the art gallery, which hosted several artist exhibits throughout the year. All parishioners are encouraged to participate, view the exhibits, or loan pieces for display.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Whitemarsh Learning Advisory Committee  
Jim Pasquarella, Chair

## HISTORY COMMISSION

WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN! Our Commission had a lot to do to get ready for our 325th anniversary. First, we had to get the important archives out of the steamy 3rd floor of Church Hill Hall (CHH) and store them in the Vault in the Church Robing Room. Then, about 6 months later, we had to quickly move all those documents from the Vault because of possible water damage to the ceiling and floor due to a nasty rainstorm. So, now we have our most precious archives temporarily stored and locked up in CHH on the first floor. We have plans to find a permanent, secure spot for them.

Meanwhile, now that we had our archives in one safe place, we organized and indexed the most critical documents. The very capable Bevan Moscovici spent countless hours pouring over these documents, organizing, indexing, taking photos, adding them to google drives, researching questionable documents, preparing chronologies...we discovered that Bevan is both a natural historian and an information technology engineer.

Other reasons for the success of the 325 anniversary were due to the outstanding and focused work of our Commission members: Dick Lee, Joyce Shumaker, Bill Potts, Dianne Forman, Sue Anderson, Katie Worrall, Michael Carr, Pam Serra, Frank Serra, and Maureen Lucak. Each member contributed to historical research, data verification, document organizing, QR coding for critical STW sites, institutional knowledge and many community presentations. We even had adjunct members join us, like Peter Burns who found in the Barn the missing William Augustus Muhlenberg plaque (1796-1877); and Julie Phillips who organized our WWII materials. And we look forward to Bonnie McKeever's work on our 1800-1900's newspapers, adding onto Maureen Lucak's effort.

Happily, we have more work to do. And what a pleasure to serve our historic church.

Julie Lawson

## THE BARN AT ST. THOMAS'

Barn Sales are 8:00am-noon every second Saturday (May thru November). Donations in the Grotto at the Barn open on April 1, 2024. Our Preview Party will take place on Friday, May 10, 2024 from 5:30-8:00pm (just before the first Barn Sale on May 11, 2024). Tickets for the Preview Party will go on sale in the spring (stay tuned).

When someone has furniture to donate to the Barn, I call the MOB (Men of the Barn) and they jump in their trucks to pick up the furniture. My wife, Wendy, says to me "Hmm, let's see, what's wrong with this picture? Furniture movers with an average age of 63 years old!" Scientists always go to the data. She doesn't know that we have Ward Miller, age 54, who is strong as an ox. To decide who should sing a solo, The Traveling Wilburys' Dylan, Petty, and Harrison all turned to Roy Orbison and in unison said: "Roy?" Similarly, we turn to Ward to hoist heavy oak sideboards up into his truck.

The Barn now has over 120 volunteers who staff 12 departments (Art, Books, Bricabrac, Café, Cinderella, Furniture, Hardware, Jewelry, Men's, Sports, Top Shop, & Toys). Each department has a capable leader; but no two departments are alike. In Bricabrac, every one of 10,000 objects is cleaned, researched, priced, and shelved. By contrast, out behind the Barn, furniture is stacked high in a Jenga-like pile. Nothing is cleaned or priced. Negotiations start when the crack Furniture staff arrives ten minutes before the sale. Think Bazaar in Istanbul.

Our Barn Youth Initiative is alive and well. We have middle school and high school volunteers at the Café, Toys, and Top Shop. We still need more young volunteers to help in various aspects of our Barn Sales. If you are interested, please contact me (by text or phone) at 215.385.6952. We will find a place for you at the Barn that is rewarding and uplifting.

While it is important to focus on the community aspect of the Barn, we did raise more than \$175,000 last season (a new record for the year). The proceeds go to worthy organizations near and far (including The Mattie N. Dixon Community Cupboard, Church of the Advocate, The St. James School, Episcopal Community Services, Face to Face, Laurel House, Mitzva Circle, Pac-a-Thon, Family Promise Montco PA, Stand With Iraqi Christians, Our Little Roses, and The Honduras Water Mission). Well done everyone! You are all fulfilling your baptismal covenant of service, and it feels good to use one's spiritual gifts to help others. I am reminded of the scene in Chariots of Fire when Eric Liddell says: God made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure. At the Barn we can feel the Holy Spirit moving. We can feel His pleasure.

Loaves and Fishes,

Jim Weiss

Head of the Barn

## LANDSCAPE REPORT

*"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago; the second best time is today"*

### Highlights

- *With over 600 trees and 86 unique species, our campus was accredited as a Level I Arboretum in the Morton Register of Arboreta.*
- *For our Arbor Day Celebration in April, 10 new trees were planted including Persian Ironwoods, Kentucky Coffee Trees, American Chestnuts and Red Oaks.*
- *In commemoration of St Thomas' 325th year, a Black Tupelo (*Nyssa Sylvatica*) was planted in the Grove.*
- *Additional tree plantings from memorials and donations included Okame Cherry Trees, a Ginkgo Biloba, a *Chionanthus Retusus* (white fringe tree) and a Deodar Cedar.*
- *Work continued on removing damaged or dead trees and branches posing potential risks to people and buildings. Still more to do as funding permits*
- *The dead/overgrown landscaping around Groton House was replanted.*
- *A new sign for our Arboretum was added along Camp Hill Road.*



## CEMETERY BOARD

*The mission of the Cemetery Board is to provide and maintain our historic cemetery for our parishioners, their families and others at a competitive price.*

*The mapping of the older sections of the cemetery is still in the process of being completed, the new section is completed.*

*Sister Madeleine has come on board as the funeral coordinator. Kathryn C Moran took on a project to clean several rows of tombstones alongside and in front of the church as a Girl Scout Project to become an Eagle Scout, which she has completed. Kathryn received the Eagle Scout award at a reception held in the McColl auditorium.*

*An outside contractor was hired to cut and weed whack the grass in the cemetery, they will be cutting the grass every week instead of every other week as in the past.*

*An anonymous person donated the funds to remove 3 dead and dying trees from the cemetery, which have been removed.*

*Flagstones have been placed under the benches adjacent to the Inurnment Garden. Three cherry trees have been planted to replace the 3 memorial cherry trees that died. Thanks to Tim Russell for removing the dead cherry trees. We are in the process of obtaining estimates to repair many of the headstones that need repairing or to be uprighted. It has been difficult to get anyone to give us estimates. We want to thank Victor Garsky, a volunteer, for repairing a headstone in the South Hill section of the cemetery.*

*Bill Potts; Chair, Tom Morgan,; Vestry Liaison and Rev'd Kristin Waskowicz Woods; Staff Liaison  
Board members Linda Bair, Dick Lull, Maureen Luack, Tom Lloyd, Chris Russell, Tim Russell, Carol Shaw  
Sister Madeleine, Maureen Sullivan, Casey von Seldeneck, Rob McNamara*

# PRESCHOOL REPORT

We are happy to report we opened at full capacity in September and have 115 students and 20 teachers. We have 8 classrooms for our 2- 5 year old students. We continue to utilize all 43 acres of our property as outdoor exploring and learning. We had a great start to the year with our long-time traditions like our Halloween Parade, Christmas Crafts and Christmas Pageant! There is much joy in the preschool walls with our children, staff and families!

We started our school year with water issues that needed to be addressed. We had to renovate a classroom, dismantle some storage units and waterproof walls as a result of the water issues. We have worked closely with the Vestry and Church to ensure the preschool is a safe place for our children and families.

Reverend Canon Lorna is our Chaplain for the second year. She has been a valuable asset to the preschool. She greets weekly at the preschool and leads our weekly chapel with all the children. Our Minister of Music, Michael Smith, is in his second year as our music teacher which we do weekly here at the preschool. We also have yoga and movement each week with our movement teacher Lesley Sprandio.

We began registration on January 8th for our 2024-2023 school year and summer camp registration will begin February 26th.

We are so thankful for the support from all our families, our staff, the Board and St. Thomas' Church.



## ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

The Endowment Committee oversees the investment portfolio of the St. Thomas' church endowment in accordance with an Investment Policy Statement, reviews the acceptance of gifts and bequests, and recommends to the Vestry the annual percentage withdrawal to be taken from the endowment funds. The Endowment Committee consists of up to five non-vestry members who serve three-year staggered terms along with the Senior Warden, the Accounting Warden, and the Rector. The non-vestry members for 2023 were Ben Archer, Jim Hillard, Bill Lutz, David Thayer, and Will Woolbert. The other members of the Committee were Phil Anspach, Jane Hamilton, and Rev Emily Richards.

The St. Thomas' Endowment consists of the Church Endowment, the Cemetery Endowment, and 17 other restricted and unrestricted funds. The 19 funds are comingled for investment, managed by PNC, and overseen by the committee. All 19 funds are tracked, accounted for, and reported individually monthly by PNC.

The investment strategy for the endowment is to generate current operating funds for the church and provide for growth in principle, above inflation, over the long term. As of December 31, 2023, the market value of the total endowment was \$7,532,721. The asset allocation of the Endowment has varied over time. As of December 31, 2023, the endowment was allocated as follows: Stocks 72.0%, Fixed Income 23.7%, and Cash 4.3%.

A summary of the endowment's net performance as of 12/31/2023 is shown below. The endowment's performance is shown in bold. Under each is an appropriate benchmark for comparison.

	2022	3 Years Annualized	5 Years Annualized
<i>St. Thomas' Total Portfolio</i>	15.45%	2.77%	7.60%
<i>Style Blended Total</i>	16.74%	3.13%	8.12%
<i>Total Equity</i>	19.98%	4.81%	10.85%
<i>Blended Equity Index</i>	23.92%	NA	NA
<i>Total Fixed Income</i>	6.49%	-1.58%	1.97%
<i>Blended Fixed Income</i>	5.18%	-1.80%	1.63%

The total payout from the endowment to the church in 2023 was \$248,758 which was 1.7% more than the 2022 payout. The dollar payout was determined using the withdrawal rate of 3.85% times the average of the trailing 12 calendar quarters endowment value prior to 1/1/23. We have calculated the 2024 payout on the same basis, and it will be \$253,484 up 1.9% from the 2023 payout.

The committee reviews the endowment withdrawal rate annually in the context of St. Thomas' operating needs, expected investment returns, inflation, and growth of principal objectives. Given the prospect of muted investment returns and similar inflation for 2024, The committee recommended to the Vestry to maintain the current annual withdrawal rate of 3.85% for 2024. The Vestry approved this recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Lutz, Endowment Committee Chair

# OUTREACH REPORT

St. Thomas' Outreach Commission funds church activities and outside organizations that make a meaningful impact on people in need locally, regionally and around the world. We strive to fund organizations which meet our areas of focus and help nurture the spiritual growth of parishioners of all ages. Funds are distributed according to these 3 major areas of focus:

- Well-being of Families and Children
- Hunger and Housing
- Education

Outreach funding comes primarily from Second Saturday Sales (SSS) proceeds which raised a record \$175,000 in 2023. Sales of donated items at the Barn are conducted every second Saturday in May through November with two sales in September. Outreach also receives direct contributions from parishioners and friends and conducts special events for the community to raise funds and fun.

The Outreach Endowment was established several years ago and has grown from parishioner donations and annual contributions from SSS funds. It generates approximately \$10,000 in annual income.

This year, the Outreach Commission in conjunction with Buildings and Hardscapes Commission completed renovations on the Barn that included waterproofing under the ramp to keep the Book Department dry, replacing windows and stairs, replacing cedar shakes on one side of the Barn, repairing some of the distinctive decorative elements on the barn and painting.

This year our commission received grant requests from 17 organizations utilizing our new uniform application and awarded grants to 13 of these organizations. We put a stronger emphasis on hunger this year in our decision making. Any organization that falls within our areas of focus is welcome to apply for funds.

2023 Outreach Grant Funds were distributed as follows:

Church of the Advocate Soup Kitchen	\$5,000
College Student Basic Needs Program	\$4,000
ECS Food Access Program	\$5,000
Face to Face	\$7,500
Family Promise	\$5,000
Giving Hope One Village At A Time	\$2,000
Honduras Water Mission	\$5,000
Iraqi Christians	\$5,000
Laurel House	\$5,000
Mattie Dixon Food Cupboard	\$7,500
Mitzva Circle	\$5,000
Our Little Roses	\$5,750
St James School-Post Graduate Scholarship Fund	\$5,000

Additional 2023 Outreach Funds were designated for the following "in-house" Outreach efforts:

2023 Outreach Grant Funds were distributed as follows:

Outreach Christmas Party	\$4,000
Harvest Fest	\$4,000
Pac-a-thon	\$6,000
Summer Camp	\$6,000

St. Thomas' Outreach Fernley Trust Fund awarded start-up grants to the following organizations for new activities they are starting:

Philadelphia Goat Bereavement Project	\$4,000
Anglican Church of Burundi Seed & Goat Program	\$4,000

Every year funds are put aside to invest in our Outreach Endowment and to pay for Barn Operations, deferred maintenance and SSS marketing expenses. In 2023 we made the following allocations:

Barn Operations	\$2,500
Outreach Endowment	\$10,000
SSS Marketing Expenses	\$1,500
Deferred Maintenance	\$70,000

The Commission thanks all parishioners, volunteers and donors for their support of these vital ministries that help thousands of people in need.

Chair: Kathleen Schneer

Members: Anne Anspach, Linda Bair, Steve Bitterman, Michael Carr, Tom Ells, Gretchen Hansen, Barbara Rozemchak, Lynda Moore, Pam Serra, Jim Weiss, Robin Worgan







"In Memoriam" The Canon Rev. Emily Barr Richards

"My dear siblings in Christ, I have said from my first day of being here at St. Thomas' that we are called to be the body of Christ, and that we would do the work of the church by loving and living together. Part of that hard but holy work, is that of dying and embracing the new journey that is before us.

I believe in this community and I love you all. God is with you. I offer this blessing: Life is short, and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the journey with us. So, be quick to love and make haste to be kind. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you and those you love, this day and always."



*"The hardest thing is never the last thing" Frederick Buechner*