



ADVENT 2025

THE CANTERBURY TALES

The Seasonal Newsletter of St. Thomas of Canterbury Episcopal Church



Fall Scenes:

Cat blessing; All Saints remembrance table; one of the many decorated cars at the first ever Trunk-or-Treat; 10 chilis in this year's chili cook-off with the winner of the golden ladle pictured; stunning fall colors on the parish grounds; quite a crowd at the Blessing of the Animals; back to school backpack blessings; a packed house for the chili cook-off

FROM THE RECTOR

Dear ones,

November took me by surprise this year.

You see, November is typically the month when I internally admit to myself that summer is over and winter in Wisconsin will be here before we know it. This year, because of the surprisingly warm fall, I was able to continue in this delusion all the way up to daylight savings time. On that first day of 4:30pm darkness, I could no longer deny that the cold would indeed come.

But here's the part that surprised me: this year, instead of a sense of seasonal dread, the arrival of the dark and cooler weather has hit like a deep exhalation. Closing the blinds and turning on the lamps before I pick up the boys from school and daycare has become a new ritual I look forward to. Lighting candles and sitting under blankets has felt like a gentle invitation to slow down and breathe deeply. As we prepare to enter the season of Advent, I pray that this season will come as a deep exhalation to you too.



While the calendar year starts to draw to a close, the demands of our lives seem only to increase. More sparkle! More presents! More holiday fun! And don't forget to be holly and jolly in the midst of it all! But the Church finds itself in a different place. As the days get shorter and the nights longer, the Church begins her new calendar year in waiting and darkness. It is the season that many of us know as Advent.

The beginning of our new year begins not with hopes and resolutions to become a better person. It doesn't even begin with the mystery of Christmas or the shock of Easter. We begin with a waiting that might be better described as a longing or yearning. Yes, Advent is the season that prepares us for Christmas, but it is also the season that prepares us for the present and future coming of Christ. It speaks of the three arrivals of Christ - past, present, and future.

Advent is a season of brutal honesty, where we recall that we are a people in need of rescue. It is the season where we search and long for that which is durable enough to hold our hope, and we wait for its arrival. This means it is also a time where we are not afraid to name all that we need saving from as the brokenness of our world and lives can feel ever-present.

The good news is that we do not wait alone. We enter into this waiting and longing, not as individuals, but with people of faith throughout time, across the globe, and here in our parish community. Our Advent waiting also urges us to seek out and bear witness to the places where it seems as though the darkness might have the last say. It requires that we hear and learn stories of the oppressed and marginalized who also find themselves in the longest of nights. We wait and cry out alongside all of those who know the brokenness of our world all too well as we trust that the Christ who came in flesh still comes to us and will come again.

Advent is where we begin.

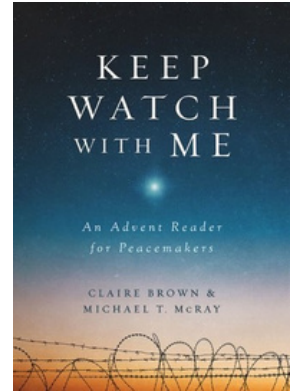
FROM THE RECTOR

How do you want to enter this season of waiting? What do you long and yearn for God to make right?

Where has your hope been disappointed? Where might your hope need to be relocated?

If you are looking for some suggestions on how to move intentionally through this season, I want to invite you to a few opportunities. On Tuesday nights on Zoom, I will be leading a guided scripture meditation on the Sunday lectionary readings from Isaiah followed by compline, a pray service from our Book of Common Prayer that concludes the day. We will be using a practice called *lectio divina* which encourages a slow and prayerful engagement with scripture. We also have daily Advent devotional booklets from Living Compass available for you in the church.

Personally, I am looking forward to moving through a devotional with various voices titled, *Keep Watch with Me: An Advent Reader for Peacemakers*. If you end up picking it up too, let me know! And, as has become a tradition I cherish during this season, I will be sharing a poem with Advent themes each week in the eNews.



Wherever this season of Advent finds you, I pray that in your waiting and longing you will be surprised by the Christ who still makes his way to us time and time again.

Advent blessings,

Melesa+



FROM THE DEACON

Well, here we are. It is officially fall and the holiday season is upon us. I love the fall season. We, as Wisconsinites, have the blessing and/or curse to enjoy all four seasons of weather, whether we like it or not. In the summer, it's the beauty of our flower gardens and the harvest of our vegetable gardens. We have the warmth of the sun, picnics at the beach, family vacations and yes, that gosh darn humidity. In the spring we have that gentle yet beautiful reminder that God is always at work as we watch the tulips and daffodils bloom representing new growth and life. The air is fresh and the temperatures start to get a bit warmer letting us know that summer is on the way. Then we have winter. I always find it interesting that although many of us have lived in Wisconsin most of our lives and know what to expect and prepare for, we always complain. It's too cold! I am tired of shoveling because the snowblower wouldn't start. BUT, then we have the children excited about snow days and no school. They get to play in that snow that we complain about, build snowmen and snow angels and drink hot cocoa. Winter also is the season that means Christmas is coming. A time of rejoicing and celebrating. A time where families and friends get together to share memories, meals and hugs. It's a time for us as Christians to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus, and revel in the joy of our greatest gift. Then we have fall or autumn. Fall is my favorite season. I love the crisp fall mornings as I sit and drink my coffee. The autumn leaves are hues of gold and red and surround us with the beauty of God's creation which often takes my breath away. I find myself stopping in the midst of my day to take it all in and to be grateful for all the blessings of my life.

In a few short weeks, we will start the season of Advent, but first we have Thanksgiving which is sometimes overlooked because Christmas music is playing on the radio stations and in the stores. Christmas decorations are already up and in the stores to purchase. Children are making Christmas lists and writing letters to Santa. Sooo, before we enter the season of Advent and the business of the Christmas holiday, I invite you to take a moment in this season of fall in the wake of Thanksgiving to stop for a moment. Make a list of all the blessings in your life and give thanks for them. Sometimes, I find myself bemoaning all of what I believe to be negative things that are happening or have happened during the course of my lifetime, so I write a list with what I feel are the negatives on one side and the blessings on the other side. Every time, the list of blessings is longer. It doesn't change the truth that challenging or painful times have happened, but it reminds me that I have much to be thankful for. It reminds me that God is always by my side and walking along with me.

Ephesians 3:16-20 is my prayer for you, my friends, as we celebrate the seasons and give thanks for all our blessings.

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and how high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen

Peace,

Deacon Lisa

FROM THE WARDENS

Summer certainly flew by fast, as they usually do in Wisconsin. During that season your Vestry, with the assistance of parishioners, were actively making St. Thomas of Canterbury more visible in the community. We attended National Night Out in Franklin and in Greenfield. We hosted Greendale's Children's Parade on July 4th, and we participated in the Greendale Village Days Eucharist, with St. Luke's ELCA and St. Stephen the Martyr ELCA. Summer happenings at STOC included the Lazy Book Club, formation of the Prayer Labyrinth Team, and we had an All Hands On Sunday to continue caring for our building and grounds.

Fall isn't over and so far, we've had the 2nd annual Chili Cook-off and first Trunk or Treat. There were 45 attendees enjoying the 10 varieties of chilis at the Chili Cook-Off. Kudos to Vicki Kutz for winning the Golden Ladle at the Chili Cook-Off. On Sunday, October 26 we had decorated vehicles in the parking lot for Trunk or Treat. So many children.... but not enough candy! Due to your generosity, we collected almost 700 pairs of socks, which were given to the Milwaukee Rescue Mission. Peanut Butter and Jelly (PBJ) Club meets the 2nd Monday of the month to make about 300 PBJ sandwiches, which are delivered to The Gathering the next day.

Our audio-visual system has been updated and is currently in test mode for posting our 10:00 mass on YouTube (Live, from Greendale, it's STOC!)

Soon we will be in the season of Advent, a time of waiting and preparation for the celebration of Jesus' birth (Christmas). We will start off the Advent season with the Advent Wreath Workshop. There will be supplies to make 10 wreaths, so if you're interested, sign up soon. A \$25 donation is suggested to offset the cost for supplies. If you already have an Advent Wreath at home but need candles, handmade candles will be available for \$10 per set.

There's much that has happened this year for STOC, and more to come. We're on the hunt for a new organ, replacing the pews with chairs, changing our HUGE lawn from grass to clover (save on maintenance costs), and an alternative worship format was created. We've had new people join our congregation sharing their talents to serve as ushers and/or counters, and they've jumped right into PBJ Club, attended the Chili Cook-Off (winner Vicki, and her husband Terry are new to STOC).

Always remember that the Vestry is here to represent you; members are available to chat with when you have any concerns or suggestions.

Cindy Purpero, Senior Warden
Kathy Angeli, Junior Warden

FROM THE DEACON IN TRAINING

Hello Everyone,

It's hard to believe that I've been here for a little over three months! It seems like it was just yesterday when I first walked through these doors, yet I feel like I've known everyone for years! I am so thrilled that I was assigned to such an amazing parish!

Over these last few months, it has been a blast to participate in events such as the pet blessing. I had so much fun meeting all your furry friends and hearing the stories about their adventures. Animals truly are wonderful blessings.

I've also enjoyed spending more time on the altar. I was only an altar girl twice in my life, so becoming an acolyte was intimidating for me. Thank you so much Mother Melesa, Deacon Lisa, and all the acolytes I've served with for walking me through what I need to do. It's been a joy to serve with all of you.

A huge thank you to everyone for allowing me to preach and listening to my sermon. It's always intimidating to give a homily, but the supportive environment you all created made it less intimidating. I appreciated all the feedback!

I am extremely excited about spending the Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany seasons with all of you. The welcoming and warm environment you create will make the holidays even brighter. Thank you all for your patience with me throughout this year and for giving me a safe environment in which to grow not only in my ministry but also as a person.

Don't be afraid to ask me if you need anything. I will serve you in any way I can. Have a Peaceful Advent, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Blessings,

Dana Fritz

ADVENT

Advent for all

*fellowship and formation for all ages
following the 10am Sunday service*

30
NOV

ADVENT WREATH WORKSHOP

Join us to make an Advent wreath for your home with fresh greens or clay.

14
DEC

CARDS & COOKIES

Grab a cookie & help us write Christmas cards for our home-bound members & others.

07
DEC

ST. NICK VISIT & BAGELS

St. Nick is making a stop at St. Thomas to share his story and bring a few treats!

21
DEC

PREP FOR 12 DAYS OF TOGETHER

Make a calendar to celebrate the 12 days of Christmas with acts that bring us together.

Compline with Scripture Meditation

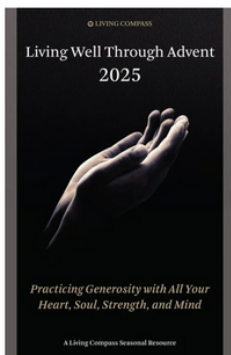
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 9, 16

Carve out space for stillness and reflection this Advent with guided scripture meditations followed by compline on Tuesday evenings via Zoom from 7-8pm. We will use a method called lectio divina which is a slow, prayerful reading of scripture. If the idea of silence and prayerful meditation intimidates you, know that you will be guided through the process with increments of 2-5 minutes of silence. We will conclude each night with compline, a liturgy for the late evening that holds some of the most cherished prayers of our prayer book.

Advent Wreath Workshop

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Join us at 11:15am on Sunday, November 30th, for an Advent wreath making extravaganza! This year we will be using live greens and handmade candles from parishioner, Terry Kutz! St. Thomas will provide all of the supplies; all you need to do is show up ready to create. This year we have supplies for 10 wreaths. To sign-up, email Melesa+ or put your name on the sign-up sheet in the gathering space. A \$25 donation is suggested to help pay for the cost of supplies.



Advent Devotional

If you are looking for a way to walk through Advent with intention, we invite you to pick up a devotional booklet from Living Compass. Living Compass is an organization that, "offers tools and training for the journey toward wellness and wholeness." This Advent's theme is Practicing Generosity with All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind. The booklets will be available in the church office and at the ushers table in the church.

CHRISTMAS

Celebrate Christmas

at St. Thomas of Canterbury



DECEMBER 24

4:00pm | Family Christmas Eucharist

A service oriented towards families with children that includes familiar Christmas hymns and an intergenerational sermon.

7:30pm | Christmas Carols and Choral Prelude

Join us prior to the 8pm service for carols and choral Christmas works from the St. Thomas choir.

8:00pm | Choral Christmas Eucharist

A traditional Eucharist with the St. Thomas choir.

DECEMBER 25

9:00am | Christmas Day Eucharist

Christmas Flowers

Each Christmas the parish is decorated with flowers and greens thanks to the generous donations of parishioners. If you would like to make a contribution to this year's flowers for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services, envelopes are available at the usher's table or you can give online through our website. If you would like your donation to be in memory or celebration of a person or event, please indicate so.

All donations must be submitted by Sunday, December 14th, to be included in the Christmas Eve bulletins.



Christmas Cookie Coffee Hour

Put those left over Christmas cookies to good use and bring them to coffee hour on Sunday, December 28th! Instead of having one coffee hour host everyone is invited to bring Christmas cookies to share for a sugar-coated extravaganza.

EPIPHANY

Epiphany Pizza Party

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6

Celebrate the Feast of Epiphany with a pizza party and community Eucharist! We will gather at 6pm in the Parish Hall for a pizza, salad, and community. The evening will conclude with Eucharist in the sanctuary and be wrapped up by 7:30pm.

Epiphany is one of the principal feast days of the Church, and it marks the shift from Christmastide to Season after the Epiphany where we celebrate manifestation of Christ to all peoples. The first celebration of this comes to us through the story of the wisemen who visited Jesus after following the star.



New Year's Annual Examen Retreat Day

SATURDAY, JANUARY 3

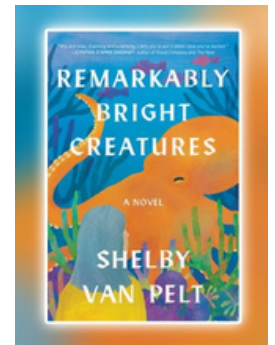


You are invited to join Mtr. Melesa for a day retreat on Saturday, January 3rd, from 9am-12:30pm, where we will reflect on the prior year and the year ahead using the Ignatian Examen. The Examen is a way of intentionally and prayerfully reflecting on your day, or in this case your year, that invites one to trace the movement of God in one's life. On this day retreat you'll be invited into extended times of reflection and silence and given tools to help you review the last year and while preparing for the year ahead. A sign up can be found in the Gathering Space or via the link in the eNews. A donation of \$15 is suggested but not required to assist with the cost of food and materials.

Lazy Book Club Winter Read

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11

The Lazy Book Club returns! This time we're reading *Remarkably Bright Creatures*, by Shelby Van Pelt. Why lazy? Because we will meet ONCE to discuss the book together on Sunday, January 11th, at 11:30am. You can sign up in the Gathering Space or via the link in the weekly eNews, purchase the book, and read at your own pace!



Annual Meeting

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25

Each year we host an Annual Meeting to look back at the amazing work God has done in our community and prepare for the year to come. We hear a variety of reports and updates about our shared parish community including a budget presentation and a state of the parish report from the rector.

In addition to providing updates and reports on the parish, elections are held for leadership positions. Each year we elect a senior warden, junior warden, two vestry members, and four delegates to Diocesan Convention. This year's Annual Meeting will be held Sunday, January 25th, at 11:15am. All members of the parish are eligible to run for these positions. If you would like more information about the positions, please contact Melesa+.

OUTREACH

Milwaukee Rescue Mission Ministry

Did you know that every quarter a group from St. Thomas volunteers serving meals at the Milwaukee Rescue Mission? You are invited to join in this ministry! Each time a group of five goes to the Rescue Mission from 3:45pm-6:30pm on a Saturday to serve dinner to the various groups within the nonprofit. If you are interested in serving or learning more, please contact Erika Stoving.



Do you have a vision for Outreach?

Do you have ideas about how St. Thomas of Canterbury can better build relationships with and serve our neighbors? If you answered with an enthusiastic or even hesitant yes, consider talking to Mtr. Melesa or Deacon Lisa. In this season at St. Thomas there is not an organized outreach committee, instead you, the whole people of St. Thomas, are that team!

Outreach Partners

NOVEMBER 2025



The November Outreach Partner is Pearls for Teen Girls. PEARLS for Teen Girls is improving quality of life and strengthening our community one girl at a time by empowering young women and gender-expansive youth with self-development tools, guidance and support to strive for better, brighter futures by living out the PEARLS values: Personal Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Respect, Leadership and Support.

DECEMBER 2025



The December Outreach Partner is The Hospitality Center of Racine. The Hospitality Center is a nonprofit founded by the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee and provides basic needs for those in Racine including breakfast and lunch, a monthly laundry program, daily morning prayer, support groups, and more.

JANUARY 2026



The January Outreach Partner is The Haiti Partnership. For over 40 years, Episcopalians in Wisconsin have stood in solidarity with the people of Jeannette, Haiti. Today, that support is being transformed through a groundbreaking outreach ministry between the Episcopal Dioceses of Wisconsin and the schools and clinic at St. Marc's in Jeanette, Haiti, and in partnership with a Haitian-led nonprofit reshaping community development through transparency, relationship, and sustainability.

To give to our monthly outreach partner, use an outreach giving envelope or write outreach in the memo line of your check.

Upcoming Dates

PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY CLUB

Monday, December 8 at 3pm
Monday, January 12 at 3pm
Monday, February 9 at 3pm

MILWAUKEE RESCUE MISSION VOLUNTEERING

Saturday, January 10 at 3:45pm
Saturday, April 11 at 3:45pm

Outreach by the Numbers

\$1,137 for Milwaukee Street Angels in August

\$1,221 for ACTS Housing in September

\$1,251 for Guest House of Milwaukee in October

680 pairs of socks collected during Socktober

Live Streaming is LIVE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

On Sunday, November 23rd, we will be going public with the live streaming of our 10am Sunday service! For the past few months Andy Rieder Van-Hout has been providing a tremendous amount of help as we have worked out the kinks of adjusting the various audio levels for the live stream. Our services will be live streamed via YouTube, and a permanent link will direct you there from our website.

In order to make this sustainable we need a team of volunteers who would be willing to work in the tech booth in the choir loft to help stream the services. We promise that it is not as complicated as you think, and training will be provided. If this is something you would be willing to assist with on a montly basis, please talk with Mtr. Melesa.



Dedication of Altar Linens and Vestments SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Over the past few years St. Thomas of Canterbury has been blessed with generous designated gifts from parishioners for the purchase of new altar frontals to help celebrate the liturgical season of the Church and to replace other linens that are showing signs of age. Additionally, we have been able to purchase a full set of seasonal vestments for our particularly short (but mighty!) clergy team as we have relied on vestments lended from St. Andrew's Episcopal in Madison for the past three years. This was made possible through memorial gifts of parishioners who found worship at St. Thomas of Canterbury to be a central part of their life. Of special note is the new deacon stoles were purchased using memorial gifts from Carol Chmielewski, Deacon Lisa's mom's, celebration of life service. On the first Sunday in Advent we will dediate and display all of the new altar linens and vestments as we begin a the new liturgical year!



Ecumenical Prayer Service SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

Save the date! After last year's success, the clergy of the Green Corners, a group of clergy from Greendale, Greenfield, and Hales Corners, have decided to host another ecumenical prayer gathering for unity on Sunday, January 18th. The service will be held at 3pm at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church. More information about the theme and focus of the service will be shared closer to the date.

PARISH UPDATES

Gathered and Sent Eucharist



Earlier this year a small group of parishioners began discussing and dreaming of what an alternative Eucharist service at St. Thomas might look like. We decided that the values that would guide our holy experiments were a service that is intergenerational and inclusive, playful and dialogical, contemplative and community oriented, rooted in the Anglican tradition. Since those early meetings we have held two Eucharist services with a third scheduled for December 3rd. The service is still very much under development, but as we continue to explore and experiment, know that you are invited to join us!

After the December gathering the discernment team will debrief our learning and experiences thus far and make plans with how to proceed in the spring.

Show and Tell

This fall we started a pop-up series of adult show and tell where individuals share their gifts, talents, and interests with our community, and what fun it has been! We've listened to podcasts, learned about poetry, and joined in communal singing while hearing about the role of music in memory. We are excited to share that we have a whole new group of folks ready to share with us this winter and spring. Mtr. Melesa is working on putting together the schedule, and we will share it when complete. Be on the lookout for show and tell offerings featuring a love for philosophy, an Eucharistic prayer with a reputation, and an appearance by Benjamin Franklin!

Creating Sustainable Systems of Care

For the past three years we have been working to create sustainable systems that allow us to ensure the ongoing care of our ministries, buildings, and grounds at St. Thomas while being able to adapt to our current realities. This started with reconsidering how the Vestry conducts its work, and parish treasurer, Ron Thorson, has applied this approach to streamlining our financial processes.

For the past year we have focused on the care of our buildings and grounds. Specifically what this has looked like is the creation of quarterly All Hands In Sundays and asking for help for the ongoing care of the community garden from the community gardeners. While there are still adjustments to be made, we are finding our way. Thank you to the many of you who have stayed after on a Sunday to clean, organize, fix, and garden! Many hands really does make the work lighter and allows us to be good stewards of the resources God has given us!



PARISH GOALS UPDATE

In March 2025 we held a series of parish meetings to share the four goals that the Vestry had adopted for the year. These goals reflect where the Vestry is directing its focus and energy in this year as we strive to be faithful to where God is leading us and stewards of our parish community. What follows is an update on the progress made on our parish goals (new update since the fall edition of the Tales are bolded):

Goal #1. Explore options, hold parish conversations, and implement plans surrounding how we steward and use our buildings and grounds.

- Parish wide conversation held in March to discuss replacing sanctuary pews with chairs to increase accessible space within the parish
- **Kitchen, sacristy, and nursery have been cleaned out and organized. The remaining spaces we are looking to address are the outreach room and library**
- We received a grant from the Diocese for clover seed that will be spread in the fall 2025 or spring 2026 as a environmentally beneficial and cost saving measure
- **The prayer labyrinth team met in October to discuss initial ideas for location and style, and has contacted the Village of Greendale to gain approval for the creation and location of a labyrinth.**

Goal #2. Address aging systems that support Sunday worship.

- Live stream equipment has been installed and we are currently running trials before launching the live stream publicly
- **The livestream of the 10am Sunday service will launch Sunday, November 23, 2025**
- **In October the Organ Replacement Team made a recommendation to the Vestry to replace our current failing organ (due to age) with a new electric organ from Allen Organ. The Vestry approved this proposal**
- **In November a St. Thomas member made a generous gift to cover the full cost of the new organ**
- **We have signed a contract with Allen Organ for a new organ, and the estimated production and installation timeline will be 7-9 months**

Goal #3. Explore and experiment with new opportunities for worship and formation.

- A worship discernment group has met a few times to discuss the creation of a worship service with the following values: intergenerational and inclusive, playful and dialogical, contemplative and community oriented, rooted in the Anglican tradition
- A \$3,500 grant was received from the Diocese to assist in the creation of this new worship service
- We are currently evaluating children's formation and have adapted programming for the fall
- **We have held two sessions of the Gathered & Sent Eucharist service with a third scheduled for December 3**
- **The worship discernment group will be in conversation in December and January to evaluate and consider next steps**

Goal #4. Explore and implement ideas for how we can increase our sanctifying presence in our communities beyond the walls of the church.

- A team of six has met several times to discuss and explore how we can be present to our neighbors, which has resulted in St. Thomas' participation in the Franklin and Greenfield National Night Out Events and hosting a trunk or treat event
- **The trunk or treat event was both eye-opening and successful as candy was given to 300+ trick-or-treaters**
- **Mtr. Melesa has been actively facilitating conversation between the Green Corners Clergy Group and Common Ground, a community organizing nonprofit, to explore collaboration in our community**

A note on the project to replace our pews with chairs: with the organ replacement project fully funded, we will be turning our attention to pricing out options for chairs and updating our current flooring in the sanctuary. Preliminary research will begin in November and will continue through winter 2026.

As we continue to work towards accomplishing these goals, please know that the Vestry and clergy are happy to talk about any questions or concerns you have.



St. Thomas of Canterbury
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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