



# The Tower

St. Thomas Episcopal Church  
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## **From the Rector**

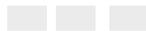
Folks,

It's officially Fall, a time when churches are in full swing with programming and most likely preparing the budget for next year. We at St. Thomas are no different. In less than three weeks, we will begin the process of reviewing committee, property, departmental, and operational needs.

It is also the time we issue pledge cards to the congregation and prepare for the ingathering in November when the cards are issued and returned. Perhaps you are new to the Episcopal Church and unfamiliar with this process, or perhaps like many of us over the years have understood the pledge period as stewardship, because that is precisely the word used to describe the process.

So before I get to asking, let me do some explaining and defining.

Stewardship. *All that we do, with all we have, all the time.* Such is the definition of stewardship as articulated by a number of dioceses in the US. God calls us to share in God's mission of caring for the world, using all the gifts God has given us. We are stewards, caretakers of God's gifts. Everything we have was a gift from God, and God asks us to use it all for God's purposes. Generosity flows naturally out of our gratitude for the gift of love, family, and life itself.



Stewardship is not a six-week period in the fall during which budgets and pledge cards are the major characteristics. Stewardship is not fundraising, paying bills, salaries, or keeping the church alive. It is not a program or an activity. Stewardship is a way of life, a conversion of the heart, an *attitude of gratitude*. To be a good steward is to live with a glad, generous and grateful heart. It is what shapes and informs the way in which we interact with each other; how we treat and handle our possessions and the environment; how we choose to take care of ourselves; what we do and say. Simply put, stewardship is discipleship embodied and lived out on a daily basis. Pledging is a fractional part of stewardship.

Pledging is the method by which we financially support all of our programs, pay our bills, compensate our staff, subsidize the upkeep of our property. It ramps up in late September, and culminates in an ingathering in November when we make our pledge to the church. *In the Episcopal Church it is a one time a year ask*. Whatever you pledge to St. Thomas, along with the other pledges, is the dollar amount we have to cover everything during the fiscal year; we will not ask you for more money to cover the budget at another point within the year. This sets us apart from other denominations who may, on a weekly or monthly basis, ask you to give more.

As most of you know, St. Thomas has a significant endowment that enables us to do more than our pledges cover, especially in years when the economy is doing well. We are grateful our portfolio has been performing well, but recognize we cannot depend on this to balance our budget. There are many things we could do with this blessing other than use it for our operating account, including the support of other organizations whose mission is critical, but funding is insufficient. The bottom line is, we should never be dependent on a financial stream that can dry up on any given year. At present, only 27% of our entire operating budget is funded by our pledges, with another small percentage covered by rental income. The hard truth is we need to be stronger in our own giving, and wean ourselves off of our dependence on the endowment.

When I interviewed with both the search committee and the Vestry, I expressed my concerns about a dependency on the endowment. My question to them was “If your child had a trust fund, would you allow him or her to live off that, or would you say, ‘Get a job?’” I’d like to think we would all say the latter.

Here’s where it gets tough. Episcopalians - including myself - are very hesitant to talk about money or ask for it. It seems in bad taste or form, so we shy away from discussion. This changes today. I not only ask each of you to give prayerful consideration to the level at which you believe you can support the ministry we provide to our congregation, surrounding communities and the world, but challenge you to give more so we may serve more, do more.

Over the next several weeks you will see reminders about pledging, you will hear about it in our readings, in sermons, and from your Vestry members. The biblical tithe of giving 10% of all we have back to God has historically been the number we have presented as what is expected of us all; I acknowledge it is unrealistic for many, if not most. What I do ask you is this: whatever percentage you are comfortable in giving, work each year to add to that percentage to move to a 10% give. If you give 1%, please consider 1.5%; if you give 5%, consider 5.5%. Every dollar matters and is deeply appreciated.

Starting on Sunday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, pledge cards will be available in the back of the church; they will remain there through the 19<sup>th</sup>, at which point those remaining will be mailed to your home. I ask they be returned on Ingathering Sunday, which will be All Saints’ Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

I hope this explanation has been helpful in developing an understanding of the distinction between stewardship and pledging. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know. I value your input.

Blessings, 

*The Rev. Carol D. Gadsden, Rector*  
[rectorstthomas@gmail.com](mailto:rectorstthomas@gmail.com)

## St. Thomas What's Going on Under Heathcote Hall's Big Top...



Are you curious about what is happening in Heathcote Hall while you are in church quietly tuning into the sermon?

### Sunday School!

Well, on any given Sunday, there's a lot of action behind those red brick walls--to borrow a phrase, "it's like a three-ring circus", with the hall serving as our very own big top. And, because our acts were becoming a little too predictable, we've changed things up, so in working and playing together we can get everyone engaged in community, from the toddlers in our nursery, to the kids in our Sunday School, to our tween and teen confirmation group, extending to include our busiest high schoolers. As I said last month, we hope to offer something for everyone!

Starting this fall in the nursery, our learning center most appropriate for babies, toddlers, and young pre-schoolers, we are reading from Archbishop Desmond Tutu's, *The Children of God Storybook Bible*, a beautifully written and illustrated book to help introduce our youngest to the Word. The little ones are then encouraged with a daily question to work out a theme of that day's Bible story in age-appropriate play.

From the Creation story, to the Ten Commandments, to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we've put thousands of Lego bricks to good use interpreting Old Testament Bible stories this fall in Sunday School, a group that spans ages 4 or 5, through the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. We begin each class in the chapel with singing, then a brief prayer followed by a short Bible story and questions. After that, we head to the Lego corner of the big hall to build our own Garden of Eden, idols, and fiery furnaces, with each Bible building team retelling the day's scripture in their own way with Lego creations. Kids seem to really love the Legos. As result, they are bringing Bible stories home, talking about them with their parents and

siblings. Clearly, the Lego-based Bible study program suits us-- the right thing, at the right time. Please stop by during coffee hour to ask us about our Lego/Bible works and to have a look at our wonderful bricks. You can build "something Bible", too!

Under Shelley Crook's creative leadership, we've started the year with a very high quality and robust group of kids in our grades 6-9 confirmation group, a remarkably interested and engaged bunch committed to exploring their personal beliefs, and our faith, together. This lively bunch begins each class with prayers for their shared endeavor, and for each other, and in thanksgiving. Then, utilizing the curriculum *Confirm, Not Conform* to guide the exploration, our kids ask a lot of big questions to discover what lies, out to the edges, of their beliefs, looking at the Bible, but also at what they hear in the news, and experience in popular culture. Of course, it's not all hard questions, there is some silliness, too, and Hershey's Kisses to sustain the hard work. Our confirmation group is large, numbering close to 15 in total, and a friendly group, with enough critical mass from week to week to satisfy the social needs of this cohort. It's fair to say that Shelley and I think we will all be proud of the decisions these kids make in regard to confirmation.

Traditionally, we've engaged our high school kids by putting them to work as babysitters in the nursery, or, more recently, as volunteer Sunday School teachers. But we'd like to do more to serve this growing group and Mother Carol is encouraging us to try some new things. While most of our kids in this cohort have a lot of pressures on their time, many express a strong desire to serve others, as well as to socialize with their friends. So we are considering plans for an ecumenical, intergenerational outreach activity, like a Valentine's senior tea dance, or a holiday dress-up dinner.

Over the course of this school year, we expect that more than 50 kids will regularly attend our programs, with the profile and interests of the group shifting from year-to-year. Changing things up is essential to keeping our

kids and families engaged. If something is missing or not working, or if you have a bright idea, we welcome suggestions from kids, parents, teachers, babysitters and parishioners that will help us be successful in our efforts. And of course, I count all of you among our many Sunday School blessings, for being such a warm, welcoming faith community for our kids and their families.

If you are interested in learning more about our programs for tots, children and teens, please contact me.

*Kate*

*Sunday School Director*

[katebeeby@optonline.net](mailto:katebeeby@optonline.net)



### **Musical Notes**

As we embark upon a new and exciting chapter in our spiritual lives with the leadership of our new rector, Carol Gadsden, please let me reiterate my invitation to have you, our parishioners, let us know of specific, meaningful hymns and anthems that you would like to hear at St. Thomas, either in general or on a particular Sunday.

Hymns and anthems are, typically, planned a month in advance; and the best way to submit requests is via email to: [ExcellentSingers@aol.com](mailto:ExcellentSingers@aol.com)

Thank you,

*Noel Hart*

*Organist and Choir Director*



## Please mark your Calendar

# CHRISTMAS — FAIR —

Every year on the first Saturday of the month in December we hold our Christmas Fair. This year the Fair is scheduled for December 6th. The doors open at 10am and will remain open until 4pm.

All profits from the hard work and dedicated efforts of our volunteer teams will go to local charities. As usual we plan the following activities:

LIVE AUCTION \*\*\* CAFE FOR BREAKFAST & LUNCH  
BAKE TABLE \*\*\* SILENT AUCTION  
CHRISTMAS GIFT TABLE \*\*\* VINTAGE CLOTHING \*\*\* JEWEL-  
RY NEARLY NEW TABLE \*\*\* BOOK TABLE  
NURSERY FOR CHILDREN

If you would like to be a Christmas Angel and volunteer for any of these activities please contact Michael Ford at [mikerdford@yahoo.com](mailto:mikerdford@yahoo.com) or after church. Come and enjoy the fun and bring your family and friends.

*Michael Ford*  
*Fair Committee Chair*



## YOU DON'T WANT TO FORGET...



Please celebrate the **Holy Eucharist** with us in St. Luke's Chapel every **Wednesday at 7:30PM**



**Bible Study** meets **Tuesdays at 7PM** in the Boardroom



**Tuesdays: Brown Bag Lunch and Pantry: 11:00AM—12:00PM**



The St. Thomas **Women's Group** meets every **first Thursday** of the month at 7:30PM



You are invited to a **Community Dinner** every **second Saturday** of the month at **5:30 PM**



The St. Thomas **Men's Group** meets every **first Friday** of the month at 7:30PM



**Thrift Shop** is open Wednesdays from 11AM to 2PM and Saturdays from 10AM to 1PM. **Temporarily closed do to mold.** Watch for updates.



### October Birthdays:

|                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| Bette Pollak      | 11-Oct |
| Carolyn Young     | 13-Oct |
| Ira Hart          | 14-Oct |
| Robert Poney, Jr. | 14-Oct |
| Veronica Sessler  | 16-Oct |

## St. Thomas Clergy, Staff and Vestry Directory

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Rector:</b> The Rev. Carol D. Gadsden    | <a href="mailto:rectorstthomas@gmail.com">rectorstthomas@gmail.com</a>               |
| <b>Parish Secretary:</b> Barbara Gessler    | <a href="mailto:office@saintthomasmrk.org">office@saintthomasmrk.org</a>             |
| <b>Sunday School Director:</b> Kate Beeby   | <a href="mailto:sundayschool@saintthomasmrk.org">sundayschool@saintthomasmrk.org</a> |
| <b>Director of Music:</b> Noel A. Hart, Jr. | <a href="mailto:ExcellentSingers@aol.com">ExcellentSingers@aol.com</a>               |
| <b>Bookkeeper:</b> Nancy Mustacato          | <a href="mailto:bookkeeper@saintthomasmrk.org">bookkeeper@saintthomasmrk.org</a>     |
| <b>Sexton:</b> Edgar Garza                  | <a href="mailto:edgaregarza@yahoo.com">edgaregarza@yahoo.com</a>                     |
| <b>Sunday Sexton:</b> Anner Garza           |  |
| <b>Senior Warden:</b> Sue Perciasepe        | <b>Junior Warden:</b> Linda Shearman   |
| <b>Vestry:</b>                              |  |
| Patricia Bave                               | Brian Gassick  |
| John Brown, Clerk                           | Gloria Welcome   |
| Shelley Crook                               | Denny Wong   |

### Service Schedule:

|                 |             |   |
|-----------------|-------------|---|
| <b>Sundays:</b> | 8:00 AM     | Holy Eucharist (said)   |
|                 | 10:00 AM    | Holy Eucharist with music,<br>followed by refreshments in the Parish Hall |
|                 | 11:30-12:45 | Choir rehearsal   |

### Christian Education for Young People:

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| 10:00 AM   | Sunday School |
| Nursery care available from 9:45AM until 12 Noon |               |

Deadline for articles and submissions for the next Tower: October 15, 2014

Submit articles to Barbara Gessler at [office@saintthomasmrk.org](mailto:office@saintthomasmrk.org)