

December 2020 The Story

***All are Welcome
No Exceptions!***

St. Thomas Episcopal Church accepts all people and we commit:

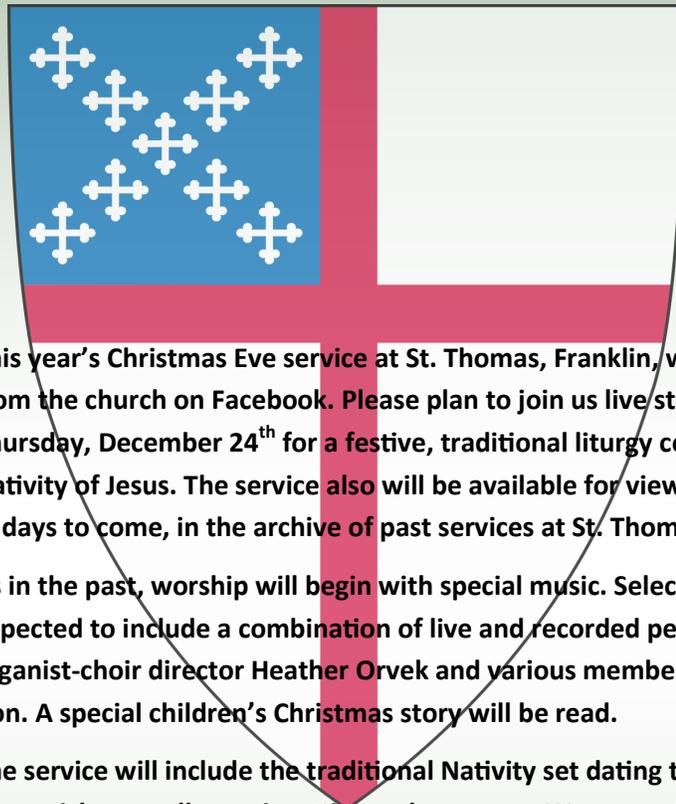
Celebrate the Eucharist regularly

Keep a personal and community discipline of prayer and study

Proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ by promoting justice, peace, and love.

Nurture God's people as we grow in Christ

Live with thanksgiving, wonder, and openness to God's love



This year's Christmas Eve service at St. Thomas, Franklin, will be live-streamed from the church on Facebook. Please plan to join us live starting at 7:00 p.m. Thursday, December 24th for a festive, traditional liturgy centering around the Nativity of Jesus. The service also will be available for viewing later that day, or in days to come, in the archive of past services at St. Thomas's Facebook Page.

As in the past, worship will begin with special music. Selections this year are expected to include a combination of live and recorded performances by our organist-choir director Heather Orvek and various members of the congregation. A special children's Christmas story will be read.

The service will include the traditional Nativity set dating to the early years of the parish, as well as poinsettias and greenery. We are not seeking donations for Christmas flowers this year.

During Prayers of the People, we will have Intercessory Prayer allowing time for you to post names of those for whom you're praying. Please also feel free to contact me in advance with names of those you'd like included in our prayers.

Due to the current surge of the coronavirus pandemic, St. Thomas will join many Episcopal churches and other faith traditions in not having an in-person congregation this Christmas Eve. Out of an abundance of caution, your congregational regathering team reaffirmed its decision to continue services with small in-person leadership teams at this time. Meanwhile, as progress for vaccines continues, please join me in praying for a swift and lasting resolution to pandemic-related challenges in the near future.

Wishing you blessed and joyous Advent and Christmas seasons,

Fr. Whitney

Vestry Candidates Sought for St. Thomas

The greatest among you will be your servant. Matthew 23:11

As the holy season of Advent approaches, Fr. Whitney and I are putting the call out for parishioners willing and able to represent St. Thomas on its Vestry.

In the Episcopal Church, the Vestry is a parish's legal representative concerning all matters pertaining to its corporate property. Its basic responsibilities include managing resources and finances, supporting clergy, ministering to parishioners, ensuring effective organization and planning, and providing guidance and support to the church's mission.

At St. Thomas, Vestry members represent the congregation by serving three-year terms. Serving on Vestry is a commitment of time and talent. It is also a rewarding and fulfilling service to our church community.

The terms of two current St. Thomas Vestry members are scheduled to end, and new Vestry members will be elected, at our next Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 31st, 2021. Annual Meeting most likely will be virtual, on Zoom.

Please contact Fr. Whitney or me if you are willing and able to serve St. Thomas, the Diocese of Indianapolis and the Episcopal Church.

--Dave Buchholz

Pandemic Update:

In a November 13th update about the public health crisis, Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows said that "as a diocese, a state and a country, we are entering an intense new phase of the COVID-19 pandemic." Her letter said that, "At this time, I do not plan to take the extraordinary step of closing our buildings, as I did in the spring during the first phase of the pandemic." Those plans will change, if the governor issues a shelter-in-place order.

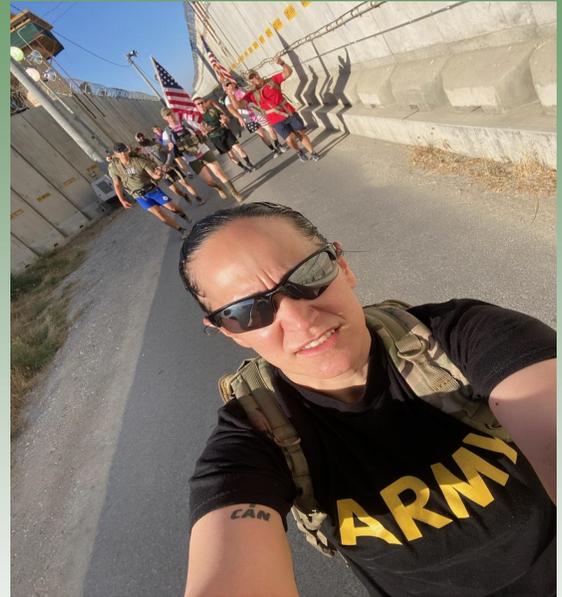
Bishop Jennifer reminded everyone that Diocesan guidelines for regathering for worship allow in-person services and meetings only when congregational regathering teams deem such gatherings as safe. The Bishop recently heard from many congregations that decided to suspend in-person worship on a week-by-week basis as their local health conditions dictate.

From November 15th to 29th, Johnson County averaged 143 new daily positive cases of the coronavirus, according to the Indiana State Department of Health's Coronavirus Dashboard. In previously released guidelines, the Diocese recommended in-person worship be permitted in locations with about five new cases per day.

"Worshiping via videoconference or livestream," she said, "remains the preferred choice if case counts are high and the availability of hospital beds is low in your area."

A member of our church family, Marta Pincheira, is in military service in Afghanistan. She has recently extended her mission and relocated. When we have an updated address for Marta, we will share it with everyone. Please do not send further correspondence until she provides a new address.

Enjoy this picture of Marta as she leads a Fourth of July parade.



Marta Pincheira, who recently extended her mission in Afghanistan to serve with an elite U.S. Army unit, has sent her fellow parishioners a holiday care package.

As a token of appreciation for the cards, letters and prayers she has been receiving from the folks at St. Thomas, Marta surprised us with a package containing at least twenty t-shirts and workout tops. The short-sleeve cotton or synthetic shirts are mostly black, dark gray, light gray or blue, and range in size from Medium to XXL. Most have graphic designs of locations or operations in Afghanistan.

If you would like a shirt – or several – please email Fr. Whitney Smith at whitinindy@hotmail.com to arrange for pickup.



Sign-up for Panera Bread Ministry using the sign-up genius:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409084BA9A62BA46-panera>



NEW NEWS FROM THE TREASURER

1. First, thank you for continuing your support of St. Thomas. As we end the year, I can provide an updated contribution statement if you would like to receive one.

2. If you wish to mail your contribution but do not want to send it to the church, you are welcome to mail it to KAREN SMITH's home address. I will be out of town beginning December 18th until March 1st. Karen will be making the deposits.

Karen Smith
4530 Hickory Ridge Blvd.
Greenwood, IN 46143

3. We are still sending an email to alert contributors when checks have been deposited. Please contact me if you mail a check and do not receive an email from us within 2 weeks of mailing the contribution. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions!

4. Year-end contribution statements will be emailed or mailed by January 15th.

Thank you – Marti Ramsey
MLRAMSEY51@GMAIL.COM; 317-441-3819



Due to your generous support of Reid and Austin Smith in their Scouting adventures, they are on their way to accomplishing their scouting goals. Reid had \$658 in wreaths sales and Austin had \$2259 in popcorn sales. Reid is on his way to Philmont Scout Ranch next summer and Austin will be attending summer camp. Thank You!

December Celebrations

Birthdays

- 8 Marti Ramsey
- 12 Erica McFarland
- 13 Josephine Foster
- 15 Phil McIver
- 19 Shirley Beck
- 21 Kelly Blade and Marna Poindexter
- 28 Terresa Branham
- 29 Ethan Bachman
- 30 Cynthia Dozier
- 30 Helena Ring

Anniversaries

- 21 Molly and Kelly Blade
- 28 Brandi and Jason Ashlock

ST. THOMAS VESTRY

The 24th Vestry of St. Thomas (2020--2022)

- 2020Rachel Allen, Cynthia Dozier
- 2021 Joshua Craft-Rutan, Jan Skopecek, Juanita Wahlberg
- 2022.....Dave Buchholz, Marikay Kapke

The Staff and Officers of St. Thomas

- Rector.....Fr. Whitney Smith
- Senior Warden Dave Buchholz
- Junior WardenCynthia Dozier
- Clerk Karen Smith
- TreasurerMarti Ramsey
- Organist/Choir DirectorHeather Orvek

If you have an article for the next newsletter, please submit it to Father Whitney at whitinindy@hotmail.com by the 15th of the month.