

First, may I express my gratitude for the opportunity to serve St Thomas, my family's church home, and to do it alongside our very able vestry, and executive committee members, which include Anne Bentley, our Treasurer, Mother Liz, and Barb Feldon, our Junior Warden. It has been a blessing to work closely with people who are so dedicated to the St Thomas community!

As we continue to live into our vision of a lay-led, clergy supported community, I want to praise all the work that's been done by the dedicated members of St Thomas in the past year. All the committees, our social and educational events, the opportunities to support our children and youth, our pastoral and outreach activities, our worship services – all of the ways we connect with each other and the larger community, were made possible by your investment of time, energy, and dedication. Thank you!

Welcome to our new members! So many people have found us, seekers from a wide variety of backgrounds, and we are so happy you are here.

We have much to celebrate in this past year –

1/ New Strategic Plan: Through multiple focus groups, Q & A sessions, and online surveys, this community built a new strategic plan to guide us in the next 2-5 years... it's our first since before the pandemic, and now one that reflects our current situation, and the opportunities that lie before us.

Among our goals, we've identified closing our budget gap and balancing our revenue and expenses by 2026... Growing our membership by 15 percent by the end of 2025, assisted by our strategic communications plan... and strengthening our children and youth programs with more service opportunities and mission trips.

This plan is a living document. Expect it to change and be refined as we move forward, but it will be the roadmap for where we're headed. You can always see the latest version online at our website.

2/ Joint Stewardship Campaign: as part of our strategic plan, the vestry decided this past summer to run a joint stewardship campaign in 2024, aimed at narrowing our annual operating deficit, AND building a capital fund to support rector housing here on the Eastside. Anne will have more details in a moment, but your engagement with the campaign and commitment to St Thomas resulted in a 22 percent increase in funds pledged for annual operating OVER last year, and \$1.3 Million dollars in pledges for rector housing... Thank you for your generosity and commitment!

Looking ahead to 2025, we have opportunities to:

1/ further stabilize our finances by investigating ways to open up the Ebsworth Life Center to the greater community, and to generate more revenue. Work is already underway with a revenue committee looking into ways for our campus to help support itself.

2/ Experience the gifts and blessings of our staff and clergy, as we continue to fine-tune the balance of our financial resources, our programs, and our staffing

3/ Address rector housing on the Eastside. After a full year of hard work on this issue, we now have your commitments to the housing fund. The next steps are to make it a reality.

4/ Embrace the work of evangelism in this “unchurched” corner of the country... look for more to come from our online evangelism work supported by a digital marketing grant from the Lilly Foundation.

5/ Continue to renew our relationship with St Thomas School.

I want to say thank you to Fred Williams, who has accepted the call to serve as your Senior Warden for 2025... and to our new incoming vestry members for their willingness to join in the work.