



# CHRIST CHURCH

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*The Rev. Matthew Hoxsie Mead*  
Rector

November 29, 2018

*Almighty and everlasting God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift: Send down upon our bishops, and other clergy, and upon the congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace: and, that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honor of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

Advent is around the corner! This Sunday, December 2, 2018, marks the start of a new liturgical church year. I write with updates about Advent, capital improvements, stewardship, an update from Diocesan Convention, and liturgical issues in the larger Church.

## **ADVENT & LITURGICAL RENEWAL**

Every church season we change or rotate a few things in the liturgy. There are numerous options in the *Book of Common Prayer 1979* (BCP79) and the other liturgical resources that have been approved by the Episcopal Church in the ensuing 40 years since the BCP79 was published. We use a lot of what is in the BCP79, and where it makes sense in the context of our community, customs, and building we also use some of the other liturgical resources. That said, the BCP79 is our base, and we tend not to stray from it.

Advent (like every other season) brings seasonal customs, season blessings, and seasonal Eucharistic prefaces (the section of the Eucharistic Prayer right before “Holy, holy, holy” or *Sanctus* is called the Eucharistic preface). In Advent and continuing until Lent at the 10:00 a.m. service we will use Eucharistic Prayer B (we have been using Eucharistic Prayer A since Trinity Sunday). Also at the 10:00 a.m. service we will use Prayers of the People Form 6 and the Confession of Sin which is part of this form. At the 8:00 a.m. service we will use Prayers of the People Form 1 and the “Lost Sheep” Confession from the Rite 1 Penitential Rite. The seasonal blessings come from the *Book of Occasional Services*; everything else comes from the BCP79. Beyond that, our occasional *Come As You Are* service draws from *Enriching Our Worship* and the BCP79, and from time to time bits of *Enriching Our Worship* appear in our

worship when appropriate. Our Advent Lessons and Carols, 6:00 p.m., Sunday, December 9, is adapted from the *Book of Occasional Services*.

I hope that the seasonal changes of Advent and the wonderful variety of our liturgical resources provide you with a spark for spiritual renewal. I find that the various approved liturgical resources offered by the Episcopal Church provide a wealth of material that allows us to live intentionally into each season. I think we do a pretty good job of using the resources without losing our focus. In Advent I invite you to focus on the words that we are praying together, and I hope that those words will inspire you and deepen your faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14)

### **CAPITAL & ROOF UPDATES**

Our Capital Campaign has been a great success. Including grants approved from the Bedell Fund and the Diocese of New York we have received commitments for over \$550,000. This will allow us to complete the first three levels of our project list, including the roof over the Church (Level 1) and the roof over the Rank Building (Level 3).

The work on the Church roof has been ongoing for the past few months. You may note the shiny new copper ridge roll that was installed Thanksgiving Week. Work around the physical plant will continue throughout the winter and throughout 2019. This year’s Annual Report will include a list of everything that has been done and what we are planning in the near future. Kari Black who is our Buildings Committee co-chair (I am the lesser half of our team) has done an amazing job overseeing everything. I am grateful for all she had done, and I am so happy we are doing these essential building projects. Thanks to all who donated to the Capital Campaign. Thanks also to Anne and JD Calder for organizing the Capital Campaign, and thanks to those who organized our wonderful 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

It is important to note that Capital Projects are outside of our normal building maintenance expenses and repairs. We are replacing the roof, but we still must service and power our boiler, budget for snowplowing, and pay for electricity. Our every-day, every-month, and every-year budget is paid for by Pledges.

### **STEWARDSHIP**

Our Stewardship Sunday was a little less than a month ago. We are off to a good start. According to our Stewardship Chair John Fox we have received 94 financial pledges for 2019 for a total of about \$294,000. Based only on the pledge cards that we have received (new, increased, decreased, and same) we are up about \$17,000 over last year.

We are about three-quarters of where we need to be by year's end. We are hoping for more than 125 pledges, and we hope to break \$400,000 in total pledges. Doing that would allow us to keep up with minimum cost of living increases for our staff, keep Canon Susan at Christ Church beyond 2019, continue to maintain our buildings, and not cut our already skeletal programing.

Our Parish is blessed with many talented people, and some of them serve on our parish's Investment Committee, co-chaired by David Jeffries and Margaret Young. For many years the Investment Committee has recommended that we modestly decrease the percentage of our annual endowment draw so that our endowment will grow at a rate consistent with inflation. At last night's Vestry meeting this topic was discussed in depth as it is every year as we begin to prepare for the coming year's budget. This is something we need to do, but until our pledging totals allow for it, we would end up cutting in ways that would be counterproductive – deferring maintenance only saddles us with bigger problems down the line... cutting staff undermines our pastoral care, administration, youth ministries, and programs... cutting programs sounds possible until you actually look at the numbers and see that we're running leaner than a parish our size ought too... and cutting outreach any more than it has already been cut runs counter to one of the core missions of the church. All that said, the Vestry does try to close the gap a little more each year so that we move closer to an ideal endowment draw.

There is an expression that a church's budget is a spreadsheet indicating its spiritual priorities. Our budget is pretty tight, and I am confident our priorities are in all the right places. We have a fantastic clergy and ministry team on staff. These past few months have shown great growth in pastoral, educational, and children's ministries... and there is a ton of Capital Campaign related work going on as well. I am grateful for our staff and for our many volunteers all of whom put in countless hours. Aside from budgeting Canon Susan who is currently paid for by a Next Step Grant from the diocese, no new spending is planned in 2019 outside of the Capital Campaign. As always, if you have any specific budget questions, please speak to me, one of the Wardens Jeff Bodenmann or Carol Ipsen, our Treasurer Anne Calder, or our Bookkeeper Amy Heese. If you have any endowment questions, please speak to David Jeffries or Margaret Young. If you have any Stewardship questions, please speak to John Fox.

If you have not already done so, please send in your 2019 Pledge / Estimate of Giving Card. It would help us greatly as we move into planning the 2019 Budget.

### **DIOCESAN CONVENTION NEWS**

The Convention of the Diocese of New York meets annually in November. Joining me were Canon Susan, Deacon Katie, and our elected Delegates to convention Curtis Chase and Sandra Rivera. This year we met in White Plains for two days of presentations and business.

I want to offer a few of highlights. You can find the full report online here (In particular I recommend the “All Videos” tab): <https://www.diocesen.org/2018-convention-report/> Convention began with presentations, discussions, a play, and a Liturgy of Lamentation. The Rev. Canon Eric Law offered a presentation on Holy Currencies and Building a Beloved Community; the presentation was followed by a discussion, and Canon Law also preached at the Convention Eucharist. Next we watched a play sponsored by the Anti-Racism Committee which highlighted some of the direct involvement – good and bad – that the Episcopal Church in New York had with slavery and abolition. This was followed by a Liturgy of Lamentation in which four anonymous accounts of sexual abuse in the Diocese of New York were read, followed by prayers and litanies. Both the liturgy and play were powerful, moving, and heartbreaking. Sexual abuse and racism remain present day evils, and I believe that we are called by God to confront and stand up against them. I found it helpful to begin conversations over these topics after first being reminded that our Biblical mandate is the Beloved Community, wherein love is the starting point in all of our relationships.

The first day of convention concluded with a dinner and the presentation of the Bishop’s Cross, given each year to a member of our diocese who has devoted his or her life to the Church and performed exemplary service for our diocese. I note with some pride that our own Canon Susan Harriss received the Bishop’s Cross in 2016.

The second day of convention was the business day. The Bishops’ addresses were all excellent and can be seen and heard in their entirety online (in the link above). There were also numerous presentations from various Commissions and Committees in the diocese. I would like to highlight the PowerPoint Presentation from the General Convention Deputation. I served as one of our Deputies – more on that below – and I think the video provides a good overview of what happened at convention.

The budget is always a major part of convention. I have served as Budget Chair and as either Chair or a member of the Finance Committee of the Diocese of New York since 2013. The full Budget report and narrative is available online. In short, the diocesan budget for 2019 is a bit more than \$11,172,000, it is balanced, and it includes significant income contingencies. Like our parish budget, the diocesan budget is lean, and core expenses are prioritized. For the past three years our diocese has been living into a Strategic Plan – I chaired the Financial Matters Task Force of the Strategic Plan – and the Finance and Budget Committees in the diocese have been untangling and updating what can only be described as byzantine and obsolete financial systems. This year the annual budget of our diocese was approved unanimously – I think that is a first in my years in the diocese. Talk about the diocesan budget always invites questions of our own Assessment and what it is used for. Our Assessment supports the Episcopate, staff, ministries, and grants – since 2016 we have received four Property Support grants and one Next Step Grant for a second clergy person – and the budget and narrative provides further detail. If you have any questions at all about the budget or the finances of the diocese, please ask me.

Convention concluded with the approval of several other important resolutions: Condemning Prolonged Solitary Confinement; Addressing Next Steps After Lamentations; Minimum Clergy Compensation; Election of Trustees of Estate and Property; Preventing Bloodshed at the Meeting of the Refugee Caravan and the U.S. Border; Admittance of St. Andrew's and St. Luke's, Beacon; Seating of St. Martin's and St. Luke's Manhattan; and Seating of CSI - Hudson Valley Scarborough. These last three resolutions involved the formal seating at Convention of newly merged parishes in Beacon and Manhattan, respectively, and a Church of South India parish seeking admittance into the diocese.

It was a good convention. If you are interested in learning more please speak to Curtis or Sandra or one of the clergy members. If you are interested in serving as a Delegate to Convention please speak to Jeff Bodenmann who is chairing our Nominating Committee. If you are interested in serving in the diocese in some way, please speak to me, and I will connect you with the Leadership Development Commission.

### **THE TASK FORCE FOR LITURGICAL & PRAYER BOOK REVISION**

This past summer I attended the Episcopal Church's General Convention. I was away from the parish for nearly two weeks serving as a Deputy. I note since I just finished writing about tight budgets that my transportation, lodging, meals, and expenses were fully paid by the Diocese of New York. This work costs our parish nothing, while allowing us to have a significant voice in the direction that the Episcopal Church at large is going. I am one of four Clergy Deputies from New York, and I hope that if you have any questions or concerns about the Episcopal Church you will share them with me.

General Convention voted on over 500 pieces of legislation. They were approved, referred, rejected, etc. Some of the more important pieces of legislation focused on liturgical and prayer book renewal and revision. I had a front row seat to this action as I had been appointed by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies to serve on and as a secretary for the legislative committee tasked with prayer book revision legislation. The final product that eventually was approved by General Convention tried to balance moving slowly ahead with revision and expansion while also holding onto the cherished rites and liturgies of the BCP79.

Revision, expansion, or whatever form it takes will take many years and will be an ongoing process. The last time the Episcopal Church did this it took more than 20 years before there was a final product. The BCP79 was crafted throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Our parish library has many volumes of the Prayer Book Studies that were published. We also have the various trial versions that were used throughout the Episcopal Church – some of you may remember transitioning throughout the 1970s from the *Book of Common Prayer 1928*, to the Green Book, to the Zebra Book, to the Blue Book, to the Proposed Book and finally to the *Book of Common Prayer 1979*. The scholarship that went into the BCP79 was first-rate, and I think most Episcopalians would agree that it is an excellent prayer book – I certainly think it

is. That said, it is a product of its time, and that has proven to be a challenge for a growing number of Episcopalian communities.

There are four major issues that are behind the call for prayer book revision. I think I have a pretty good understanding of each issue, and I am certain that not one of them is easily dealt with.

The first and most obvious is that we already have numerous other authorized resources outside of the BCP79. I noted the *Book of Occasional Services* and *Enriching Our Worship* above, but there are numerous other approved and trial resources including but not limited to same-gender marriage rites. The BCP79 holds a canonical and constitutional status above all of these rites and resources. For those congregations (and there are many of them) who regularly use *Enriching Our Worship* and for the many Episcopalians who believe “alternate” marriage rites for same gendered people is the liturgical version of “separate but equal” for gay people, the BCP’s higher canonical and constitutional status is a problem.

The second issue revolves around gender inclusive language, gender neutral language, and expansive imagery for God. There is a pretty broad spectrum here. One obvious part of this issue is finding poetic ways to update gender specific terms for people in our liturgies (e.g. men, mankind, etc.). Another part of this is avoiding male pronouns for God. The *Enriching Our Worship* liturgies include numerous examples of expansive imagery for God. To a degree, I think there is lots of room for common ground here. “Blessed be God’s kingdom” rather than “...his kingdom” – an update authorized in *Enriching Our Worship* – is common throughout the Episcopal Church. Using “all” or “people” or “humanity” rather than “men” or “mankind” is already standard in everyday English. Things get a bit more complicated when substitutes, even Biblical ones, are used for “Father” or “Son”. After all it was Jesus who used those words to speak about himself and God the Father.

The third issue is around the work of translation. The Episcopal Church is far more than the Anglican Church in the United States. It includes nations in southeast Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe. The Episcopalians in these countries are worshipping in languages other than English. No translation of the BCP79 holds the canonical and constitutional status of the *Book of Common Prayer 1979* in English. Even if the Episcopal Church had not expanded outside of the United States, this would still be a challenge. At the Convention of the Diocese of New York earlier this month, readings and parts of the liturgy were read in English, French, French Creole, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, and American Sign Language. These languages are not token languages used to make people feel part of some diverse denomination; they are languages used by vibrant and historic congregations in our diocese. Saint Anne’s Church for the Deaf was founded in 1850 when Robert Bolton was still Rector of Christ Church Pelham. The French Church of Saint Esprit dates to the 1600s and is one of the oldest worshipping congregations in the entire diocese. The Episcopal Church requires but does not yet have complete and canonically approved translations of approved rites for any non-English speaking community.

The fourth issue is how a prayer book fits into the digital age. I read my news online. We print up leaflets each Sunday in part so that we don't have to juggle multiple books and inserts. Mostly we do it so that people who are new to Christ Church or to the Episcopal Church or to Christianity can follow our service with ease – we are all literally on the same page, and if you are visiting a church that sort of thing helps you feel much more welcomed and at home. Most churches do this or something along these lines, and like us they use a variety of resources each week and season. The three issues above spring in large part from the reality that we have a single book (in English) of common prayer and a number of other approved resources. Sure, there are other versions, other rites, other translations, and alternate texts... and yet there is but one book of common prayer. A book has a page limit... what if it didn't? There were certain things that didn't get into the BCP79 because they couldn't fit within the page limit. What would our Book of Common Prayer look like if it didn't have a page limit?

My General Convention Legislative Committee was specifically tasked with all liturgical and Prayer Book revision questions including marriage rites, inclusive language, translations, and digital/paper issues. The final version of the resolution on Prayer Book Revision formed a Task Force for Liturgical and Prayer Book Revision to continue this work.

A few weeks ago I was appointed by the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies to serve on and as secretary for this Task Force for Liturgical and Prayer Book Revision. I am also the convener of the Task Force subcommittee on Communications. We are the subcommittee that gets to handle the digital question. I note again that this work costs Christ Church nothing. The Episcopal Church is paying any transportation, lodging, and meals for trips on behalf of the Task Force (I was in Baltimore two weeks ago). My service on this Task Force gives us a voice in how any revision might move ahead. I'd rather be involved and have a say than watch from the sidelines.

The BCP79 isn't going anywhere, but neither are the four core issues driving revision. My Task Force has two and a half years to work and report back to the next General Convention. My hope is that we can offer a roadmap for what sensible expansion and revision alongside the BCP79 can look like. Please ask me any time about the process.

These are exciting times in our parish and church. Make sure you come to Lessons and Carols on December 9 at 6:00 p.m., and please don't miss our Christian Pageant on December 16 at 4:00 p.m. Have a blessed Advent and a Merry Christmas!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Hoxsie Mead". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Reverend Matthew Hoxsie Mead, Rector