



THE GEORGIAN REPORT



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St. George's Episcopal Church Schenectady NY

December 2025

Diocesan Convention 2025

The dust has barely settled on the 157th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Albany, so you're getting this report hot off the presses. For the first time, the convention was held at Christ the King Spiritual Life Center. In the recent past (the last 20 years or so) the convention was held in commercial facilities – Camp of the Woods in Speculator & Silver



Bay YMCA Conference Center at Lake George. But those venues cost the diocese \$40,000-\$100,000 for a 3-day weekend convention. Using CtK was a lot less expensive and the money stays in the diocese. Bishop Jeremiah described it as “a homecoming in our own home”.

While we neglected to corral everyone for a group photo, our intrepid St George's delegation included Fr Tom, Deacon Abby Bee, David Kennison, Paul Smigelski and Bonnie Daggett with Bill Daggett as an alternate.

BISHOP'S ADDRESS Convention always opens on Friday evening with the Bishop's Address, the 2nd year for The Right Reverend Jeremiah Williamson, the 10th Bishop of Albany. Bishop Jeremiah continues to impress with his straightforward and caring style. Beginning in prayer, with everyone reciting the baptismal covenant, it was clear to all that he truly cares about the people of this diocese and about ensuring our future as a unified, God-centered family. Using examples from churches he has visited recently, he stressed God's call to open our hearts and our doors to all people of any background, any need and any orientation such that “no one is standing outside looking in. Just as no one is beyond the reach of God's love, so no one should be beyond the reach of ours.”



To that end, Bp. Jeremiah reported how he has charged the Committee on Constitution and Canons to review and propose changes for clarity and demographics but “also because our canons do not make room for some of our beloved members. Our canons have communicated a message of exclusion to our LGBTQ members, of which there are many. These faithful members have patiently waited to experience welcome in our own diocese. If we are going to be a big tent diocese, we need to make space in our hearts for each other. This next year, in anticipation of the canonical changes, we are going to facilitate opportunities for folks to share their perspectives and to practice difficult conversations. We are in the process of becoming a people that God is calling us to be and that comes with some uncertainty.”

Continuing, “Our diocese is only as strong as our churches and that is why the priority of my office is to support our congregations and support your

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ministries and to help you carry out the vision God has placed on your hearts. We are here for you.” Bp. Jeremiah is in the midst of going to all 105 congregation, taking almost 3 years of Sunday visitations to make the circuit, then he will begin again. Of necessity, some of the visitation load will eventually be delegated to Canon Neil Longe, Fr. Bill Hinrichs and Canon Meaghan Keegan.

Bp. Jeremiah said, *“I hope we can lead with love, speak respectfully and sing and pray and worship as one body of Christ. Our affections will grow and will be tested and when they are tested, I hope we can be gentle with each other. Even when our feelings are strong, remember that our love is stronger. We are Christians and disciples of Jesus. It is our work to carry on our Christian ministry, to saturate our works with the love of God. Although we have our differences, we are baptized members of the one body of Christ. We are one body, we need each other; we cannot say I have no use of you. Love is the foundation of our work. I want this diocese to be known not by the persistence of our arguments but by the strength of our love.”* His was a heartfelt and uplifting message of love and hope and was enthusiastically received with a rousing standing ovation.

CONVENTION BUSINESS The convention business session began with a number of ecclesiastical appointments to various committees and other procedural items. Dean Leander Harding of the Cathedral of All Saints then gave a detailed status report of the operations, attendance and ongoing challenges with repair and maintenance of an aging physical plant with income challenges in an age of declining church attendance. It is the story of virtually every church in the diocese, writ large by the enormity of the cathedral structure. Dean Harding emphasized that since the cathedral is the seat of the bishop and the liturgical center of the diocese – the cathedral is our church. More information can be found at <https://www.cathedralofallsaints.org/>.

Saturday morning began with the Convention Eucharist, done very nicely with multiple clergy and a beautiful liturgy.

ELECTIONS A number of diocesan positions were open, requiring elections by the clergy and lay deputations. Of those, Brian Taylor was elected to a 2nd term on the Great Chapter of the Cathedral, David Kennison was elected to the Diocesan Disciplinary Board and Fr Tom was appointed to be Secretary of the Standing Committee. It was so nice to see increased St George’s visibility in diocesan life!

REPORTS Reports were given on various diocesan groups, including Diocesan Youth Ministries, centered at Christ the King. Beaver Cross attendance continues to grow to the point where they have had to turn down some applicants due to lack of space and staff. With Canon Meaghan Keegan as Executive Director, aggressively promoting the facility to many groups including other denominations’ conferences and retreats to use as a wedding venue, Christ the King has stopped bleeding cash and shows a small profit.

FINANCIALS The DoA also now shows a small profit, \$1,193 in Income vs \$1,125 in Expenses. That said, Albany’s assessment to the Episcopal Church (8%) remains below what is expected (15%) and below most other dioceses in the country. They have applied for, and been granted, a waiver for 2026 to continue at 8% with the proviso that they have a solid plan to reach the expected amount.

The Clergy Stipend Schedule (cash salary) is being raised by 2.5% for 2026 due to cost-of-living adjustments. Deacons historically serve without stipend or fee, although parishes are required to pay \$25/month into a deacon’s fund + Church Pension Fund Assessment. Clergy health insurance is now directed to be chosen only from one of the offered diocesan plans.

RESOLUTIONS Several resolutions were proposed and discussed, most of which were routine approvals of the budget, clergy compensation, and recognition of Loaves & Fishes as an official ministry. Another resolution proposed making the diocese a sanctuary diocese for *“the immigrant, refugee and*

stranger among us". . This included a pledge to actively advocate for changes in immigrations laws.

Although strongly supported by many, the provision to change laws ultimately was seen as possible making the diocese a political target and could cause a loss of our not-for-profit status. This resolution was revised to have the bishop appoint a committee to study the ramifications in more detail and report back next year.

A significant resolution was to approve Bp. Jeremiah's directive to the Committee on Constitution and Canons to propose amendments in a number of areas. This includes clauses that require marriage to be restricted to 1 man and 1 woman and clergy to not be practicing non-heterosexual. These canons were unenforceable anyway, as they contradict the national church canons. This was approved overwhelmingly.

Finally, a courtesy resolution was later proposed and enthusiastically approved that *"the Convention expresses its heartfelt apology to the LGBTQ+ community of the diocese for the negative impact that these documents of the diocese and the policies which they enshrine have had on their lives and thanks them for their continued patience during this process of amendment."*

With apologies to Bob Dylan, "The times, they are a-changin'!" We are much the better for it.

With great affection, david

- EVENSONG



Thanksgiving Evensong was held on Sunday November 16, 2025. We had a very strong choir with many extra volunteer singers who are friends of St. Georges. After the service was complete, the Executive Director of the Schenectady City Mission, Mike Sacoccio, spoke to the congregation about the wonderful things the City Mission is working on. A portion of the plate offering will be donated to the City Mission.

joan pearson



FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK.....



Dear Georgians and Friends,

As another year comes to a close, we can look back on a year of so many great blessings. It's the close of my second full year as Rector, and so much has happened!

The biggest accomplishment by far this year was the formation of a new partnership with the YWCA of Northeast New York. This past Spring with the help from Karen Zalewski-Wildzunas and our own Sue Hartz, we were introduced to the YWCA who were looking for a new home for their Early Childhood Learning Center. The YWCA is currently undergoing a major renovation and building project on their Washington Avenue facility. The staff and teachers of the daycare loved the building and the location of our Parish Hall and Sunday School rooms. Work began right away to see if the project was feasible. Architects and contractors descended on the building, committees were formed, drawings were completed, plans were made.

On our end, Georgians sprang to action sorting, moving, and disposing of all the contents of the building to prepare for the work to come. Then, over the Summer, the Great Hall and our parking lot became a construction zone. I made the strategic decision to forego a summer vacation, thinking that it would be when I left town that something would certainly go off the rails. Gratefully, everything went smoothly as could be! Finally, in the Fall, I felt confident enough to take a few days away.

In the end, the YWCA made a huge investment into our property at no cost to us. Among the projects were a sprinkler system, new fire alarms, and the costly work of asbestos abatement and containment. A new entrance was built on the Green Street side of the building, a lift was installed in the Lobby, and a new ADA compliant bathroom was plumbed in on the second floor in the old laundry room. Several structural cracks were found and secured.

I am happy to say that our new relationship with the YWCA is going splendidly. They are showing themselves to be wonderful tenants, and I only hope we can reciprocate by being just as good a "landlord." It's a joy to hear the sound of children filling the rooms in a building that was built especially for them! There are still many details about our life together that need to be worked out. But, I am confident that their presence with us will continue to be a blessing to St. George's and the whole Stockade for many years to come. Our current lease with the YWCA is for five years, but we are hopeful that our partnership will continue and flourish for many more years!

Another wonderful happening in our Parish life was the arrival of the Reverend Deacon Abigail Bee. Deacon Abby came to us from St. George's in Clifton Park, where she had been a member for many years, served several terms on the Vestry and as Warden before her ordination to the Diaconate. Currently, Deacon Abby is working on re-establishing the Assisted Living Ministry which stopped due to the COVID restrictions in nursing facilities. Look for more information coming in January. In addition to preaching monthly, Deacon Abby will also be temporarily leading our Sunday School until a new permanent leader can be found. She came to us with a great deal of experience and wisdom, and I'm looking forward to seeing how her gifts for ministry will grow and flourish to bless our parish.

In addition to restarting the Assisted Living Ministry, we have a few plans for coming year. The church ceiling painting project will start this Winter, along with refurbishing the Chi-Rho Room in Cranmer House to be used as the new Sunday School room. This Summer, we'll host the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament Annual Mass and Meeting. Plans are in the works to gather a young(er) adults group in January, and discussion are beginning around the establishment of a men's group.

During our Stewardship Campaign this Fall, we heard from parishioners what St. George's means to them. They shared their hope and their encouragement for our future. I hope you share that same hope, too. I know I was encouraged by their inspiring love for St. George's and the work we are called to do. It's wonderful to see our parish blossoming to new life and growing, yes, numerically, but more importantly, in faith and love for God and one another. I hope you will make it your prayer that in the coming year God continues to bless us in our life of Faith, Hope, and Love!

Faithfully, Thomas +



SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS

Spotlight on Sharon Trant

Our featured volunteer for this issue is Sharon Trant. A lifelong Episcopalian, Sharon hails from the small town of Palmyra, near Rochester. As a child she attended Zion Episcopal Church where her father was head of the church school.

On her mother's side of the family, Sharon has deep roots in the Potsdam, N.Y. area, and that is where she chose to attend college, earning an engineering degree. While in Potsdam, Sharon attended Trinity Episcopal Church, and has fond memories of that towering old sandstone building that looks like a castle on an island in the St. Lawrence River.

St. George's has been Sharon's church home since 2018. She and husband Jerry, who currently serves on Vestry, are long-time residents of Schenectady. They have four grown children: Carrie, Chelsea, Shannon, and Patrick. You would recognize Chelsea, who lives in Loudonville and works as a pharmacist, as she joins her parents for worship at St. George's on occasion, with her own 18-month-old daughter, Madeline, who was baptized at St. George's.

In addition to having a granddaughter, Sharon and Jerry are looking forward to welcoming a grandson very soon! Sharon will be spending the next few weeks in Boston to help her daughter Shannon, whose due date is Christmas.

Sharon's sister is a semi-retired Episcopal priest in the Rochester area, and their brother is a Navy veteran and resides in their childhood home in Palmyra.

Sharon is a former mathematics teacher—serving most recently as a tutor and a substitute in Schenectady and Niskayuna—and has taught Sunday school since she was in 7th grade. She is also a former Girl Scout troop leader.

In 2024, Sharon re-launched St. George's dormant Sunday school. In spite of her own busy schedule and disruptions due to the church's strategic retreat from the Great Hall, she managed to convene a small class of young people for a series of classes in Episcopal traditions and Christian beliefs. In recent months, Sharon welcomed the support of co-teacher Bob Lemmerman, who provides musical flair as well as insights on our style of worship. With Sharon's commitment to being in Boston this winter, her duties as Sunday school teacher will be assumed by our own Deacon Abby.

In addition to being the driver behind St. George's Sunday School, Sharon is active in Foyers. The Trants enjoy hosting fellow Georgians at their Niskayuna home, and when the weather is conducive, at their second base of operations on Sacandaga Lake.

Sharon and Jerry have also worked at the Art Show Cafe over the past several years. Both are valued members of our faith community. Today, we offer a special tip of the hat in appreciation of Sharon and her dedication to Christian youth education.



meg hughes

Foyers Vestry Picnic



Maybe we can't visit heaven for just a day, but spending a perfect day in the Adirondacks is mighty close! The combined sun, warmth and water gave us such a relaxing time at the Pearsons' Sacandaga Lake camp on July 19 that maybe an unintended nap or two sneaked into the afternoon.

As usual the youngest members of the group, Tallulah and James, got first choice of activities and that meant exploring, cornhole, and boat rides. Everyone brought snacks, chips and dips, salads and sweets to share for lunch, Jon cooked summertime meats on the grill, and we ate and chatted for the entire afternoon, rousing from satiety when the desserts appeared. Some of us sipped a refreshing adult beverage or two. Deacon Abby fit right in to the conversations and we had a great time rehashing old names and stories from St. George's past.

It is especially fun to spend time together when there is nothing to do but relax. Such was the gift of our day at the lake.

joan pearson





- MUSIC NOTES -



The Book of Common Prayer offers four offices of prayer for daily use. The two principal offices are Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, sometimes known as Mattins and Evensong. The two lesser offices are Noonday Prayer and Compline, the last office of prayer before bed. Offices of prayer have been chanted by monks, nuns and other communities of Christians for centuries.



On Tuesday, October 21st, the St. Cecilia Choir did chant Compline in the church at 7:30 p.m. The main part of the office includes a psalm, hymn, versicles and responses, the Nunc Dimittis or Canticle of Simeon, and other prayers including confession of sins and prayers for protection in the coming night. The choir sang this part in front of the High Altar. The choir then moved to the Lady Chapel to sing an antiphon - that is, a hymn - in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Finally the choir then moved to the alcove in front of the All Souls Chapel to sing the De Profundis which is Psalm 130 followed by brief prayers for the departed.

The service was about 35-40 minutes in length and makes a nice close to the day.

Other highlights this fall were:

Solemn High Requiem Mass for All Souls, chanted by the choir on Tuesday, November 4th, at 7:00 p.m.

Choral Evensong for Thanksgiving, sung by the choir on Sunday, November 16th, at 4:00 p.m.

dr. brian j. taylor

REQUIEM MASS FOR ALL SOULS

On November 4, after the frenzy of Halloween costumes and candy, we stepped back to contemplate the memory of our loved ones with the All Souls Requiem. The contrast is stark: Halloween is all pretense about death while the All Souls Requiem is about real death and our faith that our loved ones are with God.

Each of us has a personal history of those whom we mourn. That was reflected in the long list of souls whose names were read aloud and for whom candles were lit, each candle bringing back for a moment that person's life and warmth.

As Fr. Tom explained, we all wonder what happens after death because we are concerned about our loved ones and about ourselves. Those we mourn weren't perfect but they were loved. We hope to join them at the hand of the living God. Every act of love is a reminder of God's love for his beloved people, a love that never ceases.

The communion anthem, "The Souls of the Righteous" by Geraint Lewis, is a favorite of the choir: *The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and the pain of death shall not touch them. To the eyes of the foolish, they seemed to perish, but they are in peace. (Wisdom 3.1-3)*

In our hearts, always.

joan pearson



PHOTO ALBUM



12/16/25 3rd. Sunday of Advent, The Right Reverend Jeremiah D. Williamson Conferring of the Sacraments of Holy Baptism, Confirmation and the Reception of New Members.



12/12/25 Foyer's dinner at Jean and Owen Greenspan's home.



11/9/25 Breakfast and Forum - Ms. Kerrie Wolf-Piechota Volunteer and Community Engagement Coordinator Sycamore Collaborative.



6/20/25 Fr. Tom preaching at the Cathedral.



11/9/25 With November's monthly collection for the Sycamore Collaborative food party, Georgians will have donated 5,636 Pounds in 2025!



10/5/25 Prayers of Preparation before Sunday Mass.

- SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT -

It was a crazy Summer!

What a summer it's been and I'm not talking about the weather!

THE BOILER Things heated up quickly with a failed Cranmer House boiler. You may remember every detail from the written status reports in each Sunday bulletin. The old boiler just couldn't be fixed any longer and a new one certainly wasn't cheap. We launched a boiler campaign, not really knowing how that would turn out. After all, we just replaced the Church boiler 2 years ago and the Great Hall boiler a year before that. Both of them cost a lot of money and now having to replace another one - 3 boilers over 4 years with no wiggle room in the budget was beyond crazy. Even so, the faithful people of St George's understood that the need was real and came through brilliantly in our time of need. In 4 short months, you contributed the total cost of \$82,500. Frankly, I am now boiler-ed out and I'm sure you'd agree. I don't want to hear about boilers for another 40 years!



You'll be glad to hear that the boiler parts have now all arrived. Here's a shot of the beginnings of the assembly work. More photos soon!



THE PARISH HALL The biggest project St George's has seen in many years is the lease of portions of the Parish Hall to the YWCA for their Early Learning Center day care. Built in 1958, the building was not nearly being used to its potential, yet it was very valuable real estate in the middle of a congested historic district. When built, the parish hall was rocking and rolling with families, kids, dinners, Sunday School, social events and lots more. But churches everywhere have declined in attendance and St George's is not immune. It was sad to see it empty 6 days out of 7.

We learned of the YWCA's plans to relocate their daycare center from their Washington Avenue building, and their search for a suitable Stockade location. They had the need and we had the building!

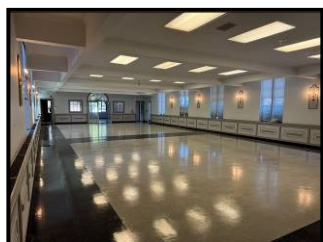
A deal was struck for a 5-year lease, but the story doesn't end there. Our parish hall was built to 1950s construction codes and had to be brought up to comply with current codes. Electrical, plumbing and structural systems had to be improved. A complete fire sprinkler system had to be installed throughout. New alarm systems and wiring, new staircases without open railings, tons of asbestos remediation. An ADA compliant entrance and bathroom, a wheelchair lift to the 2nd floor, nursery facilities, the list went on and on.

In the end, the YWCA invested almost \$1 million in refurbishment work. In return, they will pay no rent for 12 months and begin a slowly escalating rent scale thereafter. The YWCA also will pay all utility costs (heat, electricity, water) for the parish hall and St George's house, which are interconnected.

Terms of the lease are that the YWCA has areas that are solely theirs (all of the 2nd floor, 1st floor Library, now a nursery), St George's has an area that is solely theirs (the Shaw Lounge) and there are common areas that are shared (Great Hall, kitchen, 1st floor hallway and bathrooms, parking lot). The YWCA has rights to shared areas M-F, 7am-6pm and St George's can use those areas weekday evenings and all weekend. Yes, it will be a bit inconvenient at times, but we need to think in new realistic ways to maintain our large campus.

Probably the best part is that St George's and the YWCA are both not-for-profit Christian organizations, trying to be a blessing to our community and hopefully shine God's light in the world. We are partners in faith as much as we are landlord and tenant. That should put a smile on everyone's face.

With great affection, david



EVENSONG FOR THANKSGIVING

How perfect it is to celebrate Thanksgiving with the joyful music and uplifting readings of Evensong! Our Evensong for Thanksgiving on November 16 opened with Bach's Chorale Prelude on *Nun danket alle gott* and then swelled into that wonderful hymn, "Come, ye thankful people, come". We have much for which to be thankful.

The St. Cecilia Choir sang the joyous responses of John Sanders during the service, along with the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis of Charles Villiers Stanford. We were honored to hear Mr. Mike Saccocio, Executive Director of Schenectady City Mission, give the address. He sees the best and worst of our city, from the effects of poverty, addiction, despair, homelessness, to the best, when God calls people to do good things to help the poor. The City Mission provides shelter, serves 700 meals a day, hands out coats to children in 15 schools, and transforms lives. The Mission teaches people who have been lost to bring hope to other people, because people who have been in trouble recognize others in trouble. God takes that which is weak and broken and gives it purpose, restores it.

Mike's passion and his words were inspirational. Half of the Evensong offering was donated to the City Mission: From the service, \$258 went to the Mission. The Vestry augmented that to a total of \$1,000.

The service ended with "Now thank we all our God" and Brian Taylor playing a stirring March Triumphant by Siegfried Karg-Elert. Fr. Tom graciously hosted a reception at the Rectory afterward. It was a festive commemoration of Thanksgiving.

joan pearson



HOSPITALITY



The cooler temperatures and the aggressive yellow jackets signal the end of coffee hour outside our church entrance. We will be using Cranmer House but hopefully move into the Great Hall soon.

Thank you to everyone who signed up to make lemonade, iced tea and provide refreshments during the summer months. Suzy Unger, Bob & Meg Falco, Kevin Decker, Gerri Moore, Wendy Madelone, Lea Crow, Gloria Kishton, Kim Polner, Jean Greenspan, Meg Hughes, Sonia & Jerry Pedinotti, and Deborah & Daniel Suadat. Thank you to Carol Gaike for keeping coffee hour on track all summer. A sign up sheet for Sundays through December is at the entrance to the church

sandee hughes



LITTLE FREE LIBRARY



Take a Book, Leave a Book

Did you know that St. George's has a *Little Free Library* that anyone in the community may use? It's on Ferry Street, alongside the Memorial Garden. Please visit and select some new reading material for yourself.

Better yet, share the wealth! Why not donate some of your old books to help keep the Library filled? Children's books and current novels are especially welcome. Bring your donations to coffee hour and Meg Hughes or Barb Wengrovius will happily add them to the stock of books just waiting to find new homes.

meg hughes





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A DEACON JOINS ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

Enthusiasm has never been higher than the news that the Reverend Abigail Bee has become a much-awaited Deacon at St. George's Church in the Stockade Area of Schenectady.

Appointed to this three-year (renewable) term by Bishop Williamson, Deacon Abby will work alongside leaders of our existing Outreach and Pastoral Care (to name just two) to strengthen, help, encourage and grow these ministries as well as search for

new ministry opportunities. Of course, her primary duties will be visible especially on Sunday mornings.... reading the Gospel, inviting confession, preparing the Altar at the Offertory, assisting distribution of Communion, and dismissing the congregation at the end of Mass.

Deacon Abby, a lifelong member of St. George's in Clifton Park (where she also served on the Vestry and as a 2-term Warden), is a Mechanicville resident with her husband Ken; they have 4 adult children. Deacon Abby will administer to the needs of her new St. George's family in a warm and welcoming manner and, in turn, parishioners will give her a warm and welcoming introduction to our church.



lynn paska