



THE GEORGIAN REPORT



Volume 19 Number 1

St. George's Episcopal Church Schenectady NY

July 2026

Annual Meeting: Business and a Buffet

The congregation of St. George's gathered for the church's Annual Meeting after worship on January 11. Father Pettigrew opened the meeting with a prayer and assigned Carol Gaige to be the clerk of the meeting, and Kim Polner and Jon Pearson as ballot counters.

The slate of candidates for Warden and Vestry was presented. David Kennison was nominated by Jon Ewbank for Senior Warden. As there were no other willing candidates, David was duly reelected to the office he has so capably handled for the past several years.

Three Vestry seats were filled:

- > William Daggett was elected to his first full term.
- > Michael Todt, who had filled a one-year vacancy, has now begun serving his first official full term.
- > Gloria Kishton, having completed her first term, was re-elected to a second term.

The term for each of the above Vestry members will expire in 2029.

Father spoke on the successes of 2025. It was a busy year, the major highlight of which was the refurbishment of the Great Hall by our new tenant, the YWCA Daycare Center. In other good news, we welcomed Deacon Abby Bee to our clergy roster.

Although her Vestry service has expired, Carol Gaige will continue as Parish Secretary. Paul Smigelski continues as Junior Warden, focusing largely on Outreach. Gloria Kishton, as Chair of Buildings and Grounds, brings special expertise on historic preservation and maintenance.

Jon Ewbank has been appointed as Parish Administrator. Brian Taylor has stepped down as the

Rector's Assistant but will continue as Music Director. Our Sexton continues to be Fred Leger, who has been facing health issues and remains in our prayers.

Attendees received a detailed report on ministry activities and the church's budget. Oral reports were delivered by David Kennison, Jerry Trant (on financial matters), Paul Smigelski, and Gloria Kishton.

An elegant buffet luncheon was provided to all 45 in attendance. Barbara Wengrovius had prepared a delicious chicken casserole ("Snow on the Mountain") which is traditionally served with several topping choices. Many thanks also to Lea Crow, Carol Gaige, Meg Hughes, Gloria Kishton, Wendy Madelone, and Suzy Unger for food contributions.



meg hughes

YWCA OPEN HOUSE AND COMMUNITY RIBBON CUTTING



What's that noise?

Have you heard the laughing, singing and the general sounds of young children here on our campus? Those joyful noises are from our new neighbors and tenants in the Parish Hall! Last November, the Schenectady YWCA Early Learning Center moved into the Parish Hall with staff and students between the ages of 6 weeks- 5 years. The grand opening was held in early November and welcomed dignitaries from the City of Schenectady, along with members of the media. Center Director Nancy Johnson and our own Fr. Tom Pettigrew offered opening remarks with recognition for all the hard work that was done to bring the center to St. George's. All shared their hopes for a long and mutually beneficial partnership.

During the open house, guests were invited to see a community tile mural, originally created by GE Aerospace employees during a volunteer event last fall. All had the opportunity to paint and contribute a tile of their own, creating welcome space for families and a space where kids can dream big!

From the Book of Common Prayer page 824

For Schools and Colleges:

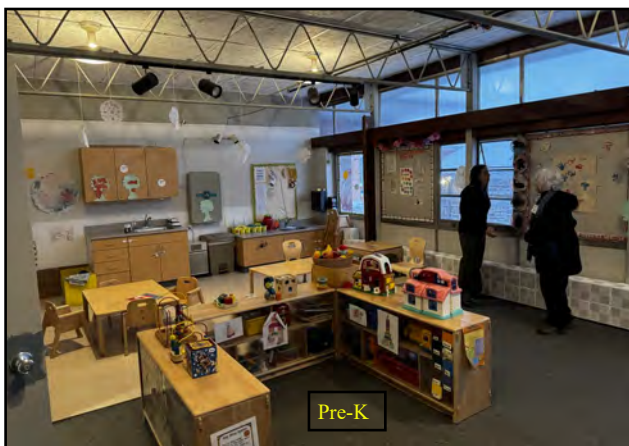
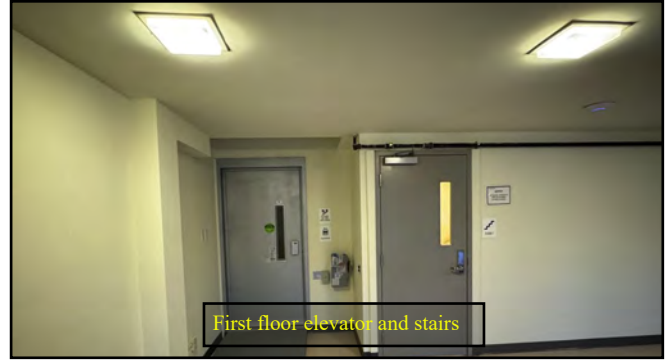
O Eternal God, bless all schools, colleges, and universities and especially the YWCA Early Learning Center, that they may be lively centers for sound learning, new discovery, and the pursuit of wisdom; and grant that those who teach and those who learn may find you to be the source of all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

From the Book of Common Prayer page 829

For the Care of Children:

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Reverend Abigail Bee



FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK.....



As I walked out of Morning Prayer in the Lady Chapel, I came to the middle of the aisle and genuflected, I turned off the lights, and left the chapel, going through the ambulatory, into the nave of the church. Before proceeding down the aisle in the nave, I paused, turned toward the High Altar, and bowed my head, and proceeded down the aisle, shut off the lights, and went over to the office.

I don't want to steal the thunder of David Kennison's occasional "Episcopal Education" column, but as I walked out that morning, after saying Morning Prayer by myself in the Chapel, I thought about how important our life of prayer is, not only to us as individuals, but as an Episcopal Community and Parish Family. I had just said Morning Prayer. But in a greater sense, the whole of St. George's Church had just offered Morning Prayer. And, in some little way, the world was different, even better, because of it.

This past Winter, I decided that my Lenten Discipline would be to offer "the whole Prayerbook" each day: Morning Prayer, Daily Mass, Evening Prayer. St. George's has a long tradition of offering these services every day of the week, going back to the 1940's. Mass, the Holy Eucharist, was offered here every day for over 50 years. Of course, for most of those years there were multiple priests on staff so it was easier to coordinate schedules and cover days off. My hope is that someday soon we can offer Mass every day of the week.

As I walked out of morning prayer that day, I realized that even though on that day it was just me in the building, it was important that prayer had been offered in this place. It's exciting to see everything that is going on here at St. George's: foyers, coffee hours, forums, book club, etc., etc., etc.. (And I'm glad that we have the wonderful Georgian Report to remind us of all that has been going on!) But the very center of what we do, and who we are, is prayer. In worship, in thanksgiving, and prayer, is the core of our identity in Christ. As important as everything else we do is, and they wonderfully important things, they are footnotes to our life of worship, thanksgiving, and prayer. Our life flows out from the Altar, through the sacraments and the prayers, shining God's light into the world.

As Lent went on, I realized that I wanted to continue offering these services throughout the whole year. I realized how important it was for everyone to know, that even if they weren't able to be present, prayer was happening. But, I also realized that I couldn't do it alone. I am grateful that throughout Lent we had parishioners regularly officiating evening prayer. My mornings have a good and regular routine, but I knew that my afternoons tended to be less organized and there would be times I need to be away. A special thank you to Dr. Taylor, Deacon Abby, Jon Ewbank, Ricky Noel, Sally King, and Daniel Miess for offering their time to regularly lead Evening Prayer. I am also grateful that they have all agreed to continue leading evening prayers as we work to build up towards a daily offering of "the whole prayerbook."

I hope that as you go about your own day, you'll recall that here in this beautiful old Church, prayer has been offered. And, when you find yourself with time, perhaps you'll join in that prayer, here in the Lady Chapel.

Faithfully, Thomas+



SALUTING ST. GEORGE'S VOLUNTEERS

From St. George's Church in Guyana to St. George's Church in Schenectady, Eric Bassant has always kept the faith. His father, who passed away on October 21, 2025, was an Anglican priest and instilled a deep sense of religious beliefs in his son. When the Bassant family moved to Schenectady, his wife Natasha "googled" area churches and found their St. George's Church at our St. George's Church. They have been members since 2023.

Eric has nothing but praise for the parishioners. "The choir, the church members, everyone is so nice. We received the warmest welcome here. We didn't get that sort of welcome at any other church."

Quickly adjusted to life not only in the United States, but at St. George's as well, Eric was a Thurifer in his home church in Guyana and signed up to be both Thurifer and Crucifer at St. George's. He also likes to sing but is not (yet) part of our choir. Son Aiden was a Boat Boy in church a few weeks ago; wife Natasha is a member of our Altar Guild and involved in the children's schools; daughter Chelsea takes a music course in playing the fiddle; daughter Arianna loves to read and began reading at an early age. They all love swimming and take it in school. The Bassant's have busy and productive lives.



Eric moved his family from Guyana to the States because he wanted a better life and educational opportunities for his family. "It's more peaceful here. It's safer," he explained. And while it's been said that *"the family that prays together, stays together,"* that phrase reflects the Bassant family. Whether it's watching movies and series on TV, going to the park, shopping, or church....they do it together.

Although he used to play cricket back home, Eric now finds enjoyment working in his small backyard. Theirs is one of 12 houses on their street. An independent construction worker by trade, Eric and his family enjoy the calmness and the quietness of life in the States.

lynn paska

Christmas Decorating a Joyful Event

Members of St. George's Church came together in a wonderful display of community spirit to decorate for Christmas on Sunday, December 21, following Mass. As the saying goes, "Many hands make light work"—or perhaps in our case, "make the LIGHTS work"! Either way, we brightened the church and our own spirits at the same time.



Happy helpers were present in abundance. Many thanks to those who lent their time and talents: Eric Bassant; Deacon Abby Bee; Kevin Decker (the brains behind the operation); Carol Gaige; Shannon Hartz; Sue Hartz; Chris Henry; Meg Hughes; Sandee Hughes; Colton Jaquith; David and Anne Kennison; Sally King and Ricky Noel; Wendy Madelone; Daniel Miess; J.J. Moran; Olivia and Quincy Parseghian (whose main contribution consisted of looking cute); Bob Paska; Jon Pearson and granddaughter MaryAnne; Father Pettigrew; Paul, Louisa, and James Smigelski; Sharon and Jerry Trant; and Barb and Jeff Wengrovius.

Thankfully, there were delicious refreshments to cap off the event. Diligent decorators were rewarded with a variety of hot homemade soups prepared by Barb and Kevin! Others from the hospitality crew—including Anne Kennison, Wendy Madelone, Sandee Hughes, and Sue Hartz—filled in the blanks with other treats.

meg hughes





- SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT - Special Edition -

The Church Ceiling Reborn!

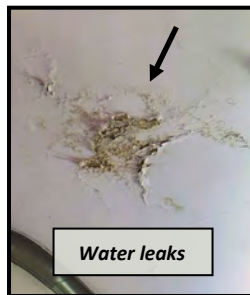
Some have called it a Lenten miracle and in many ways, it might just be that. But absent proof of divine intervention, we know the restoration of the church ceiling was a complex job, done on a very tight schedule, filled with unforeseen problems and lots and lots of dust.



Solid roofs and ceilings are always crucial, especially so when you are stewards of a historic church like St. George's. William Shakespeare said of ceilings "*This most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire.*" [Hamlet Act 2, Scene 2]. And more, from the bible [Mt 8:8], "*Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only and my soul shall be healed.*" You'll immediately recognize these beautiful words, a powerful profession of humility and faith, as they are said at every Mass, right before receiving Holy Communion. Yes, roofs and ceilings are important!

Over the past few years, anyone who has looked upwards as they sat in their pew would see what we were up against. Take a look: leaks, leaks, leaks - broken plaster - peeling paint floating down to the floor every day. Visitors must have thought that we just didn't care about our church.

Insurance covered some of the repairs on the north ceiling since that damage was caused by an ice storm that damaged the roof. But there was no coverage for the rest of the ceiling which was simply caused by not enough money to get the work done.



Water leaks



Broken Plaster



Peeling Paint

THE BEGINNING

In the midst of that crushing realization came light - Bill & Bonnie Daggett offered to fully underwrite the cost of repairing and painting the rest of the ceiling. It's going to be very expensive, we said, and it's going to make a huge mess that itself will need a major cleanup. They said don't worry, we will cover it. Their determination and outstanding generosity allowed us to begin again, full of the Holy Spirit, renewed by Bill and Bonnie. We began to make plans. We needed scaffolding, painters, organ specialists, electricians and a cleaning crew. And we wanted it all done during Lent, completed by Holy Week so we could be back in our church for Easter.

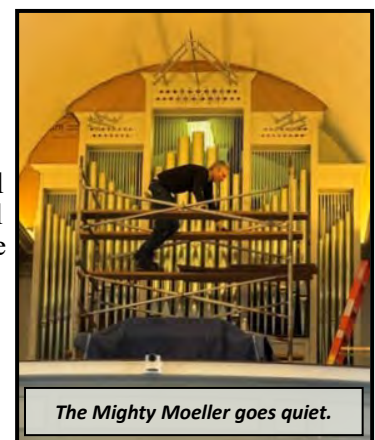


"The author with Bonnie & Bill Daggett"



Scaffolding, scaffolding!

CLEAR OUT The Mighty Moeller organ had to have pipes removed and the pipe chambers and console wrapped against dust. Pew kneelers and books, altar items such as chalices, cruets, candlesticks and crosses, Stations of the Cross - it all had to go. Where? - much to a temporary chapel configured in Cranmer House which proved to be our church for the next 6-7 weeks. Yes, it was cozy, but that small space bound us together in a common effort. A small sacrifice that made us all feel invested in this project.



The Mighty Moeller goes quiet.

SCAFFOLDING Lots and lots of scaffolding. This was the only way work could be done on the ceiling. Ladders and lifts were not an option in a church packed with historic pews. It took 2 days to set up scaffolding for the south ceiling and when that was done, another 2 days to take it all down and re-erect it to reach the vaulted ceiling. Extra height, extra scaffolding!

PAINING Our painting and repair crew, Jim Hope and Dave Palumbo, were meticulous in their work. Not once did they “hit it with a little sandpaper and put on another coat of paint”. They carefully removed every loose piece of plaster, painstakingly tracing down each crack in the plaster and removing damaged areas until they got to a solid surface. Then, everything was treated with anti-efflorescence coatings, plaster was rebuilt as needed, finished with hi-bond primer and two top coats.

THE VAULTED CEILING Look upwards again and you’ll see the center of the church ceiling - higher and shaped like a barrel. Known as a “barrel vault”, it’s an architectural feature that adds drama and light and was part of the original design of St. George’s. The



Apse plaster was falling apart.apart.

vault had its own set of problems with leaks, paint and plaster, more complex than the flat ceiling and extending into the apse (the shell-shaped portion above the High Altar). Much of the plaster details in the apse were broken or cracked and a lot of plaster had to be removed. The base layers were rebuilt with hydrophilic fiberglass cloth and adhesive to reinforce the original plaster and obtain a solid surface. Plaster details had to be recreated by making custom knives, precisely ground to the shape of the original moldings. It was painstaking work.



Jim & Dave plaster artisans.

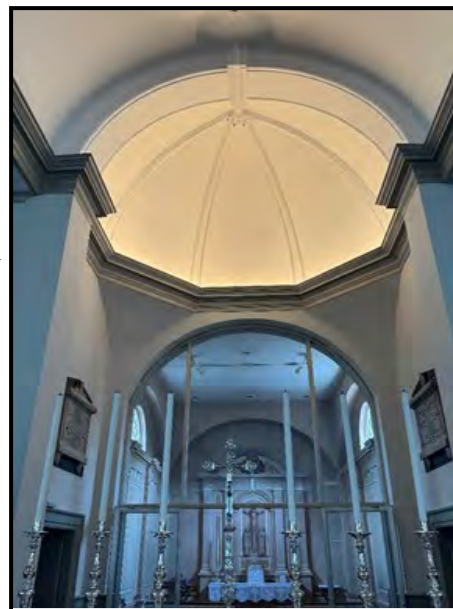
THE LIGHTING In the midst of the work on the vault and apse, we discovered that not only were there a bunch of burned-out light bulbs along the vault, some of the wiring was deteriorated and some areas didn’t come close to meeting current electrical codes. Clearly, this had to be fixed. We located a good electrician, Dino Viscusi and explained what we needed. We only had one week left on our schedule and the scaffolding needed to come down soon. Dino was outstanding, got all the material on order and within the week he and his team had the wiring replaced, along with over 200 new LED bulbs. We took the opportunity to install new electronic dimmers to the vault and apse lights, casting a soft glow for evening services.



All things old shall be made new again.

CLEANUP No surprise, the church was now a crazy mess. Dust, paint chips, plaster and garbage everywhere. The work was done but the church was unusable. Scaffolding came down in 2 days and cleanup began. Pat Weakley & Co. did the job. Pat and her crew went through every nook and cranny, ceiling to floor, including the chapels and sacristies. It was unreal how well and how quickly they cleaned. Once again, the floors shone, the pews gleamed and the sacristies stormed back into operation. The organ was put back right, wind was up and tuned. This job was over, just in time for Holy Week and Easter! Alleluia!

With great affection, david



Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!



- MUSIC NOTES -



Starrla Lares Sermon at Cathedral All Saints



On Monday evening, March 9th, one of our choir members, Miss Starrla Lares, gave the sermon in the Cathedral of All Saints, Albany, at a Solemn High Mass celebrating the 19th century saintly English bishop, Edward King. In her sermon she described Bishop King's life of prayer, humility, worship in the beauty of holiness and care for the poor as exemplifying the Anglo-Catholic idea of single-minded devotion to Christ. Miss Lares is an Aspirant for the Priesthood here in the Diocese of Albany. Dr. Taylor was also the organist for this Mass.



The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, a national Episcopal devotional society, will hold its annual meeting here in Schenectady on the first weekend in June. Our St. Cecilia Choir will be singing for two liturgies on this weekend. First, they will offer a Choral Evensong on Friday evening, June 5th. Second, they will sing for the Solemn High Pontifical Mass and Benediction on Saturday morning, June 6th. At the Friday Evensong we will be using canticle settings and an anthem by a local composer, Mr. Michael Harrison.



dr. brian j. taylor

Pancake Breakfast February 15, 2026



Eric Johnson and Elizabeth Wallsh gave a presentation of their new store and encourage for people to join their newly formed membership at the *Electric City Community Grocery Coop*, a non-profit store located in the Wedgewood Building on the corner of State St. and Erie Blvd.

bob paska

Bishop Jeremiah D. Williams Vits St. George's

How much pomp and ceremony can fit into one Sunday morning service? We all learned when Bishop Jeremiah Williamson visited on December 14 and administered not one or two, but three sacraments during a Solemn Pontifical High Mass.

The Bishop, as is traditional, knocked on the West Doors with his staff and was admitted by Fr. Tom. He prayed for a few moments, sprinkled Holy Water all around, and moved to the Altar as the choir sang *Ecce Sacerdos Magnus*. The Bishop spoke of Hope in his sermon: the work of prophets like Isaiah was to

kindle the flames of hope, to teach that God had a better future in mind for His people. He recognized the struggles of people's lives. In Advent, we remember that God entered their world, our world, a world with terrible problems. With God, nothing is impossible.



After the sermon, young Quincy Jaquith Parseghian was baptized, followed by the reception into communion of Kim Polner, Sally King, Alyssa DePaula, and Kyle Carlson, and confirmation of Arianna Bassant, Bhanmattie Bassant, and Richard Noel. We saw the future of St. George's in these moments. Bishop Jeremiah blessed gifts to the YWCA and the Sycamore Collaborative as well as an Icon donated by Daniel Miess, and administered communion to the congregation.

The Society of Mary prepared a beautiful, delicious lunch in the Great Hall following Mass. No one looking on would ever guess at the scurrying and frantic preparations that preceded this visit, so eagerly did we look forward to welcoming our new Bishop.

joan pearson



HOSPITALITY Irish coffee hour March 17, 2026



sandee hughes



St. George's Episcopal Church

30 North Ferry Street

Schenectady, New York 12305

Telephone (518) 374-3163

[email: office@stgeorgesschenectady.org](mailto:office@stgeorgesschenectady.org)

www.stgeorgesschenectady.org

Editor: Lynn Paska

Layout: Bob Paska

Contributors

Meg Hughes
Sandee Hughes
Deacon Abby
David Kennison
Lynn Paska
Joan Pearson
Fr. Thomas Pettigrew
Dr. Brian Taylor

The Vestry

David Kennison, Sr. Warden
Paul Smigelski, Jr. Warden
William Daggett
Kevin Decker
Alyssa DePaula
Gloria Kishton
Robert Paska
Kim Polner
Michael Todt
Jerry Trant
Jeffrey Wengrovius

Rector

Fr. Thomas J. Pettigrew

Parish Deacon

The Reverend Abigail Bee

Administrative

Carol Gaige, Volunteer

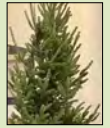
Financial Secretary

Jonathan Ewbank

Director Music Ministry

Dr. Brian Taylor

Christmas 2025



Christmas at St. George's overflowed with joy and spirited fellowship as we proclaimed Jesus' birth. About forty celebrated Christ's arrival during the 4:00 Family Service on Christmas Eve, with excited children and grandchildren there to watch baby Jesus placed gently in his manger. Later, during the St. Cecilia Choir's Carol Concert at 9:30, acolytes lit the many candles lining the aisles and windows of the sanctuary for Midnight Mass, when we celebrated the birth of the Light of the World with glorious music and acclamations.

Fr. Tom spoke of Christmas traditions in his sermon, as we all have traditions which make our celebrations special, diverse, and sentimental. Praise and worship of God are the source of our traditions. The heart of our festivities is this wonderful story of Jesus' birth, which never grows old, the story of promise, of prophecies fulfilled.

In the darkened hush after Communion, candles lit, we joined thousands of congregations in "Silent Night." Is any lullaby more beautiful than this one we sing for the Christ child? Then after the final Gospel Brian sent us out the door with Bach's *In dulci jubilo*, to the Sweets and Savories Christmas reception in the Great Hall, hosted by the Hospitality Committee.

The Feast of Lights for the Epiphany on Sunday, January 4, was a short, lovely service similar to Evensong but with candles. The Magi completed their journey to the crèche as the choir sang *We Three Kings*, we sang carols, we heard lessons, and Fr. Tom announced The Proclamation of the Dates of Easter, which named important dates of the coming year. Afterward we gathered in St. George's House for a relaxing time of food and conversation.

Epiphany on January 6 was a smaller service than intended as the evening was snowy and slippery. Several stalwart souls made the trip to St. George's for this important Mass of the season.

But the Christmas season wasn't over until Candlemas, which we observed on February 1, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. I love imagining the infant Jesus with Simeon and Anna, their thanks and praise at seeing the prophecies fulfilled in this baby. Fr. Tom blessed candles to be used in the coming year, and so we look to the future. Have a blessed 2026!

joan pearson