

The Messenger

August 2021



St. Thomas Orthodox Church
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<https://stthomassiouxcity.org>



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Our Mission

St. Thomas Orthodox Church is a community of Christians who proclaim the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as handed down by the Apostles. We are committed to bringing the Light of Christ to all of Siouxland in thought, word, and deed. At St. Thomas Orthodox Church, you will find Holy Orthodoxy – ancient and alive.

Weekly Schedule

Sundays	Orthros & Divine Liturgy	09:00
Wednesdays	Daily Vespers	18:00
Saturdays	Great Vespers	18:00

August Birthdays

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 10 Jeannie Ellington | 24 Kayleigh Stickney |
| 13 George Jacobs | 26 Nick Corey |
| 15 George Stickney | 26 Alexis Suhr |
| 15 Sam Lammers | 27 Ed Bottei |
| 18 James Muhe | 29 Barb Brienzo |
| 22 Karen Yanney | |

Inward-Focused or Outward?

Christian Congregations at a Crossroads

American Christianity is at a crossroads — again. It's the latest in a long string of crossroads.

In the run-up to revolution, American branches of European denominations — such as my Anglican ancestors — had to declare loyalty to the crown or to an emerging rebellion.

In the 1830s, congregations throughout the restless nation had to decide whether they served whites or all people, including Native Americans.

In the mid-19th century, denominations were forced to choose between continued slavery and a commitment to freedom.

On it went. During each era of change and expansion, Christian communities had to decide what they stood for and what the gospel meant to them. Would they serve immigrants who spoke a certain language or all people in the community, one class in the emerging industrial society or all people, enclaves of status and like-mindedness or whole communities?

Whatever choice was made, each congregation and denomination found a way to justify it. The choices themselves didn't flow from Scripture. Rather, in stepping up as theologians for slavery or abolition, for white rule or open access, for changes in women's place or perpetuation of patriarchy, preachers wore out their Bibles and seminary training looking for rationales to do what they wanted. They claimed absolute authority for what, by any reasonable standard, was simply their preferred way of doing things.

Now Christianity in America faces a similar crossroads that turns on the question: Do we serve only ourselves and people like us, or do we serve the larger community, especially its outcasts and vulnerable?

Up to now, the church has focused on who crossed the threshold into our pews and who had leadership roles within the fellowship. Now the challenge is to go out into the world, see what the needs are, and rethink how we do things in response to those needs.

For example, do we still need worship-centered facilities costing up to 90 percent of our revenues? One outward-facing church discovered that its community needed affordable preschool for at-risk children, affordable housing for seniors, and affordable health care. Responding to those needs is taking that church far afield from the typical Sunday-worship paradigm.

Our history — as communities that own property and align themselves with denominations — tends to have an inward focus. We try, before all else, to keep our doors open, as if our facilities give us our reason for being.

We respond to those who enter our doors, rather than seek out strangers. It's easier and less threatening, and it guarantees a certain continuity, as opposed to the disruption that strangers bring.

Speaking from our self-assigned pulpits of certainty, we tell the world how to live. Many Christians want to establish a theocratic state, even though our history as rulers is tragic.

(continued...)

We argue about right opinion and take to all available media, now including social media, to denounce divergent opinions. We would rather be right than respectful.

As a result, a world in need turns away from us. It doesn't trust our goodwill or good behavior. It doesn't see succor or meaning in our moralizing or institutionalizing — just judgment and pride.

Christianity has many self-sacrificial communities and individuals. But on the whole, I think we are at a crossroads: Will we try to stay alive a bit longer by focusing on ourselves, or will we go to the edges of our property, look outward, and ask, what does the world need from us? What does God need us to do in that world?

Inward-looking, self-serving congregations tend to be angry and suspicious, and short-lived.

Tom Ehrich is a writer, church consultant and Episcopal priest based in New York. He is the president of Morning Walk Media and publisher of Fresh Day online magazine.¹



1 Ehrich, Tom. "Inward-Focused or Outward? Christian Congregations at a Crossroads." Sojourners, May 7, 2015. <https://sojo.net/articles/inward-focused-or-outward-christian-congregations-crossroads>.

St. Thomas on the Internet

Check out our Web site at <https://stthomassiouxcity.org> as well as our other pages:

Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/St.ThomasOrthodoxChurchSC/
Siouxland Orthodox Group:	https://www.facebook.com/groups/689850188457371/
Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/sathorch/
SoundCloud:	https://soundcloud.com/sathorch
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/sathorch
YouTube:	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIkjvWIH3zMELHkelZ36kRA

In Memoriam

Remembering those who reposed in the month of August

Anna Skaff, George Haddad, Mary Yanney, Andrew Abdnor, Assaff Gosen, John E. Hanna, Sr., John Hamel, Samuel Ellis, Natalade Powell, Darlene Corey Williams, James Corey, George Ellis, Sr., Jillian Corey, Sadie Headid, Mary Bashara, Marie Yanney, Toy David, Delia Skaff, Edward Ness, Lester Ellis, Thomas Stevens, Cleopatre Manolis, Roy Headid, Michelle Headid, Mae Hanna, Philip Hanna

Ladies Club

The next Ladies Club meeting is scheduled for the first Tuesday of September (2021-09-07) at 6:30pm at Minerva's Restaurant at 2945 Hamilton Blvd.

SOYO

We were hoping to have a kickoff event at the beginning of August but were unable to get a response from any of the teens as to if they were available. If you are a teen or the parent of a teen who is interested in participating in SOYO this year, please contact Erica at erica@stthomassiouxcity.org as soon as possible. SOYO (and coming to church) will only be as important to our teens as parents let them know it should be.



Meditation

Who do you say that I am?

I can see clearly now

The more I study the Fathers of the Church, the more I allow the rhythm of the liturgy and prayers of the Church to wash over me. The more I live the Orthodox Faith in a purposeful way, the more I am convinced of this: the primary result of faithfully living this way is that I am gaining a clearer vision as to who God is and who I am.

In our Gospel reading today (Luke 9:18-20), we see a critical tipping point is reached in the lives of the disciples of Jesus. Jesus asks them the million-dollar question, “Who do you say that I am?” (Luke 9:20).

The truth is, I as His modern disciple will never know myself until I know in my heart the right answer to the question “Who do you say that I am?” And your answer to that question determines whether you’ll be able to access all the spiritual resources given by the Holy Spirit to the Church.

Mere nostalgia or thoughtless repetition will not help us know Christ. Our hearts must really be centered on who Christ is and what He has done for us. If Christ really is fully God and fully man, “begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father,” as we insist in the Nicene Creed, then I must know Him before I can know myself. Then through Him, I am able to love even my enemies, and my life will more closely resemble His. The truth is, I’ll call eternity “hell” if I don’t do this important work now. It is only when I resemble Jesus that I will be able to call His home my home.

Today: What concrete and practical steps will you take today to know Jesus better? Will you pray? Will you stand before His icon and gaze into His Face so that His image can be imprinted on your heart? Then we can learn to see Him in those around us and deepen our capacity for love and compassion.

Fr. Barnabas Powell

Parish Council

2021-06-21 via Google Meet

Attending: Fr. Peter, Erica Ameen, Frank Brienzo, Pete Steggerda, Judy Stevens, George Stickney, Jr.

George called the meeting to order at 7:03pm and Fr. Peter led us in prayer.

George moved to accept the reports that had been submitted by e-mail; Fr. Peter seconded and there was no objection.

The PC in the counting room is over 10 years old and showing signs of failing. Fr. Peter suggested we replace it with his 5-year-old laptop and he purchased a new laptop for his use.

We began the Benevolence Fund in June of 2019; so far, we have been able to help the community with \$4800+ in grants.

Dn. Kosmas Morfas will be serving with us in July before his ordination to the priesthood. Fr Peter moved that we pay him \$50 per Sunday plus take a second offering on his last Sunday here to help support him. George seconded and there was no objection.

Fr. Peter reported that Bp. Basil has asked to be allowed to retire at the end of the year. The Holy Synod of Antioch will vote on the matter in October.

Erica said she believed it would be better to discuss our group reading, [Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive](#), in person. We agreed to do so at our July meeting at Frank's house.

The replacement chiller pump has been ordered.

DOWAMA SOYO is having an online game night and interactive talent show. Erica submitted an "interpretative dance" video in hopes of embarrassing our teens and having some fun.

George moved to adjourn; Judy seconded and there was no objection. The meeting closed in prayer at 8:00pm.



Income

2021 Pledges	8,772.93	
Miscellaneous	449.13	
Other Donations	10.00	
Total Income		9,232.06

Expenses

401 Maintenance	-95.00	
404 Internet	-133.09	
408 Church Utilities	-559.45	
409 General Supplies	0.00	
410 Office Expense	-714.33	
411 Copier and Copy Expense	-91.43	
412 Benevolence	-1,500.00	
431 Priest Base Salary	-3,550.00	
432 Priest Cell Phone	-100.00	
433 Priest Health Insurance	-800.00	
434 Priest Life Insurance	-135.00	
436 Priest IRA	-200.00	
438 Priest Auto and Auto Insurance	-450.00	
440 Priest SS and Medicare	-800.00	
451 Archdiocese Assessment	-594.41	
Total Expenses		-9,722.71
NET	-490.65	

Operating Account	38,080.77
Building Fund	26,082.82
In and Out Account	80.00
Savings Account	32,309.85