

# St. Thomas Church



## Parish Profile 2023



# WELCOME TO ST. THOMAS



St. Thomas is a faithful, passionate community of Christ followers located in Neenah-Menasha, Wisconsin. We draw worshippers from roughly a 50 mile radius (in person) and from many parts of the world (virtual). With active involvement in many diocesan events and leadership positions, we are the largest congregation in the Diocese of Fond du Lac. We are the third largest Episcopal church in the state of Wisconsin.

In February of 2023, our rector retired after 13 years of service to St. Thomas. In March, the Vestry appointed a search team of eight faithful individuals. The team, while in consistent prayer and guidance of the Holy Spirit, has met with the congregation to faithfully reflect who we are and whom we seek.

Jesus is more than Sunday mornings. From vibrant youth and children ministries to a flourishing feeding ministry held multiple weekdays, we are active followers. Our faithful congregation seeks a rector who feels God's call to partner with us. We hope and pray that our profile helps in your discernment process.

St. Thomas by the  
numbers 2022  
*749 Members*  
*261 Households*  
*132 ASA + Online*  
*80 Pledging Units*  
*40 Givers of Record*  
*3 Baptisms*  
*5 Confirmations*  
*1 Received*  
*5 Marriages*  
*8 Funerals*



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**MISSION:**  
*To Know Christ,  
To Make Christ Known,  
To Serve Others in Christ's Name*

*Stained glass in the  
doors to our church*



# WHAT WE SEEK IN A RECTOR

**The next rector for St. Thomas is invited to:**

**Lead by Example**

- have a personal relationship with Jesus
- be a spiritual role model

**Promote Christian Living/Care for our Flock**

- preach biblically based sermons
- encourage spiritual growth by challenging us to apply the Scriptures in our daily lives
- provide compassionate pastoral care
- foster the gifts and talents of parishioners

**Build Church Community**

- join us in welcoming and engaging newcomers
- share our strong commitment to our children and youth
- strengthen us as a diverse community of believers
- promote engagement within our hybrid community

**Plan for the Future**

- help us through the discomfort of change
- support collaborative administration of St. Thomas with our lay leadership
- assist us in creating a culture of invitation beyond our walls

**VISION:**

***We are a Jesus-centered,  
Spirit-filled community  
of diverse followers  
working to transform the world***



*Stained glass over the chapel altar*



# PARISH LIFE

There is an energy that permeates everything that we do at St. Thomas. The Holy Spirit guides and energizes us day in and day out. As a congregation, we are Jesus and scripture focused, children and family friendly, and community and mission oriented.

We are blessed to have both a rector and an associate priest/youth minister to serve our congregation. Our associate priest/youth minister is gifted with the ability to relate well to our youth and creates a safe space for them to explore and learn and develop a Jesus-centered life. We are also blessed to have a dedicated deacon who greets everyone with love and preaches with joy and humility. Our pews also hold several retired clergy who will continue to provide support to the next rector as they have in the past. A faithful Verger rounds out our ministry team.

**Sundays** bring an opportunity to worship together using either Rite 1 at 8am or Rite 2 at 10am with choir and music. We approach liturgy from a broad church perspective. Adult Education, Sunday School and Film School for our teens occur between the services. Coffee hour follows the 10am service. After services, our youth may then be off for a fun activity or service work with our associate priest/youth minister.

**Weekdays** bring a flurry of activity to St. Thomas, including:

- a host of Bible studies either at the church or at other locations
- eucharist, which is offered three times each week
- a kitchen brimming with activity for our Double Portion food pantry and feeding ministry where meals are offered three days a week and 60-100 people a day are fed
- sacraments are brought to the homebound
- a Senior Luncheon (first Tuesday every other month) and a Spaghetti dinner (second Wednesday)
- Wednesday evening a discipleship group (D-Groups) for middle school and high school students run by our youth minister
- Kids Club where younger children learn, play, and pray with our Children's Ministries coordinator
- an annual trip to Forest Springs Camp and Conference Center for a weekend of fellowship, teaching, rest and fun

These are just some of the activities happening at our church. We are committed to allowing the LOVE of Christ, rather than the divisiveness of our culture, to instruct our mission and our lives each and every day.

## *Sunday Morning Study*



## *Children's Sermon*



## *Fellowship Weekend*





# MISSION AND OUTREACH

God calls us to care for and meet the needs of others in our parish family, our community, the greater church and throughout the world. The congregation of St. Thomas, through the dedication of the time, talent and treasure of its members, serves others in the following ways:

## ***In Our Parish***

- offering several Bible studies throughout the week
- providing religious education opportunities for all ages on Sunday mornings
- running children's programming on Sundays and Wednesdays for our elementary, middle and high school age members
- providing specialized trauma counseling to members at no cost
- preparing and delivering meals for new parents and other parishioners in need

## ***In Our Community***

- providing a robust food pantry and feeding program (Double Portion) that serves hundreds of hot meals three days a week
- partnering with Afghan refugee families in assisting with resettlement in our community
- sponsoring of a local Boy Scout troop
- offering our facilities and kitchen to numerous local organizations for hosting meetings or activities
- joining with another Diocesan parish in a goal to retire medical debt
- gathering in youth fellowship and community service throughout the year



***Double Portion***

## ***In the Greater Church***

- actively participating on a diocesan level with several St. Thomas members holding diocesan level positions
- receiving and disbursing monies through a semiannual UTO collection
- welcoming youth from other churches in our Diocese and from the greater community into our youth programming

## ***In the World***

- supporting and direct involvement in mission work in Chicago, Honduras, and Kenya
- planning of an annual youth-oriented mission trip

St. Thomas joyfully takes to heart our responsibilities for the physical and spiritual needs of others.



***Mother's Mercy Children***

***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.***  
***ACTS 1:8***



# YOUTH AND CHILDREN

The importance of our children and youth ministry is abundantly clear in every aspect of St. Thomas's life. Our parishioners actively value and encourage our children's presence and participation. Sunday



***Easter Egg Hunt***

services provide a weekly children's sermon and opportunities to serve at the altar; baptisms invite children to be an active part of the blessing of the water; conversation, laughter, and activity fill the parish hall on Wednesday nights; families are invited and encouraged to participate in all social events with full expectation that children will bring love, light, and chaos. Nevertheless, to provide options for parents of little ones, we also provide a staffed nursery on Sunday mornings and during special events.

Supported by dedicated volunteers, St. Thomas offers a multitude of children's and youth ministries, including both parish and diocesan events: Kid's Club (for grades K-5), Disciple-Groups (for grades 6-12), an Easter egg hunt, a Christmas pageant, summer camp, Film School and Sunday school, field trips, a fall lock-in, week-long mission trips, outreach activities, overnight retreats, interactive game nights, and, and, and....

These activities are directed by our full-time associate priest/youth minister, and our part-time children's ministry coordinator. Their service continues to bless this family-like community by providing our youth a safe and loving space where everyone feels welcome to share and grow through the guidance of our Lord. To quote one of our youth participants: "D-Groups is a place that will welcome you and treat you like family no matter who you are or what you do."

***Summer Youth Kayaking***



***Christmas Pageant 2022***



***Youth Mission Trip***



***Kids Club***



***D-Groups (Discipleship for Youth)***



# What's Next

As a historically theologically conservative church, St. Thomas still holds many of those characteristics and values. As with any organization over time, St. Thomas, and the people who make up this parish, continue to evolve. In recent years, some of our most conservative parishioners left to join an ACNA church down the street because they didn't like the direction of the Episcopal Church and felt St Thomas was not conservative enough. Others feel our church is too conservative as, for example, we currently don't perform same-sex marriages.

Although our congregation has diversified in many ways, we seek guidance with how to continue to grow in Jesus's love by stepping into the inevitable hard conversations with grace. How do we get comfortable with discomfort? Are we willing to change? Are we ready to change? Many are and many think they are and many are not.

The people of St. Thomas hope to broaden an existing underlying culture of creating a space, both physically and spiritually, that allows thoughtful, loving and meaningful conversation about our differences. We are taking steps toward this goal by scheduling an all-church meeting this fall to address the conversation of LGBTQ+ marriage in our congregation. Are we ready for that change? We don't know yet. We have parishioners who have strong feelings about this topic on both sides. The challenge we face is to successfully create a space for all voices to be heard and respected.

Another challenge for us is evangelism. We would like to create a culture of inviting people to church and becoming more comfortable talking to others about our faith. Before COVID, we had a few outreach activities where we invited people in our neighborhood to attend, such as our parish picnic and ice cream social, which were both held in a neighborhood park. We look forward to re-engaging with our neighborhood.

We value our faithful church community. Far more unites us than divides us. Instead of enabling divisiveness and polarization, we wish to foster our common love for this community that stems from the strength of Jesus and his teachings.



*Message as one is leaving the church*



# HISTORICAL TIMELINE

The community of St. Thomas Episcopal Church started its beginning as a family of Christ 163 years ago. St. Thomas has benefitted from the stability that comes with the longevity of ministry. We have had only four rectors in the past 67 years. Many replacements and renovations have led to our current building, an impressive blend of two architectural periods. Its majestic sweeping curved roof resembles a ship under sail and its spectacular copper steeple allows us to bring our thoughts upwards. Preserved stained glass windows and the altar from the original building remind us of the grace of God. Symbols of unity abound and speak to our shared Creed and our Savior.



***1915 St. Thomas Church***

1859	St. Stephen's Parish formed in Menasha
1868	Episcopal Trinity Church formed in Neenah
1914	Community leaders decide to merge the two parishes
1915	St. Thomas is legally incorporated, first service Christmas Eve
May 14, 1916	St. Thomas service of dedication and thanksgiving
1923	Kellett Cabin is built by BS Troop 3 (renovated by STT 1996-97)
1962	Fire seriously damages the west (altar) end of the St. Thomas nave
1963	New building dedicated by Bishop William Brady
1963	1800 voice Holtkamp pipe organ given as a memorial gift
1967	Bronze relief mural of St. Thomas the Apostle installed
approx 1977	Fellowship Weekend at Forest Springs Camp started and continues
1980	Relationship with missionary, Betsy Hake started and continues
Jan-98	Youth pastor called to full time position
2003	Double Portion started and continues
2007	Relationship with Mother's Mercy in Kenya started and continues
2012/2017	New roof installed sanctuary, parish hall
Late 2018	Worship services have online presence
2020	Large kitchen renovation, major livestream upgrade

# FACILITIES

From a bird's eye view, the various structural elements that unite to bring the walls of St. Thomas together are a mix of "new" and "old" - pieces of history that combine with renovated structures or repurposed spaces to make the gathering areas within our church unique and functional. The "church with the big, green copper steeple" is known for its unique architectural exterior by both members and passersby alike. It was designed with a sweeping curved shape roof resembling a ship under sail.



Upon entering the front doors, one is immediately swept into the nave. It is filled with bright red carpet, wooden pews that can seat 300 congregants, sturdy concrete pillars, an illuminated, gold cross centered behind the front altar, and a choir loft that is home to St. Thomas' custom 1800 voice Holtkamp Organ.



*Chapel*

Adjacent to the nave and at the end of the cloister is the chapel area. It can seat roughly 40 worshipers and is typically filled with a few pews and movable chairs. The altar in the chapel comes from the 1915 church building. Recent years have also seen welcome improvements for wheelchair-bound visitors that include a newly paved zero-grade entrance by the steeple doors and the removal of select pews within the worship space to give room for those congregants with mobility devices.

St. Thomas is blessed to own land and a cabin located on the northeast shore of Lake Winnebago about 20 minutes from the church. A small cabin was built in 1923 by Boy Scout Troop 3 that St. Thomas supports and was used primarily by the scouts. A new cabin was constructed through the talents and expertise of volunteer parishioners in 1996/1997. We now have a beautiful two-story cabin, named Kellett Cabin, complete with a fully equipped kitchen, two bathrooms and plenty of sleeping areas.

The cabin is used by the Boy Scouts, and by the parish for events and retreats. The fireplace from the original cabin still stands on the land and is now used as an outside chapel.



*Kellett Cabin*



*Nave*





# OUR COMMUNITY

St. Thomas straddles the boundary between Neenah and Menasha, Wisconsin. These municipalities, combined with the many adjacent cities, villages, and townships that stretch from Appleton to Oshkosh, make up the greater Fox Valley area. It is a part of Northeast Wisconsin that prides itself on offering the conveniences of a sizeable metropolitan area while maintaining the comfort and charm of small-town community living. Its optimal location along Lake Winnebago paired with the convenience of Interstate 41 makes for an easy drive to Green Bay (30 minutes), Milwaukee (1.5 hours), Madison (1.5 hours), and Chicago, IL (3 hours). Northeast Wisconsin is considered a central hub for recreation, the arts & theater, sports, dining of all types, history, specialized events, and so much more.

Whatever your niche, the Fox Cities offer outlets and opportunities to explore that interest with passion and enthusiasm.



**The Plaza downtown Neenah** While both Neenah and Menasha remain relatively homogenous in the way of ethnic diversity, each boasts vibrant and proud minority populations. The cities have seen population growth of 5-7% in the last decade. The median household income is about \$61,000. Roughly 10% of both the Neenah and Menasha populations are living at or below the national poverty level. Thus, there is a significant portion of our community in need of care, attention, and support to meet basic needs. St. Thomas seeks to continue serving these members of our community both in and outside the walls of our church.

The Fox Valley is rich in educational resources for all ages. Whether one seeks to find an elementary school for their young children or a reputable institution of higher learning, Northeast Wisconsin offers a wide selection of schools, universities, and technical colleges. Adults can pursue their degree or certification of choice at Fox Valley Technical College, Lawrence University, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, or any of the University of Wisconsin Campus locations in either Green Bay, Oshkosh, or Menasha.

Educators within both the Neenah Joint School District (NJSD) and the Menasha Joint School District (MJSD) work diligently with their students to contribute to the 90% average graduation rate held amongst Fox Cities schools.



**ThedaCare Hospital-Neenah**

The Fox Valley also offers excellent health care with three local hospitals, including one in Neenah which is a Level II Trauma Center. The area has consistently been named one of the best areas in the nation based on quality of life indicators. USA Today Network – Wisconsin named Neenah among ten WI towns that are totally Americana. It has picture-perfect parks, a lovely downtown district and even a historic Octagon House.

For more information about Neenah, Menasha, and the wider Fox Cities area, please visit:  
[www.foxcities.org](http://www.foxcities.org) [www.foxcitieschamber.com](http://www.foxcitieschamber.com) [www.menashawi.gov](http://www.menashawi.gov) [www.ci.neenah.wi.us](http://www.ci.neenah.wi.us)

# STEWARDSHIP & FINANCES

St. Thomas is a blessed congregation filled with faithful givers and responsible stewardship. We have a balanced budget for 2023 of \$582,383. Our budget has ranged from \$550,000-\$580,000 over the past 8 years. Although pledging has decreased over the past few years, giving has not. The pandemic did not have an impact on giving and we did not need to apply for a PPP loan. Income is made up of 80% from contributions, 18% from investments, and the rest from other income. The endowment funds available to the budget for general operations are calculated using a three, four, or five-year rolling average of these accounts at 4.5%. Our endowments total \$2,490,231. If there is a need for more funds for capital expenses, the congregation responds with generosity.

The generosity of our congregation allows us to support both a full time rector and an associate priest, who is also our youth minister. Other staff are part time – a Secretary, Choir Director and Organist, and a Children’s Ministry Coordinator. The breakdown for expenses shows that 64% of our budget is spent on salaries and benefits, 19% on church operations, 12% on the diocesan pledge, and 5% on ministry.

Our congregants and others are generous in their support of our missions: Mother’s Mercy Home in Kenya, Jericho Ministries in Honduras, our feeding program, Double Portion, Rector Discretionary, Youth Mission Trip, and Afghan Refugees. One hundred and fifty to one hundred and eighty thousand dollars passes through St. Thomas to support these ministries.

We recognize that stewardship involves planning ahead for capital projects and campaigns. We have a history of planning ahead for capital needs and great financial responsiveness from our congregation in supporting those projects.

We are greatly blessed by God’s provision.

Budget Summary		2020	2021	2022
		Actual	Actual	Actual
<b>Source of Funds</b>		\$558,439	\$561,250	\$583,851
	Pledge Income	\$465,554	\$451,874	\$449,796
	Plate Income	\$2,245	\$3,725	\$2,981
	Holidays	\$4,712	\$7,818	\$15,559
	Endowments& Invest	\$84,445	\$95,201	\$106,134
	Other	\$1,483	\$2,632	\$9,381
<b>Use of Funds</b>		\$557,617	\$556,668	\$582,529
	Salaries & Benefits	\$369,475	\$379,812	\$377,498
	Operating	\$150,587	\$144,263	\$158,891
	Mission & Ministries	\$23,878	\$25,010	\$33,947
	Capital	\$13,677	\$7,583	\$12,193
<b>Surplus or Deficit</b>		<b>\$822</b>	<b>\$4,582</b>	<b>\$1,322</b>

For more information about St. Thomas Church

Website: [stthomaswi.com](http://stthomaswi.com)

Facebook: [facebook.com/stthomaswi](https://facebook.com/stthomaswi)



# OUR DIOCESE



St. Thomas Church is a member of the Diocese of Fond du Lac, which is located in the northeastern third of Wisconsin and is a member of Province V. There are thirty-two congregations, three chapels, and about 4,000 baptized members. The diocesan office is located in Appleton, WI. The current and eighth bishop of the diocese is the Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter who has served since 2014.

The three dioceses of Wisconsin, Fond du Lac, Eau Claire and Milwaukee, are going through a process of discerning whether reunification to one diocese may better equip us to be the church God is calling us to be in these times. A preliminary vote on reunification will take place at the October 2023 diocesan conventions, with a final vote for reunification to be taken in Eastertide 2024. Bishop Gunter is also Bishop Provisional in the Diocese of Eau Claire. He is now available to the Diocese of Milwaukee as Bishop Jeffrey Lee has completed his time

as their Bishop Provisional. More information on the Trialogue can be found here: [episcopalwisconsin.info](http://episcopalwisconsin.info)

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***Being a people of God's mercy and  
delight through vital  
congregations, prayer and  
worship and missionary church.***



## HOW TO APPLY

Please send all inquiries, applications and resumes to:

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