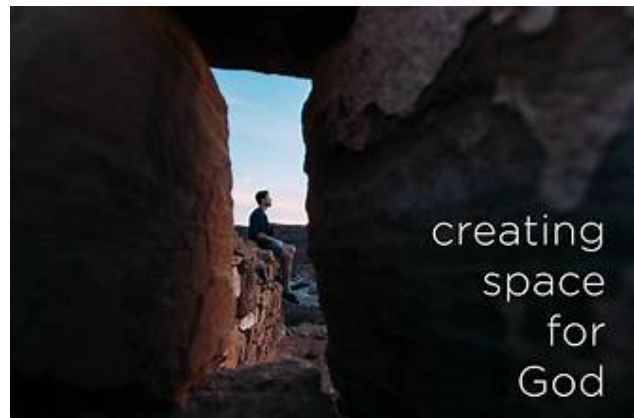

St. Thomas Memorial Church

Thomas Tract March 2025

Rector's Message - Jeffrey D. Murph

Life can be pretty distracting sometimes. Especially in the United States, there are so many things that vie for our attention, so many things that we have to do, all coming at us at a really fast pace. Sometimes, when people say to me, "Wow! Time really passes so quickly!" I wonder whether it is just that the demands of the pace of daily living in America leaves little time for savoring life itself.



To be honest, I sometimes think that this is simply a reality of human life in a broken world. And the reason I think that is the Fourth Commandment, where God told his people to keep the sabbath day holy as a day of rest. Many years ago, it was a much slower day because most stores were closed, people were mostly off from work and there was not much to do except church and family gatherings. Those days are over now, of course, but if God's commandment was not only for himself (as a day to acknowledge him) but also for us (because humans beings need to recharge) then we may be missing something.

Lent, of course, is not just a day but a whole season of trying to break the constant loop of the race of modern life. The focus on repentance, on prayer, on fasting, on regular reading of Scripture, on certain spiritual disciplines are all to push back against the distractions of life long enough that we might see how God might be present and working in our own lives.

In the back window of St. Thomas Church, John 15:5 is represented. "I am the vine; you are the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing." This verse seems to suggest that the fruit of God's Kingdom is produced in and through us by Jesus as we are connected to him. It is not us ourselves who produce this fruit but rather Jesus working through us who does it.

To produce fruit for God's Kingdom means to be part of the work of saving and healing the whole Creation. And that is eternal work. So Lent is not so much about "doing" things for God (although many take on or give up things for Lent) but rather clearing our lives at least a little bit for God to do things in and through us. The disciplines associated with Lenten practice can help us with this clearing. And if rest, or at least a break from the frenzied pace of daily living, is something that is healthy for human beings (if the Fourth Commandment is to be trusted) then we can find blessing in the things that Lent offers.

Read a little Bible, set aside some quiet maybe even for a short prayer, consider coming to Stations of the Cross or Morning Prayer or Sunday Eucharist or Ash Wednesday, participate in Lent Madness and learn a bit about the saints, maybe try a form of fasting occasionally. Examine your life to see whether it is unfolding really in the way that you would want. And ask God to bless you.

EAST END PARISHES
2025 LENTEN
PREACHING SERIES

**Be Doers of the Word:
The Gospel in Action**

6 p.m. Dinner | 7 p.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

Tuesday, March 11

Preacher: The Rev. Guy Brown

[Curate at St. Thomas, Oakmont]

at Calvary – 315 Shady Ave., East Liberty

Tuesday, March 18

Preacher: The Rev. Canon Kim Karashin

[Canon to the Ordinary, Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh]

at St. Matthew's – 336 E 10th Ave., Homestead

Tuesday, March 25

Preacher: The Rev. Deanna Briody

[Curate at Calvary, East Liberty]

at Redeemer – 5700 Forbes Ave., Squirrel Hill

Tuesday, April 1

Preacher: The Rev. Jean Chess

[Retired Deacon in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh]

at St. Stephen's – 600 Pitt Street, Wilkinsburg

Tuesday, April 8

Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Asa Lee

[President of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary]

at St. Andrew's – 5801 Hampton St., Highland Park

What is the Alms basin?

Every Sunday, there is a wooden plate sitting on a little pedestal that the ushers put in the center of the aisle as people come forward for communion (see photo). At 8:00am Eucharist, people put their offerings in it as they pass. At 10:30am Eucharist, people may drop a gift of cash or a check made out to the church, even though the ushers also pass offering plates through the pews as the choir is singing an anthem. This wooden plate is the alms basin. The cash from 8:00am Eucharist and whatever is put into it at 10:30 Eucharist is given to the Rector's Discretionary Fund, which is mostly used to help those who find themselves in need. Often monies from this Fund go to help pay rent for those who are short, for utility bills for those who cannot afford them, for medical expenses or food or bus passes or other needs of those who do not have enough. Though many in our congregation are blessed financially, not everyone is. And even those who normally have enough can be caught short by unexpected events. In addition, St. Thomas does help those who come asking for help who are not parishioners. So the offerings put into the alms basin go mostly to help those who are in need.



Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Take a break from making dinner! The annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper will be held on Tuesday, March 4 from 5:00 - 7:00 pm. This meal will be made and served by the men of St. Thomas. The cost is \$10 for adults, and \$5 for children 12 and under. On the menu are pancakes and sausage, with butter and syrup, and drinks. To-go boxes will be available for those choosing not to eat in the Parish Hall.

Bishop Solak Leading Ash Wed Prayer Vigil

Bishop Ketlen Solak is leading a diocesan-wide 24-hour online prayer vigil starting at 7 am on Ash Wednesday, March 5, and ending at 7 am on Thursday, March 6. The idea is to set aside an hour of your time during the 24-hour period to pray silently with others in the virtual prayer room. Guidelines for suggested topics and resources will be available to aid in your experience. For more information, or to get the Zoom link, visit the diocesan website at episcopalpgh.org.



St. Thomas to Host Mental Health First Aid Course



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID



Episcopal Church District 2 Invitation

As we continue to prepare for our Mental Health Ministry, we are hosting a daylong workshop on Saturday, March 15, 2025, 9:30am-4:00pm (lunch provided) in the Parish Hall of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 378 Delaware Ave. Oakmont, PA.

The cost for materials is \$25, payable at workshop. There is also a 2-hour individual pre-work on a computer assignment.

The course will teach how to apply the MHFA Action Plan (ALGEE)

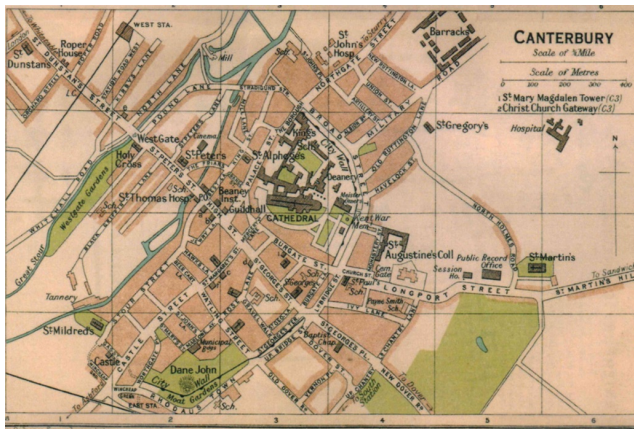
- Assess for risk of Suicide or harm.
- Listen nonjudgmentally.
- Give reassurance and information.
- Encourage appropriate professional help.
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies.

You will not be a therapist or counselor, but you will be a better peer, friend and family member.

Where to register: Email Rev. Deacon Carter Hawley (Presenter):

CHawley@TrinityCathedralPgh.org

Questions: Wilma Gaughan, Parish Nurse and Hostess, 412-607-4113(text/calls)



Pilgrimage to Canterbury

In what has quickly become a St. Thomas favorite, the annual Lenten spiritual and physical health "walk" is back - this time with a Pilgrimage to Canterbury! St. Thomas welcomes you to participate in our third annual "walk" covering the 3,767 miles from Pittsburgh to Canterbury, England. Earn points (miles) towards our collective journey by walking, exercising, attending church and other special Lenten services, and participating in various other church activities. The complete list of points and activities will be included in this

week's bulletin, and thereafter on the table at the back of the sanctuary. Tally sheets will be included in each bulletin during Lent and on the table at the back of the sanctuary for your use. Turn them in each week so that our "miles" may be counted.

Lent Madness Returns to St. Thomas

If you are new to St. Thomas or have thus far not realized what this Lent Madness stuff is all about, then you are in for a treat, as the fun that is Lent Madness returns to St. Thomas. Based on the March Madness basketball playoff structure, Lent Madness pits well- and little-known saints against each other, the winners earning the titles "Saintly 16", "Elate 8", and the "Faithful 4"- resulting in the last saint standing earning the coveted "Golden Halo" award. Once registered, you will receive an email each day giving a brief description of each saint. You vote for your favorite, and the winner of each round is sent via email the next day. It's all in good fun, as the game gives you a little information about various saints through the ages. If you would like to participate, visit lentmadness.org and enter your email to sign up. The St. Thomas bracket poster (example below), will hang in the Parish Hall.



Lent and Holy Week Activities and Schedule

There is so much going on at St. Thomas during Lent and Holy Week! The following is a list of activities and a schedule of events that you may participate in:

Through the Diocese:

- Participate in the Ash Wednesday Prayer Vigil (see article above)
- Attend one, a few, or all of the East End Parishes Lenten preaching series services (see schedule above for times and places)

At St. Thomas:

- Tuesday, March 4 from 5-7 pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper (see article above)
- Wednesday, March 5 Ash Wednesday services at 7 am, 10 am and 7 pm at St. Thomas, with an additional service at St. Margaret's at noon.
- Participate in Lent Madness (see article above)
- Saturday, March 15 from 9:30 - 4 pm - Participate in the Mental Health First Aid Course (see article above).
- Stations of the Cross will be offered each Friday during Lent at 5:30 pm (led by Fr. Murph). Additionally, Wilma Gaughan will lead the Stations of the Cross at 7 pm on March 21 and April 4.



- Participate in St. Thomas' "Pilgrimage to Canterbury" by adding up spiritual and physical "miles" (see article above)
- Sunday, March 30 - Bishop Ketlen Solak may visit St. Thomas (this is currently pending)
- April 13 - Palm Sunday services with reading of the Passion Gospel at 8:00 and 10:30 am
- April 14-16 (Mon-Wed) Holy Eucharist at 6:00 pm
- April 17 - Maundy Thursday service at 7:30 pm
- April 18 - Good Friday Service at 7:30 pm
- April 19 - Easter Vigil Service at 7:30 pm
- April 20 - Easter Day services at 8:00 and 10:30 am (with an Easter egg hunt for the children following the 10:30 service)
- April 30 - St. Thomas is serving the community dinner at the Methodist Church

Courses/meetings being offered



St. Thomas regular events include:

- Bible Study - Tuesday mornings at 11 am
 - Healing Service - Wednesday mornings at 10:00
 - Adult Education - Sunday mornings at 9:30
 - Teenager classes - every second and fourth Sunday following the 10:30 service. All teenagers are welcome.
 - Men's Ministry and Women's Group meetings - as determined
- Beloved Community Initiative's upcoming events include:
- a Prayer and Share meeting on March 19 at 7 p.m. (link found at <https://www.episcopalpgh.org/prayer-share/>)
 - Sacred Ground Small Groups - the schedule can be found at: <https://www.episcopalpgh.org/sacred-ground-schedule-released/>

March Birthdays

- 4 - Beth Maxwell
- 4 - Paul Pierce
- 5 - Emily Alcorn
- 6 - Elaine Chilcote
- 6 - Grace Murph
- 9 - Lauren Brown
- 9 - Henry Luck
- 12 - Ann Thomas
- 12 - Lourana Thomas
- 14 - Joe Noll
- 14 - Matt Noll
- 17 - Stacy Eber
- 17 - Tony Fusaro
- 18 - Richard Williams
- 19 - Tanya Hayes
- 22 - Babs Alcorn
- 22 - Sharon McIndoe
- 23 - Helen Baker
- 23 - Shammah Manirakiza
- 24 - William McGrath
- 25 - Burt Lugar
- 27 - Meloni Murph
- 28 - Alex Krushinski
- 29 - Peter Mysels
- 31 - Dory Dietz

March Anniversaries

There are no St. Thomas Anniversaries this month.

** If you aren't already on our Birthday and/or Anniversary list, please contact Laurel Almada at the office (sttomoakmont@gmail.com or 412-828-9680) and she will be happy to add you in!





St. Thomas Memorial Church | 378 Delaware Ave. | Oakmont, PA 15139 US

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