
St. Thomas Memorial Church

Thomas Tract December 2025

Rector's Message - by Fr. Jeff Murph

A few weeks ago, I had a conversation with one of our parishioners. When I realized that he was in fourth grade, I asked him, "Well, you are in fourth grade now; would you be interested in being trained as an acolyte?" He looked at me for a bit and then responded, "No, I think I want to wait until next year."

That short moment of when he was thinking about it was kind of interesting. Obviously, he knew what an acolyte did, I think he might even have wanted to do the job eventually but he evaluated his situation now and decided to wait a year until he thought the time would be right. When I was his age, I am not sure I would have had the same introspection.



The older I became, however, I began to recognize that some things just have to happen in their own time. For example, some people may date around for a few years but unless they meet someone who sweeps them off their feet, some are not really ready to settle down into a long-term relationship until something changes and all of a sudden they are. As a priest, I have known some people who have certainly been exposed to the good news of Jesus' love and forgiveness for a long time. Yet then, something happens (maybe they hear it in a new way) and their relationship with Jesus becomes real. Why is this the case? The bible sometimes uses the phrase, "the fullness of time", which really seems to mean, "when the time is right" but what is it that makes the time right for the important things in our lives?

Advent is sometimes described as the season of anticipation. It is a time of waiting for something that you really very much want to happen and you know that it WILL happen but it has not happened yet. For young children who are eager for the visit of Santa and the magic of Christmas Day, the anticipation is for Christmas finally to come. For others it might be the holiday visit of dearly missed family members from far away and the togetherness that will bring for everyone. Still for others, it might be the weary hope for God to heal the world and cure violence and cruelty and despair and want.

King David, in Psalm 13, writes, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long shall I have perplexity in my mind, and grief in my heart, day after day? How long shall my enemy triumph over me?" (Ps. 13:1-2). The Advent anticipation for the coming of Jesus is for God to make things right: in the world, in our communities and in our own personal lives. As we enter the season of anticipation, spare a prayer for God to bring our time into fullness.

43RD ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CAROL WALK

Sunday, December 14th, 2025



This festive event features a progressive sharing of the Christmas story through the Festival of Lessons and Carols. We look forward to celebrating the joy of the season with you!

6:00 pm – St. Thomas Memorial Episcopal Church
(corner of Fourth Street & Delaware Avenue)

6:30 pm – Holy Family Parish/St. Irenaeus Church
(385 Maryland Avenue)

7:00 pm – Oakmont Presbyterian Church
(corner of 5th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue)

7:30 pm – Oakmont United Methodist Church with
St. Paul Baptist Church
(corner of Fifth Street & Maryland Avenue)



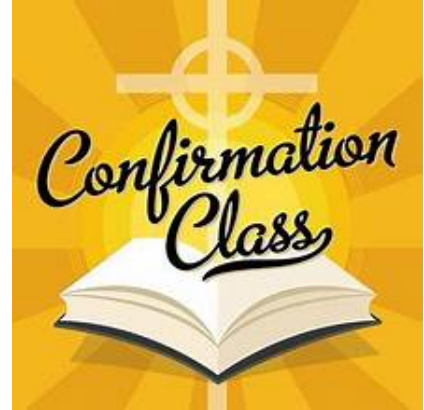
A cookie reception will follow.

All are welcome and bring a friend!

Teenage Confirmation Class Starting Soon

Father Murph is starting a teenage confirmation class for all who are interested in being prepared for confirmation at the annual visit of Bishop Solak, June 7, 2026. The classes will begin on Dec. 7 after the 10:30 eucharist in the

St. Anne's Guild Room. The class will probably continue for seven to eight weeks. If you are interested in participating then please speak to the rector.



The Longest Night of the Year Service

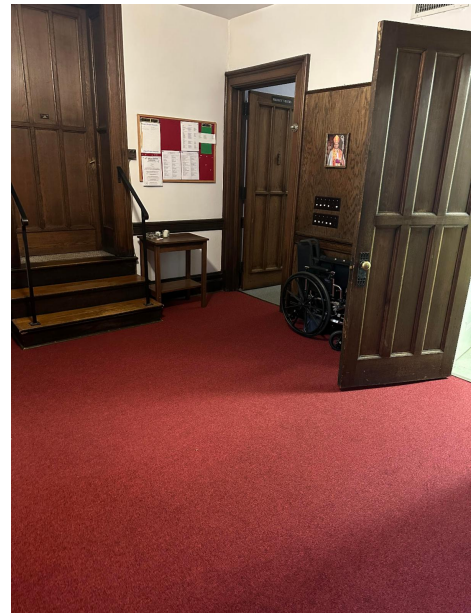
St. Thomas will host it's fifth annual Longest Night of the Year Service this December 21 at 7 pm. All are invited to attend this calm, soothing service geared toward those who are sad, lonely or just in need of a respite from the chaos of the holiday season.

This service, held on the longest night of the year AND, incidentally, St. Thomas' Day, will host a quiet

time of prayer, scripture reading, and music to remind us of God's presence and love in our lives. For questions or more information, please speak with Wilma Gaughan in person or at wmarieg@gmail.com or 412-607-4113.

New Carpet Match Donation

Many of you have seen the new carpet that was laid in the area between the Sanctuary and the Parish Hall. The older carpet had seen better days, and the wood floors underneath were not in the best shape, either. We have asked for donations to cover the cost of the improvement, and have received several donations to date. One generous donor has stepped forward, now, offering to match any donations made from this point on. The original cost of the carpeting was \$1,227.00. To date, we have received \$840, with an additional \$85 in matching monies, leaving a balance of \$302 needed to clear the debt. Because of the matching monies, St. Thomas is in need of only \$151 more in donations to cover the cost. If you feel so inclined, please send your check made out to St. Thomas or cash in a marked envelope with "carpet" in the memo line or on the front of the envelope. Thank you to everyone who has already contributed, and those who will in the future.



Christmas Memorial Flowers

Memorials for the live flowers to decorate the church for the holidays can be made in memory of loved ones or for thanksgivings for a \$20 (or more) donation. Order forms will be included in the bulletins through Dec. 14 (which is this year's deadline). If you do not have access to the bulletins in person, you may



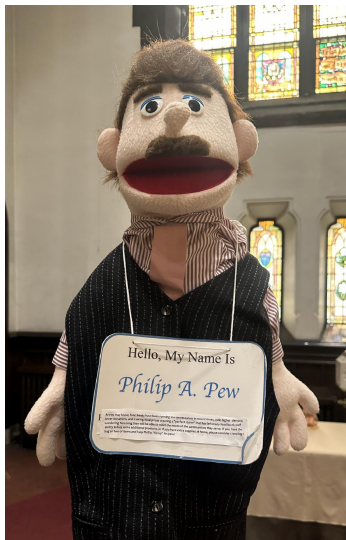
send a check or cash with a note including "Christmas flowers" in the memo line or in the note, along with your contact information and what you would like the dedication to read ("In loving memory of . . ." or "In thanksgiving for . . .", for example). There will be a special dedication sheet included in all of the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day bulletins.

Additionally, if you are willing to help with the watering of the live plants between Christmas and New Years, please speak with Kate

Westermann in person or via email at kjwpens71@gmail.com.

Parishioner Signed

Parishioner Blake Krushinski, confirmed last year by Bishop Solak along with his brother, Luke, has been awarded an athletic scholarship to play baseball for West Virginia University next fall. This photograph is of Blake and his family at his signing ceremony, held at Fox Chapel Area High School, confirming his commitment to WVU. Blake is a pitcher and also serves as an usher for St. Thomas Church. Congratulations!



Philip A. Pew is back!

Philip A. Pew has made his annual return to St. Thomas, in the hopes that his pew will be filled with non-perishable food before Christmas.

Mr. Pew's aim is to take as many food items as possible to the Rosedale food bank before the holidays so that people in need within our local communities will benefit from the generosity of others. If you are able, please bring your food items to Philip's pew located at the back of the sanctuary. The collection will run throughout the month, and close prior to Christmas.

Thank you in advance for your generosity- Mr. Pew said he is very grateful!

Seeking Actors for the Christmas Pageant

Children are needed for several possible roles in St. Thomas' Annual Christmas Pageant, which takes place during the 4:30 pm Christmas Eve Service. All ages and capabilities are welcome! There are a few parts with lines, but most are non-speaking parts. Angels, Wise Men, shepherds, and even animals- we need them all! Parents, please contact Jessica Fischer in person or at JLFischer316@gmail.com or 412-491-7628 with questions or to sign your children up. There will be a few rehearsal dates (usually



between the Sunday services), but you could also opt to show up at 3:45 on Christmas Eve and still participate.



St. Thomas Kids Daycare Thanksgiving Celebration

St. Thomas Kids Daycare and Pre-School held its first Thanksgiving celebration with the children, family and daycare staff recently.

Parents enjoyed delicious Thanksgiving day staples, such as turkey, stuffing, sweet and mashed potatoes, pie and other goodies with their children following a few special songs sung by the little ones. It was a lovely celebration and hopefully, the first of many more to come.



All photos courtesy of St. Thomas Kids' Director, Jamie Bonaroti.



Upcoming Events/Services

- Nov. 30 - First Sunday of Advent
- Dec. 6 at 1:00 pm Fellowship luncheon in the Parish Hall.
- Dec. 14 - Oakmont Carol Walk (St. Thomas is first this year). The program starts at 6 pm and will conclude with the final performance and cookie reception at Oakmont Methodist Church (see poster above).
- Dec. 21 - Longest Night of the Year Service (see article above)
- Dec. 24 - 4:30 pm Christmas Eve Service with Children's Pageant and instrumentalists
- Dec. 24 - 9:30 pm Christmas Eve Service with Choral Music starting at 9:10
- Dec. 25 - 10:30 am Christmas Day Service
- Dec. 28 - 8:00 am Holy Eucharist Rite I Service
- Dec. 28 - 10:30 am Lessons and Carols Service

COMING
SOON!

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
 - Men's Ministry and Women's Group meetings - as determined
- Beloved Community Initiative's upcoming events include:
- a Prayer and Share meeting on December 17 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/>

December Birthdays

3 - Karleen Shepard
5 - Shawn McClelland
8 - John Shearer
9 - Carolyn Cedilote
13 - Louise Baker
13 - Al Moore
14 - Tyler Aber
15 - Endy Reindl
17 - Noel Clive
19 - LuAnn Hunter
19 - Toby Stilley
24 - Alex Hayward
27 - Barbra Urban
31 - Ty McClelland
31 - Mary Lee McClelland

December Anniversaries

6 - Michael & Jennifer Pietragallo
19 - Sanford & Elaine Chilcote
20 - Cliff & Helen Askin

** 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 |
[www.st-tom.org]



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

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