

Thomas Tract January 2026

Rector's Message - by Fr. Jeff Murph

Over the time of my ministry, I have heard people tell me different stories about their journey of faith (I am always ready to listen to these accounts). Some can never remember NOT believing; it is just something that they have had since childhood and often faith, for them, is like breathing because it is so natural. Others, on the other hand, reject faith because they think that if they follow Jesus then they will have to change something in their life that they do not really want to change. Still others struggle with faith because they imagine that faith is blind; they need at least some kind of evidence, they need something that can help them open themselves to trust. As members of a church named for St. Thomas, we ourselves can certainly appreciate their need and their struggle. And, as we see in John's gospel, God does meet people who are honestly seeking (and yet struggling) to give them what they need in order to take a final step from knowledge of facts to real faith and trust.



There is even a season in the Church Year that deals with this whole issue; it is the season of Epiphany, a Greek word that means “showing” or “manifestation”. Often in the season of Epiphany, which starts with the wise men who were following a star, the readings focus on showing who Jesus is. Some examples include the story of water being changed into wine at a wedding or the story of Jesus’ baptism, where a dove alighted on his head and the voice from heaven identified him, “This is my son, the beloved”, or the Transfiguration, where Peter, James and John are given a vision of Jesus transformed along with Moses and Elijah. Each of these biblical accounts point to who Jesus is, they are evidence to those who see them that help lead to faith.

The pieces of evidence can still be perceived today by those who have open eyes to see. People can be healed (I certainly have seen that). Broken relationships can be restored by forgiveness (which can be a very hard thing to do). The lives of people can be changed in remarkable ways like liberation from addiction or the consolation from grief or just a repentance from a long-cherished sin. Often nonbelievers who come to faith point to how they saw the love of Jesus evident in the lives of Christian friends. And almost every Christian can point to an answered prayer as a sign of God working in their lives.

Faith in Christ Jesus is not blind; God meets those who truly seek him because, frankly, he has been the one who had been wooing them to him in the first place. Ask diligently for God to reveal himself, to show himself in your own life and you will find that your faith increases.

St. Thomas' Annual Meeting

St. Thomas will host its annual Parish Meeting on Sunday, January 25 following the 10:30 service. Please make every effort to be there, as this is the time in which new vestry members are selected, the budget is reviewed and passed, ministry leaders give their updates, and any questions regarding church business are addressed. An Annual Report will be made available, typically the week or so prior to the meeting, so that the document can be

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

reviewed. This document contains ministry reports, the end budget for 2025 and the proposed budget for 2026, among other things. This coming year, parishioners will have the opportunity to vote on new vestry members. There are four people who have agreed to take on the required three-year term, and there are three openings available. They are: Mitzi Fidler, LuAnn Hunter, Bill Lugar, and Richard Williams.

St. Thomas will provide the mains for the luncheon, but is asking that those with last names beginning with letters A-M to please bring a side dish to share, and those with last names beginning with letters N-Z to please bring a dessert. Help will be needed to set up and clean up before and after the meeting. Please speak with kitchen

coordinator Kristin Brown if you are willing to help.

Newcomer's Course Starting Soon

Fr. Murph intends to hold a newcomer's class starting some time in February. This class will be for adults who are new to St. Thomas and/or the Episcopal Church. If you are interested in learning more about the church and/or if you are interested in being Received or Confirmed by the Bishop during her visit to St. Thomas in June, please speak with Fr. Murph. Details regarding class dates and times have yet to be decided.



Six Steps to SANITY Course Offered at St. Thomas

Paul and Shelley Cammisa will facilitate a Six Steps to SANITY class starting on Tuesday, February 24 at 7 pm in the Guild Room. The meetings, designed for those who have loved ones suffering from addiction, will run each Tuesday evening through April 28.

Six Steps to SANITY is a faith based ministry and support group adapted from the best-selling book, *Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Children* by Allison Bottke. Using the Study Guide workbook, parents and families will learn how enabling and codependency contribute to addiction. Advanced registration is required. To register or for more information, please contact Deacon Tim Noca at 412-607-8328 or tnoca@diopitt.org.

St. Thomas Kids Earns Top Preschool Award



BusinessRate

TOP 3 of 2025 Oakmont Awards



St. Thomas Kids Daycare and Preschool Top Preschool in Oakmont for 2025

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Dear St. Thomas Kids Daycare and Preschool Team,

We are pleased to inform you that St. Thomas Kids Daycare and Preschool has been officially recognized as the **TOP 3 of 2025 Oakmont Award Winner** in the Preschool category – an honor based on verified data from Google Reviews, as analyzed and certified by BusinessRate. BusinessRate provides intelligent ranking solutions and comprehensive review management services to help local businesses thrive in competitive markets through data-driven insights and proven strategies.

This recognition is part of the BusinessRate TOP 3 of 2025 Oakmont Awards, which identify local leaders in customer satisfaction, brand reputation, and service excellence using publicly available Google review data. Your BusinessRate Score is a complete performance metric that combines all factors with a single, easy-to-understand score. This comprehensive rating shows how your business ranks against local competitors.

Congratulations again on this outstanding achievement – earned not by application or nomination, but by the authentic feedback of your own customers.

Thank you for representing excellence in Oakmont.

Warm regards,

The BusinessRate Staff
TOP 3 of 2025 Oakmont Awards
Based on Verified Google Review Data

Scan the QR code to view the rankings, awards and digital images:

Or, you can go to:
www.businessrate.com/awards
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Upcoming Events/Services

- Jan. 10 - Parishioners Lyric Davis and Patrick Upperman to be married at St. Thomas.
- Jan. 25 - Annual Parish Meeting following the 10:30 service (see article above)
- Feb. 14 - Valentine's Day
- Feb. 17 - Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner
- Feb. 18 - Ash Wednesday
- Feb. 22 - First Sunday in Lent



Courses/meetings being offered



released/

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 January 21 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->

January Birthdays

1 - Helen Askin
2 - Linda DeDominicis
2 - Becky Verzinskie
3 - Piper Isadore
4 - Darrell Powell
5 - Kyria McClain
7 - Sheila England
13 - Sara Gildersleeve
13 - Janice Hronyetz
14 - Mason Eber
15 - Joseph Kelly
19 - Drew Hunter
20 - Kate Westermann
21 - Craig Phillips
22 - Daniel Samir-Alam
Denlinger
24 - Kevin Cass
26 - Matthew Kearns
26 - Blake Krushinski
27 - Michael Pietragallo
28 - Mark McClelland
29 - Miriam Brannock
29 - Jim McGrath
31 - Barbara Mysels

January Anniversaries

There are no Parishioner Anniversaries in January, although there soon will be! See the Coming Soon section to find out who!

** 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!





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