
St. Thomas Memorial Church

Thomas Tract May 2026

Rector's Message - by Fr. Jeff Murph

Some may know that, in addition to my duties at St. Thomas Church, I also serve as the part-time chaplain at UPMC St. Margaret, which was founded as an Episcopal hospital over a hundred years ago. One of my responsibilities is to offer a quarterly memorial service for the families of patients who have died in the hospital. After we started offering this simple funeral service for our patients, I quickly realized that, for many of the families who came to the hospital chapel, these are the ONLY funeral rites that are offered for their loved ones. Quite a lot of them have not even had any service at the funeral home. As a consequence, this can mean that it touches their grief and loss in a unique way. Speaking personally, after my own brother died the day after Christmas, I returned to North Carolina a few weeks later for his funeral. It was clear that there was a difference for the whole family after the service and the following reception. I am not even sure that I could put my finger on what it was but somehow, even though the grief of my family continued, it was changed afterward.



Being a Christian (and, I suppose, being a priest), I know that there is a spiritual reality to the world in which our modern society usually takes no account or notice. It does not usually submit itself to be measured or experimented upon in empirical ways and yet that does not mean that it is not real. Since the bible describes people as being "body, soul and spirit" (1 Thess. 5:23), the spirit it is a dimension of what it is to be human. That may be why, when spiritual matters are ignored or become atrophied within a person then they become out of balance within their being. (Just as when physical or emotional health are ignored and become atrophied).

When a relationship with God is restored within a person, that does not necessarily solve every problem in their life but there is a wholeness that becomes part of their being in a way that was not there before. Prayer, confession and repentance, worship with other people, forgiving others, reading the Bible, even listening to music praising God can be ways to grow spiritually and in our relationship with God. All of this is very easy to push aside and yet, one may find that, like a coal taken out of a bed of embers, there may be a cooling in the spiritual dimension of a person's life.

For nearly thirty-two years, I have been praying that God will bless and draw closer the people of St. Thomas Church and of our community to himself, awakening the spiritual vitality in each person. I will continue to pray for that always and I hope you will join me in that prayer for us all.

[Annual Church Picnic and Bishop's Visit](#)

Preparations are already well underway in anticipation of St. Thomas' Annual Church Picnic. This year's event is expected to be extra enjoyable, as the June 7 celebration also coincides



with our yearly visit from Bishop Ketlen Solak, who will confirm several people during the 10:30 morning service that day.

The picnic is traditionally led by the newest members of the St. Thomas Vestry, but will also require the help of several other people to help set up, serve and clean up following the event. Parishioners will also be asked to bring a side dish or dessert to share. More

information on this will be upcoming within the next few weeks, so be on the lookout.



Holy Hikes 2026 Going Strong!

St. Thomas parishioners took part in the first Holy Hike of 2026 last month. There are already plans in the works for a second of the season to be held tentatively on May 23. The location has not yet been determined. The Hike will be led by Fr. Guy Brown, who has taken charge of the group since last year. For those who don't know what a Holy Hikes are, they are hikes held at local parks in which there is a service of sorts along the trail. Readings are read, prayers are prayed, and a Holy Eucharist is celebrated. Walks are typically 1-2 miles and are of varying degrees of difficulty -



usually easy or moderate. Everyone is invited to participate in this time of prayer, exercise, and fellowship. For questions or more information, speak with Fr. Brown.



Participants stopping along the trail for a moment of reading and reflection.



Participants preparing to receive the Eucharist.



[A Bit More About Liberia Medicals, Inc.](#)

Recently, the St. Thomas Vestry opted to contribute all of the annual Mite Box collection to Liberia Medicals Inc. Vestry member Richard Williams suggested the non-profit, as he had direct experience with the group's founders at the Parish he attended in North Carolina. Liberia Medicals Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides clinical screening for diabetes, hypertension, educational awareness, and primary care services to people in Liberia, West Africa. These common maladies are often poorly diagnosed and undertreated due to a lack of adequate resources for analysis, education and

management. If you would like more information about the organization, or would like to make a donation, please visit their website at <https://www.liberiamedicalsync.org> or speak with Richard Williams directly.



Photos courtesy Liberia Medicals Inc. Website of recent visits. Used with permission.



[EfM: Gathering Interest for 2026-27](#)

Most of us long for a place where we can talk honestly about faith, life, and the questions that don't always fit neatly into Sunday mornings. EfM creates that kind of space — a small, steady community where we listen to one another, learn together, and notice how God is at work in our everyday lives. It's not a class in the traditional sense; it's a circle of people who show up for one another with curiosity, courage, and care.

Each week, our group gathers for conversation, prayer, and reflection. We read, we wonder together, and we make room for the questions that come up. People often say EfM helps them see their own lives and faith with more clarity because they're exploring these things in the company of others who are doing the same.

EfM is a four-year curriculum offered one year at a time, developed by the School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee. Each year focuses on a different part of the Christian story — scripture, history, theology, ethics, and spiritual practices — but the real transformation happens in the group itself.

We are gathering interest for the 2026–27 program year now through July.

Our current group meets on Monday evenings via Zoom, and we are open to forming an additional group — either online or in person — depending on interest. If you're curious, let's talk and see what might be a good fit.

Contact:

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Note: Wendy is a member of Calvary Episcopal Church, and has been a member of EfM since 2022.



Upcoming Events/Services

- **May 10 - Mother's Day / Rogation Sunday** (Rogation, from the Latin rogatio (asking), marks the start of a period of time devoted to asking God for protection and fruitfulness of the land. Make sure to grab a bag of Blessed dirt for your garden)
- **May 16 - Men's Breakfast Meeting at 7 am in the Parish Hall**
- **May 16 - St. Thomas beautification of grounds - Volunteers needed. Meet at the church at 9 am.**
- **May 17 - Ascension Day**
- **May 20 & 27 - No Wednesday morning Healing Service**
- **May 23 - Holy Hike location pending (see article above)**
- **May 24 - Pentecost - If you will be attending either the 8:00 or 10:30 service on this day and can speak a language other than English, please contact Laurel in the office as soon as possible to be part of the yearly Pentecost readings.**
- **May 24 - Oakmont Presbyterian Church is hosting its 26th Annual Jubilant Praise concert on May 24 at 4 pm. This year's event features the Carnegie Brass & Percussion, JuBELLation Ringers Handbell Choir and the OPC Chancel Choir. No fee to attend. All are welcome.**
- **May 25 - Memorial Day**
- **May 26 - No Tuesday morning Bible Study**
- **May 31 - Trinity Sunday**
- **June 7 - Bishop Visit with Confirmations and Annual Parish Picnic (see article above)**



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 May 20 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/>

May Birthdays

- 1 - Alexander Fusaro
- 3 - Pat Phillips
- 3 - Dana Phillips
- 4 - Janice Alcorn
- 6 - Cyndie Rollinson
- 8 - James M. Fitzroy
- 8 - Jacqui Matthews
- 8 - Janice Wolfe
- 9 - Ian Dew-Becker
- 9 - Dan Trecki
- 10 - Zachary Aber
- 10 - Linda Getts
- 10 - Anne Gocke
- 13 - Jonathan Dailey
- 14 - Reilly Cass
- 15 - Bill Keller
- 16 - Zachary Farmer
- 17 - Michael Aber
- 19 - Shahnaz Alam-Denlinger
- 19 - Guy Brown
- 20 - Tory Bucci
- 20 - Ronald McClelland Jr.
- 21 - Charlotte Murph
- 23 - Natalie Kurzawa
- 24 - Cliff Askin
- 27 - Lyric Davis
- 27 - Michael Lozano Wissel
- 27 - Penny McClelland
- 27 - Jennifer McGrath
- 29 - Elsa Dozzi
- 30 - Luke Krushinski
- 30 - Bill Lugar
- 30 - Alexandra Pietragallo
- 31 - Ruth McClelland
- 31 - Ben Pierce

May Anniversaries

- 8 - Paul & Shelley Cammisa
- 11 - Michael & Gretchen Kurzawa
- 11 - Dan & Jill Squire
- 20 - Jonathan & Mary Dailey
- 23 - Roger Hindenleng & Sue Uram
- 24 - Jake McMeekin & Charlotte Murph
- 26 - Louis & Sue Rocchini
- 31 - Joseph & Julie Bucci

** 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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