

St. Thomas Memorial Church

# Thomas Tract February 2026

Rector's Message - by Fr. Jeff Murph

Doing something new can be a hard thing to do. When I was in Seminary, I would pray Compline (a short, simple prayer service for late night use, BCP, p. 127) with two friends every evening. One of these friends was one of the few African American students at the seminary. In the spring, he expressed some interest in running for student body president. He was pretty skeptical, however, pointing out that he was a minority (and he had had one or two occasions to be reminded of that). We encouraged him, however, and when he eventually ran, he was elected. What we did not realize at the time was that he was the first African American student body president of the seminary. After ordination, he later became the first African American President of his diocese's Standing Committee (Alabama). In our own parish, we have a member who, years ago, became the first woman in Pittsburgh ever to serve as a member of the board of a major corporation. She was the only woman board member for a long time.



What both of these shared was that being the first in these positions required them to be on top form all the time. They had to be good, they had to be prepared because if they made a mistake then it would be said of them that it was because they were a woman, or that they were African American. Even though personal qualifications had gotten them these positions, they knew that some would judge them because of their category. It was a heavy responsibility.

February is a short month chock full of many events: Groundhog Day, Candlemas, St. Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day (because of birthdays of Presidents Washington and Lincoln), Absalom Jones day, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, the Lunar New Year and Black History month. It also, at least in Pittsburgh, can be the depth of winter. Absalom Jones was the first African American to be ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church, here in Pennsylvania, by Bishop William White in 1802. This was a new thing, at a time when most African Americans in the United States were still slaves. Imagine what pressure he might have felt to be the best priest he could possibly be.

In the letter to the Galatians, St. Paul says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28). What St. Paul is saying was new. In the Roman Empire of the time, differences were clear; even whether a person held citizenship or not. It took the Church centuries to figure out that his insistence meant, as our forefathers claimed in 1776, that "all men are created equal" (it took Americans another 144 years to realize that women are created equal too). New ideas sometimes have old roots.

Perhaps that is why St. Paul also urges us to “test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). Be alert to what God’s Holy Spirit is doing and have charity towards the ones God calls to join in that doing, even if it is new. Who knows, even if they are “firsts,” they may be leading us all into something good.

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## St. Thomas' Annual Meeting Postponed

For the second time in as many weeks, the Annual Parish Meeting has been postponed. First the snow storm that dumped more than a foot of snow on the area and now the road conditions and the ongoing frigid temperatures have led to a decision to postpone the meeting two weeks running. The meeting is now scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 8 following the 10:30 service. Pray we have cleaner roads and warmer weather in another week.






## Calling all Men!

The annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper will be held on Tuesday, February 17 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. This meal is generally prepared, administered and served by the St. Thomas men. 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. Help will be needed to set up, cook, serve, and clean up for this event. If you are willing to help, please speak with Fr. Guy Brown, who is coordinating.




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THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE  
OF PITTSBURGH

**A Celebration of the Lives of**  
*Absalom Jones & Barbara Harris*



The Rt. Rev. Ketlen A. Solak  
Celebrant

The Rev. Charles L. Fischer, III  
Preacher

**Trinity Cathedral, 328 Sixth Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15222**

### 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](mailto:tnoca@diopitt.org).

## Upcoming Events/Services

- Feb. 5 - Sacred Ground Level 1 Class - 6 pm at St. Thomas (see more information below)
- Feb. 7 - Diocesan Celebration of Absalom Jones and Barbara Harris. 1 pm at Trinity Cathedral (See flyer above)
- Feb. 8 - Annual Parish Meeting following the 10:30 service
- Feb. 14 - Valentine's Day
- Feb. 17 - Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner from 5 -7 pm in the Parish Hall (See article above)
- Feb. 18 - Ash Wednesday - services held at 7 am, 10 am, and 7 pm at St. Thomas. An additional service will be held at noon at St. Margaret's Hospital Chapel
- Stations of the Cross - offered each Friday during Lent (excepting Good Friday) at 5:30 pm in the Sanctuary
- Feb. 22 - First Sunday in Lent
- Starting Feb. 24 and running each Tuesday until Holy Week, the Diocese will hold its Lenten Preaching Series, offered at various churches throughout the Diocese. See their website at [episcopalpg.org](http://episcopalpg.org) for details.
- March 24 - St. Thomas to host the Lenten Preaching Service (see note 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 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-released/>
- St. Thomas to host a Sacred Ground Level 1 Class starting Feb. 5 at 6 pm and running through Apr. 16, and a Sacred Ground Level 2 Class starting Apr. 16 and running through

May 21. Dinner is provided for in-person participants. Zoom options are also available. To register, visit:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe6uxXr1QHL16uv8CkQXzN-9vJpZlmsLHry-JKTy5yJzk1jIQ/viewform?pli=1> or speak with Shahnaz Alam-Denlinger.

## February Birthdays

2 - Matthew Fischer  
6 - Bob Farmer  
12 - Caitlin McGrath  
13 - Dick Thomas  
17 - Tim Dexter  
19 - Darlene McCauley  
19 - Jordan McClain  
20 - Julie King  
24 - Andy King  
25 - Patsy Clive  
25 - Louis Rocchini  
26 - Mary Dailey

## February Anniversaries

26 - James and Jessica Fischer

\*\* 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 |  
[\[www.st-tom.org\]](http://www.st-tom.org)





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