
St. Thomas Memorial Church

Thomas Tract July 2026

Rector's Message - by Fr. Jeff Murph

This is my last rector message for the Thomas Tract of St. Thomas Church, which for me is a bittersweet moment. There are a few parishioners still here who might remember that I came to St. Thomas, and to Pittsburgh, on July 11, 1994. My last Sunday will be July 12, 2026. To be honest, when I

first came to Oakmont, I did not necessarily imagine that I would be rector here for thirty-two years but I can say, without any reservation, that it has been the great privilege of my life to be able to serve as priest in this church over these past three decades. St. Thomas has been the context in which my life, and the life of my family, has been lived for most of my ministry.

Like everyone's life, these years have been filled with great joys and celebrations as well as tremendous challenges. Over my time, there was a fire in the church (that spurred the first renovation campaign), a flood which nearly destroyed one of our buildings, a painful split in the congregation precipitated by the bishop and, of course, a pandemic that shut churches and other institutions down all around the world. In my own personal life, my children grew up in this parish, being disciplined by so many faithful members of our congregation. I will never forget that it was this parish which supported my family through our son's hard battle with cancer. Over the decades, I have had the opportunity to preach the gospel, celebrate the eucharist, perform baptisms, pray for and anoint the sick, solemnize weddings, present confirmands, prepare children for first holy communion and to conduct the funerals of many beloved parishioners. In all this, my life has become interwoven with the lives of the people of this community in big and small ways, and that has been a tremendous blessing.

In my sense of God's calling and mission upon me, I have always tried, through preaching, teaching, loving pastoral care and the administration of the holy sacraments to bring people to a personal knowledge and love of God in Jesus Christ and to work to equip people to recognize and step into the spiritual gifts and ministry that God gives to every baptized person. There are times when I think I have facilitated God's work in this faithfully and other times when I am sorry to have failed. Indeed, it is why I pray for St. Thomas Church and its people every day. Though I now am retiring from this active ministry, I know that I will be praying for St. Thomas Church for as long as my life lasts because it is part of the love that I have for you all. How does one dedicate thirty-two years to a community and not be sad when the time comes to leave? Yet I also am so profoundly thankful to have been able to be part of your lives and to serve you in the love of Jesus Christ as your priest.

May God richly bless, preserve and guide St. Thomas Church into the future, giving this parish every grace of the Holy Spirit and bringing a new faithful priest to join you in God's work in this place. Remember that for over a hundred and fifty years God has been faithful to St. Thomas Church; may he be faithful for years to come.





Annual Independence Day Cookout

James and Jessica Fischer are again hosting the annual Independence Day Cookout on Sunday, July 5, following the 10:30 service. The family has been hosting this event for years, and this year will be extra special as they will also see their youngest son, Andrew, receive his First Holy Communion during the service.

Everyone is welcome to attend. Parishioners are asked to bring a side dish or dessert to share.



Prayer Groups for St. Thomas Forming

As part of entering into a time of transition, with the retirement of Fr. Murph as rector of St. Thomas Church, the vestry is inviting all parishioners to a season of prayer for God's future for our parish. Most vestry members will host or lead prayer groups over the next couple months to pray for our church, for guidance and discernment that we might identify who and what kind of leader God wants for the future of our parish.

Small groups will meet for about an hour every two weeks to discuss and pray together. The answers to these prayers will be brought back to a plenary meeting to be discerned and used in the search. This prayer season will begin after Fr. Murph's last Sunday, July 12, so please contact a vestry member or sign up in the parish hall or call the church office at 412-828-9680 if you are willing to participate. There will be zoom-accessible groups for those unable to travel.



Calling All Ladies of Every Age

Let's meet in fellowship:

No Agenda

No Program

No Study

No Work

Just fun conversation to get acquainted with each other beyond the "Peace" at church. The first get together will be held on Wednesday, July 22 at 7 pm in the Guild Room.

Refreshments will be provided. Childcare will be available upon request. At this first fellowship we will agree on mutually convenient dates and times to meet. If you would like more information or are unable to meet on this date but want to participate, please contact Darrell Powell at 412-828-0502 or DL7JP_2W8@yahoo.com.



Bishop Solak's 2026 Visit to St. Thomas

Last month, the Rt. Rev. Ketlen Solak made her annual visit to St. Thomas, where she confirmed four new members into the Episcopal Church, and received three others. Below are Stephen Vitunic, Bill Lugar, Bishop Solak, Andrew Pierce and Alex Krushinski (top). On the lower row are Ruth and Charles Lynch, Matthew Fischer, and Fr. Murph. The service included the confirmations and receptions, as well as special music offered by parishioner instrumentalists, followed by a special reception. Thank you to everyone who helped in any way to make this a special day for the Bishop and those being confirmed and received.

The Bishop's visit also coincided with the annual parish picnic, so there was much fellowship and food shared by the Bishop and parishioners alike. If you haven't already done so, please welcome our newest members if you see them at a church service or other St. Thomas event.



Upcoming Events/Services

- July 4 - Independence Day
- July 5 - First Holy Communion (10:30 service) / Independence Day Cookout hosted by the Fischer Family following the 10:30 service
- July 12 - Fr. Murph's Retirement Luncheon following the 10:30 service. Please RSVP via evite invitation or to the office at 412-828-9680.



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 July 15 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->

July Birthdays

- 1 - Teri Aber
- 1 - Paul Cammisa
- 1 - Emily Navpanahi
- 4 - Louis Rocchini
- 6 - Wilma Gaughan
- 7 - Jim Becker
- 7 - Dana Fusaro
- 7 - B.J. Rottschafer
- 8 - R.J. King

July Anniversaries

- 4 - Chip & Charlotte Fisher
- 6 - Peter & Pamela Mysels
- 10 - R.J. & Julie King
- 12 - Jim Becker & Mary Amanda Dew
- 22 - John & Allison Pierce
- 29 - Dan & Hallie Isadore

** If you aren't already on our Birthday and/or Anniversary list, please contact Laurel Almada at the

- 9 - Trudy Hakas
- 9 - Brandon Trecki
- 10 - Todd Hayes
- 12 - Louisa Miguez
- 15 - Jan Koehler
- 16 - James Fischer
- 18 - Audrey Hayward
- 21 - Margaret Shillinglaw
- 24 - Karen Alexander
- 24 - Cassandra DeTar
- 26 - Domenic Dozzi
- 26 - Barbara Keeney
- 26 - Jack Middlemas
- 28 - Josue Almada
- 29 - Jill Luck

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]



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