St. Thomas Memorial Church

Thomas Tract November 2026

Interim Rector's Message



A reflection on the Liturgy of the Church

Why do we need a liturgy? I have been asked this question more times than I've had hot dinners, as the saying goes.

The quick answer is that all worship is liturgical. To be sure, some liturgies are more formal than others; others better constructed; still others shorter or longer, but at the end of the day, it is liturgy that shapes and guides what we do in church. Even if we did things differently every Sunday, each such worship service would constitute a self-contained liturgy. You simply cannot avoid it. If something is to be done in an orderly and dignified fashion, it must be predetermined and sequential in nature (first this and then that) and then once that happens, you have a liturgy!

What is liturgy? A liturgy is a prescribed form or sequence of words and actions in which participants interact with God through adoration, repentance, thanksgiving and supplication. To participate in a liturgy is nothing less than to be lifted into the heavenly realms: to be invited into dignified conversation; a call and response with the eternal. When it comes to the Eucharist, it is to be sitting at an intimate meal in which Jesus is our host, feeding us as he does with his lifegiving presence and strength. So, when you pause to think about what you are doing in church on a Sunday morning, it's actually quite breathtaking. It's radically different from anything we do the rest of the week. I'm always surprised whenever someone describes our worship as boring, empty ritual. Perish the thought! It's active, engaging and dynamic. It should quicken our hearts and stir our imaginations! It's a journey to an alternate (and ultimately real) reality.

Also, our liturgy involves our whole being. It engages our minds (the lessons, sermon), our emotions (the lessons, sermon, hymns, music, confession, absolution) as well as our bodies (stand, sit, kneel, walk, eat bread, sip wine). It involves our spirits too, drawn as we are by the indwelling Holy Spirit beyond the capacity and confines of human rationality and into true mystical communion with God. The liturgy is our formal -and very public- act whereby we identify as a community gathered intentionally to bear witness to the life, death, resurrection and risen presence of Jesus. Our gathering - ordered and framed as it is in historic liturgical expression - is itself a unique manifestation of the nature of God and of God's people. Christian liturgy, done well, is a powerful form of evangelism.

I don't know about you, but this is incredibly exciting stuff. We should all be rushing to church on Sundays as if it's the most important and most invigorating thing we do. Because that's exactly what it is!

And there is more besides. For example, we have a three-year lectionary in which the Sunday readings are repeated on a triennial basis. These readings are themselves sorted based on their relevance to each season of the liturgical year, which begins in Advent and ends with Christ the King Sunday at the end of the Pentecost season. Each year, whether Year A (Matthew), B (Mark) or C (Luke), the readings tell the same story. In Advent, we await and yearn for the coming of Jesus. At Christmas we celebrate his Incarnation. During Epiphany we witness the brightening of the light of Christ in the world as we re-encounter the events of his earthly life and ministry. In Lent we prepare for the mighty, redemptive, events of Good Friday and Easter. During the Fifty Days of Easter season, we celebrate the resurrection hope that God in Jesus has given us. Ascension Day and Pentecost remind us of God's gifts poured out on the church by way of the Holy Spirit, equipping us for ministry in joyful witness to the saving acts of God toward all humanity and the extension of God's Kingdom on earth. We end with Christ the King Sunday during which we are reminded that despite the imperfections of the world and our limited and failed efforts to establish the Kingdom, Christ still reigns. It's a double-edged sword: hopeful on the one hand, yet also a sober reminder of our creatureliness and that the re-creation of the world is truly beyond us. Our hope must always be grounded in God and not in the human potential to effect lasting change…which of course then leads us to Advent, when we yearn once again for the coming of God to save us.

The liturgical year is the church's recapitulation of God's saving acts toward mankind and a renewed call to respond to those acts. If Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter represent the story of God's actions toward mankind, then the remainder of the year represents our opportunity to respond to God's gracious initiative on our behalf. Taken as a whole, the entire year is a call and response…yet another liturgical dance in which we interact with the living God.

So, whether it be our Sunday worship, or our liturgical year, or our three-year lectionary, we are part of ever larger and widening circles of liturgical life! Life becomes liturgy! Liturgy becomes life! To participate in the rhythm of church life is to engage in the ongoing liturgy or worship of God, not just in church; not just on Sundays, but in all times and places of life. The church sanctifies our time. It fills our days with significance and meaning beyond the minutes, hours, days, weeks, months or years by which we measure our lives.

All of which is to say: cherish our liturgy!

With love and blessings!

The Rev. Canon James D. Shoucair



Vestry / Search Committee Update

The search committee met with Canons Karashin and Smedley and are beginning their process! Prayer groups will have a final meeting with Canon Shoucair on Sunday, Nov. 1 after the 10:30 service to compile the findings from the groups.

by Sr. Warden Julie King

St. Thomas Awarded Top Episcopal Church in Allegheny County

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October 9, 2026

Dear St Thomas Episcopal Church Team,

It is with great pleasure that we recognize your organization for its outstanding achievement as a **Top Episcopal Church in Allegheny County for 2026, based on Google reviews.** This distinction reflects a level of excellence that has earned the confidence, respect, and praise of the customers you serve each day.

St Thomas Episcopal Church has distinguished itself among the highest-rated businesses in your category and market. This recognition is based on verified customer feedback and publicly available review data, drawn from more than 26 million businesses and 1.7 billion reviews compiled over 18 years, reflecting the voice of the people you serve.

Your complete ranking report is now available to view. It details the businesses you ranked ahead of, your percentile within your category, and your BusinessRate scores; a fuller picture of where you stand among top performers in Allegheny County. Many recognized businesses also choose to commemorate this achievement and share it with their community; options for displaying your recognition at your location, on your website, and with your customers are included alongside your report.

On behalf of BusinessRate, we extend our sincere congratulations on this well-earned recognition. We wish you continued success in the years ahead and thank you for your contribution to the economic vitality and service excellence of the Allegheny County community.

Respectfully,

Kyle Pittman
Founder & President
BusinessRate

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The Next Fellowship Dinner is Scheduled

Our first Fellowship Dinner was a most successful event. There was an abundance of delicious foods, wonderful fellowship, and a funny Autumn Trivia game that kept people laughing.

Our next dinner is planned for Dec. 4 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Trudy Hakas and Karleen Shepard will be our hosts. The main course will be a delicious Christmas ham. Please see the sign-up sheet on the kiosk in the Parish Hall to sign up to attend and bring a side or dessert item to share. For more information, please contact Darrell Powell: Text 412-828-0502 or email DL7JP_2W8@yahoo.com.

by Darrell Powell



Canon Shoucair pictured in the center, along with a good turnout of pets and their owners for the Annual Blessing of the Animals Service held on Oct. 4. The $97.00 collected during the service was forwarded to the Humane Animal Rescue in Verona. St. Thomas received a lovely thank you letter from the organization, which is posted on the kiosk in the Parish Hall.





St. Thomas Kids Enjoy Halloween Festivities

Children from the St. Thomas Kids Daycare and Preschool enjoyed trick or treating with family and staff on Oct. 28, as part of the annual Halloween special events. Students

enjoyed a fun-filled day of crafts, games and more.

Staff (shown top right) also dressed up to join in the fun. Parents came to help pass out candy and other treats.



Courses/meetings being offered & COMING SOON!

St. Thomas regular meetings/events include:

- Adult Education - Sunday mornings at 9:30
- Tuesday Bible Study at 11 am in the Guild Room
- Wednesday Healing Service at 10 am in the Thomas House Chapel
- Wednesday Choir Practice - 7 pm in the choir room (basement)
- Tuesday and Thursday Evening Prayer 6:30-7:00 pm in the church
- Men's Ministry and Women's Group meetings - as determined
- Women's Fellowship meetings - first Thursday of the month from 7:00-8:30 in Guild Room

COMING SOON:

- Nov. 1 - All Saints' Day
- Nov. 1 - End of Daylight Savings Time - Remember to set your clocks back one hour!
- Nov. 5 - Ladies Fellowship Meeting at 7pm in the Guild Room. Refreshments provided.
- Nov. 8 - New Consecration Sunday
- Nov. 26 - Thanksgiving Day Service at 10:30 am
- Nov. 29 - First Sunday of Advent
- Dec. 4 - Fellowship Dinner at 6 pm in the Guild Room (see article above)
- Dec. 13 - Annual Oakmont Carol Walk starting at 6:00 pm at the Methodist church. St. Thomas is second in the rotation, starting at 6:30 pm.

November Birthdays

5 - Susan Uram
6 - Hallie Isadore
6 - Andrew Pierce
6 - Aidan Squire
10 - Ann Snyder

November Anniversaries

5 - Timothy & Jennifer Sarver
11 - Dick & Ann Thomas
12 - Matthew & Felicia Kearns
14 - Stephen & Helen Baker
14 - Jim & Jennifer McGrath

13 - Bill Matthews
13 - TJ McGrath
15 - Maureen Farmer
16 - Bruce Johnston
17 - Richard Dietz
17 - Bill Ferguson
17 - Renee Romito
20 - Christian Bucci
20 - Mary Nell Hurd
22 - Dora Dailey
22 - Alexander Murph
25 - Laurel Almada
25 - Brad Krushinski
26 - Michael Hayes
27 - Katherine Kimes
28 - 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!



St. Thomas Memorial Church | [www.st-tom.org]



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

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