

The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas
Philadelphia, PA

A MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR
The Very Rev. Canon Martini Shaw

THE STATE OF THE PARISH

*“Celebrating Two Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of Legacy, Faith and Hope.”
(1792-2017)*

In the midst of celebrating 225 years of legacy, faith and hope, we continued to be a community of deep faith, steeped in scripture, tradition, reason, worship, study and prayer. And under this umbrella theme, 2017 was truly a year filled with enormous energy, festive activities and soul-stirring excitement.

Here are just but a few of our many observances and activities during the year:

- ❖ Retired loan balance in full on the Absalom Jones House restoration.
- ❖ Announced the official kick off of St. Thomas’ year long 225th Anniversary Celebration.
- ❖ The first official Visitation of our Diocesan Bishop, the Right Rev. Daniel Gutierrez, whereby approximately 50 individuals were confirmed and/or received into the Episcopal Church (St. Thomas).
- ❖ A Lenten Season focusing and reflecting on each vital com of our 225 theme.
- ❖ Hosted a very festive Eucharistic Celebration during the Annual Meeting of the Union of Black Episcopalians and black Lutherans, where we welcomed; the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Most Rev. Michael Curry; Bishop Daniel Gutierrez; the Presiding Bishop of the Lutheran Church and Many clergy and lay from other Diocese.
- ❖ Hosted a Eucharistic Celebration recognizing deceased member, Octavius Catto days prior to the City of Philadelphia, the Honorable Jim Kenny, also worshipped with us.
- ❖ A formal Gala to celebrate our 225 years of ministry.
- ❖ A festive Eucharistic Celebration welcoming former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, The Most Rev. Frank Tracy Griswold.
- ❖ Included historical narratives in the Sunday Spearhead every week, thanks to Art Sudler and the Historical Society.

We have manifold reasons to give thanks for our many blessings, including my personal heartfelt expressions of gratitude of our Co-Chairs of our year-long celebration: Albert Dandridge; Catherine Stafford and Monica Lewis Jones. Under their superb and stellar leadership, committee members worked to assure a year to forever be remembered.

We also give thanks for the many new members and families who joined our church family, community and village, to the many who received the Sacrament of Holy

Baptism, to the profound witness of our music and church school, to the supportive staff and Vestry, because without you, the AECST Express Train would not have reached its many 2017 destinations. And finally we give thanks to each of you for the many ways that you blessed St. Thomas Church with the sharing of your time, talents and treasures. We, again, ended the year on another spiritual high, financial solvency, and joy filled hearts.

Among the many faithful parishioners who have entered into the joy of the heavenly Jerusalem in 2017, we mourned the death of our 16th Rector, the Rev. Canon Jesse Anderson. His remains were placed in its resting place, the church's columbarium. In memory of both he and his father, the Great Hall was renamed and dedicated the Anderson Hall.

In conclusion, 2017 was yet another epic and amazing year for our parish as we celebrated 225 years of our Legacy, Faith and Hope. I thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Pastor/Rector, at such an historic church. I pray for each of you and solicit your prayers for me.

May God's grace and mercy bless us during the next 225 years of ministry and service, as we continue to "...Walk by faith and not by sight."

To God be the glory!!!