

**NEW MEMBERS MANUAL**

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**The Rev. Fr. Martini Shaw, Rector  
The Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Chemengich, Assistant**

## GREETINGS FROM THE RECTOR

Greetings in the Name of our Lord:

On behalf of the Wardens, Vestry and members of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, welcome into this fellowship of Christ. We glorify and give thanks to God for inspiring you to become a part of our loving, spiritual Church family.

As members of the oldest African-American Church in the city of Philadelphia, and the body of the first Black Episcopal Church in the United States of America, we are proud of our unwavering commitment to insure that...

***“The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas is an Open, Christ-Centered Community of Faith in which the Gospel is Taught, Lived and Spread.”***

To assist you in your transition into this part of the Body of Christ, we have created a New Members Manual. It comprises, for example, a list of our many dynamic ministries. It also includes a host of services and opportunities through which you can become actively involved in serving our Lord. As you peruse the New Members Manual, I encourage you to prayerfully allow the Holy Spirit to direct you in becoming fully and actively involved within the life of the Parish.

Again, welcome to your new family at The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. May you continue to grow in wisdom, grace and love.

Faithfully,

(The Rev. Fr.) Martini Shaw  
17<sup>th</sup> Rector

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## **ABSALOM JONES, Founder of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas – 1746 – 1818**

**Absalom Jones** was born into slavery in Sussex County, Delaware, on November 6, 1746. He taught himself to read and knew the New Testament thoroughly at an early age. When he was 16, Absalom's owner took him to Philadelphia, Pa., where he served as a clerk and handyman in a retail store. He was allowed to work for himself in the evenings and keep his earning. He was married in 1770. By the time Jones was 38 years old, he had purchased his wife's freedom, and his own, and had bought a house. Later he built two more houses and used them for rental income.

During this period he met Richard Allen, and they became lay preachers in St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church and lifelong friends. Their efforts met with great success, and the congregation multiplied tenfold.

Jones and Allen, in 1787, organized the Free African Society. The Society was both religious and benevolent, helping widows and orphans and assisting in sick, relief and burial expenses, and the assimilation of newly freedmen into urban life. Because of racial tensions and an altercation with church officials, they left St. George's congregation.

In 1792, under the leadership of Absalom Jones, "The African Church" was organized as a direct outgrowth of the Free African Society. In 1793, the two men organized the Black community to serve as nurses and attendants during Philadelphia's severe Yellow Fever epidemic.

In 1794, "The African Church" building was completed and dedicated on July 17<sup>th</sup> of that year. Absalom Jones led his African Church in applying to Bishop William White for membership in the Episcopal Church. On Sunday, September 14, 1794, the congregation was received into the fellowship and communion of the diocese of Pennsylvania. The following year the Diocesan Convention approved the affiliation with the stipulation that the Church could not participate in the Diocesan Convention – this was not resolved until 1864. So "The African Church" became The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, and Absalom Jones was ordained Deacon. Some nine years later he was ordained Priest, becoming the first priest in America of African descent.

In 1797, when the first African Masonic Lodge of Philadelphia was warranted, Absalom Jones was installed as First Worshipful Master and in 1815 he was elected the First Grand Master of the First African Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

During his ministry, Absalom Jones never lost his deep conviction that religious and social action go hand in hand. He founded schools for his people, helped them in distress, and supported them in their protest against slavery and oppression. He helped to found an insurance company, and a society which fought vice and immorality. Absalom Jones died at his home, 32 Powell Street, Philadelphia, Pa., on February 13, 1818. In 1973, the 64<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church added his name to the Church calendar as an optional feast to be celebrated

## THE HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS

**The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas**, was founded in 1792, born out of the struggle of persons of African descent for personal and religious freedom, justice and self determination. The church, originally known as the African Church , was an outgrowth of the Free African Society, a benevolent and religious organization established in 1787 by Absalom Jones and others to assist persons recently freed from the bonds of slavery.

As lay preachers, Absalom Jones and Richard Allen led their followers in an historic walk-out from St. George's Methodist Church because of growing racial tension, insults and degradation. The majority elected to seek affiliation with the Episcopal Church under the leadership of Absalom Jones. A portion of the group followed Allen into the founding of Bethel Church and the AME denomination.

A church building was erected and dedicated at 5<sup>th</sup> and Adelphi on July 17, 1794. the Episcopal Diocesan Convention of 17956 ratified an Act of Association and named Absalom Jones and Lay Reader instituting The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, numbering 427 communicants. In 1796 the church was incorporated under the laws of the State of Pennsylvania. In 1804 Absalom Jones was ordained priest by Bishop William White at Christ Church, Philadelphia, Pa. , making him the first priest of African descent in America.

Reverend Absalom Jones served with vision and dedication until his death on February 13, 1818. Under his leadership and that of other early members, an insurance company, school and library were established at the church; protests against slavery were mounted and humanitarian efforts made among the poor and the sick.

In 1864, St. Thomas Church was admitted into the Episcopal General Diocesan Convention, forty-six years after the death of Absalom Jones.

Subsequent locations of the church included 12<sup>th</sup> Street below Walnut, 57<sup>th</sup> and Pearl, uniting the Church with the Church of St. John the Beloved Disciple; 52<sup>nd</sup> and Parrish Streets, and currently at Overbrook and Lancaster Avenues, formerly the home of The St. Paul's Memorial Episcopal Church congregation, Overbrook.

Since 1975, membership and holding office is no longer limited to those of African decent.

The parish liturgy has evolved over the centuries from the stain Protestantism of Bishop White to a Eucharist-centered Anglo-Catholicism, enriched with an Afro-centric evangelical base. The Black religious experience is evoked while remaining true to the Book of Common Prayer.

The legacy of humanitarianism and community outreach passed down from the founders is reflected in the leadership role taken in present day struggles. Over the past fifty years, shaped by the events of the times and the inspiration of specific clergy and lay persons, St. Thomas has been in the forefront of the Civil Rights movement, the NAACP, Union of Black Episcopalians, Opportunity Industrialization Center (OIC) and the Episcopal Church Women (ECW). Paramount however, has been the movement to uphold the knowledge and valuing of the Black presence in the Episcopal Church.

Today, The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas is an open, Christ centered community of faith in which the Gospel is taught, lived and spread. On November 10, 1996, the church dedicated the Absalom Jones Chapel with a Festal Eucharist and enshrined his ashes in the altar. The Absalom Jones Memorial Stained Glass Window was installed, and dedicated on Sunday July 20, 1997.

## Our Rector

### **THE REV. FR. MARTINI SHAW**

On December 26, 2002, the Vestry called the Rev. Fr. Martini Shaw to be the seventeenth Rector of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Overbrook.

Fr. Shaw was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. He attended public school and Wayne State University in Detroit. In 1982, he earned undergraduate degrees in psychology and biology. Fr. Shaw earned a Master of Divinity Degree in 1988 from McCormick Theological Seminary located in Chicago, Il. That same year, he earned a Certificate in Anglican Studies from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary in Evanston, Il.

Fr. Shaw was ordained an Episcopal Priest in 1988 and became Curate at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in Flossmoor, Il. In 1990, he was called as Rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Chicago, Il. Fr. Shaw has served as Dean, South deanery of the Diocese of Chicago, and since 1990, as Secretary, Diocesan Convention.

In addition to pastoral care, much of Fr. Shaw's work at St. Thomas has focused on interfaith relationships and outreach. He worked with the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Anti-defamation League, as well as the Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran and Roman Catholic communities. Under Fr. Shaw's leadership, four churches formed a non-profit development initiative which transformed the Wabash YMCA into a modern facility, complete with housing for homeless people. Other outreach efforts include: day care, GED program, food pantry and a scholarship fund.

Fr. Shaw has been active in the community and was appointed by the Mayor to key boards. One, the Community Development Advisory Commission, advises policy makers as to the disbursement of millions of federal dollars awarded through the Community Development Block Grants Program. Fr. Shaw was also appointed to, and served as Chair of the Monitoring Commission for Desegregation Implementation for the Chicago Board of Education. Other organizations with which Fr. Shaw has participated are: Chase House Early Learning Centers, Chicago anti-Hunger Federation, Chicago Human Relations Commission, The Episcopal Diocese's Commission o Affordable Housing, the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence and the NAACP.

It is Fr. Shaw's belief that a Rector should have a vision; and for him, that vision embraces and promotes Stewardship, church growth, Christian formation, youth and young adult development and being a "Christ-centered and love-centered community of faith." Fr. Shaw describes his leadership style as "one that encourages and empowers lay commitment. It maintains prayer as the foundation of all decisions."

## THE VESTRY AND AUXILIARY VESTRY

**The Vestry** is the primary elected lay body of the congregation with fiduciary responsibility for the finances of the parish, maintenance of the buildings, advising the rector, and assisting in the development and implementation of church and community based programs.

Vestry persons are elected at the Annual Parish Meeting, serving in staggered terms over a three-year period. To qualify for election a person must be eighteen years of age, a member of St. Thomas for one year, a pledging and regular giving member of the parish, regular in attendance at worship, and active in the life of the congregation.

Officers of the Vestry are:

**Rector's Warden** – who serves a liaison between the congregation and the Vestry, and coordinator of the continuing work of the Vestry, and is chosen By the Rector; works closely with the Rector, and shares and articulates the Rector's vision.

**Accounting Warden** – who is responsible for the maintenance of the Budget, and parish finances.

**Treasurer** – who is responsible for the payment of bills and payrolls.

**Clerk/Registrar** – who takes and prepares the minutes of Vestry meetings, And maintains the parish rolls and records.

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### **The Auxiliary Vestry**

The Auxiliary Vestry is elected annually at the Parish Meeting. This body serves as a training resource for potential Vestry persons and to further enhance communications with guilds, organizations, and the congregation.

While the Auxiliary Vestry works along with the Vestry, it does not have the canonical authority of the Vestry. Only Vestry persons may vote on matters pertaining to the expenditure of funds, the budget, and contracts.

Qualifications for election are the same as for the Vestry.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership in the Kingdom of God is not dependent upon membership in St. Thomas, the Episcopal Church, or any other church or denomination. It is dependent upon your faith in Christ Jesus.

This is the acceptance of His power and authority, and a willingness to commit yourself to His service by calling upon and using both. The latter we believe is done through a local congregation in a “conventional way.” This is to “covenant” (commit) yourself with the Lord to obediently serve Him within a specific worshiping community, where in you may have and give support and continue to grow in Christ.

This process begins at St. Thomas by the individual answering the call to Christ, issued on any given Sunday. In so doing, realize that you are committing yourself to growth for sacrificial service which service which will heed both commissions given us by our Lord, In like 4:18-19 and Matthew 28:19. This we see as being further affirmed by you in the Sacrament of Baptism (if not already done, Confirmation or Reception by the Bishop.) New Member classes are held throughout the year.

Adults who wish to re-affirm their commitment to Christ are encouraged to do so, whether already confirmed or not, by attending the New Members classes. This is done whereby your former training may be renewed and you may take this opportunity to publicly declare acceptance of your call to serve Jesus Christ.

Membership, Baptism, Confirmation and Transfer forms may be requested from the Church Office. Offering envelopes will be issued.

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### **Eligibility to Vote or Run for Office at the Annual Parish Meeting**

The Parish holds an Annual Business Meeting once a year to present and discuss the State of the Church for the previous year, to propose new plans, and the election of persons to fill offices for the ensuing year (1):

The terms of office:

Vestry & Auxiliary Vestry – three (3) years

(can be re-elected for and second term)

Delegates & Alternates to the Diocesan Convention – (1) year

Delegates & Alternates to the Schuylkill Deanery – (1) year

Article I, Section I of the By-Laws of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas states:

*“The members of the Corporation qualified to vote at elections of members of the Vestry & auxiliary Vestry on all questions which may come before any meeting of the Corporation, shall be those persons otherwise qualified under Article 3 of the Constitution, constituting part of the charter, who shall:*

*a) be an adult member of the Church*

This excerpt was taken from the By-Laws of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas Regarding eligibility to vote during the election of officers at the Parish Meeting. From time to time the By-Laws committee reviews and amends the Parish By-Laws to reflect the changes necessary to meet the needs of the parish family.

Questions regarding voting eligibility may be address to the Co-Chairs of the Stewardship committee, The Accounting Warden or the Fiscal Office.

## PASTORAL MINISTRIES

### **The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**

Baptism is defined in the Book of Common Prayer as “full Initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body The Church.” This sacrament is offered within the context of the celebration of the Eucharist on prescribed days in accordance with the Church calendar. This is to allow the entire community to accept responsibility for nurturing of the newly baptized and to welcome them into the household of God.

The Guild of The Christ Child should be contacted to secure Baptism forms and to schedule an appointment for counseling and preparation before Baptism. In the case of infants all parents and Godparents must be baptized persons, and **actively practicing Christians**, within a Christian community, with a least one being an active Episcopalian.

\* \* \*

### **The Sacrament of Confirmation**

It is required of those to be confirmed that they have been Baptized, are sufficiently instructed in the Christian faith, are penitent for their sins, and are ready to affirm their confession of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This Sacrament is administered by a Bishop at a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Confirmation classes are held during the year in preparation of receiving the Sacrament.

### **The Sacrament of Matrimony**

We believe marriage to be a most important and sacred action in God’s creation requiring the utmost preparation of the couple, and the prayers and support of the community. It is an exciting time and an event well deserving the lifting up of God’s blessings, and sharing with the church’s membership. Arrangements should be made at least four months in advance of the event, allowing time for premarital counseling sessions.

\* \* \*

### **Hospital/Shut-In Visitation**

The Clergy and Parish Office should be immediately informed of persons who have been hospitalized. Persons going into the hospital for tests, surgery or treatment should offer this at God's altar, the Sunday prior to entering, at the end of communion.

Lay persons trained in "calling" are available to minister and visit shut-in parishioners. These persons offer a continuing relationship of sharing and caring contact with the ill and the full body of Christ at St. Thomas. The clergy and Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMS) will provide the shut-in with the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

**Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMS)** are chosen and trained and licensed by the Diocese to assist the clergy in taking communions out to shut-ins following the Sunday Eucharist. The LEM's may be accompanied by other members of the congregation who feel the spiritual call to participate in this ministry. Interested persons should speak to the Rector about the requirements for becoming a LEM.

**Healing Service** – A Healing Service is offered on fifth Sundays at the regular service of worship, which includes anointing with the oils of healing. A person may come to the altar rail following communion at any Eucharist for special prayer.

### **Funerals** (Requiem Mass or Burial Office)

The death of a parishioner should be reported immediately to the St. Thomas clergy, who will meet and make all the necessary arrangements for the church. Recognizing that this is a Rite of Christian Passage that all of us will undergo, advanced preparation is recommended, i.e. the selection of service, music, lessons and/or other readings, in addition to the preparation of wills and arrangements with a funeral director. Assistance with this advance preparation can be obtained from the clergy.

### **No active member of the congregation will be denied a funeral from the church.**

**A Columbarium** is available for "burial in the church". Niches are available for purchase by members of the congregation who are desirous of cremation. Inquiries should be directed to the Church Office for referral.

## **II. Christian Formation Forums**

See Christian Formation Manual Insert for information on:

- Children and Youth
  - : Church School (ages 4-10)
  - : Youth/Teen Program (ages 11-18)
- Young Adult Bible Study (ages 20-45)
- Adult Bible Studies
  - : New Members' Class
  - : Rector's Forum
  - : Lunch Bunch
  - : Tuesday (Truth and Life) Bible Study
  - : Men's Ministries

## **III. SHARING AND CARING MINISTRIES**

### **The St. Thomas Shepherds for Christ**

#### **Purpose:**

**To assist in the incorporation and nurturing of new and re-affirming members into the life of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas congregation.**

A Shepherd cares for the family of God with special emphasis on Senior members and those who are shut-in. If missing for three weeks from mass, a call is made to inquire about the state of the parishioner's welfare. Shepherds meet and greet visitors in a fellowship setting, and follow-up by phone to encourage their interest in being a part of the church family.

A general training meeting for shepherds is scheduled twice a year, at 2 p.m and 7 p.m. on the same day to accommodate both working and retired members.

**Who may join?** Anyone who has been a member of St. Thomas for at least one year, and interested in helping others become active members of the congregation.

### **The Caring Ministry**

**Purpose:** to serve as a support group to members in our parish who are experiencing emotional challenges (bereavement, depression, etc.)

When an individual in our parish experiences a family death, this group reaches out to that person offering support, prayers, companionship, etc. if necessary, this group will recommend to the Rector further professional assistance for the person.

Meetings are held as scheduled by the coordinator.

**Who may join?** Anyone who feels that he/she has the gifts to be a support to others during their time of need (i.e., counselors, social workers, etc.)

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### **The Council of Chancellors:**

**Purpose:** to provide legal assistance to members of the congregation, and to assist the vestry with legal advice in matters pertaining to the parish.

This group is consulted before any legal transaction is executed by the parish. Recommendations are made in hopes of preventing any negative, legal ramifications. The chancellors will also provide legal education and assistance to the parish family.

Meetings are held as necessary.

**Who may join?** Any attorney, judge or other legal person of the parish. Please contact the Church office.

## **The Health Ministry**

**Purpose:** to educate and inform our parishioners about health care issues.

This group educates and informs by presenting forums, discussions, health fairs, Blood drives, and other information on critical health issues.

Meetings are held monthly. Contact the church office for referral.

**Who may join?** Membership is open to all members of the congregation.

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## **Tree of Life ( Criminal Justice Ministry)**

*“I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.”* And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the King will answer them, *“truly I tell you as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”* Matthew 25:36, 39, 40 (RSV)

**Purpose:** to nurture God’s gift or redemption through Jesus Christ. This gift frees us from inactivity by reaching out to those in prison. We are challenged to build a solid bridge between those within and those outside the prison walls.

The Tree of life Ministry takes as its motto the words of our founding Rector, The Rev. Absalom Jones: “One Faith, One People, One Struggle.” On this foundation, Tree of Life commits itself to reestablishing dignity and God-given powers to those incarcerated through pen pals, prayer group, prison visitation, and other related services to inmates and their families.

Meetings are held on the First Sunday of the Month, after service.

**Who may join?** Any Christian who is willing to offer their talent and time to serve those directly or indirectly affected by incarceration.

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## **STEWARDSHIP**

**The Stewardship Committee**

The Stewardship Committee provides learning opportunities for parishioners to grow in expressing their thankfulness to God for His many blessings. The committee develops ideas to encourage and inspire others to share their Time, Talents and Treasure. The annual pledging activity is organized by this committee.

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### **Every Member Canvass Committee (EMC)**

The Every Member Canvass is responsible for the implementation of the Annual Giving Campaign of the parish held in the fall of the year. The EMC ask parishioners to make a pledge of giving for the upcoming year toward the work of Christ through St. Thomas.

The EMC monitors the giving of parishioners to try to prevent a short-fall, and the lapsing of members, and to identify problem areas. Persons willing to be trained and serve as a canvasser should contact the Stewardship Chairpersons.

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### **The Reclamation Ministry**

**Purpose: to identify and reach out to the parishioners who have been absent from worship at least one year.**

This group identifies persons in the parish who have not attended church in at least one year. They gather information from other groups in the church (i.e. shepherds, guilds/organizations). Once these persons are identified, an effort is made to contact the person and encourage them to return to church. Names of individuals and a report on the contact are forwarded to the Rector.

Meetings are held as necessary. Contact the church office for referral.

**Who may join?** Any individual who has the interest and feels that he/she has the warm personality needed for the ministry of calling.

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### **The Ministry of Communications**

**Purpose: to spread the Gospel of Christ.**

This ministry provides communications within the parish (newsletter) and to the broader community (city, state, and national). Press releases and other forms of communications are generated in hopes of sharing the Good News about St. Thomas, hoping to lead others to Christ.

Meetings are held as necessary. Contact the church office for referral.

**Who may join?** Any person who feels that he/she has talents that will assist in communicating our message and vision to others.

## **EVANGELISM**

Evangelism in its simplest form is “knowing Jesus in one’s personal life, and making Him known to others,” though a ministry of Sharing and Caring.

At St. Thomas, we are seeking to do this in the following ways:

- 1) Ministry to visitors
- 2) Incorporation of new members
- 3) Follow-up and co-ordination with Stewardship
- 4) Identification and Utilization of Gifts and Ministries
- 5) Proclamation and Public Relations
- 6) Reclamation of lapsed members.
- 7)

Persons are always welcome to participate in any portion of this ministry.

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## **MEMORIALS AND THANKSGIVINGS**

Opportunities to remember our loved ones or to thank God for that special blessing is presented many ways:

**Flowers:**

Flowers may be given on any Sunday except those which fall during the Penitential seasons (Lent and Advent) citing in memory or thanksgiving for both the altars and columbarium. Names, dates and events should be directed through the Church Office. Envelopes may be found in the rear of the church.

Poinsettias and Lilies are given for the beautification of the church and altars. Special arrangements are donated for the Absalom Jones Altar, High Altar and the Columbarium. Price information is listed in the Lenten or Christmas Spearhead and Sunday Bulletin. Envelopes may also be found in the rear of the church during the specific seasons.

**Candles:**

Memorial Candles are available every Sunday regardless of the season. A donation of \$2.00 per name is requested to help the Altar Guild defray the cost of the candles. Envelopes may be found in the rear of the church or call the Church Office.

The Paschal Candle – During the Lenten Season donations are made available towards the purchase of the Paschal Candle. The amount of the donation is always published in the Spearhead and Sunday bulletin. Envelopes are made available for names, and should be returned to the Church Office with your remittance.

All Saints Day – Names of departed loved ones are also listed for remembrance during our All Saints Celebrated service in November. Envelopes are made available for names and should be returned to the Church Office with your remittance.

**Vestments – Vessels – Altar Hangings:**

The Memorial Fund – Monies may be placed in the Memorial Fund which assists with the purchase of vestments, vessels and church appointments (furniture, etc.) as needed. A special gift may be purchased after consultation with the Rector.

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**Pew Memorials** – Pew plaques are dedicated on All Saints Day Celebrated in November. The cost currently is \$500 per plaque. Application forms are made available prior to November in order that the plaque may be inscribed with the correct information.

### **Investments – Endowments – Planned Program Giving:**

Members are encouraged to plan in advance for that day when they move from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant. Plans should include selection of:

- Type of burial (cremation, burial)
- Type of service (Memorial, Rite One, Rite Two)
- Selection of Music, and lessons
- Selection of a funeral director

Prepayment for burial is encouraged as a financial saving.

In addition one should have a will, which specifies how you wish your assets distributed, and to whom. The church encourages you to remember them through planned program giving which may include wills, insurance policies, investments (stocks and bonds) etc.

### **Scholarship**

Funds may likewise be designated for:

**The Endowment Fund** – utilized as a long-term investment for the care and maintenance of the buildings and grounds.

**The Jesse F. Anderson, Sr. Scholarship Fund** – Gives scholarship assistance to graduating high school seniors, going on to college, from area high schools.

**The St. Thomas Book Award** – given to St. Thomas college students to assist with the purchase of books during the school year.

## **THE ST. THOMAS KITCHEN**

### **Kitchen Supervisor:**

The kitchen supervisor's has the responsibility of overseeing order and cleanliness in the St. Thomas Kitchen. Together with our sexton, they will maintain that order by a complete inspection following events given by guilds and/or organizations which include the use of the church kitchen. Those wishing to use the kitchen should contact the Church Office to schedule their event.

### **Responsibilities of Organizations:**

1. Schedule your event with the Church Office
2. The Kitchen should be left clean at all times.
  - a. Floor – free from grease, swept clean.
  - b. Cabinets – free from soil spots.
  - c. Utensils – pots, pans, dishes, coffee urns and all cutlery and utensils should be returned to their proper shelves or drawers in clean fashion.
  - d. Stove/Oven – free from any residue after use.
  - e. Sink(s) – clean and empty.
  - f. Refrigerator – free of all leftovers and spills. Outside wiped clean.
  - g. Counter tops – wiped clean.
  - h. Trash cans – place all trash in cans. Additional bags will be provided.
  - i. Cleaning Supplies – dish detergent will be supplied, along with mop and bucket.
  - j. Persons using the kitchen are held responsible for leaving it clean.
3. The Sexton will provide general maintenance on the kitchen weekly. He will also provide cleaning supplies.
4. The kitchen will be checked every Monday by the Kitchen supervisor and the sexton. Groups found guilty of leaving the kitchen in disarray will be fined by the Vestry.

xxii.

## **The Administrative Staff**

### **The Parish Office**

The Parish Administrator/Administrative Assistant to the Rector works closely with the Rector in the daily routine of the parish. All meetings and activities are scheduled through the Church Office, and placed on the parish Calendar of Events in order to eliminate conflicts.

Groups/Individuals who wish to schedule an activity should:

- 1) Contact the church office to make preliminary arrangements.
- 2) Provide a copy of a contract (if such has been entered into for the event) for the church files.
- 3) Use only the space and facilities asked for and approved.
- 4) No alcoholic beverages should be used.
- 5) Decorative materials should not be hung from the Great Hall walls.
- 6) Nails, tacks, masking tape or pins are prohibited from use.
- 7) The Church Sexton or Security should be present during the affair.

### **The Fiscal Office**

The Fiscal Secretary maintains the financial records of the parishioners; the parish, and maintains membership information. Questions regarding quarterly statements should be directed to the Fiscal Secretary. The Fiscal office is open Monday – Thursday.

### **The Church Sexton**

The Church Sexton cares for the parish buildings and grounds. He works closely with the Clergy, Property Chair and Kitchen supervisor in the maintenance of the property, and with all of the groups and organizations of the parish. The Sexton is on site Monday – Thursday, and Saturday.

### **Security**

Security is available for all events. Security covers all evening meetings at 7 p.m. and special events on Saturday and Sunday. If you need access to church facilities before the 7 p.m. meeting time, please contact the church office.

### **The Parish Musicians**

St. Thomas is blessed to have (3) talented musicians as directors of the Chancel, Gospel, Men's Chorus and Youth Choirs, and the Jazz Ensemble. To schedule an event with either director, please contact the church office.

## **GUILDS & ORGANIZATIONS**

1.

### **The Acolyte Guild**

**Purpose:**

**To serve at Christ's altar and to assist the priest in all forms of worship services; to lead the congregation in prayers.**

The Acolyte Guild trains, inspires, and encourages young men and women ages 8 and up, to be faithful and dedicated Christians through service and fellowship. The overall thrust of this program is to assist the priest in serving the congregation during services.

The Acolytes report directly to the Rector. Over the years our acolytes have been invited to serve at ordinations, weddings and funerals. They have traveled to Washington, D.C., New York and New Orleans.

Regular rehearsals are held on Friday evenings (fall-spring) from 6:30-8 p.m.

**Who may join?** Any individual, male or female, youth or adult ages 8 years and older.

\*\*\*\*

### **The Acolyte Sponsors Guild**

**Purpose:**

**The Acolyte Sponsors' purpose is to support the Acolyte Guild both financially and spiritually.**

The Acolyte Sponsors provide the necessary vestments needed for service and their overall maintenance. The Sponsors offer encouragement to the Acolytes to serve God, and to assist the priest during worship.

The Guild meets on the first Friday of the month (fall-spring) at 6:30 p.m.

**Who may join?** Any parent of an Acolyte or any interested person.

2.

### **The Altar Guild**

**Purpose:**

**The Altar Guild maintains and prepares the church for the celebration of the Holy Sacraments, creating an environment for the spiritual development of the congregation.**

The offering of the Holy Sacraments in worship is done in dramatic fashion. The success of any drama requires the presentation, care and maintenance of sets (altar hangings, vessels) and costumes (vestments). In the church this is performed by a special group of women and men known as the Altar Guild.

**Who may join?** Any male or female who enjoys using a little spiritual elbow grease.

\*\*\*\*

### **The Guild of The Christ Child**

**Purpose:**

**The purpose of the guild is to concern itself with the parents of candidates for baptism, before and after the baptisms. Baptisms occur on the five designated times in the Christian calendar, as cited in the Book of Common Prayer.**

The Guild of the Christ child is a feeder group to the Church school. It coordinates the paperwork pertaining to Baptism. After the Baptisms, the Guild maintains contact with the child, so that at the appropriate age the child becomes a member of the Sunday School.

Meetings are held as necessary.

**Who may join?** Anyone, male or female, interested in preparing candidates for Holy Baptism.

3.

### **The Episcopal Church Women (ECW)**

**Purpose:**

**To assist the women of St. Thomas in carrying on Christ's work in the world, and to take their place in the life and worship of the church.**

The ECW provide a framework for joint ventures with sister organizations, and they work with the Overseas Development Office, through the executive council and the communicators network of the Episcopal Church. The objectives are to contribute funds to the Diocesan ECW, The General Fund of St. Thomas Church, the Diocesan Committee on World Relief, World Services and twice yearly to the United Thank Offering. The ECW strives to unite the female members of the congregation in a program of worship, study, service and fellowship

Meetings are held on the First and Third Sunday of the month after service.

**Who may join?** All women of St. Thomas are invited to attend the meetings and pay dues.

\*\*\*\*

### **The St. Thomas Gardening Committee**

**Purpose:**

**The Garden Committee works towards the beautification of the Church grounds.**

The St. Thomas Gardeners plan, plant and maintain the flower and ornamental shrub gardens on the church grounds. Once a year, in May, they hold a Flower Day, collecting donations to buy plants, soil, and mulch for the church grounds and garden.

Meetings are held as necessary.

**Who may join?** Anyone with/or without gardening experience, but with a love of the outdoors, and a desire to administer loving care to the flora and fauna of the church grounds.

4.

### **The Historical Society**

**Purpose:**

**The Historical Society of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas seeks to preserve, research, study and communicate the history of our parish.**

Organized in 1982, the Society invites everyone in the parish to join us in reclaiming our past and chronicling the events of the present for future generations.

Meetings are held on the Second Saturday of the month at 10 a.m.

**Who may join?** Anyone interested in sharing the excitement of research study in the history of our parish.

\*\*\*\*

### **The Daughters of the King**

**Purpose:**

**To spread Christ's kingdom and to strengthen the spiritual life of the parish by reaffirmation of the promises made at confirmation.**

The Order is for women who are communicants of the Episcopal Church. Members undertake the Rule of Life, incorporating the Rule of Prayer and the Rule of Service.

The group proposes to render at all times aide to the Rector as deemed necessary for the spiritual up-building of the parish. They are presently responsible for quarterly transportation of shut-ins to Sunday worship.

Meetings are held on the Second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m.

**Who may join?** Any woman interested in pledging herself to a life-long program of prayer, service, and evangelism.

5.

### **The St. Thomas Lectors**

**Purpose:**

**To read the lessons, the psalm and the intercession for the day's worship service.**

Lector's may, on occasion and at the discretion of the Rector, read from non-biblical Christian literature, and narratives, and may also be asked to serve at other services, such as funerals.

Meetings are held as necessary.

**Who may join?** Anyone interested in sharing in liturgical and/or dramatic readings at worship.

\*\*\*\*

### **The Children's Library Committee**

**Purpose:**

**To provide a lending library that provides books for reading enjoyment, enrichment, and cultural awareness in a Christ centered environment for children of all ages.**

Since opening in November 1996, the library has grown from 1200 to 2200 fiction, non-fiction and reference books. This is thanks to the donations received by many caring members of the congregation and community. Library membership has increased from 60 to 70+ members. The library committee has also hosted 'book talks' with well known children's authors or artists.

Meetings are held as necessary.

**Who may join?** Anyone with a love of children and books.

6.

### **The Men's Fellowship**

**Purpose:**

**A Christ-centered brotherhood committed to spreading the Word to the men and boys in our communities, through spiritual and secular ministries, working with the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit.**

The primary goal is to become more involved with our brothers in Christ outside of our immediate church family, while continuing to be involved in parish activities and programs.

The Men's Fellowship meets once a month as called.

**Who may join?** The Men's Fellowship invites all men of St. Thomas church to take part in the challenging activities of lifting up mankind.

\*\*\*

### **The St. Thomas Prayer Group**

**Purpose: to spiritually seek through prayer god's will for the group, church community, family and the world.**

Prayer members seek to be open vessels allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and direct prayers. Confidentially, fellowship and love are focal points in maintaining our membership. Prayer requests and thanksgiving cards are collected from prayer baskets immediately following the worship service. Daily and telephone prayers are encouraged. Each Sunday a circle is formed, cards are read and prayers are offered up.

**Who may join?** Anyone, who desires to use his/her time and talent in prayer.

7.

## **THE MUSIC MINISTRY AT ST. THOMAS CHURCH**

### **The St. Thomas Chancel Choir**

**Purpose:**

**To enhance the worship service by assisting the congregation and clergy in celebrating and spreading the Word of God through music.**

Throughout the life of the African Episcopal Church, the Chancel choir, then known as the Senior Choir has been an integral part of our worship service. For 58 years the choir was led by one choir master, James T. Townsend. The present choir master – Dr. Jay Fluellen – is a very talented man who has introduced many new and inspiring forms of music to both the choir and congregation. The Chancel choir sings on the First and Third Sunday of the month, and as part of the Mass Choir on special occasions.

Rehearsals are held on Wednesday evenings at 6 p.m.

**Who may join?** Anyone interested in praising our Lord in song.

\*\*\*\*

**The St. Thomas Gospel Choir**

**Purpose:**

**The Gospel Choir is a one-body, one-spirit, Christ-centered organization that uses its God-given talents of music as a ministry to spread the Gospel through song.**

The St. Thomas Gospel Choir was formed in 1991 and sings on the Second and Fourth Sunday of the month and as part of the Mass Choir for special occasions as requested by the Rector. The Gospel Choir travels all over the eastern seaboard, and released their first CD in November, 2002. The present director – Mr. Waltier Blocker – is a very talented man who has introduced many new and inspiring forms of music to both the choir and congregation.

Rehearsals are held on Wednesday evenings, 7:30 p.m.

**Who may join?** Anyone who enjoys the fellowship and discipline of belonging to a choir and wishes to raise their voices in song to praise the Lord.

8.

**The St. Thomas Male Chorus**

**Purpose:**

**To encourage the men of the parish to join their brothers in lifting their voices to the Lord.**

The Male Chorus was formed and commissioned in 2003. The men will sing on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, and on special occasions as a part of the Mass Choir at the Rector's request.

Rehearsals are held as necessary, and called by the Director, Jay Fluellen.

**Who may join?** Men who enjoy the fellowship of singing together for the Glory of the Lord.

\*\*\*

### **The St. Thomas Youth Choir**

**Purpose:**

**To offer the youth of the parish an opportunity to use their voices in praise in the manner of our adult members.**

The Youth Choir was formed and commissioned in 2003. The choir will sing on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, and on special occasions as a part of the Mass Choir as requested by the Rector.

Rehearsals are held on the Second and Fourth Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.

**Who may join?** Any young person ages 6 –18 who would like to fellowship with others their age and sing praises to the Lord.

9.

### **The St. Thomas Jazz Ensemble**

**Purpose:**

**To enhance the service of worship by using their talents in the  
Mastery of musical instruments.**

The St. Thomas Jazz Ensemble is comprised of members and friends of St. Thomas who use their gift of music to enhance services of worship during the calendar year. The present director – Mr. Joseph Stevenson – a talented teacher of music, writer, producer and director continues to inspire others to come forth and use their gifts to the glory of God. The Jazz Ensemble provides service music on the fifth Sunday of the month and on special occasions as requested by the Rector.

Rehearsals are called as necessary by the director.

**Who may join?** Anyone, male or female, youth or adult who can play an instrument of any kind, and enjoys being a part of the band experience.

\*\*\*\*

**The Music Committee**

**Purpose:**

**To assist in raising funds to be used to enhance the music of the church service, and to provide funding to minority students who are enrolled in a college or university pursuing study and training in voice or piano through the James T. Townsend Scholarship Fund.**

The James T. Townsend Scholarship Fund was established in 1974. In 1994 the Music Committee was blessed with the donation of a second scholarship award for piano, given in memory of Sidney deKnight by his wife and daughter.

The Music Committee also presents Spring and Fall concerts of talented individuals or college choirs, and the proceeds are used to provide second place scholarships as well.

The Music Committee meets on the Second Sunday of the month after service.

**Who may join?** Anyone interested in the planning and execution of interesting and exciting events.

10.

**The St. Thomas Actor's Guild (S.T.A.G.)**

**Purpose:**

**To create a Christian and social climate that will respond to the needs of the parish and the community through the arts; to sustain a ministry through arts and culture.**

S.T.A.G. is a conglomerate of persons of all ages coming from within the church family and the community, who are interested in all aspects of the artistry of theatre, i.e., acting, singing, set design, props, lighting, etc.

Meetings are held on Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m.

**Who may join?** Anyone of any age interested in the fun and challenge of Theatre. Experience helpful but not necessary.

\*\*\*\*

**The Jesse F. Anderson, Sr. Scholarship Committee**

**Purpose:**

**To provide financial support to deserving high school students who are going on to college for further education.**

The late Rev. Jesse F. Anderson, Sr. felt that higher education was Relevant to Black youth of Philadelphia. In 1972, he recommended to the Vestry of St. Thomas, that the church present a one year renewable scholarship to a graduating student of our nearest high schools. One was established at Overbrook High, and one at West Philadelphia High, as an outreach program for the church. Today, scholarships are presented to four High schools; Overbrook, West Philadelphia, University City and Lamberton. The principals or the scholarship committee selects these motivated students on the basis of need, not high grades.

The committee has also established the St. Thomas Book Award which is given to St. Thomas high school seniors who attend church regularly, and will be entering college, to help with the burden of buying text books.

Meetings are held as necessary and called by the Coordinator.

**Who may join?** Anyone interested in helping our youth in their quest for higher education.

11.

**The St. Thomas Recording/Photographic Ministry**

**Purpose:**

**To record and preserve sermons, concerts and pertinent events in the life of the church.**

The St. Thomas recording ministry's function is to record, VHS, DCD, CD or cassette weekly sermons or special events, such as choir concerts, musical events, special services, i.e., homecoming, Christmas, the Bishop's visitation, etc. Recordings are then made available for purchase to the general congregation. Our photographer will take still pictures of church events.

Meetings are held with the Rector as called.

**Who may join?** Anyone interested in recording the life of the church, and becoming a member of the tape ministry.

\*\*\*\*

**The Senior Partners in Christ, Inc.**

**Purpose:**

**To meet the interests, concerns and needs of the senior members of St. Thomas church and the community.**

The Senior Partners seek to bring information concerning health and welfare matters, social and cultural concerns, and endeavor to find affordable entertainment for the members of the group.

Meetings are held each Monday at 10 a.m.

**Who may join?** Any male or female ages 55+ interested in sharing their time and talent with other like individuals.

## **The Sisterhood Guild**

**Purpose:**

**To participate in and develop Christian leadership through service to others within the Church and community.**

The Sisterhood is a group dedicated to the raising funds for donation to the St. Thomas general fund. They also contribute to the J.F. A. Sr., Scholarship fund.

The Sisterhood meets on the fourth Sunday of the month.

**Who may join?** Any female member of St. Thomas Church.

\*\*\*\*

## **The St. Thomas Community Thrift Shop**

**Purpose:**

**To provide strong, financial support to the parish and diocesan endeavors, and to contribute to community outreach activities.**

The St. Thomas Thrift Shop is a focal point for collection and distribution of rejuvenated goods, and fosters fellowship and a sense of community to those who frequent the shop, and well as to those who donate their time and talent to it's work force.

The Thrift Shop is open on selected days during the week and on Saturdays.

Meetings are held as called by the director.

**Who may join?** Any male or female who has time available to help with the day to day chores of operating the shop.

13.

## **The St. Thomas Transportation Ministry**

**Purpose:**

**To assist the elderly and infirm with transportation to morning service and other activities.**

The St. Thomas Transportation Ministry is a small group of dedicated individuals who volunteer their services on Sunday mornings to transport our elderly back and forth to church services, and to provide transportation when needed by other guilds/organizations/groups in the church if possible. Van service is provided on a rotation schedule for Sunday services.

Meetings are called when necessary.

**Who may join?** Any male or female with a valid drivers license, a good driving record, and a giving spirit. There is always the need for additional drivers.

\*\*\*\*

### **The William S. Burke, Sr. Memorial Ushers**

**Purpose:**

**To assist with seating, to greet visitors to St. Thomas and make them feel welcome at worship, and to assist the Rector by directing traffic during communion, and to perform other tasks as needed.**

The William S. Burke, Sr. Memorial Ushers are so named after former Accounting Warden, William S. Burke, Sr. who, along with Fr. Anderson, Jr. felt the need to relieve the Vestry from the responsibility of directing communion traffic. Ushers participate in all regular and special services.

Several also serve at funerals. Our ushers have also been asked to take part in special services at other churches and the Cathedral.

Meetings are held as called by the co-directors.

**Who may join?** Anyone, male or female in serving St. Thomas in this capacity.

**YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS**

15.

**Cub Scout Pack #133**

**Purpose:**

**To promote discipline, teamwork, and service to others among  
Its youth members.**

A structured program, parental support and committed adult volunteers help the pack to achieve its objective. The Cub Scout motto is "Do A Good Turn Daily." Pack #133 incorporates these two principles into its program, with the expectation that the Cub Scouts live and practice these ideals every day.

The Pack meets on Saturday afternoons at 2:30 p.m.

**Who may join?** Any young lad, and any parent or guardian interested in helping the pack achieve their goal.

\*\*\*\*

**The St. Thomas Dance Ensemble**

**Purpose: To demonstrate the love of Christ by meeting the spiritual, educational and social needs of the youth in the church and community.**

The Dance Ensemble is an outreach program that strives to continue participation in ongoing activities that can enhance the growth, exposure, and camaraderie among our youth.

The Dance Ensemble has participated in liturgical presentations for the Absalom Jones Celebration, and for the Children's Ministries Center during the 1997 General Convention.

The Dance Ensemble meets on Saturday mornings at 11 a.m. – Sept. thru June.

**Who may join?** All youth, ages 5 thru 18, male or female interested in furthering their experience in the art of dance.

16.

**F.E.N.C.E.**  
**(Families of Episcopalians Nurturing within the  
College Environment)**

**Purpose:**

**To keep our college students involved in the life of the Episcopal Church within the communities where they are attending college.**

The participation of families from the student's college town Episcopal parishes is an integral part of FENCE. Each student is matched with a family. The families serve as surrogates for our college students – providing them with access to Sunday services, and any other church-sponsored programs of interest to the students. It is hoped that a relationship between the student and his/her surrogate family can be nurtured to the extent that the student becomes involved in other activities with the family (home cooked meals, down-time spent at the family's house, family outings, etc.)

Meetings are held as called by the coordinator.

**Who may join?** Anyone interested in helping students become accustomed to being away from home and into college life.

\*\*\*\*

**The Girls' Friendly Society (GFS)**

**Purpose:**

**To give the members a Christian foundation they can use in their day to day activities. The intention is to teach the members, to love themselves, and others, as they embrace the GFS motto "Bear Ye One Another's Burdens."**

The Girls' Friendly Society is a Christian organization which provides young girls ages 5 through 21 with a 'sisterly' environment. The organization is based on a four-point program: Worship, Study, Service and Recreation.

Girls' Friendly meetings are held on Saturday mornings at 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**Who may join?** Any girl, regardless of religious affiliation is welcome. Adults are also encouraged to join as leaders.

17.

**The Teenage Youth Program**

**Name: Journey to Adulthood (J2A) Youth Program**

Day and Time: Sundays; 100 – 3:00 p.m.  
Facilitator: The Rev. Fr. Chemengich and Adult Leaders

**Purpose: to equip the youth with the skills and the spiritual maturity needed to face courageously and responsibly the transitional years of adolescence.**

The Youth Program of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas offers a weekly spiritual formation opportunity for all teenagers, ages 11 through High School. The group meets on Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. In the first hour they have lunch and socialize, and the second hour is dedicated to Christian formation instructions that occasionally involve watching and discussing movies. The curriculum used is “*The Journey To Adulthood*” (by Leader Resources) and is based on two concepts: manhood and womanhood are gifts from God (for ages 11-13), and adulthood must be earned (for ages 14-18). The entire curriculum offers the teens the opportunity to explore and discuss four areas of their lives: self, spirituality, sexuality, and society, within a caring and loving environment. The program culminates in the senior high year with the Afro-centric Rites of Passage instructions and ceremony for graduating students, to prepare and mark their transition from youth into young adulthood.

In addition to the weekly Christian formation forums, the youth also get the opportunity to offer community service (such as, AIDS Walk), make educational and entertainment trips/outings, and play games (basketball, darts, table tennis, etc.).

**Who may join?** All teenage youth, ages 11-18, are welcome to join in the fun and reward of meeting, learning, and growing together through the adventures journey to adulthood.

Day and Time: As scheduled.

Facilitator: The Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Chemengich

**Objective: to provide forums in which young adults can socialize, have fun, and explore their spirituality in the light of their life's opportunities and challenges, and God's response in Scripture.**

The St. Thomas Young Adult Ministry provides a wide range of activities to meet the social and spiritual needs of our young adults. They include: two short annual Bible Study series, one in the Spring and the other in the Fall; sponsor three annual lectures; serving our local community by cooking meals (three times a year) for the St. Barnabas Mission in West Philly; educational and entertainment outings/trips; and decorating the church for our annual Christmas service (held on Christmas Eve.)

Our college students have not been left out. In order to keep them involved in the life of the church and continue to grow in their faith journey, the F.E.N.C.E. (acronym for Families of Episcopalians Nurturing within the College Environment) ministry links them with surrogate families from Episcopal parishes in their college communities across the country.

**Who may join?** All young adults, ages 20-45, interested in fellowship, networking, outreach and growing together in our Christian faith journey.

18.

**Young Adult Ministry**

**Purpose:**





