



Fourth Sunday of Advent

May the visitation of
your Holy Spirit, O God,
make us ready
for the coming of
Jesus, our Hope,
our Peace, our Joy.

*Christ...
Brings Love
and Eternal Life*

THE AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS • FIRST BLACK EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE USA
THE VERY REVEREND CANON MARTINI SHAW, 17TH RECTOR
THE REVEREND FR. DAREN E. EVANS, ASSOCIATE TO THE RECTOR
6361 LANCASTER AVENUE (ABSALOM JONES WAY) • PHILADELPHIA, PA 19151 • (215) 473-3065
WWW.AECST.ORG • WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/AECST1792

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 21, 2025

The Historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas

6361 Lancaster Avenue (Absalom Jones Way)
Philadelphia, PA, 19151
(215) 473-3065

www.aecst.org

The Very Reverend Canon Martini Shaw

The 17th Rector

The Reverend Fr. Daren E. Evans

Associate to the Rector

The Reverend Fr. Gerald Collins

Associate Priest



Scan the QR code or text "AECST" to 73256 to support our church and our ministries.

Please click on the link provided for the
[Order of Service.](#)

“WELCOME TO THE MOTHER CHURCH”

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Give thanks unto Him and bless His name.”

Psalm 100:4

Grace and Peace to you from God on this
**Fourth Sunday of Advent,
Church School Christmas Presentation.**

As we prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ during this holy season, may your hearts be filled with
Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

On behalf of the Clergy, Wardens, Vestry, and People of God, welcome to the historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. Founded in 1792 as the first Black Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., it is proudly a part of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The first rector of this historic parish, The Reverend Fr. Absalom Jones, was also the first Black Episcopal priest in the nation.

Our parish boldly proclaims the reconciling Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are an active, mission-minded, and growing church family. Whomever you are and wherever you may find yourself on your spiritual journey of faith, you are always welcomed at St. Thomas Church, where we are joyfully and enthusiastically committed to Jesus' message of love, hope, prayer and faith. Today, as you worship in this place, may you experience and feel the presence of the Lord, and may you leave feeling renewed, refreshed, and revived. Again, welcome!

The Very Reverend Canon Martini Shaw,
17th Rector and Dean of the Schuylkill Deanery



THE HISTORY OF THE ADVENT WREATH AND CANDLES

The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” which is a translation of the Greek word *Parousia*. Most know Advent today as a time of anticipation and expectation of the birth of Christ.

Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. The Advent season not only symbolizes the waiting for Christ’s birth but also for his final return.

The Advent wreath was created out of evergreens, symbolizing everlasting life in the midst of winter and death as the evergreen is continuously green. The circle reminds us of God’s unending love and the eternal life He makes possible.

The Advent wreath is a symbol of the season, with a candle lit each of the four Sundays leading up to, and on Christmas Day. The light of the flickering candle flames reminds us who Jesus is: “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:4-5).

Additional decorations, like holly and berries, are sometimes added. Their red color points ahead to Jesus’ sacrifice and death on the cross, shedding his blood for our sins.

The most common Advent candle tradition, however, involves four candles around the wreath. A new candle is lit on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. Each candle represents something different, although traditions vary. Often, the first, second, and fourth candles are purple; the third candle is rose-colored. A fifth white candle is placed in the middle of the wreath and is lit on Christmas Day to celebrate Jesus' birth.

The first candle symbolizes hope and is called the "Prophet's Candle." The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah's arrival. The purple color symbolizes royalty, repentance, and fasting.

The second candle represents faith and is called "Bethlehem's Candle." Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is also the birthplace of King David. The second candle is also purple to symbolize preparation for the coming king.

The third candle symbolizes joy and is called the "Shepherd's Candle." To the shepherd's great joy, the angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them, too. In liturgy, the color rose signifies joy. This candle is colored pink to represent joyfulness and rejoicing.

The fourth candle represents peace and is called the "Angel's Candle." The angels announced that Jesus came to bring peace--He came to bring people close to God and to each other again. This color is also purple to represent the culmination of love through the Messiah.

**Two Video Invitations to share with your family,
friends and loved ones.**



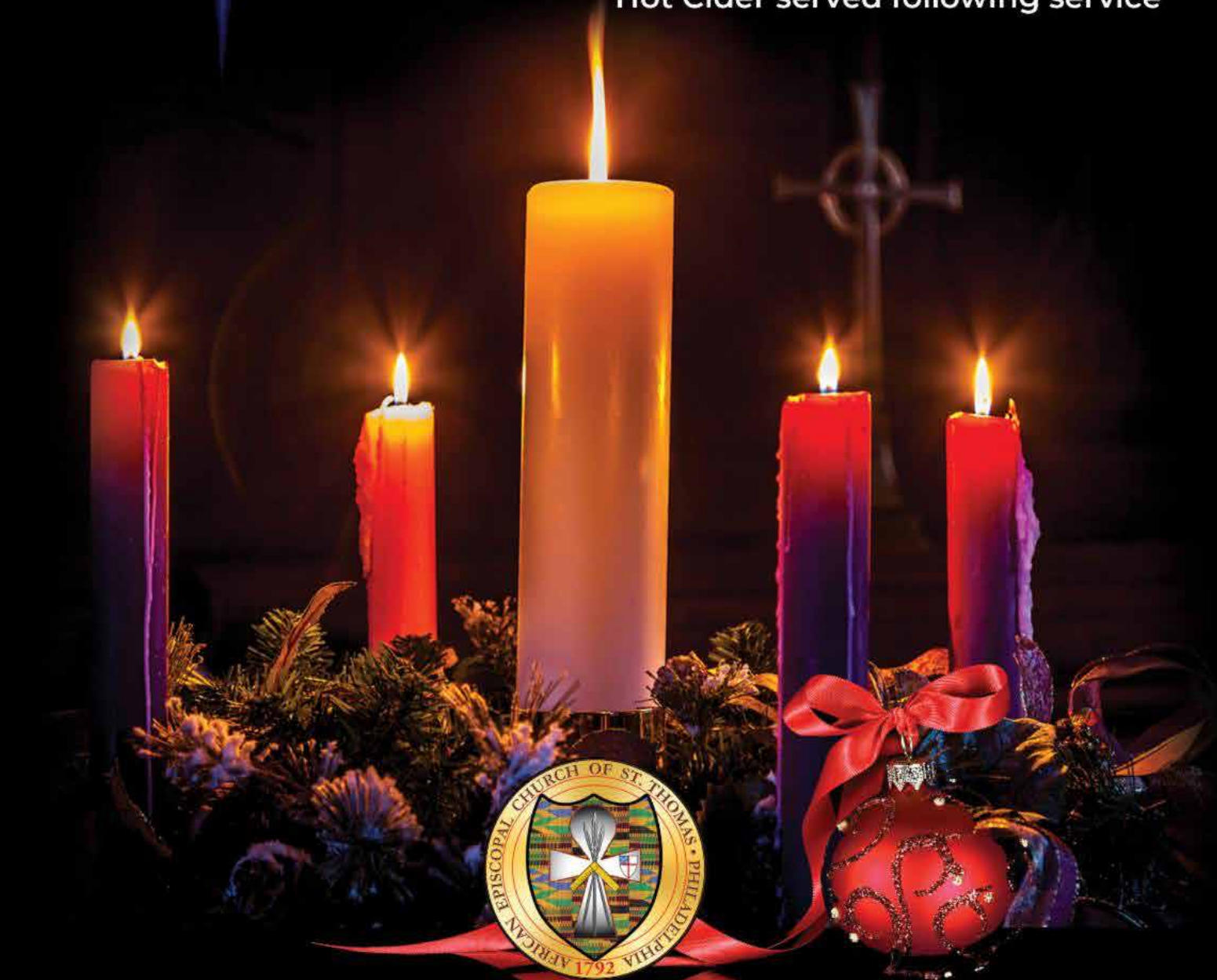
Are you receiving the weekly electronic Spearhead? If not, please email Gladyce DuBrey at 1792@aecst.org with your mobile number and email address.

THE CHRIST-MASS

Wednesday, December 24, 2025, 7:00 PM

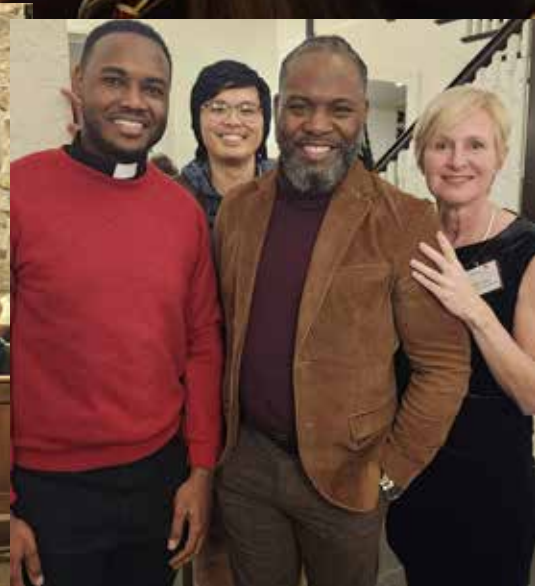
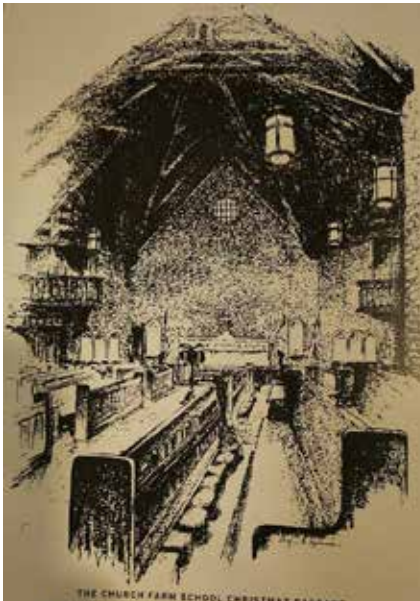
**Festive Music and Dance;
Inspiring preaching;
Distribution of Holy Communion.**

Hot Cider served following service



THE AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS • FIRST BLACK EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE USA
THE VERY REVEREND CANON MARTINI SHAW, 17TH RECTOR
THE REVEREND FR. DAREN E. EVANS, ASSOCIATE TO THE RECTOR
6361 LANCASTER AVENUE (ABSALOM JONES WAY) • PHILADELPHIA, PA 19151 • (215) 473-3065
WWW.AECST.ORG • WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/AECST1792

OUR PARTNERSHIP GROWS!
St. Thomas supports Church Farm School's
100th Christmas Pageant.





NOTE TO ALL GUILDS/ORGANIZATIONS/MINISTRIES:
The 2026 Parish Meeting is on
Saturday, February 21, 2026, at 10:00 AM.
Your one-page year end report, sent in Word format,
is due to Gladysce in the church office by
Friday, February 6, 2026.



Today, immediately after service the Young Adults will decorate the sanctuary for Christmas Eve Service.

A Holiday “Thank You” to those who donated to the St. Thomas Gardeners. The decorated wreaths and small pine trees are due to their generosity.



We offer our condolences and prayers for Brenda Johnson Best and family on the death of her sister,

Janice Gillespie.

May the soul of Janice rest in peace and rise in eternal glory.
Please pray for the family.

We offer our condolences to the family of **Elaine Curry**, who passed away on December 15th.

Her memorial service will be held at
St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, 6344 N. Broad Street,
on **December 30th** at 10:00 AM.

May the soul of Elaine rest in peace and rise in glory.
Please pray for the family.



This morning, we place
Rufus O. Williams and
Imelda Broussard Williams
in the Columbarium, their final resting place.

THEY ARE BACK!!!

The Philly Pops returns to the Kimmel Center with our St. Thomas Gospel Choir for its renowned **"A Holiday Spectacular"** musical series.



A few photos of some of the clergy, vestry and employees at their annual Holiday dinner.





**Photos: Quentin Heyward
(St.Thomas Ed Muse Memorial Photography Ministry)**

A CALL TO LEADERSHIP
Share your leadership ability.

Nominations for Vestry, Auxiliary Vestry Positions, Delegates to the Schuylkill Deanery, Delegates, and an alternate delegate to the 2025 Diocesan Convention will be accepted from December 7, 2025, through January 11, 2026. Election information can be found at the links below, in the bulletin, and on the table at the rear of the church.

[A Call to Lead](#) [Candidate Profile](#)

**ATTENTION: ALL GROUPS/MINISTRIES/
ORGANIZATIONS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

Announcements and flyers for the Sunday Bulletin and digital Spearhead **should be received on Monday, by 12:00 Noon.** If you have any questions, please contact Gladycy in the church office, 215-473-3065.

**A FRIENDLY REMINDER FROM THE STEWARDSHIP
AND FINANCE COMMITTEES:**

If you want credit for the year, your contributions should be received by **December 31, 2025.** If you are unsure about your balance, please contact Jeannette in the fiscal office at 215-471-3065 or fiscal@aecst.org as soon as possible.

Enormous thanks for your continued support
and gracious contributions.

ALL GROUPS, MINISTRIES AND FELLOWSHIPS

Please submit a “Request for Meeting Space” form to the office for all meetings in the Church, Anderson Hall, Absalom Jones House, parking lot and/or the Great Lawn two weeks prior to the event. Please refrain from approaching the sextons. The church office maintains the calendar for all events. If you have any questions or need a form, please contact the church office at 215-473-3065 or email 1792@aecst.org.

OUR LIVESTREAM MINISTRY NEEDS YOU!

Each week, many people who are away are able to worship with us via our amazing Livestream. Please prayerfully consider serving in this ministry. If interested, please communicate with the rector.

A REQUEST FROM THE RECTOR

Our amazing **Livestream Ministry** continues to be an enormous blessing to many of us who are not able to physically be present for worship on any given Sunday, but able to tune in. We are very grateful to those who serve as operators in this ministry each week.

Our live stream equipment is in desperate need of upgrading. We are establishing a fund to support this need.

Please prayerfully [donate](#) to this initiative.

Please indicate the purpose of your contribution.

Enormous thanks in advance.

COMING SOON!

Our new Parish Pictorial Directory.

Did you take your photo?

Enormous thanks to the hardworking committee.



THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT ROSE/GAUDETE SUNDAY

December 14, 2025

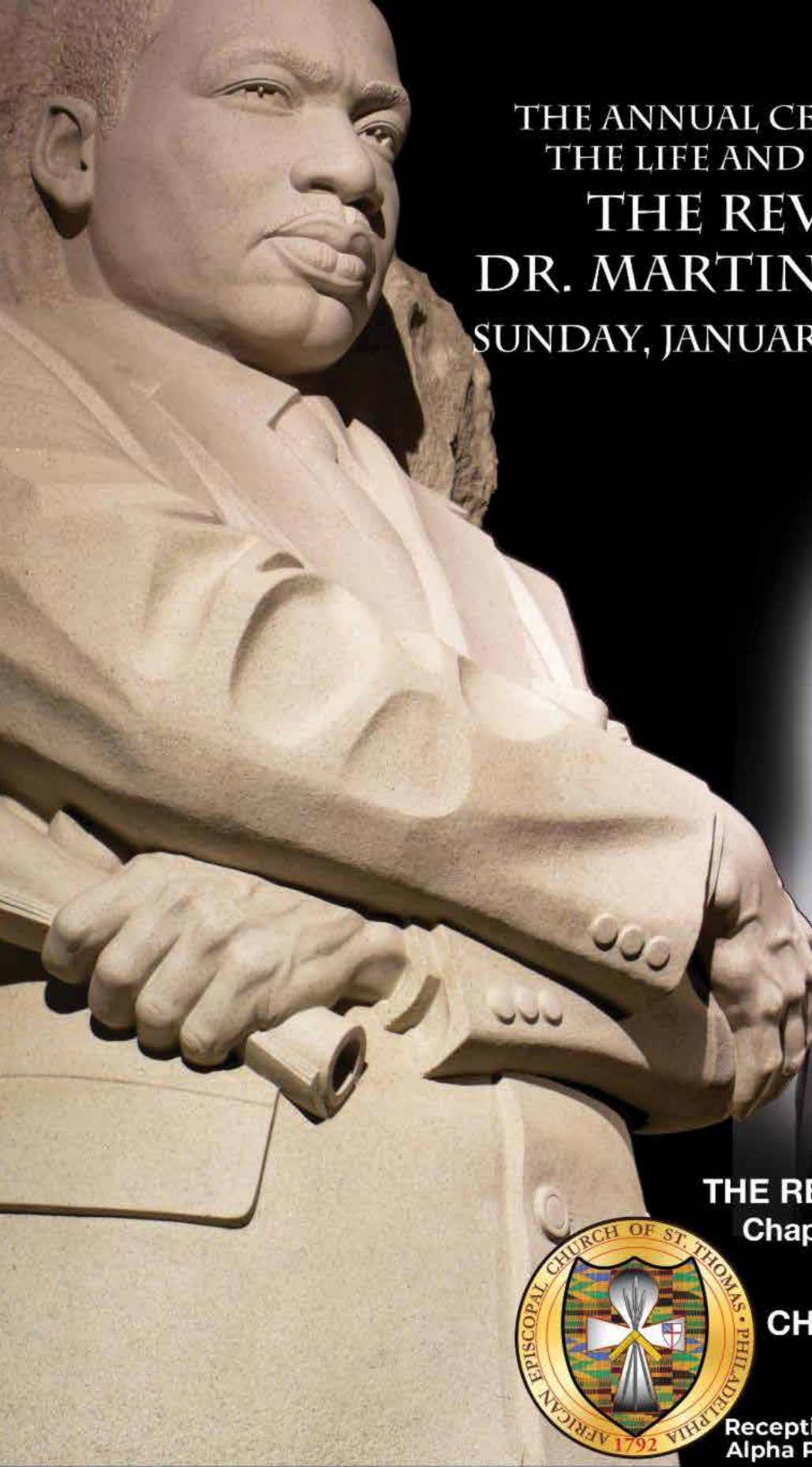
In the midst of Inclement weather, we give thanks to the over fifty who "weathered the storm" to physically be present for Mass and worship. We especially give thanks to our outdoor Monarch Greeters - Greg Hayes and Maurice Hayes; our Altar Servers - Eugene Golson and Tyrone Keller; our Lector - Kim Phillips; our Livestream/Sound Ministers - Marie Golson, Harold Townsend, and Dominic Bowrin; and our Ushers - Al Dandridge, Ernestine Johnson, and Stephanie Williamson.







More pictures may be found on [Facebook](#)



THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF
THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF
**THE REVEREND
DR. MARTIN L. KING, JR**
SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2026 10AM



Guest Speaker:
THE REV. DAWRELL RICH, PH.D.
Chaplain, Church Farm School

Guest Choir:
CHURCH FARM SCHOOL



Reception sponsored by Rho Chapter of
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.

THE AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS • FIRST BLACK EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE USA
THE VERY REVEREND CANON MARTINI SHAW, 17TH RECTOR
THE REVEREND FR. DAREN E. EVANS, ASSOCIATE TO THE RECTOR
6361 LANCASTER AVENUE (ABSALOM JONES WAY) • PHILADELPHIA, PA 19151 • (215) 473-3065
WWW.AECST.ORG • WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/AECST1792

DO YOU PLAY A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT?

Have you ever thought about using that talent to glorify God in worship? Please prayerfully consider joining our St. Thomas Jazz Ensemble, St. Thomas Chancel Choir or St. Thomas Gospel Choir. If interested, please contact [Gladyce](#) in the Parish Office ASAP to get details on upcoming scheduled rehearsals.



FAITHFUL GRATITUDE

Please use this link to express and pledge your **Faithful Gratitude** to God for 2026.

<https://forms.gle/yj3eujEaSZ58VMgK9>

**STEWARDSHIP THEME:
FAITHFUL GRATITUDE DURING 2026
A CHART TO ASSIST US WITH OUR FAITHFUL GIVING**

Holy Scripture commends a minimum tithe of
(10% of our earnings)

Where are you on your spiritual journey?
Annual Faithful Giving

Yearly Income	2%	5%	10%
\$10,000.00	\$200.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00
\$15,000.00	\$300.00	\$750.00	\$1,500.00
\$20,000.00	\$400.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00
\$25,000.00	\$500.00	\$1,200.00	\$2,500.00
\$30,000.00	\$600.00	\$1,500.00	\$3,000.00
\$40,000.00	\$800.00	\$2,000.00	\$4,000.00
\$50,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,500.00	\$5,000.00
\$60,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$3,000.00	\$6,000.00
\$70,000.00	\$1,400.00	\$3,500.00	\$7,000.00
\$80,000.00	\$1,600.00	\$4,000.00	\$8,000.00
\$90,000.00	\$1,800.00	\$4,500.00	\$9,000.00
\$100,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$10,000.00
\$110,000.00	\$2,200.00	\$5,500.00	\$11,000.00
\$120,000.00	\$2,400.00	\$6,000.00	\$12,000.00
\$150,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$7,000.00	\$15,000.00
\$175,000.00	\$3,500.00	\$8,750.00	\$17,500.00
\$200,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00

2026 FAITHFUL GIVING CARDS

We have kicked off our Annual Stewardship Season at St. Thomas.

Please prayerfully consider an increase in your 2026 Faithful Giving Pledge towards the vibrant ministries of St. Thomas.

Remember that our individual goal should be to become a biblical tither (10% of one's earnings). Are you working toward that spiritual goal? Please use the Giving Chart to assist you with your Faithful Giving Pledge for 2026. Please place your completed Faithful Giving card on the altar of God during offertory.

**Thank you to the following persons who have submitted
their 2026 Faithful Giving Cards.**

CLERGY

The Very Rev. Canon Martini Shaw
The Rev. Fr. Daren E. Evans
The Rev. Dr. Paul Bach
The Rev. Fr. Gerald Collins
The Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney

VESTRY

Dr. Tim Barksdale
Deadra Cannon
Albert Dandridge, III
Clare Mae Daniels
Deborah Camp Frye
Eugene Golson & Marie Golson
Kelvin & Pam Johnson
Monica Lewis Jones
Richard Jones
Patricia Lynch
Deborah Matthews
Judith Simkins-Booth

AUXILIARY VESTRY

Conchetta Brewer
Sharon Bullock
Ronnie Collins
Elaine Gillison
Dr. Monica Johnson Taylor
Cynthia Muse
Bobby & Judith Tillman

MEMBERS

Patricia Akins	Carl Dean
Carmen Alexander	Andrew & Lisa Renee Dumas
Constance Anderson	William & Quincina Edmonds
Dorothy Archey	Rashid & Christie Faisal
Jeanne Arnold	Larry & Diedre Farmbry
Brenda Battle	Loretta Ferguson
Jennifer Bell	Marceline Fitzwilliam
Susan Ben	Jay Fluellen
Deborah Billups	Marcia Forde
Waltier Blocker	Stephen & Donna Foster
Dr. Naomi Booker	Wendella Fox & Herb Wetzel
Guy Booth	Norman & Nikki Franke
Ricardo Bostic	Barry Frye
Alice Bowman-Cropper	Irenda Gates
Michelanne Bradwell	Edward & Kathryn Geiger
Theresa Bramwell	Barbara Glenn
Lorita Brockington	Swanie Goldsmith
J.R. & Alfreda Brockman	Josephine Graham
Marilyn Brown	Clarice Grant
Julia Bryant	Arlene Gray
Kenneth Bundy	Linda Greaves
Cornelia Camp	Michele Green
Charlotte Card	Presko (PJ) Grier
Phyllis Cater	Dr. Derek Griffith
Eleanor Chestnut	Richard & Gwenda Hart
Suzanne Closson	Thomasina Hack
Lynada Coleburn-Bryant	Joan Hall
Terry Corson	Lisa Harper
Gwendolyn Cottman	Sharon Harper
Zenobia Dancy	Katrina Harris
Karen Davis	Walter & Nicole Harris
Johanna Daye	Roosevelt, Sr. & Gail Harris

Thomas & Lynn Harris	Michele Lofton
Gregory Hayes	Adrienne Logan
Maurice Hayes	Alonda Lord
Rene' Hayes	C. Adjoa Love-Dorsey
Denise Henderson	James Lowe
Julie Hergenrather	Winston Lowe
Quentin Heyward	Kimberly Lloyd
Erica Hill-Yates	Gregory Lyles
Synethia Hill	Thomas Lynch, IV
Merle Hopson	Constance Lyons
Fleta Howell	Stephen & Michelle Mack
Diana Hutchins	Stacye McCoy-Ndiaye
Robert Hugh	Sheila Sawyer McCullough
Donald & Patricia Hunt	Denise McKinney-Gibson
Kim Hyde	Michael McIntosh
Yvonne Hyde-Carter	Laura McNeil
Diann Jacox	Elsie Moto
Simone Jeffers	Velma Morris-Nembhard
Evelyn Johns	Mueni Beatrice Mwanzia
Bobby Johnson	Vincent & Lisa Napoleon
Dr. Frank Johnson	Mercy Natt
Vernetta Johnston	Ingrid Nembhard
Bettie Jones	Chinwe Onyekere
Clarence Jones	Debbie Otey
Donna Jones	Carolyn Paige
Eric Jones	Samuel & Deidre Patterson
Dr. Sheila Jones-Smith	Zennetta Peters
Tyrone Keller	Eugene & Karina Phillips
Jurdina Koilor	Kim Phillips
Paula Lamb	Mary Ann Phillips
Nancy Lee	Stephen Pugh
Steven & Jamella Lewis	Wendy Puryear
Karen Leys	Karem Ragin

Karen Ragland	Teri Tillman
Cynthia Ray	Harold Townsend
Dolores Redmond	Carole Townsend Harrell
Clarence Rice	Arnott Trotman
Caryn Rivers	Justin & Lee Anne Trotman
Victoria Rivers	Louise Trotman
Cassandra Ruffin	Howard Tucker
Yvonne Ruiz	Joe Tucker & Alycia Horn
Sandra Rushin	Robin Vann-Lynch
Barbara Savage	Karen Vaughn
Georgia Sawyer	Barbara Wiley
Richard & Rebecca Scales	Michele Wilkinson
Leah Sheppard	R. Seth Williams
Kayma Sherman-Knuckles	Scott & Ashley Williams
Arlene Singletary	Gillian Wilson
Anita Smith	Jenelle Wilson Johnson
Catherine Stafford	Laura Wilson
H. Lynn Starr	Lorna Wilson
Daryn Stewart	Carole Williams Green
Shelly & Ann Stewart	Charlene Wiltshire
Arthur & Michele Sudler	Diane Winkfield
Carolyn Summers	Edgar Wise
Lynda Tapper Smith	Daphnie Wright-Gilstrap
Kellen & Sarah Shaw-	Khalita Wright
Thomas	Paula Wright
Calvin Thompson	Wanda Wood
Jillian Theorgood	Alice Young
Gloria Thomas	M. Elaine Young

UPCOMING SUNDAYS

December 21st

Fourth Sunday of Advent

- Church School Christmas Pageant

December 28th

The First Sunday after Christmas Day

2026

January 4th:

The Second Sunday after Christmas Day

- First Sunday of the new year - Congregational Toast

January 11th:

The First Sunday after the Epiphany /The Baptism of our Lord

January 18th:

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

- Observance of Martin L. King, Jr.

January 25th:

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

- GFS Sunday and Induction Sunday/Youth and Young Adult Sunday

THIS WEEK AT AECST

Tuesday, December 23rd

- OPC Advocacy Outreach Group Meeting 6:00 - 9:00 PM
in the Undercroft

Wednesday, December 24th

- Christmas Eve Service - 7:00 PM
- Administrative Offices closed at Noon

Thursday, December 25th

- Christmas Day - Church and Administrative Offices Closed

Friday, December 26th

- Church and Administrative Offices Closed



GIRLS' FRIENDLY SOCIETY

Friendly Facts

Madam C J Walker was an African American philanthropist, entrepreneur, and social activist. She was born on a plantation in Delta, LA, and was orphaned at a very young age. When she was older, she moved to Denver, Colorado, where she started her business and hair care line for black women.

As her business became successful and grew, she became known as the first female self-made millionaire.

She used her money to fund and support charities, civil rights movements, and education.

AECST LIVE STREAM

Please join us for worship on the St. Thomas [website](#), [the Live Stream Service](#), on our [Facebook](#) page or [Youtube](#) every Sunday morning at 10:00 AM.

You can also watch [Past Services](#).

REALM CONVERSION COMPLETE

As a reminder St Thomas went through a system conversion this year. REALM is an updated solution for the management of our ministries, stewardship, media, communications, and church events calendar. Our staff will use REALM to perform administrative and accounting tasks.

REALM will help us reach you to keep you informed. Ministry and group leaders will be able to communicate with their members outside of their meeting times and stay in touch.

Online Giving

The previous system GIVI is no longer available for online giving. REALM Connect has taken its place. REALM is not just a tool for electronic giving; it affords one the opportunity to access their giving records and offer congregants the ability to interact and communicate directly with each other. If you give directly via the church website, or by using the QR code, you will see a new webpage link on the website and a corresponding QR code that will take you to that new webpage.

Please note that we offer online electronic giving which provides an easy, secure method to contribute weekly, monthly, yearly or simply whenever you desire. Donations can be made at <https://onrealm.org/AfricanEpiscopal/give/now> or through the Realm App. (If you don't already use the Realm app and don't have an account, it's safe and easy to obtain. Download the Realm app (which is named REALM CONNECT) in the app store.

Online and text contributions are linked to your profile based on the **email address and cell phone number** you have provided. Your **envelope number** serves as an additional layer of security, especially in cases where members may have similar names (in the near future those persons without an envelope number will be issued one). We want to make sure contributions are properly credited to your account.

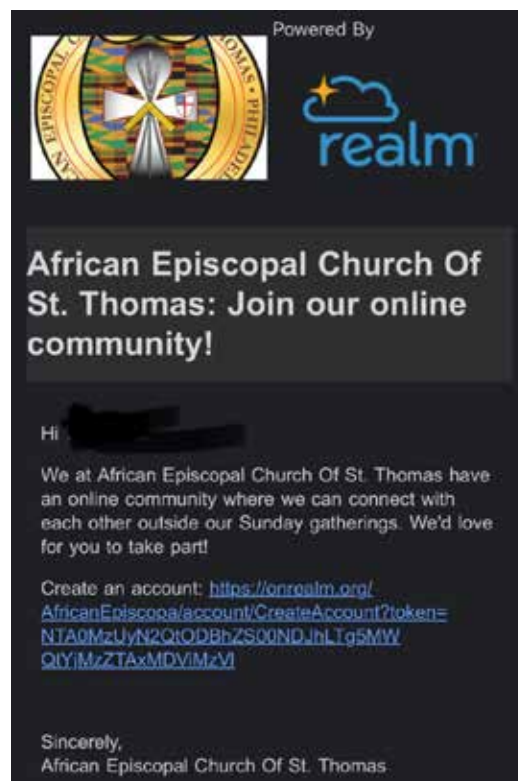
AECST members have begun and will continue to receive email invitations from the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas (notifications@onrealmmail.org) titled, "African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas: Join our online community!", which will enable you to register on the site and view many of the available functions. Please request a **Membership Information Form** from the Stewardship Ministry (Stewardship@aecst.org) and one will be sent to you. Please complete and return the form so that your profile can be updated accordingly. Once the form is returned corrections can be made and you will be sent a Realm invite.

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS:

In order for your contributions in REALM Connect to be successful, YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS AND CELL PHONE NUMBER MUST MATCH EXACTLY WITH REALM RECORDS. Envelope numbers serve as an additional layer of security, especially in cases where members may have similar names (soon those people without an envelope number will be issued one).

We want to make sure contributions are properly credited to your account.

Thank you for your continued support of St. Thomas.



CONFIRMATION / REAFFIRMATION / RECEPTION CLASSES

have started.

The schedule for in-person and Zoom
classes is as follows:

In Person	By Zoom
Sunday, 11/02/2025	Monday, 11/17/2025
Sunday, 12/07/2025	Monday, 12/02/2025
Sunday 01/04/2026	Monday, 01/19/2026
Sunday, 02/01/2026	Monday, 02/16/2026
Sunday, 03/01/2026	Monday, 03/16/2026
Sunday, 04/05/2026	Monday, 04/20/2026
Sunday, 05/03/2026	Monday, 05/18/2026

Sunday 6/7/2026 – Confirmation Day!

Please connect with Fr. Daren, 215-473-3065 or email,
associaterector@aecst.org if you have not received any
information or have questions, ASAP.

CHAT AND CHEW

Have you ever considered hosting a Chat and Chew
following Service in thanksgiving for a blessing received or
in memory of a departed loved one?

Please contact [Gladyce](#) in the church office
for further details.

OUR DEDICATED OUT-OF-TOWN FAMILIES

We give thanks to God for these active and dedicated members of St. Thomas who presently live in other cities, states, and countries, but remain connected weekly by various media platforms:

Constance Anderson - Florida

The Rev. Dr. Paul Bach & Dr. Julie Hergerather - Bloomsburg, PA

Christopher Burks - Rhode Island/New York

Deadra Cannon - Georgia

Nora Corbin - Illinois

Dr. Ted Corbin - Illinois

Paula Cropper - North Carolina

Lee Daniels - New York

Stacey Davis - New York

Andrew and Lisa Renee Dumas - Portugal

Rashid, Christie, and Gabrielle Faisal - Michigan

The Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney - Texas

Bradley Hammond - Mississippi

Richard & Gwenda Hart - South Carolina

Yvonne Hyde-Carter - New York

Dr. Calvin Johnson - Florida

Bettie Jones - North Carolina

Rae Scott Jones - Florida

Richard Jones, Jr. - Virginia

Dr. Sheila Jones-Smith - South Carolina

Steven & Jameela Lewis - Colorado

Gregory Lyles - Switzerland

Nohjay Nimpson - Texas

Zennetta Peters - North Carolina

Dr. John Rich - Illinois

Richard & Rebecca Scales - Florida

Shelly and Ann Stewart - Florida

Howard Tucker - Brazil/Philadelphia

Allison Young - Maryland

ALTAR FLOWERS

Flowers on the Columbarium are in loving memory
of **Rufus O. and Imelda Broussard Williams**,
given by Rufus Seth Williams.

Unfortunately, due to rising costs of goods, the Altar Guild
has increased the cost of the flowers.

To order flowers, please return the form with payment to
Gladyce in the church office. Thank you.

Flowers on the High Altar - \$80.00 each
Flowers on the Absalom Jones Altar - \$70.00 each
Flowers on the Columbarium - \$60.00

Please use the QR Code to order flowers or
contribute to our church ministries.



DAILY RECOMMENDED BIBLE READINGS
The Readings for the Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025

The First Lesson - [Isaiah 7:10-16](#)

[Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18](#)

The Second Lesson - [Romans 1:1-7](#)

The Holy Gospel - [Matthew 1:18-25](#)

The Holy Gospel Readings for the
week of December 22, 2025

Monday - [John 5:30-47](#)

Tuesday - [Luke 1:5-25](#)

Wednesday - [Luke 1:26-38](#)

Thursday - [Luke 1:39-48](#)

Friday - [Luke 1:57-66](#)

Saturday - [Luke 1:67-80](#)



PILGRIMS ON A JOURNEY
BIBLE STUDY will be on Christmas Break, Tuesday, **December 23rd and 30, 2025**. We resume class on Tuesday, **January 6th** (The Feast of the Epiphany) at 7:00 PM via Zoom. If you are interested in joining the ministry, please contact Fr. Jay at associatepriest@aecst.org.

WEDNESDAYS IN-PERSON BIBLE STUDY
with Fr. Daren will be on break for the Christmas/New Year season. We will resume on Wednesday, **January 14**, at 6:00 PM. See you then!



CALLING ALL DANCERS!!!!

Opportunity awaits if you want to praise the Lord in dance and worship. The “Angels in Motion” dance ministry, a multi-generational ministry welcomes all ages, and skill levels in ballet, modern, jazz, and African dance to join! Interested? Please contact, Director, [Pamela Johnson.](#)



VERGERS NEEDED!

Are you being called to this exciting ministry?
Want to know more about what a Verger does?

The Verger Guide may be found [here](#)

Please speak with Karen Ragland or
the Rector for more details.

AECST PODCAST



Our **AECST Podcast Series** returns with an important new episode! Fr. Daren is joined by Licensed Clinical Social Worker **Mrs. Lasheena Riley Duval** for a conversation on **supporting children through medical care**. Tune in!



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR HEALING GARDEN!

Get your hands dirty for a great cause! The CLEAR Project (Children, Liturgy, Ecology, and Renewal) is creating a healing garden right here on our church campus.

This is a hands-on way to live out our Christian calling to care for God's creation.

We need volunteers at all skill levels from expert gardeners to those who just want to help.

If you're interested, please contact
Fr. Daren (associaterector@aecst.org) or
Tynecia Wilson (churchschool@aecst.org).

RE-IMAGINING OUR MINISTRIES

Persons are needed:

- to lift their voices on the **Comfort Choir** during funeral services at St. Thomas. Please contact [D. Lynn Joell](#) if interested.
- to serve with the **Sound Ministry** for Sunday morning service and weekday funeral services. If interested, please contact [Gladyce](#) in the Parish Office.
- to serve on the **Altar Guild**. This amazing group of individuals prepares our altar each week for the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Interested people should contact [Alfreda Brockman](#).
- to serve as **Readers and Intercessors** to read the Holy Scripture during our weekly services. Interested persons should contact [Gladyce](#) in the Parish Office to sign up.
- to join the **Transportation Ministry**. The main mission of the ministry is to provide transportation to parishioners who attend Sunday Service. Please contact [Gladyce](#) in the office if you are interested.
- as **Acolytes** to serve on the altar. Please contact [Fr. Daren](#) if you are interested.
- **Photography Ministry** is in need of additional photographers. You do not need to be a professional photographer but do enjoy taking pictures. Anyone interested can contact [Bill Edmonds](#) or [Dale Williams](#).
- **The Shepherds Ministry** is still in need of many more volunteers to be able to shepherd all households of our congregation. Shepherds set their own schedules to be in regular touch with their households of sheep by phone, email, text or various social media platforms. Each is assigned no more than 4 households. All Ministry meetings are held via Zoom. Please note that the Vestry will continue to shepherd, for one year, all new members joining the congregation. For more information, or to volunteer, please contact [Charlene M. Wiltshire](#).

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR PARISHIONERS WHO ARE:

IN REHAB:

Francina Norris and Lisa Woodley - St. Francis Nursing Home

IN LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENCES:

Helena Allen - Simpson House; Linda Holmes - Saunders House; Gwendolyn Langford - Arden Courts of Cherry Hill; Ola Bass - Atria Lafayette Hill; Ridart "Butch" Farmer - Centennial Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center

AT HOME:

Robert Brown, Thelma Silvers, Patricia Ellison, Mary Ann Jones, Shirley Caldwell, Wendell Whitlock, Verger Stephen Hannum, Joyce Stewart, Virginia DuBrey, Alice Young, Alletta Parris-Olday, Deborah Harrison, D. Lynn Joell, Regina Meacham Devero, Elaine Young, Alice Bowman - Cropper, Katrina Harris, Erica Hill Yates

KEEP IN PRAYER:

Justin Trotman, Cathy Stafford, Daryn Stewart, Arlene Gray, Adinah Edwards, Waltier Blocker, Santee Ruffin, Angela Holloway, Mary Ann Phillips, Yvonne Syndor, Adrian Gray, Sharon Harper, Quincina Edmonds, D. Lynn Joell, Edita Gauthney

WE PRAY FOR

those who are Incarcerated and their families, as well as those affected by their actions.

CALLING ALL YOUTH



What's an Acolyte? Am I old enough? Why do I want to be one? These and other questions can be answered by Father Daren! No prior experience is necessary to serve in the **Acolyte Ministry**. Rehearsals are on Sundays, immediately after service. This is an excellent opportunity for children and youth to become involved in the life of the church. Contact [Fr.Daren](#) for details.

YOUTH ACHIEVEMENTS

We want to highlight the achievements of our youth and young adults! If your child has excelled in academics, sports, the arts, or community service—or you are a young adult working on a significant personal or professional project—we would love to hear about it. Please contact [Fr. Daren](#) so we can share your story with the congregation!



IMPORTANT NOTE FROM THE RECTOR

St. Thomas celebrates children and youth not only as the church of TOMORROW, but also the church of TODAY! We welcome and encourage their full presence and participation in our Sunday worship.

Church School begins at **10:00 AM in the Undercroft.**

You **must** register your child for church school for the 2025-2026 school year. Please use this [link](#) to register your child/children.

Call for Church School Teachers - If you feel the calling by God to volunteer your time in church school, please fill out the registration [link](#). If you were a teacher last year, please fill out this year's registration.



Tiny Tykes Temple is now located in the beautiful library of the Absalom Jones House for infants, children (under 3 years old) and parents. Parents who may find it necessary to step away from mass for a moment are encouraged to take advantage of this wonderful space.

STEWARDSHIP NEWS

HOW CAN I BE FAITHFUL TO GOD AND THE CHURCH THROUGH STEWARDSHIP?

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”. 2 Corinthians 9:7. NIV

The **Stewardship Committee** of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas recognizes that stewardship may take form in several ways: your time, talent, or treasures. The one commonality is that each of us must prayerfully ask God to guide us in making the right choices and have faith that He will guide us to the right decision.

Our church has a tremendous congregation that is thriving and growing. The ministries that we have serve all of God’s children near and far. These endeavors require all three forms of stewardship: but especially your sharing of treasure.

Prayerfully consider donating by using the QR Code below:



OTHER WAYS TO CONTINUE TO BE FAITHFUL TO GOD AND THE CHURCH THROUGH STEWARDSHIP:

1) Sunday Offering Plate

2) Mail in your check or money order to the church.

Please use the following address:

The Historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas
c/o Fiscal Administrator
6361 Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19151

3) Bring your check directly to the Fiscal Office during regular business hours, Monday - Friday, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM. After business hours, drop your envelope in the door mail slot located on the front patio of the Absalom Jones House.

4) Church Website - <http://www.aecst.org/donations.htm> the button(s) on the page that represents where you'd like your payment to be applied, i.e., your pledge, the AJ house, Easter, etc.

5) REALM CONNECT - Our members and visitors who use GIVI to donate online will be switching away from GIVI to REALM Connect. If you give via the church website, either directly or by using the QR code, you will soon see a new

[webpage link](#) on our website and a corresponding QR code that will take you to that new page

6) Cellphone: Text "AECST" to 73256 to donate,

IMPORTANT: Please make sure your name, number, and amount is placed on your offering envelope. This is very important to keep bookkeeping accurate. If you're unsure of your number, please don't hesitate to contact Pat Lynch at stewardship@aecst.org. We appreciate your assistance.

CAPITAL BUILDING IMPROVEMENT CAMPAIGN

Thank you to all who have contributed to the fund. Everyone is asked to please make a minimum sacrificial gift of \$40 per month. Please use the envelope from your packet or place Building Fund in the Memo section of your check or click the [Donation Button](#) and select the Building Fund button on our Capital Improvement Donation button on our [website](#).

MINISTRY STAFF

Bishop	The Rt. Rev. Daniel G P Gutierrez	
Rector	The Very Rev. Canon Martini Shaw	rector@aecst.org
Associate to the Rector	The Rev. Fr. Daren E. Evans	associaterector@aecst.org
Associate Priest	The Rev. Fr. Gerald Collins	associatepriest@aecst.org
Associate Priest	The Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney	wilgafney@gmail.com
Associate Minister	The Rev. Dr. Paul Bach	pauljaybach@gmail.com
Executive Asst to the Rector	Gladyce DuBrey	1792@aecst.org
Fiscal Administrator	Jeannette Jeffrey	fiscal@aecst.org
Sexton	LaDon Elliott	1792@aecst.org
Asst Sexton	David McGilberry	1792@aecst.org
Chancel Choirmaster	Jay Fluellen, D.M.A.	chancelchoir@aecst.org
Gospel Choirmaster	Waltier Blocker	gospelchoir@aecst.org
Rector's General Counsel	Joe Tucker, Esq.	jtucker@tlgattorneys.com
Altar Guild	Alfreda Brockman	fredabee@verizon.net
Baptism Co-Chairs	Gail Hinton Harris	baptism@aecst.org
	Patricia Walker-Ellison	p.walker.ellison@gmail.com
O. V. Catto Voter Education Ministry	Wendella Fox Elaine Gillison	cattoministry@aecst.org
Church School Superintendent	Tynecia Wilson	churchschool@aecst.org
Ed Muse Photography Ministry	William Edmonds	edmon57@comcast.net
Fiscal Advisor to the Rector	Deadra Cannon	assistantfiscal@aecst.org
Girls Friendly Society	Nikkol Simms	njsimms@verizon.net
Jazz Ensemble Director	Jay Fluellen, D.M.A.	chancelchoir@aecst1792.org
Live Stream Ministry	Yaseen Farooq Teri Tillman	livevideo@aecst.org
Memorial Flowers	Alfreda Brockman	fredabee@verizon.net
	Clare Mae Daniels	happycmd05@aol.com
Roy Ellison Monarch Greeters	Ashley Hines	1792@aecst.org
Parish Vergers	Karen Ragland	Kdrags415@gmail.com
Parish Webmaster	Gail Hinton Harris	webmanager@aecst.org
Property Chair	William Burke	property@aecst.org
Scout Pack 133	Howard Chapman	howchapman@gmail.com
	Arlene Gray	bsapack0133@gmail.com
Stewardship Chair	Patricia Lynch	stewardship@aecst.org
Videography Ministry	Quentin Heyward	recordedvideo@aecst.org
Visitor's Ministry	Edita Gauthney Michele Green	visitorsministry@aecst.org
Voices of Comfort	Robert Davenport	1792@aecst.org
William Burke Ushers Ministry	Arlene Singletary	leaniepo302@gmail.com

THE VESTRY

Rector's Warden - Richard Jones | Accounting Warden - Deborah Camp-Frye
Clerk of the Vestry - Pamela Johnson | Treasurer - Albert S. Dandridge, III Esq.
Stewardship Chair - Patricia Lynch | Property Chair - William Burke

Dr. Tim Barksdale	Clare Mae Daniels	Kelvin Johnson
Judith Simkins Booth	Eugene Golson	Monica Lewis Jones
Deadra Cannon	Marie B. Golson	Deborah Matthews

THE AUXILIARY VESTRY

Brenda Best	Mary Sandra Dean	Dr. Monica Johnson Taylor
Conchetta Brewer	Elaine Gillison	Darryle (Bobby) Tillman
Sharon Bullock	D. Lynn Joell	Judy Tillman
Ronnie Collins	Cynthia Muse	

DELEGATES TO THE DIOCESAN CONVENTION

Albert S. Dandridge, III Esq. | Dr. Cassandra Ruffin | Alternate: Tyrone Keller

DELEGATES TO THE SCHUYLKILL DEANERY

Phyllis Cater | Mary Dean | Alternate: Tyrone Keller