

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Rejoice!

The Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory,
the glory of the one and only Son,
who came from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 NIV



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 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 Rev. Fr. Daren E. Evans
Associate to the Rector

The Rev. Fr. Gerald Collins
Associate Priest

FROM THE DESK OF THE RECTOR:

This is a reminder that the Mass ends following the Closing Hymn and Dismissal. Please make an extra effort to refrain from leaving the Service before the conclusion.

This request is being made in order to respect others gathered for worship.

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

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS
December 29, 2024

“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 **The First Sunday after Christmas, Health Ministry Sunday**

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 USA. The first rector of this historic parish, The Rev. 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. Whoever 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, acceptance 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. Whoever you may be and however you may find yourself experiencing life's journey, do know that St. Thomas Church welcomes you. Again, welcome!

Faithfully,
Martini Shaw⁺

(The Very Rev. Canon) Martini Shaw, 17th Rector
and Dean of the Schuylkill Deanery

**May these few minutes of the Homily Highlights
“Jesus Christ is coming to town” from our festive
Christmas Eve Mass bless you.**



Video: Quentin Heyward (St.Thomas Videography Ministry)

IMPORTANT NOTE FROM THE RECTOR:

Please help us end the year without a deficit by completing your 2024 financial pledge by **December 31, 2024**. If you are unsure of your balance, please contact Jeannette Jeffrey in the Fiscal Office Monday-Thursday 10:00 AM-2:00 PM.

Please assist the Vestry

in planning and providing for making the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas the best it can be in response to your Christian journey, by completing this [questionnaire](#) by **January 12th**. You can respond online or use a paper questionnaire provided on a table at the back of the church. (We love online responses!)

IMPORTANT STEWARDSHIP NEWS - From the Rector

Please prayerfully consider an increase in your 2025 Faithful Giving toward 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? A chart to assist with Faithful Giving may be found [here](#).

The Faithful Giving Form may be found using the following [link](#) or when you come to church on Sunday please place your Faithful Giving card on the Altar of God.

Thank you to the individuals who have submitted their 2025 Faithful Giving cards. The list of names may be found [here](#).

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 January 12, 2025, until January 19, 2025. Election information can be found [here](#) and nomination information may be found [here](#).



We are saddened to announce the death of **Deborah "Binky" Seay**. Her memorial service will be held at St. Thomas on Wednesday, January 15, 2025, at 10:00 AM. Please pray for the family. May her soul rest in peace and rise in glory.

Merry Christmas from the Rector, Associate to the Rector, Vestry and Auxiliary Vestry



Merry Christmas from several of our Church School students and staff.

**Photos: Justin Trotman
(St.Thomas Ed Muse Memorial Photography Ministry)**



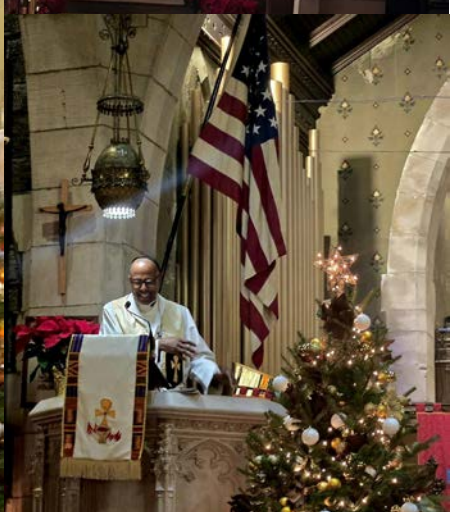




**A night of solemnity, joy, and celebration!
Christmas Eve Mass - December 24, 2024**

Photo Credit: St.Thomas Ed Muse Memorial Photography
Ministry: William Edmonds, Justin Trotman and Stephen Pugh







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





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Please tune in to hear our nationally renowned
St Thomas Gospel Choir on CBS TELEVISION
singing tunes of the Season.

December 24th, Christmas Eve

9:00 AM, 12:00 Noon and 4:00 PM

December 25th, Christmas Day, 2:00 PM

Saturday, December 28th, 12:30 PM

Sunday, December 29th, 2:00 PM



cbsphiladelphia.com

3 CBS NEWS
PHILADELPHIA



**Happy Birthday to all our Parishioners who are celebrating birthdays in
January**

- 1 / 2 Angelica Ganier-Glenn, Meecca Miles, Constance Stokes. Shonalie Roberts, Seth Williams
- 1/3 Thomas Harris
- 1/4 Debra Joell
- 1/5 Theodore Bythewood
- 1/7 Patricia Corbin, Andrew Sudler, Donald Ellis Moore
- 1/9 Selma Thompson, Deidre Farmby, Denise McKinney, Lisa Sharon Harper
- 1/10 Karl Holloway, Donnisa Graham
- 1/12 Vernetta Johnston, Nicole Miles
- 1/13 Delores Redmond
- 1/16 Helena Allen, Khari Lewis, Malik Lewis
- 1/17 Jayne Browne, John Maxwell
- 1/18 Adrienne Logan
- 1/19 Gladys Dungee, Jann Minor
- 1/22 Larry Farmby, Jessica Golson
- 1/23 Rev. Wil Gafney, Alice Wright
- 1/24 Alexis Collins, Karen Jones
- 1/26 D'Lalah Joell, Ian Napoleon
- 1/27 Natalye Paquin, Elizabeth Derr
- 1/28 Jamella Lewis
- 1/29 JoAnn Chapman, Fr. Jay
- 1/30 Gary Camp, Marie Jordan

On Sunday, December 22, 2024, New Co-Chairs
St. Thomas Visitor's Ministry:
Edita Gauthney and Michelle Green were commissioned.



"The New Members Manual" has finally arrived!
Please use the [link](#) to access it.

AECST LIVE STREAM

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

THIS WEEK AT AECST

Monday, December 30th

Church and Parish Offices open 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Tuesday, December 31st

New Year's Eve -Parish office closes at Noon

Wednesday, January 1st

New Year's Day-Church and Parish offices closed

Thursday, January 2nd

Church and Parish offices open 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Friday, January 3rd

Church and Parish offices open 9:00 AM-4:00 PM



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS
UPCOMING SUNDAYS IN JANUARY**

January 5th

Eve of the Feast of the Epiphany
Congregational Toast to the New Year - 2025

January 12th

The Baptism of our Lord (congregation blessed with Holy
Water from the Jordan River)

January 19th

Observance and Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Guest Speaker: The Rev. William Gipson. Special Advisor
to the Vice President for Social Equity and Community,
University of Pennsylvania

January 26th

Welcome and Fellowship to new members of 2024
Girls Friendly Induction with a Chat & Chew
following service





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.](#)

CHAT AND CHEW

Have you ever considered hosting a Coffee Hour (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.



ALTAR FLOWERS

Flowers on the High Altar -\$60.00

Flowers on the Absalom Jones Altar - \$50.00 each

Flowers on the Columbarium - \$40.00 each

To order flowers for the High Altar, Absalom Jones Altar, or Columbarium, please use this [link](#).



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.

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](#).



EXCITING NEWS!!! SPREAD IT!!!

Our new and exciting Family Podcast Series is ALIVE!!
Two series are now available for your listening enjoyment.

#1 - Fr. Daren introduces the Series with **Fr. Shaw** as his guest. "Creating a Culture of Conversation". The podcast can be found using this [link](#).

#2 - Fr. Daren welcomes **Pamela Johnson** as his guest. "Body Image: Good Enough for Jesus". The podcast can be found using this [link](#).

#3 - Fr. Daren welcomes **Tynecia Wilson** as his guest. Conversation: "The Adultification of Black Girls".
The podcast can be found using this [link](#):



CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDED

Are you willing to serve, at least one Sunday per month, as a church school teacher? Please prayerfully consider this call. We are especially looking for young adults, men, and anyone who loves children. Please speak with [Fr. Daren](#) ASAP if you are interested.



At St. Thomas, we embrace and celebrate our youth. If you have children in your family or neighborhood, please invite or bring them to be a part of our amazing Church School program. When was the last time you invited someone to church?



Church School begins at 10:00 AM on Sundays in the Undercroft. Please see Church School Superintendent Tynecia Wilson for details.



ATTENTION ALL ACOLYTES

Rehearsals are EACH SUNDAY immediately following service. For more information, please speak with [Fr. Daren](#).



A REMINDER TO ALL GUILDS, ORGANIZATIONS, MINISTRIES, AND INDIVIDUALS:

ANY and **ALL** Activities using the church facilities (i.e., Anderson Hall, the Undercroft, the church) or the Absalom Jones House **MUST** be scheduled and approved by the Parish Administrator: [Gladyce DuBrey](#) or call (215-473-3065) and **NOT the SEXTON** beforehand.

It is **VERY IMPORTANT** that all activities are listed on the calendar of the Parish Office.

DAILY RECOMMENDED BIBLE READINGS

**READINGS FOR
The first Sunday after Christmas
December 29, 2024**

The First Lesson-[Isaiah 61:10-62:3](#)
[Psalm 147](#)

The Second Lesson-[Galatians 3:23-25,4:4-7](#)
The Holy Gospel- [John 1:1-18](#)

**The Gospel Readings for the
Week of December 30, 2024**

Monday- [John 7:53-8:11](#)

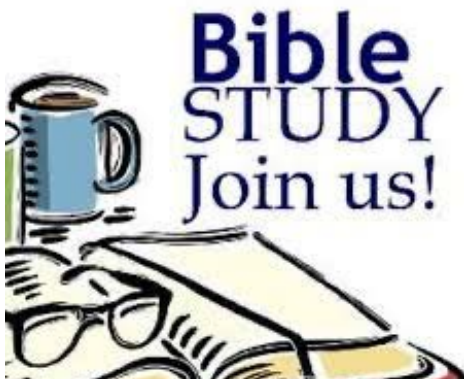
Tuesday-New Year's Eve-[John 8:12-19](#)

Wednesday-New Year's Day-[John 16:23-30](#)

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

Friday-John [6:35-42,48-51](#)

Saturday-[John 10:7-17](#)



The Adult Bible Study Group
will be on **CHRISTMAS BREAK** on
Tuesday, December 24 and
December 31, 2024. We will resume on
January 7, 2025, at 7:00 PM via Zoom.
Please contact [Fr. Jay](#) with
questions/requests.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR PARISHIONERS WHO ARE:

IN THE HOSPITAL:

Kenneth Dow, Alletta Parris-Olday - Presbyterian;
Carole Williams Green- PA Hospital; Arlene Gray-Bryn Mawr
Hospital; Alletta Parris-Olday-Presbyterian

IN REHAB:

Helena Allen - Simpson House; Leotta Griffith, Linda Holmes,
Gwendolyn Langford-Arden Courts of Cherry Hil; Inez Turner
- The Residence; Veger Stephen Hannum - St. Francis Rehab

AT HOME:

Robert Brown, Ridart "Butch" Farmer, Ola Bass,
Shirley Winkfield, Thelma Silvers, Lemont Johnson,
Patricia Ellison, Mary Ann Jones, Shirley Caldwell,
Barbara Douglas, Wendell Whitlock, Yvonne Syndor, Virginia DuBrey

KEEP IN PRAYER:

Justin Trotman, Cathy Stafford, Teri Taylor, Lisa Woodley,
Adinah Edwards, Carl Dean, Patricia Holmes, Ann Stewart,
Sandra Bryant Miller, Autumn Simmons, Donald Hunt, Jr.,
Terry Corson, Ronald Coleman, Rene Hayes

WE PRAY FOR

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

YOUTH COUNCIL

Do you feel called to work with Youth? Do you have great ideas that will help the church to connect with the youth of today (and vice versa)? You are invited to be a part of our parish Youth Council. Please contact [Fr. Daren](#) for more details.

YOUNG ADULT GATHERING

All young adults (those in their 20's and 30's) are invited to a time of fellowship on the 4th Sunday of every month in Anderson Hall immediately following worship.

GIRLS FRIENDLY

Girls Friendly will begin on **Saturday, October 5th**. Please contact [Nikkol Simms](#) for more information.

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.

CALLING FOR YOUTH ACOLYTES!



All youth of our church are invited to serve in the AECST Acolyte Ministry. No prior experience is needed as training will be provided. This is an excellent way for our children and youth to be involved in the life of the church. For more information please speak with [Fr. Daren](#).

Scout Troop #133 - Our Cub Scout Program is open to children grades 1-5. The Cub program meets at **2:00 PM on Saturdays**.

Our Scout Program is open to children aged 11-17 years old. The Scout Program meets at **3:00 PM on Saturdays**.

Please contact Scout [Master Howard Chapman](#) for more information.

Our Wednesday in-person Bible Study

is on break for the Christmas holidays. We will resume on **Wednesday, January 8, 2025**, in the AJ House at 6:00 PM. Our Spring study will be a journey through the Book of Revelation.

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

“To whom much is given, much is required.” -Luke 12:48

The Stewardship Committee of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas recognizes that stewardship may take form in several ways, your time, your talent or your 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 treasures. Prayerfully consider donating to one or all of the special requests below.

FAITHFUL GIVING CARD (PLEDGE)

Please pray for your Faithful Giving for 2024 and 2025. You’ll be able to complete your [Faithful Giving Card](#) on the [church website](#), or by using the paper Faithful Giving Card. Strong support is needed to meet the budget, our many endeavors and outreach projects at St. Thomas. Your Faithful Giving Card can also be placed in the Alms Basin or mailed to the church office.

THE BUILDING FUND ENVELOPES have been placed in Anderson Hall beside the Offering Envelopes. Please pick them up with your offering envelopes. If you’ve already picked your offering envelopes up, please pick up your Building Fund envelopes. You can also do your Building Fund offering [online](#). Each box of Building Fund envelopes will include twelve envelopes, one for each month.

Thank you.

CAPITAL BUILDING IMPROVEMENT FUND

If you are actively contributing, thank you! Your gifts are truly appreciated. Everyone is asked to make a minimum sacrificial gift of \$40 per month. The Building Fund Envelopes are located in Anderson Hall beside the Offering envelopes. When using electronic payments select "Building Fund." If using checks write "Building Fund" on the memo line of your check.

STEWARDSHIP NEWS

The church has received many "undeliverable" mailings. If you have moved, please update your mailing address with the church office by [email](#) or phone 215-473-3065.

Can you help deliver offertory envelopes to our sick and shut-in parishioners? If you live near a parishioner who is unable to come to church, it would be much appreciated if you would bring their envelopes to them. A list of our sick and shut-in parishioners is located next to the offertory envelopes in Anderson Hall.

IMPORTANT: Make sure your name, envelope #, and amount are included on the front of your offering envelope. This is critical for bookkeeping accuracy. Help is just an email away. Contact [Judy Tillman](#).

RECTOR'S PRAYERFUL WISH LIST

\$100,000.00. Our air conditioning units have provided over 30 years of comfort. They are now in need of being replaced. Please prayerfully consider donating toward the replacement and use the [link](#) provided. Thank you to those who have already given toward the new air-conditioning units.

There are several ways to submit your offering and tithes: church service offertory, use the QR code, website donations, download the Givi app, U.S. Mail or hand deliver it to the fiscal office.



**The African Episcopal
Church of St. Thomas |
Abou...**

www.aecst.org

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

“To whom much is given, much is required.” Luke 12:48

- 1) **Sunday Offering Plate.**
- 2) **Mail in** your check or money order to the church.
Please use the following address:
The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas
c/o Fiscal Administrator.
6361 Lancaster Avenue, (Absalom Jones Way).Philadelphia,
PA 19151
- 3) **Use the Givi app.** If you don't already use the app and don't have an account, it's easy to obtain. Please download the Givi app, (**givi IOS App**) for your Apple (iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch) or (**givi Android App**) for your Android device. If you have any questions, please speak with **Deadra Cannon**, 215-844-6115.
- 4) **Bring your check** directly to the Fiscal Office during regular business hours (Monday - Thursday 10:00 AM-2:00 PM) **After business hours**, drop your envelope in the door mail slot located on the front patio of the Absalom Jones House.
- 5) **Church website - [Online Giving](#)**
Simply select 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. **NOTE:** Please remember to enter your envelope number in the Customer ID field, if you are a member of St.Thomas when filling out your online giving information.)
- 6) **Pledge Cards** - Please send them via the US mail to the church or fill out the form **[electronically](#)** through the **www.aecst.org** website or send an email to our **[Fiscal Administrator](#)**.
Thank you so much to all who have return them.

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 Minister	The Rev. Dr. Thomas G. Snowden	dravidian@comcast.net
Associate Minister	The Rev. Dr. Paul Bach	pauljaybach@gmail.com
Executive Asst to Rector	Gladyce DuBrey	1792@aecst.org
Fiscal Administor	Jeannette Jeffrey	fiscal@aecst.org
Sexton	LaDon Elliott	1792@aecst.org
Asst Sexton	David McGilberry	1792@aecst.org
Chancel Choirmaster	Jay Fluellen, DMA	chancelchoir@aecst.org
Gospel Choirmaster	Waltier Blocker	gospelchoir@aecst.org
Rector's General Counsel	Joe Tucker, Esq	jtucker@tigattorneys.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
Church School Superintendent	Tynecia Wilson	churchschool@aecst.org
Ed Muse Photogrphy 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		
Live Stream Ministry	Yaseen Farooq	livevideo@aecst.org
	Terri Tillman	livevideo@aecst.org
Memorial Flowers	Alfreda Brockmam	fredabee@verizon.net
	Clare Mae Daniels	happycmd05@aol.com
Monarch Greeters Ministry		
Parish Vergers	Stephen Hannum	1792@aecst.org
	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	Judy Tillman	stewardship@aecst.org
Transportation Ministry		
Videography Ministry	Quentin Heyward	recordedvideo@aecst.org
Voices of Comfort	Robert Davenport	robertnewtondavenport@gmail.com
William Burke Ushers Ministry	Arlene Singletary	leaniepo302@gmail.com

VESTRY OFFICERS

Rector's Warden - Richard Jones | Accounting Warden - Deborah Camp-Frye
Clerk of the Vestry - Clare Mae Daniels | Treasurer - Albert S. Dandridge, iii Esq.
Stewardship Chair - Judy Tillman | Property Chair - William Burke

THE VESTRY

Deadra Cannon	Wendella Fox	Marie B. Golson
Deborah Harrison	D. Lynn Joell	Kelvin Johnson
Pamela Johnson	Patricia Lynch	Judith Simkins-Booth

THE AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS is a Christ-centered community that welcomes all people. This community embraces and executes the core values of our founder, the Reverend Absalom Jones: leadership, morality, spirituality, equal rights, education, liberty, charity, justice, humanitarianism, self-determanation, self-respect, and freedom.

St. Thomas is an open, Christ-centered community of faith in which the Gospel is re-imaged, taught, lived, and spread.