

THE FRIENDS OF OLD SAINT THOMAS
at Ivy Mills

Volume 5, No. 1

Spring, 1998

NEWSLETTER

The Friends of Old St. Thomas "Spirit Award"

When defining a parish we must look beyond the geographical boundaries, building dimensions and the size of the congregation. What constitutes a successful parish is the spirit of its members. The Christian spirit involves the opportunity to honor God and carry out His teachings through our words, deeds and actions. Two hundred and seventy years ago our earliest parishioners embraced this philosophy when they chose to live and work in harmony with their Quaker and Protestant neighbors. Their effort made William Penn's concept of a "holy experiment" in religious toleration a reality.

Here at St. Thomas the legacy of Christian goodness is evident in many ways; extending a hand to help someone in need, visiting a sick neighbor, doing an errand for the homebound, sharing a talent, working on a community project, being thoughtful of others or simply doing your best.

To acknowledge such good deeds and encourage our youth to pursue these positive actions, The Friends of Old St. Thomas has established the "Spirit Award." In June a winner will be chosen. The award consists of a \$50.00 US. Savings Bond and a certificate. In addition, the recipient's name will be engraved on a special commemorative plaque to be placed on permanent display.

Participation is voluntary but limited to students currently enrolled in the eighth grade and who are members of St. Thomas parish. Nomination forms have been distributed to eighth graders attending St. Thomas School and will be available in the Narthex for students attending public or private schools. Note that anyone, parent, grandparent, neighbor, teacher or friend may nominate an eligible student. Deadline for submissions is May 1, 1998. Completed forms should be mailed to FOST, P.O. Box 19, Chester Heights, PA 19017. For further information, contact Mary Archer at 459-5345.

FOST needs your help!

The parish ministry, Friends of Old St. Thomas, has accepted responsibility for keeping up and keeping alive the story of the Archdiocese's first parish--St. Thomas the Apostle at Ivy Mills, founded in 1729 and going strong 270 years later. In order to meet that responsibility, by maintaining the old church and its outbuildings, and by holding educational, social and other

programs, FOST has collected funds through memberships, honor and memorial donations, craft classes, food certificates, and to date, two special Sunday collections. A foundation gave enough to cover the cost of the cosmetic painting job in 1993. All income so far has been very gratifying and useful. But it is not enough. Major foundation support will be necessary, especially to refurbish the buildings, but that support requires **substantial parish-wide commitment.**

You can help show that commitment by buying FOST Notecards. Blank inside, and thus useful for all occasions, these high quality cards show three of the old church stained glass windows and the "Old Church in Winter" scene. Cost is only \$8.00 for 8 cards (2 of each scene).

Your purchase and use of the cards helps 3 ways...by giving financial support, by showing parish commitment, and by spreading the word to your card recipients. In all those ways, the old church--and the collective parish memory--will benefit greatly by your help. **To purchase cards contact any member of FOST or call Kathy McNichol at (610) 558-0182.**

Day of Remembrance

Join us on **Sunday, April 19 at 2:00 p.m.** in the old church for a memorial service honoring deceased relatives and friends who are buried in St. Thomas churchyards or in other cemeteries. For those who have requested it, the names of their deceased loved ones will be read aloud during the ceremony. Remembrance flowers for gravesites will be distributed at the end of the service. Light refreshments will follow. To request reading of names call Rose Ann Mohn at 431-7178.

Friends Social

Current FOST members have received invitations for an open house on **Sunday, April 26**, at the historic Willcox Homestead. English Jesuit priests heading to Philadelphia regularly visited the Willcox home to celebrate Mass and confer the Sacraments. This stop became known as the "Concord" or "Ivy Mills" mission station. The original house was enlarged in 1837 and the larger building, still standing, became the first "grand house" in Concord Township. Mass was said in St. Mary's Chapel in this house until St. Thomas the Apostle Church was built in 1852.

The Friends of Old St. Thomas wishes to acknowledge and thank the following donors
for their financial support during the 1997 calendar year.

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The Friends of Old Saint Thomas
at Ivy Mills

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Family: \$10.00 (yearly)_____ Individual: \$5.00 (yearly)_____ Donation: \$_____

Please mail completed form and your check to
The Friends of Old St. Thomas
P.O. Box 19, Chester Heights, PA 19017

THE FRIENDS OF OLD SAINT THOMAS
at Ivy Mills

Volume 5, No. 2

Fall, 1998

NEWSLETTER

Repairs to the Interior of the Church

Recent repair of the ceiling and side wall was necessary due to the weight of the vinyl paper and multiple applications of paint in combination with humidity. The effect of the humidity which is present in the walls (due to the removal of the exterior stucco from the stone in 1937) is compounded by the windows being opened and left open all day even during inclement weather.

Carl Benner painters expedited the repairs so that daily mass, weddings and other scheduled events could continue.

Please help take care of the church by keeping the windows closed as much as possible. If windows must be opened, please close gently to avoid further damage to the stained glass.

A Cause Worthy of Your Consideration

It would be inconceivable to think of Philadelphia without Independence Hall, Washington, DC. without the White House or New York City without Grand Central Station...yet at one time or another all of these historic sites came very close to becoming just a memory. Independence Hall was once put up for public sale by the city, which found it an expensive nuisance. The White House sustained severe damage when it was burned during the war of 1812. Proposed building projects would have severely compromised the integrity of Grand Central Station. We are all grateful to those people who took the initiative to become involved in saving and restoring these important properties.

Take a minute to imagine the grounds of St. Thomas without the old church and the buildings that constitute the historic complex. It would be a tragedy not only for us, but for future generations if we abandoned caring for and about the history of St. Thomas. This parish is unique. It is the oldest parish in the Philadelphia Archdiocese; its founding antedates 1729. The earliest members of our parish joined fellow believers and formed one of the earliest Catholic communities in the new world. These early settlers proved by their example that William Penn's "Holy Experiment" of religious toleration had merit, and our founding fathers had the wisdom to include Penn's idea when they drafted the Constitution of the United States recognizing the right of religious freedom.

The old church, built in 1852, is the oldest original church building in continuous use in Delaware County. In 1983 the Delaware County Planning Department deemed the entire old church complex a "historic district" worthy of National Register listing. Surely this significant property deserves to be maintained as part of our religious legacy.

We can understand exactly what Shakespeare meant when he wrote about the noiseless and inaudible footsteps of time. Look around and observe the many changes that have taken place in our immediate neighborhoods. Cornfields have been transformed into housing developments. Farms and barns are no longer commonplace. Once quiet country roads are now clogged with traffic. Change is inevitable, but we hope you will agree that maintaining and preserving Old St. Thomas is an endeavor worthy of your support.

Active Members Needed

For the Friends' ministry to be successful we must increase our membership and encourage members to become **active participants** in keeping alive and perpetuating the history of St. Thomas the Apostle parish. Many volunteer opportunities do not require attending meetings and can be done at your convenience. We need people to make phone calls, send out correspondence, set up appointments, handle publicity, help with fundraising, develop educational programs, research parish and local history, talk with older parishioners and record their recollections, help with social events, clean the church, work on cemetery projects, care for flowers and shrubs and help maintain the historic complex grounds. Perhaps you have an area of expertise or ideas that would be beneficial to our organization. Please call and let us know how you can help (Contact Trish Glessner at 610 459-3151) or attend our meetings on the second Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the old rectory. Recruitment of new members is of paramount importance to our ministry

Reaching Out

Realizing many newcomers and current parishioners may not be aware of the historical significance of this parish and its old buildings, The Friends are planning a spring open house of the entire historic complex in April. This will be a unique opportunity to participate in an in-depth tour of the old church and hear about the interior changes that took place through the years. Tour the rooms in the old rectory and visit the barn which later served as a garage. Inspect the horse shed and the ice house. Take a guided tour through the cemetery and view the artifacts we have collected. Make it a day for you and your family to get acquainted with our parish history. Watch for details in the Sunday bulletin.

Finances

FOST has accepted responsibility for the old church complex. Originally, we had hoped to raise sufficient funds to restore the old church by the year 2002, the 150th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone by St. John Neumann. It seems highly unlikely this will take place by 2002. We have found that in order to qualify for matching grants or to be considered for private funding, we must raise a significant amount of money. This has been very difficult. Much of what we have raised has gone for routine maintenance and general repairs.

Most of our income comes from parishioners who support the fund raising efforts of the Friends. The parish designates one collection each year specifically for the old church. This year the collection amounted to \$1100. Utilities are paid by the parish but the Friends pay all other expenses.

Financial support is essential if our ministry is to continue. We would like to present some options you may wish to consider to aid the Friends in their goal of restoring the old church.

- Become a member of FOST. Fill out your application today.
- Memorial Gift - a donation in memory of a deceased loved one.
- Honor Gift - a donation in memory of living friends or relatives.
- Wills - a memorial gift in your will to The Friends of Old St. Thomas.
- Life Insurance - you may assign to The Friends of Old St. Thomas the ownership of an existing policy or you may wish to make a gift with a new policy.
- Deferred Gifts - there are many ways other than a will by which a donor can make a monetary gift to The Friends of Old St. Thomas and still insure a generous life income for the donor and spouse.
- Outright or restricted gifts.
- Support the fund raising efforts of FOST.

An attorney, accountant or financial consultant can offer you advice concerning bequests that are part of an estate plan, securities or insurance policies. You must clearly indicate these are given for use in maintaining and preserving the Old Church complex.

Note Cards on Sale Now!

The Friends will have notecards available for purchase in the Social Hall after every Mass through December 13th. We had many requests for "The Old Church in Winter" for use as a Christmas card. The inside is blank so you can write your own holiday message. The cards are versatile enough to use anytime and make a great gift. The proceeds go towards preservation and restoration of the Old Church. A packet of eight cards is \$8.00.

1998 Spirit Award Winner

The Friends of Old St. Thomas proudly announces the first recipient of the "Spirit Award", Joseph Longworth, a 1998 graduate of St. Thomas School. Joseph received a U.S. Savings Bond and his name has been inscribed on a commemorative plaque on permanent display in the Social Hall.

Lisa Jones, Beth Laganelli and Katie Missimer received honorable mention.

The "Spirit Award" annually recognizes an 8th grade student and member of St. Thomas Parish who embodies the Christian spirit of honoring God and carrying out His teachings through words and deeds at home, in school and parish and in the wider community. Visiting a sick neighbor, doing errands for the homebound, sharing a talent, working on a community project, being thoughtful and kind to others are examples of the tradition of good Christian spirit which began when our earliest parishioners chose to live in harmony with each other and with their Quaker and Protestant neighbors.

FOST Appreciation Social

Our thanks to the Willcox Family for allowing the Friends to hold the Spring Social at the historic Willcox Homestead. This stately old home was the perfect setting for the Friends to socialize. Guests had the opportunity to tour the house and grounds. The restored rooms included St. Mary's Chapel where religious services were held prior to 1852.

Craft Class

Unfortunately, scheduling problems prevented the Friends from offering a fall craft class. Our spring workshop will be held on Thursday, March 4, 1999.

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Address.....

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