

“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 Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, Education and Back to School Sunday. Welcome to our Guest Speaker, Dr. Aaron Walton, President, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, along with the Cheyney University Glee Club, worshipping with us this morning.

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, and proudly a part of the world-wide Anglican Communion. 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 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!

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



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**The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
Education and Back to School Sunday
September 20, 2026**

The Celebrant: The Very Rev. Canon Martini Shaw

Assisting: The Rev. Fr. Gerald Collins

Guest Speaker: Dr. Aaron A. Walton, President, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania

Vergers: Dr. Naomi Johnson Booker, Eugene Golson and Karen Ragland

Music Ministry: St. Thomas Chancel Choir

Guest Choir: Cheyney University Glee Club

Guest Soloist: Chantal Freeman

Livestream/Sound Ministry: Quentin Heyward, Marie Golson and Ryan Chatman

Order of Service

The Opening Mediation

Verger Dr. Naomi Johnson Booker

The Prelude

Cheyney University Glee Club

The Opening Hymn- “God of Grace and God of Glory”

1982 Hymnal #594

**1) God of grace and God of glory,
on thy people pour thy power;
crown thine ancient Church's story;
bring her bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.**

**3) Cure thy children's warring madness,
Bend our pride to thy control;
Shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
Rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.**

**2) Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us,
free our hearts to faith and praise.
grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.**

**4) Save us from weak resignation
To the evils we deplore;
Let the gift of thy salvation
Be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving then whom we adore,
Serving thee whom we adore.**

A Word of Welcome

The Celebrant

The Opening Salutation

Book of Common Prayer (BCP) Pg. 355

The Celebrant: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The People: And blessed be God's kingdom, now and forever. Amen.

The Collect for Purity

BCP Pg. 355

The Celebrant: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Musical Selection

Renard Golden, Educator

The Proclamation of the Word

The Collect of the Day

The Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

The People: And also with you.

The Celebrant: Let us pray:

Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The First Reading: Exodus 16:2-15

Justin Trotman, Education Administrative Assistant

A Reading from the Book of Exodus.

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?” And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD.”

Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, ‘Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.’” And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. The LORD spoke to Moses and said, “I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”

In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.”

The Reader: The Word of the Lord.

The People: Thanks be to God.

Psalms 105:1-6, 37-45

Dr. Naomi Johnson Booker, Educator

Give thanks to the LORD and call upon his Name; *
make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him, *
and speak of all his marvelous works.

Glory in his holy Name; *
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

Search for the LORD and his strength; *
continually seek his face.

Remember the marvels he has done, *
his wonders and the judgments of his mouth,

O offspring of Abraham his servant, *
O children of Jacob his chosen.

He led out his people with silver and gold; *
in all their tribes there was not one that stumbled.

Egypt was glad of their going, *
because they were afraid of them.

He spread out a cloud for a covering *
and a fire to give light in the night season.

They asked, and quails appeared, *
and he satisfied them with bread from heaven.

He opened the rock, and water flowed, *
so the river ran in the dry places.

For God remembered his holy word *
and Abraham his servant.

So he led forth his people with gladness, *
his chosen with shouts of joy.

He gave his people the lands of the nations, *
and they took the fruit of others' toil,

That they might keep his statutes *
and observe his laws.
Hallelujah!

The Second Reading: Romans 14:1-12

Carolyn E. Paige, Retired Education Administrator

A Reading from the Book of Philippians.

To me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well-- since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

The Reader: The Word of the Lord.

The People: Thanks be to God.

The Gradual Hymn– “Blessed Assurance”

**1) Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood. [Refrain]**

**Refrain: This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.**

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

The Priest: The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

The People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

The Priest: The Gospel of the Lord.

The People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

The Homily Hymn – “Blessed Assurance”

LEVAS # 184 (vv. 3)

**3) Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I and my savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love**

**Refrain: This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my savior all the day long.**

The Message

Dr. Aaron A. Walton, President, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania

A Musical Selection

Cheyney University Glee Club

The Call to Christian Discipleship

The Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,**

the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Dr. Derek Griffith, Educator

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love,
and reveal your glory in the world.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one
another and serve the common good.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of
others and to your honor and glory.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

We pray for all educators, school staffing, students, parents, and families that they may be guided and protected by your wisdom and understanding. We especially pray for the leadership and student body of Cheyney University.

Silence

That they may experience Your heavenly protection and be endued with wisdom and understanding.

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Make us instruments of reconciliation and peace and teach the nations of the earth to walk together in the ways of justice, mercy, and love.

Silence

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

The Concluding Collect

The Celebrant

Almighty and everlasting God, whose providence has sustained your people throughout every generation: Receive these prayers we offer with thankful hearts, and grant that, trusting in your mercy and guided by your Spirit, we may continue to serve you faithfully; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Confession

The Celebrant: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us kneel and confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

(Silence is kept)

The Celebrant and the People

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

The Absolution

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

The Peace

The Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The People: And also with you.

The Holy Eucharist

The Offertory Sentence and Offering

The Celebrant

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The Musical Offertory Selection

Soloist: Chantal Freeman

The Great Thanksgiving

BCP Pg. 361

The Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

The People: And also with you.

The Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

The People: We lift them to the Lord.

The Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

The People: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

For you are the source of light and life; you made us in your image and called us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who forever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

The Sanctus

The Celebrant and the People (*sung*)

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

The Celebrant: Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself, and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all. He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

The Memorial Acclamation (*sung*)

The Celebrant and the People

Jesus Christ has died.

Jesus Christ is risen.

Jesus Christ will come again.

The Celebrant: We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer (*sung*)

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant: Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

The People: Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

The Agnus Dei (*sung*)

The Celebrant: Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The People: Have mercy upon us.

The Celebrant: Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The People: Have mercy upon us.

The Celebrant: Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The People: Grant us thy peace.

The Prayer of Humble Access

Let us pray: We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy; Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our

sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

The Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

The Distribution of Communion

All baptized persons who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, are invited to receive the Holy Sacrament. If you only wish to receive a blessing, please cross your arms on your chest.

The Communion Selections

St. Thomas Music Ministry

The Post Communion Prayer

BCP pg. 365

The Celebrant and the People:

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sending Forth of the Lay Eucharistic Visitors

The Celebrant: In the healing name of Jesus and with the compassionate embrace of this parish family, I send you forth bearing these Holy Gifts to those to whom you go today, so that they may share with us in the Communion of Christ's Body and Blood.

The People: We who are many are one body, and we all share one bread and one cup.

The Announcements

Richard Jones, Rector's Warden

The Blessing of St. Thomas' Church School Teachers, Staff and all Educators

The Blessing of students and their backpacks

The Recognition of Visitors and Guests

The Blessing of Birthdays, Anniversaries and Travel

The Final Blessing

The Celebrant

The Closing Hymn – "Guide My Feet"

1982 Hymnal Pg. 497

**1) Guide my feet while I run this race;
guide my feet while I run this race;
guide my feet while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain!**

**hold my hand while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain!**

**2) Hold my hand while I run this race;
hold my hand while I run this race;**

**3) Stand by me while I run this race;
stand by me while I run this race;
stand by me while I run this race,
for I don't want to run this race in vain!**

The Dismissal

The Rector

The Postlude

St. Thomas Music Ministry

Dr. Aaron A. Walton, President

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania

President Aaron A. Walton, a proven, results driven leader with 40 years of experience in corporate level management, was appointed as Cheyney University of Pennsylvania's Interim President on May 31, 2017. Because of the unprecedented progress he spearheaded during his first five months, President Walton was elected as permanent President by the Board of Governors of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) on November 13, 2017.

President Walton is a fearless champion for Cheyney University and its students. He brings expertise in strategic planning and organizational turnarounds and has addressed the University's challenges head-on while leading the effort to define a new trajectory for the University. In his inaugural address to Cheyney's faculty and staff in June 2017, President Walton outlined a clear vision for the University — to produce students who excel in academics, character, and social responsibility. Through the University's strategic planning process, these three pillars ultimately became the foundation of Cheyney's new Vision: to be known as the premier educational model for academic excellence, character development, and social responsibility.

A former Senior Vice President of Highmark, Inc., one of the nation's leading healthcare providers, President Walton was one of nine principal officers responsible for providing overall management and direction of all corporate activities nationally. During his tenure at Highmark, he established and implemented a number of strategic healthcare initiatives that yielded community and company-wide growth and advancement, including an award-winning program that was one of the first programs in America to address childhood obesity and bullying. He was also instrumental in establishing the Children's Health Insurance Program, better known as C.H.I.P., which has become a national model.

While a senior executive at Highmark, and in his subsequent retirement, he served as Vice Chair of the PASSHE Board of Governors, where he was also Chair of Academic & Student Affairs, and Chair of Human Resources. President Walton was also a longtime member of California University of Pennsylvania's Council of Trustees, and chair from 1999 to 2003.

Prior to being tapped to lead Cheyney University, President Walton served as co-chair of the Cheyney Task Force appointed by the Board of Governors. The Task Force developed and approved, a "conceptual framework" for a new business model for Cheyney which included the creation of the Institute For The Contemporary African American Experience (ICAAE). On July 31, 2018, Governor Tom Wolf joined President Walton and other officials on Cheyney's campus to announce the official launch of the ICAAE.

President Walton has held both leadership and advisory roles on more than 35 community boards. Some of his affiliations include the August Wilson Center for African American Culture (Chair), Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Polemarch Pittsburgh Alumni Chapter, the Kappa Scholarship Endowment Fund (Founding Board Member), NEED (Negro Emergency Educational Drive) where he served as Chair, The 100 Black Men of Western Pennsylvania, and Sire Archon, Rho Boule, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity.

President Walton earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Speech Pathology and Audiology from California University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Public Management (MPM) from the Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University. He and his wife, Dr. Gloria M. Walton, have two adult children and three grandchildren.

