

# ST. THOMAS LIFELINES

VOLUME 33, No. 1

JANUARY 2026

Dear St. Thomas Family,

Happy New Year! I hope 2026 is off to a good start with everyone. This particular January has a number of events and business items that are important in the life of St. Thomas as well as our diocese of Southwestern Virginia. If the weather cooperates, it will be a lively January.

The big item at the very end of January is our diocesan convention in Roanoke. This year is extraordinary because—in addition to conducting business including approving a budget—we will elect our next bishop. This is a major undertaking, and if a diocese is blessed and a bit lucky, it happens infrequently (our last election of a bishop was about a dozen years ago). Usually these elections are held at a special convention, but this time, we are combining it with our yearly gathering. This seems like a good idea, and it's an efficient use of resources.

This past week, the four candidates and their spouses have travelled around the diocese to get a good look at who and what they have been nominated to pastor and lead. For three consecutive evenings, they appeared at large gatherings to answer questions about themselves and to express their ideas about ministry, mission, and community. I was unable to attend any of these gatherings in person, but they were broadcast on YouTube, and I caught all of them on my cell phone on my way home from work. I thought these interactions were very helpful, and I encourage you to watch them on the DIOSWVA YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@DioSWVA>.

This Sunday, January 11, our beloved deacon, Jon Greene, will lead us in a special forum after worship to discuss the process, the candidates, and our hopes for the future of the church. I hope many of us will be able to participate.

At St. Thomas, January also marks the reconstitution of our Vestry with the commissioning of three new members. I thank Crystal Priddy, Joel Hagan, and Kathy Fowler for their willingness to serve St. Thomas in this important leadership role. I also thank Jane Ellis, Chris Witt, and Danielle Bland, who completed their three-year terms at the end of 2025. Your service and leadership are greatly appreciated!

We are blessed with thoughtful, generous, and talented members—at both the parish and diocesan levels. I feel that when such an obvious cloud of witnesses joins us to God's abundant grace and mercy, our faith is strengthened and our lives are enriched. Thank you to all in our parish family who in their different ways make the body of Christ visible and tangible at St. Thomas and the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia!

Yours in Christ,  
Mark

### Annual Meeting Summary

The meeting opened with prayer. After a quorum was established business continued with the election of new vestry members, the presentation of the proposed 2026 budget and reports from the wardens and committee members. Copies of the budget and financial report presented by Val Tweedie are on the bulletin board. Committee reports are in this issue of LifeLines.

### Altar Guild – Lora Beeken

St. Thomas Altar Guild is thriving and growing! The purpose of the Guild is to prepare and maintain the church's sanctuary, vessels, linens, and vestments for worship, ensuring a beautiful and orderly setting for services, with tasks including setting up for communion, laundering linens, polishing brass, and managing decorations for special seasons like Christmas and Easter.

We have added a few new members this year and last with the following parishioners serving on the guild: Kathy Pollard, Ruth Ashworth, Crystal Priddy, Kathy Fowler, Karen Bronaugh, Gail Leist - Co chair, and Lora Beeken - Co Chair

In honor of a dear parishioner and altar guild member who recently died almost two years ago, Judy Koland, memorial gifts of blue pottery were made in her name. The vessels, which will be used during Eucharist, were blessed in November, and the pottery will be used during Advent and Lent.

Please keep in mind that A Cleaner World in Blacksburg launders our fair linens and vestments at no charge. If you have a need for a dry cleaner, please visit A Cleaner World and express your appreciation for their generosity!

If you are interested in joining the Altar Guild, please contact Gail or Lora or any other member of the Guild. We would love to have you join this worthwhile experience!

### Flowers – Janet

The flower ministry involves getting flowers from stores and gardens each week. It takes a couple of hours each week to put the arrangements together. Advent, Christmas, and Easter are busier. Due to the cost of flowers, it was decided that Sundays that are not sponsored we will not use real flowers. Janet will put together a couple of arrangements of silk flowers that can be put out instead. This is a ministry of one and Janet would be happy to have others join her.

### Senior Warden's Report – Harvey Leist

#### (Presented by Joe)

Harvey is out of town visiting his brother and asked me to thank the congregation for the pleasure of being on the vestry for 2025 and allowing him to serve as Senior Warden. We are a small parish with a big heart. St. Thomas serves the greater community of Christiansburg and Southwest Virginia with multiple projects.

Just to highlight a few:

Boys Home- our support allows young boys an opportunity to become good men. Taking the day trip with Tom Bernard to Boys Home changed my understanding and appreciation of how valuable this ministry is.

Room at the Table- dedicated parishioners with a contribution from the entire church provide 100 plus meals to local residents each month.

There are so many other outreach ministries. A few are: Food Bank Sunday, Blessing Box, Christmas store, and To Our House.

Jesus had 3 fish and 5 loaves of bread and he fed thousands. We are small with a big heart and we feed many.

A heartfelt thank you to all of you. It has been an honor to serve as your senior warden. May God bless St. Thomas.

### Junior Warden's Report – Joe Richmeier

- The outside gardens are worked on throughout the year.
- The memorial flower box was setup in the columbarium area.
- The new church sign is completed – a lot of credit goes to Val for the work on this project.
- The bell has been fixed.
- The elevator will not be repaired. It is obsolete and cannot be fixed. This was part of the decision to move the choir room downstairs into the nursery.
- Inspections of the fire extinguishers went well.
- We will need to look into painting the church roof.
- He has moved the Roanoke Street retaining wall to later. We need to look into help or grants from the Diocese.
- Joe noted that there are plans to move the nursery upstairs into the former choir room and install the bathroom upstairs.
- Jenny's office will be moved downstairs.

## Treasurer's Report & 2026 Budget Presentation – Val Tweedie

A packet was handed out with a Balance Sheet report, Actual through Nov. 30-Proposed Budget-2025 Budget, and Graphs showing where income and expenses are coming from and going.

The biggest expenses are payroll, utilities, and building maintenance.

Vestry will approve the 2026 budget at their January meeting.

Some ministries like music and Altar Guild may want to look at their needs for 2026 and adjust the budget for their ministries.

The guest cellist is compensated through the budget item for guest priests and musicians.

## Pledge Custodian – Jenny Stalvey

This year we had 38 pledges pledging a total of \$100,010. Pledges have come in fairly regularly throughout the year and near the end of the year some have even been able to give more.

The 2026 stewardship campaign surpassed the goal of \$100,000. As of today, we have received 39 pledges with a total pledged of \$105,684. This includes three new pledges and increases in 10 others.



## Boys Home—Chris Witt

We reached our goal for the cottage sponsorship for 2026 which is \$2500. There are six residents of Green Cottage including Paul, Levi, Tyrese, Nazayah, and Sean.



## Trex Update

In December, we collected 84 lbs. of plastics towards our next bench. *Please remember pet food bags are not accepted.*

## Outreach Activities at St. Thomas

- Prepare meals for those in need through the Room at the Table program
- Prepare meals for guests at the To Our House program for the homeless
- Sponsor a cabin and provide supplies for Boys Home
- Contribute Thanksgiving food baskets through the Backpack program
- Contribute peanut butter and canned fruit to the Montgomery County Christmas Store
- Provide food items to those in need in the Blessing Box in front of the church
- Recycle plastic through the Trex program and donate Trex benches to community groups
- Host weekly meetings for Narcotics Anonymous
- St. Thomas booth at the Wilderness Trail Festival
- Host three Red Cross blood drives each year
- Provide cocoa to participants in the Christiansburg Christmas parade
- Contribute monthly food donations to the food pantry at MCEAP
- Contribute granola bars to the Backpack program for students at CPS and CES
- Pack weekend food supplies for students in need at CPS and CES through the Backpack program
- Host a weekly watercolor class in the parish hall

## RATT & TOH- Ruth Ashworth

RATT is a fun outreach group. They have fun preparing 100 meals which are handed out on a first come first served basis. About 15 meals are set aside and given to homebound people.

To Our House is also something everyone should try out. This is a great experience preparing a meal for the people in the program and spending time with them.

## Food Bank Sunday

On the first Sunday of the month we collect donations of non-perishable food items for the food bank. Donations are taken to MCEAP later in the week. Food donations can be put in the baskets at the entrance to the church. If you would like to make a monetary donation, be sure to mark "Food Bank" on your check or envelope.

**In December we collected 35 items and \$15!**

**Birthdays**

- 1 Casey Graham  
 3 Lawson Kennan  
 Larry Pollard  
 5 Natalie Teel  
 7 Gail Leist  
 9 Irma Pillsbury  
 13 Paul Voights-Boys Home  
 15 Patience Okoronkwo  
 19 Laura Earp  
 20 Avery Pasciak  
 30 Ann Alexander  
 31 Maggie Straub

**December RATT**

The team included Ann Alexander, Jane Ellis, Kathleen Fowler, Crystal Priddy, Liz Swinfen, Tom & Danielle Bland. A hardy meal of chili was prepared as well as coleslaw. The meal also included a roll, applesauce, and cookie. Thanks to all the volunteers, and if you'd like to get involved, we prepare a meal once a month on Tuesdays. Contact Danielle Bland to join the team!

**Hospitality Sunday**

Join in fellowship and enjoy some refreshments after church on the first Sunday of the month. Everyone is invited to bring a dish of finger food to share!

*The next hospitality Sunday is February 1.*

**Greening of the Church, December 14, 2025**

Pictures by Chris Witt

**Daughters of the King – Kathryn Pollard.**

The Ann Frances Chapter of the Order of the Daughters of the King met regularly during 2025. We compiled a prayer list at the end of each meeting. Daughters then prayed daily for the names on that list.

We welcomed Ruth Ashworth as a member in September. We also sponsored a Quiet Day in Lent and one again in Advent.

**Ushers – Chris Witt**

Chris thanks Joe Straub, Joel Hagen, Kathleen Fowler, Bill Kennan, and Harold Ashworth for serving as ushers. We could always use more ushers. He thanked everyone for their support.

Mark Priest also commented that we need more Zoom operators.

From Harvey—We need acolytes. Adults and youth.

**Thank You Kroger Shoppers!**

From August 31 through November 30, 2025, 23 households contributed \$89.83 to St. Thomas through the Kroger Community Rewards Program.

**January Server Schedule**

	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Altar Guild</b>	Ruth Ashworth Lora Beeken	Ruth Ashworth Lora Beeken	Kathleen Fowler Kathryn Pollard	Kathleen Fowler Kathryn Pollard
<b>Announcements</b>	Marie Painter	Joe Richmeier	Bill Kennan	Harvey Leist
<b>Chalice Bearer</b>	Danielle Bland	Landon Cairns	Joel Hagen	Jane Ellis
<b>Lay Reader</b>	Bill Kennan	Val Tweedie	Mark Priest	Val Tweedie
<b>Ushers</b>	Bill Kennan Chris Witt	Joel Hagen Joe Straub	Kathleen Fowler Chris Witt	Harold Ashworth Bill Kennan
<b>Zoom Operators</b>	Mark Priest	Val Tweedie	Joel Hagen	Mark Priest

# JANUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<i>If you need to meet with Fr. Mark, please feel free to contact him at 276- 791-3175 or frazimw9@gmail.com.</i>				7pm Evening Prayer on Zoom <b>Happy New Year!</b>	2 8pm NA	3
<b>4 The 2nd Sunday after Christmas Day</b> Hospitality & Food Bank Sunday 10am Holy Eucharist in person & on Zoom	5 7pm NA	6 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 8pm NA	7 1pm Watercolor Class	8 8pm NA	9 8pm NA	10
<b>11 The 1st Sunday after the Epiphany</b> <b>The Baptism of Our Lord</b> 10am Holy Eucharist in person & on Zoom Adult Forum: Election of a New Bishop	12 7pm NA	13 5:45pm Backpack Packing Party 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 8pm NA	14 10:15am Daughters of the King 1pm Watercolor Class 7pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	15 8pm NA	16 8pm NA	17
<b>18 The 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany</b> <b>Loose Plate Offering</b> Rector's Discretionary 10am Holy Eucharist in person & on Zoom 11:20am Adult Forum <b>11:30am Vestry</b>	19 7pm NA	20 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 8pm NA	21 1pm Watercolor Class 7pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	22 8pm NA	23 8pm NA	24
<b>25 The 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany</b> 10am Holy Eucharist in person & on Zoom <b>11am Worship Committee Meeting</b> 11:20am Adult Forum	26 7pm NA	27 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal 8pm NA	28 1pm Watercolor Class 7pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	29 8pm NA	30 8pm NA	31

## Zoom Information for Sundays

Join from a computer:  
[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81739544575?  
pwd=M1g3ehNHauURDfIRQ1BPTGNEN3NPd09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81739544575?pwd=M1g3ehNHauURDfIRQ1BPTGNEN3NPd09)

Join from a Telephone: Dial +1 646 931 3860 and Enter  
Meeting ID 817 3954 4575 and Passcode 845478 .

## Zoom Information for Thursdays

Join from a computer:  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89544248014>  
**Phone:** 540-382-4365  
**Website:** <https://ssthomaschristiansburg.org>  
**Email List Signup:** <http://eepurl.com/gxP6Dj>

