

St. Thomas LifeLines

Volume 33, No. 7

July 2026

Dear St. Thomas Family,

Each year as the Fourth of July approaches, we are invited into a complicated but holy work: to give thanks for the blessings of our nation while also asking God to make us more faithful to the ideals we celebrate.

In the Episcopal Church, Independence Day is not simply a civic observance—it is a holy day we bring into prayer. We give thanks for liberty, even as we ask for the grace “to maintain our liberties in righteousness and peace.”

This year, I’ve been reflecting on a striking essay by my friend from seminary Andrew Thayer, who describes our present moment using the metaphor of an autoimmune disorder. In medicine, such a disorder occurs when the body’s own defenses—meant to protect—begin to attack the body itself. When that happens, the problem is not an external threat but a kind of internal confusion: the body loses its ability to recognize itself.

That image is unsettling, but also illuminating.

We can recognize something of that pattern in our common life today. Institutions designed to serve the common good can become instruments of suspicion. Fellow citizens can come to be seen not as neighbors, but as threats. When that happens, the “body” of a nation begins, in a sense, to turn against itself—a kind of failure of shared identity and mutual recognition.

For Christians, this language resonates deeply. St. Paul reminds us that we are one body in Christ. When one member suffers, all suffer. When we fail to see Christ in one another, we risk participating in our own spiritual diminishment.

So, on this Fourth of July, I would suggest that patriotism—properly understood—is not blind celebration nor harsh condemnation. It is something more faithful: a commitment to the health of the whole body. It is gratitude paired with honesty. It is love that tells the truth.

And above all, it is rooted not in fear, but in hope.

The Gospel offers us a different kind of freedom than any nation can provide. It is the freedom to love our neighbor, to pray for those with whom we disagree, and to seek the good even when it is costly. It is the freedom to resist the forces—within us and around us—that divide, dehumanize, or harden our hearts.

This is the work of healing.

As we gather in worship this month—perhaps after picnics, parades, and fireworks—we do something profoundly countercultural: we kneel together, we confess together, we receive one bread and one cup together. In that act, Christ restores our vision. We remember who we are, and whose we are.

May God bless this country we love—not by sparing us from struggle, but by granting us wisdom, humility, and courage. And may God use us, in our small and faithful ways, to be agents of healing in a divided time.

Yours in Christ,
Mark

Birthdays!

- 7/1 – Jessica Morgan
- 7/10 – Mary Stuart Cosby, Jane Ellis, Marie Painter
- 7/13 – Ann De Oliveira
- 7/16 – Anne Curry
- 7/18 – Ogechi Okoronkwo
- 7/20 – Kathy Fowler
- 7/23 – Jennifer Miller



Anniversaries!

- 7/5 – Tom & Danielle Bland, Jon & Elise Greene
- 7/9 – Fr. Mark & Amy Frazier
- 7/17 – Larry & Kathy Pollard
- 7/19 – Joel & Sue Hagen

Parish Family News

Mary Stuart Cosby's great granddaughter Addison Leone graduated from Jamestown High School on June 6th with a Governor Seal and as a member of the National Honor Society. Addison will attend Virginia Tech in the fall!

Summer Backyard Suppers

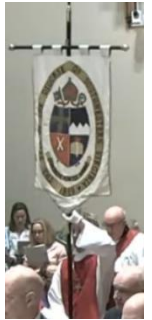
Our next backyard supper will be on Sunday, July 12th at 5pm Liz & Graham Swinfen's, 777 Craigs Mountain Rd., Christiansburg. Bring a dish to share and a chair to sit on. All are welcome!

Here are a few pictures from our first backyard supper at Jane Carper's on June 28th.



Bishop Karin MacPhail

On June 13th, Bishop Karin MacPhail was ordained at St. John's Roanoke. Several St. Thomas people attended and participated in the ceremony.



Landon Cairns carried the Bishop's banner in the processional and Joe Richmeier carried St. Thomas's banner. A link to official photos of the event can be found in the diocesan newsletter and you can watch the ceremony on the diocesan YouTube site: <https://www.youtube.com/dioswva>.



Room At the Table News

On Tuesday June 16, St. Thomas prepared 110 meals at Christiansburg Presbyterian Church. The sous chefs included Ruth & Harold Ashworth, Jane Ellis, Fr. Mark and Danielle Bland. The menu was a hearty Taco Salad. Thanks to the team for their dedication to this very important ministry. Our next meal will be July 21. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Danielle Bland.

Grace House on the Mountain Collection

The Ann-Frances chapter of the Daughters of the King invite you to join them in donating funds to Grace House on the Mountain for school supplies. We will collect donations on July 19th through the offertory. Please note Grace House on the memo line of your checks.



Earthquake Victim Relief

On June 24, two strong earthquakes struck north-central Venezuela in rapid succession. Episcopal Relief & Development is in contact with local partners as they provide critical relief today and assess their community needs. The International Disaster Fund is an important tool for responding to immediate needs and supporting long-term recovery. To donate and get more information, visit episcopalrelief.org.



Thank You Kroger Shoppers!

We received \$79.93 through the Kroger Community Rewards thanks to 23 households shopping at Kroger from March 1st through May 31st. To contribute to St. Thomas link your Kroger Rewards account to St. Thomas (EU541).



Forward Day by Day

The next issue of the daily devotional “Forward Day by Day” available this month. Regular and large print copies will be in the tract rack in the church entrance and in the parish hall. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please contact the church office.



Blood Drive

St. Thomas will host a Red Cross blood drive on Saturday, July 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Donors can sign up on the Red Cross app or website: www.redcrossblood.org. For more information contact Joel (joelbhagen@gmail.com) or Sue (smchagen@gmail.com).

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 July 5th.

Food Bank Sunday

On the first Sunday of the month we collect donations of non-perishable food for the food bank which 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 June we collected 30 items and \$10!

Trex Update

In June, we collected 65 lbs. of plastics to recycle.

Lord God Almighty, in whose Name the founders of this country won liberty for themselves and for us, and lit the torch of freedom for nations then unborn: Grant that we and all the people of this land may have grace to maintain our liberties in righteousness and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect for Independence Day, BCP page 242

July Server Schedule				
	5	12	19	26
Altar Guild	Kathleen Fowler Kathryn Pollard	Kathleen Fowler Kathryn Pollard	Karen Bronaugh Gail Leist Crystal Priddy	Karen Bronaugh Gail Leist Crystal Priddy
Announcements	Bill Kennan	Joel Hagen	Harvey Leist	Marie Painter
Chalice Bearer	Val Tweedie	Danielle Bland	Landon Cairns	Anne Curry
Lay Reader	Amy Frazier	Jane Ellis	Bill Kennan	Jennifer Miller
Nursery	<i>Sign up on the website to serve or contact Marie Painter or Crystal Priddy.</i>			
Ushers	Harold Ashworth Bill Kennan	Kathleen Fowler Joel Hagen	Joe Straub Chris Witt	Harold Ashworth Joe Straub
Zoom Operator	Joel Hagen	Mark Priest	Mark Priest	Joel Hagen

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Contact Us Email: mystthomasoffice@yahoo.com Phone: 540-382-4365 Website: https://stthomaschristiansburg.org Email List Signup: http://eepurl.com/gxP6Dj			1 8 pm NA	2 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	3 8 pm NA	4 
5 6th Sunday after Pentecost Food Bank & Hospitality Sunday 10 am Holy Eucharist	6	7 7 pm NA	8 8 pm NA	9 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	10 8 pm NA	11
12 7th Sunday after Pentecost 10 am Holy Eucharist 11:30 am Vestry Meeting 5 pm Backyard Summer Supper at the Swinfen's	13	14 7 pm NA	15 8 pm NA	16 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	17 8 pm NA	18 10am-2pm Red Cross Blood Drive
19 8th Sunday after Pentecost Loose Plate Offering ~ Rector's Discretionary Fund 10 am Holy Eucharist	20	21 7 pm NA	22 8 pm NA	23 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	24 8 pm NA	25
26 9th Sunday after Pentecost 10 am Holy Eucharist	27	28 7 pm NA	29 8 pm NA	30 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	31 8 pm NA	