

St. Thomas LifeLines

Volume 33, No. 8

August 2026

Dear St. Thomas Family,

Christianity has always been weird. Not weird because it is irrational, but because it refuses to fit comfortably into whatever culture is around it. Every generation is tempted to reshape Christianity in its own image, but Jesus consistently refuses to cooperate.

In the first century, many people expected a Messiah who would conquer enemies through power. Instead, Jesus taught people to love their enemies. The Romans admired strength; Christians worshiped a crucified Savior. Both groups found Christianity strange because it challenged their deepest assumptions. It still does.

Christianity says every person has dignity and is worthy of respect because we are made in God's image. It also says every person is a sinner in need of repentance. It tells us to care for the poor, welcome the outsider, forgive those who hurt us, and measure greatness by service rather than status. It calls us to humility in a culture obsessed with self-promotion and to self-sacrifice in a culture focused on self-fulfillment.

No matter the era, the gospel both affirms and confronts the culture around it. And that is precisely why people need the church.

People do not need another institution that simply repeats whatever society already believes. They can get that from social media, news outlets, political movements, and countless other voices competing for attention. If the church merely echoes the culture, it has little to offer.

The church exists to be a different kind of community. It reminds us that our worth comes from God, not our accomplishments. It teaches that forgiveness is stronger than bitterness, that truth matters more than popularity, and that love often requires sacrifice. It challenges the assumptions we absorb without even realizing it.

In every age, the church serves as a necessary contrast to the world around it. Sometimes that means challenging materialism. Sometimes nationalism. Sometimes individualism. Sometimes progress. The specific cultural idols change, but the church's calling does not.

This does not mean Christians should withdraw from society. We are called to love our neighbors, serve our communities, and work for the common good. But we cannot do that faithfully if we simply mirror the culture. The church is most helpful to the world when it is distinct from the world.

History shows that whenever Christians confuse the gospel with a political ideology, a national identity, or the spirit of the age, the church loses its prophetic voice. It becomes less faithful to Christ and less useful to its neighbors.

The world does not need a church that is fashionable. It needs a church that is faithful. After all, Christians follow a King who entered Jerusalem on a donkey instead of a war horse, conquered through sacrifice rather than force, and rose from the dead when everyone thought the story was over.

Christianity is weird because Jesus is weird. And that holy weirdness is not a problem to solve. It is a gift to cherish. In a world constantly trying to reshape us in its image, people need a church that is different enough to point them toward God's kingdom instead.

Yours in Christ,
Mark

Birthdays!

8/2-Bayne Sandridge, Liz Swinfen, Kelly Tardy
 8/8-Mollie Austin
 8/10-Rick Ellis, Taylor at Boys Home
 8/11-Elijah De Oliveira
 8/14-Royal Cummings
 8/17-Cynthia Berthold
 8/19-Janet Webster
 8/20-Mark Frame
 8/22-Liam De Oliveira
 8/23-Harold Ashworth
 8/24-Bridget Miller

Anniversaries!

8/3-Victor & Ann De Oliveira
 8/8-Graham & Liz Swinfen
 8/12-Harvey & Gail Leist
 8/14-Roger & Gwynn Polidoro

**Parish Family News**

Congratulations on celebrating 97
 on July 10th Mary Stuart Cosby!

Nursery News

We are ready for some diaper changing! Thanks to Senior Warden, Joe for installing a changing table in the ladies room!

**Blood Drive**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Red Cross blood drive in July. We collected 6 units of blood. Our next blood drive will be held on Saturday, October 10, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Choir**Choir resumes September 14; work day August 29**

Although we have enjoyed our summer break, we're ready to get back to singing as a choir during Sunday worship! We welcome past singers -- whether last year or before -- and new voices. No experience, audition, or ability to read music required! The programming for this choir year offers opportunities to learn new music, revisit a couple of old favorites, and share a couple of special, music-focused services with our St Thomas family and our community. However, there's still time to work in requests -- so let us know what they are!

To prepare for our restart on September 14, we're having a work day on **Saturday, August 29**. We'll start in the choir stalls at **4 pm**, highlighting some scheduling items (so bring your calendars!) and learning some new music. We'll then share Eucharist before moving to Harvey and Gail's house around 6 pm for food, fun, and fellowship. More specifics forthcoming!

Qui cantat bis orat

Summer Backyard Suppers

Our next backyard supper will be on Sunday, August 16th at 5pm. Tom and Danielle Bland will host at 1514 High Rock Hill Rd in Pilot. Bring a dish to share and a chair to sit on. All are welcome!

August Server Schedule

	2	9	16	23	30
Altar Guild	Ruth Ashworth Lora Beeken	Ruth Ashworth Lora Beeken	Kathleen Fowler Kathryn Pollard	Kathleen Fowler Kathryn Pollard	Karen Bronaugh Gail Leist Crystal Priddy
Announcements	Crystal Priddy	Joe Richmeier	Kathleen Fowler	Joel Hagen	Bill Kennan
Chalice Bearer	Jane Ellis	Joel Hagen	Bill Kennan	Mark Priest	Val Tweedie
Lay Reader	Amy Frazier	Mark Priest	Jane Ellis	Bill Kennan	Jennifer Miller
Nursery & Coffee Hour	<i>If you would like to serve in the nursery or kitchen, please sign up online or contact Marie Painter.</i>				
Ushers	Joel Hagen Bill Kennan	Kathleen Fowler Chris Witt	Harold Ashworth Joe Straub	Harold Ashworth Bill Kennan	Joe Straub Chris Witt
Zoom Operator	Mark Priest	Joel Hagen	Mark Priest	Joel Hagen	Val Tweedie

August 2026

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
2 10th Sunday after Pentecost Food Bank & Hospitality Sunday 10 am Holy Eucharist	3	4 7 pm NA	5 8 pm NA	6 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	7 8 pm NA	8
9 11th Sunday after Pentecost 10 am Holy Eucharist 11 am Worship Committee Meeting	10	11 7 pm NA	12 8 pm NA	13 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	14 8 pm NA	15
16 12th Sunday after Pentecost Loose Plate Offering ~ Rector's Discretionary Fund 10 am Holy Eucharist 11:30 am Vestry Meeting 5 pm Backyard Supper at the Bland's	17	18 7 pm NA	19 8 pm NA	20 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	21 8 pm NA	22
23 13th Sunday after Pentecost 10 am Holy Eucharist	24	25 6:30-9:30 pm Safe Church, Safe Community Training on Zoom 7 pm NA	26 8 pm NA	27 1 pm Watercolor Class 7 pm Evening Prayer on Zoom	28 8 pm NA	29 9am-3pm Formation Day: Being Disciples 4pm Choir Work Day
30 14th Sunday after Pentecost 10 am Holy Eucharist	31					

Backpack Program

The Open Hands Backpack program that St. Thomas contributes granola bars to has come out with some interesting figures. In the 2025/2026 school year, the following were packed and sent out: 3649 bags of food, 22934 meals, 10947 snacks and beverages.

With school set to begin next month, we will continue to supply the program with granola bars. Please leave your donations of granola bars in the pink basket located in the parish hall and thank you for your continued support in this outreach ministry!

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 July we collected 16 items and \$30!

Forward Day by Day

We provide Forward Day by Day to parishioners as a simple and effective daily prayer practice. Each day features a Bible verse from the daily readings and a related reflection written by a different author each month, all in less than 200 words. It even includes the daily feast days, as well as prompts to take faithful action in your daily life. The next issue is now available. Regular and large print copies are 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.

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 August 2nd.



St. Thomas Episcopal Church
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