

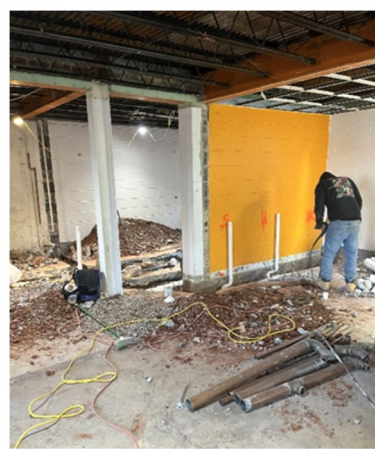
Triumph Newsletter

MARCH 2023 | VOLUME 3

Youth Center Renovation Accelerates

By Dave Rea

There are two big phases to renovation projects; demolition followed by reconstruction. After a long period of demo and honing the plans, the Youth Center renovation project is in full swing reconstruction. Between mid-January and mid-February, all aspects of the project are showing reconstruction progress. New underground plumbing for the downstairs bathrooms is installed. Some of the old wiring in the basement ceiling was upgraded to flexible metal conduit to allow for the open ceiling and prepare for painting. The basement ceiling was painted and wow, the room already looks bigger and brighter. The new front entrance is now under roof and the old entrance has a new roof to match. The main floor bathroom has been demo'd and a shower will be added to that bathroom. The pictures show just a sampling of the recent progress. There's still a lot to do, but everyday we're getting closer to the finish line.



The drains for the basement bathrooms are waiting on inspection before the new concrete can be poured. The new entrance is under roof and the old door gets a new roof to match. The painted open ceiling (below) provides additional brightness to the basement fellowship hall.



Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert Visits St. Thomas

By Roxanne Sutton

On Sunday, January 15, 2023 Superintendent of the Northern Virginia District of the United Methodist Church (UMC) Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert came to St. Thomas UMC to give a sermon and provide information on the process of disaffiliation from the UMC. Rev. Calvert's sermon, *Rise Up and Jump In*, focused on the story of Bartimaeus — a person who left all his worldly possessions behind to reach out in faith and ask Jesus to heal his blindness. Rev. Calvert shared how many of us seek perfection in our lives — through self-improvement, New Year's Resolutions, etc. She shared how our drive to perfection is a thing of privilege as we are able to strive to go from good to better. She also shared that our striving for perfection is ultimately something we will fail at on Earth.

Rev. Calvert reminded us that Bartimaeus — coming from a place of little privilege — was likely able to see those on the outskirts and fringes of society much more clearly than the long-time followers of Jesus. She hopes we all have had a moment where we felt like Bartimaeus because it is at our lowest when we can see Jesus more clearly. She also warned us to not be the fickle crowd who only waits to use their privilege to help others only when the problems become so loud we can no longer ignore them. Finally, she reminded us that we are the only Jesus people see in their day-to-day lives and the only way to be perfected is to be perfected in the love of God.

You can listen to her full sermon through St. Thomas' Facebook page.

[9 a.m. Traditional Service](#)

[11 a.m. Contemporary Service](#)

In between the services, Rev. Calvert met with 82 church members (62 people met upstairs in Room 300 - 306 and 20 people participated via Zoom) to answer

questions. She also shared what disaffiliation is, why some churches were already doing so, and the process a church would need to go through to disaffiliate. Participants represented five generations and were balanced between men and women; youth and young adults also attended. Rev. Calvert emphasized that it is not her wish that any church in the NOVA District would disaffiliate, but that each church would need to go through the discernment process to decide what is right for them.

Rev. Calvert shared the background of how some churches are currently choosing to disaffiliate from the UMC because of a [paragraph added to the Book of Discipline during the 2019 General Conference](#). It was

originally added as a way for churches to disaffiliate due to the stricter guidance around ordination and marriage of self-avowed and practicing members of the LGBTQ+ community. However, since then, some churches have decided to disaffiliate because of:

Assumptions or concerns about what may or may not happen at the 2024 General Conference.

The specific paragraph in the Book of Discipline allowing disaffiliation over issues related to human sexuality expires on December 31, 2023.

The Global Methodist Church (GMC) decided to launch in May 2022, prompting several churches with more conservative views around LGBTQ+ inclusion to disaffiliate from the UMC to join the GMC.

Although, some churches have disaffiliated to become independent or a more progressive denomination.

Rev. Calvert shared that reactions to this paragraph and its expiration date have prompted unnecessary fear. Some churches are rushing to leave the UMC before future decisions around LGBTQ+ inclusion have

yet to be made. In response to questions from church members, Rev. Calvert shared that disaffiliation isn't new. She said it's possible additional provisions for disaffiliation could be added depending on decisions made at the 2024 General Conference.

Rev. Calvert emphasized that the work of discernment was a matter for the body of the church. While it is the pastors' job to help facilitate discernment, it is up to the body and members of the church to do the work. It is everyone's job to play an active role in this process.

She also reiterated that no action is required at this time. An individual church does not have to move forward with exploring disaffiliation. However, if a church decides to explore disaffiliation this year, they should do so sooner rather than later.

If a church would disaffiliate, they would leave the UMC and the Northern Virginia district. As pastors are agents of the UMC, churches who disaffiliate would likely need to find their own pastor, however, some pastors have disaffiliated alongside their current churches. There are also legal issues related to apportionments, property and pension liabilities. In response to a question, Rev. Calvert shared that any loans issued from the UMC would have to be paid in full upon disaffiliation.

Overall, the session was informative and allowed members to ask questions about decisions facing St. Thomas and UMC churches around the country. Rev. Calvert ended by emphasizing that she does not wish for any church to disaffiliate and that she would be available for more questions. It was decided that further questions should be sent to Pastor Abi, who would send them on in bulk to make it easier on Rev. Calvert to respond.

Here is a summary of the questions the Rev. Dr. Sarah Calvert answered during and after the meeting:

What is STUMC currently paying towards

apportionments? Rich Banner answered about \$11,000 towards District and another \$139,000 towards Conference (Total about \$150,000).

Follow up comment / question: It appeared that Bishop Sharma Lewis was accommodating to the disaffiliation process. Is the new bishop going to be as accommodating? How many disaffiliations in the District? Conference? Sarah answered that she has met the new bishop twice. She does not know the answer yet. On the NOVA District, one church has formally started this process. She does not anticipate many disaffiliations in Northern Virginia. More than one, certainly, but not many more. So far, 10 churches have disaffiliated (34 are slated to disaffiliate at the 2/18/23 called Annual Conference).

Have we given our discernment timetable to the DS? Yes.

You stated disaffiliation must be decided by the end of 2023. Is that calendar year 2023? Should disaffiliation be completed by 2023, or must it be started by 2023? It must be completed by December 31, 2023 in order to be guaranteed. However, that being said, while the DS does not have a crystal ball, she anticipates that some comparable legislation like the Taylor Disaffiliation clause will be created at GC 2024 to allow a legal pathway for churches / pastors to move forward.

How are we to determine what is sin based on reading the bible? Rev. Calvert said, "There are two pastors who have been appointed here – I invite you to ask and wrestle with them on this question."

Is there any move to move the "sunset" clause date out a year or more until the GC meets? No there is not. However, see response under #3.

How would disaffiliation impact our loan (for the youth center) that we have through the UMC Foundation? We would have to refinance it b/c they ONLY fund UMCs.

Can individual church members leave without taking the whole church with them? Yes, of course.

If a church member reaches out to the District Superintendent to say STUMC wants to disaffiliate, but this member is not part of the “lay leadership” – how is this handled? The process can ONLY be started by a formal request from the Church Council. Rogue individual members cannot start the disaffiliation process.

Our new bishop “paused” discernment in North Georgia because of disinformation. Is this same misinformation found in Virginia? Will we be “paused”? Sarah has no idea how the new bishop will move through this process. At this time, there is no plans to pause the process / pathway to disaffiliation in ¶ 2553.

Can we get a copy of your notes you read at the beginning of the meeting? Yes, an abbreviated version.

What would be the appropriate cost for a church of our size to disaffiliate? Specific cost is only available once the process begins formally. But, the likelihood is that it would be about 2 million (plus the repayment of all grants / loans).

Will the appointment of our new bishop change any part of our disaffiliation process through ¶ 2553? At this time, no. However, this is subject to change.

Why is the church not following the Book of Discipline? Sarah pointed out that across the denomination, sin occurs in lots of ways – we are human, sinful creatures. (i.e. extra-marital affairs, stealing, not upholding the UMC when leaving the church, etc.). We take each situation separately, and compassionately as we help people be more sanctified.

LGBTQ Discernment Process Continues

By Paula Harper

The Church Council at St Thomas is sponsoring Watch Parties to empower the body with resources on how to go forward as issues around disaffiliation force us to make a critical decision.

Watch Party #2 gathered in the Sanctuary at 3 pm on Sun, Jan 26 for the second in our series of five gatherings to help our church determine whether we can function as a United Methodist church or not. There were 89 in attendance: 40 males, 49 females; 83 adults and 6 youth. The video presentation of the two casemakers, Rev. Rob Renfroe and Rev. Adam Hamilton focused on how each side aligns Scripture with their view on Methodism.

- Rev. Renfroe representing the Global Methodist movement states “We believe that the Bible is the inspired authoritative word of God that tells us how to live, how to please God and is a measuring tool on what is true spiritually and morally.”

- Rev. Adam Hamilton who responds on behalf of United Methodism, highlights his presentation with troublesome Biblical passages that endorse violence, genocide and slavery. He states that “Scripture should be interpreted in the light of the witnesses in the rest of the scriptures, in the light of historical and cultural context, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in the tradition of the church, in the sense of belief throughout the ages and with our intellect and reason.”

Small groups of 10-12, encouraged by prayer and sitting in the presence of a candle representing Christ’s Light and holy consciousness, discussed what they had just seen in the videos augmented by their own experiences and understanding.

A reconvening in the Sanctuary allowed us to raise up our praises and our prayers for discernment before being dismissed for the evening.

Watch Party #3 followed the same format on Sun, Feb 5: video in the Sanctuary, disbursing into small discussion groups and rejoining in the Sanctuary for blessing and dismissal. Attendance totaled 71 with 35 males, 36 females: 68 adults and 3 youth. The focus for Sun, Feb 5 was Jesus.

- Rev. Renfroe states that Global Methodists “believe that Jesus is divine, God incarnate, the Lord of All, the Way, the Truth and the Life.” He then expounded on Bishops, clergy and seminary leaders who departed from that doctrine in their teachings and were not subsequently sanctioned by UMC hierarchy.
- Rev. Hamilton states that United Methodists believe “in the divinity of Jesus, that he is the Word of God made flesh, that he was born of a virgin, that he died for our sins and was resurrected from the dead.” He proclaims, “The UMC is more centered in faith and committed to Christ” than in earlier decades and the examples Rev. Renfroe used were not typical of the body of the Church.

Watch Party #4 met on Sun, Feb 12. Total attendance was 81: 38 males and 43 females: 75 adults and 6 youth. A crucial piece of the division facing UMC is “Human Sexuality” and served as the discussion topic.

- Rev. Renfroe states, “All persons are of sacred worth and are welcome in the our churches. However homosexuality is incompatible with our Christian teaching. Pastors may not marry gay couples nor may our churches be used for their marriage celebrations. Self-avowed, practicing gays may not be ordained as ministers.
- Rev. Hamilton responds, “We believe there is room for disagreement in the UMC and will radically love everybody including gays, lesbians and transgenders. This is a great opportunity to reach future generations. In fact, if you speak

with young people now, they will question why we are even talking about this issue.”

Please stay tuned in our newsletter, website, and during announcements in worship for other gatherings as needed after the Watch Parties such as bible study, fellowship events, town hall meetings, etc. There is also a mechanism on our website to email all members of the Church Council to help facilitate even better communication. Please go to this page: <https://www.stthomasumc.org/ourleaders> and scroll down to find a large, orange button that says “Click Here to Email All Council Leaders.”

Hunter Lenz or Barry Barnard (the Chair and Vice Chair of Church Council in 2023) will respond to your email and follow up as needed.

Watch Party Questions

During the first four Watch Parties, participants submitted comments or questions. Those questions and answers are provided below:

Could the process be laid out at the start of the next meeting? Possibly, at every meeting? The process will be outlined at Watch Party #5. As we move forward, we will make efforts to continually update the congregation on the process.

Are there going to be written scripts of the two (Renfroe and Hamilton) available? I would like to spend some time with their thoughts. No. There are no plans to provide written scripts from Renfroe and Hamilton. However, all of the videos are on the St. Thomas UMC website under **Resources** and can be reviewed at any time.

How will the voting work? There is no vote scheduled at this time. In the event there would be a vote on disaffiliation, proper notice and details of the voting process will be shared and provided in advance. Having said that, any formal vote requires two thirds of the church members present at a called church conference to vote yes for disaffiliation in order to pass.

Will we know the financial obligations to disaffiliate before we vote? Yes – IF there is a formal vote on disaffiliation, the church will know and share the financial requirements and any other terms and conditions before the vote.

If we decide to disaffiliate, will we know our future direction before disaffiliation (i.e. if we disaffiliate, we will become an independent church / GMC / etc.? Or will that be an entirely new discernment process? This is to be determined. While our future direction as a church may certainly be discussed and determined before a vote, the disaffiliation process does not mandate such action.

If many (according to Renfroe) or some (according to Hamilton) of our clergy and bishops deny the divinity of Jesus, how are those few or many allowed to remain in positions of leadership in our church? The Book of Discipline outlines the responsibilities and duties of Elders, Licensed Pastors, District Superintendents and Bishops. This includes matters of faith. It is the responsibility of the UMC Annual Conferences leadership, including the District Superintendents, the Bishops and the Council of Bishops to address any concerns. It is worth noting, every clergy person is born out of a congregation, vetted by the Local Church SPRC, voted on by the entire body at Charge Conference, and then comes before the District Board of Ordained Ministry, and then ultimately endorsed by the full Clergy Session at the Annual Conference. In other words, someone is not ordained without many touch points to ensure they are able to lead with integrity and commitment to orthodox views. If someone veers off course theologically later in their ministry, then as noted, the Annual Conference

and Bishop would follow the appropriate protocols to ensure accountability.

We've heard the team talk about the "straw poll"... is that what the survey we are taking in two weeks is? No. The survey is not a "straw poll." The intent of the survey is to provide feedback to our Church Council. The Church Council is tasked with determining our next steps. The survey is a tool designed to assist the Church Council in this matter.

LGBTQ people have been hurt by the church. Do we want to be in a place where LGBTQ people do not feel loved or welcome? Or do we want to love everyone like Jesus demonstrated. There are many passages in the Bible that we don't believe represent how God sees us today. These are based on the culture of the time. **When Jesus came, everything changed!** We are to love everyone. Recently, St. Thomas adopted a new Hospitality Statement which it reads in part, **"We welcome everyone without exception. ... We covenant to respect, love and serve one another along our faith journeys."** Adopted unanimously by the St. Thomas Church Council on November 22, 2022. The full statement is here: <https://www.stthomasumc.org/our-hospitality>

Rev. Renfroe said there were only 2 options for Methodists – to either leave the UMC or stay with the UMC. That might need clarification, especially before our congregation "votes". I thought there were many other Wesleyan / Methodist denominations – i.e. Free Methodist, Wesleyan, Wesleyan Methodist, AME, etc. Yes, there are many options available to a Church that may choose to disaffiliate.

Having the desire to keep the church together, will the results of the straw poll vote be disclosed to the congregation so that we will have a general idea of the congregation's position?

Yes, if any straw poll is taken the results will be shared with the congregation.

Below are comments that did not include a question.

- Very good first meeting. Range of feelings, expressed, thankfulness we're talking, anger that it's come to this (a split); confusion over the information and disaffiliation; frustration at what was felt to be top down leadership (i.e. bishops making decisions for churches; churches losing autonomy).
- Everyone should have an opportunity to participate / speak in the small groups. This does not always happen because a few people take over the discussion.
- All of our church leaders should be teaching and supporting the basic tenets of what the church is founded on. I am very bothered by the "vast majority" (rather than all) leaders believe in the resurrection and that Christ is the only way to heaven.
- Congregants might want to take or retake the quiz for progressive, traditional compatibilists. Maybe we should watch Rev. Tom Berlin's video about the same categories as a refresher.
- Change is not new, problems are different but they are not new or worse.
- Principles must be within so when we can't see or hear our leader, we withstand. There must be a changeless core.



By Lynn Furlong

We had a nice turn out on Friday, February 24 for the OWLS lunch at Katerina's Greek Cuisine. This was our first trip to Katerina's. Everyone enjoyed the food and fellowship with many suggesting that this should be a repeat destination. Our March outing will be to Northside 29 Restaurant on Friday, March 24 in New Baltimore. We will be taking the church van this month so please let Marian and Lynn know if you plan to ride in the van or meet us there. Please RSVP to Marian (571-315-6881) or Lynn (703-499-0243) by March 21.



Church Council Corner

By Hunter Lenz

As February has waned and we start the month of March, your Church Council also moves forward through the last vestiges of winter and looks forward to the spring. We have seen a busy time in the first part of 2023, from new members starting on the Council, and the reigniting of some of our committees. Our Congregational Care Committee, chaired by Bob Jones, continues the work of bringing hope and support to members of our congregation who are sick, have experienced recent loss or find themselves in difficult times.

Our Missions Committee, chaired by Zuzana Steen, was hard at work in February, including Operation Bear Hug and collecting contributions to aid the people of Turkey and Syria devastated by a terrible series of earthquakes. The Trustees, chaired by Don Rickerson, continued to monitor the renovation of the Youth Center, while the Lay Leaders worked on our currently ongoing Lenten Devotional Series - Covenant Life. This is but a snippet of the activities your Church Council has worked on, and I extend a big thank you to all the members of our committees for your hard work.

This and all of the other great work we do as part of St Thomas cannot be possible without the gifts from the congregation- gifts of both time and money. We are currently facing the harsh reality that the monetary giving to our church continues to be below budget estimates for 2023. This has an impact on our

ability to carry out many of the committee's intended goals, which affects how we reach, nourish, and serve our church community and the greater local community. We have also made difficult decisions regarding our St Thomas staff- we will be a church with one full time pastor as of July 2023, and there have been other reductions in paid staff.

Throughout the month of February, you heard from Finance Committee Chair Rich Banner, SPRC Committee Chair Janie Russell and Church Council Vice-Chair Barry Barnard, talking about our financial difficulties. We were reminded of the membership vows we took at this church, "to faithfully participate in its ministries by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service." Pastor Abi preached about "showing up", and the importance of being there for others. Our gifts to St Thomas are part of our way of showing up- by being present we do good works for others, and by our financial giving we multiply those good works.

One of the questions asked by the Lay Leaders in the February newsletter, laying out the Lenten Devotionals, was "Will my membership vows mean anything?" These vows ARE meaningful, as our gifts enable us to share the love of Jesus with our community. I prayerfully ask that we all reflect on our vows, especially considering how we give to St Thomas. And whatever God reveals to you in your heart, I encourage you to follow this calling.

Staff Updates

By Janie Russell

The Staff Parish Relations Committee is preparing for the changes that will occur when we move from two pastors to one pastor. We have also temporarily put our search for an accompanist for the 9 am service on the back burner, until the financial position of the

church improves. We are hoping to fill the position for the Local Relief Coordinator, as the salary for this position is covered by two grants.

Eliminating staff positions was difficult for the Committee but was also stressful for the staff. Please take time to thank our staff for all their hard work, either commenting on your appreciation when you see them or through cards and notes.

START Mission Trip | April 2 – 6

By Cliff Farrar



START is returning to New Bern, NC to help residents recover from Hurricane Florence, which devastated the area in 2018. We'll be traveling on Palm Sunday, April 2 and work Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of that week. We'll leave New Bern on Thursday morning in order to be back in town for services on Thursday night. Anyone who wants to serve is welcome on these trips; all skill levels are welcome. All we require is a desire to serve the Lord in this way. Youth are also welcome! Questions? Contact Cliff

Farrar (703) 881-8718. We look forward to a fulfilling time being the hands and feet of Jesus.

We are hosting Tuesday Night Dinner on Tue, March 21. There will be no charge for the meal, but we will gladly accept donations to the mission. These funds will be used to purchase building materials and to help our host to defray expenses incurred during our stay at the recovery center. Thank you for your support!

Operation Bearhug

Thank you for donating to Operation Bearhug!

We were able to provide 207 bears to Prince William hospital and to Manassas Health and Rehab! Thanks again from the Mission Council!!!



Community Clothing Closet

By Renee Kinnear

The Community Clothing Closet would like to thank everyone who continues to donate new and used clothing! The needs are still great and our numbers have increased in the past month. Spring is arriving and we are ready to transition to our spring and summer clothing! Due to lack of storage space please hold your warm winter items until August. We appreciate the donations of shorts, capri's, short sleeve shirts, light jackets, dresses/skirts, and swim suits. Please, nothing stained or missing buttons.

We do need the following items year round: Jeans, socks, new underwear, and hoodies for men, women and children.

Thanks to all the volunteers who continue to support this ministry! If you are interested in helping in any way, big or small, we have a place for you! Contact Renee Kinnear for more info.

Adult Discipleship

By Pat Brown

As our pastors have begun a new sermon series on Covenant Life: Everyday Discipleship and we are in the season of Lent, this is a good time to ponder your path of spiritual growth also. You may recall that last year the Adult Discipleship Team offered some ways to intentionally work on your personal spiritual formation. Part of that included taking the Real Discipleship Survey and creating a personal Spiritual Growth Plan. If you have not done those yet, you are encouraged to do so. (Information is available in the church office or on the church's website under NOURISH-Adult Discipleship). If you already did those two things, you may want to take some time to review what you put into your Spiritual Growth Plan and evaluate what steps are next.

During this Lenten season there are several classes being offered that are focusing on the building blocks of a Covenant Life. Paula Renfro's class on Sunday mornings at 9:30 is studying *The Walk* and Pat Dodson's class at 11:00 on Sunday mornings is studying *A Disciple's Path*. Anyone can join either of these classes.

Lastly, there are still openings for submissions to the Lenten Devotional. This is something that we've done for many years now and it continues to be a spiritually uplifting means of worship during Lent. Please consider sharing a part of your faith story by signing up on the website in the Weekly Announcements under the REACH tab

There a few ways you can ensure you receive this year's devotionals.

1. To receive the devotionals via email, subscribe on our website, Resources page / Blog
2. You can text "DEVO" to 571-532-6622 to receive the devotionals via text (you can opt out at any time).
3. You can also follow St. Thomas on Facebook where devotionals will be posted when they are live.
4. Finally, you can bookmark the Lenten Devotionals page for easy access.

We look forward to sharing God's love through our community's stories this Lent!

Interested in Baptism 101?

The season of Lent is a perfect time to prepare for baptism on Easter morning! We would like to offer a baptism class sometime in the month of March at a time that is convenient for those interested – perhaps on a Sunday morning at 10 AM or a Tuesday or Thursday evening. Baptism 101 is a required orientation class for any adult considering baptism or for any parent who would like their child baptized. Baptism is one of two sacraments offered in the life of the United Methodist Church and marks the official initiation into the body of Christ, the Church, which joins the new member to Christians everywhere. It's the beginning of a life-long process of growth in Christ. In this 45 – 60 minute class, we cover the meaning and the mechanics of baptism, and why someone should be baptized. To learn more, please email abi.foerster@stthomasumc.org, or call the front office, (703) 368-5161.





KITCHEN MINISTRY

ST. THOMAS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

We have the privilege of having a great team who help each week with our Tuesday Night Dinners. We are going to be saying good-bye to two of them at the end of the month. Missie and John Duffy will be leaving to move to their new home in Bryce. We are thankful for their help these past few years and wish them well in their new adventure! Please take the time over this month to express your appreciation to them. (We may get them to pop in once in a while until their house here is sold.)

We would welcome anyone who would like to join our team on Tuesday afternoons. Please contact Janel at jbgirl211@yahoo.com or call 703-507-9075.

Please keep Frank Priest in your prayers as he is dealing with some health issues. The kitchen ministry team will do our best to keep the menus as posted but there may be a week where we need to make a last minute substitution. We appreciate your understanding if this happens.



March Menus

Cookie of the month: Irish Shortbreads
(available each week)

March 7

Turkey A La King
Rice Pilaf
Green Beans
Dinner Roll

Dessert: Bread Pudding/Vanilla Sauce

Kid's: Ravioli

March 14

St. Patrick's Day Dinner
Corned Beef and Cabbage
Potatoes, Carrots
Irish Soda Bread

Dessert: Pistachio Cupcakes

Kid's: Hot Dog

March 21

Hawaiian Chicken
Rice Pilaf
Carrots w/ Pineapple
Cinnamon Roll

Dessert: Carrot Cake

Kid's: Chicken Nuggets

March 28

Baked Meatloaf
Mashed Potato/Gravy
Corn on the Cob
Dinner Roll

Dessert: Apple Cake

Kid's: Cheeseburger



THE PACK
ST. THOMAS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Student Ministry

By Pastor Arum

We've entered in the season of Lent. It means we are getting closer to Easter...and then the Youth Sunday! We traditionally have the Youth Sunday on Sunday after Easter, so this year it will be April 16. On the first and second Sundays, we will have our regular programs at the PACK Night. We then will dedicate the rest of two Sunday gatherings to prepare and practice their roles for the Youth Sunday. Mark the Youth Sunday on your calendar and look forward to a great worship service our Youth will lead!

Also, please include this year's Confirmands and their mentors. They have just started their confirmation journey on February 26th. The journey will continue through the end of May and they will celebrate their confirmation on the Day of Pentecost, May 28.

Athenae Granados, with her mentor Deb Crawford

Laney Schoch, with her mentor Holly Banner

Wesley Swanson, with his mentor Mitchell Banner

Caiden Thompson, with his mentor John Rosko

Christen Thompson, with her mentor Lora Ometz

Jamie Thornton, with her mentor Kimberly Bixby

Here is the schedule for March. Details will be shared through the PACK Weekly emails. If you would like to subscribe to it, please let Pastor Arum know!

March 5 (1st Sun): PACK Night Worship Day with a special Lenten season activity

March 11 (Sat): Northern Virginia District Confirmation Retreat at Grace UMC

March 12 (2nd Sun): PACK Night Fun Day

March 19 (3rd Sun): Youth Sunday Practice 1

March 26 (4th Sun): Youth Sunday Practice 2

We have a special request for you. The PACK Night always begins with a shared dinner. We need more sign-ups to offer dinner to cover the remaining school year. Please scan the following QR code. Or use the link to sign up! You can either home-cook and bring meals or order food such as pizzas or sandwiches. Let's make sure our students are well-fed and ready to engage in fellowship and spiritual growth!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/8050949aea72ea13-pack1#/>

Here is a summary and photos of the activities that took place in February.

We started February with our worship. Milan stepped up to lead the music with Jack and Christopher. As our church is going through a discernment process, we talked about a topic related to it, "How to Read the Bible." On the second Sunday of February, we also had a small discussion on "Differences in Understanding the Bible." Many of our students who confirmed their faith are sharing the same responsibilities and rights with the adult members of the church. They faithfully participated in the Watch Parties and continued their sharing of thoughts on this topic in the PACK gatherings.



On February 17-19, the PACK joined seven other UM churches in the Northern Virginia District for a Ski Retreat at Roundtop Resort, PA. Eighty people gathered for worship, fellowship, and snow fun! From St. Thomas, seven students, four adults, and Pastor Arum's family (Joon, Virginia, and Charlotte) joined. Everyone had so much fun, and no one got hurt or broke any bones!



On the last Sunday of the month, we packed care packages for college students who live on or near campus. Students brought their favorite snacks to stuff in and signed the card. We hope that our college students are surprised by our gift and feel the love of our church!



If you have any questions about the Student Ministry and would like to know how to support the Student Ministry, please feel free to contact Pastor Arum at arum.kim@stthomasumc.org or 571-438-3953 (cell).



By Kristi Swanson

February was a busy month for the children's ministry, with kicking off our "On the Case" detective themed VBS and starting our observation of the Lenten Season with Pancakes and Ashes. Our Sunday School, Children's Church and Tweens programs are forging ahead as usual, with kids learning and growing in God's Word.

We hope you are getting started on your Lenten Activities Kit in preparation for Easter. Our annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on April 8 from 2-4pm. This is one of our biggest outreach events and it takes a huge amount of time and resources to pull it off. Last year we had over 700 attendees. This year could be even busier!



We can still use your help the day of the event. Most urgently, we are in need of empty 18 egg containers and plastic eggs filled with candy or toys. You can buy pre-filled eggs, pack them yourself, or simply drop off the supplies and the children's ministry will take care of the prep. Our goal is to get

as many donations as possible before March 10. We appreciate any help you can provide.

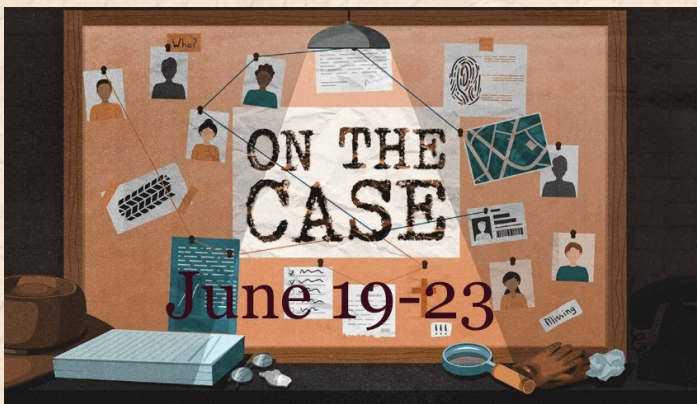
The Tweens did tons of service in February, completing 28 blankets for the Angel Shop that will happen at Christmas time and decorating two big trays of valentine cookies for first responders. Of course, they enjoyed a few of those cookies themselves! They also learned about prayer and recorded a Lenten devotional that you will be able to view later this month. It was a busy meeting! We will meet again on March 10 to prepare for the egg hunt, pack hygiene bags for the homeless, and enjoy some snow cones! Hence, our request to have the Egg Hunt donations before this date if possible. These kids want to serve!





In Sunday School, the kids will begin the Up in the Air series from the Grow Kids curriculum. We learn about so many incredible humans — past and present — who have changed the world using their influence, their voice, their dreams, and their passion. Kids might find it hard to relate to these dreamers, though, and ask themselves, “Can God use me for something that grand?” In Up In The Air, kids will learn through the stories of Elisha that we can dream big with God, have faith in God, count on God’s promises, ask God for what we need, and be used by God. The sky isn’t the limit anymore . . . not with God’s promises at work in our lives! Our children’s church program will highlight pieces of this curriculum and reinforce topics from the children’s messages.

In our ministry, we are always busy with our monthly activities, but also focusing on our future opportunities to get together. We are looking so forward to our summer program! VBS will be an awesome week of sleuthing, uncovering the mysteries of Jesus’ parables.



After that, we have scheduled several Wacky Wednesdays, low-pressure, high-fun get togethers for our church’s kids to hang out over the summer. Definitely invite friends! We are also planning another Camp Tweens event for rising 3rd-graduating 5th graders. Stay tuned for more information.

Wacky Wednesday Dates (all 4-6pm)

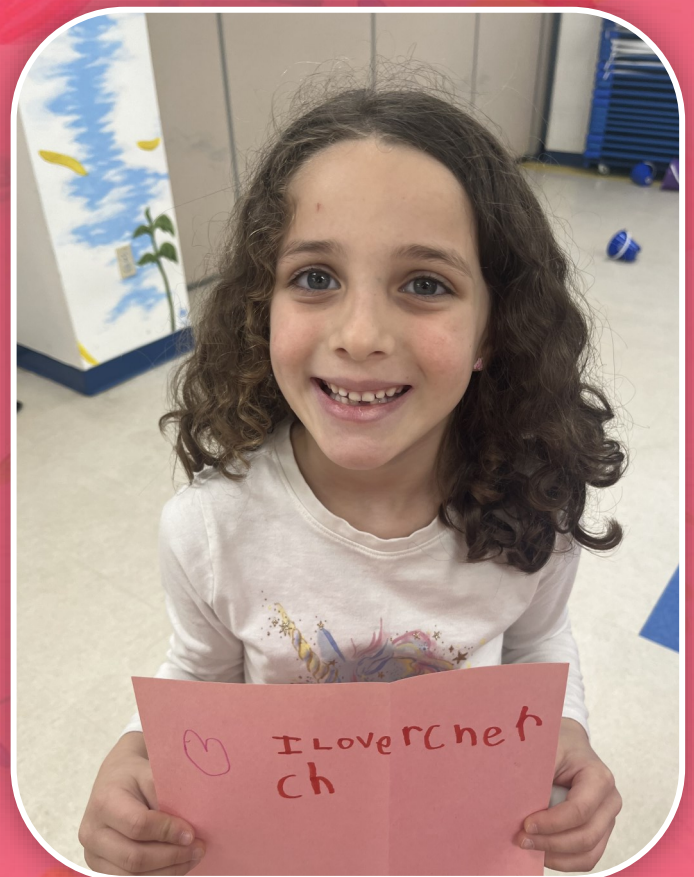
Wednesday, June 28, Popsicles and Play

Wednesday, July 12, Ice Cream and Bubbles

Wednesday, July 23, Facepaint and Popcorn

Wednesday, August 9, Movie Night and Make Your Own Snack Mix

We would like to thank everyone who has been contributing to our ministry through our Amazon wishlist for VBS and other events. We will continue to add items as VBS comes closer and additional needs arise. Please keep checking in!



United Women in Faith (UWF)

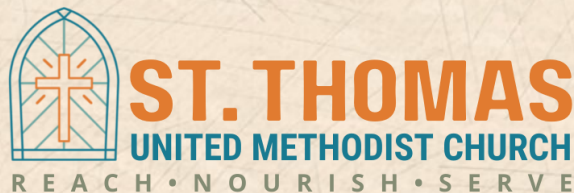
By Pat Dodson

Our February Potluck Brunch was a terrific time for food, fellowship, learning and service. Twenty-one ladies, including some new faces, gathered on Saturday morning, Feb 11. Rev. Pat Tony spoke on *"Signposts of Discerning Discipleship"*. We finished by making Valentines for the Church and Sunbeam Children's Center staff to thank them for all they do. Thanks to Pat Brown, Marian Ludlow and Sarah Hammack, for prepping all the papers and heart cut-outs!



Also in February, we determined the disbursement of funds from our 2022 Bazaar and Yard Sale. We raised over \$8700 for Missions and Missionaries both locally and globally. We are looking forward to this year's 50th Annual Holiday Bazaar!

Dorcas Circle: Join us on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 1pm in Room 300 for a fun time of fellowship and spiritual growth. Questions? Contact Martha Barlow at thistlethinker21@yahoo.com



Upcoming Events

- Mar 10 Tweens Easter Egg Packing | 6:30 - 8:00 pm
- Mar 12 Daylight Savings Time Starts
- Mar 17 St. Patricks Day
- Mar 21 START Fundraiser Tuesday Night Dinner
- Mar 24 OWLS - Northside 29 Restaurant, New Baltimore
- Mar 26 Easter Eggs & Candy Due

8899 Sudley Road, Manassas, VA 20110

Rev. Abi Foerster, Senior Pastor

Rev. Arum Kim, Associate Pastor

stthomasumc.org

703-368-5161

Newsletter Deadline:

15th of the month

Please email all articles to both:

samantha.bouquet@stthomasumc.org

receptionist@stthomasumc.org

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March Birthdays			1 Dom Izzo	2 Dottie Dawson Carter Guice	3 Christopher Evans Maddie Harcup	4 Bob Glausser
	5 Rebekah Brown Ashby Boyd	6	7	8 Ron Campbell	9 Gale Heuser	10 Anna Tacik
	12 Lori Perez Wyatt Almond	13 Jack Bailey Edwin Feng	14 Katie Furlong	15 Rachel Ometz	16 Felicia Michalek Munah Norman	17 Pat Clark
	19	20	21	22 Norma Boyles	23 Madeline Bailey Elana Verosko	24 Emma Hardy
	26	27 Tony Hoxworth	28 Galen Freeze Rich Banner	29	30	31 Elwood Addy