

Triumph *Newsletter*

DECEMBER 2022 | VOLUME 12

Living Nativity

Community Outreach, Shared Tradition & Fellowship Event



Whether you've been a part of St Thomas for a few weeks or many years, the Drive-Thru Living Nativity is an annual event that we host for the community. It's our way of sharing the joy of Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ with others in a meaningful way through outdoor sets and non-speaking dramatized scenes — and we hope EVERYONE will jump in and serve! Volunteer as an actor, help with scene set up or break down, sing Christmas carols, or offer hospitality through our kitchen team.

This year's Drive-Thru Living Nativity is scheduled for **Sat, Dec. 10 from 5 - 8 pm** (rain date: Sun, Dec 11). Save the date & help spread the word! You can sign up to volunteer as a costumed "actor" at one of the scenes and/or to bring finger food to share by visiting the Events page of our website.

To help in the Kitchen, speak with Frank Priest or Janel Weed.

To help with set up and tear down, speak with Ron Campbell.

To sing with the Carolers, contact Dominick Izzo!



Ladies, you are invited to our UWF (United Women in Faith) annual Christmas Party at 1 pm on **Fri, Dec 2** in Room 300. Please bring a luncheon dish to share and a gift for the gift exchange (please, no food or items with a scent). Gift items should have a value of \$15-20.



New Advent Sermon Series
Nov 27th - Dec 24th

SAVING SCROOGE

Worship This Advent

Can Ebenezer Scrooge be saved? Is redemption even possible for this well-known curmudgeon from the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol*? During this year's Advent series, Pastor Abi will dive deep into the dark, sad, greedy world of Scrooge to discover a man in dire need of a second chance. Along with Scrooge, we will meet the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future and in the process learn about living with and for others in a world blessed by Jesus. Rediscover and reinvigorate your Christian faith this Advent and Christmas season and look at this familiar classic through the lens of faith.

Week 1 (Nov. 27) | Ghost of Christmas Past

Week 2 (Dec. 4) | Ghost of Christmas Present

How do we miss opportunities to help others like Tiny Tim, live in the moment, and instead become fully present to God's goodness & grace? God calls the most unlikely to be agents of hope in a hurting world.

Week 3 (Dec. 11) | "A Christmas Carol in Bethlehem"

Our chancel choir will bring to worship this wonderful cantata to complement our Advent sermon series on how Scrooge, like the Innkeeper, had his heart changed by the magic and wonder of this season of coming expectation of the birth of Jesus.

Week 4 (Dec. 18) | Ghost of Christmas Future

What do we want others to remember us for in this life? Each of us can leave a legacy of love for our children and community as followers of Jesus.

Christmas Eve (Dec. 24) | A Life Redeemed

Luke 2:1 – 20, 2 Corinthians 5:15 – 20

Even the coldest of hearts like Scrooge can be reawakened by God's gift of life – the infant lowly, infant holy born in a manger so all might be able to proclaim with Tiny Tim, "God Bless Us Everyone!"

Special Christmas Eve Services

- 5 pm Children & Family Service
- 7 pm Casual Contemporary Service
- 9 pm Festive Traditional Service

All services include passing the light & singing Silent Night! 7 & 9 pm services also include Communion.

Christmas Miracle Mission Offering

On Christmas Eve each year during all three evening services a special collection is taken specifically for Missions. 100% of this special offering funds mission projects such as Operation Bear Hug, START hurricane relief trips, our "Keep the Change" campaign to provide meals to our first responders and so much more! If you would like to contribute to our special Christmas Miracle Offering, please designate your offering: "Christmas Miracle Offering" on the memo line of your check or mark the box with the same title on our online giving page on our website. Thank you for your generosity!

"Invite a Friend" Advent Activities



Our Chancel Choir and professional orchestra will present the Annual Christmas Cantata at both services on **Sun, Dec 11**. Come enjoy "A Christmas Carol in Bethlehem," a cantata where the innkeeper Scrooge struggles with visits from angels and ghosts as he decides whether to let Mary and Joseph or the Cratchits into the inn. Listening to the beautiful music and singing some familiar carols along the way, will certainly be a highlight of your Advent season!

Spaces for the Breakfast with Santa are limited. Santa is fully vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19. Depending on the comfort level of the family, you may take the photo on Santa's lap, or sit in a separate chair, with or without wearing a mask. Each family will be assigned to their own, separate table for breakfast. Tables will be sanitized between families.

Visit the Events page of our website to signup and reserve your spot. Questions, email Pastor Arum.



Santa is coming to St. Thomas to meet the children! Families from the community are invited to join us for Breakfast with Santa on **Sun, Dec 18, 10 - 11 am and 12 - 1 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. You can take a family photo with Santa and enjoy a delicious breakfast.

Children's Christmas Pageant

Calling All Children—Rehearsals Now Underway

Our children will present "Footprints to the Manger" at our 5 pm service on Christmas Eve (Dec. 24). All children are invited to participate in the program singing some of our most loved Christmas Carols and performing as a shepherd or angel. Rehearsals are held each Sunday during Children's Church at 11 am, or you can also join the Children's Choir practice on Tuesdays at 5 pm to participate in the special music. All kids are sure to have a great time and put on a fantastic display of Christmas cheer and reflection. Sign up today on your Connect Card!



KITCHEN MINISTRY

ST. THOMAS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

By Frank Priest & Janel Weed

We will have two Tuesday Night Dinners in December and then put our efforts into preparing for the Christmas Day Dinner before enjoying some time off between Christmas and New Year's week. Tuesday Night Dinners will return on January 3, 2023.

Thanks for signing up online or calling the church office before noon on Mondays. This helps us greatly in preparing the right amount of food.

We would like to ask your help in getting the word out about our FREE Christmas Day Dinner. Please let your family, friends, and neighbors know that they can come to church for Christmas Caroling at 10 am on Christmas Day and then stay for dinner. Folks can either pick up their dinners curbside from 11 am to 3 pm, or we will also offer limited inside seating during this same time WITH A RESERVATION made by Friday, Dec. 23. Please call the church office 703-368-5161 to make your reservation.

Did you know the first Christmas Day Dinner was served in 2001? We are excitedly preparing for our 22nd Dinner on Dec 25 and have been blessed by the participation of so many people over the past 21 years.

Now, we need your help as we prepare for this year's meal. As you can imagine serving hundreds of people requires **a lot of food** along with **many people to help**. This year we plan on serving 2,000 people. (This includes our meals for first responders, hospitals, and home bound sweethearts.)

We still have some challenges this year but we are working to make this dinner memorable. All food will be prepared at church.

We will use sign up genius for our donations and volunteers along with a sign-up board in the Narthex. Please look for the sign up genius link on the events page of our website. There is a place for **YOU!** We look forward to your help with this ministry.

We encourage you to invite family, friends, and neighbors to come for Caroling at 10 AM and then stay for a delicious, free meal on Christmas Day!



December Menus

Dec. 6

Garden Salad

Baked Ziti

Fried Okra

Parmesan Bread Stick

Dessert: Tapioca Pudding

Kid's Meal: Same as adult meal

Dec. 13

Christmas Feast

Dessert: Cherry Cobbler

Kid's Meal: Same as Adults

Cookie of the Month: Gingerbread Cookies

Dec. 20

No Tuesday Night Dinner

Dec. 25

Christmas Day Dinner

Serving 11:00am-3:00pm

Dec. 27

No Tuesday Night Dinner

To sign up for dinner, visit our website and click on the Nourish tab, then Tuesday Night Dinner. Or, call the church office by 12 noon on Monday.

Welcome to Our New Bishop

Sue Hauptert-Johnson Set to Join the Virginia Annual Conference January 1, 2023

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson was elected bishop by the 2016 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church and consecrated July 15, 2016. Her first assignment as bishop was to the North Georgia Episcopal Area beginning September 1, 2016.

A Florida native, Bishop Hauptert-Johnson (or “Bishop Sue”) is a graduate of the University of Florida (B.S. in Business Administration), University of Florida College of Law (J.D.), and Candler School of Theology at Emory University (M.Div.). She was a federal law clerk and a litigator with the Tampa law firm of Carlton, Fields before she answered her call to ministry.

After graduating summa cum laude from Candler, she was ordained a deacon in the Florida Annual Conference in 1996 and an elder in 1998. She subsequently served pastoral appointments as an associate pastor at 4,500-member First UMC, Lakeland; as pastor of a 300-member rural/suburban church, Hillsborough UMC, Tampa; and as a lead pastor of two large- membership churches, First UMC, Cape Coral, and First UMC, Ocala. Bishop Hauptert-Johnson served as the North Central District Superintendent of the Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church from 2013-2016.

As district superintendent, she guided a diverse area of very large and very small churches, urban, suburban, and rural churches; African-American, Haitian, and Hispanic churches; a Native American ministry; a large camp and retreat center, and a vibrant campus ministry. She was the “missional strategist” for this region, equipping and resourcing churches for ministry and helping them work together to reach their mission fields for Jesus Christ.



Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson

She was the Florida Conference's clergy delegation leader for General Conference 2016. She has represented the Florida Conference at the quadrennial United Methodist Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference four times and the United Methodist General Conference in 2008, 2012 and 2016. She also was chairperson of the Judicial Administration Legislative Committee at the 2012 General Conference.

As bishop of the North Georgia Conference, Bishop Hauptert-Johnson has led with passion and integrity in a challenging time for the denomination. Her emphasis has been on unity in Christ and steadfastness to our mission.

She has called on North Georgia to live into the prayer from our communion liturgy, that we may be “one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.”

Bishop Hauptert-Johnson is known for mission-driven and fruitful appointment making and her work on alignment of focus at the annual conference level. She serves on the Board of Directors for Global Ministries and on The General Council on Finance and Administration Apportionment Sustainability Task Force. She serves on the Emory University Board of Trustees as well as eight other United Methodist-related colleges and universities in Georgia, and on numerous ministry and agency boards.

Bishop Hauptert-Johnson is married to Rev. Allen Johnson. They have a daughter, Samantha. She enjoys NCAA football and basketball, all things Broadway, reading and movies.

Family Advent Night



Many gathered on Sunday evening, Nov. 27 for the Hanging of the Greens Service and Family Advent Night activities. All were blessed by the beautiful music, engaging fellowship, and preparing to have a meaningful Advent season by making a take home Advent wreath, decorating cookies and creating an ornament. Thanks to all who planned and led such a wonderful event!



Let's Talk about Medicare Event

Wednesday, Dec 7 | 3 PM | Fellowship Hall

Please join us for a free, no-obligation session where you'll learn how Medicare works, get answers to your questions, and find out what benefits and coverage are available to you. Light refreshments will be provided. This program is sponsored by the food pantry with support of Aetna Medicare Solutions.

You Are Invited To

**RISE
UP**

AND TESTIFY TO GOD'S GRACE!

Join Us New Year's Day for Worship on Sunday, Jan. 1 @ 10 AM

Inspiring Music, Timely Message from Our Lay Leaders, & a Wesley Covenant Service. Free, Delicious Breakfast beginning at 9 AM in Fellowship Hall.

Thank You From Lisa Grenados

Dear Abi,

Words can't express how much gratitude we have for the outpouring of love from you and the members of our church family. We are so grateful for God's amazing love and the love of all of you.

While we have been facing the most challenging times of our lives you have yoked with us and greatly eased our burden.

God is so good and he has used his amazing vessels to bestow such amazing blessings upon us. The support has so much more than we could have imagined or hoped for.

We are so thankful for all of you. We love you so dearly.

We hope to be back worshipping by your sides, in the near future.

Please share with the congregation our tremendous love and gratitude.

So grateful for you.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

God's blessings upon you all

The Grenados family
(Lisa, Walter, + Athena)

A few members and friends are planning to go caroling on Sun., Dec. 18 at the Grenados' home to encourage Lisa who has pancreatic cancer. All ages are invited to participate. Plan to meet at St. Thomas at 2 pm and we'll carpool over together. The family lives about 15 minutes from the church, and the plan is to carol for about a half hour.

Interested? Let Pastor Abi or Pastor Arum know you're joining the group.



KING'S KIDS

ST. THOMAS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

By Kristi Swanson

The Kids had a meaningful November learning about generosity and how we can listen to God. For December, Sunday school will follow the GrowKids "Joy to the World" curriculum. Here's what it's all about: What are your go-to Christmas traditions? It's amazing how different all of our Christmas celebrations can be, especially when you take into account how Christmas is celebrated all over the world. This month, we'll be reminded what a universal gift Jesus is, and how Jesus brought good news, joy, and peace on that very first Christmas so that the whole world could know God!



Sunday School will take a winter break December 18—January 1. During this time, families are encouraged to worship together, and Children's Church will still be offered. Sunday School will resume on Sun., January 8.

The Tweens began what we hope will be a new tradition of hosting a Veterans Day dinner. Veterans from our church were invited to enjoy a special meal prepared by Frank and the kitchen team. The tweens heard from each veteran about their time in the service. We also learned how to fold the flag, made cards for active service members, learned about soldiers of the Bible, and placed American flags in front of the church as a tribute to our veterans. **For December, the Tweens are invited to sign up with their families to participate in the drive-thru living nativity.**



Veterans Day Celebration with our Tweens



Advent kicked off with a fantastic **Hanging of the Greens service and Family Advent Night**. We are continuing to fill our advent mission bags and hope you are too! Those are due back on December 11, so we have time for distribution.

Everyone is invited to join us for the **Family Christmas Eve service at 5pm on the 24th**. The children will perform a beautiful Christmas program entitled, "Footprints to the Manger" and the children's choir will sing a special song. Rehearsal will take place during Children's Church at 11:00 each Sunday. We hope to see you there!

The kids are ready to celebrate the season and start the new year!



THE PACK

ST. THOMAS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

By Pastor Arum

Our church has many special events to celebrate the Advent Season and Christmas, and our Students will be there to participate in and volunteer at the events: Drive-Thru Living Nativity, Breakfast with Santa, special worship services and Christmas Dinner! Even though we are super busy with all the specials, we cannot miss our Christmas Party. We will have a special dinner, dessert and drinks, play fun games and exchange a gift. Bring \$10 worth of your favorite snack to exchange and invite your friends! We then have a short winter break from December 19 through January 7. We will resume our gathering on January 8, 2023.

- Dec. 4 (1st Sun): PACK Worship Day
- Dec. 10 (Sat): Drive-Thru Living Nativity from 5 – 8 pm
- Dec. 11 (2nd Sun): PACK Christmas Party. ***(If it rains on Dec. 10, we'll have the Living Nativity on Dec. 11, and then we'd have our Christmas Party on the 10. We basically switch the dates as needed.)***
- Dec. 18 (3rd Sun): NO PACK AM & PACK Night. Help at Breakfast with Santa Event, 10 – 11 am & 12 – 1 pm
- Dec. 25 (4th Sun): NO PACK AM & PACK Night. Merry Christmas!
- Jan. 1 (1st Sun): NO PACK AM & PACK Night in observance of New Year's Day.



November was full of specials. On the first weekend, four of the PACK students participated in the Fall Youth Retreat. About 30 students from St. Thomas, Annandale, Fairfax and Christ-Crossman UMC gathered for three-days long worship, fellowship and fun. Especially, Jack was a part of the band, leading the music for 4 services! The next Youth Ministry Cohort event will be a Ski Retreat on February 17-19. It's always extra fun to meet and have fellowship with many other students from different churches!

On the PACK Night: Fun Day on the second Sunday, our church parking lot turned into a Laser Tag field! We played three rounds of games and had roasted marshmallow during the breaks. Also, we welcomed two new students: Athenae and Camila.

On the third Sunday, we had PACK Night: Small Groups Day as Friendsgiving. 9 adults from the church joined our fun. We were very thankful for their participating and the dessert they brought. We divided into 5 groups to have a table talk and play a couple of games. The winning team was gifted a "Friends Forever" mug. Congrats, Judy, Elana, David and Milan!



On the fourth Sunday, PACK helped the church's Hanging of the Greens & Family Advent Night event, as the mission project of the month. They served as the readers and the Joyful Noise Singers, in the Praise Band, and at the activity stations. Thank our students for their service!

Finally, 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).

Leadership Transitions As We Prepare for 2023

2022 OUTGOING LEADER	POSITION	2023 INCOMING LEADER
Joe Steen	Church Council Chair	Hunter Lenz
Hunter Lenz	Church Council, Vice Chair	Barry Barnard
Pat Brown	Head Lay Leader	Paula Renfro
Ron Campbell	Trustees Chair	Will be elected by Trustees in January
Janie Russell	SCC Board Chair	Tracy Spencer
Cathy Campbell	Mission Council Chair	Zuzana Steen
Zuzana Steen	Mission Council, Vice Chair	Delbert Parks
Jane Priest	Congregational Care Team	Bob Jones
NEW LEADERSHIP POSITIONS ON COUNCIL		
	Adult Discipleship Team	Pat Brown
	Youth Representative	David Burnett (Teenager)
	Alternate to Annual Conference	Renee Kinnear

On November 20, 2022 the membership of St. Thomas met on the third floor for its annual meeting (United Methodists call this a Charge Conference). This is when we celebrate the mission and ministry of the church that has been accomplished over the past year and look forward to the upcoming year. One task of the body is to elect the slate of officers and leaders. Please join the church in thanking those individuals who have served faithfully over the past year and welcome those who are stepping into new roles. As you will see, there are also several new positions too. Please keep the leaders serving on Church Council and the various ministry teams in your prayers as we enter a new year of ministry together.

Also, a number of leaders on SPRC, Trustees, and Finance are attending training this month to be better equipped for their role. All other leaders and members

of the church are invited to sign up for NOVA Training Day on Saturday, January 14. Here's a little more about the event:

*Over the last 2.5 years, we have needed to learn how to be resilient and adapt to the messiness of constant change. As we realize that the mess is not going away, we now need tools to sustain us today and in the foreseeable future. We are SO excited to welcome **Kate Bowler AND Tod Bolsinger** as our NoVa District Training Day keynote speakers to help give us context and perspective as we navigate the challenges ahead. Plan to spend Saturday, January 14 with Kate and Tod live via webinar and then explore the 40+ additional pre-recorded workshops we've prepared for you!*

To register: <https://novatrainingday.com/>



OWLS MINISTRY

OLDER WISER LIVELIER SENIOR MINISTRY

By Lynn Furlong & Marian Ludlow

Twelve OWLS participants gathered at Tortino Mare on November 18 to enjoy a delicious Italian lunch. We were in a very nice private room. This was probably a good idea as we enjoyed the fellowship with lots of laughter. Connie Rickerson even passed around her calamari to anyone who wanted a sample. Yum! We always have a good time when we get together and we always welcome new friends.

Our December outing will be December 16 when we will travel to see the Festival of Lights at Bull Run Park in Centreville. We will meet at the church at 5:15 PM and leave for the park at 5:30. We hope to take both church vans, and other cars, if necessary. The cost is \$30.00 per car if we are able to purchase tickets online or \$40.00 at the gate. After driving through the light display we will have dinner at Bob Evans Restaurant in Manassas. We are definitely going to try to get our tickets online so we will need your RSVP no later than Tuesday, December 13. This will give us time to plan transportation and reserve our tickets. Please RSVP to Marian Ludlow (571-315-6881) or Lynn Furlong (703-499-0243). As usual, OWLS is open to all who are 55 or older. Plan to join us in December and invite a friend.



*Through Jesus' gift of salvation
we are called to live into
our legacy of giving
generously of the
grace we
have received.*

**RELEASING
GOD'S
BLESSINGS**

Releasing God's Blessings

An Update on Our Stewardship Efforts

On Sunday, Nov. 20 we wrapped up our stewardship sermon series, "Releasing God's Blessings" by asking the congregation to come forward and place their commitment to God for the ministry and mission of St. Thomas in 2023. Here's a summary of our efforts together at the end of November:

- # of Pledged Giving Units at start of campaign: **48**
- # of Pledged Giving Units received to date: **32**
- Difference +/- To Date: **-16**
- 2022 dollars Estimate of Giving/Pledged: **\$376,142.01**
- 2023 dollars Estimate of Giving/Pledged: **\$285,831.50**
- Difference +/- To Date: **-\$90,310.51**

of new people estimating their gift or pledging: **6**

Total # of people pledging to give online to date: **26**

What percentage of the congregation's budget is supported by online giving? **26%**

If you would like to financially support what God plans to do in 2023 - it's not too late! Please fill out a 2023 Commitment Card on our website (stthomasumc.org/giving) or find blank envelopes / cards at the end of each pew in the Sanctuary. Completed cards may be placed in any brass giving plate during worship. To God be the glory!

JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR!

Christmas Eve Services | Dec 24

5 pm Family Service with "pop up" children's pageant, Footprints to the Manger.

7 pm Casual Contemporary Service with our praise band, candlelight & communion.

9 pm Festive Traditional Service with our chancel & handbell choirs, candlelight & communion.

Christmas Day | Dec 25

10 am Cozy Caroling (wear your pajamas or your favorite ugly sweater!)

11 am to 3 pm - Stay for Christmas Day Dinner



ST. THOMAS
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

REACH • NOURISH • SERVE

Upcoming Events

- **Dec 2** UMW Christmas Party | 1 PM
- **Dec 10** Drive-Thru Nativity | 5 PM to 8 PM
- **Dec 11** Christmas Cantata | 9 AM & 11 AM
- **Dec 18** Breakfast with Santa | 10-11 AM & 12-1 PM
- **Dec. 24** Food Pantry Closed for Christmas Holiday
- **Dec 24** Christmas Eve Services
 - 5 PM | Children's Christmas Pageant
 - 7 PM | Contemporary Candlelight & Communion
 - 9 PM | Traditional Candlelight & Communion
- **Dec 25** Cozy Christmas Carol Service | 10 AM
Christmas Day Dinner | 11 AM - 3 PM
- **Dec 26** Church Office Closed (Monday)

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
December Birthdays				1 Peggy Lawlor	2	3 Cary McMahon
4 Monique Buchanan	5	6 Carolyn Glade	7 Bill Bixby	8 Elizabeth Goldfarb James Mouser	9	10
11 Jacob Wagner Jenalynn Weed	12	13	14 Philip Adams Brandon Hayes	1	16	17 Mason Sanchez Danielle Harcup
18 Walter Granados Cheryl Wagner Lynda Workman	19	20 Leonard Fick Sybil Johnston Levi Lusk	21 Ginny Bixby Gary Thornton	22	23 Paul Petrilla	24
25 John Rosko	26	27 Missy Duffy	28 Dommie Izzo	29 Giovanni Schoch Donovan Keyser Roger Stone Bridgette Rudolph	30 Robin Gardner Martha Jones Tracy Spencer	31 Jody Boston Lacy Lusk Angel Brun