

THE THOMAS FAMILY

Serving Together Since 2016 • Panama

"If your faith and hope are in God, then you have a security that none can destroy." -Charles Spurgeon

School's out, and summer has been in full swing! We hope your summer has been enjoyable for you and your family! I would love to encourage you today by sharing some exciting family updates!

Family Updates

We are incredibly proud to announce that our firstborn, Noah, graduated from Kindergarten in June! I am getting teary-eyed just writing this. Even though he excelled academically, this year and last had their fair share of challenges. I'll never forget reading this quote online in the middle of the school year, which automatically made me think of Noah. It said: *"When God wanted to make a king out of David, He didn't give him a crown-He gave him Goliath. Your challenges prepare you for your purpose."*

As a parent, it's hard to see your child struggle, especially in areas where it can be harder to relate or fully understand what they are going through or feeling. I know God has a unique and amazing purpose for each of my children, as He does for everyone. To trust God in those dark moments of uncertainty and then to come out of it on the other side is a mix of many different emotions. For me, as a mom, there was a feeling of relief and gratitude to see Noah push through with God's help and grace as he conquered this particular Goliath in his young life. **I know there will be other Goliaths, but we as a family will choose to trust God in faith that He will carry us through the fight towards victory.** We pray that your faith and hope are firmly planted in Him. Know that He will come through in ways you may not expect or planned. We encourage you, when those opportunities to face a Goliath in your life present themselves, stand firm in Him through steadfast prayer every day, reading His nourishing Word, and by listening to things that glorify His name, such as sermons or worship music. These small daily habits feed your faith, and it helps to build a foundation that will be immovable. **Let us be a generation to break down generational curses and worldly habits and cultivate a childlike faith, hunger, and joy when spending time with our Lord.**

We waited to tell Noah that he would be homeschooled for 1st grade after he finished school because we didn't want him slacking the last few weeks. Regardless, he was a bit sad leaving his friends behind. Overall, he was happy about the news. He had told his teachers and Stephen and me for the past two years how he wanted Mommy to homeschool him again. I'm truly grateful and honored to have the opportunity to pour into our children not just academically but spiritually as well.

As for Ezra, we are also proud to announce he graduated Pre-K from homeschooling with me. He completed a 28-week Christian curriculum in addition to 180 lessons of another free Christian curriculum I found online. It was an absolute joy having those early mornings with my sweet boy who was always so eager to learn and do school with me. He learned the sounds of the alphabet, and I am excited to start teaching him how to read. As we mentioned in our previous newsletter, Stephen and I decided to do homeschool for all three children this school year. Even though I have some experience homeschooling, it has only been preschool I have done for the past 4 years with my children. We would appreciate prayers as we transition to elementary-level homeschool in August.

As for Esther, our happy-go-lucky girl, we've seen her personality blossom even more right before our eyes. She loves all things ballet, and as a former dancer, I must say she is quite the little dancer. She has also entered into a dress phase and only wants to wear "princess" dresses. She's a girl who enjoys getting her hair done, trying on lots of shoes daily, putting on jewelry, and twirling in her dresses while listening to music. We have been enjoying this age and stage as much as we can. We know it all just flies by so quickly!

(Continued...)



Ministry Updates

Stephen, Santiago, and Ezra were able to do a fundraising trip in the middle of May to several different states. It was a busy trip, and we are grateful for all the people who took the time to meet with them. I was at home with Noah (since he was still in school) and Esther. My parents were kind enough to come during that time to help, which was such an incredible blessing!

In addition, the Abraham Project Panama (APP) team (which includes Santiago and Yuliana as well as Stephen and me) was able to complete a 6-month training with a ministry called Life Model Works. Stephen and I were first introduced to a couple at our Cornerstone International Summit (our missions sending organization does this event every five years) last summer. The husband, Michael Hendricks, wrote a book along with Dr. John Wilder called *The Other Half of the Church*. He shared about it with his wife, Claudia Hendricks. We were incredibly blessed to have Claudia lead a Spanish training with the APP team, a local pastor in Panama, and some members in Costa Rica. We plan on incorporating this training into our program with the future APP staff (such as the social worker, psychologist, house parents, etc.) and the children we receive into our homes. We also plan to integrate it with our own children too. The book and training focus on five core topics: Relational joy, Hesed (Covenant love), Group Identity, Healthy Correction, and Addressing Narcissism. If these topics interest you, we highly recommend you buy the book!

The last update we have is regarding the process we are currently in to hire a psychologist. Earlier this year, the social worker we went through the process to hire ultimately did not go through. However, this potential hire is a part of Santiago and Yuli's church, and she showed interest in working with us. We were able to have a more in-depth interview with her at the end of June. We set aside time to pray as a team, and we all came to the same consensus: it would be good to hire her temporarily to help us create the professional documents our program needs to continue getting things organized and ready for when we are operational.



Partnering Through Prayer

Dear Lord, You know all of our needs, desires, and struggles. We come before You today with gratitude and joy that we have You as our Heavenly Father who cares about what we care about. Help us, Lord, with whatever thing we lack, and that You may bring it to fruition through Your perfect timing and ways. Help us to align our thoughts with Yours and see others through Your eyes that are filled with so much compassion and grace. Lord, help us if our faith is wavering and our hope is not fully in You to prioritize our time to strengthen those spiritual muscles by establishing godly habits, thus creating steadfastness in You and You alone. Jesus, we all desire to have a security in You that no one can destroy. As Charles Spurgeon said so well: "To trust God in the light is nothing, but trust Him in the dark-that is faith." We desire and ask for that deep-rooted faith in You, Lord. We love You, Lord, and we pray for continued encouragement, protection, and good health over us and our families.

- Stephen, Kendra, Noah, Ezra, & Esther Lily

Support

Thank you for partnering with **Stephen Jr & Kendra Thomas** in seeing His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven! Thank you for your gifts and prayers.

To stand with **The Thomas Jr Family** financially, you can give online at cimissions.org/panama/ or make your check out to Cornerstone Int'l, memo **Panama - Thomas**, & mail in enclosed envelope.



po box 192
wilmore, ky 40390
1-800-859-4578
cimissions.org