

# THE EPISTLE

The Monthly Newsletter of St. Luke's United Methodist Church

## A Strong Parental Influence

Have you ever stopped and thought about the kind of family in which Jesus grew up?

It was a family devoted to God. That makes sense, doesn't it? God chose Mary and Joseph because they were the kind of people who would take Jesus to Jerusalem every year for Passover. They would take Jesus to the Synagogue weekly, if not daily. They were the kind of parents who went out of their way to honor God.

It made a difference! Jesus grew up in a family that was devoted to God, and it made a difference for him. Jesus was human, and he needed the nurture that his human family offered.

Jesus is growing in a family that went beyond the call of duty to honor God. He did his growing in a family that helped him to develop strong ties to His Heavenly Father. Life in that kind of family made Jesus strong. It prepared him for life. It prepared him for death. It prepared him for whatever he might face. It prepared him for the beginning of his ministry. Do you remember how his ministry began? Jesus began his ministry with the temptation in the wilderness! There Satan tried to get the best of Jesus.

- Satan tried to get Jesus to make bread from stone.
- He tried to get Jesus to take the easy way and to worship Satan.
- He tried to get Jesus to jump-start his ministry with a spectacular stunt.

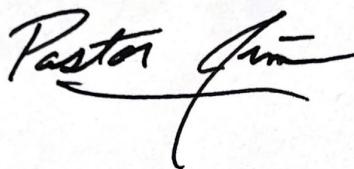
But Jesus parried every temptation. He countered every temptation with scripture.

So when the test came (Satan's temptations), Jesus was ready. When the test came, Jesus passed it with flying colors. He was able to pass the test because he had grown strong in a family that went to Jerusalem for Passover every year – in a family that went beyond the call of duty to honor God – in a family that worshiped in the synagogue, every Sabbath – in a family that gave things at the dinner table – in a family that prayed together – in a family that told and retold the great stories from the scripture – in a family that went to church!

St. Luke's, what does that have to do with us? Quite a bit! It gives us a model of a family for raising kids. It gives us a model for growing strong kids. It gives us a model for growing kids who can handle temptation.

St. Luke's, help your kids and prepare your kids so that when the test comes – they'll be ready! Bring them to God's house!

Faithfully,



Pastor Jim

# CARE TALKS

## The History of the Congregational Care Talks

In 1980 a rarity happened in the ministry, whether appointed or called. At the age of 29, I was appointed to Wesley Living Ministries as the Pastoral/Spiritual Care provider. This was a dream come true and for me a “Plum” appointment. In 1971, I felt a specialty calling to older adult ministry while serving at my first charge at Arlington U.M.C. Arlington, Kentucky. The day had arrived. Over a period of 42 years serving at Wesley-unusual in and of itself- I aged into the very ministry I deeply loved sharing.

With retirement approaching, my hope was that I could return to St. Luke’s-and that too reached “Plum” status. I have appreciated and enjoyed the many ways of caring the church staff and church family have invited me to share alongside all in being the hands, heart, and mind of Christ

In addition, as you have all read in The Epistle and participated in, I have also been offering an additional ministry under the name of Congregational Care Talks. It occurred to me that I have not shared with many of you the history of the Care Talks. Consequently, this article is written to acquaint you with this ministry 40 plus years in the making.

These Care Talks numbering 5 are a collection of educational opportunities packaged in a Pastoral Care Initiative titled “Life’s Ride”. The plans of care in each have their roots from Insights gained “out in the field” in my years at Wesley. The pick-ups originate

from two sources. The first is what I have learned alongside Wesley neighbors regarding the practice of pastoral care. The second source is courtesy of Wesley neighbors who in sharing their Life Ride (Soul Baring) expressed something about their life ride that definitely impacts all of us.

So there you have the story behind the Care Talks that will contribute to a much more fulfilling and smoother life ride. I don’t think anybody would object to that! The benefits are a richer pilgrim walk, a healthier body, mind and spirit, fellowship sweet, and God’s peace beyond compare.

If you are interested in knowing more about this Life Ride Initiative or to volunteer as a team member to grow the ministry, I would be thrilled to share with you.

## What's Next?

Our Care Talk in February will focus on The Art of Getting Along. In the Sunday School Hour, the lesson will center on Dispelling Bees. The message for the Worship service is on Body Building Christ Style.

In April, we will be having an Intergenerational Fashion Show modeling The Fruits of the Spirit. It will take a lot of planning but of what a Fashion Show it will be!

Kind regards,  
Pastor Dennis Neenan

## ADVENT ART

Would you like to have one of the posters from our Advent and Christmas series for your home or workspace? They are available for a donation toward future worship resources. Please see Pastor Amy Martin for one of these beautiful reminders of God’s presence and our Advent theme “What Do You Fear?”



# Star Words

Beginning with Epiphany Sunday, everyone at St. Luke's is invited to receive a Star Word card. The card contains a single word which may serve as a guide for your journey in the year ahead. Star Words is a growing prayer practice used in many churches based on the story of the magi following a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. This creative prayer practice in the new year can also help us move closer to Jesus.

Star Words are not necessarily assignments for ways that God wants you to grow or improve. This may indeed be what you take from your Star Word, but it can also be a way to reflect on God's presence and the ways that God is moving through, around, or in connection to that word and its meaning.

So you may ask, "What can I do with my Star Word?" Here are some ideas:

- Find a scripture than anchors it
- Look up the definition and its synonyms
- Find books, podcasts, and articles that dive into your word and explore a deeper meaning
- Create a playlist of songs that reflect your word
- Start a journal (written, drawn, really any expression) of how your word is showing up in your life

However you choose to interact with your Star Word in 2026, may it remind you of God's presence as it guides you to Jesus.

If you haven't received a Star Word, they will be available through January, and if you'd like to make a choice of another word to add to the one you received, you may do that as well. Contact Pastor Amy Martin for further conversation about Star Words.



**THE CHOSEN**  
**Study Group**  
**BEGINS JANUARY 18, 2026**  
**11:30A IN THE LIBRARY**  
**BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH**  
**ALL WELCOME!**

**The Food Pantry would like to give a huge Thank You for all the donations from our wonderful and generous congregation. We were able to serve over 300 families in November and December. Thanks for helping us to be the hands of Jesus in our community.**

### **Service opportunities related to The Congregational Care Talks:**

- Helping to Organize an Educational Prayer ministry and distributing it across the entire church family to participate in sure to foster personal and community well being.
- Volunteering to help build a Family Ministry where we study the variety of church families within our communion, design ministries to focus on the common needs of all structures, put in place a ministry to address the particular needs of each, and a ministry team who would be in place to assist those in transitioning from one kind to another.
- Assisting in a ministry titled “We Can Do This” aimed at reminding us as a church family that we are well equipped to fulfill our discipleship duties. In a Bible Study, we first study the “How’s” and then discuss strategies to share it with the church family.
- Volunteering for the newly designed prayer ministry connected with the Food Pantry. It involves welcoming our guests, inviting them to share their prayer requests, writing down their first name and their prayer requests.
- This is followed up with staff and church family remembering them in our prayer times.
- Helping with Fruits of the Spirit Fashion Show.
- Volunteering in supporting the Campus School sports teams who practice and compete in our Family life Center from helping with the concession stand to cheerleading.

If interested, please call 378-7505 for more information and/or sign up. That is my number.

Pastor Neenan



**A huge thank you to everyone for the wonderful response to the Advent Love in Action. It was a success with each category receiving numerous items to support our partner ministries.**

## United Women in Faith News

On Tuesday December 9 the United Women in Faith met and carried our mission to help women, children and youth and those in need. We made approximately 100 snack and hygiene bags for the residents supported by Golden Cross ministries. Some had food items while others had hygiene and personal care items. If you would like to join us and help with projects such as this we meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month except January and February. See you March 11 at 6 pm in the Lounge. Contact Pat Anderson if you have questions.



### Manna Snack bag update - 2026

The 2025 year started out with money and snack contributions from the church's Christmas emphasis. A gift card from Target allowed us to purchase all the empty snack bags that we needed for our snacks. Cash contributions kept us solvent and able to function for the remainder of the year. We still received some extra Vienna sausages from the food bank along with fruit cups and crackers.

We distributed 18 to 20 Manna bags at the hospitality door with Sara's help until Highland Towers shut down in the early part of 2025. Around the later part of the Spring "business" picked back up with word of mouth bringing us new "customers". By mid-summer we were back to 20 bags a week for walk up "bag seekers".

Think of it this way, one can of Vienna sausages equates to one Manna bag. The donations last Christmas bought us 576 cans of Vienna sausages. With Vienna sausage cans contributed last Christmas, plus Vienna sausage cans collected from the food bank, and other supplies the number is over 800 Manna bags passed out by Sarah and others working the desk in 2025.

The Manna Snack bag program received 159 cans of Vienna Sausage and 104 Fruit cups for the 2026 food ministry on January 4 from the results of the Love in Action effort.

What's in a Manna bag? Answer: Water, crackers, Vienna sausages, a fruit cup, a mustard pack, spoon and napkins and care.

A special thanks to Stan Craig, Larry Kaler, Harry Colter, Sarah Jordan, Larry Banks, Carolyn Galloway and volunteers like Maggie Scoggins" together they make the program run smoothly.

## Cocoa and Carols 2025

What a fun time we had at Cocoa and Carols at the beginning of Advent! A big thank you goes to our children who led the singing along with Amy Martin. Also thanks to all of the volunteers who made the event a success and gave us an opportunity to reach out to our community with song, food and fun!



Dear Church Family,

We are now accepting flower dedications for Sundays in 2026. This is a meaningful way to honor or remember a loved one while beautifying our worship service.

If you would like to dedicate flowers for a specific Sunday in 2026, please call Sarah Jordan at the church office or email Ms. Sarah directly at:

[sarah.jordan@stlukesumc.org](mailto:sarah.jordan@stlukesumc.org)

Thank you for your continued support and participation!

## DECEMBER 2025 HONORIUMS AND MEMORIALS:

Honoriums:

In Honor of Dot Dickey's Birthday from Rita Richardson

In Honor of Jim McKinney and Family from Rita Richardson

Memorials:

In Memory of Robert Hollingsworth from Mary Lou Cushing

# DAY SCHOOL NEWS

Our Christmas Program was a holiday highlight! We love being in our beautiful sanctuary and the kids always bring Christmas cheer. The program was followed by a cookie reception in the Fellowship Hall. Santa visited the young and old on our last day of school.

We return from break on January 5 with big expectations for 2026. Amy Pearson will retire in May and Erin Cowles will step in as Director. Erin has been a part of this school since her kids were here (her oldest is now a sophomore in college!), so she knows the ropes better than anyone! This will be the smoothest transition in the history of transitions!

We are always so grateful for the love and support of our church family.



Sherwood  
Elementary's  
Winter  
Wonderland  
Community Event  
2025



Handwritten 'Thank You' in green ink.

Dear St. Luke's United Methodist Church,

We wanted to extend a heartfelt thank you for your contribution to our Staff Lunch and staff gifts. Your generosity and support are truly appreciated and helped make the day extra special!

With warmest regards,

Sherwood Elementary Faculty & Staff





On Sunday, January 4, St. Luke's celebrated Epiphany with food, a brief program, and a time of service, at an event called "Breaking Bread Together Again: Celebrating Epiphany and Service." Thanks to all of the volunteers who helped with set up, food, and clean up. Likewise, thanks to Amy Martin and Wes Kirkpatrick who led our singing, and to the Hinds children, Shannon, Charlie, and Ava, who brought in the Wise Men for our Nativity Scene. We are also grateful to our team leaders who led the service portion of the event, Sarah Jordan (Love In Action Sorting Session), Linda Hensley (Christmas Decoration Take Down), and Beth Ryan (Epiphany Cards, plus Clancey Patterson who led in the kitchen. Most of all, thanks to the hard working, fun loving members of our church family who came and enjoyed fellowship and working together to serve our community and our church. We accomplished SO MUCH in a short time! In addition to those who attended the event, a big thank you goes to our generous congregation who donated items for December's Love In Action to Dorothy Day House, Wesley Senior Ministries, Sherwood Elementary, St. Luke's Day School, the Food Pantry, Room Inn the Inn, and the Manna Bag ministry. On February 1, we will resume our regular "Breaking Bread Together Again" when we enjoy a time of food and fellowship at Jason's Deli following worship on Communion Sunday. No reservations are needed. Just show up and enjoy time with your church family.

-Lynne McAlexander Intergenerational Activities



# Make Sunday Count!

## Sunday School Classes

### Join a study community in 2026.

**Seekers:** Led by class members, continue discussing Luke, beginning chapter 8. They meet in Room 215.

**Newman Class:** Continuing a discussion of the book “A Long Obedience in the Same Direction” by Eugene Peterson. The focus for each Sunday in January is one of the Psalms in Songs of Ascents: January 4 - Psalm 127, January 11 - Psalm 128, January 18 - Psalm 129, and January 25 - Psalm 130 in Room 213.

**Growing Disciples:** Studying the Gospel of John, using William Barclay’s commentary as a guide.

**Christian Homebuilders:** Pastor Jim is teaching the Gospel of John in Room 108.

**Youth:** Beginning a 4-week series called “Exploring Prayer”.

**Children classes meet in Children’s Building:** Children in grades 3-5 meet upstairs. Children JK - 2 meet in the first floor.

**Care Talks:** Next talk will be in February. More info to come.

**The Chosen Study Group:** Begins January 18, 2026 in the Library. Bring your own lunch.

**Please contact Ruth Morrison if you have any questions :**  
**[ruthmorrison28@gmail.com](mailto:ruthmorrison28@gmail.com)**

# Our Church Directory is Online!

You can now view our church directory online or through the **FREE** mobile app.

To access the directory online, go to [members.InstantChurchDirectory.com](http://members.InstantChurchDirectory.com) and enter your email address as listed in the directory. Click on “Send Secure Sign-In Link.” Then check your email and click on the “Log in to Instant Church Directory” button found in your email.

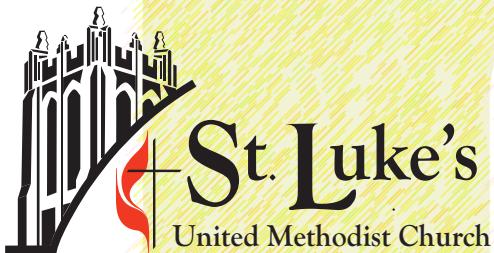
A free mobile app is also available in the **Apple® App Store** and the **Google Play™ Store**. Just search for “[Instant Church Directory](#)” to download.

Important: Your email address **must be listed in the directory before you can log in.**

\*Print copies are available per request at the front desk.

## Need help or have questions?

Please contact: Alexa at [alexa.velasco@stlukesumc.org](mailto:alexa.velasco@stlukesumc.org)



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