

# THE EPISTLE

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

## Hope Instead of Fear

Isaiah 2:4-5 (NRSV):

*"He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."*

St. Luke's,

- Are you hope-filled this Advent?
- Or are you trudging through life, entering yet another Advent and Christmas season, wondering why life is so difficult?
- Do you feel burdened and weighed down with the issues of life?
- Is your heart heavy and your soul weak?
- When you read the words of Isaiah do you open your eyes and say "yes, the Lord's time is coming. Hallelujah"?
- Or are you resolved that, somehow you will survive yet another Christmas and nothing ever changes.
- If you are not filled with hope and if your heart does not burst with joy for the coming of Christ's birth, is it possible that you have become too focused on yourself and have set God and his Kingdom aside?
- Is this Christmas a time to re-center God in your life so He can fill your heart with the hope that belongs there?

The Advent Season is upon us and now we begin to turn over our sights on the celebration of that glorious Christmas day when God sent His only Son into the world. It is an exciting time. A time filled with hope, love, peace, and joy.

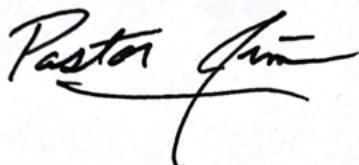
Or is it? If we do not first allow our hearts to be filled with the hope that God's kingdom will come and that it is a realistic dream that is achievable in our lives, then what is the point of Christmas?

If there is no reason to dream about peace and work towards a time when all people can sing hallelujah as a single and glorious choir, then why go through the motions of Christmas at all?

We do so because God has faithfully promised that His kingdom will come and these unrealistic dreams are exactly what we can hope for.

As we light the Candle of Hope this Advent, we do so with the understanding that we are "walking in the Light of the Lord." Hallelujah!

Faithfully,



Pastor Jim

# CARE TALKS

## Soul Baring Care Shop

On Sunday, December 14, 2025, a Care Talk on Soul Baring will be offered during the Sunday School hour. We will be gathering in the Chapel as it has become our customary meeting place for this every other month ministry.

Soul baring means to reveal ones most inner thoughts and feelings with another, normally with a lot of emotions. Sharing these life experiences deemed significant to us from being superbly joyous to in the throes of wrenching self-made or other made brokenness is how God made us to be. Tapping God and God readied others is part of the miracle we are in being intricately knitted together. Psalm 139:13-14.

Baring our Soul is as lifting a glass in a toast and saying, "To our health." A magnificent moment or experience shouted out completes it and a senseless act cried out or uncovered can contribute to unburdening.

In this study, we review some of the many who freely expressed to God and appointed others in their delightful to frightening life ride.

The hope is that we can more model this vital life support system by realizing we will be in good company enabling us to distance ourselves from the strong ingrained religious and cultural restraints deep in us.

As is always appropriate in discussing heart felt sharing, the choosing the of a designated shoulder who have the gifts of listening, understanding, and empathy will be highlighted.

Lastly, we will conclude with the sounds of music—not the Von Trapps.

See you there!

Kind regards,  
Pastor Dennis Neenan

## Day School Christmas Cards

**JK is selling Christmas cards from their original art! The first box of 10 cards is \$20 with each additional box of 10 for \$10. Orders must be in by Monday, December 1. Orders will be ready for pick up on Friday, December 5.**





ST. LUKE'S UMC

480 S. HIGHLAND • MEMPHIS, TN 39111

# COCOA CAROLS

DECEMBER 7TH  
11:30 A.M - 1 P.M

JOIN US IN FRONT OF THE SANCTUARY  
TO SING CAROLS WITH OUR NEIGHBORS.

(NO MUSICAL TALENT REQUIRED)

CHRISTMAS FUN FOR ALL AGES!

COCOA, COOKIES, SANDWICHES

GINGERBREAD BOUNCE HOUSE

GIANT SNOW GLOBE PHOTO OP

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



# What do you fear?

## Insisting on Hope This Advent

During Advent this year, our worship services will follow the theme “What Do You Fear?” Recognizing that this is a season in history where fear is all too pervasive and warranted, we will lean into – even insist on – hope in response. The Advent scriptures feature messages from the angels and prophets calling us to lay fear aside and claim the hope of God’s presence and promise. Part of that holy presence and promise is the companionship and encouragement we give one another to not give up hope. We are not alone in this season, and we are not alone in our fears.

To guide us in this hope-filled Advent journey, we have devotional booklets available with weekly resources, including art, poetry, original hymns, and reflections on the scripture stories and themes. Please pick one up in the Hospitality Hall or at any of the Sanctuary doors. And look for the Advent art display in the hall outside the Parlor. May God give us an insistent and enduring hope for our faith journey together.

*In a fearful world,  
may you look for God’s spirit.*

*May you reach for each other’s hands.*

*May you choose courage whenever you can.*

*And in all things, may you remember  
that good news is louder than fear.*

*In the name of the one who calls,  
the one who sends,*

*and the one who journeys with—  
go in peace and  
be not afraid.*

*—benediction for Advent*



ST. LUKE'S UMC MUSIC DEPARTMENT  
INVITES YOU TO

# *A CONCERT OF LESSONS AND CAROLS*

Music by the St. Luke's Chancel Choir,  
Wesley Bells Handbell Duet, Children's Choir

 Organist Wes Kirkpatrick  
with violinist Jordan Musgrave

Directed by Rev. Amy Martin Minister of Music and Worship

## SUNDAY DECEMBER 14

**3:00 PM IN THE SANCTUARY  
FREE ENTRY**

**480 S. HIGHLAND  
MEMPHIS, TN 38111**

# HOLIDAY HOPE NIGHT



**DECEMBER 12TH 2025  
FROM 5:30-7:30 PM**

Parents take the night off during a busy season while your child enjoys a meal, a movie, and crafts to remember the reason for the season! RSVP with Mary Page Contreras. This event is FREE for all. Nursery is available by request only.



# *Breaking Bread Together Again: Celebrating Epiphany & Service*

Sunday, January 4, 2026 at 11:30 a.m

- Epiphany celebration including light lunch and opportunities to work together to serve our community and our church.
- Fun, food, & fellowship with your church family
- Variety of jobs needing volunteers of different ages & skill levels.
- Reservations are not required. Call Lynne McAlexander at 550-3091 if you have questions.



**The Sherwood Elementary Mitten Tree is decorated with gifts of warmth and love Thank you, St. Luke's family, for making this happen every year! We are about to take the first delivery soon! Last delivery will be Dec 15th, in time for distribution for the Christmas Holiday.**

**The Church Ladies Small Group,  
Melinda Kaler, Jacki Romey, Barbara Simpson  
and Bette Colter  
mtkaler1111@gmail.com**



**Mary Page was just named West Tennessee ESL Educator of the Year! They surprised her on Pajama Day. :)**



## United Women in Faith News

The United Women in Faith (UWF) at St. Luke's have been busy doing what we do best - serving! In September, not only did we honor Sarah Jordan with the UWF Special Mission Recognition pin for her unwavering devotion and service, we also fed the hungry students at Memphis Wesley. In October, we collected items for the Community Baby Shower for Teen Moms sponsored by United Methodist Neighborhood Centers of Memphis and the Saint II ministry of Saint Andrew AME Church. It's always fun to buy baby things, and these bottles, socks, blankets, and more helped these young mothers prepare. Pat Anderson attended the Metro District UWF Annual Meeting and was inspired, as she often is, by one of the mission partners that shared information with the attendees - Golden Cross Senior Ministries. So, at our December potluck meeting on Tuesday, December 9, 6pm, we will be assembling gift bags for the residents at the many facilities supported by Golden Cross. If you would like to join in the fun, come on! Bring a dish to share and some of the following items: canned soup or beef stew with pop tops, deodorant, travel sized shampoo or toothpaste, tuna in pouches, individually wrapped hard candy. Reach out to Pat Anderson (901-489-3757) or Phyllis Gay (901-485-8416) if you have questions. Hope to see you on December 9th!



## **Sunday Breakfast Ministry – Volunteers Needed!**

Many of you know that we ended Saturday Supper earlier this year, but did you know our Sunday morning breakfast is still going strong? This ministry continues to bless our community, but we need your help.

We've seen a decline in both volunteers and funds, since the food ministry is not a budgeted item for the church. Our hope is to recruit more help and reorganize with a fresh start in 2026.

### **Ways You Can Serve**

- **Main Contact** – Oversee the breakfast ministry as a whole and organize the teams.
- **Serve on a Team** – Most teams cook every other month, some once a month. Teams of 6-8 work best.
- **Team Captain** – Send reminders, gather extra help if needed, and lead your team on Sunday.
- **Shop & Order Supplies** – Weekly shopping for eggs, milk, and other essentials, plus keeping us stocked with trays, utensils, water, etc.
- **Panera Pick-Up** – Friday night pickup at the Laurelwood location (arrive just before closing at 9pm), then bring items to the church Sunday morning at 7am.
- **Give Financially** – Support the food ministry fund to help cover ongoing costs.

### **Interested?**

If you feel led to serve or have questions, please reach out to:

Denise Hensley      [denisehensley@gmail.com](mailto:denisehensley@gmail.com)      (901) 212-3085

### **NOVEMBER 2025 HONORIUMS AND MEMORIALS:**

#### **Memorials:**

**In Memory of Shirley Moore from Carol Sue Keathley**

**In Memory of Frank and Deanna Marion from Kathleen and Patrick McQillan**



## Children's Ministry

So many fun things are happening for our children as we enter into such a magical season of the year. Beginning on November 30th, we will be bringing back a special Advent class for our children. The combined Sunday School class for JK- 5th Grade will meet in the Day School Lobby. This special class is called, "Tis the Season for ADVENTure!" and each week the children will get to discuss the different components of Advent: Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. They will get to create something special for each theme. The class will meet together in the Lobby weekly from 9:15-10:00 am until Sunday, December 21st, which will be the final week. Our Children's Choir is also back up and running this year being led by our very own, Mrs. Amy Pearson! The kids practice weekly in the lobby after Sunday School classes from 10-10:15 am and the church will get to hear their hard work on both Sunday the 14th at 3:00 pm and during Worship on the 21st. Sunday, December 7th will be a fun day as well as all of our kids will work alongside Mr. Warren Morrison to learn how to make Manna bags for our community as a service project. We love remembering the reason for the season and we will conclude that day with our annual "Cocoa & Carols" on the front steps!

Finally, on Friday, December 12th we will be having another "Holiday Hope Night" from 5:30-7:30pm. This night is a time for parents to get some peace and quiet during one of the busiest seasons of the year. The children will be dropped off in the Fellowship Hall for pizza, a movie, crafts, and games and parents can go run errands, have a nice dinner out, or maybe even take a nap! This event was so fun last year and we hope to have even more kids come this year. It is free to attend and open to all ages JK-Fifth Grade, but we can add a nursery for infant and preschool age siblings if requested. Be on the lookout for a registration link and as always, if you have any questions do not hesitate to reach out to Mary Page Contreras. We need volunteers too! We have so many fun things planned for our children to enjoy the true meaning of the season and share their special gifts with us all, as well as have some fun! I hope you and your family can be present for all the good to come and we can enjoy the magic of the season together.



## The Fun Bunch

### **December 4th: Fun Bunch Annual Christmas Ornament Decorating Party**

Meet us at 11am in the CLC craft room. Please bring your sack lunch. We will be providing craft supplies and drinks. We will be making ornaments for our homebound friends. Please sign up at the Hospitality Hall Desk.

### **December 12th: A Bonus Activity!**

We will be going to the Peabody Hotel to see the world-famous ducks and listen to Christmas music. We will have lunch downtown before returning to St. Luke's. We will be leaving the church at 10 am. Please sign up at the Hospitality Hall to let us know how many to plan for. Thanks!



First of all we would like to say THANK YOU to everyone who has made a donation to Room In The Inn! We have been so blessed to receive new towels, pillows, sheet sets, and blankets. We were able to get enough tall air mattresses for up to 13 guests and both overnight hosts. Because of your generous donations we were also able to purchase pads to put the air mattresses on and some new totes to store all the items in.

We had 8 women and 4 children on Saturday November 15th, which was our first night of the season. We feed them a warm meal, provide them with an opportunity to shower, sleep on a tall air mattress, have breakfast and a goody bag before returning.

Our next RITI nights are 12/20/25; 1/17/26; 2/21/26 and 3/21/26.

We need YOUR help for this mission project!

**Scan the QR Code to sign up to help!**

Questions? Call or text Jonathan St.Gelais 901-508-7207 or Lisa St.Gelais 901-230-9174.



**Scan Me**

# DAY SCHOOL

We can't believe we will be wrapping up the first half of our year in just a few weeks! Already this year, we've enjoyed the petting zoo, been visited by a firetruck, enjoyed a costume parade and celebrated Thanksgiving! The year is flying by!

Our Christmas program will be Wednesday, December 17, 9:30 a.m., in the Sanctuary. It is always a special program that brings so much Christmas cheer. Our last day, December 19, will be a half day with 11:30 dismissal, but not before Santa arrives while we eat pancakes in our pjs!

Classes resume on Monday, January 5!



UNITED METHODIST  
**Neighborhood Center**  
OF MEMPHIS

**United Methodist Neighborhood Centers in Memphis (UMNC-M) continue to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of families who need a helping hand.**

**We asked for donations of gift cards for Thanksgiving. We received 252 Gift Cards and we were able to serve 175 families. Thank you for your donations St. Luke's!**

# Make Sunday Count!

**Sunday School Classes  
Join a class during Advent!**

**Seekers:** Led by class members, continue discussing one Luke chapter per Sunday finishing prior to Christmas. They meet in Room 215.

**Newman Class:** Continuing a discussion of the book “A Long Obedience in the Same Direction” by Eugene Peterson focusing on the Songs of Ascent Psalms 120 - 134 in Room 213.

**Growing Disciples:** Studying an Advent Devotional Booklet “Calling All Angels”, beginning Sunday, November 30. All are welcome in the Library.

**Christian Homebuilders:** Advent Book by the Reverend Rawls in Room 108.

**Youth:** Beginning a 4-week Advent series on Nov 30: “A Wandering Journey”.

**Children Junior K - 5th grade:** Classes are combined for Advent.

**Care Talks:** “Dis spelling Bee” on December 14 with Pastor Dennis Neenan in the chapel

***Advent is a time of preparation to be together in worship, in class, in devotional and in prayer.***

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