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The Steeple



February 9, 2022

The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church



What's the Buzz?

You know there are a lot of buzzwords in church like - love on, lean in, go God, and so on. In some sense even "vitality" could be considered a buzzword. It certainly is an operative word in our diocese. Nevertheless, what lies behind the word or its corresponding designator "congregational vitality," is a powerful reminder of what actually does give life, what comes alive, and keeps folks engaged in community. Much has changed in the way we measure vitality. It's not just the old standard of how many folks show up on

Sunday morning anymore, but a host of other factors.

As I mentioned during the annual meeting, I hope to gather more this year – and not just for service but just for the sheer joy of being together – to relish the time we have with one another because before you know it – it's gone. There are deep friendships here, new friendships, and the promise of even more when a table of good food is laid out before us to enjoy. Let's do that some more my friends!

In an article I read this past week entitled, "The Lonely Crowd," columnist Mike Frost offered his readers a glimpse of one aspect of vitality – friendship. I wonder after reading it, what you make of his assessment in general and where St. Luke's fits in. I have my own thoughts especially after reading his section on "active listening." Nevertheless, Frost raises up an awareness for us all – not a condemnation. Such awareness is vital to healthy congregations. As author Kate Murphy reminds us listening is key to awareness as our awareness shapes our environment.ⁱⁱ

On March 6th, Kate Bond – Director of Faith Formation and Discipleship for the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, will visit St. Luke's and introduce us to the congregational vitality assessment. You can read a little bit more about the events of the day and the rationale from our Bishop in the pages that follow. My hope is that as we probe what vitality means to us, we will be affirmed in what we are already doing and are about here at Luke's Place. Nevertheless, I hope that we are challenged too - not only in learning the new vocabulary that comes along with congregational vitality, but how we see each other and more importantly how the community sees St. Luke's.

I know the idea of taking an assessment isn't thrilling my friends. Nevertheless, if you add a breakfast casserole and some good coffee on the side, I sense that enthusiasm may rise. If I could plan it, that is the way I'd have it. I've even heard that someone does Peach French Toast here – can't name names – but wouldn't that be a treat?!

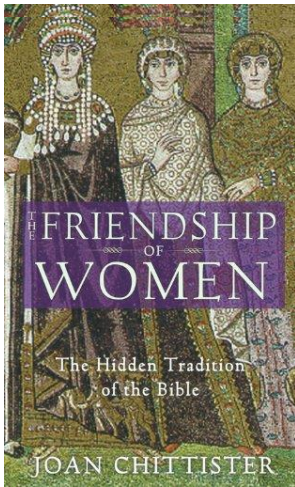


Save the Date!!
March 6th, 9:15am
Metcalf Hall!
Everyone invited-
Breakfast
provided!

Bishop Poulson has described congregational vitality as the central focus of his time as Bishop of Oklahoma. Congregational vitality is about strengthening our relationships with God, our relationships with one another, and building a strong presence in our surrounding communities. In the Diocese of Oklahoma, congregational vitality fosters healthy communities of faith that are transformational in the lives of people and sustainable for years to come. The Ministry Partners, a team of lay and clergy persons who work with the Diocese to empower our congregations for ministry, has been specifically tasked with working with congregations on facilitating and building vitality. Join us as we hear from Kate Bond, a member of the Ministry Partners Team, about starting our congregational vitality process at St. Luke's and the opportunities the Diocese has for building up the work and ministry of congregations.

Book Notes

By Fr Nick



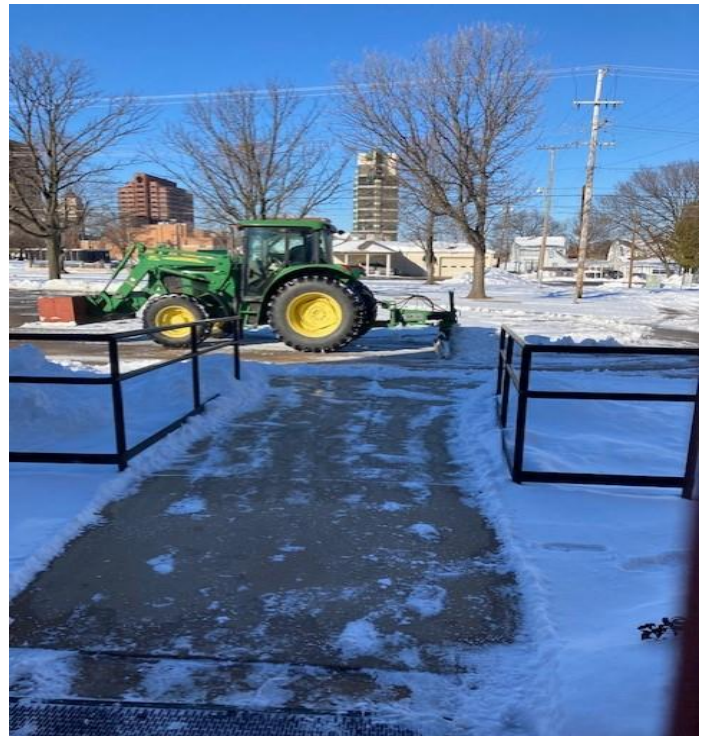
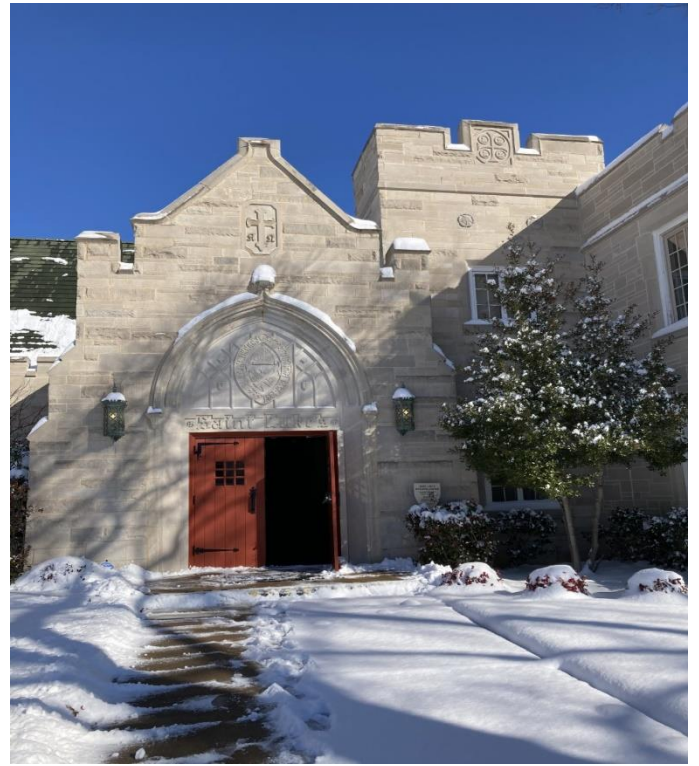
This week Penny asked what I was reading. Continuing with the theme of friendship, I want to commend this one by Joan Chittister. I got it for Teresa last Christmas and it has a wonderful message for all. This book speaks directly to women as the title suggests, however, men too can gain deep insight and thus begin to formulate their own analogs if they have courage enough to brave its pages. Be not afraid gentlemen!

The Friendship of Women: The Hidden Tradition of the Bible. “Looking deeply into biblical stories of female friendships in order to extract greater truths, this compelling work explores the sacred dimension of friendship through the lenses of faith, tradition, and scripture, revealing the often-overlooked voices and experiences of women in the Old and New Testaments. Recovering and reclaiming the witness and wisdom of such women as Lydia, Prisca, Phoebe, Martha, Deborah, Esther, Rachel, Ruth, Veronica, Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary Magdalene, and drawing a highly inspiring message from each of these women's lives, the book embraces friendship as it is embodied by women, between God and all of creation, and between all human beings.”

COMING SOON!

Midweek Manna
Wednesday Evenings

Watch STEEPLE for Details



St Luke's after the winter storm

Birthdays and Anniversaries, -February 10TH - 16TH, 2022

Birthdays

**Nancy Woods 12th
Michael Conner 13th**

Anniversaries

If your or a loved one's name doesn't appear on the list, please email or call the office, and we will add your birthday or anniversary!

Remember your Souper Bowl Donations

At Luke's Place February 10th-16th , 2022

Feb 10th - Men's Breakfast, 7-8:30am Metcalf Hall

Rector's Bible Study, 9:15- 10:15am Metcalf Hall

Green Country Village Eucharist, 1:00pm

Feb 13th- Rite I Eucharist, 8am, Chapel

Faith Forum, 9:15-10:15am, Metcalf Hall

Children's Godly Play, 10:15am, upstairs Playroom 1

Rite II Eucharist, 10:30am

Immediately after the 10:30 service: Annual Meeting in Metcalf Hall

Feb 14th- Vestry, 5:30pm in the Vestry Room

Feb 16th - YD 6pm in Rodgers Hall

Morning Prayer is held every Monday- Thursday at 9am, Chapel

Evening Prayer is held every Monday-Thursday at 4pm, Chapel (or via Facebook)

******PSA: Did you know you can get FREE Covid tests from the government?**

<https://www.covidtests.gov> will allow you to order 4 free tests. Once you receive them, keep them away from extreme heat and cold and watch the expiration dates.****

Weekly Words of Wellness

The Serenity to Accept the Things We Cannot Change

By D. Scott Stoner & Holly Hughes Stoner

(This is the sixth column in our six-part series on Understanding the Process of Growth and Change. If you missed one, you can find all of them [HERE](#).)

We complete our six-part series on understanding the process of growth and change by reflecting on a paraphrase of the opening words of the *Serenity Prayer*, written by Reinhold Niebuhr.

"Seek the serenity to accept the things you cannot change,
the courage to change the things you can,
and the wisdom to know the difference."

The first five columns in this series (and accompanying podcast episodes) have been focused more on "the courage to change the things you can." This final column focuses more on the first part of the prayer, "the serenity to accept the things you cannot change."

One of the most influential spiritual teachers of our day passed away a few weeks ago. Thich Nhat Hanh wrote over thirty books about the practices of love, peace, and mindfulness. He is perhaps the person most responsible for introducing the benefits of mindfulness to the West, having first come and taught in the United States in the 1960s. He was a close friend of Martin Luther King and Thomas Merton. He taught and modeled the principles of love, peace, and serenity to all, never wanting to convert anyone to his Buddhist faith, but always wanting to help people live more fully the teachings of their own faith.

For us, Thich Nhat Hahn's particular gift was his ability to fully acknowledge the pain and suffering that exists in the world and yet, at the same time, speak authentic words of how love, hope, and peace in the face of suffering. His writings articulate a deeply spiritual path to finding

serenity in the face of things we cannot change. Yet it is important to add that, like Martin Luther King, he was a tireless advocate for changing the things that we can change, such as the societal conditions that add to injustice, conflict, and suffering.

The pandemic has affected each of us differently. Some have experienced minimal loss and disruption, while others have experienced unfathomable stress and suffering. We all have had plenty of opportunities to practice finding serenity in the face of things we cannot change. An old joke says, "I asked God to give more patience and what I got was more opportunities to practice it!" Like this joke, we have all been given more than enough opportunities to practice and develop the spiritual practices of letting go and finding serenity amidst the many challenges we have faced over the last two years, particularly the ones we could not or cannot change.

As we complete our six-part series, we want to remember that opportunities to change and grow come in many forms. Sometimes they come as things we can change, but require our courage and commitment. Other times they present as opportunities to find the serenity to accept the things we cannot change. And always it involves developing the wisdom to know the difference.

We close with a quote from Thich Nhat Hanh and our usual "Making It Personal" questions.

"Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today," *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life.*

Making It Personal:

1. What has helped you find peace when facing challenges that seem unchangeable in the past?
2. What challenge or suffering are you experiencing right now that falls into the category of "things you cannot change"? What is helping you find serenity in the midst of that challenge?
3. Is there something more you would like to do to enhance your capacity to accept things you cannot change right now?

Children's Programming K-5th grade



This Sunday we will meet in the Godly Play room upstairs at 10:15 am to hear the story The Parable of the Good Shepherd. If you miss church on Sunday or you would like to watch the story together as a family, [here](#) is a link to the Godly Play Foundation's YouTube video.

As you discuss the story with your children over the next week, you might want to use these wondering questions to start the conversation.

- I wonder which part of the story you like the best?
- I wonder what part of the story is the most important? Why?
- I wonder which part of the story is especially for you?
- I wonder if we could leave out part of the story and still have all we need?

Wondering together with these questions can become a simple family ritual. You could even try using these same questions to wonder together about other topics!

Drop your K-5th graders off upstairs at 10:15am. Each week, we will alternate between music and Godly Play, giving children a chance to experience both! The children will rejoin their families in church before communion. Please contact Keeli Droege: keelidroege@gmail.com

St Crispin's is Calling ALL Campers!

Registration is now open for Summer Camp 2022 at St. Crispin's!

Click [this link](#) to find out more and to register your campers. Counselor, CIT (counselors-in-training), and Medical Staff applications are also open. We can't wait to see you there! Questions? Email Teresa Phares at tphares@epiok.org



St. Luke's Vestry Members

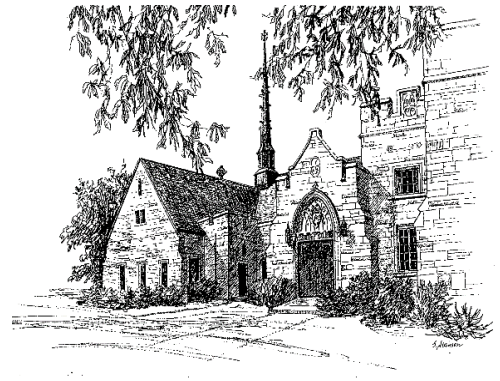
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Remember Your Souper Bowl Donations !

Sunday's altar flowers are given by Fr Bob Gates in loving memory of
Georgia Lynn Henry Gates

solicitations...

Be aware – No one from St. Luke's will request gift cards or other monetary support through email. If you receive such a message in your email, it is spam. All financial requests/special appeals at St. Luke's go through normal channels and any special requests will be made by phone or in person.



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