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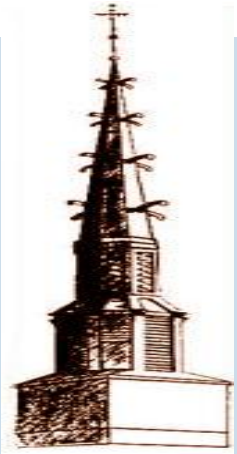
The Steeple



Jan 15, 2026

The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Dear friends,

In October the diocese of Oklahoma held its 88th annual convention. Along with the business session, there were various panels and workshops that spent some time looking at different aspects of vocational life. In the evening, as is the custom, Bishop Poulson gave his annual address. The address has been posted online I believe, and I encourage you all to take some time and give it a listen.

In the midst of his address the Bishop paused for a moment and drew the convention's attention to the fact that many people in the diocese have encouraged him to offer more public reflections on the issues we are facing today. He responded that he would, with the acknowledgement that if he did, he realized that there would be more chances that the very people who asked him to speak up might disagree with him. It was with great humility that he accepted the diocese's encouragement.

The fruit of that decision has been offered this week with two published letters from the Bishop's office – one in light of the events that are continuing to develop in Minnesota, along with relevant information pertaining to Oklahoma. The Bishop also issued a statement in response to a decision reached in Broken Arrow regarding the construction of a Mosque. Both of these statements are available on the diocese's website. Pastoral guidance and reflection is a charism of our Bishop and I encourage you to read both of his statements with that in mind.

While these statements were being drafted, I was at St. John's in Tulsa with a few members from our community. I wish I could share screen shots from some of the texts I received yesterday. They ranged from simple administrative requests, to stump the priest kind of questions, all mixed in with messages of genuine concern regarding our friends. Some were quite bizarre and some, joy filled. All interesting. There was, however, one I'd like to share because it ties together what our Bishop is doing with some of the data that is out there regarding our religious institutions.

If podcasts are your thing, I'd encourage you to listen to one entitled Shifting Culture by Joshua Johnson, episode 380 Ryan Burge – "The Vanishing Church and the Cost of Polarization."

It is accessible and Burge has book that bears the same name. I found that the podcast offered some insight regarding a few things that we continue to circle back around to: how to respond as a church during times like these and what is happening with us generationally. Give it a listen and let me know.
Nick+

At Luke's Place: Jan 16th – Jan 22nd

Jan 17th Jeff's ordination at St Paul's, OKC
Jan 18th Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 8:00am, Chapel
Faith Forum, 9:15am, Vestry Room
Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 10:30am, Nave or Metcalf
Jan 19th MLK Holiday- office closed
Jan 20th Spiritual Discovery, 9:30am, Library
Discussion Group, 6:30pm, Rodgers
Jan 21st Choir, 5pm, Choir Room
YD, 6pm, Rodgers
Jan 22nd Men's Group, 7am, Metcalf
Bible Study, 9:15am, Metcalf
Green Country Eucharist, 1pm, GCV

Prayer List

Please pray for: **Ben** Baker, **Steve** McCraw, **Josh** Harris, **David** Swindell, **Connie** Finch, **Terry** Grogan, **Tyler** Roberson, **Jerry** Nezam**, Lynette** Beebe, **Jack** Smith, **Danny** Clem, **David** McAtee, **Shawn**, **Stephanie** Gallegos, **Pat** Sare, **Steve** Linn, **Jean** Mason, **Adam** Thomas, **Tom** Oakes, **Bill** Pendley, **Mary** Wallace, **Lynda** Stephens, **Marcie** Zervas, **Audrey** Harris, **Peggy** Rockey, **Ken** Harvey, **Nan** Buhlinger, **Bill** Birk, **Carol** McSpadden, **Dionna** Cameron, **Betty** Rogers, **Dan** & **JoAnn** Gallery, **Freda** Bretz, **Kathleen** Turner, **Steve** Clark, **Lauren** Gandy, **Susan** Brooks, **Dea**n Zervas, **Frank** Molina, **Diane** Mitchell, **Rob** Dahlgren, **Frank** Traylor, **Steve** Hand, **Donna** Steward, **Clay** Smith, and **Penny** Johnson.

Please add the following to your prayers for the First Week after Epiphany:
St Mark's, Perry **Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America**

The Remembrance Tree is packed away for this year. Your ornaments are in a basket in the Narthex ready to go back home. Thank you for sharing.

Theologian's Corner
The Confession of St. Peter

The Confession of St. Peter the Apostle, observed on January 18, recalls Simon Peter's bold declaration, "You are the Christ," and Jesus' response that Peter would be the rock upon which the Church would be built. Peter, the fisherman called with his brother Andrew, appears in the Gospels as impetuous, passionate, and often stumbling, walking on water only to sink, desiring to build booths at the Transfiguration, and denying Jesus three times before the crucifixion.

Yet, filled with the Spirit at Pentecost, he became a courageous leader, proclaiming the gospel and guiding the Church through its struggles over welcoming Gentiles, even when he himself wrestled with his own conservatism. Tradition links Peter with Rome, where he is said to have been crucified upside down, affirming his unworthiness to die in the same manner as his Lord. His life, marked by weakness transformed into strength, is a sign of God's grace working through ordinary people. Since 1908, the days between his feast and the Conversion of St. Paul have been set aside as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, honoring the two apostles who bore such witness to Christ.

From now on this particular feast will hold a particular blessing for us as our Jeff Birk will be ordained to the diaconate this Saturday at 4:00 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Oklahoma City. Please keep Jeff, Laura, and their family in your prayers.

Together we pray: Almighty Father, who inspired Simon Peter, first among the apostles, to confess Jesus as Messiah and Son of the living God: Keep your Church steadfast upon the rock of this faith, so that in unity and peace we may proclaim the one truth and follow the one Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Birthdays & Anniversaries for Jan 18th -24th

Birthdays		Anniversaries
Grace Stephens	(1/19)	
Glenn Bonner	(1/20)	

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

January requested Item:

12 count colored pencils

Ministry Reports for Annual Meeting

The Parish Annual Meeting is scheduled for February 8th after the 10:30am Service. If you are chair of a specific ministry at St Luke's or in the community representing St Luke's, please provide a ministry report of the past year. These reports need to be turned into the office by January 27th to be included in the Annual Report.

Thank you to everyone who has already turned their reports in.

Discussion Group

The Tuesday Discussion Group will meet January 20th at 6:30pm in Rodgers Hall. Topic of discussion will be "Predestination, free will and happenstance OR Does everything happen for a reason?

Just a reminder that Jeff Birk's ordination to the Deaconate is this Saturday, 4:00pm, at St Paul's Cathedral in downtown Oklahoma City. Please keep Jeff and Laura in your prayers as they both step out in faith and service.

The Governor of Oklahoma
and the
Oklahoma Arts Council
cordially invite you to the

Forty-Sixth Governor's Arts Awards

4:00 p.m. • Tuesday • January 20, 2026
State Capitol of Oklahoma
Fourth Floor Rotunda

Reception following in the
Second Floor Rotunda

Forty-Sixth Governor's Arts Awards

The Governor's Award
Jean Ann Fausser, Tulsa
Glenna and Richard Tanenbaum, Oklahoma City

Business in the Arts Award
Masonic Charity Foundation of Oklahoma, Edmond
The Springer Company, Oklahoma City

Media in the Arts Award
Jim Johnson, Norman
Abbie de Vera, Tulsa

Arts in Education Award
Brenda Alexander, Woodward
Jennifer Baker, Norman
Lisa Coulter, Tishomingo
Vicki Gelona, Ardmore
Mariana Llanos, Oklahoma City
Susan Mueller, Bartlesville

Community Service Award
John Bedford, Norman
Hal French, Edmond
Brian Horton, Broken Arrow
Lauren Green, Bartlesville
ShIronbutterfly Ray, Muskogee
Jabee Williams, Oklahoma City

Public Service in the Arts Award
Tim Gatz, El Reno

Special Recognition Award
Oklahoma Music Educators Association, Statewide
The Questers Cimarron Chapter 1195, Edmond

Lauren Green is to be honored by the Governor of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Arts Council on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, 4:00pm at the State Capitol.
You, his St Luke's family, are invited to attend the Awards presentation and reception.

Altar Flowers

Everyone who comes to St. Luke's loves to see the fresh flowers on the High Altar. They make the service even more meaningful for so many.

We have five open Sundays before Ash Wednesday on February 18th.
If you would like to remember or honor someone on January 25, February 1, February 8 or February 15, please let Penny in the office and Jo Baughman, Flower Fund Chairman know the date you pick and the exact wording you would like in the Sunday bulletin for that week.

The cost remains at $55 or more contribution for each Sunday, and please carefully mark your donation for the Treasurer to record to the Flower Fund. Do check the important dates on your calendars and we would appreciate having all of these Sundays filled.

Cake in Popcorn

Submitted by Mthr Andrea Jones

I was talking on the phone earlier this morning and as the call wrapped up, I said, *Thank you so much for the help, I owe you a cake.* Immediately after hanging up, I wondered, *Where did that thought come from?*
Are cakes a new form of barter? Would this person consider a cake a valuable exchange medium? Does this person even like cakes? Even if they appreciated cakes, how would I get the cake to them, they live pretty far away! Use the USPS? How to box it, wrap and cushion the dang thing. How long until it arrived?
Obviously, my mind was going on a real tangent. This whole cake pondering brought to mind my freshman year in college.
I was returning to my dorm from morning classes and stopped by the front desk to pick up the mail. My mother had made a deal with me: if I wrote her a letter every week, she would send me $5 for spending money (in 1963 five dollars was lot of money). I was expecting the letter but instead the on-duty student handed me a cardboard box! It was from my mother, battered, corners no longer pointed, taped together on all sides, top to bottom, and printed in large letters, To: Kathleen A. Wallace.

I was so delighted I ran up all three flights of stairs to my room. First-year girls got rooms on the third floor; the Senior class girls enjoyed the first floor; rank had privileges in those days. After finding a nail file, I diligently sawed through all that paper and tape. Imagine my surprise to find...POPCORN! A 20 x 20 box of buttered and salted popcorn. I quickly reasoned the box was too heavy to have just popcorn inside so I began to dig deeper. Underneath the buttered snack was chocolate cake with chocolate icing, slightly squashed, with popcorn imprinting all over it.

It did not take long for everyone on the third-floor wing to get the word about the homemade treats. We all passed up lunch in the dining hall for a large chunk of cake; it was totally worthy. And even though the popcorn was a little stale, I ate it every evening for the rest of the week.

When I shared this story with my brother, back in 1963 or thereabouts, he said, *Yeah, Mom sent me a cake in popcorn for my birthday too. The only problem was that I was on a months-long deployment circling the sea China (he was in the Navy). By the time I opened it, popcorn and all, the whole inside of the box was green with mold! So, I cut all the outside off and just ate the inside. Cake from home was* <u>*that*</u> *special!*

What did I learn from these pondering thoughts?

Never underestimate the value of cake. The gift of a cake can last long, long after it has been eaten. I am often amazed when I look back, at how God is gives his children just what they need, exactly when they most need it. Sometimes sweetness to lift us up in hard times and sometimes salt; to help us appreciate the good times. Amen.

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

"In the Day of Trouble": Supporting Our Immigrant Neighbors

Dear Friends in Christ in Oklahoma,

With the tragic events in Minneapolis last week, there have been at least five people who have died in the aftermath of the Trump administration's escalated immigration enforcement, detention, and deportation activities. Tensions and violence are rising all over our country. Our hearts are heavy, and it feels as if things are spiraling out of control.

I am troubled that the immigration enforcement escalation in recent months seems designed not to remove dangerous criminals, but rather to create maximum cruelty, fear, dehumanization, and family and community disruption. We can and we must do better, as a nation.

In Oklahoma, the intensified ICE efforts in recent months have had direct impact on some of our congregations, with some members stopped, detained, deported or self-deported, and an increased atmosphere of fear, especially among our Latino Episcopalians. Additionally, it has been announced that the closed Diamondback Correctional Facility in Watonga is being re-opened as an ICE detention facility.

Holy Scripture and the Christian tradition support a nation's right to secure its borders, and maintain an orderly process for immigration. It remains my hope that eventually our governmental leaders will come together for bi-partisan, comprehensive immigration reform that protects the vulnerable, secures our borders, and implements a just, safe, and orderly system for immigration.

At the same time, the Scriptures make plain that every person, without exception, is beloved, made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), and that we are to respect the dignity of every human being (BCP p. 305). Immigrants and refugees are specifically lifted up in the Bible as those deserving our respect, our concern, and our help.

I want to be clear that immigrants in Oklahoma, whatever your documentation or legal status, are loved and valued as our friends and neighbors. Law enforcement and immigration officers are also children of God, attempting to do their jobs and follow their orders in agonizing, and sometimes dangerous situations.

In this season of particular stress and anxiety, I invite our Episcopalians in Oklahoma to consider several practical, faithful steps:

Pray. Prayer is at the heart of who we are as people of faith, as we share with God the deepest sorrows and joys of our hearts. I encourage us to pray for those affected by all the challenges in our communities and nation, especially the vulnerable. Our Book of Common Prayer has a number of suitable prayers for our national life, and the human family. The Prayers of the People are also an appropriate place in our liturgy to pray for justice and compassion, and also for people by name. If you have particular individuals or families directly affected by these immigration enforcement situations, for example church members being detained or deported, and if they wish to be prayed for by name, please let Susanna LeMasters (slemasters@epiok.org) know and we will share that information as appropriate with the clergy.

Be in contact with your elected officials. People of goodwill, across political differences, can join in urging our elected leaders to seek commonsense and compassionate solutions to this immigration crisis, balancing security and human dignity. Terror, intimidation, profiling, and violence should have no place in immigration enforcement.

Join our group of chaplains who support immigrants and their families. We are building a group of ordained and lay chaplains who can offer pastoral support and accompaniment to those in detention, in immigration proceedings, and their families. To volunteer, reach out to Canon Betsy (canonbetsy@epiok.org).

May our Lord Jesus bless those are living in fear, inspire the faithful to reach out in friendship to our neighbors, and raise up in our leaders compassion and wisdom.

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP p. 820)

Blessings,

Bishop Poulson, VI Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

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