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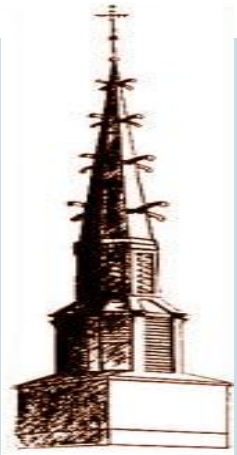
The Steeple



Jan 8, 2026

The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Beloved,

This morning, I was watching news coverage of the developing story related to the shooting of Renee Nicole Good. First, I think we should pause and pray for the repose of her soul and for her child before I say anything at all… anything.

Yes, that is faithful. To recognize here… loss and what is wrought from that loss.

Before I went out into that flash storm we had this morning, the news coverage panned to show a group of protestors outside of the federal building in Minnesota bearing the name of Bishop Henry Benjamin Whipple.

Let me get that straight, an Episcopal Bishop's name on a federal building? Huh?

In moments like this, I often try to reach out to friends who may be serving in areas where the incident occurred and I am always struck by how they respond, especially after profound acts of violence have occurred, before the facts are settled. It seems the Church is often tempted either to go silent or to rush toward certainty in the wake such tragedies. My friends in Minnesota this morning report, that neither serves the Gospel particularly well. The shooting of Renee Nicole Good confronts us with grief before anything offers us clarity.

So, the question presses in on us again, removed as we are - as it always does when power and pain collide: Where does faith meet this incident? Is our faith meant to help us respond to this personally - to influence power? Or to reframe it in another way, does faith exist to baptize what already is, or to trouble it, confront it, or encourage us to engage with it toward what might yet be? All these remain unanswered questions perhaps.

I think it certainly matters that protests formed outside a federal building named for Henry Benjamin Whipple, an Episcopal bishop remembered not for wielding power, but for addressing it. Whipple spent his life speaking to presidents and politicians not as their chaplain, but as their conscience, particularly on behalf of Native peoples whose suffering the nation preferred not to see. Of course, that history does not tell us what to think about this moment, but it does remind us that the Church has long stood near power at times belonging to it and at other times distancing itself from it.

For those who fear that faith is being co-opted by political movements the Gospel offers us reassurance while the church may not. The point is that Christian faith does not exist to be a mascot for any ideology. Rather it should resist being weaponized, simplified, or reduced to sound bites in service of any ideology. Faith should refuse the lie that God can be captured by any ideology.

And for those who fear that faith has become too quiet, too deferential, too cautious in the face of injustice: the Gospel challenges us as well. Silence, too, can serve power. The prophets were never neutral, and Jesus was not executed for being politely inoffensive. Faith that never questions authority has forgotten its own story.

So perhaps the question is not whether faith ultimately engages power, but how.

Faith certainly is not a substitute for investigation. It does not rush to verdicts or flatten complex human tragedy into talking points. Faith does not claim certainty where there is none. Instead, our faith and our baptismal identity insist on dignity, especially when fear, anger, and suspicion are the loudest.

In moments like this, faith calls those who protest to remember why they protest. And it calls those who govern to remember that authority is ultimately accountable.
Faith thus is not in service to power. But neither is it allergic to it. Faith, we hope, stands close enough to power to speak truth, and yet clear enough from it to refuse corruption. In the shadow of such violence, that may be the Church's most faithful posture: to stand watchfully, to grieve honestly, to speak intentionally, and to insist again and again that no exercise of power is beyond the reach of responsibility.

May Renee's soul Rest in Peace and Rise in Glory.

Nick+

At Luke's Place: Jan 9th – Jan 15th

Jan 11th Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 8:00am, Chapel
Faith Forum, 9:15am, Metcalf
Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 10:30am, Nave
Jan 12th Ladies' Prayer Partners, 11:30am, Metcalf
Finance Committee, noon, Vestry Room
Jan 13th Spiritual Discovery, 9:30am, Library
Discussion Group, 6:30pm, Rodgers
Jan 14th Choir, 5pm, Choir Room
YD, 6pm, Rodgers
Jan 15th 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, **Kelly** Preston, and **Penny** Johnson.

Please add the following to your prayers for the Week of Epiphany:
The Diocese of Sapele-the Anglican Church of Nigeria St James', OKC
The Anglican Church of Canada St Andrew's, Stillwater
St Augustine Canterbury-OSU Campus Ministry The Diocese of Seychelles-the Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean All Saints', Miami
The Church of the Province of Central Africa

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.

Theologians Corner: The Desert Mothers

The Desert Mothers were female Christian ascetics living in the desert of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria in the 4th and 5th centuries AD. They typically lived in the monastic communities that began forming during that time, though sometimes they lived as hermits. Other women from that era who influenced the early ascetic or monastic tradition while living outside the desert are also described as Desert Mothers.

The Desert Fathers are much more well known because most of the early lives of the saints "were written by men for a male monastic audience" the occasional stories about the Desert Mothers come from the early Desert Fathers and their biographers. Many desert women had leadership roles within the Christian community. There are several chapters dedicated to the Desert Mothers in the Lausiac History by Palladius, who mentions 2,975 women living in the desert. Other sources include the various stories told over the years about the lives of saints of that era, traditionally called vitae "life". The lives of twelve female desert saints are described in Book I of Vitae Patrum "Lives of the Fathers."

The Desert Mothers were known as ammas "spiritual mothers", comparable to the Desert Fathers abbas, due to the respect they earned as spiritual teachers and directors. One of the most well-known Desert Mothers was Amma Syncletica of Alexandria, who had twenty-seven sayings attributed to her in the Apophthegmata Patrum, or Sayings of the Desert Fathers. Two other ammas, Theodora of Alexandria and Amma Sarah of the Desert, also had sayings in that book.

According to written accounts, Amma Syncletica might have been born around AD 270, since she died about AD 350 and is said to have lived to her eighties, to wealthy parents in Alexandria and was well educated, including an early study of the writings of Desert Father Evagrius Ponticus. After the death of her parents, she sold everything she had and gave the money to the poor. Moving outside the city with her blind sister, she lived as a hermit among the tombs outside of Alexandria. Gradually a community of women ascetics grew up around her, who she served as

their spiritual mother. Even though she was an ascetic and hermit, Syncletica taught moderation, and that asceticism was not an end in itself.

Theodora of Alexandria was the amma of a monastic community of women near Alexandria. Prior to that, she had fled to the desert disguised as a man and joined a community of monks. She was sought out by many of the Desert Fathers for advice reportedly Bishop Theophilus of Alexandria came to her for counsel.

Sarah of the Desert's sayings indicate that she was a hermit living by a river for sixty years. Her sharp replies to some of the old men who challenged her show a distinctly strong personality. According to one story, two male anchorites visited her in the desert and decided, "Let's humiliate this old woman." They said to her, "Be careful not to become conceited thinking to yourself: "Look how anchorites are coming to see me, a mere woman." She replied, "According to nature I am a woman, but not according to my thoughts."

Together we pray: Fix our hearts on thee, O God, in pure devotion, that aided by the example of thy servants Sarah, Theodora, and Syncletica, the vain pursuits of this world may have no hold upon us, and that by the consuming fire of thy Spirit, we may be changed into the image and likeness of thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with thee and the same Spirit be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

Birthdays & Anniversaries for Jan 11th-17th

Birthdays		Anniversaries
Kim Breedlove	(1/11)	
Sally Lindsey	(1/11)	
Charlie Olsen	(1/14)	
Fr Lee Stephens	(1/14)	
Karen Lewey	(1/15)	
Dean Zervas	(1/15)	

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.

Discussion Group

The Tuesday Discussion Group will meet January 13th at 6:30pm in Rodgers Hall. Topic of discussion will be "What is a Soul?"

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.

St. Luke's Vestry Members

- Nancy Woods, Sr. Warden – Nancywoods120@gmail.com
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- Chad Ellis – w.chadwick.ellis@gmail.com
- Karen Lewey – kgrammy07@yahoo.com
- Laura Birk – lpbirk73@gmail.com
- Steve Heidorn- sgheidorn@yahoo.com
- Dolores McCreary –dolomc37@gmail.com
- Steve Roper- sdroper2006@yahoo.com
- Fred Whitson- sandyswhit@gmail.com
- Robert Lonski- rjtazski@yahoo.com

Bereavement Team 2
Laura Birk, Nancy Megee, Wendy Hall, Karen Lewey, Debbie Mueggenborg

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