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The Steeple

Feb 12, 2026

The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Shared Leadership & Shared Hope

On Monday, we wasted no time in gathering for our first vestry meeting with our newly elected vestry members. I left that meeting feeling two things at once: gratitude and a holy responsibility. Gratitude for those who were willing to say "yes" to leadership. And, a holy responsibility because vestry work is not simply organizational; it is spiritual.

At its heart, the vestry is a group of lay leaders elected by the parish to share in the governance, stewardship, and discernment of the church's life and mission. Fundamentally, the vestry helps care for the business of the church so that the Body of Christ can flourish. It is not a board of critics, nor is it a rubber stamp. It is a circle of prayerful leaders who, alongside the rector, listen for the Spirit and help steward our common life.

In our first meeting together, we focused on a few foundational practices:

- Prayer before policy. We did not dive right into the budgets or building maintenance. We began with prayer. We reminded ourselves that this is Christ's church. Every decision flows from that truth.

- Clarity of roles. We revisited what shared leadership looks like in the Episcopal Church. The rector leads in worship and the day-to-day life of the parish. The wardens serve as senior lay leaders and partners in vision and care. The vestry, together, holds fiduciary responsibility and helps discern direction. Our authority is just that, shared.

- Mutual ministry. We spoke candidly about trust, communication, and the commitment to speak directly to one another rather than around one another. Healthy vestries cultivate healthy parishes.

One of the consistent desires I hear in our parish is the longing to become an even more intergenerational haven. That work does not happen accidentally friends. It requires intentional leadership, courage, and creativity. Your vestry is committed to that work.

It also requires all of us. Vestry leadership is representative, it is not a substitute for congregational ownership. The church is healthiest when every member understands themselves as a minister of the Gospel in daily life.

With that, I am grateful to introduce our newest vestry members:

Becky Liehr

Lisa Beeman

Cathy Perrier

Chase Almy

Steve Van Aken

I remain especially grateful for our wardens, Karole and Karen who serve as steady partners in leadership and prayer.

Please pray for your vestry. Pray for wisdom, humility, courage, and joy. Pray that we may be faithful stewards of what has been entrusted to us. Pray that every decision, large or small, reflects the love of Christ.

There is no perfect parish. There is only the parish we care enough to cultivate together. I am thankful to cultivate this one with you.

Faithfully,
Nick+

Office will be closed February 16th for the holiday

At Luke's Place: Feb 13th – Feb 19th

Feb 15th Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 8:00am, Chapel
Faith Forum, 9:15am,
Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 10:30am, Nave
Feb 16th Office Closed for President's Day
Feb 17th Spiritual Discovery, 9:30am, Library
Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper, 4-6pm,Metcalf
Discussion Group, 6:30pm, Rodgers
Feb 18th Ash Wednesday Service, noon
Ash Wednesday Service, Green Country Village, 2pm
Choir, 5pm, Choir Room
Ash Wednesday Service, 6:00pm
Feb 19th Men's Group, 7am, Metcalf
Bible Study, 9"15am, Metcalf

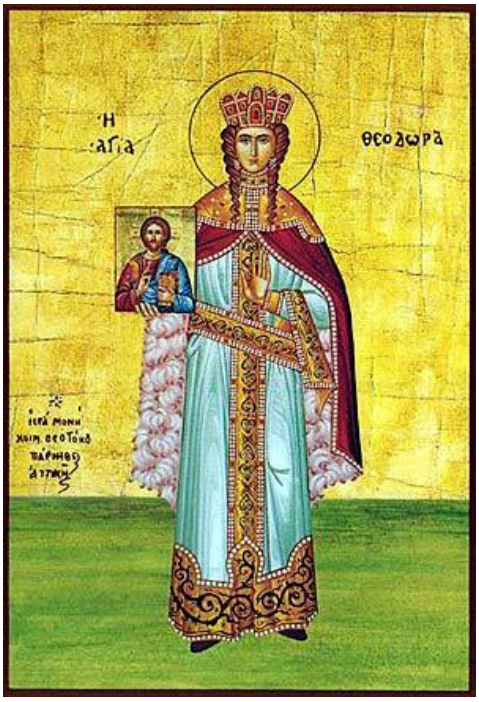
Prayer List

Please pray for: **Ben** Baker, **Steve** McCraw, **Josh** Harris, **David** Swindell, **Connie** Finch, **Terry** Grogan, **Tyler** Roberson, **Jerry** Nezam, **Lynette** Beebe, **Danny** Clem, **David** McAtee, **Shawn**, **Stephanie** Gallegos, **Pat** Sare, **Steve** Linn, **Jean** Mason, **Adam** Thomas, **Bill** Pendley, **Mary** Wallace, **Lynda** Stephens, **Marcie** Zervas, **Audrey** Harris, **Peggy** Rockey, **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, **Frank** Traylor, **Steve** Hand, **Donna** Steward, **Clay** Smith, **Penny** Johnson, **Kim** Shipman, **Matt** Clark, **Jackie** Lynch, and **Nancy** Casteel.

Please add the following to your prayers for the Fifth Week after Epiphany:
St Christopher's, Midwest City **Church of the Redeemer, Okmulgee**
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

February requested Item:

8 or 16 Watercolors, Crayola preferred but any brand



Theologians Corner
Theodora, Empress c. 867

Theodora (c. 815 – after 867) was a Byzantine Empress as the spouse of the Byzantine emperor Theophilos, and regent of her son, Michael III, from Theophilos' death in 842 to 855. She is best known for her restoration of the veneration of icons, which ended the Byzantine Iconoclasm.

Originally from Paphlagonia (on the Black Sea coast of what is now Turkey), Theodora was of Armenian aristocratic descent.

In 829, Theophilos succeeded to the throne. He was sixteen-years-old and unmarried. The following year, in May, 830, Theodora was chosen to become empress, probably by her new mother-in-law. The marriage took place on the 5th of June in 830 a.d., in Hagia Sophia.

Despite the fact that Theophilus was an iconoclast, Theodora held fast to the veneration of icons which she kept in her chambers in the imperial palace. Theophilus' health eventually failed and he died on the 20th of January in 842 a.d. He was about twenty-nine years old.

Following the death of her husband, Theodora served as regent for her son Michael. She overrode Theophilus' ecclesiastical policy and summoned a council under the patriarch Methodius, in which the veneration, but not worship, of icons was finally restored and the iconoclastic clergy deposed.

Together we pray: O God, who didst call thy servant Theodora to an earthly throne that she might advance your heavenly kingdom and who didst give her the wisdom to establish unity where there had been division; Create in thy church such godly union and concord that we might proclaim the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, not only in correct theology but in right actions; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Discussion Group

The Tuesday Discussion Group will meet February 17,at 6:30pm in Rodgers Hall.

Lenten Program Begins February 25th 6pm.

More information coming

Birthdays & Anniversaries for Feb 15th- 21st,2026

Birthdays		Anniversaries	
Mary Rowley	(2/16)	Jim & Cathy Perrier	(2/15)
Sally Finch	(2/17)	Tim & Pam Hanson	(2/16)
Mary Ann Clem	(2/18)	Bob & Stefanie Tedstrom	(2/19)
Tom Droege	(2/18)		
Everett Ellis	(2/20)		

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.

Concern

Concern would like to thank all for your continued support of food and financial donations. In 2025, all our supporting church congregations donated over 1,500 volunteer hours. We could not provide our services to the community without this support.

Concern's current needs are **canned green beans** and **canned peas**.

Last year St. Luke's Fellowship announced the start of Forks & Fellowship, an opportunity to share a meal with others in our church family in an informal and relaxed setting. In 2025, sixteen single adults and married couples of all ages were put into 4 groups that shared stories and developed deeper friendships in small dinner groups that met at least four times throughout the year. Most of these same people are signing up for 2026 and will be put into new groups that will include church members that are up for the challenge! Wanting new people to join in on this fun way to get together and that is where you sign up.

The Fellowship team creates small groups of no more than eight people per group and assigns a leader for each group. Then it's up to your group to schedule dinners or activities to get to know each of your members. You can have dinner at your home, you can go to brunch after church or choose to meet at a local restaurant/coffee shop/gathering place. The purpose of this fellowship opportunity is to develop relationships with folks of all ages in the church. These times can foster opportunities to make friends outside of our usual social circles, getting to know new people in our church family.

If you are interested, you can register on-line (click here to register) or drop by the office. Answer a few basic questions by Sunday, February 22. Groups will be notified in early March, and each group will plan their own schedule to meet at least 4 times during the year.

What is Forks and Fellowship?

Forks and Fellowship is an opportunity to share a meal with others in our church family in an informal and relaxed setting, either in restaurants or homes. It's great for newcomers and long-timers! This is not a bible study group but another way to fellowship with those within the church.

What are we eating?

When we say "meal," we mean just about anything – coffee before/after work, dinner, dessert on Friday nights, lunch after church on Sunday, etc. Part of how groups will be put together is based on your input on preferred days/times. This is about fellowship and not how fancy a spread you can create.

Where are we eating?

Again, it's up to your group! You can rotate hosting in homes, meet at coffee shops, eat at restaurants, get takeout and meet at the park, etc.! Even meeting at the church for pizza and salad is an option if arrangements are made with the church office.

What's the agenda?

The only agenda is to get to know one another better and share food and fellowship. There is no program – just a meal, hospitality, and conversation.

Who can participate?

Everyone! Couples, singles, and families are all invited to participate. Anyone can be part of a group, and our sign up is designed to help put you in just the right spot. This will be an adults-only fellowship activity as alcohol may be served.

How does it work?

Everyone is assigned to a group of up to 8 other adults. The goal is for each group to get together quarterly, as schedules permit.

Who figures out when and where our group will gather?

When you sign up, there is a place to indicate which days work best for you. There is also a place to indicate if you are willing to help organize the first meeting. This person will gently encourage the host to organize dinner/activity, if needed. There are some online sites, such as Perfect Potluck or 5 ingredients 15 minutes , which might be helpful tools for those looking for ideas for dinners.

How are the groups organized? Can I choose my group?

Your registration information will be used to help us create groups to consistently get a good mix of people. Because we want everyone to make some new friendships and connections, we will place people in groups intentionally, rather than having you select your own group members.

What if I have questions?

Steve Heidorn can be contacted if there are additional questions as well as the following members of the Forks & Fellowship committee.

Steve Heidorn 918-914-1412

Pam Hansen 608-797-1747

Margo Proctor 918-914-3911

Penny will have copies of the forms to complete if there are issues with online registration.

Register today!

If you are interested, (click here to register). Answer a few basic questions by Sunday, February 22. Groups will be notified in early March, and each group will plan their own schedule to meet quarterly during 2026.

Remember ... the BEST conversations happen around the table! We are looking forward to talking with you!

Souper Bowl Challenge

We're focusing on shelf-stable breakfast foods this year with our "Breakfast of Champions" theme, so pick up a few boxes of "just add water" pancake mix, oatmeal packets, peanut butter, and breakfast bars to bring in next time you're at the store. Leave your donations under the coat rack by Metcalf and select Team Pancakes or Team Waffles

Pancake Supper, February 17th
4:00pm-6:00pm
Metcalf Hall
Donations will be taken to benefit Concern

Come and enjoy pancakes with our YD during the Fat Tuesday celebration

Come and go event

Youth will be serving

February 18th, 2026

Services are : Noon and 6:00 pm

In 2026, like in every year, Ash Wednesday is the first day of the liturgical season of Lent. It always falls six and half weeks before Easter, beginning the Lenten season of preparation for Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

According to the Episcopal Church, Lent is a 40-day penitential season (excluding Sundays) of fasting, prayer, and self-denial, lasting from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday. It prepares Christians for Easter by encouraging self-examination, repentance, and reflection on Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness.

Music Ministry Report 2025

Keeli Droege

- We added several exciting new elements to the music program over the last year! Several guest musicians joined us during Easter, Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas and several other occasions in 2025. Organist Mary Warren has been a guest artist once a month, performing piano and organ duets with Keeli Droege. We have also been blessed to have a variety of student musicians perform solos and play with the choir during choral anthems, including flute, marimba, string bass, and soprano and baritone vocalists. Rhonda Cerveny, a professionally trained vocalist, regularly assists the choir with vocal technique and conducting.
- The Chancel Choir meets regularly for rehearsals on Wednesday evenings from 5:00–6:30 p.m. The choir currently sings all service music and offertory anthems weekly. We also continued the new tradition of Holden Evening Prayer, led by several choir members during the Advent season on Wednesday evenings.
- For 2026, we have the following programming planned:

- • Guest student instrumentalists
  • Piano and organ duets
  • Youth Sunday music program in May
  • Evening Prayer services (Holden Evening Prayer) during the Advent season on Wednesday evenings
  • Christmas musical program/recital
- If you have a musical gift to share (vocal or instrumental), we would love to include you in our programming! We are also looking for new members to join our Chancel Choir. If you would like to "test it out," Lent and Easter are the perfect time. We will begin working on Holy Week music on February 18th (Ash Wednesday).

St. Luke's Vestry Members

- Karole Cozby, Sr. Warden- kscozby916@gmail.com
- Karen Lewey, Jr Warden - kgrammy07@yahoo.com
- Becky Liehr – jbliehr@gmail.com
- Chase Almy – chasealmy88@gmail.com
- Lisa Beeman – lisabeeman89@gmail.com
- Steve Heidorn- sgheidorn@yahoo.com
- Dolores McCreary –dolomc37@gmail.com
- Steve VanAken- scvanaken@sbcglobal.net
- Fred Whitson- sandyswhit@gmail.com
- Robert Lonski- rjtazski@yahoo.com
- Cathy Perrier – bling4mimi@hotmail.com

Bereavement Team 3

Becky Liehr, Cathy Perrier, Kris Bonner, Mary Jo Peterson

St. Luke's Episcopal Church Contacts:

The Reverend Nick Phares, Rector
269-788-7063; RevPhares@outlook.com

Keeli Droege, Choir Director/Organist
918-697-8509 keelidroege@gmail.com

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Penny Williams, secretary 918-766-2157