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The Steeple

Feb 19, 2026

The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Entering Lent with Matt Schumer

Poised on the threshold of Lent, we hear once again the Church's tender and solemn invitation found in the Book of Common Prayer: *"I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent."* It is an invitation both ancient and ever new, an invitation to self-examination and repentance; to prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and to the reading and meditation on God's holy Word.

Lent comes to us as a gift. It is a season given for the healing of our souls, the renewal of our minds, and the reordering of our lives. In a world marked by endless demands upon our attention, the Church offers a different rhythm, one shaped not by urgency, but by grace.

Earlier this week I came across an essay that frames Lent as happening a particularly striking moment in human history. In that essay, Matt Schumer stresses that we are living in a time when artificial intelligence seems to be accelerating at extraordinary speed that is almost out of our control. We know this. Machines learn. Algorithms predict. Artificial intelligence generates language, images, and ideas with astonishing power. As an AI professional, Schumer has asked whether intelligence itself is separating from human consciousness, whether the tools we have created are beginning to take on a life of their own?

It is a question filled with both promise and anxiety. And it raises an important concern: Does the Church have anything to say about this? I think so. And, what the Church offers may be more essential now than ever.

The Church reminds us that intelligence is not the same as wisdom. Information is not the same as meaning. And processing power is not the same as the human soul. Our dignity does not arise

from our capacity to compute, but from our capacity for relationship… with God and with one another. We are not merely thinking beings; we are loving beings. We are not simply conscious; we are called into communion. Lent invites us to return to this truth.

Through prayer, we remember that our deepest identity is found not in what we produce, but in whose we are. Through fasting, we loosen the grip of the systems and appetites that claim our attention. Through repentance, we acknowledge that no technology can redeem the human heart, only grace can do that. Through silence, we rediscover the sacred depth of human consciousness itself: the place where God speaks. If our age risks confusing intelligence with personhood, Lent teaches us again what it means to be fully human.

The Church does not fear technological advancement, nor does it reject human creativity. Rather, it asks deeper questions: What kind of people are we becoming? What shapes our desires? What forms our hearts? Who are we before God? These are Lenten questions. These are important questions.

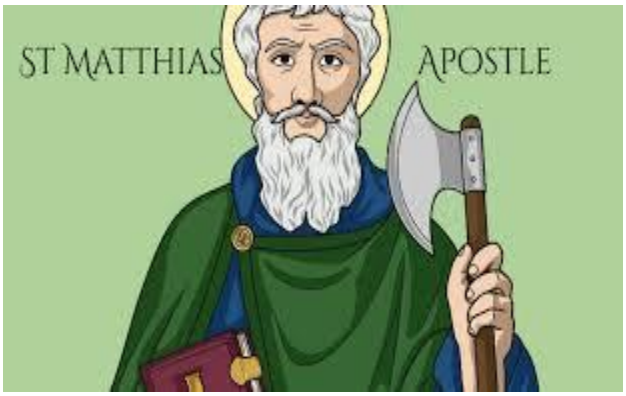
And perhaps this is precisely why the Church's ancient invitation remains so vital today. When the world urges us to move faster, Lent teaches us to slow down. When culture prizes efficiency, Lent calls us to awareness. When technology promises control, Lent invites surrender.

I invite you, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent. Come to this place of quiet. Come to the table. Come to the practices that have shaped Christians for centuries. Come and rediscover the depth of your humanity in the light of God's love.

The world still hungers for wisdom. And in a time of rapid innovation, the Church continues to bear witness to what is eternal even as it embraces innovation. You are a part of that holy witness.

Faithfully,

Nick+



St Matthias the Apostle Feast Day Eucharist February 24th , 12:15pm, chapel

At Luke's Place: Feb 20th – Feb 26th

Feb 21	Casa Hispana Bingo, 5:30pm, Metcalf
Feb 22	Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 8:00am, Chapel
	Faith Forum, 9:15am,
	Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 10:30am, Nave
Feb 23	Ladies Prayer Partners, 11:30am, Metcalf
Feb 24	Spiritual Discovery, 9:30am, Library
	St Matthias Feast Day Eucharist, 12:15pm, chapel
	Discussion Group, 6:30pm, Rodgers
Feb 25	Choir, 5pm, Choir Room
	Midweek Manna Lenten Program, 6pm, Metcalf
Feb 26	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, **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 Last Week after Epiphany:

Grace, Ponca City **The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean**

February requested Item:

8 or 16 Watercolors, Crayola preferred but any brand

Theologian's Corner:
The Holy Season of Lent

Early Christians observed "a season of penitence and fasting" in preparation for the Paschal feast, or Easter (BCP, pp. 264-265). The season now known as Lent (from an Old English word meaning "spring," the time of lengthening days) has a long history.

Originally, in places where Easter was celebrated on a Sunday, the Paschal feast followed a fast of up to two days. In the third century this fast was lengthened to six days. Eventually this fast became attached to, or overlapped, another fast of forty days, in imitation of Christ's fasting in the wilderness. The forty-day fast was especially important for converts to the faith who were preparing for baptism, and for those guilty of notorious sins who were being restored to the Christian assembly.

In the western church the forty days of Lent extend from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday, omitting Sundays. The last three days of Lent are the sacred Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. Today Lent has reacquired its significance as the final preparation of adult candidates for baptism. Joining with them, all Christians are invited "to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word" (BCP, p. 265).

Together Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Discussion Group

The Tuesday Discussion Group will meet February 24 ,at 6:30pm in Rodgers Hall.
The topic is "Is the Prosperity Gospel supported by Scripture?"

Birthdays & Anniversaries for Feb 22nd- 28th

Birthdays	Anniversaries
Jeanne Eastman (2/27)	

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

YD Food Drive

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

Lent(il) Dinners

Yes, you read that correctly. Lent… Lent-il. Because nothing says repentance and renewal quite like… Rueben's favorite order.

This Lent, I invite you to gather around the table for simple meals, good conversation, and rich spiritual reflection. Each week we will share a humble dinner (yes, lentils included, though not exclusively!) followed by a guided discussion exploring a fascinating story from the Christian Apocrypha.

What are we studying?

We'll be looking at The Gospel of Nicodemus, sometimes called The Acts of Pontius Pilate. This early Christian text explores the trial, death, and resurrection of Jesus from perspectives not found in the New Testament, including vivid reflections on Christ's descent to the dead, a theme we proclaim every time we say the Apostles' Creed.

A quick guide to some terminology:

Deuterocanonical books are writings included in the Old Testament by some Christian traditions but not in the Hebrew Bible or most Protestant canons. They are "second canon" texts that have long been valued for teaching and reflection. The Christian Canon possess these kind of books too.

Gnostic writings come from early Christian groups who emphasized secret spiritual knowledge (gnosis) as the path to salvation, often presenting very different views of creation, the body, and Christ from what became orthodox Christian teaching.

The Gospel of Nicodemus, however, is neither quite deuterocanonical nor fully Gnostic. Instead, it represents early Christian imagination and devotion at work, showing how believers wrestled with the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. It helps us see how the Church clarified its beliefs, deepened its theology, and proclaimed hope in Christ's victory over death.

Why study texts like this?

Because Lent is a season for holy curiosity as much as holy discipline. These writings help us understand the faith of the early Church, the development of Christian doctrine, and the profound questions believers have always asked about suffering, redemption, and resurrection.

So join us for Lent(il) Dinners, where the meals will be simple but hardy, the conversation brief but lively, the learning is rich, and the grace is abundant.

See you all soon at 6:00 p.m. beginning, Wednesday February 25th.

Nick+

Lenten Dinners sign up is on the bulletin board across from the office. It's the usual request of soup, bread, and cookies. The YD will be joining us for dinner.

BINGO night

BY CASA HISPANA

Join us for an evening of Bingo, Raffles, Family Fun, and Hispanic Food

Saturday, February 21st, 2026

5:30 PM

St Luke's Episcopal Church

CasaHispana.Bartlesville@gmail.com

For tickets call 918.907.1584

$12 Ticket

Include:

- Admission Price &
- 10 cards

Games start at 6:00 PM

All proceeds benefit Casa Hispana a Bartlesville non-profit organization that provides support to local individuals and families by enabling connections to community resources, offering translation services, English and citizenship classes, and providing highly subsidized dental/health care to under-served communities

Back to the Basics!

Next month, we will begin a new program of faith formation to be known as "Back to the Basics." This will be a study of the Catechism of the Episcopal church. The catechism can be found in the Book of Common Prayer, pages 844 through 862. If you have ever wondered why we do what we do and worship like we worship, this course will be for you.

Who should participate in this study?

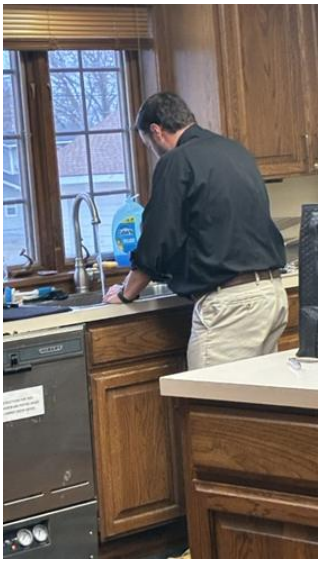
- Anyone who is desiring membership in St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Bartlesville. Oklahoma should attend this study in advance of the bi-annual visit of our Diocesan Bishop. Aspirants who have been baptized in another church will seek "Reception" while someone who has not been the member of another church will seek "Confirmation" from the Bishop.
- Any current member of St. Luke's who did not have the opportunity to participate in a course of study in the ways of the Episcopal Church can benefit from this study.
- Any worshiper at St. Luke's who just wants to learn – or relearn the essentials of the Christian faith as practiced at St. Luke's will be benefit from this study.

What is the time and place of this study?

- We will meet at St. Luke's in a room suitable to the size of the group.
- We will meet once per month for ninety minutes starting in March and ending in October. A total of eight meetings.

If you are interested in this program or would like to learn more about it, please call our Lay Catechist, Tom Reyburn at 970-209-4695 or email him at SjMtnMan@gmail.com.

SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE FEED



Burning of the Palms

Sally Finch's 100th Birthday

St. Luke's Vestry Members

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- Chase Almy – chasealmy88@gmail.com
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Bereavement Team 3

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

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