



- * *Adventus: Officium Divinum*
- * Stewardship Update: Encouraging!
- * Fr. Nick's Report Card
- * Christmas Wish Tree – Thank you!
- * Weekly Words of Wellness
- * No Pub Theology in December
- * Please consider volunteering at CONCERN!



The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Adventus: Officium Divinum

My friends, I greet you warmly on this first Wednesday of Advent. As I write this, Dennis just left the balance for the Angel Tree Fund on my desk. You all are so generous! Thank-you. Tonight, the youth will head out in town and purchase gifts for those in need this Christmas and they will do so as stewards of your generosity.

As we prepare for Christmas, the season of Advent signals a new year for us and as we make that shift I would like to offer more opportunities for us to gather and pray together. Throughout Advent, I will lead Morning Prayer at 9 a.m. and Evening Prayer at 4 p.m., Monday thru Thursday, in the Chapel.

The 4:00 p.m. Evening Prayer will be streamed on Facebook Live, and a link to a recording of that video will be emailed out that evening. You are all welcome to attend either or both services, and/or watch the 4:00 p.m. service Live on Facebook or its recording at a later time.

Know that your generosity is something that I give thanks for each day. In the office there is a place that says, "authorized intercessions and thanksgivings may follow." Surely thanking God for you - is authorized there, as is - giving thanks for your witness! This Advent I invite you to join with me in praying the offices at church and to give thanks for the many blessings of our life together. In addition to those services, there will be opportunities to gather for Eucharist on all of the major feasts of the church year. The major feasts include: all feasts of the Apostles, Evangelists, Saint Stephen, The Holy Innocents, Saint Joseph, St. Mary Magdalene, Saint Mary – the mother of our Lord, Saint Michael and All Angels, and St. James.

Beginning on page nineteen of the Book of Common Prayer these major feasts (the ones that are bolded) are recorded by month and day for our reference. Not to worry we will also make sure these services are added to the church's calendar too! her.

My friends if you are seeking ways to grow deeper in the faith, I hope you will consider attending some of these services. Adding them as a practice is a sure-fire way to broaden and indeed, deepen our communal understanding of the great cloud of witnesses that surround us all -- always.

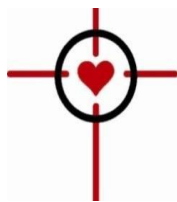
Wherever this first week of Advent finds you, I hope it finds you well – healthy and whole. I hope this Advent finds you with a deep understanding of just how much you are loved – by God and your church. My prayer for you during this season of promise is one that hopes that the rich presence of God comes home to you in prayer everyday.

And so, “Be present, O Lord, to our requests; and as you give us a desire to pray, grant us, O most Loving God, your aid and comfort in our prayers; and may the souls which thirst for your promises be filled from your abundance; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

A blessed Advent to you all,

Nick+

Please Consider Volunteering at CONCERN!



Concern office and food pantry: Volunteers are always needed to check clients in at the front desk and answer the phone, or to provide intake assistance by determining the needs of our clients, or to pack pantry orders or to re-package bulk food or make “food runs” to the Tulsa Food bank or local stores. The time commitment is up to the volunteer: 2-4 hours once a week or once a month. Concern appreciates the help and will work with volunteers to make volunteering a good experience for all. Call 918.336.4693. Please visit: <http://www.concerncares.com/give-help.html>

Stewardship Update: Encouraging!

In his letter to the congregation in late October, Fr. Nick reminded us that Christian stewardship should focus not so much on the need for the church to receive, but “on the need of the giver for his or her own spiritual development.” Yes, the church requires funds to keep the doors open, the lights on and salaries paid. But fundamentally, stewardship is, in Fr. Nick’s words, “a spiritual-growth-oriented process.”

The results so far from this year’s stewardship program – shown below – indicate that strong, continuing spiritual growth took place among our members leading up to Consecration Sunday on Nov. 14. Almost all members increased their pledges and a few began pledging for the first time. That is so encouraging!

We still have not heard from about 20 members or member families who have pledged in the past. If you are among them, you will be mailed reminder letter very soon, along with a pledge card and return envelope. If any of those members decide to raise their pledges, the projected \$16,000 deficit shown below could be reduced, hopefully significantly.

\$267,000 - pledges in hand from Consecration Sunday and mail-ins.

\$65,000 - potential addition pledges based on 2021 pledgers pledging the same amount in 2022

\$70,000 - non-pledge payments based on revised 2021 target

\$402,000 - TOTAL

\$418,000 - Preliminary 2022 Expense Budget (see Nov. 10 Steeple for details)

(\$16,000) - Deficit between projected 2022 income and expenses as of Dec 1. Could be reduced depending on remaining pledges yet to be received.

Thanks to everyone who helped organize the Consecration Sunday event, including the wonderful catered meal provided by Casa Hispana.

– Dan Droege, on behalf of the Finance Committee

Fr. Nick's Report Card

...And His Report Card on St. Luke's

Back in October, the vestry felt it would be a good idea for Fr. Nick to get some feedback from the congregation on how he was doing as our new rector. By the same token, the vestry also felt that they – and the congregation generally – needed to know how Fr. Nick felt about us.

What followed was four-week mutual review process, organized by a committee of Becky Liehr, Kris Bonner, Doug McIver and Dan Droege. Members of this review committee gathered input from more than a dozen active members of the congregation to help ensure the committee's assessment was broadly representative.

At the November vestry meeting, a report was presented that enumerated both the committee's findings as well as Fr. Nick's reflections about St. Luke's. In this week's Steeple, we'll summarize Fr. Nick's "report card" from the committee and next week, we'll summarize his comments about the vestry, the congregation, and his overall view of St. Luke's and its future.

Pastor Care: The committee's report gave Fr. Nick an outstanding evaluation for the time and dedication he has spent addressing the pastoral needs of so many current and potential members and their families as well as former St. Luke's members and their families. Fr. Nick is a wonderful listener and his complete willingness, regardless of his personal schedule, to be present with those in need of spiritual support (of which there were many) is hugely appreciated by all. The congregation is greatly impressed with Fr. Nick's willingness to spend time with members who are ill, undergoing surgery or facing other personal or family challenges. His presence and comfort to the dying and their families has been exceptional and tremendously appreciated.

Service Liturgy: The committee noted how well Fr. Nick has easily accommodated both Rite I and II at the 8 am and 10:30 am services respectively, and how he has seamlessly woven into the services prayers (particularly Prayers of the People) from sources beyond the BCP. This creative approach to worship – not to mention the artwork on the worship bulletin itself – is much appreciated. The altar guild, readers, A/V team, music director, ushers and others helping with services all appreciate the way Fr. Nick keeps them informed and shows obvious appreciation for their efforts.

Sermons: The review committee unanimously agreed that Fr. Nick's sermons have been thoughtful and thought-provoking and revealing his deep spirituality and care for his congregation, both collectively and as individuals. He was praised making the texts for the day relevant and applicable at both the congregational and personal levels. He does not shy away from sharing his own personal experiences as well as his own vulnerabilities, demonstrating that he is not on a pedestal, but "one of us." Lastly, he was praised for balancing the depth of his message with brevity of delivery. It is obvious that Fr. Nick places a great deal of time, effort and prayer into crafting his sermons.

Organization of services: It's very apparent to the committee (and the congregation as a whole) that Fr. Nick is very well-organized in planning each service and is very conscious of pacing and keeping the service moving within reasonable time limits. He is excellent at presenting the announcements in an engaging and personal manner, and shows a genuine awareness of what's happening within the church and the congregation, and shares special needs when appropriate. After services, he looks each person in the eye with sincerity and caring, and asks how they are doing. He has fully embraced the addition of online services, and appreciates how the online capability allows the church to reach individuals that otherwise would and could not be present.

Adult Christian Formation: The committee noted that despite COVID challenges, Fr. Nick has been innovative in starting a Sunday morning Faith Forum, initiating a new Thursday morning Bible study group, and working with members in creating the monthly Pub Theology gatherings. These adult formation opportunities have been well-received. Attendees fully appreciate Fr. Nick's depth of knowledge (described by

one as “off the charts”), his enthusiasm and his skill in “meeting people where they are.” It’s apparent to all attendees that Fr. Nick puts time and forethought into developing topics. But at the same time, he shows flexibility to take on subjects and questions that arise spontaneously from the group. He shows a “contagious enthusiasm” for the topics discussed.

Youth Christian Formation: While Covid restrictions have restrained ability to get children’s Sunday School started, Fr. Nick has worked closely with Teresa Phares in restarting Godly Play classes on Sunday mornings, alternating with Children’s Music, directed by Keeli Droege. Fr. Nick has regularly attended Young Disciples Wednesday night meetings, bringing a sense of youthful engagement as well as a spiritual message each time. Based on feedback from participants and YD leaders, Fr Nick relates well with this age group. Since September, Fr. Nick has been deepening the impact of the YD experience by working with the youth on the Living Compass approach to young Christian well-being.

Support of St. Luke’s Outside Ministries: The committee lauded Fr. Nick for making a point of quickly becoming acquainted with St. Luke’s traditional outside ministries including Concern, Agape, Family Promise and Pack-the-Backpacks. It is obvious that he fully embraces the mission and work of these organizations and honors the congregation’s long association with them. He has taken the time to get to know each of these ministries on a “hands-on” basis as well as promoting them in the Steeple and during services. Fr. Nick’s approach to these ministries acknowledges and supports St. Luke’s “Arms Wide Open” posture to the community, regardless of an individual’s or a family’s social status, faith orientation, etc.

Administration and Communications: The committee was aware of the many administrative challenges facing Fr. Nick soon after his arrival and appreciates the way he jumped into whatever void was unfilled to make sure things got done properly and on time. On top of these high-priority office needs, Fr. Nick was able to provide regular office hours – an accessibility that is very much appreciated by all the congregation. Regarding communications, Fr. Nick frequently reaches out to members and potential members via email to simply let them know St. Luke’s cares about them. He has been absolutely adamant about having a Steeple every week, leading off by a message from the rector. His Steeple messages range from nuts-and-bolts of church activities to deeper, thought-provoking messages – basically mini-homilies. Fr. Nick is a master of keeping track of administrative issues – his notebook is always with him as ready reference and for recording key information. Lastly, the committee appreciates how Fr. Nick is extremely literate in technologies the church must utilize to be more effective, including the new Realm church management and communication system.

In next week’s Steeple... What Fr. Nick thinks about (gulp) us!

Christmas Wish Tree - Thank You!

Thank you for your support of the Salvation Army's effort to provide Christmas gifts for area children in need!

If you still have gifts to donate, please firmly attach the tag to the unwrapped gifts and bring them to the church office no later than Sunday, December 5th.

We will also gladly accept monetary donations.

Please make check out to St. Luke’s and write Christmas Wish on the memo line.

Many thanks to the Young Disciples who will do the shopping this year.

Please call Steve or Cheryl Van Aken at 918-914-9041 with any questions.

Children's Programming is Back!

On October 24, we began gathering with children again on Sundays. Drop your K-5th graders off upstairs at 10:15 am. 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.

We are looking for people to serve as doorkeepers. Please reach out to Keeli Droege at keelidroege@gmail.com to sign up!

*Children will be asked to wear a mask, and all adults working with children will be masked.



Weekly Words of Wellness

Happiness, Balance, and Gratitude

[By Scott Stoner & Holly Hughes Stoner](#)

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving. It has always been my favorite holiday because of both its simplicity and its focus on gratitude. As I get older, I find that gratitude is foundational to my emotional and spiritual well-being, as I continue to discover the truth of this quote from David Steindl-Rast, “The root of joy is gratefulness. It is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful.”

As the intensity of the holiday season ramps up, I am realizing that I will need to be more intentional about focusing on gratitude as the foundation for joy and happiness. Another quote, this one from Thomas Merton, will also help guide my choices over the next month: “Happiness is not a matter of intensity, but of balance, order, rhythm, and harmony.”

I invite you too to be intentional about how you navigate the holiday season. How will you practice gratitude and create a rhythm that enhances balance and well-being? Part of the intensity of the holiday season comes from the cultural message to buy and do more, which, if we are not mindful, can create feelings that our lives are lacking in some way. A focus on gratitude for what we already have is perhaps the best way to maintain our emotional, relational, and spiritual balance this time of year.

Making it Personal (*These prompts are offered to help you reflect on how you might apply the content of this week's column to your own life. You might write your responses to them in a journal, discuss them with someone else or in a group, or simply take a few moments to reflect on your responses.*)

1. What is your response to the quote, “The root of joy is gratefulness. It is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful”?
2. What thoughts do you have about the quote from Thomas Merton, “Happiness is not a matter of intensity, but of balance, order, rhythm, and harmony?”
3. What’s one thing you need to be intentional about to help you navigate the holiday season with a sense of balance, order, rhythm, and harmony?

Check out our [Wellness Compass podcast](#) this week, where we expand on the subject of this column as we discuss other ideas for prioritizing our mental health during the holiday season.

Pub Theology at ¡El Maguey!

There will be no Pub Theology in December.

Please join us on **January 28th!**

The next meeting will be at 7 p.m. Thursday, January 28th at El Maguey.

What is 'Pub Theology'? It's a time to gather informally and talk about different subjects around our core values of faith. What feeds your faith? Where did you see Jesus this week?

What literature are you reading that has had some inspiration for you?

A host of topics are brought up and discussed over drinks and appetizers.

(We pay our own tabs). There is usually a facilitator to throw out topics for discussion.

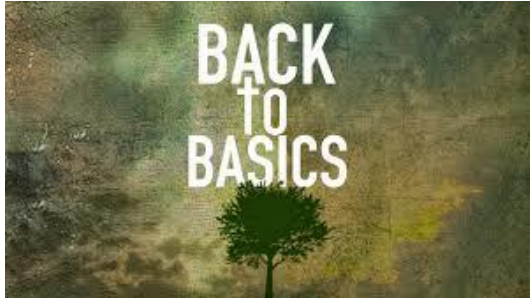
No politics, no gossip, and what is discussed in Pub Theology that is personal stays in the group. Respect the dignity of every person. It's a fun and relaxed time to get to know each other. Call the church office and let us know if you will be joining us so we can have enough tables set up at El Maguey.

If you have any questions, contact Fr. Nick, Penny Williams, or Nancy Megee.

We will be happy to share. Let's share some theology!



Faith Forum Series



**Sundays 9:15– 10:15 a.m.
in Metcalf Hall**

Rector's Bible Study



**Thursdays 9:00 a.m.
in Metcalf Hall**

St. Luke's Vestry Members

Dan Droege, Sr. Warden – 918-331-7936
dbdcomm.2@gmail.com

Doug McIver, Jr. Warden – 785-342-4328
dmciver@susandickcpa.com

Jo Baughman – jybokla@aol.com

Karole Cozby – kscozby916@gmail.com

Chad Ellis – w.chadwick.ellis@gmail.com

Karen Lewey – kgrammy07@yahoo.com

Penny Williams – oklaborn@sbcglobal.net

Nancy Woods – Nancywoods120@gmail.com

Steve Van Aken – scvanaken@sbcglobal.net

Nancy Warring – newarring@cityofbartlesville.org

Katherine Powell – kmpbmp48@gmail.com

Nancy Megee – sc4me81@yahoo.com

St. Luke's Prayer List

Our Prayer List can be found in the Sunday bulletin and on our website.

Call or email our office
with prayer requests.

918-336-1211 or
StLukesBartlesville@outlook.com

Bereavement Team 2

Laura Birk, Kris Bonner,
Nancy Megee, Rita Childers,
Carol Murphy

St. Luke's Episcopal Church Contacts:

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

Dolores McCreary, Choir Director/Organist
dolomc37@gmail.com 918-397-4828

Keeli Droege, Christian Education Coord.
keelidroege@gmail.com 918-697-8509

Connecting with St. Luke's

To learn various ways to connect at St. Luke's,
visit our website at:

<http://episcopalbartlesville.org/>

Birthdays and Anniversaries November 25 – December 8

Birthdays

Doug Freeburn - Nov 30

Pam Bonham - Dec 1

Nan Buhlinger - Dec 3

Jen Peterson - Dec 3

Jo Baughman - Dec 4

Jan Dreiling - Dec 7

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!

Agape Mission Volunteer Schedule

Thursday, December 9

10:45 am – 1 pm: Fr. Nick Phares, Becky Liehr,
Kris Bonner, Dolores McCreary, Kathy Zervas,
Jim Perrier

12:45 pm – 2 pm: Jeanne Julstrom, Peter
Julstrom, Wendy Hall

Thursday, December 23

Agape closed for Christmas