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# *The Steeple*



Dec 20, 2023



## **The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church**



### **The Candle of Joy**

In Fredrich Buechner's book "Wishful Thinking" the word "*Joy*" is defined by its unpredictable wholeness. Next to Buechner's entry of Joy is a reference to the Gospel of John - a Gospel I think, that speaks the most about joy than all the rest. In Buechner we read:

In the Gospel of John, Jesus sums up pretty much everything by saying, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:11) He said it at the supper that he knew was the last one he'd have a mouth to eat.

Happiness turns up more or less where you'd expect it to – a good marriage, a rewarding job, a pleasant vacation. Joy, on the other hand, is as notoriously unpredictable as the one who bequeaths it.

This week we light the pink candle in our homes. The pink candle symbolizes joy and is often associated with Mary, as the narrative focus of Advent now makes a rather sharp turn towards Bethlehem. Nevertheless, the word Joy in the mass refers to the reading from Paul in his letter to Thessalonica. In the fifth chapter we read, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Rejoice is kind of a dignified Elizabethan but make no mistake about it, Paul is speaking about having joy in all things no matter what.

Finding joy in **all** things is a mighty challenge. There are plenty of things that don't bring me joy – like digging through the garbage to find a retainer or pulling hair out of a shower drain. Nevertheless, Paul is not selective in his comment on joy however menial the task. And there is perhaps no better witness in finding joy in the little things than Brother Lawrence, however, he spoke more about shaving carrots than he did about other matters of 21<sup>st</sup> century home economics. And yet, there is wisdom there – and I think, joy. Because Paul and Brother Lawrence's meditations on joy go way beyond chores and deals, instead, with the things of life we have a hard time understanding, especially love and loss.

I'll bet there will be many chances for us to relish the little things this coming week – even in the midst of trial. Whatever that “trial” is for you may the words of Bishop Charleston give you hope. He writes, “Somber the mood beneath the tinsel, cautious the spirit of those who celebrate. A holiday season in difficult times offers us a unique chance to discover hope in the human experience. Joy will not be silenced. In every story of every faith there is the possibility of peace. This is the season when we reveal that truth to the world. Hope is born where it is needed the most.”

Joy will not be silenced for hope is born.

Nick+

## **Theologian's Corner: St. Thomas the Apostle**



The Apostle Thomas (Hebrew or Aramaic for "twin") was also called "Didymus" (Greek for "twin"). He was absent when the Risen Lord appeared to the other apostles on the evening of Easter Day, and refused to believe that Christ had indeed risen until he had seen him for himself, but when he had seen Him, he said to Him, "My Lord and My God." (John 20:19-29)

Because of this episode, he has been known ever since as "Doubting Thomas." But we ought also to remember his earlier words, when Jesus announced His intention of going to the Jerusalem area, brushing aside the protests of His disciples that His life was in danger there, at which Thomas said to the others: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:7,8,16) If Thomas was pessimistic, he was also sturdily loyal.

At the Last Supper, Jesus said: "I go to prepare a place for you.... And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas replied: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" To this Jesus answered: "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:1-6)

Thomas is mentioned again (John 21) as one of the seven disciples who were fishing on the Sea of Galilee (Sea of Tiberias) when the Risen Lord appeared to them. Aside from this he appears in the New Testament only as a name on lists of the Apostles. A couple of centuries later a story was circulating in the Mediterranean world that he had gone to preach in India; and there is a Christian community in India (the Kerala district) that claims descent from Christians converted by the preaching of Thomas.

The tradition among Christians in India is that Thomas was speared to death near Madras, and accordingly he is often pictured holding a spear. Paintings of martyrs often show them holding or accompanied by the instruments with which they were put to death. A recently discovered work called the Gospel of Thomas is a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus. I know of no scholarly support for the notion that it is the work of the Apostle Thomas, but some scholars think that some of the sayings in it may be authentic sayings of Jesus.

## POEM

These things did Thomas hold for real:  
the warmth of blood, the chill of steel,  
the grain of wood, the heft of stone,  
the last frail twitch of blood and bone.

His brittle certainties denied  
that one could live when one had died,  
until his fingers read like Braille  
the markings of the spear and nail.

May we, O God, by grace believe  
and, in believing, still receive  
the Christ who held His raw palms out  
and beckoned Thomas from his doubt.

(Thomas Troeger, 1984, Psalter/Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church)

Together we pray: Everliving God, who didst strengthen thine apostle Thomas with sure and certain faith in thy Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that our faith may never be found wanting in thy sight; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Please pray for:** Liz Green, Michelle Sheffield, Catherine Sheffield, David King, Pris Snow, Ben Baker, Sanawbar, Diana Farris, Joel Hahn, Steve McCraw, Josh Harris, David Swindell, Norma Perrier, Connie Finch, Dorothy Buchanan, Peggy Kauffman, Ryan Kiesel, Tony Clapper, Bruce Neiswander, Jack & Karla Stoecker, Joseph, Tim, Shania Smith, Terry Grogan, Tyler Roberson,

**Jerry Nezam, Jim Brooks, Tom Martin, Don Doty, Luke Karel, Miriam Petrovich, Lynette Beebe, Nancy & Joe Norton, Jack Smith, Tina Holland, and Margaret Holden.**

**Please add the following to your prayers this third week of Advent:**

**St Matthew's, Enid**

**Church of the Holy Spirit, Montevideo, Uruguay**

## **December Needs**

Concern's current Pantry needs: peanut butter, canned beans, canned vegetables, chunky soups

For homeless - hats, gloves and hand warmers.

**LET US SEE IF WE CAN FILL THE TOTE BY METCALF WITH GLOVES, SOCK HATS, AND HAND WARMERS.**



## **Luke's Place Dec 21<sup>st</sup> -Dec 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Dec 21<sup>st</sup> Men's Breakfast, 7am, Metcalf**

**Rector's Bible Study, 9:15am, Metcalf**

**Green Country Eucharist, Rite I, 1pm, GCV**

**Dec 24<sup>th</sup> Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8am, Chapel**

**Faith Forum, 9:15am, Metcalf**

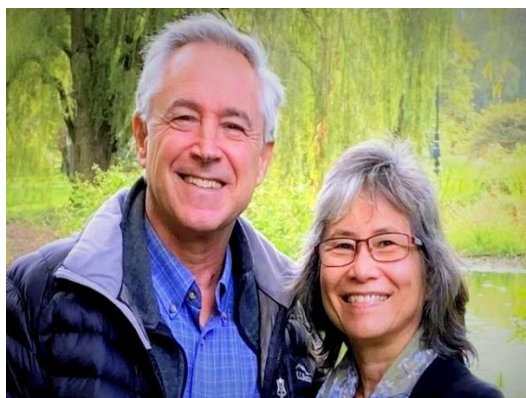
**Christmas Eve Service with pageant, 4:00pm, Nave**

**Dec 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day service, 10:00am, Nave**

**Dec 26<sup>th</sup> Feast of St Stephen, Deacon and Martyr, 12:15pm, Chapel**

**Dec 27<sup>th</sup> Feast of St John, Apostle and Evangelist, 12:15pm, Chapel**

## **NEWS FROM THE GREENS**



Hi friends,

Some months ago I decided not to continue Thai lessons on a regular basis. Recently, I was thinking about my spiritual walk (since the question was on my annual review). I realized my response was down a notch from the previous year. Why was that? After only a little reflection I realized that my Thai tutor had become an important partner in digging out the

truths of God's Word. Yes, I shared a lot with her, but she also shared much with me. This had become significant in how vibrant my journey in this world is. So, instead of allowing other



appointments to block my Thai lesson each week, I now look for a way to schedule a Thai lesson with her every week. The time with her had changed from being just a way to learn the Thai language to being a time of *life-giving encouragement*. That's how I began to work on keeping my Thai tutor in my "community."

Life in community, whether in person or online, is not easy. Each person in a community is imperfect. Yet communities (John 13:34-35) are one of the ways that God chooses to make Himself known to us. It takes courage to be committed to a community. It also takes more time and makes life more complicated, but communities do make us stronger in our life with God.

Thank you for being a community for Roger and me as we work in Southeast Asia. Though some of you write back, many of you are there as a listening community and track with our ups and downs in helping people dig God's Word deep into their lives. May our Lord bless each of you for your sacrifices in being in community with us.

In this season of remembering a tiny baby whose advent was "good news of great joy," may the glow of this good news warm your home. May God keep you strong in life's journey. May He lift you up when you are tired and bring you encouragement when you are disappointed. May your community, which God has brought to you, surprise you with joy when you aren't expecting it.

Grateful for each of you,  
Joanne

*I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples." John 13:34-35*



Attached is a photo from a walkover bridge as I was returning home from the market early one morning. The road is the main one going through town and is usually full of vehicles. You can see the pretty mountains in the background. The people here are a community around us. May God do His work in us so that one day they will see that we have been among them as a *life-giving encouragement*, living out His good news of great joy.

## Birthdays and Anniversaries, Dec 24<sup>th</sup> –Dec 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Birthdays



Debbie Mueggenborg (12/24)	Cheryl & Bill Bridendolph (12/28)
Sheila Taylor (12/24)	
Mark Wright (12/28)	
Charlie Lee (12/29)	

### 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!



## *Advent Program and Light Supper TONIGHT, 6pm Metcalf Hall*

Join us in food and fellowship  
Program will be Advent Lessons and Carols in the Nave  
*Menu: Chili and ALL the fixin's*

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### Advent Faith Forum Series

Light of the World.  
A Beginner's Guide to Advent  
9:15, Metcalf  
The Gifts of the Gentiles

December 24<sup>th</sup>



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### **Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**Contemporary:** Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



This month's Pack the Backpacks items are 3x5 inch ruled Index Cards, 100 ct packages and 5 tab notebook dividers.



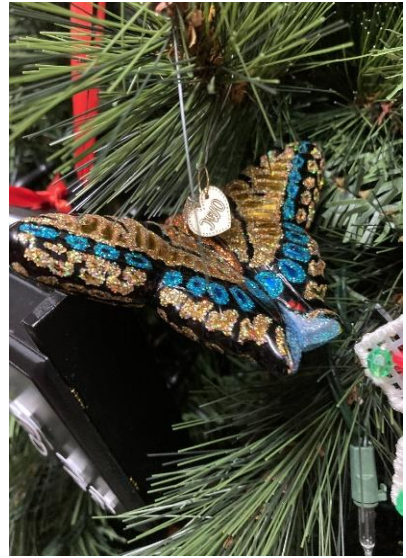
Thank you to everyone who has contributed in the past. It helps more than you know.



## Tree of Celestial Hope











Our  
Christmas Eve  
service with pageant  
will be held at  
4:00pm.

Holy Eucharist will be  
Christmas Day, 10:00am

*Oh Come, Let us Adore  
Him*



ST. LUKE'S BOOKSTORE

Thank you to ALL who made our 1<sup>st</sup> Open House so successful!  
Special thanks to Debi Adams and our special guest 'Santa'.

There are still plenty of seasonal items and gifts left! Come shop your  
Bookstore for last minute Christmas gifts and stocking stuffers.



YD ended the semester with the annual Christmas party with the traditional escargot and dirty Santa. They also carolled in the neighborhood.



## Security Note

This door leads out to the alley. Twice since Thanksgiving it has been left unlocked overnight and was the entry for the attempted break-in a few weeks back. If you unlock this door, please be sure you use your key to lock it back. It does not automatically lock again. Unlocking and locking takes a perimeter key and the lock is on the outside of the door. It may appear locked from the inside, but unless you actually insert your key and lock it from the outside, it will not be locked.



## Collect for Christmas Day

**Traditional: The Nativity of Our Lord-** Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

### St. Luke's Vestry Members

- Doug McIver, Sr. Warden -- [dmciver@susandickcpa.com](mailto:dmciver@susandickcpa.com) 785-342-4328
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### **Bereavement Team 1**

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Julstrom, Sally Lindsey