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# *The Steeple*



Dec 25, 2023



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



### **The Candle of Love**

In Fredrich Buechner's book, "Wishful Thinking" the word *Love* is defined by how we are to give it, not so much in how we are to receive it. Honestly, if the sentiment of God loving us first is taken to heart, then what follows is, I think, a natural part of responding to that first love. Buechner writes:

Of all powers, love is the most powerful and the most powerless. It is the most powerful because it alone can conquer that final and most impregnable stronghold which is the human heart. It is the most powerless because it can do nothing except by consent.

To say that, love is God is romantic idealism. To say that, God is love is either the last straw or the ultimate truth.

In the Christian sense, love is not primarily an emotion but an act of will. When Jesus tells us to love our neighbors, he is not telling us to love them in the sense of responding to them with a cozy emotional feeling. You can as well produce a cozy emotional feeling on demand as you can a yawn or a sneeze. On the contrary, he is telling us to love our neighbors in the sense of being willing to work for their well-being even if it means sacrificing our own well-being to that end, even if it means sometimes that just leaving them alone. Thus, in Jesus' terms we can love our neighbors without necessarily liking them. In fact, liking them may stand in the way of loving them by making us overprotective sentimentalists instead of reasonably honest friends.

When Jesus talked to the Pharisees, he didn't say, "There, there. Everything's going to be all right." He said, "You brood of vipers! How can you speak good when you are evil (Matthew 12:34) And he said that to them because he loved them.

Put another way Thomas Merton once said, "Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy." And when it comes to not inquiring whether one is worthy or not there is perhaps no more succinct way to think about that than to read Mother Teresa's poem entitled, "Anyway."

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;

**Be kind anyway.**

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;

**Succeed anyway.**

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;

**Be honest and frank anyway.**

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;

**Build anyway.**

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;

**Be happy anyway.**

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;

**Do good anyway.**

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;

**Give the world the best you've got anyway.**

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God;

**It was never between you and them anyway.**

In the final analysis, perhaps only one question will be asked of us, "How well did we love?" **Love anyway.** For that is what came down at Christmas. (H 84)

Merry Christmas. Let us bless the Lord.

Nick+



## Theologians Corner: The Holy Innocents

Today the church remembers the Feast of The Holy Innocents.

We read in Matthew 2 that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, King Herod, fearing for his throne, ordered that all the male infants of Bethlehem be killed. These children are regarded as martyrs for the Gospel -- "martyrs in fact though not in will." Augustine called them "buds, killed by the frost of persecution the moment they showed

themselves."

Bishop Neil Alexander is particularly helpful in his discussion about why these kinds of feasts follow Christmas. From his book *Celebrating Liturgical Time* he writes:

Additionally, three other major feasts-St. Stephen, Deacon and Martyr (December 26); St. John, Apostle and Evangelist (December 27); and Holy Innocents (December 28)-fall on the

days immediately following Christmas Day. Albeit out of sequence against the backdrop of the eucharistic lectionary, the Feast of the Holy Innocents is the only one of these three feasts that is thematically related to Christmas. The other two—St. Stephen and St. John—are older than Christmas and were assigned to these days in December before Christmas landed on December 25. Consequently, one should not try to give them a place in the larger celebration of Christmas. More than one preacher has labored over what the martyrdom of a deacon and the feast of the beloved disciple have to do with Christmas. The answer is: nothing. The placement of these feasts in the days immediately following Christmas Day is an historical accident and forcing a merger between the content of these feasts and the themes associated with Christmas is, quite simply, torture!

In other words, “Don’t do it!”

For a discussion of the historical background of the Holy Innocents, consult the Web page <http://elvis.rowan.edu/~kilroy/CHRISTIA/library/infancy2.html>

Together we pray: We remember this day, O God, the slaughter of the holy innocents of Bethlehem by the order of King Herod. Receive, we beseech thee, into the arms of thy mercy all innocent victims; and by thy great might frustrate the designs of evil tyrants and establish thy rule of justice, love, and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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**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, Margaret Holden, and Molly Ferguson.

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

**St Paul’s, Clinton**

**Whirlwind Mission, Watonga**

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## 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 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 -Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

- Dec 28<sup>th</sup> Men's Breakfast, 7am, Metcalf  
Green Country Eucharist, Rite I, 1pm, GCV  
Dec 31<sup>st</sup> Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8am, Chapel  
Holy Eucharost Rite II, 10:30am  
Jan 1<sup>st</sup> Office Closed

### Birthdays and Anniversaries, Dec 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023 –Jan 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024



#### Birthdays

Josh McCraw (1/3)  
Lexi Phares (1/5)  
Courtney Leach (1/6)



#### Anniversaries

Mark & Mary Jo Peterson (12/31)  
Bryan & Nancy Megee (1/3)

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!

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



We are ALMOST There! The basket is  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Lets fill it Before the New Year Thank you!





**Meditation Group will meet Thursday (Dec 28<sup>th</sup>) at 3:00pm in the Beard Library. Join us!**



**Feast of the Holy Innocents will be celebrated Thursday, 1pm, at Green Country Village chapel. Everyone welcome!**





It was the Friday before Christmas and all through the Church, the menfolk were hanging the greenery rope. The Altar Guild Ladies were gathering and assessing their work. The organist practiced and the music drifted towards the rafters and the costumes were hung, waiting for the pageant actors.....A poet I am not, but the activity this morning highlights the anticipation of the Birth of our Savior. The other day I was searching for a Christmas movie to watch and I found one of the Christmas episodes of a past favorite TV show called 'Touched by an Angel'. In it, Monica (God's messenger angel) was telling of the tragedy in Mark Twain's life that happened on Christmas Eve. She had witnessed it and was explaining to her current assigned family facing a potential tragedy, that 'Christmas always comes...' in spite of the circumstances and God will Love them through it. The Love Candle will be lit early Sunday morning to end Advent and begin the Christmas season with the carols and pageant of our children at the Christmas Eve service later that day. May you Love deeply the family and friends who surround you this holiday and praise the baby born in a manger.

As many of you know, I will be on vacation immediately following Christmas Day and will return Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>. I have talked with Margaret and she misses you all so much. You are part of her family. She will have tests run next week which will tell her doctor what procedure or course of treatment she will need to do. We are still a few weeks from her recovery and after that she may have to lift less and move a little slower. Until then, if you see a trash can overflowing or a bathroom that needs paper towels or toilet paper, can you help us out and attend to it? All paper goods are in Margaret's closet next to Metcalf kitchen. Also if any trash is spotted on the grounds, would you mind picking it up and throwing it in our dumpster next to 801 S Osage garage? The trash in the cans inside are also tossed in our dumpster. The can liners are on the top of the fridge in Metcalf. This would help to keep us looking tidy. Thanks ahead!

Let me end with 'Many Thanks' to everyone who has supported me this past year! You are a delight to work for and this position has never felt like a 'job'. Your encouragement has meant the world. Of course, I do have the best boss....Thank you, Nicholas Phares. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! May you be blessed abundantly!

-----Penny

## **St. Luke's Vestry Members**

- Doug McIver, Sr. Warden -- [dmciver@susandickcpa.com](mailto:dmciver@susandickcpa.com) 785-342-4328
- Nancy Woods, Jr. Warden – [Nancywoods120@gmail.com](mailto:Nancywoods120@gmail.com)
- Jo Baughman – [jybokla@aol.com](mailto:jybokla@aol.com)
- Karole Cozby – [kscozby916@gmail.com](mailto:kscozby916@gmail.com)
- Chad Ellis – [w.chadwick.ellis@gmail.com](mailto:w.chadwick.ellis@gmail.com)
- Karen Lewey – [kgrammy07@yahoo.com](mailto:kgrammy07@yahoo.com)
- Laura Birk – [lpbirk73@gmail.com](mailto:lpbirk73@gmail.com)
- Mark Peterson- [m\\_mpeterson@hotmail.com](mailto:m_mpeterson@hotmail.com)
- Steve Van Aken – [scvanaken@sbcglobal.net](mailto:scvanaken@sbcglobal.net)
- Katherine Powell – [kmpbmp48@gmail.com](mailto:kmpbmp48@gmail.com)
- Steve Roper- [sdroper2006@yahoo.com](mailto:sdroper2006@yahoo.com)
- Josie McIver-

St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
210 East 9<sup>th</sup> St., Bartlesville, OK 74003  
Office Hours: 9am-4pm, M-F  
Email: [StLukesBartlesville@outlook.com](mailto:StLukesBartlesville@outlook.com)  
918-336-1212  
Or contact  
Penny Williams, secretary 918-766-2157

St. Luke's Episcopal Church Contacts:

The Reverend Nick Phares, Rector  
269-788-7063; [RevPhares@outlook.com](mailto:RevPhares@outlook.com)

Keeli Droege, Choir Director/Organist  
918-697-8509 [keelidroege@gmail.com](mailto:keelidroege@gmail.com)

### **Bereavement Team 1**

Susie Clark, Nancy Woods, Jeanne  
Julstrom, Sally Lindsey

The Nativity of our Lord: O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

