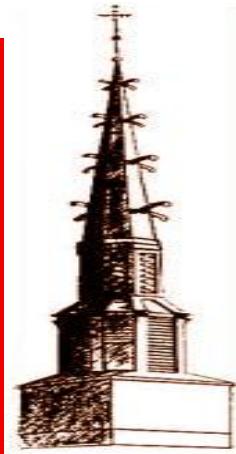


In this week's Steeple >>>

- Fr Nick's message
- Theologian's Corner
- Luke's Place Schedule
- Remembrance Tree
- Christmas Services
- St Stephen Feast Day
- St John, the Apostle

The Steeple



Dec 24, 2025



The Weekly Newsletter of St. Luke's Episcopal Church



The Times and Christmas

This morning's headlines are the same I'm afraid... heavy. Even without naming them, you know their familiar contours: war and its aftermath, political fracture, economic anxiety, the steady drumbeat of pessimism, the stories of systems that are straining and the people they serve falling through the cracks. The front page of the Times is conflicted, crowded, urgent, and relentless. It tells us what we think matters now, what is burning, what demands our outrage or our fear more than it does our hope. It presses us to see that the rough draft of history is fueled by power, force, and speed.

And then, in the midst of that news cycle, the Church dares to announce something that does not look like news at all, that a child is born.

No press conference here. No leverage. No immediate solution to the crises listed above the fold today. Just a babe, born to parents who themselves would have made the news only as refugees if that - travelers under imperial decree, people on the margins of someone else's census. If this story appeared in the paper today, it would be buried in the opinion section at best, easily eclipsed by "more important" events of the day.

And yet, this is the story Christians insist changes how all other stories are to be read.

The birth of Christ does not deny our headlines. It does not "spiritualize" them away or pretend that suffering is unreal, even if only for a day. Christmas does not tell us that the world is fine; it tells us that God has entered the world as it is! God does not wait for stability before coming near. God does not wait for consensus, peace, or moral clarity. God comes into places that are occupied with fear, exhaustion, and uncertainty. God takes on flesh not outside the news cycle, but right in

the middle of it...in the middle of the Epstein files, measles outbreaks, tariffs, and our place as stewards of all that.

That matters.

Because the temptation this time of year can be “nothing ever really changes” or distraction, “let’s just enjoy the lights.” Christmas refuses both friends! It teaches us a third way: Hope that is grounded, unyielding, and costly. Hope that does not depend on the headlines. Hope that takes up its place quietly, like a child growing unnoticed while empires position themselves for the future all the while as armies move all around Him.

What are we to take away, then, as Christians with the manger in view?

Perhaps the understanding that God’s work is often hidden. The most important thing happening in the world may not be the most reported. Pay attention to what is faithful and easily overlooked: acts of care, forgiveness, endurance, love that refuses to let go.

This too, that God’s solidarity is real. Whatever story on that front page breaks your heart whether it is grief, displacement, injustice, or anguish, God has chosen to know it from the inside. Emmanuel is not a slogan. It is a claim that God is with us, even when the news tells us we are on our own.

All of that and this, that our calling is to bear Christ into it the world. Like Mary, like Joseph, like the shepherds who showed up with nothing impressive to offer, we are invited to tend what God has entrusted to us - our families, our neighbors, our community, our small corner of a very troubled world. We live as witnesses that another kingdom is already breaking in, not through domination, but through love that keeps showing up for each other.

This Christmas may we let the holy child of Bethlehem remind us that history is not only shaped by what makes the headlines. It is also shaped by God choosing vulnerability, presence, and mercy and by ordinary people who, in response to that grace, refuse to give up on hope no matter the times.

That is the good news of Christmas. Not that everything is all right now, but that God has entered it anyway. To be with us forever.

Deep Peace,

Nick+



At Luke's Place: Dec 26th – Jan 3rd

Dec 28th **Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 8:00am, Chapel**
Faith Forum, 9:15am, Metcalf
Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 10:30am, Nave
Dec 29th **Community Soup Night, 4-8pm, Metcalf**

Prayer List

Please pray for: Ben Baker, Steve McCraw, Josh Harris, David Swindell, Connie Finch, Terry Grogan, Tyler Roberson, Jerry Nezam, Lynette Beebe, Jack Smith, Danny Clem, David McAtee, Shawn, Stephanie Gallegos, Pat Sare, Steve Linn, Jean Mason, Adam Thomas, Tom Oakes, Bill Pendley, Mary Wallace, Lynda Stephens, Marcie Zervas, Audrey Harris, Peggy Rockey, Ken Harvey, Nan Buhlinger, Bill Birk, Carol McSpadden, Dionna Cameron, Betty Rogers, Dan & JoAnn Gallery, Freda Bretz, Kathleen Turner, Steve Clark, Lauren Gandy, Susan Brooks, Dean Zervas, Frank Molina, Diane Mitchell, Rob Dahlgren, Frank Traylor, Steve Hand, Donna Steward, Clay Smith, and Kelly Preston.

Please add the following to your prayers for the Fourth Week of Advent :
St. Paul's, Clinton Whirlwind Mission, Watonga The Anglican Church of Burundi

Theologians Corner: A Homily for the Feast of St. Thomas

Here we are friends, just warming up our voices to sing carols, the scent of pine fresh as it is being hung in the nave today, the manger on the horizon and suddenly the Church sets before us the risen Christ - wounds visible and a voice saying, "Peace be with you." It can feel almost jarring, this feast. Are we not preparing for shepherds and angels? Why are we already standing with Thomas upon the cusp of Easter Glory?

But the Church is not confused. Nor is she rushing us ahead. Christmas and resurrection are not two separate stories stitched awkwardly together. They draw on one another. The Child laid in the manger is born already bearing the promise of those wounds. The flesh Mary gives him is the same flesh Thomas will one day touch. The Word made flesh at Christmas is the Word who will say, "Do not doubt, but believe." Incarnation and resurrection belong to the same mystery: God's refusal to remain distant.

Habakkuk knows something about waiting for that nearness. "I will stand at my watch post," he says, "and station myself on the rampart." He waits for a word, for a vision, for something that will make sense of the world as it is. And the answer he receives is not a timetable or an explanation, but a posture of life: "The righteous live by their faith." Not by certainty. Not by control. By faithfulness in the waiting, that is Advent.

The letter to the Hebrews echoes that same insistence. "Do not throw away your confidence," it says, "for it has a great reward." And then comes that famous line we hear so often at funerals and

at the edges of mystery: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Notice what is not said. Faith is not the denial of doubt. Faith is not pretending we see what we do not. Faith is learning how to live, to endure, to love, while some things remain just out of reach that, too, is Advent too.

Which brings us back, to Thomas.

“Doubting Thomas,” we call him, as though he were uniquely flawed among the apostles. But Thomas is not asking for less than the others received. He is asking for the same. They saw the Lord. They heard his voice. They rejoiced. Thomas simply says, “I need to see him too. I need to know that the crucified one is truly the risen one.”

And when Jesus appears, he does not scold Thomas. He does not shame him. He offers him exactly what he asked for: His body, the wounds, hands, a side, real flesh. The risen Christ does not erase the marks of suffering. He carries them. And Thomas’ response, “My Lord and my God!” is one of the most direct confessions of faith in the whole Gospel of John.

But again St. Thomas and Christmas? Well as far as I know Christmas is not a sentimental escape from the world’s pain. It is God entering into it. Fully. Vulnerably. With skin that can be pierced and a heart that can be broken. The child in the manger is already the one who will say, “Put your finger here.” And the Church, gathered in the glow of Christmas joy, is made up of people who know both wonder of that night and the wounds that will surely come.

During this season, we speak often of joy and rightly so. But Christian joy is not brittle kind, like that of the dried pine needles that Courtney keeps sweeping up. This kind of joy can hold questions. It can make room for those who stand a little apart, like Thomas, waiting for something real enough to touch. The life of the Church depends on that honesty. A Church that cannot bear doubt cannot bear much truth either.

But a Church that, like its Lord, is willing to show its wounds becomes a place where faith can actually grow.

Jesus’ final words in this passage are often misunderstood: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” This is not a rebuke of Thomas. It is a blessing for us. For the Church that comes after. For those who will live by faith, not sight, yet still cling to the promise that God has truly come near.

Today, moment from the manger somehow already holding close the resurrection, we are reminded that faith is not about having all the answers. It is about trusting that the God who chose to be born among us will also meet us in our waiting, our questioning, our longing. The vision may seem to tarry, as Habakkuk says but it will surely come.

And when it does, it will still bear the marks of love.

The Remembrance Tree will be up until Epiphany. Still time to add your ornament

Birthdays & Anniversaries for Dec 28th- Jan 3rd

Birthdays

Mark Wright (12/28) Bill & Cheryl Bridendolph (12/28)
Josh McCraw (1/3) Mark & Mary Jo Peterson (12/31)
 Bryan & Nancy Megee (1/3)

Anniversaries

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.



Service

At St Luke's, 4:00pm

After the Christmas Eve Service, join us in Metcalf Hall for eggnog and wassail. If you have extra treats from Christmas celebrations, please bring those to share.

Christmas Day service 10:00am



Feast Day of St Stephen - Dec 26th

We give you thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of the first martyr Stephen, who looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors to your Son Jesus Christ, who stands at your right hand; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

Feast Day of St John, Apostle and Evangelist – Dec 27th

Shed upon your Church, O Lord, the brightness of your light, that we, being illumined by the teaching of your apostle and evangelist John, may so walk in the light of your truth, that at length we may attain to the fullness of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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Bereavement Team 2

**Laura Birk, Nancy Megee,
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For unto us a Child is born,
unto us a Son is given...

Isaiah 9:6

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