



# Summer Messenger

## PASTOR'S CORNER

“Remember who you are.” These are the words that the spirit of the lion King Mufasa speaks to his son, Prince Simba, as the young adult prince seeks to live a carefree life in hiding – far from his homeland and the community that needs him. It seems that, for many of us, it isn't the desire for relaxation and a carefree existence that call us away from our deepest selves: instead it is the constant pressure to perform, to place our value in how well we live up to the expectations and needs placed upon us.

And yet, these words ring true: remember who you are. We, too, are children of royalty, children of God. Late this spring, we poured this promise over two adults at their baptisms. (Congratulations, Drew and Christine!) The following week, several teenagers affirmed their baptisms (got Confirmed), promising to live in relationship with God and the Church community.

Now they, and we, continue the lifelong process of living as God's beloved children – seeking time and again to remember who (and whose) we truly are. As we move into the (sometimes) calmer season of summer and the season of growth after Pentecost, here are 3 ways we can intentionally do this:

1. Take part in worship, whether here or at a church where your travels take you.
2. Serve. Whether it's Grauer Back-to-School Distribution, Vacation Bible School, Community Table, or as a reader or Communion Assistant in worship.
3. Spend some intentional time with God in prayer. Even 5 minutes/day will deepen your connection. Scott Willis shared a particularly helpful prayer that goes as follows: Sit in a comfortable place and imagine that Jesus is sitting with you. Take a minute or two to reflect on each of these questions:
  - a. What does Jesus look like?
  - b. How does it feel to have Jesus right there with you? What emotions arise?
  - c. What do you want to tell him about your life and how things are going?
  - d. What questions do you have for him?
  - e. What do you think Jesus is wanting to tell you?

May you remember who you are, dear beloved child of God!

Blessings,  
**Pr. Beth**

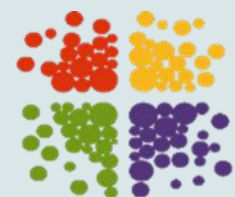
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**St. Luke**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

## SPECIAL SUMMER DATES

- June 15-19: VBS Summer Camp  
9 a.m. — Noon
- August 8: Grauer Back-to-School Distribution Project

### SAVE THE DATE

#### Worship

- May 31, 10:30am: Confirmation Sunday
- June 21, both services: Music with Marimbas & Guest preacher Rev. Carol Kyllingstad
- July 5: Guest preacher, Rev. Dr. Mark Brocker Farewell & Godspeed; 10:30am: David and Geenie Parker-Medford
- July 19: RIC Pride Sunday, Guest Preacher, Mikah Meyer; 10:30am, Music with Summer Choir
- August 23, 10:30am: Music with Handbells
- August 16, 10:30am: Music with Summer Choir
- September 13, Rally Day, 10:30am: **One service only**

#### Connect

- June 15-19: 9am – 12pm, VBS
- June 23: 7-9pm, 1st Weekly SLY Summer Tuesday, Vermont House
- June 28: between services, *Connecting at the OASIS*
- July 19: following worship, Portland Pride Parade
- July 26: between services, *Connecting at the OASIS*
- August 9: between services, *Connecting at the OASIS*
- August 23: 11:45am, WELCA Luncheon

#### Serve

- Super Summer Cereal Drive: now through Labor Day
- Community Table: 2<sup>nd</sup> and last Saturday of each month
- August 2: 11:30am: Grauer Set-up Sunday
- August 8: Grauer Back-to-School Distribution Day
- August 22: Habit for Humanity, Pope Leo's Village

## WORSHIP

Join us for worship as together we explore the work of God's restoring, healing power!

**Modern Worship:** Sunday at 9:15 a.m. Band-led

**Traditional Worship:** Sunday at 10:30 a.m. Organ, St. Luke Ringers & Rejoice Choir



## WORSHIP AT ST. LUKE

### Sunday Morning Education Ministries

**Children's Ministry:** Meet in Fellowship Hall, classes held in Room 109

**Middle School Ministries:** Lower Shalom

**St. Luke Youth:** Vermont House

**Parent Group:** Upper Shalom

Children's Church held during the **9:15 a.m.** service.

Nursery care for children birth to five years continues at both services.

### Serve in Worship!

#### Share Your Faith as a Reader or Prayer Leader

It's Time to Sign Up to Read Scripture or Lead the Prayers This Summer!

Readers and prayer leaders are a vital part of our worship at St. Luke. Reading the scriptures aloud and leading the Prayers of the People bless both the reader and the congregation. It's an active way to share our faith and declare our trust in God's care for us.

#### Help with Communion

Have you ever wanted to help with Communion? You can volunteer to serve Communion, set the table, or help with cleanup after the 10:30 service.

Your help is truly appreciated!

#### Virtual Worship

Not able to join us in person? Worship with us online! Our **9:15 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. services** are livestreamed on Facebook and saved on YouTube and Facebook.

Access recordings on [St. Luke's Facebook page](#) or our website: [stlukechurch.com](http://stlukechurch.com)

You'll want your bulletin to participate online! Download your Worship Bulletins at [stlukechurch.com](http://stlukechurch.com)

# MUSIC MINISTRIES

## Summer Music at St. Luke (June-August)

Summer at St. Luke Lutheran Church brings a different rhythm to our music ministry life: a season filled with rest, creativity, learning, and joyful opportunities to make music together.

While some of our regular ensembles pause during the summer months, there are still many ways to sing, ring, play, and participate in worship at St. Luke all summer long!

### REJOICE CHOIR, ST. LUKE RINGERS & SONGBIRDS

Our Rejoice Choir, St. Luke Ringers, and Songbirds take a well-deserved summer break during June, July, and August and will resume rehearsals in September. We are deeply grateful for all the music, dedication, and joy these ensembles bring throughout the program year.

### MODERN WORSHIP TEAM

Our Modern Worship Team continues leading music throughout the summer at the 9:15 a.m. Contemporary Worship Service.

Rehearsals are held:  
Thursdays | 6-7:15 p.m.  
Sundays | 8:30-9:10 a.m.

If you sing or play an instrument, we would love to welcome you! New musicians are always invited to join, whether regularly or occasionally throughout the summer months.



### MARIMBA WORKSHOP WITH JEFF POWERS

*Saturday, June 20 – Sunday, June 21*

We are thrilled to welcome percussionist and educator Jeff Powers for a special marimba workshop weekend at St. Luke!

**Workshop: Saturday, June 20 | 9 a.m.—12 p.m.**  
**Location:** St. Luke Sanctuary

Participants will explore marimba and percussion music in a fun, hands-on, and welcoming environment. This workshop is open to **all ages and all experience levels**—no prior musical experience is needed. A complimentary breakfast will be available before the workshop.

**Worship Performances:** Workshop participants will share music during worship services on **Sunday, June 21**.

**Event RSVP:** Help us prepare instruments and breakfast by registering in advance. [Click here to RSVP.](#)



# MUSIC MINISTRIES

## SUMMER CHOIRS

No robes, no weekly rehearsals, and no long-term commitment. Just show up and sing!

Join us for our Summer Pop-Up Choir Sundays as we gather to learn a few fun pieces of music and sing for the **10:30am Traditional Worship Service**.

Singers will meet at **9:30am** in the upstairs music room for a short warm-up and rehearsal before worship.

- **Sunday, July 19 (Pride-Themed Music)**
- **Sunday, August 16 (Renaissance & Gospel Music)**

All singers are welcome, whether you are an experienced



## INTRO TO HANDBELL RINGING WORKSHOP

**With Steven Schaefer & the St. Luke Ringers**  
**Saturday, August 22 – Sunday, August 23**

Curious about handbells? Come learn the basics in this beginner-friendly workshop designed for anyone interested in trying handbell ringing for the first time.

### WORKSHOP

**Saturday, August 22 | 9 a.m.—12 p.m.**

**Location:** St. Luke Sanctuary

Participants will learn foundational ringing techniques, musical teamwork, and prepare music to share in worship the following day. The workshop is open to **all ages and all experience levels**.

*(A complimentary breakfast will be provided before the workshop)*

### WORSHIP PARTICIPATION

Workshop participants will ring during worship services on **Sunday, August 23**.

### EVENT RSVP

Help us prepare bells and breakfast by registering in advance. [Click here to RSVP](#).



We are excited to continue making music that brings joy, connection, beauty, and meaning to our community throughout the summer months. Whether you are returning to music or trying something new for the very first time, there is a place for you at St. Luke.

**MAKE MUSIC. BUILD COMMUNITY. FIND YOUR PLACE.**

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

## Summer Sunday Sessions

Children's Church at 9:15 a.m. will continue through the summer. Children's church is a hybrid program during the 9:15 service in which children attend worship with their families, then step out for a breakout session during the sermon; children return for communion.

The Nursery will continue offering weekly childcare at both services from 9 a.m. to Noon throughout the summer: birth – 5 years.



## MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

- VBS Kids Summer Camp June 15-19
- Marimbas Workshop—Kids welcome!
- June 28, July 26, & August 9: OASIS “Connecting at the OASIS” in between services
- Rally Day 2026: Sunday, September 13!
- First Day of Children's Ministry: Sunday, September 20
- Fall Festival & Chili Contest: Sunday, October 25
- Children's Advent Festival: Saturday, December 5
- Children's Nativity Play: Sunday, December 6

## Summer Camp at Camp Lutherwood

Huge thank you to Trust Fund for your generous support. \$300 scholarships to St Luke campers are available for week-long camp programs spanning elementary-high school.



**Register today:** <https://www.lutherwoodoregon.org/camp>

St. Luke Middle Schoolers will be headed down to Confirmation Camp JUNE 28-JULY 2.

Rising 5th graders (6th graders by fall 2026) are eligible to attend [Confirmation Camp].

SLY High Schoolers will be headed down for Altitude Camp July 26-30.

Important Detail: When registering, please list St. Luke as your church. The \$300 will be deducted from your final bill. Camperships are also available from Camp Lutherwood and are stackable with St. Luke's. [Camp Lutherwood Campership Form Here](#)

## Camp Lutherwood is hiring: Applications open now

Know a young adult who would be a good fit for a summer at camp? Be a positive role model and make a difference in children's lives, all while growing personally and professionally. All staff are paid for their summer of work. Positions are salaried. Staff are also provided housing, laundry services, and meals at no charge during their employment. Bonuses are available for returning staff members and recruiting friends as staff members. Must be 18 years old to apply. Dates for employment at June 15 - August 9.

Learn more at [lutherwoodoregon.org/employment](https://lutherwoodoregon.org/employment) or email [jobs@lutherwoodoregon.org](mailto:jobs@lutherwoodoregon.org)

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES



Our new OASIS provides fun space for our egg hunt!



Scouts Troop 150 lead the way to the egg hunt!



**Easter EGGstravaganza partnerships continue! We celebrated EGGSTRAVAGANZA 2026 with our Ukrainian Community and SW Portland Scouts Troope 150**

Children enjoyed the egg hunt led by Scouts Troope 150. Our guests enjoyed a bountiful breakfast, cooked up by our St Luke council. The fun morning culminated with a Ukrainian children's dance troope performance and pysanky egg exhibit.

**Thanks to our St. Luke SLY and MSM youth AND our local Scout Troope 150, led by St. Luke member Jennifer Niemeyer,** we had help with the entire process from stuffing eggs, setting up the egg hunt, and running the event.

**Thanks to our St. Luke Council.** Their breakfast filled both bellies and hearts!

**Thanks to our Ukrainian friends Tetiana Chub and Olena Ziukova** for sharing the beauty and joy of cultural traditions found in egg decorating art (pysanky eggs) and dance. St. Luke has had a long friendship with the **Ukrainian Foundation and community.** Over the years, we have opened our St. Luke campus for English classes, cultural choir ensemble rehearsals, and children's summer day camps for newly emigrated Ukrainian children who are making new homes and new friends here in the United States.

Find out more about our partners at their websites:

<https://ukrainian.foundation/>

<https://troop150.org/>



Joan Snyder  
council president  
and pancake

### KINDERPREP IS ENROLLING!

Come visit Julia Hernandez's preschool at St. Luke

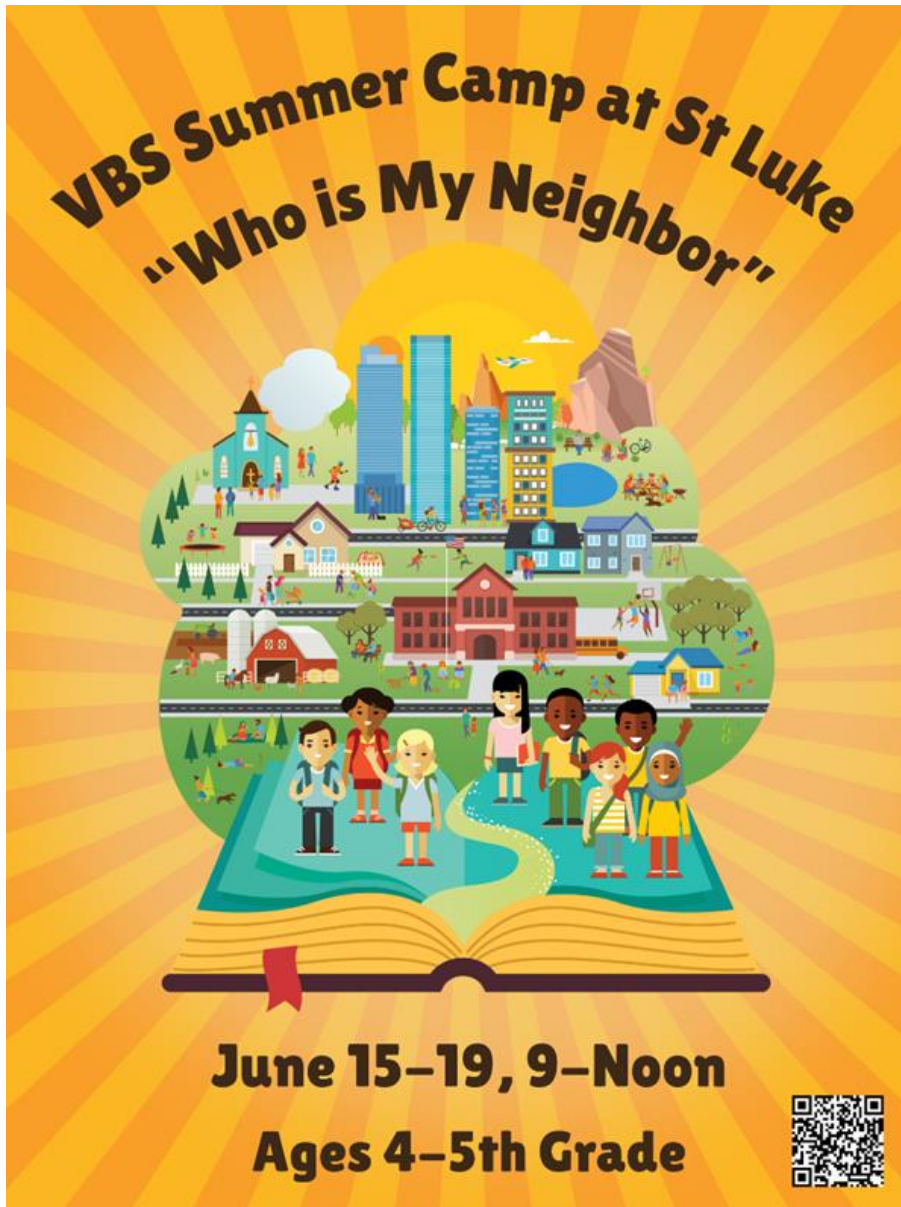
**CONTACT JULIA HERNANDEZ:**

Check out Kinderprep's socials!

[Website](#) | [Instagram](#)

Kinderprep  
ECE

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES



### SAVE THE DATE!

**VBS Summer Camp Mon-Fri June 15-19 9 a.m.—Noon**

Kids ages 4-4th grade, come to 5 days of fun at St. Luke! 5th Graders are welcome to opt for camp or as Jr. leaders-in-training. Our 2025 theme is "Who Is My Neighbor" centering around the story of the Good Samaritan. We will celebrate and learn what being good neighbors is all about! A few spots left! Sign up today! We will have special guests from our Portland community who are good neighbor role models pay visits throughout the week. Register: <https://www.stlukechurch.com/vbs.html>

This link also offers information on afternoon care.

Campers enjoy a daily rotation of science, games, community building, and learning, plus a healthy (and yummy) nut-free snack.

**Youth Leadership VBS Training (5th Grade – 12th Grade): 10 a.m.—Noon Saturday, June 13**

**Youth Leaders needed: Middle School and High School**

**Adults: Want to help with preparations before camp or with a station during camp?**

# MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRIES

*Immersing Middle Schoolers in the love of God...  
so that they can minister with hope & love in St. Luke and the wider world.*

**It's been a great year!** From meeting Jesus at the beach in Seaside, to exploring the Old Testament, to serving with Community Table, to assembling planter boxes, arranging care packs and costumes for hospitalized kids, to exploring photography and how God sees the world, to naming hermit crabs (George), to having three 8<sup>th</sup> graders affirm their baptisms, our students and their leaders have had a blast as we explored our faith and built community!

**Students at the Seaside tidal pools**



**MSM Retreat at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church**



**MSM Spring Retreat Dinner**



**Our last gathering of the program year is Sunday, June 7!** We gather in Lower Shalom for our end-of-year celebration. Partway through our time, rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders will join us, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will head to SLY.

**Confirmation Camp is June 28-July 2 at Camp Lutherwood, Oregon!** Join other St. Luke students (and friends) and Pr. Beth & other adult volunteers as we travel together for a week of camp with middle schoolers from across Oregon and beyond! St. Luke provides scholarships of \$250/student. Sign up at <https://www.lutherwoodoregon.org/camp#confirmation>, and let Pr. Beth know that you have done so!

**Much thanks to our teaching team:** Jonathan Maier, Donna Brocker, and Pr. Beth, with Dan Swan & Eli Burch stepping in as needed!

**Much thanks to Lisa Sickler,** our Christ Kin coordinator over the past years. She has facilitated wonderful connections between students and adult mentors in St. Luke. We hold her in gratitude as she steps down from this ministry in order to be more present with SLY, and we now seek a new coordinator, whose main job is to communicate with Christ Kin (adults) & Pr. Beth, and to be a warm, welcoming presence at our 3 middle school retreats.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

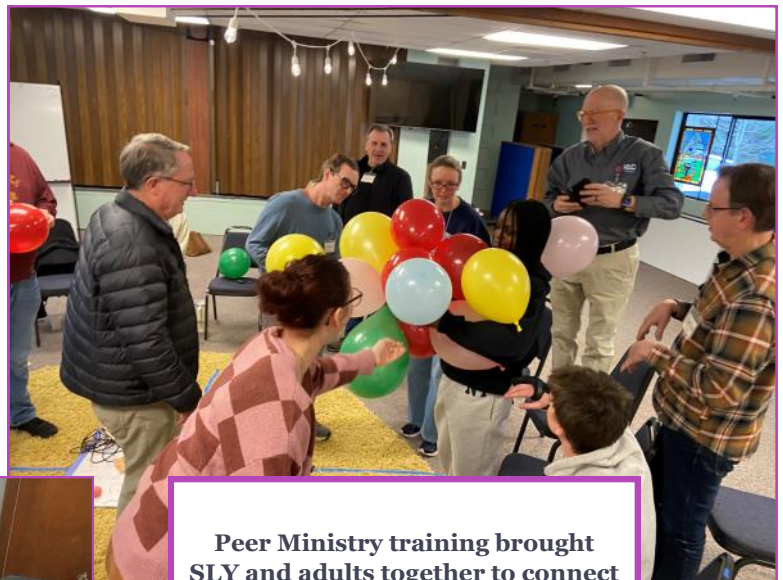
- Rally Day 2026: Sunday, September 13!
- First Day of MSM: Sunday, September 20
- MSM Fall Retreat: Saturday-Sunday, September 26-27

# SLY HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRIES

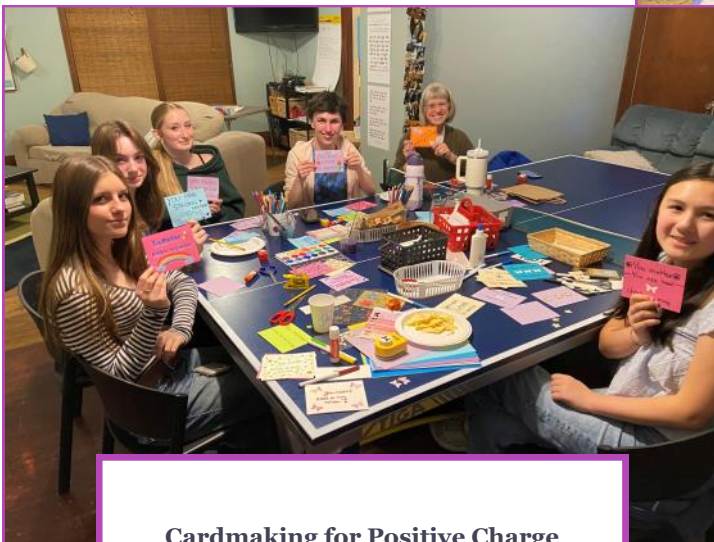
## *St. Luke Youth (SLY): Growing in Faith, Community, and Leadership*

A glimpse of some things SLY has been up to the last few months:

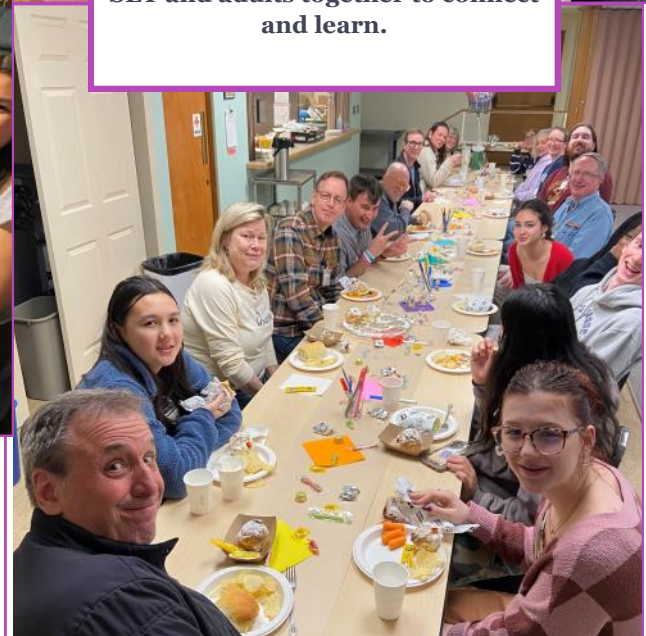
- Participated in a full day of Peer Ministry Training
- Served at Community Table multiple times
- Spent a Saturday night making and delivering sack lunches for women staying at Bethany's Room
- Took a Mystery Fieldtrip to do some thrifting and socializing over frozen yogurt
- Met at Driftwood for coffee and conversation between services on Palm Sunday
- Made uplifting cards for Positive Charge and played games on a Saturday night
- HS Seniors received blessings, quilts, and We Rise Together, a book of poems by Joe Davis
- Spent a Saturday night playing games, doing art, and making muffins from scratch for women staying at Bethany's Room
- Read and discussed scriptures that inspire teens, and all of us to live out our faith beyond the walls of the church



**Peer Ministry training brought SLY and adults together to connect and learn.**



**Cardmaking for Positive Charge**



## SLY HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRIES

*June 7 marks the official welcome of our rising 9th graders into SLY! They're encouraged to jump in and join us at any of the events below starting on May 30<sup>th</sup>. We are eager to start learning and serving with them!*

### Upcoming 2026 dates:

- Sat, May 30 SLY helps at Community Table 1-3:15pm
- Sun, May 31 Noon Parent & student meeting @ Vermont House
- Sun, June 7 Last Regular SLY of the school year - Welcome rising freshman!
- Sun, June 7 11:45 a.m. Alternate Parent & Student Meeting at Vermont House for those unable to attend on May 31
- Sat, June 13 VBS training for all volunteers
- June 15-19 SLY helps at VBS (plus afternoon program for teens)
- Sat, June 20: Marimbas Workshop Returns! 9-noon open to kids, teens, & adults
- Sun, June 21 Marimbas music ensemble during Sunday worship
- Tue, June 23 7-9pm First Weekly SLY Summer Tuesday @ Vermont House
- July 26-30 SLY goes to camp at Camp Lutherwood
- August 8 SLY helps with Grauer Back to School Distribution Day
- August 15 SLY All Day Rafting Trip
- August 22 SLY helps with Habitat for Humanity Build (must be 16+ yrs old)



**Psalm 149:4 (NIV) — “For the Lord takes DELIGHT in his people...”**

One Sunday morning in SLY, everyone selected a pair of sunglasses as a reminder to let the word “DELIGHT” shape the way we see others. The glasses symbolize our hope to remember that God delights in all people — and to practice seeing others through that same lens.

# SLY HIGH SCHOOL MINISTRIES

## PARENT & YOUTH\* MEETING

\*All rising 9th - 12th graders



MAY 31ST



LUNCH  
11:45 AM



MEETING  
12:00 PM

### WE'RE MEETING IN VERMONT HOUSE & TALKING ABOUT:

- Fundraising expectations
- October registration and deposit
- Plans for this summer
- SLY's new communication: GroupMe



### CAN'T ATTEND?

June 7th at 11:45 is the alternative date if your teen hopes to attend the Gathering but your family cannot make the meeting on the 31st.

St. Luke, you're going to start hearing about SLY going to Minneapolis in June 2027 for the ELCA Youth Gathering.

### So WHAT IS the Gathering?

Every three years, thousands of high schoolers and their adult leaders from across the ELCA come together for the ELCA Youth Gathering. **It's not just an event but a movement in which faith ignites and community comes alive.** Through inspiring speakers, experiential learning and transformative connections, young people experience the church in bold, unforgettable ways. Each night, participants share a unique faith experience through high-energy worship and powerful storytelling. The Gathering is an opportunity to ask big questions, grow in faith and be part of something bigger than yourself.

Is your rising 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grader ready to join the movement? The process, including fundraising, starts NOW – so be sure to have them connect with Jodi to be on the list.



## ADULT EDUCATION

**“Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God.” (Romans 12:2)**

Current membership on the Adult Education Team includes: Mark Brockner (Chair); Pastor Beth Brashear; Lori Geres; Elise Moentman; Jan Peterson; John Stull; and Scott Willis.

Highlights of the spring season were: a “Centering Prayer” class led by Scott Willis after Wednesday Lenten services; and a “Spiritual Gifts” held on two successive Saturday mornings (May 9 and 16). The Christ Care Group invited Theologian in Residence Mark Brockner to lead a gathering on “The Power of Forgiveness” on April 20.

Table Talks, led by Mark Brockner, continued this spring on a monthly basis. The March theme was “A Faithful Response to the War with Iran.” The April theme was “What Do We Actually Believe about the Resurrection?” The May theme was “Being Faithful and Patriotic.” Table Talks are not held during the summer, but they will resume in September. Table Talk topics are chosen early in the month in which they are held. People are encouraged to suggest topics.

A number of groups continue to meet on a regular basis: the Tuesday Men’s Bible Study, the Tuesday AM Women’s Bible Study, the Men’s Friday Morning Bible Study, the Parents’ Group, the Women’s Circles, the Good Words Book Group, and FAB (Fifty and Beyond). All these groups welcome new participants.

The Adult Education Team is currently working on a one-page mission statement entitled “Nurturing Thoughtful Followers of Jesus.” This statement will help focus our vision for adult education ministry at St. Luke. Being nurtured in our faith and equipped for ministry is a lifelong process. We encourage persons of all ages at St. Luke to be intentional participants in this educational process.

*Adult Education Committee Chair*

# ADULT EDUCATION

## SUMMER PROGRAMMING

### WELCA (Women of the ELCA)

*Looking back.....*

- In February we had a lovely luncheon for all Women of St Luke, followed by a bible study led by Pastor Patti. A wonderful time was had by all who attended.

- This year for the Easter Baskets that we traditionally have gathered for the West, was a bit different and a lot more fun! We provided the goodies and baskets for the mom's who are at West Women's & Children's Shelter to fill for their kids. This was a wonderful way involve everyone and for the mom's to be able to put something together for their children.



In April we hosted an event for members of the congregation to put together Personal Care Kits that were sent to Lutheran World Relief for distribution. You helped put together 50 kits! That was a fun time for all and we look forward to hosting other events similar to this one!

*Looking forward to....*

- Luncheon to be held on August 23 with Pastor Beth leading the bible study! Other details will be shared soon!
- Thankoffering will be in November and exciting plans are underway. More details surrounding this event will be forthcoming!

### Card Ministry

We have beautiful cards that John Gaudette donated to us. They are perfect for us to use for our card ministry, thank you!

### Men's Bible Study

**Tuesdays, 8 a.m., Zoom**

**Invite Link:** <https://georgefox.zoom.us/j/84791215956>

### Men's Breakfast Bible Study

**Fridays, 7:30-8:30 a.m.**

**Miller's Homestead Restaurant**

Join us to study the appointed Bible readings for the coming Sunday. BYOB (Bring your own Bible).

### Women's Chronological Bible Study Tuesdays, 8 a.m., Zoom

Every Tuesday at 8am – ZOOM (**we continue all through the summer!**). All are welcome! Ever wonder how things in the Bible fit together? We are "chronologically" reading the Bible, with the aid of different annotated Bibles and the combined wisdom and life experiences of the dozen or so women who attend by Zoom each week. We are now in the New Testament exploring the work of the apostles following Jesus's death and resurrection. We have great discussions every week! Join in and we will share the reading list! Contact Joan Snyder (VanderWeele) ([joanpsnyder@comcast.net](mailto:joanpsnyder@comcast.net)) or Margrethe Farnstrom ([gefarn@yahoo.com](mailto:gefarn@yahoo.com)) if you have any questions.

**Zoom Meeting: ID:** 501 766 676

**Passcode:** 378366 , or use the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/501766676?pwd=N1RKSTRTRUg6NDdzeEoGa2ZDeUpMQTOg>

### WELCA Gather Bible Studies

**Second week of each month** - Will meet in June and take a break in July and August.

The Gather Bible study groups meet during the second week of each month, offering various options to accommodate your schedule. Please feel free to attend the group that best fits your availability.

For more information, please contact Marilyn Hudson or Melody Drangstveit.

**On the second week of each month, we meet:**

**Sundays, 6:30-8 p.m.** in St. Luke's Conference Room

**Mondays, 9:30-11 a.m.** in the St. Luke Library

**Mondays, 1:30-3 p.m.** in various members' homes

### Parent Group

**Sundays, 10:30 a.m., Upper Shalom**

This is a great opportunity to sit still, enjoy coffee, share discussions, and build meaningful friendships.

For parents of littles to parents with kids in college to parents who are empty nesters. A Sunday morning ministry carefully built into our Sunday morning schedule, to give you options for worship.

# CHURCH UPDATES

## STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

The Stewardship Ministry team's current focus is our Spiritual Gifts class, Ministry Teams' Description booklet and planning for Fall Appeal.

### Spiritual Gifts Class

- Reviewed and updated course materials
- Held class May 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> from 9 to 12 p.m.
- 10 participants in May class
- Decided to offer classes two times per year
  - Late fall and early spring
  - Next date offering under review

### Ministry Team Descriptions

- Descriptions booklet published entitled "Spirit of Unity through Ministry"
  - Hard copies available in narthex
  - Hard copies handed out to new members and Spiritual Gift Class participants
  - Booklet available on St. Luke website
- Ministry Team Monthly highlight
  - One Ministry Team highlighted each month in the Weekly Press
  - Website link to Ministry Team booklet included
  - Permanent website location for booklet under review
- Descriptions booklet update will occur yearly in January/February

### Fall Appeal Planning

- Discussion on expanding approach of Fall Appeal for 2027 ministry
- Considering options to engage members and youth
- Initial plan drafted

Stewardship is about how our congregation can engage in God's work. Your Stewardship Ministry Team's continuing goal is to encourage engagement and growth of our St. Luke Beloved Community.

*Stewardship Ministry Chair*

# CHURCH UPDATES

## COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I asked Google AI how mainline Protestant churches are doing. Here is what it said:

“Mainline Protestant churches in the U.S. are experiencing a ... decline in membership and influence. ... While some individual congregations remain vibrant, nearly 75% face decline. ... To remain vibrant, churches are shifting from ‘maintenance mode’ to ‘mission mode,’ focusing on deep community engagement, authentic relationships, and leveraging their physical and digital presence in new ways.”



To that, I add two pieces of good news. First, several sources have reported that overall worship attendance, while still down significantly since 2000, has gone up in the past five years and is now slightly surpassing pre-COVID levels. Second, all indications are that St. Luke is one of the congregations that has remained relatively vibrant. You see it every Sunday when you show up to worship, or on a Saturday when you show up to help with Community Table, or when you attend a Wednesday fellowship supper, or when you watch our children engaged in God's Play sessions on Sunday. Our Stewardship Committee's ministry booklet lists *forty* committees and ministry teams active within the congregation. And we have been blessed with your very generous response to our LIFT campaign to improve our church facilities. We are definitely doing some things right.

And we want to do more. In April, we held a small “mini-retreat” focused on the financial health of St. Luke and how we should be stewarding the resources we have to continue to do God's work into the future. One overwhelming conclusion from our conversation was that we first need to envision what the future mission of St. Luke should look like.

Watch for events happening this fall to solicit input on what that future mission looks like to you and how St. Luke might carry it out. We will use that input to set ourselves on a path to continue to be a vibrant expression of God's love in our church community and in God's world. If you would like to help with that visioning work, talk to President-Elect Matt Schweitzer.

Yours in love,

*Council President*

## TRUST FUND COMMITTEE

The Benson Family Foundation Scholarship fund is administered by the Trust Fund Committee. Eight of nine students reapplied for these scholarships this year. One new student has been added so the total number of students receiving scholarships remains at nine. The Lutheran schools represented are California Lutheran, Pacific Lutheran, St. Olaf and Concordia-Irvine. A total of \$204,826 has been awarded for the 2026-2027 academic year.

The Trust Fund will have paid the \$500,000 matching grant to the LIFT campaign by the end of May. These funds have been directed towards the elevator final payment and for ongoing heating and cooling system work.

Several educational grants have been made. \$10,600 has been set aside for Emily Brabham's expenses to attend Luther Seminary. This includes costs for a course in church leadership taught in one of the fastest growing denominations, the ELC of Tanzania. Up to \$6,000 is offered to cover scholarships for Lutherwood campers.

\$20,000 is going to Social Concerns to help with costs of Community Table, The Grauer Back to School Project and for Refugee Assistance.

About \$10,000 is going to our new multigenerational outdoor area, OASIS, to pay for educational components of the play area. About \$15,000 is going to cover some non-operational building, education and additional Social Concern expenses as requested by Council and Financial committees.

We will be rebalancing investment funds to align with our historical investment policy. We hope to have a public forum later this year to refresh information about how legacy gifts can be made to St Luke.

*Trust Fund Committee Chair*



# LIFT Capital Campaign

*Leaping in Faith Together, Caring for Creation*



## SUMMER 2026 UPDATE

The 1st anniversary for the three-year LIFT campaign is June 1, 2026. Several important LIFT projects are now completed. As previously reported, our “Celebration Goal” of \$1.75 million in pledges was exceeded by a generous combination of promised gifts by members along with a matching gift received of \$500,000 from the Trust Fund. Again, thank you for your generosity in this campaign. Currently 68% of our pledged donations were given over eleven months of the LIFT campaign. This is great news as these combined funds are sufficient to complete our priority “Must Do” projects. We expect that continued giving over the next 2-3 years, will allow us to complete other important LIFT projects and initiatives.

### Hands and Hearts LIFT Celebration

On Sunday May 17, “Hands and Hearts” event celebrated the LIFT projects completed for the OASIS dedication and ribbon cutting, Church mortgage burning, and Elevator modernization. The fun celebration was well attended by 145 members of the congregation. Food, beverages and a special treat of an ice cream truck was provided along with children games, music, and fellowship.

### “Must-Do” Projects (Phase I)

The **Outdoor Activity Social Intergenerational Space (“OASIS”)** is completed and final touches are being made to install the slide over Memorial Weekend followed by the Art panels. Our hearts are warmed to see so many members contribute to creating this beautiful multi-generational space that all of us can use and enjoy. Thank you to Sue Skinner [skinner\\_sue@msn.com](mailto:skinner_sue@msn.com) and team for all the work on this project.

The **HVAC project** started in February and is on target for completion June 30, 2026, in time for summer. Then the church building will have a newly installed heating and cooling system to replace our existing heating system. Our existing heating system and gas-fired boiler are now decommissioned and no longer operating. The heat pumps were installed in April next to the lower parking lot and stair tower. The new HVAC system is split into 6 zones but has thermostat controls in each room. The system has a master control that can be operated remotely. Each zone can be independently set to heating or cooling but not both in a same zone. Once the system is fully operational there will be adjustments to the thermostat to fine tune the system temperature for heating and cooling. Thank you for your patient and understanding as the new HVAC system is brought online by each zone and tuned for comfort. Direct any questions on the HVAC system to Ryan Carpenter, Dan Gott or Dan Swan.

The **Elevator Modernization** was completed in March 2026. Our Dover elevator is now in compliance with Oregon code with the electrical software now replaced. Thanks to Dan Gott and property team for completing this project.

### Phase II

Any LIFT donations that exceed the funding requirement for the “must do” projects, will be used for the phase II projects. The **Vermont House mortgage** has a variable 3.7% interest rate growing to 5.9% in February 2027. The pay-down of the mortgage on the Vermont House is a high priority. So far \$196k has been paid on the Vermont mortgage leaving a balance of around \$60k. Once fully paid-off, this will provide the dual benefit of completing the high priority initiative in the congregation “Feasibility and Visioning study” fall of 2024 and lower the mortgage cost on the church’s annual budget by \$29k. The paid-off church mortgage already completed in phase II has freed up \$37k in funds for St Luke ministry in 2026.

The remaining two projects for Phase II are to install new windows and doors in selected locations throughout the church building and to pay off the Commercial Property mortgage. The Commercial Property mortgage has a variable interest rate of 3.7% growing to 5.9% in 2027, but is a legitimate business expense, which provides a tax benefit. The installation of new windows and doors in the church building will improve our energy efficiency. Both of these projects were rated as a high priority by the congregational in the “Feasibility and Visioning study” survey conducted in the Fall of 2024.

Funds will also be set aside for the LIFT campaign benevolence.



# LIFT Capital Campaign

*Leaping in Faith Together, Caring for Creation*



## SUMMER 2026 UPDATE (cont.)

### Phase III

Phase III projects depend on the amount of remaining LIFT funds available. This phase will start once phase II is completed.

For more detailed information on the LIFT projects and timelines, we encourage you to visit the LIFT section of the church website: [LIFT - St. Luke Lutheran Church - Portland, Oregon](#). Please direct any questions to Dan Swan, Jim Van Horn, or Rob Skinner.

For more detailed information on the LIFT projects and timelines, we encourage you to visit the LIFT section of the church website: [LIFT Webpage - St. Luke Lutheran Church](#).

***Thank you for your continued financial support!***

***Please direct any questions to Dan Swan, Jim Van Horn, or Rob Skinner.***



# CONNECT

## FAB (Fifty And Beyond)

The FAB (Fifty And Beyond) Planning Team welcomes any suggestions for day trips and coffee-hour activities. Our Planning Team meets the Second Wednesday of the month, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. in the Conference Room. Please contact one of the six team members with any ideas you might have for events, or better yet, to say you'll join our team! The current members are: Dale Vaughan, Dan Gott, Ellie Moe, Louise Nuss, Nancy Feldman, and Marsha Swantz.

### Looking Forward

On **Wednesday, June 24** at 10:30am, gather in the Fellowship Hall for a coffee hour and non-sales event Medicare educational event for both under age 65 and over age 65. This will include conversations about health, health benefits, and health insurance.

On a **Wednesday in July**, plans are being made with consideration for an outing or two to enjoy our Pacific NW summer weather, e.g. picnic at Council Crest, a visit to The Grotto in NE Portland (an internationally-renowned Catholic shrine and botanical garden), or a visit to the Sebright Gardens in Salem (nursery and gardens of Hostas, Ferns and unusual perennials). More information to follow in the upcoming Weekly Press online publications and Sunday bulletins.

### Looking Back

On **Wednesday, March 4th**, 30 of us gathered in the Fellowship Hall for a coffee hour and to celebrate St. Patty's Day early with Celtic Music. St. Luke member and accomplished musician, Geoff Frazier, will share Scottish and Irish music on bagpipes, Irish whistle and flute, as well as songs and stories. Geoff earned a National Certificate in Scottish Gaelic Language and Music from Benbecula College, Isle of Benbecula, Scotland, specializing in bagpipe and Gaelic song.

On **Wednesday, March 25th**, 24 of us gathered in the Fellowship Hall for a coffee hour and presentation by St. Luke member Jan Peterson's daughter Nancy Peterson and son-in-law Dave Ertel about their Alaska-to-Argentina bicycle trip from May 2017 to January 2019 - 20 months and 27,000 kilometers! Nancy and Dave shared their stories about bears, bandits, sleeping in abandoned buildings and the generous and warm people they met along the way.

On **Wednesday, April 22nd**, 15 of us visited Lan Su Chinese Garden in NW Portland. After our 60+ minute tour by a very knowledgeable and personable docent, We enjoyed lunch at the Chinese restaurant Xin Ding Dumplings. Despite the rainy weather, we all had a good time!

On **Wednesday, May 6th**, 11 of us attended NW Senior Theatre 2pm performance of "Mothers & Fathers & Kids...Oh, my!" (A family show about...families) at Rise Church in Tigard.

On **Wednesday in May 20th**, 12 of us visited the display gardens at Schreiner's Iris Gardens in Keizer during this family-owned farm's 101st bloom season. In addition to the display gardens, we visited the gift shop and cut flower show. Afterwards, we enjoyed lunch at Country Cottage Restaurant in Woodburn.

## Memory Café

### Second Thursdays from 2:30 – 4 p.m.

Memory Café is a ministry for persons with memory loss and their family/friend care partners to gather together on the 2nd Thursday of the month from 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Memory Café is open to the community, welcoming people of all faiths and no faith to gather together on a monthly basis to enjoy fellowship, refreshments and live singalong music.

Here are the dates for the next three months: June 11 and July 9. There is no Memory Café gathering in August due to Grauer Back-to-School event.

## CONNECT DATES

### FAB

**June 24**  
**July TBD**

### Memory Café

**June 11**  
**July 9**

### Cancer Support Group

**May 31st**



# CONNECT

## Good Words Book Group

The **Good Words Book Group** will meet June 21 at 9:15 a.m. in the Conference Room for fellowship and to discuss ***There Are Rivers in the Sky*** by Elif Shafak. We'll take a break during the summer and resume in September when our book will be ***The Correspondent*** by Virginia Evans. New members are always welcome!



Here's our book list since September—maybe you'll find one to read this summer:

- The House in the Cerulean Sea** by TJ Klune
- All the Beauty in the Word** by Patrick Bringley
- Horse** by Geraldine Brooks
- Rules of Civility** by Amor Towles
- Calico** by Lee Goldberg
- 1984** by George Orwell
- The Many Daughters of Afong Moy** by Jamie Ford
- The Covenant of Water** by Abraham Verghese

## Breast Cancer/Cancer Support Group

We meet monthly, as schedules permit, to share our questions, concerns. Usually anywhere from four to eight people join us. We talk freely about test results and fears about upcoming imaging appointments and support each other. We have discussed everything from pros and cons of various post-surgery medications, experiences with chemo and radiation and what to expect from various procedures, with those further along in the journey able to say what might be coming up.

So far, we haven't found a consistent meeting day, as we try to work around St. Luke special events and travel schedules of the participants. Our next meeting is in the St. Luke library **May 31<sup>st</sup>** after the last service.

All are welcome!

## Campus Video Tour

The Welcome Team has decided that since the Walking Tour is lengthy and prevents physically limited individuals from participating, we would like to have a video made which we would show twice a year at the church for anyone interested. The video could also be put on our website and have a QR code available for those who want it on their phone. We would need participants in the video to speak about the ministry in the buildings.

## Synod and the Wider Church

Synod is a Greek word meaning “on the way together.” Comparable to Roman Catholic diocese or a Methodist conference, our Oregon Synod consists of all of the progressive Lutheran congregations in Oregon. St. Luke is one of the leading congregations within our Oregon Synod.

Synod Assembly – St. Luke representatives gathered via Zoom on Saturday, May 31 for our annual assembly. We spent time in worship, then conducted business – the passage of two resolutions:

1. Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Justice through Accompaniment, Material Support, and Public Witness
  - a. This resolution calls on all congregations to support our immigrant siblings as we are able.
2. Resolution Requiring LGBTQIA+ Representation on Candidacy Committee
  - a. The Candidacy Committee is the team tasked with helping to prepare people to be pastors or deacons. It serves both as a support for the candidates as well as a discernment team, helping to determine whether or not a candidate should become a pastor or deacon.
  - b. A high percentage of our candidates seeking to become pastors or deacons are Queer, and this resolution calls for our committee to have at least one Queer person on it.

## Table Talks for 2026-2027

Gathered around the table in his home, Martin Luther talked freely and openly with his colleagues and students about matters of faith, theology, and varied aspects of daily life. In an effort to cultivate this kind of spirited discussion at St. Luke, our Theologian in Residence Mark Bocker hosts Table Talks on a monthly basis during the program year (September–May). Each monthly Table Talk is offered in person in the Conference Room on a Saturday morning from 11 a.m.—Noon and via Zoom on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening, 7-8p.m. Timely topics are chosen a month or two in advance. Participants are encouraged to propose theological, ethical, or political issues that they are eager to discuss with members of our St. Luke community of faith.

Table Talks will begin for the 2026–2027 program year in September. Look for information through the normal St. Luke communication channels.

## SERVE

### Community Table

The Community Table is helping to feed almost 200 households each month. We are welcoming our food insecure neighbors to come to St Luke and receive a week's worth of groceries. If you would like to lend a hand at the food pantry, there are lots of opportunities. We distribute food on the 2nd and last Saturday each month from 2-3pm. But we could always use extra hands for setting up for distribution, or unloading the trucks on Thursday morning, or packing bags and boxes on Fridays. Our Super Summer Cereal Drive is ongoing through Labor Day, as we try to give our guest households a little extra while the kids are out of school for summer, please bring a box of cereal to share and drop it in the bin in the Ministry Hall.

**Our summer distribution dates are:**

**June 13, 27**

**July 11, 25**

**August 15, 29**



### Grauer Back-to-School

Grauer has been setting kids up for success in school for over 20 years! This year's Grauer supply distribution is happening August 8th. We will be distributing coats, shoes, socks, t-shirts, underwear, and backpacks filled with school supplies to 400 students from low-income families. We would love to have donations of spiral notebooks (wide or college ruled) into our bin in the Ministry Hall and donations to pay for the items we are handing out. Our preparations are underway; there are lots of ways to join in and help. There is room on the planning team that meets at 5pm on the third Tuesday of the month. We will be starting set up after the 10:30 service on August 2nd, we will continue to setup August 3rd-7th each morning 9am to noon, and of course we need many hands on August 8th.



# SERVE

## Climate Justice Ministry

The spring term has been a busy and creative time for CJM. Our committee members have been working hard using our time and energy to address climate justice in the area's of advocacy, education, community action and eco-spirituality. Touching upon a few of these themes the CJM committed to designing an Earth Day liturgy for a combined St. Luke service on April 19th. With the support of our pastoral and music ministries, we explored the spiritual dimensions of lamentation, confession, and faith with regards to re-connecting with Mother Earth, our home.

Continuing our long standing collaboration with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, CJM expedited this year's EMO Earth Summit art project; a state wide creation of a "quilt of re-connection" with climate justice initiatives statewide. A few of our members participated in the Palm Sunday Protest sponsored by The Together Lab. It was a peaceful protest of Portland clergy and lay leaders in downtown Portland across from the courthouse where immigrants and asylum seekers have their deportation hearings.

Looking ahead, CJM is set to engage in a strategic planning session at the end of the May to discern our goals for the remainder of the year. CJM is looking forward to offering the St. Luke community climate justice initiatives that align with our faith values.

Here is a great podcast and local events to learn more about global and local environmental concerns:

- <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/bill-mckibben-on-what-the-climate-movement-needs-to-do-now/id1469270123?i=1000723004280>
- <https://worldforestry.org/event/forest-pub-june-2026/>
- <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/grassroots-to-the-grid->

## Habitat For Humanity

St. Luke is partnering with Habitat for Humanity Portland Region for their [Pope Leo Village campaign](#). This project was created by an anonymous donor who was inspired by Pope Leo XIV's teachings on justice, compassion, and service. It invites people of all faiths, identities, and generations to come together in support of affordable housing in their 18 city campaign.

"In that service to others we may find that coming together in friendship, building up community, we too can find true meaning in our lives." – Pope Leo XIV

We are seeking St Luke Volunteers to participate in a workday on August 22nd from 8:30am-4pm.

## Lay Visitation Ministry—New Leadership!

Lay Visitation Ministries is our congregation's way of staying in touch with homebound members. Our Lay Visitation Ministers (LVM) enjoy a nice visit with members, updating them on interesting things going on at church, making a friendly connection and bringing communion to those who miss that at our church services. Online church is wonderful, but is not the same as a human touch and the act of communing with a friend.

There is training on communion, but no one needs training on how to be a friend, a happy face and a connection to St Luke. We would love for you to join us in this endeavor! If you are interested in bringing the love of God, the community of St. Luke and just a friendly smile to someone who would really like a visit, please contact Fay Brown, our new coordinator, or Pastor Beth to get connected! It takes very little time, twice a month, to really make someone's day. As our Lay Ministers report, we often get more caring than we give. Lives are enriched in both for the minister and the receiver!

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Let me introduce myself, Fay Brown

3 years ago I joined St. Luke Lutheran Church.

Unfortunately my first 2 years I had several surgeries & illnesses. I was housebound & unable to join in worship.

I was so Blessed to have a husband & wife team appointed to be my visitors. They held the threads of worship &

Communion together for me; also updates on the life & activities of the church. They also were with me through a difficult time in my life. We became friends. They rejoiced with me when I was able to get out & become involved in the life of the church/ community.

Having experienced this ministry personally, I was humbled and excited when Pastor Beth asked me if I would be interested in joining the team as coordinator! You may ask, "why excited?" I had been praying asking God for direction in my life? How I could give back, having received healing, love & care from the LVM. Then being asked from Pastor Beth to consider this role. She too had been praying for someone to take over from Tammy. Answer to prayers. This is exciting.

On May 21st the team and I came together, with some I met for the first time.

I look forward to working alongside the present members & some new people joining.

Fay



# SERVE

## West Women and Children's Shelter

The shelter is a domestic violence shelter which St. Luke Lutheran Church has been involved with for decades. The clothing room there is called Anita's Closet, after our dearly missed Anita Brackensick who started it and staffed it until she had to step back for health reasons. Your faithfulness in donating clean, gently used clothing has kept it going, providing for women who often have to leave unsafe situations with very few belongings. Our women's circles have provided robes, slippers and pajamas for each client at Christmas as well as Easter baskets for the children. St. Luke Benevolence grants have also consistently supported the West.

Currently, Gerry Foote purchases food each week and delivers the donations from the bin in the Ministry area. Aside from clothing, needed items include toiletries, spices, cooking oils, breakfast bars, toilet paper, diapers and feminine hygiene products, to name a few. Donations for food can be made to the St. Luke West Women's Food Fund through the Social Concerns Committee.

## Mini Pantry: Going Strong!

At 5 years old, our bright and cheerful food pantry keeps our ministry of food for all alive. And, this pantry supports neighbors in need 24/7. We watch for past best use date food and tidy spills. You can help us by signing up for one Sunday or Wednesday shift or a consistent time slot. Or, bring paper sacks and non-perishable food to the pantry itself. Another place to leave items is on the ministry hall table. Sign Up [here](#).



## Housing Justice: Commitments & Initiatives

After a few months of volunteers individually gathering information and attending meetings, the SWITCH (SW Initiatives to Change Homelessness, formerly Pathways Home) group is meeting again. Next steps include selecting an initiative or two for rallying neighbors in SW Portland and planning a gathering to update neighbors. Watch our Weekly Press for additional information through the 2026 Summer months.

## IN THE NEWS

### Update from Annika Deazley with Young Adults in Global Mission

*We're happy to share an update from our own Young Adult in Global Mission, Annika Deazley.*

*We hold Annika in prayer as she ministers on our behalf, accompanying families and children in Uruguay!*

Annika's YAGM Year  
**Montevideo, Uruguay**  
April 2026

February and March have been about getting adjusted to new routines as the school year gets started and beginning to find community. Fall appeared overnight on Good Friday, and the wind and rain make for perfect reading (and newsletter writing) weather.

We began February with a program retreat in the province of Cordoba, in Argentina. It was a wonderful opportunity to slow down and reflect, as well as see a different part of the country. Some highlights of our time were long walks, mindful coloring and laughing together. Once I arrived back in Montevideo, I resumed my previous routines, as well as added some new ones.



I joined a running club! There are people from across the world, primarily Europeans and people from other Spanish-speaking countries, although I did meet someone from Oregon. We run 5 kilometers together on Saturdays then go to a cafe afterwards, and I've had the opportunity to chat with a variety of people. It's been a great place to make connections, and learn peoples' stories about how they ended up in Montevideo.

I've also been participating in other events to make connections and am having a lot of fun! I did a free salsa dancing class and met a bunch of study abroad students, as well as resurrected my 8th grade salsa skills. One evening I made empanadas with a friend that I met at a camp this summer, and we watched a thunder storm roll in across the city from her balcony. Another of my adventures was visiting one of the beautiful beach towns near Montevideo, called Carrasco, with a different friend and running the 9km back along the riverfront path.

In the CAIF it's been fun to spend time with the kids I worked with in September and October, as they're now in the next grade up. Some of them grew a ton over the summer, all of them acquired more language and social skills, and it's super exciting to see how they're developing. I've taken on more of a floater role, helping out where needed in various classrooms, and it's fun to see the variety between different rooms. The biggest difference is definitely the kids, and the group dynamics, but each teacher has their own approach, too. It's fun now that the majority of the kids are comfortable around me and will ask me for help or greet me when I arrive. One of the biggest wins recently was one of our more hyperactive two-year-olds sat down for nearly ten minutes during breakfast and ate multiple servings of the food that was served. It's so amazing to see the littles interacting with their environment in new ways and getting accustomed to routines.



On March 8th for International Women's Day, I attended a class at the Methodist church, where we read bell hooks and Sojourner Truth, did each others' hair in a style we wore as a little girl, and reflected on the impacts of being silenced in our lives. Following the class, we walked down one of the main boulevards alongside thousands of other people, many sporting the color purple. After we reached the end, I ate a choripan (Uruguayan hot dog) in the middle of the closed-down boulevard with a couple friends.

The highlight of March was my family visiting: my parents, younger brother, maternal grandparents and my boyfriend. On the left is a picture of all of them in front of my church. It was such a blessing to show them around Montevideo, as well as explore parts of Buenos Aires that were new to me. We got a chance to try grilling Uruguayan-style in the house we rented, as well as see some gorgeous sunsets, and overall spend lots of quality time together. Biking around Colonia del Sacramento with the guys, stopping to skip rocks and walk along the beach, then speeding back to avoid the incoming rainstorm is a memory that will forever make me smile.

Holy Week arrived as soon as my family left, and it was filled with activity. We had a very rainy Palm Sunday service, which definitely dampened our plans of

processing from outside of the church. From there I went to an ecumenical ecotheology retreat for a couple of nights, where we talked about our connection to the earth, as well as the community around us. On Maundy Thursday my church hosted a small Passover (Pesaj) dinner, complete with all the elements and an interactive liturgy. I attended Good Friday service at the Valdese church that's connected to the student home where I live. Then we made it to Easter! We had a church breakfast, followed by a lovely worship service. Recently, a couple of American study abroad students have begun attending my church, and so it's been lovely to chat with them in English. Our church community is growing slowly but surely, and each new face and singing voice fills the chapel with more joy.

I am looking forward to our program retreat next week, and then to making the most of the couple of short months that I have left here. I'm excited to experience fall in Montevideo and pull out my warmer clothes!

I live. Then we made it to Easter! We had a church breakfast, followed by a lovely worship service. Recently, a couple of American study abroad students have begun attending my church, and so it's been lovely to chat with them in English. Our church community is growing slowly but surely, and each new face and singing voice fills the chapel with more joy.

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Photos (clockwise starting top left corner): A lovely view of the grounds of the ecotheology retreat center. A candombe (Uruguayan folkloric music and dance style) performance in the Montevideo Old Town. My friend's backyard where we ate our afternoon snack in hammocks.

A canyon in Cordoba seen on a walk during our retreat. The beef and pork empanadas my friend and I ate during a rainstorm. The Passover dinner we shared on Maundy Thursday (I brought the apples with cinnamon). A full moon seen during a sunset run on the Rambla.

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