

THE EPISTLE

The Monthly Newsletter of St. Luke's United Methodist Church

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..."

Dear St. Luke's,
The Bible compares every Christian to a tree. It is a tree that is to bear fruit. We have been given two fruit-producing agents in our lives. One is Scripture. If we will read, study, and meditate on the word of God, the word of God will bring forth fruit in our lives.

The other fruit-producing agent is the Spirit. Galatians 5:22 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit. People today talk a lot about the gifts of the Spirit. They want to know what your particular spiritual gift might be.

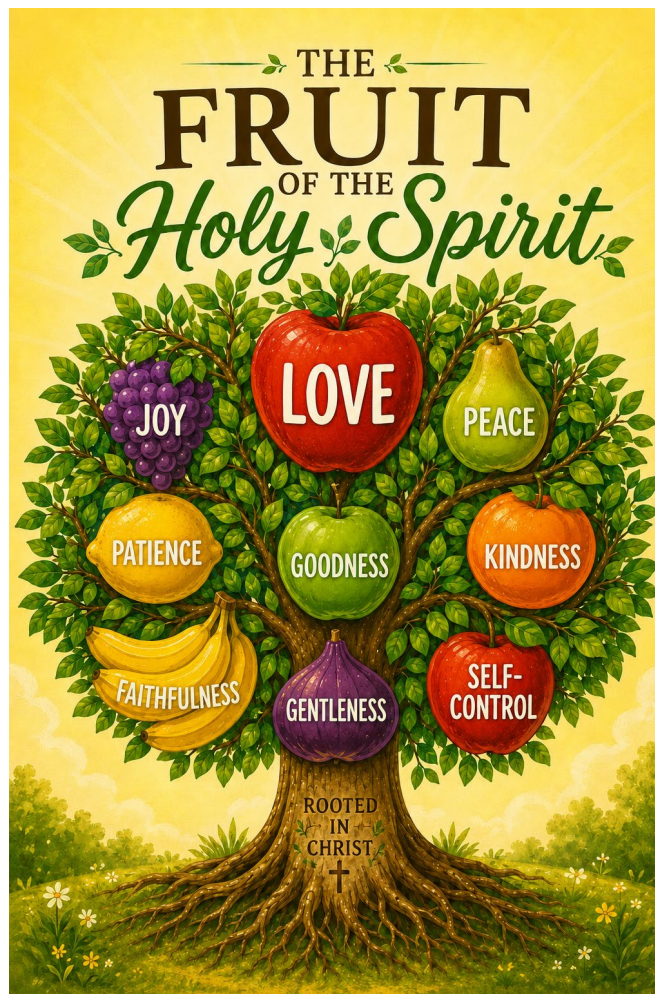
But there is not enough emphasis on the graces of the Spirit, which is the fruit of the Spirit. And we are not to produce just one kind of singular fruit – we are called to produce several kinds of fruit.

Every Christian is to bear the full fruit of the Spirit.

One other point is that the first character quality of the fruit is love. That is because all the other fruit flows from love, and without love none of the other fruit really matters. The first evidence that the Holy Spirit lives in you is love.

Beginning Sunday, June 21st and running through August, I will be preaching a sermon-series on The Fruit of the Spirit (9 qualities that grow in a person who is living in step with God's Spirit.) I hope

you will be in church to hear about these qualities which build life and community.
Faithfully,



Pastor Jim

Grief Care

Part 1: The Work of Grieving

The hymn titled Nearer My God to Thee has a most unusual line. It is, “Let sorrow do its work; come grief and pain, sweet are thy messengers, sweet their refrain.” These words may well fit in the category of generating reactions like, “What is that all about?” or a sharper one, “Now, that is strange!!!” with a rolling of the eyes.

After all, grief, synonymous with loss, is saturated with pain and suffering beyond compare. It is a season, hard and harsh, we never get used to living through on both sides of grieving. There is no sweet to it and I will triple Amen that.

In this time of bitter and profound separation, God is there to sustain us. One of my favorite combo scriptures is sharing, “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:18, and “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Great is the Lord and abundant in power, whose understanding is beyond measure.” Psalm 147:3, 5.

In this reading, as well as God seeing us through, there is the promise of healing the brokenhearted. The psalmist is declaring God prepares a path to take to feel whole again. This path to take is part of the miracle we are when God wondrously created us. That miracle was designing us to fall to pieces in seasons of grief and loss. Simply put, grieving is built into us to naturally happen when our world, as known, is slowly or suddenly rearranged by the death of a loved one. It is as natural as falling asleep when tired, eating when hungry, sneezing when your nose itches, or celebrating good news. Without the God-given innate ability to grieve, the abundant life God invites us to live can never be.

This is, I believe, the meaning of “Let sorrow do its work; come grief and pain, sweet are thy messengers, sweet their refrain.” The sweet is not sweet as in something enjoyable, but in the healing realm. Grief’s purpose enables the bereaved to identify, acknowledge, and integrate who they loved, but now without. It centers on finding a new place with the deceased and treasuring memories and maintaining connection. It is adapting to life without a loved one, but one who is always there.

To truly grieve is hard work. Initially, upon death’s strike, it has been my observation that the bereaved are honestly mourning as divinely designed and in their own way, and the comforting are mostly thoughtfully caring. Each party is letting sorrow do its work.

However, as experience tells me, after the initial punch and mostly thoughtful caregiving, the tendency in both camps is to flirt with rushing the grieving process by saying or implying, “It’s time to move on.” These decisions jeopardize the whole purpose of long-range grieving, so personal in nature, necessary for healing to occur. This would be like saying to someone after major surgery, “I expect you to be up and run in the marathon next week.”

Whether it is named suppressing or hiding God-given grief, the counsel is, “Don’t take away your own grief.” It would be a “stick up,” robbing yourself. And don’t let anyone take away your grief. It is a hold up, stealing from you. Grieving is not a burden to be hidden or suppressed as a weakness, but a space-giving testament to the heart’s depth of a loving relationship.

Grief has been described as a paradoxical experience. In other words, your best healing is when you feel the worst and get it out to a trusted, God-readied friend, but oh, how painful and hurt-filled.

Yes, God is with us, seeing us through our brokenhearted seasons, but as amazing was God designing this grieving pathway for healing. I call it healthy grieving. It is an illustration of “Great is the Lord and abundant in power, whose understanding is beyond measure.” Who else would’ve considered fitting us for our life ride with the ability to fully fall to pieces, enabling us to eventually be put back together, forever different, yet remaining in love? Quite amazing!

The next article in July will be Grief Care: Part 2. It is centered on, “Grief is the portion of some every day; help somebody today along life’s way.”

Take care,

Pastor Neenan

MAY 2026 HONORIUMS AND MEMORIALS:

Honoriums:

In Honor of Amy Pearson from Harry Colter, Doey Barrar, Janie Hendrix

Memorials:

In Memory of Betty Carter from Galen Colbert and Roland Bullock, Janet Bartelmay and Family

In Memory of Bette Colter from Melissa Ungberg



Flower Donors Needed for the month of July!

Please call the front desk for more information 901-452-6262



The youth group will be staying in Leslie County, KY, from June 27 to July 4. We can take monetary donations for gas and snack/drink donations. We can take prepackaged snacks like chips, Little Debbie's, granola bars, etc., as well as water bottles and Gatorade.

If anyone has any questions, my email is ceblount1@gmail.com.



The Fun Bunch Activities

Jeopardy will be meeting with our Fun Bunch on June 25th at 11:30 in the Lounge.

Bring your sack lunch and a small door prize if you have one.

We will provide drinks and dessert. We will be dividing into teams to face the challenge of Jeopardy Questions. Fun and a mind challenge!

Please sign up at the desk so we will know how many to plan for.

Jeanne and Jim Debo 413-3341

CONGRATS GRADUATES!

May 2026 • Celebrating a Beautiful Ending
Welcoming a Great Beginning



HIGH SCHOOL



Brady St. Gelais • St. Benedict at Auburndale High School

Ben Brown • University High School

Owyn Kaler • Rockvale High School

Jade Masters • St. George's Independent School

Lily Parks • University High School

Nathan Ryan • Penn Foster High School



COLLEGE



Sophia Carpenter • University of Memphis

BFA in Musical Theater

Bosava Divya Pallabothula • University of Memphis

BS in Data Science

Meredith Patterson • Arkansas State University

BSN in Nursing

Laura Nkonge • University of Memphis

BA in Architecture, Interior Architecture, Honors Cum Laude



ADVANCED DEGREE



Bright Oware • University of Memphis

Master of Health Care Administration

Contribution statements will be available by email this fall!!

Here are some things you need to know:

- 1) Contributors' accounts have been updated with email addresses; the next step is to verify that the email associated with your account is correct.
- 2) On June 10, an email from the membership office (membership@stlukesumc.org) will be sent to each contributor for verification of email.
- 3) **Please make sure your email account is set up to accept messages from membership@stlukesumc.org.** If you don't receive this email, check your spam/junk mail folders before calling the church office.
- 4) When responding to the verification email, include the following:
 - 1) Do you wish to receive your contribution statement by email, or continue picking statement up at church, or receiving it by regular mail?
 - 2) What email should be used for your contribution statement?
- 5) Next month, more information will be provided regarding Security and Precautions for Emailing Statements.
- 6) Target date for emailed contribution statements is October 2026 for the third quarter statements.

Anyone without access to email will continue to pick up their statement at church or have it sent via regular mail.

If you have any questions/concerns, don't hesitate to contact Mary Lou at marylou.cushing@stlukesumc.org.



A GREAT TIME WAS HAD IN ROME!

What an incredible week we had at Rome Vacation Bible School, as the children learned Paul's powerful lessons of God's amazing love for us all! Along with visiting with Paul who was under house arrest and being guarded by Brutus, the Roman guard, the children experienced worshipping in a cave, making crafts in the Roman Market, seeing an aqueduct work, playing Roman games, and praising God with fun songs during our celebration time, Extollo. The children donated enough money to purchase six fruit trees for the Carpenter Art Garden, which will be planted in the fall. All of us made new friends and enjoyed being with old friends too. All of us enjoyed this nice group of kind and caring children. Of course, none of this would be possible without our volunteers and staff, who created our version of Rome, coordinated needed supplies, prepared supplies to be used in the Roman market, registered children, cooked and served meals, ran our sound and video system, served as leaders of our Roman families, were shopkeepers, portrayed early Christians, and led our praise time, all with joy and love. Children's ministry is a team sport. We are so grateful to this year's Roman Holiday Night and VBS team which included over forty people who worked diligently to make VBS a success. Special thanks go Whitley Acree (Marketplace Coordinator) Dennis Neenan (Paul), Stone McKinney (Paul's Roman Guard, Brutus), Katie Shepherd (Extollo Leader & Lucia, an early Christian in the underground church), Olivia and Logan Hale (early Christians), and Blake Acree (Roman Games leader.) It was a joy to collaborate with each volunteer who helped in so many ways and in such varied jobs.

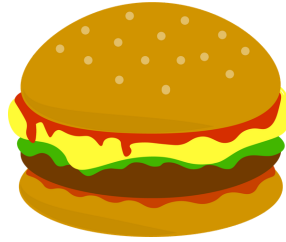
Thanks again to everyone!

Lynne McAlexander



COMING HOME

SUNDAY, JULY 12 AT 11:30



Join us for on July 12 for an after church cookout to celebrate the concept of “Home,” and to welcome home our ASP volunteers as they return from their trip to making homes warmer, safer, and drier through Appalachia Service Project. We’ll have hamburgers, hotdogs, lemonade and frozen treats for \$6 per person with a family maximum of \$25. Please make a reservation by Wednesday, July 8 at the front desk or by calling the church office at 452-6262.

Day School News

Summer Camp is in full swing! We started the Tuesday after Memorial Day and will go until July 17. Each week will have a fun theme like "Under the Sea," "Camping," "Party in the USA" and "Culinary Creation."

They will have so much fun!

I want to take this opportunity to say how grateful I am for my time at St. Luke's UMC Day School. It is truly a special place. The families and staff make it such a sweet school. I feel so blessed to complete my career in such a caring atmosphere. The school will continue to be a great blessing to many families!

- Amy Pearson

@REALLYGREATSITE

Challengers After School Program – End of the Year Reflection

As we close out another wonderful school year, we are filled with gratitude, joy, and pride for everything our children accomplished together through the Challengers After School Program. This year ended with laughter, fun, and many smiling faces as we celebrated the growth and success of our students.

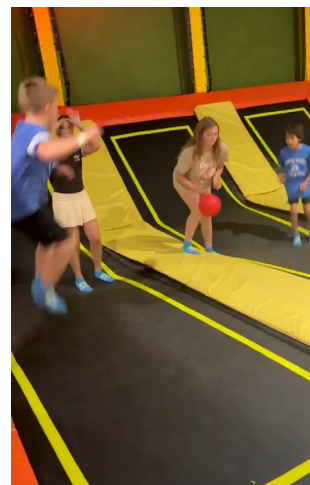
To make lasting memories together, our students enjoyed two exciting field trips this year. In December, we celebrated the holiday season with a fun-filled skating trip where students enjoyed music, fellowship, and lots of laughs. To end the school year on a high note, we traveled to Fun City in Cordova, where the children spent the day enjoying games, activities, and time together with friends and staff.

This year brought both victories and challenges. While we faced obstacles at the beginning of the year, we remained committed to creating a safe, supportive, and positive environment for every child. Through teamwork, patience, dedication, and the support of our parents and church family, we finished the year stronger than ever.

I would like to personally thank every parent, volunteer, staff member, and supporter who trusted and chose me to serve as Director of the Challengers After School Program. Your encouragement and partnership have meant so much throughout this journey.

Most importantly, thank you to our amazing children for bringing energy, joy, and heart into the program each day. Watching them learn, grow, and build friendships has been the greatest reward.

We are excited for what the future holds and look forward to another successful year ahead!





A heartfelt thank you to St. Luke's for making Sherwood Elementary School's Teacher and Staff Appreciation Week so special for them. It was also Luau Day so it made the pictures extra cute and festive. Thank you to all teachers and staff for choosing to serve children and help our kids grow and learn! Have a great summer vacation!



June 2026

May 2026	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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June 2026	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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July 2026	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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- St. Luke's UMC
- Holidays in United States

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00AM Community Breakfast 9:00AM Sunday School 10:30AM VBS Worship Service 3:00PM Handbell Practice 	<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 8:15AM Yoga Class 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 5:30PM VBS 6:30PM Boy Scouts Troop 40 	<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... VBS 1:00PM Pickleball 6:00PM Yoga 6:30PM Cub Scouts 7:00PM Coin Club Meeting 	<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 10:30AM Exercise Class ... VBS 12:00PM Practice Pickleball 6:00PM Stamp Club 6:30PM Choir Practice 	<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:00AM AI-Anon ... VBS 1:00PM Art-Gathering 1:00PM Pickleball 	<p>5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 	<p>6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30AM Yoga
<p>7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00AM Community Breakfast 9:00AM Sunday School 10:00AM Plano, TX UMC Choir 10:30AM Worship Service 11:30AM Pot Luck Lunch 3:00PM Handbell Practice 	<p>8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 8:15AM Yoga Class 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 6:30PM Boy Scouts Troop 40 	<p>9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:00PM Pickleball 6:00PM United Women of Faith 6:00PM Yoga 6:30PM Cub Scouts 	<p>10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 10:30AM Exercise Class 12:00PM Practice Pickleball 6:30PM Choir Practice 	<p>11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30AM Food Pantry 10:00AM AI-Anon 1:00PM Art-Gathering 1:00PM Pickleball 	<p>12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 	<p>13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30AM Yoga
<p>14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00AM Community Breakfast 9:00AM Sunday School 10:30AM Worship Service 11:30AM SPRC Meeting 3:00PM Handbell Practice 	<p>15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 8:15AM Yoga Class 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 6:30PM Boy Scouts Troop 40 	<p>16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:00PM Pickleball 6:00PM Trustee Meeting 6:00PM Yoga 6:30PM Cub Scouts 7:00PM Coin Club 	<p>17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 10:30AM Exercise Class 12:00PM Practice Pickleball 6:30PM Choir Practice 	<p>18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:00AM AI-Anon 1:00PM Art-Gathering 1:00PM Pickleball 5:30PM Communication Committee 	<p>19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 	<p>20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30AM Yoga
<p>21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00AM Community Breakfast 9:00AM Sunday School 10:30AM Worship Service 3:00PM Handbell Practice 	<p>22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 8:15AM Yoga Class 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 6:30PM Boy Scouts Troop 40 	<p>23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:00PM Pickleball 6:00PM Finance Meeting 6:00PM Yoga 6:30PM Cub Scouts 	<p>24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 10:30AM Exercise Class 12:00PM Practice Pickleball 6:30PM Choir Practice 	<p>25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30AM Food Pantry 10:00AM AI-Anon 1:00PM Art-Gathering 1:00PM Pickleball 	<p>26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 	<p>27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:00AM ASP 9:30AM Yoga
<p>28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... ASP 8:00AM Community Breakfast 9:00AM Sunday School 10:00AM Sweet Sunday 10:30AM Worship Service 3:00PM Handbell Practice 	<p>29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... ASP 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 8:15AM Yoga Class 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 6:30PM Boy Scouts Troop 40 	<p>30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... ASP 1:00PM Pickleball 6:00PM Yoga 6:30PM Cub Scouts 	<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... ASP 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 9:00AM Chair Aerobics 10:30AM Exercise Class 12:00PM Practice Pickleball 6:00PM Stamp Club 6:30PM Choir Practice 	<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... ASP 10:00AM AI-Anon 1:00PM Art-Gathering 1:00PM Pickleball 	<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... ASP 6:30AM Men's Basketball League 	<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... ASP 9:30AM Yoga