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# The Encourager



St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
"a church that encourages"

## March 2025

(Deadline for the upcoming Newsletter submissions is on March 25th)

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**The Mission of St. Luke's Lutheran Church is to  
Share God's Love Through  
Welcoming, Encouraging and Serving**

**Our Rule of Love**

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### CONGREGATION COUNCIL

President: Lisa Rhyne

Secretary: Tom Ainsworth

Treasurer: Phil Brooks

Members are encouraged to bring any questions,  
suggestions, or concerns to Council.

Click on the buttons below to view reports.

**Council Minutes February 2025**

**Interim Pastor Report February 2025**

**Admin. Support Team February 2025**

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Combined Budget January 2025 vs YTD

Combined January 2025 Income Statement by Month

Combined January 2025 Income Statement

St Lukes January 2025 Income Statement

Encouragement Center January 2025 Income Statement



In gratitude to God and in thankfulness for our shared ministry and mission across North Carolina, and throughout the world, our congregation intends to provide an investment of:

\$ 14,580 in 2025

which represents 4.5 % of our regular giving.

● This amount is an increase of \$ 1.5% over our share in 2024.

Congregation Name:

St. Lukes Lutheran Church

City:

Charlotte, NC

Primary Contact:

Ami Vucovich

Contact Email:

office@stlukeslca.org

Please return this statement of intent no later than Sunday, December 15, 2024 to Jenny Ramos by emailing to [jramos@nclutheran.org](mailto:jramos@nclutheran.org) or by mail at 1988 Lutheran Synod Drive, Salisbury, NC 28144. You can also fill out online. [nclutheran.org/missionsupport](http://nclutheran.org/missionsupport)



**North Carolina Synod**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



# CONGREGATION & WORSHIP LIFE

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Watch us on YouTube

## **Worship Notes Lent to Easter 2025 “About To Do A New Thing”**

**Overall Theme:** Lent literally means “spring”. Spring comes after what can seem like the long winter season. It is a season that focuses on new growth. Isaiah 43 speaks to the people of Israel with words of hope. The prophet is conveying to the people who had waited, that God’s new action was imminent. God was about to do a new thing. During this journey of lent, we are going to mine the scripture for God’s word of imminent hope and encouragement for this congregation. As God calls us out of the long winter, how do we receive the spring that God is sending. We will first remember that this new spring is still planted on the foundation of many generations. It will be nourished and grow out of the same soil. This new thing is also Spirit led. We are reminded that this new thing requires solid roots in order to stand firm. There are things that may test us beyond our strength, but God is the one who provides the way through and will bring about what God proposes. It is important to recognize that this new thing is a new creation. We are to look upon this new creation with new perspective. We do this by not focusing on our memory of former things, but instead, stay attuned to this new thing God is doing. “God is about to do a new thing. Do you perceive it?” This Lent as we enter into spring, let us get ready for the surprising new life God has set before us.

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### **TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD**

March 2nd at 10:00am  
(Sanctuary)

### **“Being Transformed Into The Same Image”**

Text: 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

(Exodus 34:29-35; Luke 9:28-43a)

CHILDREN'S CHURCH:

We are following a chronological, narrative book series called "The Story" by Max Lucado, Randy Frazee and Karen Hill.

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**ASH WEDNESDAY**

March 5th at 7:00pm  
(Sanctuary)

**"Foundations of Many Generations"**

Main Text: Isaiah 58:1-12  
(2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21)

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**FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT**

March 9th at 10:00AM  
(Sanctuary)

**"Led By The Spirit"**

Main Text: Luke 4:1-13  
(Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Romans 10:8b-13)

CHILDREN'S CHURCH:

We are following a chronological, narrative book series called "The Story" by Max Lucado, Randy Frazee and Karen Hill.

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**SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT**

March 16th at 10:00am  
(Sanctuary)

**"Come to Life"**

Main Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50  
(Genesis 43:3-11, 15; Luke 6:27-38)

with Noisy Offering: Dress for Success

CHILDREN'S CHURCH:

We are following a chronological, narrative book series called "The Story" by Max Lucado, Randy Frazee and Karen Hill.

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**THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**

March 23rd at 10:00am  
(Sanctuary)



## **“Beyond Your Strength”**

Main Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13  
(Isaiah 55:1-9; Luke 13:1-9)

### **CHILDREN'S CHURCH:**

We are following a chronological, narrative book series called “The Story” by Max Lucado, Randy Frazee and Karen Hill.

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## **FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT**

March 30th at 10:00am  
(Sanctuary)

## **“There Is A New Creation”**

Text: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21  
(Joshua 5:9-12; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32)

### **CHILDREN'S CHURCH:**

We are following a chronological, narrative book series called “The Story” by Max Lucado, Randy Frazee and Karen Hill.

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## **CHILDREN'S CHURCH**

During service, we are going to be following a chronological, narrative book series called “The Story” by Max Lucado, Randy Frazee and Karen Hill. This book tells the story of the Old and New Testaments.

We are excited to share new songs and puppet skits, along with the stories of the Bible, that lay a foundation of the love of our Heavenly Father and the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

There is an adult novel in this series that you can read if you wish to follow along with the children as well.



# ADULT SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY

The Contemporary Bible Class has begun a new series this week:

“101 Bible Stories for Grown Ups.”

We will look at children’s Bible stories and examine the Bible to get “the rest of the story.”

Please join us at 9:00 in the conference room.

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The Adult Bible Study, led by Joy Cooper, will no longer meet on Sundays.

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## NOISY OFFERING

In February we collected for:

Pastor's Discretionary Fund

**This month we will be collecting for:**



Pastor's Discretionary Fund

The Mission of Dress for Success is to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.

Dress for Success Charlotte, one of more than 144 affiliates in 20 countries, was founded in 2000 and currently works in partnership with 80 Referral Agency Partners. In 2021, more than 500 women were referred (800 pre-pandemic) for job preparedness, job acquisition, employment retention, financial education, and career advancement programs and services. 61% of clients are mothers and 68% are single head of household. 10% are parenting grandchildren and next of kin.

For 24 years, Dress for Success Charlotte has been a champion of women’s economic upward mobility. Our vision is that all women are economically self-sufficient, treated individually and with dignity and respect, and receive comparable pay to their male counterparts as they strengthen and shape their



families and our communities.

We are committed to making Charlotte a safer and better place to live by helping our clients secure employment as a means to achieve economic independence and strengthen their families. We are leveraging our experience, processes, and resources to continue to provide a wraparound approach through workforce development programming and support to enable solutions to generational and situational poverty.

The mission of Dress for Success is to help unemployed and underemployed women achieve economic independence by providing no-fee programs, development tools and professional attire to thrive in work and in life.

[Click to learn more about Charlotte Dress for Success](#)

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## FLOWER CHART IN THE NARTHEX

If you would like to beautify our church sanctuary, honor someone, or commemorate a special day, please add your name to the chart!

We are now using Starclaire House of Flowers. They can be contacted at 704-553-2435. Payment is by credit card or check in advance to the florist.

Remember to tell the florist the date you are giving.

Call Ami-Luise at the church office at 704-523-7981 or email [office@stlukeselca.org](mailto:office@stlukeselca.org) with the information you would like put in the bulletins by Wednesday morning of the week you are giving.

If you have any questions, call Pam Moser at 704-552-0996. Thanks!



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## MARCH BIRTHDAYS





4 Chloe Roberts  
6 Carrie Beckham  
8 Tiffany Miller  
9 Judith Whelan  
10 Alynene Keen  
11 Karen Smith  
11 Isabel Williams  
15 Linda Horne  
16 Joe Perez  
16 Ryan Roberts  
17 Tom Huber  
18 Steven Brauer  
18 Prissy Carpender  
19 Gray Howard  
20 Sean McCall  
21 Steven Paul Lorimer  
24 Cozette Nowak  
24 Betty Paysinger  
26 Amanda Howard  
27 Alexandra Jenkins

If we have missed your birthday, please reach out to the office.

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### **Katharina Circle**

Katharina Circle will be meeting March 4th at 7:00pm in the Parish Hall making Meals for Hospitality House.

### **Anna Vee Circle**

The Anna Vee Circle will be meeting on Tuesday, 4th at 12pm for the Cybersecurity Lunch and Learn in the Parish Hall.

### **Lutheran Men In Mission (LMIM)**

Please reach out to LMIM for updates.

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## LENTEN BIBLE STUDY WITH BISHOP TIM SMITH

Bishop Tim Smith will offer an online Bible study on the book of Revelation during Lent—specifically, the five Thursdays beginning March 13 and concluding on April 10—from 7 to 8 p.m. via Zoom. Don't miss this opportunity to study Revelation with other Lutherans across the synod!

Click on the button below to register.

[Register Here](#)



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## ST. LUKE'S HAPPENINGS!

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### ONLINE GIVING A GREAT WAY TO GIVE!

**Easy Online Giving Form on Website:** You can now give securely online either as a one time gift or recurring gift using the form on our website. This form is very easy to use and self explanatory. Donors can give to the general fund or designate a gift for a specific purpose such as flowers or other specific mission priorities. Simply click on the link below. ***You can give by ACH Transfers from your Bank or Credit Card on this platform.***

[SLLC ONLINE GIVING](#)

**Please Consider Option to Cover the Fee:** There is an option to cover the fee of the transaction so that 100% of the gift goes to mission. Simply mark the box indicating the fees and it will be added in. Either way, we are grateful



for your gift!

**If You Need Help We Are Here:** We commit to support you every step of the way and will be glad to walk you through it either on the phone or you can come to the office as well.

*You can reach us at the office by email at [office@stlukeaselca.org](mailto:office@stlukeaselca.org) or phone 704-523-7981.  
You can also contact Kathy West at [west@stlukeaselca.org](mailto:west@stlukeaselca.org).*

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## COPELAND'S CORNER

***And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before the Lord, but the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:5b-7)***

**God Does Not See The Way We See:** St. Luke's is entering the Call Process and beginning the search for not only the next pastor but also the person who will lead the new entity known as the Encouragement Center. It is essential that the process seek God's vision. Many have participated either as a candidate for a job or as the one in search. What makes this call process different than simply filling a position. We have seen what can happen when we view this process as simply hiring. The Committee and congregation may get what we think we want, but we end up without what we ultimately need. We need God's call to be discerned, not simply a position filled. How then do we discern God's vision and not our own?

**Looking From a Human Perspective:** Left to our own vision, we will search for what we want. Generally, what humans want is what they already know and are familiar with. They look from the outside based upon experience and opinion. They view criteria that is visible but never search below the surface. In terms of searching for a pastor, this often means falling back on the way it was done before. The past is always 2020. The future, however, requires inquiry into deeper things. Looking from a human perspective is easy but can often put us out of step with God's will and vision.

**Discerning Is Searching for God's Vision:** It takes longer and involves deeper inquiry. It depends on prayer and conversation with God and with others. It requires laying aside personal agenda and genuinely inquiring as to God's. Samuel waited to anoint the one until God made it clear that David was the one. David was not the obvious choice, but he was God's choice, and that is key.

**The Lord's Anointed Is Before The Lord:** The task of the Call Process is to find what God has already appointed. To do this, the Call Committee was carefully and prayerfully chosen. They have all agreed to serve. In preparation for this discernment, they will spend significant time in prayer together. Each will come with their own view, but together they will be able to see God's view.



The congregation and the leadership of the church needs to trust this team in their discernment and pray for them as well.

**Let us pray....**God of all wisdom and insight, you can see far more than we can perceive or even imagine. You have guided St. Luke's to this time and you have already provided the next leader. With open hearts and minds, we pray for the Call Committee. Help them to truly discern your will and direction. Bind them together and then lead them by your Spirit to choose as you would have them to do. Then Lord, open the eyes of the Council and Congregation, that they also may see through your eyes and receive your anointed future. In Jesus name we pray. Amen!!!!

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## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SUMMARY

Thank you to all who participated in the very full and fruitful congregational meeting. The conversation was full and the decisions were monumental. Below is a summary of what was accomplished:

- **Received Annual Reports**
- **Approved the Constitution and Bylaws through a 2<sup>nd</sup> Vote**
- **Elected Representatives to NC Synod Assembly**
- **Introduced the Call Committee**
- **Approved the Position Description Pastor/Director Encouragement Center**
- **Received Architectural Drawings for the Jan McCoy Welcome Center Project, approved the Scope and established the Funds for Gifts**
- **Approved the Memorandum of Use between the NFP Encouragement Center and the Congregation**
- **Requested to be Included in the ELCA Group Exception in order to establish the Not for Profit Encouragement Center.**
- **Approved the CPI Security Proposal, entering a lease for the equipment and putting the monitoring under the Encouragement Center**

With these decisions made, the congregation can now move forward toward the future God is laying out before us.

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## CALL COMMITTEE

**Call Committee Introductions:** After prayerful and careful consideration, the council made contacts to extend the call to serve on this important committee that will search for the next spiritual leader of the congregation and develop the new mission of the Encouragement Center. By God's grace we have six members who have agreed to serve. They are:

Each week during Lent, there will be a spotlight on one of these members. A picture, bio and short answers will be sent in an email.

**Organizational Meeting March 2nd:** The Call Committee will gather after worship to organize for the work of discernment before them. They will elect leadership that consists of:

- **Chair:** This leader will help to ensure the process is done well. They will work closely with the NC Synod Call Process Coordinator. The chair will call the meetings and facilitate the conversation.
- **Secretary:** The Secretary is responsible for all communication between the Call Committee members. The conversation is confidential and not recorded. Once the Call Committee chooses a primary candidate, the secretary makes sure all documents are filled out appropriately.
- **Chaplain:** As this is a discernment process to discover the will of God, being prayerful and spiritually centered is essential. The Chaplain will make sure God is central in the conversation.

**Group Building and Preparation:** The weeks leading up to installation of the Call Committee on Easter will be spent building relationship and unity as a team in preparation for the search. While this is taking place the Ministry Site Profile will be developed, engaged and ultimately approved.

**Ministry Site Profile:** Writing will begin on the Ministry Site Profile (The Resume of the Church). This will utilize what was gathered in the earlier transitional process work and that which is being presented at the Congregational Meeting. Once drafted it will be shared with the Synod and Congregation for feedback. A final draft will be presented to the council for approval. A team of 4 made up of Call Committee and Transition Team Members will shepherd this conversation through to presentation.

**Installation of Call Committee on Easter Sunday:** The Call Committee will be installed on Easter Sunday.

Much of what the training involves will be done by the time the committee is installed. The only other activity being discussed is having a mock interview prior to engaging candidate conversation.

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## VOTING MEMBERS NC SYNOD ASSEMBLY

**May 29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup>**  
**Koury Center, Greensboro**

The congregation elected two voting members to the NC Synod Assembly. They are:

- **Erin Alred Pushman**
- **Joel Moser**

We often speak of the Synod as them. Synod, however, means “walking together”. We are the synod. Sending voting members is our participation in the larger church in helping make key decisions. This year is a big one as to the importance of the decisions. In this assembly, the following are being considered:



- Election of a Bishop
- Election of Vice President
- Decisions that Guide the Work of the Synod

Please pray our Synod Assembly, our Voting Members and all gathered for these important decisions. As we have prayed for discernment with regard to call, we pray the same for the larger church.

**Pray Also For ELCA National Church Assembly This Summer:**As we are electing a Bishop for the NC Synod Assembly, we also will be electing a new Bishop for the ELCA. Please pray for this gathering and all getting ready to engage all that will be considered.

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## CONVERSION PEWS TO CHAIRS INVITATION TO CONVERSATION

All of the movements we are exploring, including renovations to the sanctuary entry and seating are not for our past needs or even our present. The changes being explored are in anticipation and hope of future church. We are getting it ready for the next generation of St. Luke's to live, worship and grow in faith and community. To that end, there have been two key factors that have been central to the plans being developed. **Those key factors are Accessibility and Flexibility.**

Pews have been an important part of worship for generations before. Pews, however, are bolted to the floor and are immovable fixtures. As accessibility and flexibility are key factors, a conversation has begun regarding the wisdom of converting our sanctuary from pews to chairs. Here is the rationale:

- **Pews already Removed in Front Space:** The purpose was to create flexibility. In our current setting, however, it has put distance between the people and the worship leadership. Moving the congregation closer will bring a closer sense of community that is very important in this time.
- **Pew Cushions Need Replacing:** No matter what, the pew cushions need being replaced. Before we put money into that, it is good to consider the alternatives of chairs.
- **Flooring Will Need Replacement:** The Current flooring will need to be replaced when the space is moved forward. Chairs do not need to be bolted to the new flooring, where pews would.
- **Flexibility of Space:** The area that would become the Welcome Center could be easily opened up to expand space for large events. The area can be easily expanded or tightened up with chairs rather than pews.

This is only initial conversation but the team working with the Architect would love your feedback, questions and suggestions.

Please contact the Church Office and Ami will share this with the team.

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# LUNCH AND LEARN CYBERSECURITY

March 4, 2025 at 12pm - 1pm in Parish Hall

Lunch and Learn for members of St. Luke's to focus on cybersecurity and the current threats to personal banking and financial exposures.

Tom Tran with T2 Technologies has very kindly offered to speak at our lunch. He works with both larger employers (like Myers Park Baptist) and individuals to monitor their computer systems, keep them up to date on current threats and guide them thru any potential incursions. He's very up to date on recent threats and techniques.

Casual lecture with plenty of time for questions.

**Sunday will be last chance to sign up!**

[Sign Up Here\]](#)



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## ST. LUKE'S WOMEN'S CIRCLES

No description of our church would be complete without including the activities and service projects of our women's circles. We have two circles presently active at St. Luke's: the Katharina Circle and the Anna Vee Circle. Both meet on the first Tuesday of the month. The Anna Vee Circle meets at noon at the church, and the Katharina Circle meets in the evenings at members' homes. Both groups provide encouragement and support for their members, as well as service to our church and community. For example, these two groups make up the Bereavement Committees that provide receptions for all of the funerals at St. Luke's for our members. We also are sometimes requested to serve refreshments at special events, workshops, etc. Each circle plans its own activities and ways that we can achieve St. Luke's mission to share God's love. Here's a description of each group's projects for the year 2024.

## KATHARINA CIRCLE

Our Circle strives to do a service project every month, in addition to sharing the prayers and praises of our members in order to support each other. We began the year by acting as the Host Team for Room in the Inn and cooking and serving a delicious dinner and breakfast to our homeless neighbors. Later, at the end of the season, our members washed all of the blankets and pillow covers used this year for the RITI program. We sent Valentine's cards to our shut-in members, cooked a total of 45 meals for the Hospitality House (2 meetings), hosted St. Luke's potluck breakfast on Easter Sunday, and had two meetings to design and make jewelry to donate to the Assistance League Thrift Shop to provide funds for their outreach. We cleaned the greenway near Sharon Road West, made plans for St. Luke's annual Fall Women's Retreat at LutherRock (cancelled because of Helene), and donated \$250 to Lutheran Disaster Relief. In the fall, we donated school supplies to Classroom Central, made bookmarks for Promising Pages (a group donating books to children to encourage literacy), created 42 fall baskets for senior citizens in Elder Orphan Care, Concord, and donated \$100 to LutherRock for their recovery efforts. In the Christmas season we put up the St. Luke's Minis-tree to collect monetary gifts for 3 of our ministries (RITI, Pastor's Discretionary Fund, and Mission Possible (prison ministry). Thanks to the wonderful support of the congregation, we raised \$630 for these ministries. We donated 36 books, plus sleeping bags, and socks to the YWCA Youth Program for their Winter celebration and helped facilitate the Christmas Pageant program at Circle of Friends (an organization for disabled adults) to remind us of the true meaning of Christmas. In addition to these service projects, we also took a spring beach trip, a family pool party, two dinners out together, and a Christmas Party. A combination of work and play makes us a close and happy group! Now we're planning for another active year in 2025.

## ANNA VEE CIRCLE

The ladies of the Anna Vee Circle (mostly retired, empty nesters) enjoy getting together for lunch in the church conference room at noon on the first Tuesday each month from September through May. Our December meeting was a Christmas celebration at Trio's restaurant.

Besides the encouragement and support we give each other our meetings include a devotion/Bible Study for spiritual growth.

We support our church and community in various ways.

An offering is collected each month and passed on to different charities. In 2024, we collected \$1,751.00. \$1,000 was sent to Nourish Up (formerly Loaves & Fishes); \$800 went to Lutheran Disaster Relief. And ten percent of our annual contributions goes to the NC Synod. We donated 6 Stanley water bottles to the collection that St. Luke's gave to Grace Lutheran in Boone after the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene.

Each month the ladies collect specific items which are donated to a ministry (e.g. canned goods for Nourish Up; socks, paper goods, toiletries for a group home or RITI, etc.)

And each month that we meet we send personalized greeting/birthday/holiday cards to our homebound members and those on our prayer list.

In December we organized, prepared, and served a spaghetti dinner to our Room in the Inn guests and volunteers. We also furnished breakfast and a bag lunch for our guests.



The circle is always thrilled to welcome new members! Please contact Marilyn Schuster at (704) 516-4526 or Rebekah Woodward at (704) 614-8254 for more information.

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## **ROOM IN THE INN CELEBRATES VALENTINE'S DAY**

Our February 16th meeting of RITI emphasized love with a Valentine's Day theme. We had lovely heart table decorations, and our guests enjoyed beautiful Valentine's cards and bags of treats decorated by our children in Children's Church. Our neighbors loved and appreciated it!

After church we set up the beds and tables, thanks to invaluable help from the Murray family, Marilyn Schuster, the Brooks family, Paul and Michelle Sullivan, and Joel Moser. Heather Micci drove the van that evening to pick up our guests and took them back to Roof Above on Monday morning.

That evening our 8 guests arrived (2 families with 2 mothers and 3 teenage sons and 3 single women) and were greeted Julie Bartlett and Cindy McKee, who made sure they had supplies to get settled in. Our guests enjoyed a delicious soup made by Cindy McKee and were offered warm beverages to relax before dinner.

We were honored to have members of Unity Church (meeting in our chapel) to serve as host team to provide dinner and breakfast items for the next day. They cooked, served, and cleaned up after a delicious meal that was a potato bar with all the fixings, including broccoli, mushrooms, ham, a pot of chili, salad, rolls, and cupcakes for dessert. They were assisted by St. Luke's Ryan McCall and Sofia Merritt. We are so thankful that Unity has chosen to partner with us in this important mission.

After the meal our guests had showers, assisted by Julie Bartlett and Phil Brooks, and settled in for the evening. Our overnight hosts were Vanessa Infanzon and Tracy Moore. They handled the evening needs until "lights out." The next morning they had a busy schedule getting our guests up, storing the cots and tv, stripping the cots, providing breakfast, and escorting our guests to the van. On their way out they were given lunches provided by Fancita Lorimer. After our guests left, Vanessa and Tracy returned all the drink equipment to storage, locked all cabinets and closets, and took the laundry upstairs for pick up. It's a big job, and we appreciate their dedication.

It was another successful RITI event, and we are so grateful to the large group of people who work to make it possible. It is a wonderful way to welcome and share God's love and has such a positive impact on the lives of the people we serve. Our last RITI for the season will be March 23rd. Please put it on your calendar. There will be no host team providing food items and serving. It is open to all members of St. Luke's and Unity to volunteer. Please support our last day of service.

In addition we would like to thank all members of St. Luke's who generously donated clothing items and supplies for our inventory. A special thanks to the Anna Vee Circle for using us as one of their monthly projects. We presently have no more needs. Thank you St. Luke's for your giving hearts and for your support of Room in the Inn.

Phil & Diana Brooks

**Our last hosting will be March 23.**



## SUBMITTED BY TOM AINSWORTH

I may be alienating some people when I write that the mindless carnage in Washington of government agencies by the firing of their employees by this present Administration, and the access to private citizen information by an unelected, uncaring and thoughtless billionaire and his teenage hacking entourage getting access to those government records by the unmonitored scrutiny of their databases, makes me actually despair of decent humanity. Yet aside from the political decimation of our Constitutional rights as I see it, I have indeed found surprising evidence of decent humanity in my life. As many of you know, I have been on crutches for the last several months awaiting the scheduling of right hip replacement surgery which I need badly. I went through the same process four years ago with the left hip with wonderful results after the procedure. Now the right hip has decided that IT wants the same treatment (typical joint jealousy)! Just walking on crutches is hard enough, but obstacles like doors, stairs and crowds make it truly exasperating sometimes. But I have been amazed at the number of times recently that random strangers have kindly opened doors for me, helped me up stairs and opened paths for me in crowded places. They ask me if they can help get my grocery bags to my car after trips to the supermarket; they offered in my apartment elevator to carry my bundles to my door for me; they have offered to help me on with my jacket; and have assisted in getting packages to my car from my office. I have even been kindly offered meals to help me after my operation when it actually happens. At those times when I really don't need their help they offer it anyway, and I feel badly that I didn't let them help me somehow! Their patience is also overwhelming because several kind people have held a door open for me at the top of some stairs when I haven't even scaled them yet, which process can take minutes. Their unsolicited kindness by their willingness to help out a stranger they deem "in distress" is truly inspiring. These actions genuinely validate my idea that most people are essentially, and sincerely, good in character (like dogs, only with opposable thumbs). Their basic nature is to try and help to assist others they have never met when they believe that their help is needed. I think that this is a basic human instinct which is ingrained in us all and hard to suppress. You need look no further than considering the enormous number of people from outside the area who are helping the citizens of western North Carolina recover from the destruction of Hurricane Helene, or the countless strangers volunteering to aid the victims of the Los Angeles wildfires. The kindness shown to me on a much smaller scale reinforces that belief. Some people may have apparently lost that instinct but the vast majority who haven't give me optimism for the general decency of humanity. Individuals who don't exhibit these empathetic traits should justly be scorned in my opinion, or at least avoided. I love the sweatshirt which Linus has worn in the Peanuts™ comic strip which says "I love humanity; it's people I can't stand!" That validly sums up at least to me the idea that the vast majority of us still have common decency and will help others to the best of our ability even when the events we encounter in the news seem to imply otherwise.

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**TOM FRICK'S 90th BIRTHDAY BBQ**

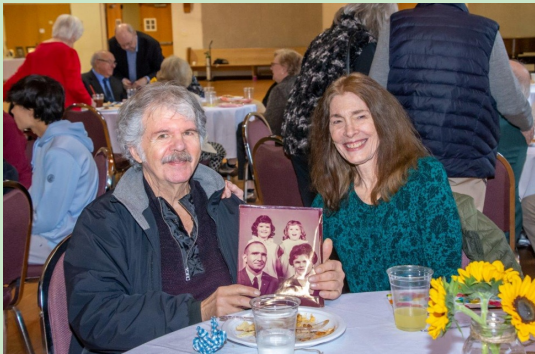




















## FROM BEHIND THE LENS OF "MR.TERRY" CHEVILLE





























# OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

## LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

### CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Your gift to Lutheran World Relief can deliver urgently needed support and care to neighbors affected by wildfires.

[lwr.org/fires](https://lwr.org/fires)

Thank you for sharing God's love with your neighbors when and where they need it most.



Lutheran Disaster Response shares God's hope, healing and renewal with people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world.

When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need

Lutheran Disaster Response



## NOURISH UP

# OUR PRIORITY NEEDS

Please no glass containers.



**nourish up**

Lifting our community  
through food.

formerly Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays



**canned meat**

tuna, chicken, salmon



**canned fruit**

no sugar added or in juice



**canned vegetables**

no salt added or low sodium



**pasta**

canned or dry boxed



**whole grain cereal**



**beans**

canned or dry



**peanut butter**



**rice**



**diapers and wipes**

Visit [nourishup.org](https://nourishup.org) for more information about how you can get involved.

## LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF COFFEE

Lutheran World Relief Farmers Market now offers chocolate in addition to coffee!

Mountain Harvest works with roughly 850 farmers in eight communities on Mount Elgon, Uganda with each farm growing between 600 and 1,000 coffee trees. We pay farmers up to 30% above local market prices allowing them to better provide for their families, invest in their crops and land, and ultimately, drive the local economy to benefit their community.

Latitude Craft Chocolate signs long term contracts with their suppliers to grow organic cocoa, promote biodiversity and ensure fair labor practices on all the



farms. Over half of their contracted farmers are women. Latitude pays on average 50% higher than prices in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, the world's leading cocoa producing countries.



LWR Farmer's Market Coffee

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## FAMILIES IN CRISIS NEED YOUR HELP

Your love will reach your neighbors who feel so alone as they continue to fight for their lives.

You'll provide frightened, cold and hungry children, mothers and seniors with:

- Shelter from the deadly cold with beds, pillows and heaters.
- Warm meals and clean water.
- Mobile medical clinics that provide health care, critically needed medical supplies and mental health support for PTSD and trauma.
- Essential supplies, like soap and toilet paper.
- Comforting quilts made by members of our caring Lutheran family.
- Love, support — and most importantly — hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Click on the button below and connect to the website enabling you to contribute directly and your offering will flow swiftly to where it needs to go.

Lutheran World Relief





St. Luke's Lutheran Church | 3200 Park Road | Charlotte, NC 28209 US

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