

St. Luke's

St. Luke's Episcopal Church ~ East Greenwich, Rhode Island



MONTHLY

From Father Tim

People who wait have received a promise that allows them to wait. They have received something that is at work in them, like a seed that has started to grow. We can only really wait if what we are waiting for has already begun for us. Henri Nouwen, *Finding My Way Home*

Every day now I am on lookout. I race home wide-eyed, expectant, and hopeful. The wheels were set in motion long ago. The promised time of arrival was unclear, but the arrival itself is no longer in question.

I have only two concerns: one, would I miss it, even if it were there for all the world to see. Two, would Diane spy it first, thus spoiling the surprise.

Of course, I am talking about a present I have purchased for my wife. (I can't say more because she swears she really reads my letters!) But, after reading the above words written by the late priest, psychologist, and author, Henri Nouwen, I am struck by the similarities between waiting for the arrival of my purchase and our Advent waiting for the fulfillment of God's Kingdom.

In both cases our expectations have been raised by descriptions and testimonials. In both cases we have glimpsed what we one day will realize more fully. And in both cases there is the promise of delivery upon which we wait.

But, in reality, there are differences too. In the case of our purchases, we know exactly what we are looking for. And, helpfully, we usually have in mind a projected delivery date. We are not so fortunate when it comes to this Advent waiting, are we?

What will the fulfillment of God's Kingdom look like? What does the "end of time" mean? When is it that Jesus will come again? Oh, if only God had given us a tracking number which would help us better monitor all this business!

I was talking not long ago with a colleague and friend of mine about the Kingdom of God and he noted that there has been a drift, of sorts, over the centuries—that the concept of God’s Kingdom has shifted from something here and now to something more distant, more ethereal, more abstract. These days we imagine God’s Kingdom as to be that life after this life, as to be an experience wholly different from the “earthly realm.” The result, it seems, is that we bide our time.

We might honor the Kingdom’s ways, but only sporadically, partially, waiting upon some celestial event “out there” to transport us “up there.” I don’t know about you, but for me, I think too often my Advent waiting (not to mention my movements throughout the rest of the year) resembles this passive, externalized approach.

But Nouwen reminds us, we are waiting for something that is already at work in us, *“like a seed that has started to grow.”*

So, while I will continue to race home over the span of these next several weeks, looking for that package delivered somewhere outside my house, I think I also will spend my Advent waiting, looking within. For, although I don’t know when Jesus is coming again, and although I don’t know what “the end of time” will look like, I can be certain that there is a spark of Jesus in me (as in you). I can be certain that God’s Kingdom is dawning even now. And I can be certain that I spend my Advent waiting, not passively but actively bearing Christ’s light and love into the dark corners of our world.

I don’t know if this will make my Advent waiting any shorter. But I sure do know it will make it holier.

Advent blessings,

Jim

Anecdotes From The Assistant: A Word From Father Dante

They say time flies when you're having fun. I guess it is true, because time sure seems to be flying here at St. Luke's. I am writing this letter the Saturday after Thanksgiving having just set up our Advent resources display in the atrium. No matter how many times I check my calendar, it is hard for me to believe that December begins one week from today, and the season of Advent begins a week from Sunday (December 2).

Advent is my favorite season in the Church year (through I think say that at the start of nearly every liturgical season). As the secular Christmas season begins earlier and earlier, I find myself growing in appreciation for the liturgical season of Advent. I need the invitation to slow down, to stop, and reflect amidst the hectic world around me. I find my Advent reading and prayer to be the perfect respite from planning holiday meals, travel plans, family traditions, and everything else that emerges when December arrives. As wonderful as those things are, sometimes I just need to call time out.

This year as we prepare to enter into the season of Advent, I find myself particularly grateful for the Advent proper preface. The proper preface is a short paragraph at the beginning of the Eucharistic prayer. It highlights seasonal and theological themes appropriate for the Sunday. Here's the Advent proper preface:

Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing (BCP p. 378).

So you might be thinking – umm . . . that does not seem very Adventy. Where is the light, hope, and joy?! But it seems to me, this prayer is exactly why we celebrate and prepare this season.

The readings and prayers for Advent are actually pretty intense. They pick of themes of the second coming of the Messiah, repentance, sin. They even pick up the old school themes of Advent based on the four last thing: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. Even with those old school – Four Last Things – themes, I think there is still much to celebrate in this. After all, these themes are picked up in our collects for the four Sundays of Advent. Here are some of the things we will lift up

us in prayer: “give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead,” “who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins,” “O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us,” and “purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself” (BCP p. 211-212).

The manger scenes we have all come to know and love at Christmas, the gentle baby, the animals, the stars in the sky are beautiful and have captured the imaginations of many through the centuries. But those meek and mild things will have a radial impact on the world and humanity. What we prepare for in this season of Advent is for the preconceived notions of the world to be shattered by the birth of the Messiah.

These themes get heavy, and they get heavy quickly. When we get into language of sin, judgment, and repentance it can become all too easy to start to feel overwhelmed. It can become all too easy to begin to feel helpless and hopeless. It can become all too easy to start to wonder if we are beyond forgiveness, if our sins are just too much. If you are anything like me, you know what this feels like. This is where I find the proper preface for Advent so helpful and hopeful. Read those words again, “Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great triumph to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.” The most important line in that for me is the last one – “we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.” Without shame our fear. The gift and joy of Advent is the recognition that there is absolutely nothing we can ever do to separate us from the love of God. There is nothing we can do that is beyond the redemptive power of God. There is nothing that the birth of the Messiah cannot overcome.

The incarnation happens, the birth of God into the world in the person of Jesus happens, so that we might believe that we are beloved of God, let go of whatever shame or fear we have, and fully rejoice and behold the appearance of God into our world. For me, there is no better reason to rejoice than that.

This Advent season I hope you will join me in finding ways to let go of shame and fear. I hope you will join me in finding ways to breakdown the walls and barriers that surround our hearts so that we might prepare a place in ourselves for the birth of the Messiah.

The Choirs Of St. Luke's

A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS CONCERT



featuring

The St. Cecilia and Canterbury
Choirs, The Three Amigos and
The Jubilate Ringers

Sunday, December 16
at 4 PM

*Festive music for the holiday season with a
Cookie Reception Following!*

St. Luke's Episcopal Church ~ 99 Peirce Street
East Greenwich



St. Luke's Choirs Sing for Town Tree Lighting



The annual Lighting of the East Greenwich Town Christmas Tree and official arrival of Santa Claus will be **on Saturday, December 1**. The festivities begin with a parade down Main Street at **4:30pm**. Our St. Cecilia and Canterbury Choirs will then raise their voices in singing some favorite Christmas Carols on the steps of the Town Hall beginning at **5:30pm** which will be followed by the **6pm** arrival of Santa Claus, tree lighting, and hot chocolate!

Newcomer Committee

Newcomers, Visitors, Interested Neighbors ... Getting to Know Each Other!

Did you know that just this fall we had close to 20 newcomers, visitors or interested neighbors asking to learn more about St. Luke's? Over the last year, we've had closer to 50 new inquiries and many of these individuals and/or families have chosen to make St. Luke's their home. How blessed we are! To welcome our newcomers, greet interested visitors or neighbors, and provide an opportunity to learn more about our parish community, a Welcome to St. Luke's Brunch is scheduled for Sunday, January 13, 2019 following the 10:15am worship service. This is an informal gathering for newcomers and visitors to meet with clergy and program leaders and get to know each other while enjoying a hearty meal and joyful conversations.

Invitations will be sent out directly to anyone who has completed one of our Welcome Cards or contacted us otherwise. Children, of course, are welcome and childcare will be provided as needed. If you have not let us know about your interest in learning more about St. Luke's, please feel free to contact Fr. Dante Tavolaro (dante@stlukese.org) and he will make sure that you receive details about the brunch. We look forward to welcoming you then.

Many Differences, Same Jesus

This article is the second in a six part series titled "Many Differences, Same Jesus." In this series we have asked members of our community to reflect upon the theme of our 2019 Commitment Campaign. This piece is a printing of Arielle Roger's witness given in church on Sunday November 4.

Hello. My name is Arielle Rogers and I serve as the Alto Section Leader and occasional soloist for the absolutely amazing, talented, and beautiful group of people called the Canterbury Choir here at St. Luke's. They are a group who are extremely dear to my heart.

I first came to St. Luke's 4 years ago, as a hire by Rodney Ayers. I responded to an email that went out to fellow musicians in RI, and quickly Rodney and I scheduled and audition. As soon as I met Rodney, I had a special feeling that this was going to be great. The audition included sight reading, a solo piece to sing, and unbeknownst to me an incredibly instant bond over one of the greatest performers, Ms. Audra McDonald. Regardless of if I was offered the position or not, I was glad to have met such an extraordinary person, Rodney.

Throughout High School and College I worked as a cantor and soloist for different churches in different denominations. I have been a professional musician in church settings for a little over a decade now. I'm 27 to give some context. For a long time church was just a job. A place I went to provide a service to faith seeking people. That's all it was, until I was asked to sing here, with you all.

As well as being the Alto Section leader, I am a private voice teacher, a public school teacher and a professional singer. It's a constant juggling act to see where I'm being led on my life's journey. Because of all of this and some, my guard has been built up to protect myself, my career opportunities and my music.

My guard exists like a wall that protects my heart, mind, soul and prospects. One of the reasons my guard stands so strong is because of a moment I witnessed when I was cantoring for a church in Providence. After receiving permission from my dear friend who went through this, I can tell the story briefly. The parish was assigned a new priest who had been determined to truly follow the Catholic law to a tee. He had learned that my friend, the music director was a gay married man and that many of the choir members of that church belonged to the LGBT community. Upon his request the music director was fired for being Gay and married to his partner. When this was found out, many of us including myself were enraged and in awe. We hear the stories about how certain religious groups do not accept certain communities, but it's not really 'real' until it hits home. I witnessed my friend, with my own eyes, go through something that would truly test a person's faith and love in Jesus Christ.

At that point, my guard was as tough as ever. When I was welcomed into the St. Luke's family, it took me at least the first year and a half to start knocking it down. My fiance and I did a lot of soul searching for our place in faith and with God. Over 7

these past years, every Sunday after service, Taylor and I always talk about how it went. We talk about the sermon and how it made us think or feel. We wonder how it was put together, and how it can relate to us. We talk about how beautiful a piece of music was and how fulfilling it is to talk to friends. We get our voices going on how St. Luke's has changed us.

Taylor and I got engaged this summer. It was such a surprise, I cried off all of my makeup when it was happening! One of the first things we decided right then and there was that we wanted to start our married life by having our wedding right here at St. Luke's. That was the easiest and most comforting decision we have made in this wedding process. When we walked into Fr. Tim's office to let him know our good news and to ask him to marry us, he was overjoyed. I think I cried some of the happiest tears of my life that morning we asked him, and I can't wait to 'happy cry' again in this church, with the love of my life, on our wedding day.

Giving to St. Luke's is not just a monetary thing. Monetary contributions are crucial to keeping this space going for the incredible amount of events and programs that go on here. But, just as crucial is giving your time, love and expressing your faith as much as you can. Without us, our love and our faith, St. Luke's would just be an old building with some pretty glass windows. We are St. Luke's. We create and continue St. Lukes. We find our faith within God and each other at St. Luke's.

Home is where the heart is, and it is so true that St. Luke's is bursting at the seams with heart. I will continue to keep my heart here, making this my home church. I know Taylor and even our "fur-baby" cat Garrison feel the same. Thank you all for your support and taking the time to listen to what I have witnessed and for sharing your love and faith with me. I hope my words will be reflected in your heart when it comes to your pledges this commitment season.

A Message From Dave Sampson

The 2019 Commitment Campaign has gotten off to a very good start. To borrow words from Mike Grady, I'd like to thank those members of the congregation who have already "come to the garden and planted seeds." As of 19 November, soon after Commitment Sunday, the church had received 129 pledges for a total commitment of \$357,564.

While, we have not heard from everyone, the fact that 42 families or individuals increased their pledge over last year demonstrates our commitment to faith and community. We should all pledge at a level appropriate for our personal situation. I continue to encourage all of us to closely examine our situation and look into our hearts to determine that amount so we may grow and spread a bountiful harvest.

Thank you,

David

David Sampson
Stewardship Committee Chairman

From The Finance Committee

How are we doing financially?

The first installment in a thrilling three-part series brought to you by the Saint Luke's Finance Committee

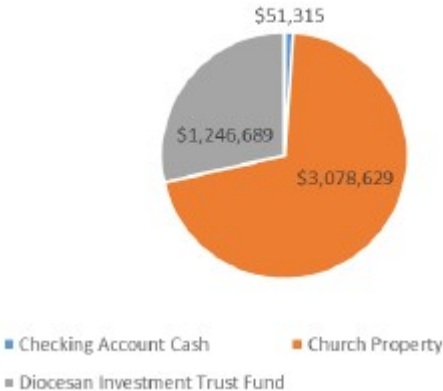
Saint Luke's has a financial structure very similar to most of our parishioners. We have property, we have a savings account, and we have a checking account.

Our property is held in two parts and totals around \$3.1million. The first is the church campus itself on Peirce Street in East Greenwich, valued at around \$2.9 million. Providing a specific value for that property is a little tricky, since there's no real "sales" history and it's an historic building. Periodically, the Finance Committee reviews the assessed value and the insurance replacement value and assigns a reasonable approximation.

We also own a portion of the equity in the Rector's residence - \$200,000. In the past, we owned a rectory, which was provided to the rector in kind as part of the compensation package. Largely so that parish priests can benefit from earned equity to purchase a residence upon retirement, that model changed throughout the Episcopal Church a number of years ago and now our rector shares in the purchase and the equity of the rector's residence.

Our "savings" are all shares in a mutual fund maintained and managed by the Diocese of Rhode Island for the benefit of all Rhode Island parishes. We currently own around 20,000 shares, valued at \$62.50 each for a total of around 1¼ million dollars. One of the benefits of the Diocesan Investment Trust Fund (called the "DIT") is that we receive a relatively predictable and steady income in the form of a quarterly "dividend" with a value established by the Diocesan DIT Board based on the total return to the fund over a multi-year period. Last (and least) is the cash held in the parish checking account. We receive around \$600 thousand a year in parishioner donations every year, which comes in fairly evenly during the year. The treasurer maintains about \$60-70 thousand in the checking account which relates to about a month's income and expenses.

Our Current Financial Picture



So, how are we doing, you might ask. And the answer is, "we're doing pretty good". We have a beautiful and fundamentally sound church and parish hall. We have an investment fund that we can draw on when our income falls a little short, or if we suffer some sort of short term catastrophe. Most importantly, we have a checking account that is maintained by the generous and timely donations of our faithful parishioners.

We know you can't wait for installment number two of this incredible cultural thriller – cleverly titled "Where does St Luke's money go?"

From The Treasurer

Did you Know!

If you are retired and attained the young age of 70 ½, you are required to take minimum distributions from your retirement accounts. This distribution normally is added to your taxable income.

One thing the tax code allows for is qualified charitable distribution.

A QCD is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA custodian, payable to a qualified charity, like **St. Luke's Church!** QCDs can be counted toward satisfying your required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the year, as long as certain rules are met.

In addition to the benefits of giving to charity, a QCD **excludes the amount donated from taxable income**, which is unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA. Keeping your taxable income lower may reduce the impact to certain tax credits and deductions, including Social Security and Medicare.

Can I make a QCD?

While many IRAs are eligible for QCDs—Traditional, Rollover, Inherited, SEP (inactive plans only), and SIMPLE (inactive plans only)* —there are requirements:

- You must be 70½ or older to be eligible to make a QCD.
- QCDs are limited to the amount that would otherwise be taxed as ordinary income. This excludes non-deductible contributions.
- The maximum annual amount that can qualify for a QCD is \$100,000. This applies to the sum of QCDs made to one or more charities in a calendar year. (If, however, you file taxes jointly, your spouse can also make a QCD from his or her own IRA within the same tax year for up to \$100,000.) . **(See Fr. Tim if you'd like to donate over that amount)**
- For a QCD to count towards your current year's RMD, the funds must come out of your IRA by your RMD deadline, generally December 31.

Any amount donated above your RMD does not count toward satisfying a future year's RMD.

Funds distributed directly to you, the IRA owner, and which you then give to charity do not qualify as a QCD. The distribution must be made to the charity to qualify.

Under certain circumstances, a QCD may be made from a Roth IRA. Roth IRAs are not subject to RMDs during your lifetime, and distributions are generally tax-free.

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT ST. LUKE'S

GREENING OF THE CHURCH

December 16, 2018 • 11:30am

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT

December 16, 2018 • 4:00pm

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

December 24, 2018

4:00pm

7:00pm

11:00pm (musical prelude at 10:30pm)

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

December 25, 2018 • 10:00am

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

December 30, 2018

Holy Eucharist • 7:45am

Christmas Lessons & Carols
with Eucharist • 10:15am

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

January 6, 2019 • 10:15am

99 PEIRCE STREET EAST GREENWICH

401-884-4116 • WWW.STLUKESEG.ORG • @STLUKESEG

Advent Adult Faith Formation Book Study

This year the Adult Faith Formation team has chosen Walter Brueggemann's book *Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study* for our annual program. Over the course of the four weeks of Advent we will look at the names for the Messiah that are found in Isaiah 9:6: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. As the back of the book describes, "Christians have claimed from the beginning that Jesus was the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament. In this study, bestselling author Walter Brueggemann tackles the questions: What were these expectations? and Did Jesus fulfill them?" Please join us beginning Sunday December 2 at 9am for this study. Books are available in the parish office for \$12 - scholarships are available to cover the cost of the book.

Middle School Youth Group Update

The middle school youth group is off to a great start this year. So far we've had a movie night, wrote our own Eucharistic prayer, talked about vestments and played dress up, and gone on a field trip to The Church of the Redeemer, Providence for their monthly Taizé service. This month we've got two great events planned.

On **Friday December 14** we will gather from 6-8pm to make Christmas Ornaments! Come get crafty as we talk about the various symbols of the Jesse Tree and make ornaments to decorate our homes with.

On **Friday December 28** we are going to repeat an event from last year! That's right it's time to go back to United Skates of America. We will gather at St. Luke's at 11:30am with the plan to arrive at United Skates of America at 12:30pm. Once there we will have lunch, skate, play games, and even see how good we are at a round of laser tag. This is a particularly good event to invite friends to!

As a reminder all youth group events are open to young people in grades 6-8. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Fr. Dante for more information

Epiphany Pageant **Sunday, January 6, 10:15am**

Calling All Children, Teens, And Those Who Are Young At Heart

All people of St, Luke's from pre-school through high school and beyond are welcomed and encouraged to be part of this year's Epiphany Pageant, the telling of the Christmas Story.

Costumes are provided and there are no lines to memorize!

Last year we switched the pageant from Sunday morning to Saturday afternoon so that we might keep the Feast of the Epiphany on the actual day. This year, January 6 falls on a Sunday so that pageant is going back to Sunday morning during the 10:15am service.

There will be only one rehearsal for the pageant. It will be on Saturday, January 5, from 10am-12pm. Lunch will be provided.

If you, or your child(ren), are interested in participating in the Epiphany Pageant please speak with Rodney Ayers at Rodeny@stlukese.org or Fr. Dante at Dante@stlukese.org.

JOURNEY WITH US THIS ADVENT

SUNDAY MORNING BOOK STUDY

9am Beginning Sunday December 2, 2018

"Names for the Messiah: An Advent Study" by Walter Brueggemann

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR YOUR USE AT HOME

"Advent and Christmas Wisdom" G.K. Chesterton

• "Preparing for Christmas: Daily Meditations for Advent" Richard Rohr

"All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings" Gayle Boss

"Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas" Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"Love Came Down: Anglican Readings for Advent and Christmas" Christopher Webber

"Names for the Messiah" is available in the parish office for \$12. Scholarship money is available to cover the cost of the book. This list of resources was compiled by the Adult Faith Formation Committee. For more information about Adult Faith Formation at St. Luke's please contact the parish office or a member of the clergy.

TP Schwartz-Barcott Has Written A Book

A new book on "religious violence in the holy books" was published recently by Teneo Press. The author is one of our parishioners, Tim Barcott (a.k.a.: T.P. Schwartz-Barcott). It includes an acknowledgement of St. Luke's Church.

The title of the book is:

Violence, Terror, Genocide, and War in the Holy Books and in the Decades Ahead: New Psychological and Sociological Insights on How The Old Testament, The New Testament, and The Qur'an Might Influence Violence.

328 pages. It is available in paperback and in electronic versions through Amazon Books and Barnes & Noble. This book also is in the St. Luke's Library in the Atrium, in case anyone is interested in borrowing it.

DECEMBER SAVE THE DATES

December 1

5:30 EG Town Tree Lighting with St. Luke's Choir

December 5

7 pm Women of Grace Meeting

December 8

4 pm St. Lucia Fest @ St. Luke's Church

December 13

8 am Property Breakfast @ Dining Rm

December 14

Middle School Youth Group 6-8 pm @ Dining Rm

December 16

11:30 am St. Luke's Greening of the Church
4 pm Christmas Concert @ St. Luke's Church

December 17

5 pm CCK Dinner @ Dining Rm

December 22

10 am Loaves & Fishes Run @ Dining Rm

December 24

4 pm Christmas Eve Service
7 pm Christmas Eve Service
10:30 pm Christmas Eve Service

December 25

10 am Christmas Day Service

December 28

Middle School Youth Group 12-3 pm @ United Skates of America

December 30

First Sunday After Christmas

7:45 am Holy Eucharist
10:15 am Christmas Lessons & Carols with Eucharist

Christmas Flower & Music Memorials

POINSETTIA MEMORIALS

REQUESTED BY: _____

In loving memory of...



Please submit names to the office by Wednesday, December 12, in order to be included in this season's Poinsettia and Music Memorials.

Suggested donation for the Poinsettias and Music Memorials is \$10 per name. Music Memorials pay for the additional musicians St. Luke's brings in to celebrate Christmas Eve.

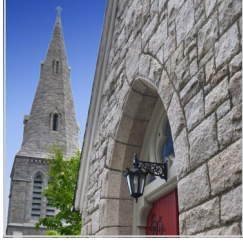
You can email names to Christina in the office at cimondi@stlukeseg.org, drop this form with a check in the Sunday offering, or mail this form with your check to St. Luke's. There are also forms available at the back of the church. Thank you!



MUSIC MEMORIALS

REQUESTED BY: _____

In loving memory of...



St. Luke's Episcopal Church
99 Peirce Street
East Greenwich, RI 02818

St. Luke's Episcopal Church December 2018 Newsletter