

St. Luke's

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



MONTHLY

From Father Tim

Just a little more than seven years ago now I sat in Arlene and Joe Serdakowski's living room, a candidate to be your next rector. The conversation was easy; the laughter was frequent; and the questions reflected a church that was energetic, committed, and faithful. It seemed as if the vestry arrived that night positively inclined, based upon the advance billing of the search committee, and I know I was returning to Rhode Island excited by the prospects of being called to St. Luke's.

But then, the atmosphere in the room changed; the tone grew a bit more serious and folks seemed a bit more attentive when Jamie Millard asked his question: "What do you think of our mission trip to the DR?" he began. "And do you plan on going down there yourself?"

In that moment, I felt like there was most definitely a "right" and "wrong" answer. Lucky for me, I got it "right." Also, lucky for me, the "right answer" captured my true sentiment. The prospects of a mission trip with a group of teens and adults could not have been more exciting.

As I write this note, I am getting ready for my fourth time in El Pedregal—and let me tell you, the reality of my first three trips has exceeded even my grandest imaginings.

I love that our teens are willing to put in long hours preparing for their journey. I love that they are willing to spend a week of their vacation (and in some cases, even miss a week of school) traveling to this developing region, to sleep on cots, work long hours, endure cold showers, and generally step out of their comfort zones.

I love that our chaperones are similarly willing to devote a week of their vacation time, sacrificing creature comforts, to dig trenches, hoist cinder blocks, paint classrooms, and work elbow to elbow with a collection of teenagers, mostly not their own children.

I love that parishioners of all generations, some “DR alumni” but many who aren’t, give generously and selflessly, buying pizzas or bricks, so that another group of missionaries might experience the joy and magic of this once-in-a-lifetime adventure. (Thank you so much for your contributions!)

I love, love, love the people we meet, so warm and welcoming. Each year, when we leave, hugs are exchanged, tears are shed, and hearts are a little broken. It never ceases to amaze me that, while this might be our mission trip, we are the ones who are cared for, we are the ones who are served, we are the ones whose lives are changed, are made better — so much more so than any of our Dominican counterparts.

And I love how we return to Rhode Island, having lived into the depths of our baptismal covenant, having sought and served Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Do we change the lives of the people of El Pedregal? Hopefully, at least a little bit. Are our lives changed by the people of El Pedregal? More than words can explain.

In traveling to the Dominican Republic, we learn more about Jesus, and the gospel, and the Kingdom of God in one week than we might otherwise in a lifetime.

I cannot wait to return to El Pedregal (and not just because the temperatures will be forty degrees warmer). I cannot wait because the work that we do and the company we keep makes for a “thin place.”

If you’ve not heard of this notion before, Mindie Burgoyne, a blogger on Celtic Spirituality, describes a thin place this way: *“Truth abides in thin places; naked, raw, hard to face truth. Yet the comfort, safety, and strength to face that truth abides there (as well). Thin places captivate our imagination, yet diminish our existence. We become very small, yet we gain connection and become part of something larger than we can perceive.”*

These words, I believe, both beautifully capture the experience of a “thin place” and perfectly describe our trip to El Pedregal. They also explain the passion in Jamie Millard’s question from seven years ago.

I thank you all for making possible this journey to the thin place. I pray when we return, our experience might make thinner the place we call St. Luke’s.

Peace,

Jim

Anecdotes From The Assistant: A Word From Father Dante

I have found in the clergy and theological world there are certain authors that “everyone has read.” There are certain people that everyone assumes you have read the moment you put on that clerical collar. In some cases, admitting you have not read that book or that person can come with some embarrassment and reactions like, “how did you make it through seminary without reading fill-in-the-blank?!” Despite my reputation as a bit of a theology/church nerd, there are some of those iconic people that I have never really read: maybe I read a blurb, or a chapter, but never a whole book. I am only mildly embarrassed to admit that Henri J. M. Nouwen is one of those people from me. So last week, when a friend encouraged me to read Nouwen’s “Life of the Beloved” I jumped at the opportunity to finally read the beloved Henri Nouwen.

It is not much of an over statement to say that this book has changed my life. It has certainly rocked my spiritual life, awakened things I did not know were present in my soul, and has re-energized my commitment to work for the full integration of my life of faith.

Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World is written as a letter to one of Nouwen’s friends called Fred. Fred asked Nouwen to write something for him and his friends about the spiritual life. He asked Nouwen to write something to help them in their searching: people without deep religious or spiritual connections. In response to this, Nouwen opens the first chapter by talking about how this project emerged for him. “Ever since you asked me to write for you and your friends about the spiritual life, I have been wondering if there might be one word I would most want you to remember when you finished reading all I wish to say . . . It is the word “Beloved,” and I am convinced that it has been given to me for the sake of you and your friends” (25). Nouwen spends the rest of the book writing an intimate and passionate story about what it means to be and live as the Beloved of God.

I found myself convicted as I turned the page and read these words:

It certainly is not easy to hear that voice [claiming you as Beloved] in a world filled with voices that shout: “You are no good, you are ugly; you are worthless; you are despicable, you are nobody – unless you can demonstrate the opposite.” These negative voices are so loud and so persistent that it is easy to believe them. That’s the great trap. It is the trap of self-rejection. **Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity or power, but self-rejection (26-27, Emphasis added).**

Those words did not just convict me they hit the deepest source of pain in my soul – pain so real I found myself angry at the friend who recommended the book, slamming the book down on the table, and walking away. But when my Italian temper subsided I was able to recognize that my anger was a kneejerk response to being reminded of my pain.

This book may have been written nearly 30 years ago, but Nouwen’s assessment of the world we live in is still spot on. We live in a world, a society, and culture that focuses on and privileges productivity and achievement. We are judge worthy not by our character, but by what we have achieved, won, and what our professional output is. When we are constantly surrounded by these voices and messages it can be difficult to not start beating ourselves up or being too hard on ourselves. I would hazard a guess that I am not alone in our community of setting the bar just a little too high for myself, of having unrealistic expectations of what I can do and achieve. Then when I fail to live up to that unattainable standard, to use Nouwen’s words, I fall into the trap of self-rejection.

I spent the majority of Monday afternoon, sitting on my couch reading this passionate plea to claim my status as Beloved. It was intimate, challenging, and tore down my defenses making me all the more vulnerable to his words. It was the perfect thing for me to read the day after we celebrated The Baptism of our Lord. Just as God claimed Jesus his Beloved in the waters of Baptism, so we too are claimed in those very same waters. As much as I struggle to believe it from time to time, I too, with all my shortcomings and limitations, have been claimed and named by God as Beloved.

I wonder if you struggle the way I struggle. I wonder if sometimes you have a hard time believing that you too are a Beloved child of God. If you are, I recommend to you *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*. It might convict you, it might be hard to read, it might stir things up for you that you did not know existed inside you. But maybe that is just the place you need to be in to read it. If it is not, feel free to get angry with me the same way I got angry with my friend. But no matter what you decide to do: try to remember, especially in those times when you doubt it most, that you are Beloved.

Regardless if you read this book, may we all hear and believe these words from Nouwen and claim them as our own:

All I want to say to you is “You are the Beloved,” and all I hope is that you can hear these words as spoken to you with all the tenderness and force that love can hold. My only desire is to make these words reverberate in every corner of your being – “You are the Beloved” (26).

The Choirs Of St. Luke's

Sweets for your Sweet – Sunday, February 10! Choir Bake sale coming soon!

On Sunday, February 10 the St. Cecilia Choir, along with the Angel and Canterbury Choirs, will have a Bake Sale following both the 7:45 am and 10:15 am services. This is a great opportunity to buy delicious baked goods to share with loved ones - just in time for Valentine's Day! Mini bread loaves, cookies, and chocolate treats are just some of the yummy items you will find at the sale. Your support at the Bake Sale will benefit the St. Cecilia Choir Fund, which is used to purchase materials for the Royal School of Church Music training program. The fund also provides scholarships for the intensive summer training courses enjoyed by many of our choristers.



The Welcoming Committee

Welcome Brunch Enjoyed by All!

Newcomers and visitors who wanted to learn more about St. Luke's enjoyed a hearty meal and lively conversation at the January 13 *Welcome to St. Luke's Brunch*. Together with vestry members, clergy and program leaders, newcomers shared stories, asked questions and explored their common interests in St. Luke's faith community. Many thanks to the volunteers who provided the casseroles, quiches, home-baked goods, salads, yogurt, fruit and more! In the spirit of this year's commitment banner professing *Different Faces—Same Jesus*, let's continue to meet, welcome and engage our newcomers to St. Luke's – their experiences and talents will no doubt enrich our community in Christ.



Many Differences, Same Jesus

This article is the third 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 Michael Grady’s witness given in church on Sunday November 18.

The Harvest of Our Giving By: Mike Grady

Good morning. Let me start by saying what a privilege it is to follow Arielle Rogers and Gary Schweizer as a witness to the 2019 Commitment Campaign: *Many Differences, Same Jesus*. They both inspired and moved us with their thoughtful words. They also created just a little bit of pressure on the guy who gets to go last, but that’s a good thing, right?

Like many of you, I’ve spent a fair amount of time these past few weekends working out in the yard, preparing our flower beds and vegetable garden for a long winter’s nap. Cutting back the perennials, removing and storing tomato cages, yanking out those last stubborn weeds, adding a final layer of compost; all in hopes of beating those first flakes of snow that flew last Thursday afternoon.

So, when Fr. Tim asked me to offer this final ministry statement, I was very much in a plant-and-harvest frame of mind. You see, as a native son of the Midwest, this seasonal cycle of planting and growing and harvesting is really part of my DNA. It also strikes me that there’s a parallel between a growing season and the good works of a faith community like ours that’s committed to following the way of Jesus by helping the less fortunate in our midst.

Indeed, “the harvest” is one of Scripture’s most familiar themes. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, writes: *He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.*

You just have to look up at these amazing banners to apprehend St. Luke’s “harvest of righteousness.” And the bounty is a sight to behold:

We harvest every last Saturday of the month when the loaves-and-fishes’ caravan rolls out to Woonsocket to offer food and clothing to our neighbors; just as we feed closer to home every Wednesday at Lunch on the Hill and the monthly Christ Community Kitchen;

We harvested last May when two of our graduating seniors stepped up to this lectern and said, thank you, for preparing them to venture out to the brave new world of college;

We harvest every month when our vestry – parishioners from different ministries, with different politics, from different faith journeys – all come together as one to do the important business of our parish ... “many perspectives, same Jesus”;

We harvested earlier this month when eight Rite 13 students stood at this rail and said, “yes, we are ready to continue our journey to adulthood” and you answered, “and we are here to support you.”

We harvested three weeks ago at the opening Eucharist of the Diocesan Convention when our magnificent choir raised the rafters of this holy place, singing “Praise to the Lord”;

We harvest every week when we receive the wisdom of our clergy;

And we will harvest again next February when our J2A students and adult leaders enter the village of El Pedregal for a week of work and prayer in fellowship with our Dominican brothers and sisters.

Of course, all of this harvesting is possible only through the commitment of thousands of hours of our time and our financial support.

We all take different paths to the harvest table. Gary and his husband Joseph found St. Luke's one cold Christmas Eve and were overwhelmed by both the beauty of the service and your warm embrace. Arielle was drawn here by the Canterbury Choir, the celebration of our differences and, in her words, "the extraordinary" Rodney Ayers.

My family and I found St. Luke's at a more somber time. Our first service here was the first Sunday following the 9/11 attacks which took the lives of several friends. Like many of you we came to church that day searching for a safe harbor and comforting words in the shadow of darkness. We found that safety and so much more, and have never looked back. Now I wish I could say I went home after that first service and signed a pledge card. But true to my first-born nature, I moved cautiously in my first year or so at St. Luke's. I was worried about what that commitment would mean, how would it might change my comfortable place here.

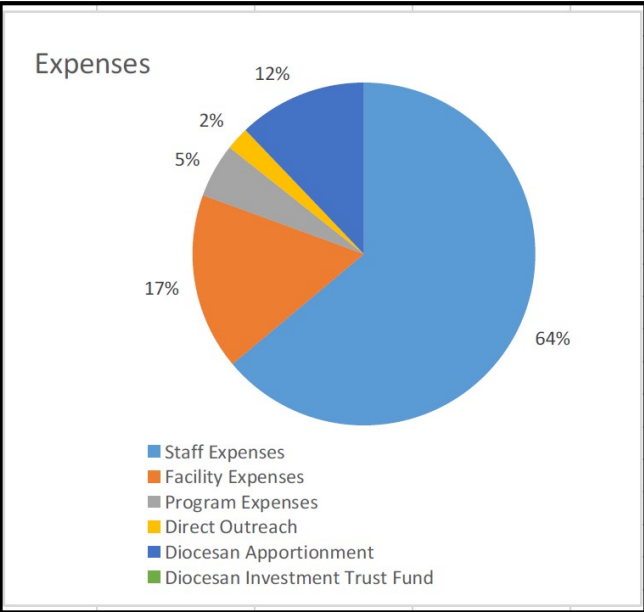
Well, what pledging did for me is what it's done for many of you: It strengthened my sense of belonging, my bond to the community; it's become part of my identity. And the plain fact is, my giving over the years has increased in proportion to my involvement -- as a teacher, vestry member, missionary, warden -- testament to my growing faith in the mission and ministries of St. Luke's.

In closing, I want to thank all of you who've already made a pledge for 2019. For others who continue to pray on this very personal decision, we hope that in the end, you'll decide to come on out to the garden, plant some seeds, join in the harvest, and change the world.

Thank you.

From The Finance Committee

Where does St Luke’s Money go?



Over the last few years, parishioners have contributed around \$600,000 annually to support the Christian mission of Saint Luke’s in the world. Where does St Luke’s Money go?

Not surprisingly, a major portion of our costs are related to staff and facility expenses – a little over 80% this year.

Our staff costs break down about 2/3 to actual salary and 1/3 to benefits like health insurance, retirement plans and reimbursable professional expenses. The Diocese of Rhode Island contributes a third of our Assistant Rector’s salary. In addition, we have two Associate Clergy who support our pastoral mission without reimbursement.

Expenses	2018	Percent
Staff Expenses	\$ 442,754	64%
Facility Expenses	\$ 115,420	17%
Program Expenses	\$ 35,350	5%
Direct Outreach	\$ 15,189	2%
Diocesan Apportionment	\$ 84,048	12%
Diocesan Investment Trust Fund Reinvestment	\$ -	0%
Adjusted Total Assets	\$ 692,761	100%

Having a sense of our facility costs is a little more nuanced. For the size and age of our campus, the amount of money we spend to maintain it is incredibly small.

There are two reasons for this – first, we have a large group of volunteers who contribute a lot of time and effort to keeping the place up, both inside and out. Second, we have a list of about a dozen projects that we know need to get done, but have so far lacked funding and have been deferred year to year. Some of these are more immediately critical than others, but they are all important to the long-term viability of our church home as we continue to expand into the community. Where does St Luke’s Money go?

Program expenses and Direct Outreach are a small part of our budget, again because we have a battalion of volunteers who contribute their time and effort to support our mission of bringing the Gospel message to our community. We also provide a significant amount of “in-kind” outreach in the form of free or discounted facility space to other community support groups and activities.

We pay our “dues” to belong to the Diocese of Rhode Island, called our “Apportionment”. It’s computed every year as a percentage of our income and expenses. The incredible support we have received over the years from our Bishop and the Diocesan staff makes this annual cost seem less like an obligation and more like a well-deserved “thanks for everything you do for us.”

The last expense we should see is a portion of our income going back to replenish our savings. This year, like the last couple of years, we have drawn down our endowment to pay for our annual operating obligations.

Coming soon: “Where does St. Luke’s money come from?” (Hint – it doesn’t grow on a tree in the Memorial Garden.)

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.

Property Committee

Our Property Breakfasts this winter season will be on the 3rd Thursday of each month: January 17, February 21, March 21 and April 18 beginning at 8 am in the Dining Room.

We welcome parishioners to become involved at any time – we begin with a delicious breakfast followed by projects and of course a coffee break! Come spring there will be outside projects as well.

Thanks for calling our attention to things that need property attention!

Sandy and Peggy Rubel

ST LUKE'S USHERS MINISTRY

Ushers needed for 7:45 AM Services. Additional information is included below.

Dear friend, when you extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters, even when they are strangers, you make the faith visible. ... It's good work you're doing, helping these travelers on their way, hospitality worthy of God himself! (3 John, vs 5-6)



Our Mission

The usher ministry offers the hospitality of Christ to people who come to worship, to collect and secure the gifts of the people, and to assure the order, comfort, and safety of the congregation. Making St Luke's an inviting place to worship.

Talent

- Must like meeting and greeting people.*
- The ability to be friendly while dignified and appreciative of the setting.*
- Attentiveness to needs and poise in the unexpected.*



Time Involved

- Teams serve on a rotational basis about every 6 weeks.*
- Ushers may specify a preference for services.*
- Arrive 30 minutes before service*

***Please reach out to Steve McLoughlin if you would like to know more or would like to be an usher.
401 885 3104/smcloughlin2@aol.com***

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

SAVE THE DATES

January 6, 2019

10:15 am Epiphany Pageant @ Church

January 13, 2019

11:15 am Newcomer Brunch Reception @ Auditorium

January 17, 2019

8 am Property Breakfast @ Blackburn Rm
7 pm Women of Grace Meeting

January 26, 2019

10 am Loaves & Fishes Run

January 27, 2019

9 am Holy Eucharist - Annual Meeting @ Church

January 28, 2019

5 pm CCK Dinner @ Dining Rm

February 3

8 am Dominican Republic Trip Brunch @ Dining Rm

February 10

11:30 am Choir Bake Sale @ Atrium

February 21

8 am Property Breakfast @ Dining Rm

February 23

10 am Loaves & Fishes Run

February 25

5 pm CCK Dinner @ Dining Rm

Supporting the Life and Ministry of St. Luke's

Life is full, vibrant, and active here at St. Luke's. One of the blessings of this community is the generosity and support of each and every person to support the vibrant and important ministries we offer. Over the next few weeks there are several opportunities to support the life and ministries of the parish that we would like to invite you to participate in.

Souper Bowl of Caring: January 20 – February 3

This year St. Luke's is participating in the national movement called Souper Bowl of Caring (www.souperbowl.org). This movement began more than 29 years ago to bring awareness to the needs of the hungry as people prepare for Super Bowl parties. As you shop over the next two weeks and make ready your Super Bowl preparations, we ask that you also **pick up some cans of soup to support the hungry in our community**. Can goods can be placed in the boxes in front of the office window in the atrium. **On February 3, these cans will be brought to the East Greenwich Interfaith Food Pantry housed here at St. Luke's**. For more information please contact: Bill Capron, Pam & Dick Kelly, or Deacon Christine.

Dominican Republic Mission Trip Fundraisers: January 20 – February 3

This year's Dominican Republic missionaries are making their final preparations for the parish biennial mission trip. Part of these preparations include raising funds to support this ministry. There are two ways to help support the DR missionaries in this work. First, there is the **Super Bowl Pizza Sale**. Instead of ordering pizza to be delivered to your house on Super Bowl Sunday, you can have pizza made for you by our missionaries and **pick it up here at St. Luke's on Saturday February 2 from 1-3pm**. All pizzas are handmade with fresh, top quality ingredients. Pizzas include cheese, pepperoni, veggie, and deluxe and range in price from \$12-\$14. Second, on **February 3 please plan to attend a brunch hosted by the DR missions**. Come and worship, and then enjoy a nice brunch so that you are fueled and ready to go for the big game. For more information about these opportunities please speak with a member of the DR Mission Team.

Choir Bake Sale: February 10

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ADULT FAITH FORMATION

Join us beginning on Sunday January 13 for our next adult faith formation series. For this book study we will be reading the book *Talking about Genesis: A Resource Guide*. **Books are available in the parish office for \$10 each. As always, scholarships are available to cover the cost of the book.**

Please read the following chapter for each class: January 20 - Chapter 3; February 3 - Chapter 4; February 10 - Chapter 9.

ST. LUKE'S USHER MINISTRY

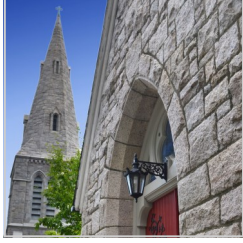
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