

December

St Luke Union Church

Upcoming Holiday Worship:

10:30a Sunday Dec 1 First Sunday of Advent
10:30a Sunday Dec 15 Worship, Choir Cantata
5:00p Wed. Dec 18 Vespers – Food & Worship
10:30a Sunday 22 Joy Offering
7:00p Tuesday Dec 24 Christmas Eve Service
with Candle Light,
Communion,
and Reception to follow

Advent Devotionals Available

Advent: A Calendar of Daily Devotions 2024 provides daily devotions for Christians as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. Pick up a copy at the information table in Fellowship Hall.

Many Thanks

How can I begin to thank you for how caring you, my St. Luke family, have been during Del's illness and passing. He was on Home Hospice Care for fourteen months. Your support helped me navigate a very difficult year.

Your thoughts, your words, your kind expression of sympathy are greatly appreciated.

Thank you for being there for me.

Terry Small

Don't Forget to Submit Your Pledge Cards

Did you miss Pledge Sunday? Don't worry, there is still time to turn it in! Bring it to worship on Sunday and place it in the offering plate or drop it by the church office or drop it in the mail.

Pastor Andy Joke: What did the gingerbread man put on his bed?



DECEMBER 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
01 Communion Choir Prac 9:30a Worship 10:30a	02 Adult Bible Study 12p Boy Scouts 7p	03	04 Spiritual Growth 5p Church Chat 6p Choir Practice 7p	05	06 Men's Breakfast 7a	07 Troop 19 Court of Honor & Lock-in 4p
08 Sunday Sch 9:30a Choir Practice 9:30a Worship 10:30a	09 Adult Bible Study 12p Boy Scouts 7p	10 Resource Team 2p Finance Team 5p WF Christmas Party 5:30p	11 Worship Team 5p Choir Practice 7p	12 Crossroads 9a	13	14
15 RaiseRight Choir Prac. 9:30a Choir Cantata & Worship 10:30a	16 NO Adult Bible Study Boy Scouts 7p	17 VMC Meeting 5:30p	18 Vespers 5p Choir Practice 7p	19 Faith Brews 5p	20	21
22 Sunday Sch 9:30a Choir Prac 9:30a Worship 10:30a	23 Adult Bible Study 12p Boy Scouts 7p	24 Christmas Eve Service 7p Reception	25 Christmas Day! Church Office Closed	26 Church Office Closed	27	28
29 Choir Prac. 9:30a Worship 10:30a	30 Adult Bible Study 12p Boy Scouts 7p	31				

Happy Birthday! Caroline Fleming 12/1; Abbie Baker 12/3; Rev Bud Roberts & Darlene Trower 12/5; Sarah Luna 12/11; Bob Hinthorn 12/12; Samantha Allison 12/15; Patricia Felan 12/16; Daniel Ferrier 12/17; Lynne Wright 12/19; Larry Maffet 12/20; Kim Feicke 12/21; Louise Moore 12/22; John Belletete 12/28; Jim McClure 12/30

Happy Anniversary! Paul & Stephanie Dehner 12/31

Joy Offering 2024

On Sunday December 22, we will collect the 2024 Joy Offering. This offering supports retired and current ministers as well as church workers in need of additional funds. It also supports students in programs preparing them for God's work to others. Please prayerfully consider the difference these people have made in our lives and how they have contributed to our spiritual growth in times when we needed Christian help.

For your convenience, envelopes will be placed in the pews a few weeks before the offering.

Mitten Tree

The Mission Team is again sponsoring a Mitten Tree during Advent. You may bring children's mittens, hats, gloves, scarves, underwear, and socks and place them on the tree during Advent through the last Sunday in December. All items will be given to Heartland Head Start.

The Mission Team will also be collecting "necessities" for adults (men's and women's undergarments, long underwear, hats, gloves, scarves, etc).

It would be nice to see the tree overflowing!

Women's Fellowship Christmas Dinner Tuesday December 10th, 2024, at 5:30pm



This will be our soup/salad Potluck
We will be making Christmas Simmer Potpourri
Watch for sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall
Come and celebrate with us!!!



On November 9th St Luke Union Church members cooked and served a meal to families staying at Ronald McDonald House in Peoria.

Pastor Andy Joke Answer: A cookie sheet!

Poinsettias

You can help beautify our sanctuary for Christmas by purchasing poinsettias. These 4-6 blossom plants are \$12.75 each.

Payment **MUST** accompany each order. Deadline to order is Sunday, December 15, 2024.

An alternative opportunity for giving may be a donation to **Home Sweet Home Ministries**.

I wish to order _____ Poinsettia Plant(s) to be given to the glory of God and:

In memory of _____

OR

In honor of _____

OR

In celebration of _____

I wish to give a donation of _____ to be given to the glory of God and to **Home Sweet Home Ministries** and:

In memory of _____

OR

In honor of _____

OR

In celebration of _____

Enclosed: \$_____ (Checks payable to St. Luke Union Church,
Memo: Poinsettia or Home Sweet Home Ministries)

Donor(s) _____
(As it will appear in the acknowledgement listing)



Home Sweet Home Ministries

HSHM is a Central Illinois leader in supporting people experiencing homelessness and living in material poverty conditions. HSHM's current array of life-sustaining services includes a shelter for men, women, and families with children; full service dining center for shelter residents and community members; Central IL's first low-income food co-op; a community center where people can connect with one another and with services; housing programs to speed re-entry into homes; and street outreach services to reach people who may not otherwise initiate the process of being helped. Led by our Mission Statement, HSHM's goal is to embody the love of Jesus Christ in order to help people experience hope for their future and feel connected to a sense of community.

Memory Bricks for the Labyrinth

If you wish to order a memory brick to be placed around the labyrinth next spring, please submit a check and completed form in the offering or to the church office by 12/15/2024.

3 lines, 16 letters per line. Spaces count as a letter.

Price per engraved brick is \$50
Make checks payable to SLUC with Brick in memo

All orders must be submitted by Dec. 15, 2024

SAMPLE:

Line 1: In Memory of (12 letters)

Line 2: Mary Jane Trower (16 letters)

Line 3: 1933-2010 (9 letters)

Line 1: _____

Line 2: _____

Line 3: _____

Your Name: _____

Phone # _____

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.
Psalm 42:1

Many of you have heard how Psalm 42:1 as put to music, brought me peace and comfort in God's greater plan on the three occasions when my son Seth underwent open heart surgery. Marjorie Thompson, in *Soul Feast*, explains how we look for Christ to reshape us into the persons we were created to be, growing in gratitude, trust, obedience, humility, compassion, service and joy. She then adds, "The more fully we can entrust ourselves to God, the more freely God's loving purpose can be worked out."

In my approach to pastoral ministry I have served in a two-fold manner. I am comfortable with church administration, including areas of finance, facilities and personnel. Second, I maintain a desire for continued study and discovery of theology. This has brought depth and greater understanding to the triune God. The area I have often neglected or has been pushed aside is in personal and corporate spirituality. This is an area I wish to develop to a level of life practice.

I have served as the pastor of St Luke Union Church for 15 years and believe we continue to be a healthy congregation and remain in-tuned with Jesus' greater mission for his church. I love serving all of you and do not have any intentions of leaving until it is time for retirement. I do hold a strong desire to finish strongly and not acquire a "coast to the finish" attitude. Understanding my strengths and weaknesses, I have begun to look at ways to bring about a spiritual re-awakening, and reclaim my passion for ministry. To do this I have begun looking into the logistics and funding of a planned renewal sabbatical in 2026. I have come to realize that such a need has developed out of my personal and professional practice. I grew up in a home that held an expectation of hard work and success. Upon becoming a pastor I held the same standard for myself. It wasn't until several years into a pastoral life that I was introduced to the concept of sabbatical. I never took the idea seriously and rationalized I would never be able to figure out what to do while away from the life of leading Christ's church. Perhaps my sense of responsibility produced a fear of the congregation faltering. Things began to change in my approach to ministry following several major life events. Those included my sons' departure from home and what that meant for my marriage. Then undergoing open heart surgery and how I achieved my recovery goals. These life events have caused me to reflect on how I balance my personal life and called ministry. During my tenure with St Luke Union I have been awarded a Doctor in Ministry Degree, and oversaw a major building campaign and project. In 2020 we battled the COVID pandemic and how we saw loss of participation and a disruption to worship, programs, and congregational relationships. There has been an emotional toll walking with so many in times of celebration, grief, and conflict. The final realization for the need of a renewal sabbatical was last fall when I was invited to help a local farmer with the harvest. Farming was something I always wanted to do, but couldn't for obvious reasons. In farming I discovered that I needed time to not be in charge. I discovered that to be renewed, I needed some time to not be constrained by the emotional swings of pastoral life and congregational care.

St Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until it rests in you." He also said, "God is always trying to give good things to us, but our hands are too full to receive them". In my 18 years of ordained ministry, I seldom have found the opportunity to worship in the vulnerability of my heart. In my sabbatical I wish to worship, commune, and participate in spiritual practice, to grow a deeper relationship with God and to reaffirm the covenant I have made with Sandi and my family. The result will be a pastor who will better serve the congregation he has been called to and affirmed. A pastor with a renewed passion and spirit to serve. A time when St Luke Union Church can grow independently of my leadership allowing for new voices of God's inspiration to be heard.

Marjorie Thompson writes, "It's time to more fully entrust my life and pastoral life to God" After the deer finds its cool and running water, it's refreshed-self bounds on.

Blessings, Pastor Andy

FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY IS ALWAYS THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

Our next Salvation Army food drive is on December 1

In choosing what to donate to the Salvation Army Food Pantry, let's make sure we help stock their shelves with what they need – and avoid what they don't need!

What they need:

High priority: Canned Soup (pop-top preferred) and Macaroni and Cheese
Canned fruit - preferably packed in natural juice
Canned meat – chicken, ham, SPAM
Canned fish – tuna and salmon
Soups, Stews, Chili - either canned or packaged
Boxed dinners – Mac & Cheese, Hamburger Helper
Boxed cereals – preferably whole grain, low in sugar
Canned beans – pinto, pork 'n beans, etc.
Applesauce
Peanut Butter
Crackers
Granola Bars
Instant mashed potatoes
Pasta – spaghetti, as well as spaghetti sauce
Rice
Powdered milk

What they don't need:

Anything that has to be baked
Junk food
Anything that needs a can opener -- (pop-top cans are best)
Anything in glass containers or cellophane wrapping

A Traditional Table Prayer

"O Lord our God and heavenly Father, in your indescribable mercy you have provided food and drink for the nourishment of our bodies. Grant us peace to use these gifts from your hands with thankful, reverent hearts. Let your blessing rest on these your gifts, to our comfort and health.

Grant, good Lord, that as we hunger and thirst for this food for our bodies, so may our souls earnestly long after the Bread of eternal Life, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen."

CONTACT US!

Rev. Dr. Andrew Gifford, Pastor

agifford@stlukeunion.org

Susan Walter, Office Manager

swalter@stlukeunion.org

Website:

www.stlukeunion.org

Facebook

Like our Facebook page for updates on church news, events & Reginald's whereabouts! Sunday Worship will go Facebook LIVE at 10:30am!

www.facebook.com/

stlukeunionchurch

YouTube

Search: St Luke Union Church

Church Office Hours:

Monday: 9a – 3p

Tuesday: 9a – 3p

Wednesday: 9a – 3p

Thursday: 9a – 3p

Friday & Saturday: Closed

Phone:

309-663-7437

Worship

Online + In-Person

Sunday 10:30am!



St Luke Union Church

2101 E Washington St Bloomington, IL 61701

(Corner of Regency Drive and Washington St – open 24 hrs/7 days a week)

TerraCycle Programs & Other Collections

Collection is in the garage behind the church where collection containers are labeled;
if you do not see a container, please DO NOT leave it.

ARM & HAMMER® and OxiClean®: ARM & HAMMER and OxiClean plastic pouches. (Must be these brands only)

Bausch + Lomb ONE Contact Lens Recycling: All brands of contact lenses, plus foil and blister packaging.

GoGo SqueeZ Baby Food Pouches Recycling: All baby and toddler food plastic pouches and caps (such as Go-Go Squeeze, Ella's, Earth's Best, etc.). **Please - Leave caps on to reduce smell and mold.**

Brita® Recycling Program: Brita pitchers, individual filtration bottles, filters, foil filter packaging, and faucet filtration systems. (Must be this brand only.)

Burt's Bee Recycling: Burt's Bee products packaging. (Must be this brand only.)

Cigarette Waste Recycling Program: NO DROP OFF - PLEASE CONTACT AMIE (joelamiekeeton@gmail.com or 309.242.8871) FOR MORE INSTRUCTIONS. Program accepts cold extinguished cigarettes, cigarette filters, loose tobacco pouches, outer plastic packaging, inner foil packaging, rolling paper and ash.

Colgate/Tom's of Maine Dental and Deodorant Recycling: All brands toothpaste tubes and caps, toothbrushes, floss containers, mouthwash bottles and caps, plastic deodorant containers and caps; also, clear plastic cover from toothbrush/dental floss packaging (remove cardboard backing and put in city recycling first). **Please note: no aerosol cans which go into regular city recycling.**

Honest Kids Drink Pouch Recycling Program: Flat, flexible aluminum/plastic drink pouches and their straws. Any brand accepted. Must be completely empty.

Entenmann's Little Bites Pouches Recycling Program: Entenmann's brand Little Bites plastic pouches and clear Entenmann's Minis packaging. (Must be this brand only.)

eos: eos lip, lotion and shave packaging. (Must be this brand only.)

Febreze® Air Care Recycling Program: All brands of air freshener plastic cartridges, plugs, packaging and flexible plastic film packaging, trigger heads and Mr. Clean Deep Cleaning Mist bottles and trigger heads. **(Aerosol spray cans go into city recycling).**

Garnier® Personal Care & Beauty: Emptied Plastic Garnier personal care or beauty product containers, tubes and lids. (Must be this brand only.)

Gerber®: Gerber baby food packaging and small and large hook Gerber Baby clothing hangers. (Must be this brand only.)

Gillette® Razor Recycling Program: All brands of razor blades; plastic and metal razors; flexible plastic bags and rigid plastic razor packaging. Clean and dry before donating.

GOLDTOE® Socks: All brands of used, clean socks.

Kroger - Our Brands Recycling Program: Kroger flexible plastic packaging. (Must be this brand only.)

Late July® Snacks Recycling Program: Late July® brand plastic snack packaging and chip bags. (Must be this brand.)

PopSockets® & Cell Phone Cases: Grips, mounts, wallets, and similar phone accessories, this program is brand-specific, which means you can only collect PopSockets products. However, you can collect **phone cases from ANY brand** for recycling.

Swiffer® Recycling Program: Swiffer refills: Sweeper, Duster and WetJet pads. (Must be this brand only).

Takis® Snacks: Takis Snacks, Takis Rolled Tortilla Chips, Takis STIX, Takis POP!, Takis Waves, Takis Kettlez, and Takis Crisps flexible plastic bags and containers. (Must be this brand only).

Tide Free Recycling Program: Fabric care products and packaging from brands Tide, Gain, Downy, NBD & Dreft, including plastic components (dispensing cup, bag, nozzle clip) and plastic packaging wrap, flexible plastic bags, rigid plastic tubs and lids and Tide To GO pen. (Must be these brands only).

Toys & Games: VTech and LeapFrog electronic learning devices and electronic toys program and Hasbro

Toys and Games: For the full list of accepted items, [view the VTech & LeapFrog FAQ](#) and [Hasbro](#) list of accepted items. (Must be these brands only.)

Additional Recycling Collections at the St Luke:

Aluminum Can Recycling: Please put cans in the Large labeled wooden box in the front and center of the garage. Please consider recycling your ALUMINUM cans with us instead of just putting them in city recycling. We recycle locally to get money for charity.

Holiday-Type Light Strands & Cords/Wire/Cable Recycling: Twinkle light bulbs ok to leave on; larger light bulbs should be removed and can be recycled at the lighting section of our local Menards, Lowes or Home Depot. Please remove any other plastic or metal decor before donating light strands.

Lion's Club box: Cell phones; small printer cartridges (**from home use only**); eyeglasses; hearing aids; keys. (ok to drop small items at Common Ground). Lion's Club volunteers manage this for charity. (ok to drop small amounts at Common Ground).

***Please - ONLY leave the items listed above.**

TerraCycle Volunteers:

Amie Keeton joelamiekeeton@gmail.com, Janet Guaderrama jquader@gmail.com,
Melanie Ziomek mziomek@my.heartland.edu Marcia Nagy trek2ak@frontiernet.net