

December

St Luke Union Church

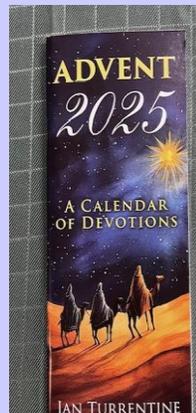
Christmas 2025 Schedule of Events

Sunday, November 30	10:30am	First Sunday of Advent
Sunday, December 21	10:30am	Choir Cantata
Sunday, December 21	10:30am	Christmas Joy Offering
Wednesday, December 24	7:00pm	Christmas Eve Service with Candle Light, Communion, and Reception to follow



**Women's Fellowship
Christmas Dinner
Tuesday, December 9, 2025
5:30pm**

Join us for a fun evening of fellowship, food and festive cheer. Hope you all can join us.



2025 Advent Devotionals are available at the Welcome Table in Fellowship Hall

Give Thanks – Update

Our Home Sweet Home Ministries turkey donations were up 66% over last year's giving! Thank you to all who donated.



DECEMBER 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	01 Adult Bible Study 12p Boy Scouts 7p	02	03 Church Chat 5p Spiritual Growth 5p Handbells 6p Choir Practice 7p	04 PEO Mtg 5p	05 Men's Breakfast 7a	06 Troop 19 Court of Honor/Lock-in 5p
07 Communion Sun School 9:30a Choir Prac 9:30a Worship 10:30a	08 Adult Bible Study 12p Boy Scouts 7p	09 Resource Team 2p Finance Mtg 5p WF Christmas Dinner 5:30p	10 Worship Team 5p Handbells 6p Choir Practice 7p	11 Crossroads 9a	12	13 Piano and Violin Recital 2p
14 Choir Prac.9:30a Worship 10:30a Annual Reports Due	15 Adult Bible Study 12p Boy Scouts 7p	16 VMC Mtg 5:30p	17 Church Chat 5p Handbells 6p Choir Practice 7p	18 Faith Brews 5p Destihl Brewery	19	20 Flute Recital 11a
21 RaiseRight Joy Offering Sun School 9:30a Choir Prac.9:30a Choir Cantata & Worship 10:30a	22 Boy Scouts 7p	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 7p Reception	25 Christmas Day Church Office Closed	26	27
28 Choir Prac.9:30a Worship 10:30a	29 Boy Scouts 7p	30	31 New Year's Eve			

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

Happy Anniversary! Paul & Stephanie Dehner 12/31

Annual Reports are due in the Church Office by Sunday, December 14th
You may email your reports to swalter@stlukeunion.org.

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.



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).



Nominating Committee: The Nominating Committee is looking for 2026 committee members who are willing and feel the call to serve St Luke Union Church and its people. The nominating Committee is looking for people who would serve on the Vision and Ministry Council (VMC), Personnel Committee and the Nominating Committee. VMC is a 3-year term, with meetings occurring the third Tuesday of the month at 5:30pm. Personnel is a three-year term and Nominating Committee persons serve two-year terms. Both of these committees meet as needed throughout the year. If you feel called to serve, please reach out to any member of the Nominating Committee: Jim Ferrier, Amanda Garard, Norm Lopez and Ruth Trower.

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING Collected December 21

We will collect the Christmas Joy offering Sunday, December 21. This offering is divided between the denominations. The offering supports clergy & other church workers who need extra financial help for various reasons, such as damage from hurricanes, tornadoes, etc. It also helps those who had smaller incomes due to serving smaller churches, needing help with medical care, or placement in hospitals, nursing homes, etc.

In addition, it has helped some students with paying for their college education, including those schools & colleges related to our denominations. This includes those planning to become religious workers & leaders.

Special envelopes will be placed in the pews shortly before this offering and included with those who receive *New Directions* by mail. Also, you can place the offering in a plain "pew envelope," indicating it is to be used for the Joy Offering.

Please pray for guidance in deciding how to contribute to this offering. We thank you for your support.

Help keep the Water Bill down: Over the last several months, the church has been hit with rather large water bills. This is likely due to water being left on or a toilet running. The Resource Team asks that if anyone finds water on or a toilet running, please turn it off, or jiggle the handle, AND notify someone who can fix it. We appreciate your help. This is a simple way to keep costs down.

Floods are for Noah, not us at St Luke Union Church.

Pastor Andy



Poinsettias

You can help beautify our sanctuary for Christmas by purchasing poinsettias. These 4-6 blossom plants are \$13 each.

Payment MUST accompany each order. Deadline to order is Sunday, December 14, 2025.

An alternative opportunity for giving may be a donation to **The Salvation Army Safe Harbor Shelter**.

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 **The Salvation Army Safe Harbor Shelter** and:

In memory of _____
OR
In honor of _____
OR
In celebration of _____

Enclosed: \$_____ (Checks payable to St. Luke Union Church, Memo: Poinsettia or Safe Harbor Shelter)

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



The Salvation Army Safe Harbor Shelter

Safe Harbor Shelter program provides services to homeless individuals over the age of 18 who are otherwise displaced or do not have adequate housing and are forced to sleep on the streets. Safe Harbor is a congregate facility with fifty beds, 32 in the men's dorm, and 18 in the women's dorm. The shelter is open to non-resident individuals during the day to access a place to stay, food to eat, hot showers, and laundry facilities. All individuals have access to case managers, employment specialists, and pastoral care.

FOOD PANTRY SUNDAY IS ALWAYS THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

Our next Salvation Army food drive is on December 7

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

What they need:

Canned Soup (pop-top preferred), 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 and 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

Stand Down for Veterans 2026 Wish List

Goodwill Industries of Central Illinois is already planning for Stand Down For Veterans 2026. I asked what items they would like help with for 2026 and Johanna Wagner provided this list. We will collect NEW, UNUSED (STILL IN THE ORIGINAL PACKAGING):

- **Socks**-typically white, grey, or black crew socks.
Again, the target is 750 pairs (3 pairs per veteran).
In 2025 Stand Down served 289 veterans; so let's see if we can collect **867** pairs of socks!
- **Hand and Foot warmers**- Goodwill's target is **1500** (combined)
- **Washcloths** - this is a new item for us. The target is **250**, but I'm guessing **289** is a more realistic number.
- **Female undergarments** - usually there are 25 female veterans.

Goodwill is not expecting us to provide **all** of these items, but they would like help with these. The Stand Down donation bin is in the upstairs Fellowship Hall, by the staircase.

If you would prefer to donate money instead of items you can send checks to:

Goodwill Industries

Attn: Johanna Wagner

2319 E War Memorial

Peoria Il. 61614

Write **Stand Down 2026** in the Memo line

THANK YOU for any help you can provide!

- James Munro

Thanksgiving Prayer

Earth Maker, Pain Bearer, Life Giver,

You are the giver of every good and perfect gift. Today we gather as a family and as friends to thank You—not only for the food before us, but for Your love and grace that sustains us in all things.

We thank You for Your covenant faithfulness through every season, for providing far more than we deserve, and for the blessing of being called Your people through Christ our Lord. As You have been faithful to generations before us, be faithful to us and to those who will come after us.

We thank You for this home, for the hands that prepared this meal, and for the love that ties us all together. Teach us to see Your kindness in ordinary things—laughter, shared stories, work, rest, and the daily bread You provide.

Help us, by Your Spirit, to walk in gratitude, to serve one another in love, and to reflect Christ's humility at this table and beyond it. Make our hearts quick to remember Your mercies and slow to grumble, knowing that all we have is from You.

Bless this food to our bodies, and our lives to Your glory.
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

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!

Matthew 4:18-19, As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

I have been to and witnessed several alter calls in my life before ministry as well as after my ordination. These worship experiences can be very moving and often tug on the heart strings of those in attendance. So much so that it draws people out of their seats, walks them to the alter, and humbles their heart to proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior. One such occasion was a men's retreat at the Moody Bible Church in Chicago. Tony Evans was one of the speakers and if you have ever heard him preach, to say he is dynamic is an understatement. As the afternoon wore on, the final preacher moved toward the alter call and several of us Presbyterians could sense it was coming. It was then agreed that when the call came, it would be our cue to head for the suburbs. I understand the draw, the emotion and the reality of someone experiencing salvation, but to quote Brother Lawrence, "You can't go faster than grace allows." In other words, it is not possible to become spiritually mature all at once. What a good alter call does is gets the majority to say yes to Jesus' invitation, but how many will eventually have a mature relationship with God?

John Mark Comer in his book, *Practicing the Way*, explains that one may come to a profession of faith in a moment, but there is a lifetime spent in becoming a disciple. He goes on to explain that the personal goal of becoming a disciple is to: be with Jesus, become like Jesus and to do as Jesus did. He points out that a disciple is a noun and not a verb. No one goes about discipling they are disciples, or we are not Christian-ing we are Christians. This misunderstanding of what we are to do with the gracious gift of our salvation tends to produce customers of Jesus rather than disciples of Jesus' way.

Peter and Andrew were simple fishermen, but Jesus knows their hearts and invites them to become disciples. In an instant they drop their nets and follow. That was their alter call, but it was only the beginning of a faith journey with Jesus. This occurs because before they believed in Jesus, he believed in them. There are no accidental saints. All we need to do is drop our nets.

Merry Christmas
Pastor Andy



TerraCycle with St. Luke Union Church

TerraCycle collection is in the garage in the back of the parking lot
2101 E Washington St, Bloomington, IL 61701
Collection containers are labeled - please sort all items.
Open 24 hours

ITEMS ACCEPTED

- **ARM & HAMMER™ and OxiClean™:** Plastic Pouches
- **Contact Lens Brigade:** Accepts all brands of contact lenses, plus foil and blister packaging.
- **Baby Food Pouch Brigade:** Accepts all baby and toddler food plastic pouches and caps (such as Go-Go Squeeze, Ella's, Earth's Best, etc.). Please leave the cap on to reduce smell and leaking.
- **Brita® or PUR Brigade®:** Accepts all brands of pitchers, individual filtration bottles, filters, foil filter packaging, and faucet filtration systems.
- **Burt's Bee Brigade:** Accepts any Burt's Bee products packaging (must be this brand only).
- **Cigarette Waste: NO DROP OFF– PLEASE EMAIL AMIE, joelamikeeton@gmail.com FOR MORE INSTRUCTIONS.** Accepts cold extinguished cigarettes, cigarette filters, loose tobacco pouches, outer plastic packaging, inner foil packaging, rolling paper and ash.
- **Colgate® Oral Care Free Recycling Program: Accepts all brands** toothpaste tubes and caps, toothbrushes, floss containers, mouthwash bottles and caps.
- **Drink Pouch:** Recycle all brands of drink pouches.
- **Entenmann's Little Bites Pouches Program:** Accepts only Entenmann's brand Little Bites plastic pouches and clear Entenmann's Minis packaging.
- **eos Brigade:** Packaging from eos brand only.
- **Febreze Air Care Program:** Accepts all brands of air freshener cartridges and plus, packaging and flexible film packaging, and trigger heads (plastic bottles/cans go in regular curbside recycling).
- **Garnier® Program:** Accepts all Garnier brand packaging.
- **GOLDTOE Sock Program:** Accepts all brands of LAUNDERED socks for recycling.
- **Kroger® Brands Program:** Recycle flexible plastic packaging from Kroger® brands through this program.
- **Gillette Razor Brigade:** All brands of blades, razors, and plastic packaging.
- **Garnier Skin & Hair Care Brigade:** Garnier® skin care and hair care packaging.
- **Swiffer® Recycling Program:** Recycle Swiffer refills (must be Swiffer)
- **Takis® Snacks Recycling Program:** Recycle Takis Snack packaging (must be Takis)
- **Tom's of Maine Recycling Program:** Recycle all Tom's of Maine packaging (must be Tom's of Maine)

Additional items collected (not TerraCycle):

- **Lion's Club collection:** Cell phones; home computer printer cartridges (no business-size cartridges); eyeglasses; hearing aids; keys.
- Christmas/Holiday light strands
- Aluminum