

# *New Directions* **June** St Luke Union Church

## New Baby News

Pastor Andy and Sandi are proud to introduce their new granddaughter, Harper Lynlee Gifford born to Seth and Alli Gifford on May 21, 2026. She weighed 8lbs 7oz and was 20" long.



## Youth Mission Trip 2026

We will have seven youth group members and two adults traveling to Mount Gilead, OH the week of June 14-20, 2026 to participate in Group Mission Trips Workcamp. Please pray for their safety while traveling and for spiritual growth during their week away from home.

Prayer Partners Needed: Please sign up to pray for and send mail to one of our youth or leaders on the mission trip. Sign up and mailing labels are available in Fellowship Hall.

*Please note Youth Sunday will be celebrated on Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup>.*

## Thank You!

I want to thank all my St. Luke friends for your prayers and words of encouragement during my recent illness. I was especially cheered by the Shannon's breakfast menu messages. Your friendship is truly a gift.

-HelenAnn Gray

**Summer Church Humor:** A pastor greeted everyone after morning worship and asked one little boy, "So what are your plans this summer?" The boy said, "Sleeping in." The pastor laughed. "Anything else?" The boy said, "Eventually."



# JUNE 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	<b>01</b> Adult Bible Study 12p Boy Scouts 7p	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b> Spiritual Growth 5p Choir Practice 7p	<b>04</b>	<b>05</b> Men's Breakfast 7a	<b>06</b> Bridal Shower 9a
<b>07</b> Communion Choir Prac. 9:30a Worship 10:30a	<b>08</b> Boy Scouts 7p	<b>09</b> Resource Team 2p Finance Mtg 5p	<b>10</b> Worship Team 5p	<b>11</b> Crossroads 9a DAR Luncheon 11a	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> Worship at Funk's Grove Church 10:30a <i>Picnic Lunch following service</i>	<b>15</b> Boy Scouts 7p	<b>16</b> VMC Meeting 5:30p	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Faith Brews 5p	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <span>Youth Mission Trip to Mount Gilead, OH June 14-20</span> <span style="flex-grow: 1; border-bottom: 1px solid black; position: relative; margin: 0 10px;"> <span style="position: absolute; right: -5px; top: -5px; bottom: -5px;">→</span> </span> </div>						
<b>21</b> RaiseRight <b>Confirmation</b> <b>Baptism</b> Choir Prac 9:30a Worship 10:30a	<b>22</b> Boy Scouts 7p	<b>23</b> Lamplighters 7p	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> <b>Youth Sunday</b> Choir Prac 9:30a Worship 10:30a	<b>29</b> Boy Scouts 7p	<b>30</b>				

**Happy Birthday!** Sara Kellum, Renee Stolte 6/8; Ben Gifford 6/12; Ian Murray, Rebecca Schaefer 6/19; Rod Hawkins 6/23; John Boerner 6/27; Annie Otto 6/28; Aiden Luna 6/30

**Happy Anniversary!** Kevin & Amanda O'Rourke 6/7; Doug & Sanae Ferrier 6/8; Ryan & Megan Murray 6/9; Charlie & Beth Louck 6/10; Dan & Ann Austin 6/12; Jim & Charlene Munro 6/13; Scott & Sarah Luna 6/15; Bob & Marsha Hinthorn 6/18; Glenn & Sharon Stille 6/22; Marshall & Nancy Davis 6/23; Tom & Linda Sellberg 6/27; Ed & Tammy Desmond, Chuck & Carol Parlette 6/29

## Congratulations 2026 Graduate!

Wyatt Klapp, the son of Mindy Klapp and grandson of Linda Weirman, graduated from High School this spring. Wyatt plans to attend Midwest Technical Institute to further his education. Congrats Wyatt!

### Clergy Renewal

*Beginning July 11, 2026 Pastor Andy will begin his Clergy Renewal time. During those 17 weeks the VMC has called the Reverend Susan Baller-Shepard to serve as worship leader and for pastoral care. Please welcome her and show her the love of St. Luke Union Church.*

#### **bio:**

Susan Baller-Shepard has always been interested in the stories of people's lives, whether these come from ancient texts, or from modern narratives of finding meaning today. Susan majored in religion and English at the University of Iowa and was part of the undergraduate Writers' Workshop there. Susan served as an intern at the Presbyterian Church USA's Washington, D. C. office and was a Volunteer in Mission for the Presbyterian Church USA in Walsall, England for a year. She completed a dual competency masters degree program with McCormick Theological Seminary and the University of Illinois with graduate degrees in Divinity and Social Work. Her graduate master's thesis was "Recidivism Rates of Female Inmates in Illinois and the Role of Family Connectedness," which arose from her work taking children to visit their mothers in prison. At McCormick, she was awarded the Ellen and James Taylor Award for Preaching and the John V. Farwell Award for Scripture Reading.

Ordained thirty-four years ago to serve First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Illinois, she has also served churches in Peoria, Rochester, and in the Bloomington/Normal area. Susan has served on most of the committees in the Presbytery, PJC committees at the Presbytery and Synod level, and served on the PCUSA Council for the Synod of Lincoln Trails, while also moderating local church sessions as needed. Susan was a founding board member of the Community Health Care Clinic in Normal, Illinois and in leadership with the Presbytery of Great Rivers Brazil Partnership for ten years. Susan worked on international development projects in Brazil, Haiti, and the People's Republic of China. For twenty years Susan facilitated a Spiritual Book Club locally and online. She taught Major World Religions and Literature of the Bible at Heartland Community College in Normal, Illinois for ten years, along with Community Education classes.

Susan is wife of Tracy, mother to Alex, Drake, and Lizzie, and daughter of Joyce Pomrenke. She loves to read, especially mysteries, loves taking classes, and wrangling mini horses in therapeutic horse settings. She volunteers at Habitat, where she caulks better than she paints.

#### **Time with St Luke Union:**

I've known and been very grateful for St Luke Union's witness in this McLean County for years. All three of our children were baptized at St. Luke Union, and I cuddled babies and wrestled toddlers in these very pews. I've watched this congregation minister to its members and the larger community in all sorts of ways through the years, including the way the church has maintained its recycling legacy. I'm thankful for the opportunity to serve this church while Rev. Andy Gifford is on sabbatical, recharging his soul for ministry and for his continued work among the St. Luke Union community. I believe in the restorative power of time in nature, being in spiritual community, and having time with family, all parts of Andy's sabbatical journey. I was asked to serve, prayed about it, and am open to how God's Spirit will move among all of us in the months to come. I think of Hebrews 11:8, which says Abraham, "obeyed and went, without knowing where he was going." We embark with God, with prayer, not knowing where we are going, but knowing Who is with us, all the time, through all our lives.

**Funks Grove Worship Service  
Sunday, June 14, 2026 10:30 am**

Our worship service will be at  
Funks Grove Church,  
7054 E 535 North Rd., McLean, IL 61754.  
Potluck/Picnic to follow.  
Bring a side or main dish to share  
AND bring a plate and silverware.

*There will be no worship service at St Luke  
Union Church that day.*



Please consider joining an Agape Group!  
Talk to those who have done it and hear how  
much fun it is. There is no study or agenda,  
just fellowship and getting to know one  
another better. Groups will have 5-6 members  
and choose how they want to meet, whether  
in homes, restaurants, outside at a park, etc.  
If you are currently in a group, please go  
ahead and continue meeting until you want  
to wrap it up. But if you've each had a chance  
to hostess and are almost ready to regroup,  
please sign up. The list will be in Fellowship  
Hall through 6/21, and I'll have the new  
groups ready to go by early July.

Thanks!  
Marsha Hinthorn, 309-310-5483



**Fun Facts:**

**Summer vacation has farming roots (sort of).**  
Contrary to popular belief, school calendars  
were not mainly designed for farm families.  
Many agricultural communities actually  
needed children during planting and harvest  
seasons. Long summer breaks became more  
common through urban school schedules in  
the 1800's.

**Ice Cream consumption spikes in summer.**  
July is often the biggest month for ice cream  
sales, but the season starts heating up in  
June.

**Stand Down for Veterans 2026 UPDATE**

We are still collecting items for the 2026 STAND DOWN  
FOR VETERANS, organized by Goodwill in Peoria.  
As of now we have collected:

- 351 pairs of **men's socks** (our goal is 867)
- 60 pairs of **men's diabetic socks**
- 0 pairs of **ladies socks**
- 38 pairs of **ladies diabetic socks** (no change from last month)
- 706 pairs of **hand warmers**
- 0 pairs of **foot warmers**  
(goal is 1500 hand and foot warmers)
- 129 **washcloths** (goal is at least 250)

We are still collecting **NEW, UNUSED** products in the  
**ORIGINAL** packaging. The Stand Down donation bin is  
in the upstairs Fellowship Hall, near the staircase.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE A MONETARY DONATION,  
please send your checks to:

Goodwill Industries  
Care of Tim O'Malley  
2319 E War Memorial  
Peoria, IL 61614

Make checks payable to "Goodwill Foundation"  
and put "Stand Down 2026" in the memo line.  
As always, I suggest adding a note that you are from  
St Luke Union Church; Goodwill knows who we are and  
appreciates our work!

THANK YOU for any help you can provide!  
- James Munro

**Rotary pork chop lunch is coming!**

The date is Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup>.  
See Brian Trower for pork chop lunch tickets  
(text to 309.531.1076).

**\*\*New Location- Second Presbyterian,  
south parking lot\*\***

For \$10 you receive a pork chop sandwich, chips,  
a cookie and a drink. The proceeds go to the  
Bloomington Rotary Foundation which funds  
dozens of local charities.

*Romans 7:19 – “For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.”*

During a children’s sermon some time ago, Reginald and I talked about the simple but meaningful act of saying, “I’m sorry,” when we have done something that is not as God desires. We also reflected on the response that should follow: “I forgive you.” Often, however, the response we hear is, “It’s alright.” While usually offered kindly, those words can sometimes avoid the deeper work of forgiveness itself. Saying “I forgive you” acknowledges that something wrong occurred and that grace, rather than resentment, will have the final word.

Each Sunday at St. Luke Union Church, we participate in an important part of worship that centers on this very truth: the Prayer of Confession and the Declaration of Forgiveness. As a pastor, speaking the words of forgiveness over the congregation is one of the great privileges and joys of worship.

Why do we confess every week? Confession is not about convincing God to forgive us. It is not a transaction in which repentance earns grace. Rather, confession places us in a posture of humility and opens our hearts to receive what God has already offered.

Grace comes first. God’s mercy is already moving toward us before we speak a single word of confession. Repentance does not create grace; repentance is our response to the grace already at work in our lives. When we confess together in worship, we are not informing God of something unknown—we are acknowledging our need and proclaiming our trust in God’s mercy.

So why pray a Prayer of Confession if grace is already given? Because confession helps us remember. It reminds us of what God has done through Jesus Christ. It calls us to honesty about ourselves and gratitude for God’s love. We come before God not because we deserve mercy, but because mercy has been freely given through Christ and made known to us through the Holy Spirit.

In confession, we bring before God not only the things we have done and left undone, but also the deeper brokenness of our human condition. We come honestly, humbly, and expectantly. And when we say to God, “I am sorry,” the answer we receive in Christ is always: “I forgive you.”

Peace,  
Pastor Andrew Gifford

## CONTACT US!

**Rev. Dr. Andrew Gifford, Pastor**

agifford@stlukeunion.org

**Susan Walter, Office Manager**

swalter@stlukeunion.org

### Website:

[www.stlukeunion.org](http://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](http://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.**

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- **ARM & HAMMER™ and OxiClean™:** Recycle ARM & HAMMER and OxiClean brand only plastic pouches
  - **Contact Lens:** Accepts all brands of contact lenses, plus foil and blister packaging.
  - **Brita® or PUR:** Accepts Brita or PUR brand only pitchers, individual filtration bottles, filters, foil filter packaging, and faucet filtration systems.
  - **Burt's Bee:** Accepts Burt's Bee product packaging (must be this brand only).
  - **Cigarette Waste: NO DROP OFF– PLEASE EMAIL AMIE, joelamiekeeton@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: 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:** Accepts only Entenmann's brand Little Bites plastic pouches and clear Entenmann's Minis packaging.
  - **eos:** Packaging from eos brand only.
  - **Febreze Air Care:** 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).
  - **Gillette Razor: All brands** of blades, razors, and plastic packaging.
  - **GoGo squeeZ® Food Pouch: Accepts all brands** of 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.
  - **GOLDTOE Socks:** Accepts GOLDTOE brand socks. Please launder.
  - **Hasbro:** Recycle Hasbro brand toys and games.
  - **Kroger® Brands:** Recycle flexible plastic packaging from Kroger® brands through this program.
  - **Stanley Black & Decker Tools:** Recycle DEWALT®, CRAFTSMAN®, BLACK+DECKER®, STANLEY®, IRWIN®, LENOX®, MAC Tools®, PORTER-CABLE® and Bostitch® branded tools.
  - **Swiffer®:** Recycle Swiffer refills (must be Swiffer).
  - **Takis® Snacks Recycling Program:** Recycle Takis Snack packaging (must be Takis)
  - **Tide Free:** Recycle Tide, Gain, Downy, Bounce, NBD., and Dreft fabric care packaging.
  - **Tom's of Maine:** Recycle all Tom's of Maine packaging (must be Tom's of Maine)
  - **VTech® & LeapFrog®:** Recycle VTech and LeapFrog electronic learning devices and electronic toys.

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**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. Lion's Club volunteers manage this for charity.

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

**TerraCycle Volunteers:**

Amie Keeton [joelamiekeeton@gmail.com](mailto:joelamiekeeton@gmail.com), Janet Guaderrama [jquader@gmail.com](mailto:jquader@gmail.com),  
Melanie Ziomek [mziomek@my.heartland.edu](mailto:mziomek@my.heartland.edu) Marcia Nagy [trek2ak@frontiernet.net](mailto:trek2ak@frontiernet.net)