

NURTURING SANCTUARY

LENTEN DEVOTIONALS
2025



Table of Contents

Introduction | 3

Liturgy for Daily Devotionals | 4

Devotionals | 5-52

Daily Lectionary for Lent | 53

Holy Week Service Schedule | 55



Introduction

Vision Statement of St. Luke's Atlanta:

We dream of being a courageous, diverse, healing, and justice-creating sanctuary for the heart of Atlanta.

Our church and its members yearn to create a sanctuary for the heart of Atlanta that fosters courage, diversity, healing and justice. But how do we do this? What changes do we need to make within ourselves to create sanctuary for each other and the community? And what does that sort of sanctuary look like?

Some of us may not know where to begin to answer these questions. Those who do may answer them differently than others. Yet each of us can strive to discern how best to become a parishioner who helps make our church that place of sanctuary. By undertaking that vision together, we can connect more deeply with God and each other.

This is the 25th year that members and friends of St. Luke's have contributed to a booklet of reflections. We hope you find ideas and experiences in these contributions that add meaning to your Lenten season as we aspire to create a sanctuary for others and ourselves and nurture that sanctuary at a critical time in the life of our church, our country, and the world.

Bill McCarty, Managing Editor
Debbie Newman, Managing Editor Emerita
Catherine McCarty, Editor
Sue Rohan, Editor
Jackie Saylor, Editor

Liturgy for Daily Devotionals

Becoming Still

Breathe in slowly and exhale slowly four times, calming your mind.
Be ready to listen and observe.

Invocation

God, open my heart and mind so that I may hear you.

Reflection for the Day

Read or view the reflection for today found in this booklet or email.

Contemplation

Consider this reflection. Does it relate to you? Your response?

Closing Prayers

Petitions and prayers. What do you wish to say to God today? For what are you most thankful?

Stillness

Be still and listen for God.

A Thorough Lint Cleaning

Probably not a good look to begin a Lenten devotional collection with a title containing the word “lint.” Neither a typo nor careless misspelling, this is a shameless wordplay.

Although fortunate enough to own a clothes dryer for all my marriage, I’ve had the misfortune for the last 28 of those years to have the dryer exhaust deposit its lint throughout more than 25 feet of ductwork. To avoid having a fire hazard and inefficient dryer, I’ve had to clean the ductwork periodically.

The observance of Lent is arguably like my periodic lint cleaning. We prepare for Easter Week by giving up something we like or taking on a discipline. Some believe this is to make ourselves presentable and worthy of God’s grace. After Easter, we resume our gluttonous, undisciplined, “dirty” ways, only to need another Lent cleaning the next year. As they say: “rinse and repeat.”

Particularly for those of us who’ve experienced a long lifetime of Lents, it’s easy to see each Lent this way and regard the cycle of liturgical seasons as a carousel taking us back each year to the same place where we began. Maybe that’s a misguided take on Lent—and on life. Rather than merely cleaning the ductwork, might we be using Lent to change and turn the ductwork so it will take us to a new place? Perhaps a bit of “repentance,” per the original Hebrew/Greek.

The Devotional Committee challenges you during this Lenten season to consider the place of sanctuary that St. Luke’s aspires to create and the challenging place where we now find our country and our society. Maybe we’re not destined to end our journey each year in the same place where we began. What might you and others hope to receive from the sanctuary we’re creating? What might you and others need to do to help create that sanctuary? We hope this collection of devotionals will help kindle in you a fire of contemplation and action that will take you and the parish to a new place. Dare we say to a sanctuary for all?

Bill is a cradle Episcopalian and lifelong Southerner from Nashville. He attended St. Luke’s as a young attorney in the mid-80s and returned to Atlanta in 2023 to retire. He has yet to catch his residence on fire.

Building My Faith

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” – Micah 6:8, NRSV

This passage from Micah provides me the foundation to build upon St. Luke’s vision of being a courageous, diverse, healing, and justice-creating sanctuary during this Lent.

It invites me to take a courageous inward look and commit to transformation. With God’s guidance, I’ll seek to make positive changes and pray for the courage to face my shortcomings.

Celebrating the diversity within the body of Christ, I’ll try to deepen my relationship with God while striving to better understand and appreciate the diverse perspectives of those around me.

For me Lent is a time for healing, for acknowledging my own brokenness. I’ll focus on strengthening relationships with God, myself, and others, trusting in God’s love to make us whole.

Micah 6.8 also reminds me to love myself at least as much as I love others as I work for justice in our community and beyond.

My prayer for Lent:

Loving God, this Lent, grant me the courage to examine my heart and commit to transformation. Help me appreciate the diverse body of Christ and seek healing for myself and our world. May I become a justice-creating sanctuary, sharing your love in Atlanta and beyond. In your holy name, I pray. Amen.

Wishing you a Holy Lent!

Don and his wife Sally became “St. Lukers” in 2019 and immediately fell in love with our parish. He credits writing news for The Diocese of Atlanta “catching people doing good” for opening his heart to God after the corrosive effects of decades as a journalist “catching people doing wrong.”

Sanctuary: an Island and a Friendship

I am drawn to islands, especially at times of change and challenge in my life. Islands are spaces with defined boundaries, a characteristic that lets me know where I am in the physical world. An island establishes a manageable spatial reality. It grants proximity to a larger body of water while offering control and safety from nature's stronger surrounding forces.

Some friendships offer a similar experience. They can be a welcoming space where thoughts are revealed, perspectives changed, new ideas born. Friendships can cultivate a willingness to listen to another's perspective.

During a time of personal change and challenge, I accepted Ashley Bryan's invitation to visit him in the hamlet of Islesford on Little Cranberry Island, located off the coast of Maine. Getting to the island marked the beginning of a pilgrimage. I traveled to the Atlanta airport, flew to Bangor, traveled on buses to Bar Harbor, and then through Acadia National Park to reach a harbor town, and finally boarded a mailboat out into the Atlantic to reach Islesford. What a joy to see Ashley standing on the dock, ready to welcome me into his world.

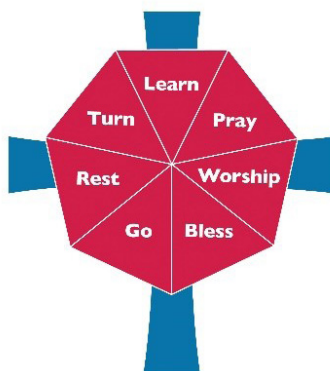
Host Ashley was a painter, author/illustrator, poet, stained glass artist, puppet maker, master teacher, and special friend. He told amazing stories. Ashley's greatest gift was his desire to hear your story. He saw anything that happened in a day not as an interruption but as an addition to the work of the moment. He affirmed the creative spirit as being a reality in everyone he met. He let that spirit bloom by encouraging conversations ranging from arts to the nature of creativity, philosophy, cooking (lobster!), poetry, African American folk tales, and so much more.

During my visit, I experienced influences of mindset, attitude, and spirit. I began to imagine a heartfelt way of being with individuals and groups. Stronger and better for cocooning within meaningful exchanges of mind and spirit in a place apart from everyday reality, I felt renewed and focused for the work ahead. Sanctuary.

Barbara joined St. Luke's in 1993. She is grateful for Ashley and all the gifts of 24 years of friendship. To read his obituary, see [nytimes.com/2022/02/09/books/ashley-bryan-dead.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/09/books/ashley-bryan-dead.html).

The Way of Love

In addition to devotionals created by members of St. Luke's, "The Way of Love" materials from The Episcopal Church will appear in this booklet on many of the Saturdays and Sundays of this Lent. For a deep dive into these materials, *see* www.episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove. The excerpts in this Lenten booklet are from "Introduction to the Way of Love."



THE WAY OF LOVE
Practices for Jesus-Centered Life

WHAT IS THE WAY OF LOVE?

The Way of Love is a way of life. More than a program or curriculum, it is a return to the ancient pathways and Rules of Life that followers of Jesus have observed for centuries. They knew the power of commitment to a core set of practices—Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest—and the power of gathering in a small group where you find love and support for living into these commitments. If we hope to not only worship Jesus but to grow more like him and bear his redeeming love in the world, we can adopt a rule of life like the Way of Love and find a community with which to practice it.

The Way of Love (cont.)

WHAT IS A RULE OF LIFE? HOW DO I BEGIN?

A Rule of Life* is an intentional commitment to a set of practices that provide guidance, rhythm and inspiration for living a beautiful, meaningful and holy life. As we place these practices at the heart of our daily lives and join with companions who share the commitment, we grow more and more in the unselfish, hope-filled Way of Love that Jesus embodied in the world.

EXPLORING AND LIVING THE PRACTICES

We invite you to take time exploring these practices for living a Jesus-centered life. Sit with the words from scripture and from the Book of Common Prayer, pray over the practice, reflect and discern where God is calling you, and note the “Helpful Terms” ** at the end if you want to learn a little more. And remember: no one follows Jesus all alone. The ideal way to live the Way of Love is in a community of love, support and accountability.

*** Rule of Life** (from the *Society of St. John the Evangelist and the Virginia Theological Seminary Center for the Ministry of Teaching*):

- The idea of a “Rule of Life” comes from the Latin word *regula* and suggests a way to regulate or regularize our lives to stay on an intentional path. A “Rule of Life” is not just a set of rules to live by; rather, it is a gentle framework to guide and support us on our way.
- A “Rule of Life” allows us to live with intention and purpose in the present moment. It helps us clarify our most important values, relationships, dreams and work.
- A “Rule of Life” is meant to be simple, realistic, flexible and achievable. It is a purposeful tool to help us grow into a more meaningful life with God.

**The “Helpful Terms” appear at the end of “Introduction to the Way of Love” at https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/way_of_love_introduction.pdf.

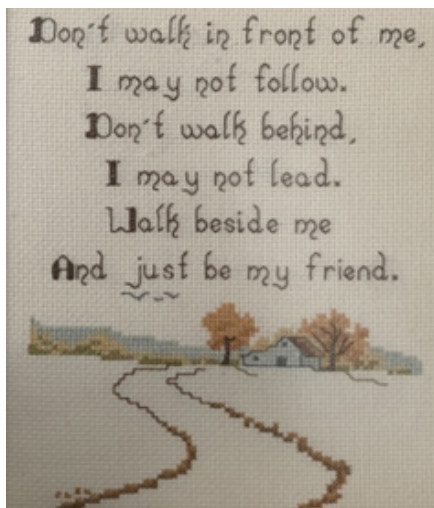
In *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck highlights the plight of the “Okies,” Oklahoma families displaced by corporate greed and drought. Their westward journey in search of work, safety and food mirrors the suffering of the Hebrews in Exodus. In California, they encounter hostility from townspeople and landowners, who, fearful of the migrants’ numbers, form armed squads and dehumanize the Okies as lazy and vulgar. This pattern of disregarding the suffering of others repeats throughout history, driven by fear and self-righteousness.

As I reflect on the novel, I empathize with those in need and aspire to be a sanctuary for the vulnerable. Yet I hear my ego’s voice judging and comparing. Not much has changed since Steinbeck’s novel. Today, identity has become even more rigid, with cultural values now signaled through social media personas. Naomi Klein, in her 2023 book *Doppelganger*, describes this as the “commodification of the self,” where people are reduced to labels—race, gender, political affiliation—and defined against the “other.” There is no liberal without a conservative, no godless heathen without a god-fearing Christian.

But what if we moved beyond these labels? Walt Whitman, in “Song of Myself,” writes, “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself. (I am large, I contain multitudes.)” His vision of the self is expansive, not confined by rigid identities. I pray that we, too, can be sanctuaries of healing and justice, viewing ourselves and others through the infinite heart of God. May we embrace our shared humanity rather than allowing the ego to shut us down or turn away. Perhaps we need to suggest our egos take a nap, then listen to the deeper call within. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to face it. This transformation is within our reach.

Becky is currently a nursery lady, a cook with the Courtland Street Ministries, and a part of the healing prayer team. Gifted with a wonderful family and group of friends, she continues her personal journey, loudly stumbling toward finding the divine spark in all of us.

In the past 12 months, I have been struck by how the past informs my present. By looking back and considering my relationships, life changes, and environmental factors throughout, I've been able to have a greater understanding of how God shows up and what steps may yet lie ahead of me. In December of 2023, my grandmother went on hospice care and passed away due to complications from dementia. Even though she left us long before she was gone, I felt her absence much more viscerally after my family gathered for her funeral. Gathering virtually with my cousins and sisters to write a collective eulogy gave the closure that I didn't know I needed and caused me to reflect on Grandmother's impact in my life.



Her name was Grace, a name which I feel she embodied to those around her, and most vividly to her grandchildren. When she moved out of her home in 2020, I was only interested in one item from her home: a framed cross stitch that always hung in her kitchen (pictured below). It's now in my kitchen and it represents the kind of person I hope to be. It informs the question I frequently ask myself: "What's mine to do?"

I may not be able to change the upstream causes of societal ills, but I can sit with a friend experiencing grief or loneliness. I may

not be able to change someone's mind, but I can offer a kind word about what their generosity meant to me or bring them a hot meal after surgery. This cross-stitch preaches a sermon to me, teaching that the kind of people who Christ calls us to be are friends who accompany one another on the journey.

Brooke and her husband, Drew, are Atlanta natives who live in Southwest Atlanta with an ever-growing collection of plants. She has been a member of St. Luke's for three years now.

I will never forget standing in the hallway of the funeral home, waiting with my family to enter the chapel for my Mom's funeral. Even though I was surrounded by family, I felt alone. Most everyone had their partner or spouse beside them for support as we waited for Mom's casket to reach us.

When we were ready to walk in, they opened the side doors of the chapel. I could only see four people sitting inside from where I stood, but those four people took my breath away. It's one of those moments I'll remember for the rest of my life.

Like a framed photograph, there sat four of my friends from St. Luke's looking forward to the lectern at the front of the chapel. They couldn't see me, but I wanted to cry when I saw them. I knew they were there to support me in my grief and loss.

I have never felt more loved and supported as I did in that moment. And the lonely feeling disappeared. My four friends had brought the sense of sanctuary we created together at St. Luke's to this random funeral home chapel in the City of Decatur.

That's the thing about sanctuary. It's something that transcends physical space. What we have, are, and will create at St. Luke's together is unlimited and far-reaching. This world needs us and all we have to share.

Debbie is grateful to those four friends who showed up for her on that cold, January day in 2018. You know who you are, and she's thankful each of you is still in her life.

Sanctuary

Will you be my refuge, my haven in the storm,
Will you keep the embers warm, when my fire's all but gone?
Will you remember, and bring me sprigs of rosemary,
Be my sanctuary till I can carry on, carry on, carry on.
In a state of true believers, on streets called "us" and "them,"
It's gonna take some time till the world feels safe again.

"Sanctuary" by Carrie Newcomer

In 2008, in Nakuru, Kenya, I met Joseph, a young Pentecostal pastor. He had begun to notice that, despite his church's pronouncements, it didn't welcome everyone; men far outnumbered women. He quickly discovered who was left out: single mothers, widows, lesbians and sex workers whom church leaders shunned, demonized and sent away.

In the pain of those rejected, Joseph heard God's call to do justice and to offer community and care—a place of sanctuary where the outcasts could belong and worship. He talked about God's inclusive love to all on Nakuru's streets who would listen. He was arrested and jailed, at the hands of his own church, for making these bold claims about God. Despite the abuses he suffered there, he returned to the streets, refusing to be silent.

Joseph concluded that those who were excluded were exactly who must be the church! So he gathered them, and together they began to share their stories of grace. They meet every Sunday to sing and pray and nurture their children. When I returned to Nakuru to install Joseph as the pastor of this new and growing joyful congregation, they numbered 43 women, 51 children and 3 men.

Sanctuary. Sacred Space. Safety and refuge.

During this particular Lenten season, which is full of anxiety and fear for many, may I—may we—ask Joseph's questions: Who is excluded? Who needs safety and refuge? What is God calling us to do? In the words of "Sanctuary," a song by Randy Lynn Scruggs and John W. Thompson, may each of us boldly petition:

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
Pure and holy, tried and true.
And with thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

Glenna is a retired clergyperson and a musician. She and her partner have been at St. Luke's since April 2020.

Living in God's Time

There is a deep human ache when we feel we are “losing time.” Moments slip through our fingers, hours vanish unnoticed, and seasons change with little warning. This sense of loss reminds us of our finite nature, where time is measured, counted, and feared for its passing. Yet, in these moments of perceived loss, we are invited into a greater mystery: living in God's time.

God's time, unlike ours, is not confined by clocks or calendars. It is eternal, boundless, and perfect. To live in God's time is to dwell in a divine presence, where every moment holds infinite value. Jesus, in John 15:9-17, reminds us to abide in his love—a love that spans what has been and what will be. Abiding in his love means remaining present, rooted in the eternal now of God's presence, where time is not lost but redeemed.

The Holy Spirit works in time like a gentle gardener, tending to our souls even when we are unaware. In the night, when we sleep and are unconscious of the passage of hours, God remains vigilant.

The “Keep Watch” Prayer for Mission (BCP 134) echoes this truth: “Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep.” It is a reminder that God's time does not falter or fade, even when we rest. God's spirit weaves grace into our lives in ways we cannot see, ensuring that nothing is wasted.

To live in God's time is to trust that our creator is working in every moment—past, present, and future. It calls us to surrender our anxiety about time and embrace the gift of being present. Jesus invites us to love as he has loved: a love that transcends time and enters into the eternal rhythm of God's heart.

In God's time, every moment is sacred. Each sunrise holds promise. Each sunset holds a lesson. Each night offers peace. Every breath is a testament to an abiding love. As we learn to abide in Christ, we discover that time is never lost. Instead, it becomes the vessel through which God's eternal purposes unfold, inviting us into the fullness of life.

The Rev. Joseph J. Rose is associate rector of congregational development and pastoral care at St. Luke's. He's a native of the Pacific Northwest and a former journalist. He holds a Master of Divinity from Yale University.

The Way of Love: Turn

TURN: PAUSE, LISTEN AND CHOOSE TO FOLLOW JESUS

As Jesus was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him. – Mark 2:14

“Do you turn to Jesus Christ ...?” – Book of Common Prayer, 302

Like the disciples, we are called by Jesus to follow the Way of Love. With God’s help, we can turn from the powers of sin, hatred, fear, injustice, and oppression toward the way of truth, love, hope, justice, and freedom. In turning, we reorient our lives to Jesus Christ, falling in love again, again, and again.

For Reflection and Discernment

- What practices help you to turn again and again to Jesus Christ and the Way of Love?
- How will (or do) you incorporate these practices into your rhythm of life?
- Who will be your companion as you turn toward Jesus Christ?

The Way of Love: Learn

LEARN: REFLECT ON SCRIPTURE EACH DAY, ESPECIALLY ON JESUS' LIFE AND TEACHINGS.

*“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”
– John 14:23*

Grant us so to hear [the Holy Scriptures], read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them. – Book of Common Prayer, 236

By reading and reflecting on Scripture, especially the life and teachings of Jesus, we draw near to God and God's word dwells in us. When we open our minds and hearts to Scripture, we learn to see God's story and God's activity in everyday life.

For Reflection and Discernment

- What ways of reflecting on Scripture are most life-giving for you?
- When will (or do) you set aside time to read and reflect on Scripture in your day?
- With whom will you share in the commitment to read and reflect on Scripture?

Stones: In Memoriam

“We were always good to our slaves,”
Miss Mary told the children,
Out of deference to her fathers’ past –
Or maybe fear of what she couldn’t say.

Later, walking down a dusty August path,
The children found a stand of ancient oaks,
And there, beneath the trees,
The filtered light revealed
Two rows of sunken, lichen-covered stones,
Almost buried by a century of leaves.

Nearby a leaning cabin
Sat on piles of crumbling ochre rocks
Once carried from the fields.
The opened door let in a little light
To show a rough, uneven floor
And walls of dingy, sallow white.

Then in a second, smaller room,
The children saw, although the light was nearly dusk,
A rusted, hand-forged iron chain,
Stretching down from wall to ankle height.

Sensing some significance,
Some history they’d not been told,
The children asked Miss Mary
What the chain had meant,
And what the story was of those who lay
Beneath the almost-buried stones.
The woman looked away.
“We were good to those slaves,”
She said – and that was all.

In time, Miss Mary died,
Having never told the story.
They laid her in the ancestral plot
And on her marble stone these words –
In Memoriam.

Cont.

Those who had been children did remember –
The sunken stones, the rusted chain, the questions of an August day.
And in their way they learned to tell the story –

At least it was one story,
If not what those beneath the stones would tell,
If ever they'd found words enough
For what they'd seen, and what they knew,
And what they'd never understood.

For whose story ever can be finally told,
Or fully understood.

Or even borne?

Whose half-remembered, half-imagined history is not,
Like histories of all our kind, a burden heavier than stone?

Claire is grateful for St. Luke's, a place where stories can be safely told.

“Sanctuary—a place of peace, a safe haven, a sacred refuge. It is our shelter in times of trial, an oasis for weary hearts, a harbor of hope, and a place of true belonging. In this Lenten season, may we strive to create and become that sanctuary for each other.” – Edwin Dill

As an openly gay man, my journey with St. Luke’s has been one of profound connection, challenge, and hope. I have found a community that embraces courage, diversity, and healing. The church’s vision to become “a courageous, diverse, healing, and justice-creating sanctuary for the heart of Atlanta” is not only an aspirational goal but a necessary one in today’s world. I am reminded of how vital it is for each of us to play a role in creating this sanctuary, bringing our full selves to the task.

True sanctuary begins with courage—the courage to show up, to be vulnerable, and to welcome others as they are. This has meant embracing my role within our community openly and without shame, allowing my presence and story to stand as a testament to God’s love for all. It has meant recognizing and lifting up those around me who are marginalized, ensuring they, too, feel God’s love through our collective actions.

To embody diversity, we can look beyond our differences and focus on what unites us. Each of us brings unique gifts, perspectives, and experiences. In a world often divided, we have the power to showcase unity in diversity. We can let go of judgments, release fears, and practice radical inclusion.

To be a “healing” presence we can actively support one another with shared empathy, understanding, and a willingness to carry each other’s burdens. When we do this, we move closer to being the sanctuary we envision, where justice and love flow freely.

Entering Lent, let us reflect on the changes needed to create this sanctuary for ourselves and the broader community. By living into this vision, we honor our faith and deepen our connection to God and each other, creating a true sanctuary for the heart of Atlanta.

Edwin, a member of St. Luke’s for eight years, is a dedicated non-profit professional serving our community. A native Southerner, he spent 25 years in New York City and Miami working in the financial industry before returning to the South. He now calls Midtown home, where he lives with his Beagle, Andy.

One of my favorite persons in the Bible is Joseph, a dreamer. During two of his dreams, God used “sheaves in the field” and the “sun and the moon” to illustrate His plan for Joseph and the people of Israel. (Gen. 37:5-9, KJV) Joseph had no idea his brothers would try to harm him or send him away. His adventures in the Bible were unexpected, challenging and sometimes humiliating, but through it all, he relied on God to see it through on his behalf.

In the context of St. Luke’s vision, dreaming refers to “A cherished aspiration, ambition, or ideal.” (Google Dictionary) As members of St. Luke’s, we are challenged to come to the table as “we are,” people of God who are sometimes broken, scared, or unworthy, and we dream for the courage to accept that we are those things. We must learn to understand the past, accept or not accept it, and come to the present table where all are welcome. Dreaming involves the courage to realize that a dream may change based on changes in the environment, people, or resources.

I can identify with Joseph’s dreaming and God’s visitation. As a member of St. Luke’s for more than 30 years, I have experienced some of the challenges that Joseph experienced. Like Joseph, in my challenges I saw God’s hands at work changing biases, challenging norms, offering acceptance, and working on me as well. I had to learn to look beyond biases and norms based on my experiences or the experiences of others and see each person I encountered as the individual God created them to be.

My contribution to the vision is to continue to allow God to make the changes in me that are acceptable in His sight. I pray daily for guidance and forgiveness for the times I have judged unfairly, been quick to say or do harmful things, or have not shown respect or dignity to those I encounter. I will strive to do my part to help us achieve our vision.

Jeronia has been a member of St. Luke’s for more than 30 years and is the lay leader for Courtland Street Mission, a new member of the Daughters of the King, an intercessor, and a Prayers of the People reader. She loves St. Luke’s and its community of faith.



Photo Credit: Kate Kennedy, Venice , Italy, 2022

Let us never forget our call to illuminate God in all the corners of the earth. Let us go forth into the world to love and serve the Lord—to be the word, deed, and hope of God in the sanctuary of creation.

Kate Kennedy recently served as the Minister of Community Discernment at St. Luke's. She and her family have been at St Luke's for almost 20 years. She is grateful for the community that has supported her work and her dreams.

The Barabbas Problem

As someone who can't resist a rabbit hole, I dove deep this year into the Barabbas vignette of our Passion narrative. What is the point of this story?

All four Gospels tell of Pilate's decision to free him instead of Jesus, but their versions differ. Matthew and Mark claim Pilate customarily pardoned a prisoner during Passover, but John says it was a Jewish custom. Mark and Luke claim Barabbas was an insurrectionist; to John, a thief; to Matthew, a "notorious prisoner." They all agree, though, that the Jews insisted Barabbas be spared instead of Jesus.

After hours of research, I found there is little historical evidence beyond the Gospels that Passover Pardon was a custom or even happened in this one instance. So why does it appear in all four Gospels? There was tension between Judaism and the early Christians by the time the Gospels were written, and maybe that context is worth considering.

But what if we focused instead on what is unsaid in the Gospel accounts? Would Jesus, who did not sift the worthy from the unworthy, even have consented to accepting the pardon while another hung from the cross? My faith hinges on the answer to this question far more than the resurrection. Like Maximillian Kolbe at Auschwitz, I believe Jesus would die as much for Barabbas in the literal sense as for any of us in the spiritual sense.

Through this lens, then, perhaps Barabbas is not a sideshow in the Passion story but its entire point. Maybe God is calling us to find Barabbas in our time, the one who exists in the margins and who are targeted by the powerful for exclusion from our common fold—and lift them up for a place in our faith narrative.

How does God call us to stand with and for those society deems unworthy today? I am using this season of Lent to reflect on how I can be an instrument of God's grace rather than just a recipient of it, for we must all be Her Paschal candle in the darkness to come. Amen.

Lynsey is a criminal defense attorney and visiting assistant professor at Emory Law School.

The Way of Love: Pray

PRAY: DWELL INTENTIONALLY WITH GOD DAILY

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” – Luke 11:1

“Lord, hear our prayer.” – Book of Common Prayer

Jesus teaches us to come before God with humble hearts, boldly offering our thanksgivings and concerns to God or simply listening for God’s voice in our lives and in the world. Whether in thought, word or deed, individually or corporately, when we pray we invite and dwell in God’s loving presence.

For Reflection and Discernment

- What intentional prayer practices center you in God’s presence, so you can hear, speak, or simply dwell with God?
- How will (or do) you incorporate intentional prayer into your daily life?
- With whom will you share in the commitment to pray?

The Way of Love: Worship

WORSHIP: GATHER IN COMMUNITY WEEKLY TO THANK, PRAISE, AND DWELL WITH GOD

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. – Luke 24:30-31

*Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.
People: We lift them to the Lord.*

– Book of Common Prayer, 361

When we worship, we gather with others before God. We hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, give thanks, confess, and offer the brokenness of the world to God. As we break bread, our eyes are opened to the presence of Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are made one body, the body of Christ sent forth to live the Way of Love.

For Reflection and Discernment

- What communal worship practices move you to encounter God and knit you into the body of Christ?
- How will (or do) you commit to regularly worship?
- With whom will you share the commitment to worship this week?

One of the only times in my life that I observed a true fast was around 1995, when I attended a 4-day Sufi Retreat in Carroll County. I was there in support of some friends from the University of West Georgia who were, in addition to being Episcopalians, devout members of the Sufi Order. My little fast from anything other than water or juice, lasted 4 days. Many were beginning 7-day and 30-day fasts.

According to Wikipedia and Church Teachings, Lent is a period of grief that ends with the great celebration of Easter. The purpose of Lent seems to be the preparation of the believer for Easter through prayer, repentance of sins, almsgiving, simple living, and self-denial. That's a lot! What to do?

In Lent, they say, many Christians commit to fasting, as well as giving up some luxuries in imitation of Christ's sacrifice during his journey into the desert for 40 days; this is known as one's Lenten sacrifice. Many Lent-observing Christians also add a Lenten spiritual discipline, such as reading a daily devotional or praying through a Lenten calendar, to draw themselves near to God.

That 4-day fast that I did back then was so humbling, yet clarifying, for me. I got some spiritual clarity that, combined with various Sufi practices, enhanced and clarified my devotion to the Episcopal Church and The Anglican Community.

From Matthew 16:24, NASB 1995: "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'" Whatever you do or don't do for Lent, my Prayer for all of us is that the practices provide spiritual clarity. The Prayer of the Holy Cross is this:

Almighty God, whose beloved Son willingly endured the agony and shame of the cross for our redemption: Give us courage, we beseech thee, to take up our cross and follow Him; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*
– *Book of Common Prayer*, 201

Philip is a native of Atlanta and an Episcopalian of 54 years. He is Vice President and Risk Manager for a large regional bank. Hobbies are golf, reading, and traveling. He loves St. Luke's and finds it the most grounding part of his life.

A dank, dark tomb ... a sanctuary? The place where Jesus was laid after his brutal crucifixion is precisely that: a sacred haven for the three-day repose of his lifeless body. Throughout His ministry, Jesus offered sanctuary to many: the marginalized, lepers, demoniacs, tax collectors, adulterers and countless others. One might say Jesus was the first advocate for inclusion. Not everyone jumped on His bandwagon. In fact, many railed against it.

During the somber Lenten season, we are moving from the darkness of the tomb to the scintillating light of Easter morning. I write this on the eve of my late mother's 93rd birthday. She died nine years ago. Few days pass that I don't think of her, wishing she were here. In many ways, my mother was my sanctuary, my safe place. Kind, gentle and no-nonsense, my mother would do anything for those she loved, especially her children. She was our biggest advocate, which was especially important to me, since my decision to train as a classical musician was not necessarily going to pay the bills. That did not matter to her; she knew music was one of my sanctuaries. One of my greatest regrets is that I didn't have the opportunity to express some things to my mother before aggressive dementia clouded her mind. I hid things in a dark tomb. But she knew some important things about me and loved me regardless.

As I approach the close of my 60th trip around the sun, I am who I am, period. I no longer feel the need to hide. My sanctuary has been and always shall be the love from my church, parents, siblings, and friends. Jesus wouldn't have cared one iota about what I have hidden, and those who know me don't either. I hope you can step out of the darkness into the sanctuary of love and light this Easter and every day.

Chris wishes his dear St. Luke's family a peaceful, contemplative Lent and a blessed, joyous Happy Easter. He is grateful for the clergy and his friends at St. Luke's and to be a part of the sanctuary. He begins his next trip around the sun this day (March 25).

Music as Sanctuary

Music transports us. When stuck in Atlanta traffic, all we need to do is turn on some music to travel to a more pleasant place—perhaps a place and time in our life where, figuratively speaking, there was little traffic, and only a promising future stood ahead of us. If the song is from our adolescence, it may raise fond or awkward memories of having “learned about love” even if the lesson didn’t go too far (“Taxi,” 1972, written and performed by Harry Chapin).

Musicals and operas combine such “transportational” music with fantastic costumes, elaborate sets, and sometimes-salient props. They give us the virtual experience of being there with the performers. Of course, the performers rarely break the fourth wall separating them from the audience—except, of course, when a young performer at an elementary school program greets their parents in the audience with the utmost exuberance.

Music is central to most church services, and it can help transport us to many places. At St. Luke’s, God becomes present through the transcendent music, colorful liturgical vestments, stained glass, beautiful flowers, and talented “performers.” These performers, of course, are not merely acting, and they are always breaking the fourth wall. Indeed, you are part of the performance. It’s a celebration, display, and experience of God’s unconditional love. You have already been cast to play a role and, if you choose, an important one.

Church music has transported me to various places over my long Episcopal life. In each one I have truly “learned about love.” God’s enduring presence touches me especially when we sing out Hymn 482, known as “Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy.” It captures the essence of the sanctuary we are creating at St. Luke’s. I close with its third verse:

Lord of all kindliness, Lord of all grace,
your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace:
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

– Words by Jan Struther; music Slane, Irish ballad melody

Bill is a cradle Episcopalian and lifelong Southerner from Music City (of course). His lifetime musical involvement includes singing in church choirs and playing base guitar. He’s also a percussionist (if a vehicle’s center console and steering column constitute percussion instruments).

My first encounter with horror was a children's book of Bible stories filled with carnage, infanticide, exile, and the heartbreaking loss of home, life, safety, and loved ones. But these were only stories, right? And wasn't all that brutality long-distant history?

As an eight-year-old, I learned it was not. A terrifying Old Testament story gripping my imagination, I asked my father, "When was the last time there was a war?" Imagine my shock when he told me there were still wars, that wars were going on *at that very moment! All over the world!*

I still cringe and close my eyes to on-screen violence and pass on highly recommended graphic novels and streaming series because I just can't take the cruelty. Yet I feel an obligation to be aware of and prayerful about war and persecution throughout the world, not just in certain places.

As I write, the Sudanese civil war has killed an estimated 150,000 people and displaced some 12 million. ([see npr.org/2024/10/03/nx-s1-5133541/war-sudan-health-care-hospital-omdurman-humanitarian-crisis](https://www.npr.org/2024/10/03/nx-s1-5133541/war-sudan-health-care-hospital-omdurman-humanitarian-crisis)) The greatest numbers of refugees resettled in Georgia have been displaced by violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Syria. ([see unrefugees.org/news/five-things-to-know-about-refugees-in-atlanta](https://www.unrefugees.org/news/five-things-to-know-about-refugees-in-atlanta)) Yet most Sundays, in our Prayers of the People, those countries go unnamed while we pray especially for those that the conflicts in Israel, Palestine and Ukraine have affected.

Why do we frequently turn our focus to those two war zones in particular? Are the other countries and their conflicts too unfamiliar? Do we assume that war is the natural state of certain societies, violence the pitiable but normal plight of certain races? Are we simply more mindful of our personal stake—complicity?—in Ukraine and the Holy Land as U.S. citizens and residents? Are we justly focused on the world conflicts that create the most anxiety at and around St. Luke's because "We dream of being a courageous, diverse, healing, and justice-creating sanctuary *for the heart of Atlanta?*"

Perhaps, in the end, our prayers resemble the filtered and partial vision of a person who watches a scary movie through fingers spread before her eyes. We are caught between wanting to look away and needing to witness the horror unfolding before us, between flinching and facing our greatest fears. We can only take so much terror in real life. The real horror is also the real blessing: our personal ability and responsibility to act.

Kristina Watkins Mormino and her son, James Henson, have attended St. Luke's since 2015.

I absolutely believe in the power of prayer. It's our direct line of communication with our Creator. Like many, I often feel my prayers are not answered either as quickly as I would like or in the manner I'd like. But I usually find that once I get my ego out of the way, God was giving me God's answer all along. All I needed to do was stand atop the table, just as Robin Williams did in *Dead Poets Society*, instead of continuing to sit at the table, waiting for God to show up.

I've often read that as Christians, we're eager to participate in the celebration of Easter and avoid the work of Lent. Sound familiar? Let's face it, real change is a long, slow slugfest, and it seems fundamental to our very nature to dislike slow progress. Hence wars instead of the long, arduous process of diplomacy. It is indeed a long process to change a human heart. I suppose God knows that.

So keep it simple. Love God, love neighbor. Let me reiterate: LOVE GOD, LOVE NEIGHBOR. These are commandments from our Lord, not suggestions. And on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. In other words, the entire Old Testament, summed up here. "And who is my neighbor?" someone once asked me. That's not important. What's important is that we try to BE a neighbor, as our Lord explained in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

But in our brokenness and distance from our basic holiness, we can't do that alone. We really do need help from our Creator. That brings us back to the prayer thing, our direct hotline to the Almighty. Have you been in touch lately? Often?

What do you think? Are you still sitting at the table, waiting for God to show up?

Toni is a cradle Episcopalian who prefers the solemnity of High Mass to more contemporary versions. She has lately begun a new practice of preparing for bedtime and evening prayer by doing yoga while softly playing the music of Gregorian chants.

The Way of Love: Bless

BLESS: SHARE FAITH AND UNSELFISHLY GIVE AND SERVE

“Freely you have received; freely give.” – Matthew 10:8

Celebrant: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: We will, with God’s help.

– Book of Common Prayer, 305

Jesus called his disciples to give, forgive, teach, and heal in his name. We are empowered by the Spirit to bless everyone we meet, practicing generosity and compassion and proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ with hopeful words and selfless actions. We can share our stories of blessing and invite others to the Way of Love.

For Reflection and Discernment

- What are the ways the Spirit is calling you to bless others?
- How will (or does) blessing others – through sharing your resources, faith, and story – become part of your daily life?
- Who will join you in committing to the practice of blessing others?

Six Word Spiritual Journey

God dances.

In that, I live.



Photo by Marek Piwnicki on Unsplash (unsplash.com/photos/the-sun-is-setting-over-the-ocean-waves-15dWG1BKOVE)

The Rev. P. Kimberleigh Jordan is Minister for Formation, Community Ministries & Creative Arts here at St. Luke's. She is a mom of two beautiful young adults, and she and her beloved spouse, the Rev. John Vaughn, will celebrate twenty-five years of marriage this summer.

In this season of anticipation, we are reminded to pray, take on a new commitment (or fast), and be charitable. *But am I listening?* I have often asked that of a younger person in my life or my partner, but what about me?

Each Sunday, I have been joining St. Luke's by livestream. This gives me a bird's-eye view of our congregation, which reminds me that we are nothing if not a menagerie of compassionate personalities. We have tremendous skills and amusing temperaments, are generous in spirit and charitable, and come from a variety of cultures. We are committed and diligent, are fixers and are all seeking paths to ties that bind.

But are we listening? How would we be seen or judged, if we did not collaborate or volunteer? Oh, but we do.

But are we listening? Writer Brian Morton reminds us "The world ... is bound together not by protons and electrons, but by stories." Yevgeny Yevtushenko wrote in the poem "People":

Everyone has his own secret, private world.

In that world is a finest moment.

In that world is a tragic hour,
but it is all unknown to us.

That is, until we listen.

Now is the season for me to practice mindfulness by courageously stepping up and stepping into the messiness I know is in our world. But I should be mindful not to try to fix others as I would have their lives look to me, but rather to try to help them as they choose to receive. May I learn to hold others, respect their requests, listen to their stories and remain curious.

Father Kevin Conroy, who served the "poorest of the poor," said that we should go where we are needed but not wanted and stay until we are wanted but not needed. Might this apply to the hard work that St. Luke's has ahead of it as it pursues its vision?

I invite us to be gentle with ourselves. I will be attempting to step up by stepping back into an abundance of experiences (some earned wisdom) and listening. I pray for the courage to be mindful of all beings.

Through God's help, we got this. Oh, what a beautiful tapestry we can be!

Michele has been a member of St. Luke's since 1984, sharing her home with Figaro, her non-sighted, American Short-Hair cat, who reminds her what it means to walk and leap and play by faith.

“*Can’t* we all just get along?”

It’s a simple phrase. In 1992 it became a popular paraphrase of a statement made by Rodney King in response to the Los Angeles riots that broke out after the acquittal of the police officers who were caught on video beating him. At the time commentators criticized the phrase as too simplistic, people are never going to get along; it’s human nature they opined.

Did we take what the commentators said as an excuse to justify how we treat others who are different or don’t agree with us? I hope not. There’s a huge difference between disagreeing with or being annoyed by someone, which is human nature, and depriving them of their basic human rights because they are different from us.

St. Luke’s vision statement, “We dream of being a courageous, diverse, healing and justice-creating sanctuary for the heart of Atlanta,” is the embodiment of that simple phrase.

“Can’t we all just get along?” Getting along doesn’t mean that we all have to agree with each other or all move in lockstep.

“Getting along” is people with diverse opinions, experiences, beliefs, etc. looking beyond the differences, to find common humanity. Common humanity is found by accepting others as they are, not how we think they should be. We may not know what happened to make them as they are. Finding that common humanity is a guiding principle at St. Luke’s.

Alice has been a member of St Lukes for 2 years, finding it a genuinely welcoming parish.

When I discovered this amazing place called St. Luke's, I remember thinking how large the place felt. Yet the people were so welcoming that I didn't feel lost in the crowd as I did at other large churches I had attended in the past. I also knew getting to know people was the best way to connect with others, but how to go about doing that?

Not long after I had begun attending, St. Luke's started promoting the Annual Parish Retreat at Kanuga. I was fascinated by the idea of a parish retreat because this Baptist-raised girl had never experienced such a thing. Then John Earles did a pop-up during a Sunday service to talk about Kanuga and how his family never missed attending. I decided to sign up and just go for it.

From start to finish, I was in awe of this event called Kanuga. I showed up in North Carolina knowing absolutely no one. I had been communicating via email with Mark Simmons, but that was it.

Throughout the weekend I was befriended by various people who are still dear friends to this day. I participated in absolutely everything so I could get a feel for who these people were who made up St. Luke's. And everywhere I turned in the mountains of North Carolina, I experienced that sense of a welcoming community I'd found in our physical sanctuary in Atlanta.

Sanctuary can be a place, a person or a collection of both. In my experience, St. Luke's knows both how to create sanctuary and how to offer that same sanctuary outside the four walls of the nave.

Debbie is grateful to have found St. Luke's and all the amazing people that make up our sanctuary.



The Braves' World Series Victory Parade passes right in front of St. Luke's, so why not come down and watch as a community.

If you decide to come tomorrow at noon there are some things you need to know:

- The Guild of Ring Changers will ring the bells during the parade.
- No church parking in lots off Peachtree. (We don't know when APD will close Peachtree Street and reopen it, so we don't want people to get stuck.)
- Limited parking in the Courtland Street lot – please consider taking MARTA or carpooling.
- Bathrooms in the Bell Tower will be open to the public.

“‘Come,’ He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.” – Matt. 14:29

Stepping into life's challenges often feels like stepping out of a boat into the unknown. Fear and uncertainty can weigh heavily, yet faith invites trust—not in personal strength, but in God's steady hand.

In November 2021, an email arrived with an invitation to join the Atlanta Braves' World Series Victory Parade.

What would have been

an easy “yes,” just a couple years before now included the words fear and anxiety. Crowds, long avoided, felt intimidating. The thought of gathering again brought hesitation after so much time away from gatherings during the pandemic.

The email offered a gentle nudge: “The Braves' World Series Victory Parade passes right in front of St. Luke's, so why not come down and watch as a community?” It included a photo of a cheering crowd—an image that sparked a longing to participate, though it looked over stimulating and felt unknown.

Faith often asks for action despite hesitation. Much like Peter stepping out of the boat, moving forward requires trust in the One who calls.

The decision to attend the parade wasn't made lightly, but with a spark of faith, the step was taken.

I am a huge sports fan and an artist. I watched every game of the World Series and painted through the breaks. The brush moved across the canvas as hope and inspiration grew with every win. A new painting began to take shape—not just of Atlanta and the Braves, but as a reflection of faith

Cont.

in something greater. Freddie Freeman, my favorite player, a leader both on and off the field, became the central muse. Each stroke became an act of hope, painted with the belief that perseverance could lead to victory, even when the outcome remained unknown.

On the day of the parade, the “Untitled World Series 2021” painting seemed almost complete, but not quite. Something was missing. Then came the decision to add Freeman’s #5—a bold yet prayerful finishing touch. The paint dried just in time to carry the artwork on the MARTA train and into the cheering crowds. It was so cool seeing a diverse variety of faces and ages again. I didn’t know everyone’s names, but I was in community with my extended family,

The parade was more than a celebration; it was a moment of reconnection. The vibrant energy of the crowd brought joy, and the act of being present felt like a victory in itself.

Even more, my painting caught the attention of other Braves fans, and ... get this, Freddie Freeman and his family! The unexpected recognition added a personal reminder of what happens when faith overcomes fear.

Faith doesn’t remove all challenges; the storm didn’t calm immediately when Peter walked on water. But the presence of Jesus provided strength. Stepping out in faith, whether into a crowd or into life’s unknowns, is about trusting that God’s hands are always there to steady the way.

Prayer:

Lord, Your call to “come” is heard even in life’s most uncertain moments. When fear threatens to hold back, grant the courage to step forward. Let each step be guided by trust in Your presence and promises. Strengthen the heart to face challenges with faith, knowing that Your hands are always beneath every step. Amen.

Supporting Scripture:

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” – 2 Cor. 5:7

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” – Ps. 119:105

Music:

“Look Heart, No Hands” (written by Trey Bruce and Russell Smith; recorded by Randy Travis).

“Overpass Graffiti” (written and produced by Ed Sheeran, Johnny McDaid and Fred Gibson; performed by Ed Sheeran).

Lorrie Anne is a member of St. Luke’s and serves as a lector. She is a multi-media sustainable artist and founding team member of “The Envisions,” an international consulting firm dedicated to faith and creativity while walking in Christ’s love daily.

I spend most of my life thinking about prison in ways that both test and strengthen my faith. Let me explain.

Over the last 40 years, our country has systematically committed to sending more people to prison for longer amounts of time. We incarcerate more people per capita than any other country. And nothing about our prison system is “first world.” Once caught, nonviolent people often become violent just to endure the brutal conditions. I have clients who have survived prison-related trauma I cannot fathom. Incarceration changes people, rarely for the better.

What happens once the debt is paid? Research shows that most former offenders will be rearrested within three years because we set them up for failure. They have spent years isolated from their support systems but must immediately adjust to civilized society. And good luck finding a job that pays a living wage. Once you are branded a felon, affordable housing assistance, nutrition benefits, education grants and loans, and many other pillars of our social safety net are unavailable. Even getting a driver’s license and transportation access can be a struggle.

If you are a product of this system, hope can feel illusory because in a very real sense it is. Choices have been made to permanently exclude justice-impacted people from the American dream. These choices have dramatically transformed families and communities, fed on racial tension, and threatened the basic survival of the most vulnerable among us—all while doing very little to make us safer and arguably making us less safe.

Where is God in this? We know, but we choose not to remember. God waits in the prison cell for us to answer Her call. (Matt. 25:36, 43) It is in prisons that I have felt God speaking most loudly and clearly to my heart and where I have found my vocational and spiritual purpose in life.

St. Luke’s new prison ministry is working to answer God’s call from the lonely cell. Our work will grow and evolve as we learn more about how best to offer hope to those affected by the criminal justice system. We hope you will join us.

Lynsey is a criminal defense attorney and visiting assistant professor at Emory Law School.

The Way of Love: Go

GO: CROSS BOUNDARIES, LISTEN DEEPLY AND LIVE LIKE JESUS

Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” – John 20:21

*Send them into the world in witness to your love.
– Book of Common Prayer, 306*

As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he sends us beyond our circles and comfort, to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God with our lips and with our lives. We go to listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community,* a people reconciled in love with God and one another.

For Reflection and Discernment

- To what new places or communities is the Spirit sending you to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God?
- How will you build into your life a commitment to cross boundaries, listen carefully, and take part in healing and reconciling what is broken in this world?
- With whom will you share in the commitment to go forth as a reconciler and healer?

* **Beloved Community:** A community dedicated to the dream of dignity and abundant life for all, where people see themselves and others as beloved children of God, and “where the good of all is the quest of each” (Clarence Skinner). It is the body within which we grow to love God, love our neighbors, love ourselves and love creation. The phrase is widely known for its use by Martin Luther King Jr., <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community>.

We were short one devotional, and to spare you from having to read yet another one written by our managing editor, we asked artificial intelligence (AI) to produce one for us based on the substance of St. Luke's vision statement. ChatGPT checked all of the boxes, so to speak, and it even quoted some pertinent Bible verses. But, our new AI parishioner utterly failed to capture the creativity, warmth, and depth of thought displayed by the devotionals that all of you humans submitted. We thank you for your submissions and ask you to keep this ministry in mind for future years. To paraphrase Edmund Burke, John Stuart Mill, or whoever said the original: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of AI is for humans to do nothing." Here we go:

In the heart of Atlanta, where the pulse of the city beats with the rhythms of many lives, we are called to dream. To dream of a sanctuary—not a building or a place, but a community where courage, diversity, healing, and justice flow freely like a river through the streets. This dream is not only about what can be but also about what *should be*—a city where every person, regardless of background, feels seen, heard, and valued.

The Scriptures remind us that “where there is no vision, the people perish.” (Prov. 29:18) As we look to the future of Atlanta, we must dream boldly—dream of a place where people of all colors, cultures, and stories are woven together in a tapestry of unity, celebrating the beauty of each individual. Atlanta is a city with deep roots in both struggle and resilience, from the Civil Rights Movement to the present moment. The courage to step forward, to love beyond fear, and to stand for justice in the face of adversity is part of the legacy that calls us.

This sanctuary is one of healing. We live in a world often fractured by division, pain, and brokenness. But Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28) We are invited to create spaces where the wounded can find comfort and where the weary can find rest. The sanctuary we dream of is not just a retreat from the world, but a place of transformation where individuals and communities alike find restoration.

Finally, this sanctuary will be one of justice—where the oppressed are uplifted, the marginalized are given voice, and all people are treated with dignity and respect. As we dream, let us embody the truth of Isaiah 1:17: “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.”

May our dream for Atlanta be one that reflects God's kingdom—a place where courage, diversity, healing, and justice create a beautiful, ever-growing sanctuary for all.

“Where Are You?” (Part I)

When I lived in Oregon, I would take my daughters camping at Lost Lake in the deep Cascade mountains.

As the summer sun dropped away, we would often hear the call of a single loon greet the twilight. For me, that bird call, both longing and hopeful for a reply in the dark, was a reminder of God’s mission. It not only echoed God’s missionary act of creating the heavens and the earth, but God’s first call to humanity when we rebelled and hid in fear in the Garden. God called to God’s lost children: “Where are you?”

An invitation: The next time you are at St. Luke’s or you are in fellowship with other parishioners, listen for God’s call: “Where are you?”

In Genesis 3:9, when God asks humankind that question, we get a glimpse of God’s sacred and eternal character. God who, from the beginning, longed to be with us, to be so close to us that God took on fragile flesh as Jesus of Nazareth to walk, weep, laugh, and suffer with us.

It is a question not born of ignorance but of invitation. God, who knows all, seeks not to locate humankind physically but to draw us into a moment of self-awareness. “Where are you?” is a question God asks each of us, inviting us to pause and reflect on our spiritual journey.

This question calls us to step away from the busy-ness of life and take an honest inventory of our hearts. Are we abiding in God’s love, or have we drifted into patterns of fear, distraction, complacency, or loneliness? The question could even be heard with a lonely echo through time: “Where are you?” Could it be that God is lonely without us? God needs to be with us?

Where are we? Are we living out the core values of St. Luke’s – love, service, humility, and faith? Or are we merely going through the motions?

The Rev. Joseph J. Rose is associate rector of congregational development and pastoral care at St. Luke’s. He is a native of the Pacific Northwest and a former journalist. He holds a Master of Divinity from Yale University.

“Where Are You?” (Part II)

In the Garden, humanity followed our own will instead of God’s will, we wounded and distorted our relationship with God, each other, and creation. But as the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer states, “God is love.”

God continues to call to us in infinite love. At the heart of that love is a mission of healing, liberation and reconciliation. It is a love yearning to make everything whole again. It is a divine love made uniquely incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. Ultimately, God’s mission is to reconcile all people to unity with God and our neighbors in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

To ask, “Where am I?” is to align ourselves with God’s desire for intimacy and growth. It is not a question of judgment but of grace—a gentle nudge toward renewal.

Take time today to sit with this question. Where are you in your relationship with God? Where are you in living out God’s mission? Trust that God meets you wherever you are, inviting you to deeper communion and a life rooted in holy purposes. God’s question is always an invitation to come closer.

Just like yesterday, the Rev. Joseph J. Rose is associate rector of congregational development and pastoral care at St. Luke’s. He is a native of the Pacific Northwest and a former journalist. He holds a Master of Divinity from Yale University.

Lent is my favorite church season. It was during Lent that I first identified with the human side of the adult Jesus. After John baptized Jesus, “the Holy Spirit descended upon him,” and a voice from heaven declared: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22, *NRVS*) Jesus was then led by the Spirit into the wilderness. (Luke 4:1)

St. Luke’s vision statement compels us to use this season of Lent to ask Jesus to show us our strengths and weaknesses and what changes He desires for us individually so that, collectively, we will fulfill that vision.

The “L” in Lent means learning from and listening to Jesus. It’s during this season that I ask Jesus to teach me how to become more like Him.

The “E” in Lent means examining and existing to me. It’s during this period of time that I examine my priorities and make a concerted effort to see if changes are needed. I also either fast or I give up something that I love eating. This opens me to being more receptive to hearing God’s voice.

The “N” in Lent means negating or correcting any words that are not the truth. During Jesus’ time in the desert, He had to negate the devil’s words by quoting correctly the written words of the Bible. (Luke 4:3-14) In my life, negating means not allowing the negative words of the devil or others who think they are helping impact my truth.

The “T” in Lent means transitioning to me. After the forty days on the mountain, Jesus was filled with the power of the Spirit when He returned to Galilee to begin His ministry. (Luke 4:14-22) At the end of Lent, I also begin to make the changes in my life to reflect what I learned during Lent. With newfound awareness, I start a new journey to becoming more Christ like.

As members of St. Luke’s, we must transition from dreaming to doing. We must discern what practices can best make our dreams a reality.

Jeronia has been a member of St. Luke’s for more than 30 years and is active in several ministries.

From “Why Me?” to “Why Not Me?”

A desperate cry of “Why me?” is often what initially drives people to church. Granted, as a cradle Episcopalian, my parents were what initially drove me to church, but, for the never-churched or those who have left the church, life’s hardships—or a particularly big personal tragedy—may be what prompts them to cast (or again cast) their shadow across the threshold of a church’s sanctuary in hopes of finding a suitable answer to the question: “Why me?”

Some churches answer the question with a message that their imperfections and failings (i.e., sins) are the reason. If only they would satisfy the condition of accepting Jesus as their personal savior, they would experience God’s “unconditional” love. Maybe the “deal” would even provide them a life of prosperity.

In contrast, St. Luke’s guides anyone seeking sanctuary to ask the better question; the one Jesus guided us to ask: “Why not me?” Jesus’ acts and words manifest that the leper, the paralytic, the man with the withered hand, the woman in the crowd who touched His clothes, the Gentile woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit, Bartimaeus (a blind beggar), even tax collectors and other “sinners”—dare we say even attorneys?—were all worthy of God’s healing powers and unconditional love.

And so, why don’t you ask: “Why not me?”

St. Luke’s also challenges us to ask the why-not-me question in another respect. Sanctuary is not just a place. It’s a community, and a community needs its members to nurture and heal each other, to guide others in discernment, and sometimes even to step up to organize and lead. If it weren’t for the total absence of any ulterior motives, deception, and connivance, St. Luke’s could be accused of shrewdly and opportunistically bringing you in by offering you God’s unconditional love only to turn you into a purveyor of spiritual gifts, eager to get others hooked on the irresistible peace that passes all understanding.

And so I ask: “Why not you?”

Bill is a cradle Episcopalian and lifelong Southerner from Nashville. He attended St. Luke’s as a young attorney (i.e., sinner) in the mid-80s and returned to Atlanta in 2023 to retire (i.e., stop sinning).

Rose of Sharon



Tiny one
tucked into the base
of the oak

Wind brought you
I guess or maybe
a squirrel

Unnoticed
these warm summer days
up to now

Your soft voice
in violet hue
just said h'lo

I almost
missed you I whisper
but thank God

Your beauty
and your courage can
thrive right here

Brenda Street, a former children's librarian and professional freelance harpist, has been a St. Luke's parishioner since 2004. She and Mike Egan were married at St. Luke's in 2019.

The Way of Love: Rest

REST: RECEIVE THE GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE, PEACE, AND RESTORATION

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. – John 14:27

Blessed are you, O Lord ... giving rest to the weary, renewing the strength of those who are spent. – Book of Common Prayer, 113

From the beginning of creation, God has established the sacred pattern of going and returning, labor and rest. Especially today, God invites us to dedicate time for restoration and wholeness - within our bodies, minds, and souls, and within our communities and institutions. By resting we place our trust in God, the primary actor who brings all things to their fullness.

For Reflection and Discernment

- What practices restore your body, mind, and soul?
- How will you observe rest and renewal on a regular basis?
- With whom will you commit to create and maintain a regular practice of rest?

Holy Week

From early times Christians have observed the week before Easter as a time of special devotion. As the pilgrim Egeria recorded in the late fourth century, Jerusalem contained many sacred places that were sites for devotion and liturgy. Numerous pilgrims to the holy city followed the path of Jesus in his last days. They formed processions, worshipped where Christ suffered and died, and venerated relics. From this beginning evolved the rites we observe today on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. These services provide a liturgical experience of the last days of Jesus' earthly life, as well as the time and events leading up to his resurrection. The BCP provides special liturgies for each of these days. The eucharistic lectionary also provides proper readings for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in Holy Week. Some parishes observe the service of Tenebrae on one of these days in Holy Week. In many dioceses, the diocesan clergy will make a reaffirmation of ordination vows in the context of a eucharist during Holy Week, usually before Maundy Thursday. The three holy days, or Triduum, of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday are at the heart of the Holy Week observance. In many Episcopal parishes, the liturgical color for Holy Week from Palm Sunday through Maundy Thursday is red. Holy Week ends at sundown on the Saturday before Easter, or with the celebration of the Easter Vigil.

Source: *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church* at episcopalchurch.org/glossary/holy-week.

Closing collect for the service of Tenebrae:

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family,
for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and
given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross.

The Book of Occasional Services, p. 105 (2022), available at episcopalcommonprayer.org/uploads/1/2/9/8/129843103/book_of_occasional_services_final.pdf.

Way of the Cross (Stations of the Cross)

A devotion to the Passion of Christ which recalls a series of events at the end of Jesus' life from his condemnation to his burial. The Way of the Cross imitates the practice of visiting the places of Jesus' Passion in the Holy Land by early Christian pilgrims. The first stations outside Palestine were built in Bologna in the fifth century. This devotion was encouraged by the Franciscans, and it became common in the fifteenth century. The number of stations for prayer and meditation in the Way of the Cross has varied, but it typically includes fourteen stations. Each station may have a cross and an artistic representation of the scene. The stations may be erected inside a church or outdoors. The BOS [The Book of Occasional Services] includes the following stations in the Way of the Cross: 1) Jesus is condemned to death; 2) Jesus takes up his cross; 3) Jesus falls the first time; 4) Jesus meets his afflicted mother; 5) the cross is laid on Simon of Cyrene; 6) a woman wipes the face of Jesus; 7) Jesus falls a second time; 8) Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem; 9) Jesus falls a third time; 10) Jesus is stripped of his garments; 11) Jesus is nailed to the cross; 12) Jesus dies on the cross; 13) the body of Jesus is placed in the arms of his mother; 14) Jesus is laid in the tomb. The hymn *Stabat Mater* has been associated with the Way of the Cross. Verses of this hymn traditionally have been sung between each of the stations when the devotion is done by a congregation. The *Stabat Mater* appears as "At the cross her vigil keeping," Hymn 159 in *The Hymnal* 1982. The BOS also suggests that the *Trisagion* be chanted as the procession goes from station to station."

Source: *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church* at episcopalchurch.org/glossary/way-of-the-cross-stations-of-the-cross.

The Way of the Cross service begins at page 53 of *The Book of Occasional Services* (2022), available at episcopalcommonprayer.org/uploads/1/2/9/8/129843103/book_of_occasional_services_final.pdf. English translations of *Stabat Mater* are in the public domain and can be found online simply by searching "Stabat Mater."

Trisagion:

*Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.*



his photograph was inspired by Caravaggio's *Ecce Homo* ("Behold the Man") (see also John 19:5), which depicts the Passion of Christ. My version explores how LGBTQIA+ people are created in the image of God and how we must reject the narratives that try to make us the other—something to be feared, hated and rejected. St. Luke's declares that God's love is for everyone and that our church home is a place embracing diversity, healing and justice that is a sanctuary for all people.

David is a native Atlantan and has been attending St. Luke's for the past 8 years with his wonderful husband, Billy Clifton-Strawn.

Way of the Cross: Jesus is Condemned to Death



This image shows a gavel with a background of linen and Pontius Pilate's proclamation, written in Aramaic, sentencing Jesus to death by crucifixion.

From the Way of the Cross service of the Episcopal Church (*The Book of Occasional Services* (2022), p. 55):

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation; and they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him to Pilate. And they all condemned him and said, “He deserves to die.” When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. Then he handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

....

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. *Amen.*

Gene was a commercial photographer in New Jersey for approximately 16 years before moving to Georgia. Now, he just shoots for pleasure and to have works to adorn the walls of his house.

Way of the Cross: Jesus Falls for the First Time



The cross on the ground when Jesus dropped it the first time.

From the Way of the Cross service of the Episcopal Church (*The Book of Occasional Services* (2022), p. 57):

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and was born in human likeness. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

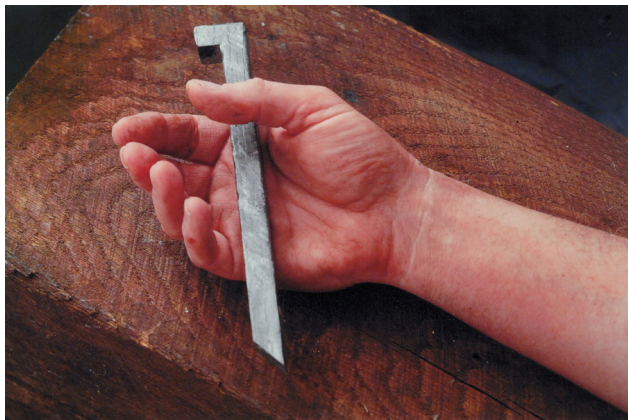
Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, and kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is the Lord our God.

....

O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Gene was a commercial photographer in New Jersey for approximately 16 years before moving to Georgia. Now, he just shoots for pleasure and to have works to adorn the walls of his house.

Way of the Cross: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross



Jesus' arm stretched out upon the cross in preparation to be nailed.

From the Way of the Cross service of the Episcopal Church (*The Book of Occasional Services* (2022), p. 65):

When they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him; and with him they crucified two criminals, one on the right, the other on the left, and Jesus between them. And the scripture was fulfilled which says, “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

....

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Gene was a commercial photographer in New Jersey for approximately 16 years before moving to Georgia. Now, he just shoots for pleasure and to have works to adorn the walls of his house.



Nellie's is (was?) a family-owned gathering place in Las Cruces (meaning “the crosses”), New Mexico. It closed for business in 2024 and, as of the print date of this devotional booklet, there are no reports that it will be reopening.

Cotten Alston is a long-time member of St. Luke's.

Scripture Readings for Lent 2025

Daily Office (BCP)

LAST EPIPHANY

Ash Wednesday

Jonah 3:1-4:11

Heb. 12:1-14

Luke 18:9-14

Thursday

Deut. 7:6-11

Titus 1:1-16

John 1:29-34

Friday

Deut. 7:12-16

Titus 2:1-15

John 1:35-42

Saturday

Deut. 7:17-26

Titus 3:1-15

John 1:43-51

1 LENT

Sunday

Deut. 8:1-10

1 Cor. 1:17--31

Mark 2:18-22

Monday

Deut. 8:11-20

Heb. 2:11-18

John 2:1-12

Tuesday

Deut. 9:4-12

Heb. 3:1-11

John 2:13-22

Wednesday

Deut. 9:13-21

Heb. 3:12-19

John 2:23-3:15

Thursday

Deut. 9:23-10:5

Heb. 4:1-10

John 3:16-21

Friday

Deut. 10:12-22

Heb. 4:11-16

John 3:22-36

Saturday

Deut. 11:18-28

Heb. 5:1-10

John 4:1-26

2 LENT

Sunday

Jer. 1:1-10

1 Cor. 3:11-23

Mark 3:31-4:9

Monday

Jer. 1:11-19

Rom. 1:1-15

John 4:27-42

Tuesday

Jer. 2:1-13

Rom. 1:16-25

John 4:43-54

Wednesday

Jer. 3:6-18

Rom. 1:28-2:11

John 5:1-18

Thursday

Jer. 4:9-10, 19-28

Rom. 2:12-24

John 5:19-29

Friday

Jer. 5:1-9

Rom. 2:25-3:18

John 5:30-47

Saturday

Jer. 5:20-31

Rom. 3:19-31

John 7:1-13

3 LENT

Sunday

Jer. 6:9-15

1 Cor. 6:12-20

Mark 5:1-20

Monday

Jer. 7:1-15

Rom. 4:1-12

John 7:14-36

Tuesday

Jer. 7:21-34

Rom. 4:13-25

John 7:37-52

Wednesday

Jer. 8:18-9:6

Rom. 5:1-11

John 8:12-20

Thursday

Jer. 10:11-24

Rom. 5:12-21

John 8:21-32

Friday

Jer. 11:1-8
Rom. 6:1-11
John 8:33-47

Saturday

Jer. 13:1-11
Rom. 6:12-23
John 8:47-59

4 LENT

Sunday

Jer. 14:1-9, 17-22
Gal. 4:21-5:1
Mark 8:11-21

Monday

Jer. 16:10-21
Rom. 7:1-12
John 6:1-15

Tuesday

Jer. 17:19-27
Rom. 7:13-25
John 6:16-27

Wednesday

Jer. 18:1-11
Rom. 8:1-11
John 6:27-40

Thursday

Jer. 22:13-23
Rom. 8:12-27
John 6:41-51

Friday

Jer. 23:1-8
Rom. 8:28-39
John 6:52-59

Saturday

Jer. 23:9-15
Rom. 9:1-18
John 6:60-71

5 LENT

Sunday

Jer. 23:16-32
1 Cor. 9:19-27
Mark 8:31-9:1

Monday

Jer. 24:1-10
Rom. 9:19-33
John 9:1-17

Tuesday

Jer. 25:8-17
Rom. 10:1-13
John 9:18-41

Wednesday

Jer. 25:30-38
Rom. 10:14-21
John 10:1-18

Thursday

Jer. 26:1-16
Rom. 11:1-12
John 10:19-42

Friday

Jer. 29:1, 4-13
Rom. 11:13-24
John 11:1-27 or
12:1-10

Saturday

Jer. 31:27-34
Rom. 11:25-36
John 11:28-44 or
12:37-50

Holy Week

Palm Sunday

Zech. 9:9-12
1 Tim. 6:12-16
Matt. 21:12-17

Monday

Jer. 12:1-16
Phil. 3:1-14
John 12:9-19

Tuesday

Jer. 15:10-21
Phil. 3:15-21
John 12:20-26

Wednesday

Jer. 17:4-10, 14-17
Phil. 4:1-13
John 12:27-36

Maundy Thursday

Jer. 20:7-11
1 Cor. 10:14-17;
11:27-32
John 17:1-11 (12-
26)

Good Friday

Wisdom 1:16-2:1,
12-22 or Gen. 22:1-
14
1 Peter 1:10-20
John 13:36-38

Holy Saturday

Job 19:21-27a
Heb. 4:1-16
Rom. 8:1-11

Palm Sunday, April 13

8 a.m. | 9 a.m. | 11:15 a.m.

Holy Wednesday, April 16

7 p.m. The Office of Tenebrae

Maundy Thursday, April 17

6 p.m. Agape Meal in Budd Hall

7 p.m. Maundy Thursday

Good Friday, April 18

Noon The Three Hours

6:15 p.m. Stations of the Cross

7 p.m. Good Friday

Holy Saturday, April 19

10 a.m. Holy Saturday Service

8 p.m. The Great Vigil

Easter Day, April 20

8 a.m. | 9 a.m. | 11:15 a.m.

10:15 a.m. Easter Egg Hunt for Children & Youth



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