

SPIRE VOL. 171 | NO. 2 | ADVENT 2023



ST. LUKE'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



2023 CHRISTMAS OFFERING: HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

St. Luke's vision is a city transformed by the love of Jesus. One way to do that is by ensuring that more people have access to safe, affordable housing...and we can do that with Habitat for Humanity!

STEP 1

Give to our Christmas Offering to fund our Habitat for Humanity house! Our goal is \$100,000.

STEP 2

Help build our house in March. It's located in Robins Landing, Habitat's new 127-acre affordable master-planned community on Tidwell Road.

CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

\$150

CAN INSTALL
A WINDOW

\$300

PROVIDES A
FRONT DOOR

\$500

CAN INSTALL
A BATHTUB

\$1,000

PROVIDES
WOOD STUDS
FOR FRAMING

Learn more • Make a gift • Sign up to build
StLukesMethodist.org/christmasoffering

Text to Give: 832-669-5500 code "Christmas"



READY OR NOT...

"Ready or not, here I come!" As a child, it was the shout of the designated seeker in the hide and seek game. After an appropriate period of preparation for the hiders – say a count to 20 – the seeker would come looking for you. It was fun to hide for a little while, but if the seeker couldn't find you, the best thing to do was make some noise or a silly shout to offer the seeker a good hint. We all really wanted to be found. It wasn't any fun hiding there alone.

Advent is our time of preparation. God is counting to 20. We should not be hiding from God's presence, as Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden, but getting ready for it. "Prepare the way of the Lord!" says John the Baptizer. So, we festoon our homes with holiday décor, address our Christmas cards, spend hours online or in stores shopping for gifts to share with others, build menus for parties and family gatherings, and fill our calendars with special events. But, there is other preparation to be done. Calloused hearts need to be softened, made ready and eager to receive God's grace. Priorities need to be reordered. Amends need to be made. Commitments need to be restored. Forgiveness needs to be offered. Blessings need to be counted. There is much to do to prepare for God's coming. I hope the events and ministries offered in this season's Spire will help you to be ready. They are all designed so that you and your family will have a truly meaningful Advent and Christmas season this year.

When Christmas does come, what we all really want is to be found—found by a loving God, Immanuel, a God who is with us, coming to save us from ourselves. Ready or not, God is coming!



"THERE IS
MUCH TO DO
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COMING."





PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD: ADVENT AND THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Tuesdays, November 28–December 19 | Noon

The Study for Women – Led by Jennifer Boubel

Who better to ready your heart for the coming of Jesus than his precursor cousin, John the Baptist? Adam Hamilton's Advent study explores four themes in John's message: "A People Prepared for the Lord," "God Is Gracious," "The Fruit of Repentance" and "Witnesses Testifying to the Light."

Register: StLukesMethodist.org/bible-studies

BIBLE PROJECT ADVENT WORD STUDY

Thursdays, November 30, December 7, 14, 21

In-Person: 9:30–11 a.m. | ES314 and Online: 7–8:30 p.m. | Led by Louise McEvoy

Join us as we dive deep into the words *yakhal*, *shalom*, *agape*, and *chara* (aka hope, peace, love, and joy) this Advent season. In addition to Scripture, class discussions will be centered on BibleProject podcasts, videos, and/or articles. Participants will receive the class schedule in mid-November.

Register for In-Person Study and Online Study: StLukesMethodist.org/bible-studies

PRACTICING ADVENT

Sundays, December 3, 10 and 17 | 4–5 p.m. | ES301 | Led by Katie Brown

The season of Advent invites us to embrace the spiritual discipline of waiting. Join us as we discover and reflect on how we can practice the spiritual disciplines of Advent and prepare for Christ's coming.

Register: StLukesMethodist.org/bible-studies



PREPARE THE WAY! ADVENT SERMON SERIES | NOVEMBER 26–DECEMBER 17

John the Baptizer foreshadows the ministry of Jesus with the words, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" Just as we prepare our houses and calendars for Christmas, Advent is a wonderful time to look again at our hearts and lives. Are there habits which need to be replaced with other habits? Are there priorities that need to be reordered? Are there attitudes that need to be changed? Is there joy that needs to be rediscovered? Beginning November 26, join us for worship in our traditional and contemporary services for "Prepare the Way" as we get ready for the coming of a savior.

NEW THIS YEAR! ADVENT BIBLE READING PLAN ON THE ST. LUKE'S APP

Take a break each day of Advent to immerse yourself in a few verses of scripture. No matter how busy life gets, if you have the app on your phone, you have a plan. To access the reading plan starting November 26, tap "Advent Bible Reading" on the home screen and select "Plan" at the bottom of that page. Then discover the profound journey from the Old Testament prophecies to the New Testament birth story, understanding God's divine plan to draw us into love—for God and for the world.

Don't have the app? Download at StLukesMethodist.org/app or



App Download



NOVEMBER 27–DECEMBER 3

NOV
27-30

ST. LUKE'S DAY SCHOOL BOOK FAIR

Beep! Beep! Book Fair | November 27–30 | Fellowship Hall

Christmas shopping for a cause! Enjoy book shopping, Santa photos, Silhouettes, Cocoa in the Courtyard, Storybook Theater and Storytime with Mrs. Claus, all benefitting scholarships and teacher development for St. Luke's Day School. sldsbookfair.com

DEC
2-3

TAPESTRY PLAYERS PRESENTS A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Saturday, December 2 | 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 3 | 2:30 p.m.

Rotunda Theater

A comedic take on Charles Dickens's classic holiday tale, adapted and directed by Angela Foster—perfect theater experience for families! tapestryplayers.org/christmas

DEC
2

BUILDING INTIMACY WITH GOD THROUGH PRAYER

Prayer Workshop with Rev. Alison Young

Saturday, December 2 | 9 a.m.–12 p.m. | Fellowship Hall

Rev. Alison Young is a Spiritual Formation Coach, Mentor, and ordained United Methodist clergy who once served on staff at St. Luke's. In this experiential workshop she will teach how to develop a deeper intimacy with God through prayer. We will incorporate various forms of tactile and visual learning as we approach prayer from a new perspective.
Register: StLukesMethodist.org/prayerconference

DEC
2

CONSPIRARE CHRISTMAS

Saturday, December 2 | 7:30 p.m. | Sanctuary

Conspire Christmas reinvents the traditional holiday concert with songs of hope, courage and love. Isaac Cates and Ordained, the dynamic Kansas City Gospel Choir known for their unique blending of sacred and secular choral sounds with modern Gospel, join Conspire in a collaboration that will have you on your feet!
StLukesMethodist.org/conspire

FAMILY CHRISTMAS CONCERT



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2 | 5-6:30 P.M.

FELLOWSHIP HALL

JOIN THE CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP BAND IN A SING-A-LONG PARTY WITH FUN CHRISTMAS CLASSICS FROM "ROCKIN' AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE" TO "JOY TO THE WORLD."

CHILDREN'S CRAFTS • LETTERS TO SANTA • PICTURES WITH SANTA • FOOD TRUCKS • SNOW MACHINE
MAKE SPIRITS BRIGHT FOR OTHERS BY BRINGING A NEW, UNWRAPPED TOY FOR JINGLE BELL EXPRESS



MARCH TO THE MANGER

Sunday, December 3
9:45 a.m. Sunday School
11 a.m. Children's Church

Visit with Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus, and bring new, unwrapped children's toys and gifts (ages 0-15) for Christian Community Service Center's Jingle Bell Express. Shop the Amazon Wishlist: [StLukesMethodist.org/wishlist](https://www.amazon.com/stores/page/8a1b1b1b-1b1b-1b1b-1b1b-1b1b1b1b1b1b)

STUDENTS' PROGRESSIVE DINNER

Sunday, December 3 | 6-9 p.m.

One of our favorite Student Ministries traditions! Start at the Student Ministries Building and then journey to host homes for appetizers and dinner, returning for dessert, ugly sweater contest and Christmas themed worship.

CHRISTMAS IN THE CHAPEL

Tuesday, December 5
6:30-8 p.m. | Chapel
Women's Night Circle

Join in the tradition of stopping in the midst of the Christmas preparations for a Carol Sing around the piano with festive refreshments.

WOMEN'S CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Friday, December 8
12 p.m. | Fellowship Hall

Get in the Christmas spirit with the women of St. Luke's! Enjoy beautifully decorated tables, and share a meal with old and new friends, enjoying some fun fellowship this Advent season. \$15 includes lunch. Register: [StLukesMethodist.org/christmasluncheon](https://www.stlukesmethodist.org/christmasluncheon)

PROJECT CHRISTMAS | THE WRAP PARTY

Saturday, December 9 | 9-11 a.m. | 3rd Floor Johnson Bldg.

Join us to wrap and adorn Small Steps' family baskets for Project Christmas. Help make every day essential items look their best! Sign up: [stlukesmethodist.org/wrapparty2023](https://www.stlukesmethodist.org/wrapparty2023)

DECEMBER 3-9



CAROLING BY THE COLUMNS

Friday, December 8 | 7 p.m. | Sanctuary Steps

Bring a chair, blanket, some hot chocolate and the whole family and hear our St. Luke's staff singers and Chancel Bells perform your favorite Christmas carols on the steps of our Sanctuary. This 45-minute concert is sure to get you in the holiday spirit! Free admission.

YEAR-END GIVING

St. Luke's receives 32% of our contributions in the month of December, and we rely on your gifts to end the fiscal year well.

Online: my.stlukesmethodist.org/give-now

Text to Give: Text 832-669-5500 to donate one time or set up a recurring gift.

Check or Donor Advised Fund: Checks can be made payable to St. Luke's UMC and mailed to: St. Luke's UMC, Attn: Finance Office, P.O. Box 22013, Houston, TX 77227-2013.

Must be postmarked by December 31st for 2023 charitable giving.

DECEMBER 10-16

SUN
DEC 10
8:45 AM

REJOICE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

Fellowship Hall

Don't miss this annual Contemporary celebration service featuring your favorite classic Christmas songs. We'll have special guest musicians, breakfast tacos and more. Rejoice with us!

SUN
DEC 10
6:30 PM

CHRISTMAS WITHOUT THEM

Chapel

The Christmas season brings challenges to those who are grieving. May we be comforted as we gather together with those on the same journey. We'll worship God and remember our loved ones as we quietly and gently celebrate the birth of our Lord in an "unplugged" experience. Even in this season of grief, God will offer you the gift of peace for your soul.

THURS
DEC 14
11 AM

THE SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS WITH JIM AND GRACE ROMAN

St. Luke's Sanctuary Choir Loft and Hines Baker Room

Join us in the Choir Loft for this annual tradition with the Sounds of Christmas presented by Jim and Grace Roman! Stay for a special holiday lunch (\$15). Register for lunch by December 11. Register: StLukesMethodist.org/soundsofchristmas

THURS
DEC 14
7:30 PM

CHRISTMAS IN THE CHAPEL: A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

St. Luke's chamber ensemble, Credo, presents a service of contemplative Advent and Christmas music and readings in our beautiful Chapel. Free admission.

SAT
DEC 16
9 AM

FRIENDS AT HOME ADVENT POINSETTIA DELIVERY

Spread some Christmas Cheer and deliver a festive plant to one of our home-bound members. Plant pick-up is Saturday, December 16 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Reserve a plant: eboudreaux@stlukesmethodist.org or 713-402-5033. Our amazing students will deliver poinsettias to long-term care facilities.

OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS WITH ROB LANDES SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10 | SANCTUARY | 4-5 PM

Join Rob Landes and SundaySing! as they perform your holiday favorites in our beautifully decorated Sanctuary. This concert is fun and festive for the whole family! Free admission.

THE GREAT BRANCHES BAKE OFF | 5-7 PM

Directly following the Rob Landes concert, come to the branches building to sample and judge the creations of some of Houston's best home bakers! To enter your baked goods in the contest, register at brancheshtx.org/bakeoff





CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

Sunday, December 17 | 8:30, 9:45, and 11 a.m. | Sanctuary

Our annual Christmas Festival features a professional orchestra with our Chancel Choir, conducted by Sid Davis. Come to any of our traditional services to enjoy a morning of beautiful music and worship. Our guest musicians each year are made possible through the generous support of St. Luke's Friends of Music: StLukesMethodist.org/friendsofmusic

Advent Flower Dedications

Remember or honor your loved ones with a contribution to our seasonal decorations. Contributions are welcome in any amount (we suggest a minimum of \$30). Dedications are accepted through November 30 and will be printed in the Sunday worship bulletins on December 17. Contact Monica Griffin: mgriffin@stlukemethodist.org or 713-402-5110.

CHRISTMAS MOVIES

THE POLAR EXPRESS
DECEMBER 15 | 6-8:30 P.M.
GETHSEMANE

Get ready for a jolly adventure aboard the Polar Express. We're serving up dinner and hot cocoa to make this ride unforgettable!

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET
DECEMBER 19 | 1:30 P.M.
ROTUNDA THEATER

Afternoon at the Movies:
Jump into the holiday spirit with this classic movie. Enjoy hot cocoa and movie treats with Senior Adult friends.

THE STAR
DECEMBER 17 | 4 P.M.
BRANCHES BUILDING

All are welcome to this animated telling of the nativity story through the eyes of animals. Popcorn and cookies will be provided. Bring your own chair or blanket for comfortable viewing. Invite your friends!

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

WESTHEIMER CHRISTMAS EVE

TRADITIONAL

- 10 a.m. Family Worship with Christmas Pageant
- 12 p.m. * Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion
Pure Sound Youth Choir
- 2 p.m. * Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion
Pure Sound Youth Choir
- 4 p.m. Family Worship with Christmas Pageant
and Holy Communion
- 6 p.m. * Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion
St. Cecilia and Veritas Choirs
- 8 p.m. Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion
Chancel Choir
- 11 p.m. Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion
Chancel Choir

CONTEMPORARY

- 4:15 p.m. Family Worship with Christmas Pageant and
Holy Communion
Ash Rising Contemporary Band
- 6:15 p.m. * Candlelight Worship with Holy Communion
Ash Rising Contemporary Band

* Childcare available for children 2 months–PreK



BRANCHES CHRISTMAS EVE

- 11 a.m. * Christmas Eve Worship
- 4:30 p.m. Candlelight Family Worship with
Children's Choir

GETHSEMANE CHRISTMAS EVE

- 9:30 a.m.* A joyful service, embracing bilingual
elements fostering a unifying atmosphere
filled with love
- 10:30 a.m.* Baragumu (African Fellowship) Service
- 4:30 p.m.* A family-friendly service with favorite
carols, a Christmas Eve message, children's
pageant and *Silent Night* sung by candlelight

WORSHIP ONLINE

Stream Traditional : 2, 4, 6, 8 and 11 p.m.
Stream Contemporary: 4:15 and 6:15 p.m.
Stream branches: 11 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.
Stream Gethsemane: 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

GETHSEMANE

DECEMBER 10 | 10:30 A.M. | LAS POSADAS CELEBRATION FOR KIDS

During Sunday School children will re-enact Mary and Joseph's journey as they await the arrival of Baby Jesus.

DECEMBER 13 | 7-8 P.M. | WE SING CHRISTMAS

Following Wednesday Night Dinner, join the festive fun for "We Sing of Christmas," a beautiful service featuring contemporary, multicultural music that will make your heart sing. It's the perfect way for the entire family to get into the holiday spirit!

DECEMBER 15 | 6-8:30 P.M. | CHRISTMAS MOVIE NIGHT

Get ready for a jolly, family-friendly adventure aboard the Polar Express, our timeless Christmas movie pick. We're serving up tasty snacks and hot cocoa to make this ride unforgettable!

DECEMBER 17 | 9:45 AND 11 A.M. | WORSHIP AT ST. LUKE'S CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

The entire Gethsemane worshipping communities—English, Swahili and Spanish- will join the Westheimer family for the annual Christmas Festival. Transportation will be provided. Contact Amy Kelley: akelley@stlukesmethodist.org.

CHRISTMAS EVE | DECEMBER 24

9:30 a.m. | Christmas Eve Service

Gather for a joyful celebration of Jesus' birth. Embrace bilingual elements in an atmosphere filled with love.

10:30 a.m. | Baragumu (African Fellowship) Christmas Eve Service

Experience the heartwarming rhythms and harmonies of Baragumu at our Christmas celebration. Our inspiring sermon, along with joyful music, unites the community in a festive, faith-filled atmosphere.

11:30 a.m. | For kids: Happy Birthday Baby Jesus

Children will have an exciting celebration for Baby Jesus during Sunday School hour. Crafts and snacks will be provided.

4:30 p.m. | For all: Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with Children's Pageant

A family friendly service for all celebrating the birth of Jesus with favorite Christmas carols, a brief message, a children's pageant and *Silent Night* sung by candlelight.

CHRISTMAS DAY | DECEMBER 25

10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. | Baragumu (African Fellowship)

Join us for a jubilant celebration of God's glory to the world. A festive service with uplifting messages and a delightful lunch.

NEW YEAR'S EVE | DECEMBER 31

10:30 a.m. | Kinship Sunday

11:45 a.m. | Kinship Lunch

Celebrate the final Kinship Sunday of the year as our multicultural congregations in English, Spanish, and Swahili unite to worship Jesus. Don't miss the Kinship Lunch, a potluck where we share our favorite side dishes.

NEW YEAR'S DAY | DECEMBER 31-JANUARY 1

10:30 p.m.- Jan 1, 6:00 a.m. | Swahili: Baragumu Vigil

Say goodbye to the old year and welcome the new year at Baragumu's all-night Swahili New Year's Eve prayer vigil. Reflect, pray and embrace the fresh start.

BRANCHES

ADVENT SERMON SERIES AT BRANCHES - REVOLUTION

Before Jesus was born into the world, people prepared the way for his coming revolution of love and transformation. Maybe you have a friend or neighbor looking for a place to belong — invite them to check out branches this Advent as we journey toward Christmas Eve and hear the stories of the daring people who made the way for Jesus to come into the world to save it.

BRANCHES CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS CHOIR

All children are welcome to participate in the first-ever branches children's choir! Children will rehearse weekly beginning November 17, from 12-12:30 p.m. in the branches building. The choir will perform at the 4:30 p.m. branches Christmas Eve service. Sign up: brancheshtx.org/choir

THE GREAT BRANCHES BAKE-OFF

December 10 | 5-7 p.m. | branches building

Directly following the Rob Landes concert, come to the branches building to sample and judge the creations of some of Houston's best home bakers! To enter your baked goods in the contest, register at brancheshtx.org/bakeoff

BRANCHES FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

December 17 | 4 p.m. | branches building

All are welcome to a free viewing of the children's movie, *The Star*, an animated telling of the nativity story through the eyes of animals. Popcorn and cookies will be provided. Bring your own chair or blanket for comfortable viewing. Invite your friends!

CHRISTMAS EVE AT BRANCHES

11 a.m. | Christmas Eve Worship

4:30 p.m. | Candlelight Family Worship with Children's Choir

BRUNCHES AT BRANCHES

Sunday, December 31 | 11 a.m.

Join the branches community in celebration of the new year with "brunches"—a time of celebration, good food and community! We will share brunch together, have a short worship service and a message to encourage you for the new year.



PROJECT CHRISTMAS



CAN YOU FILL A BASKET OR PROVIDE A GIFT CARD?

For the second year, St. Luke's has the opportunity to provide 160 baskets of everyday essentials for Small Steps families. Last year, these families were overjoyed to receive overflowing baskets of household items. Providing laundry detergent may not seem as fun as a toy, but providing these fundamental and typically expensive items, relieves some financial strain on these families so parents will have funds available to buy Christmas gifts for their own children.

PICK UP A BASKET ON NOVEMBER 19 OR 26 | COMMONS

Come to the commons and pick up an empty laundry basket and instructions to fill it. We estimate the cost to be \$150-\$200 per basket. In addition, each basket will contain a \$25 gift card(s) for food, gas or transportation at selected retail stores.

☒ GIFTS FOR CHILDREN ☒ DIGNITY FOR THEIR PARENTS



THE GARDEN OPENING

The Garden, our community youth center at Gethsemane, will open to the public in early 2024. The Garden is a community that prioritizes the growth and well-being of young people by nurturing wholeness and belonging.

THE WOODSHOP OPENING

The new 3,370-square-foot Woodshop should be up and running by the new year! Ask our team of dedicated volunteer woodworkers how much they love their modern new facility with more work space, indoor and out. Patience has been the key as the city finishes its work and permits ours.

DNOW FOR STUDENTS | JANUARY 12-14

Disciple Now (DNOW) is back for students in 6th-12th grades. They will stay in Houston with their small group in host homes, travel to a service project and have worship and small group at St. Luke's. Register: StLukesMethodist.org/students

WORKING FAITH COHORT | LAUNCHING JANUARY 21

Ever wonder how your Sunday and Monday are connected? Working Faith's 5th cohort is launching to help you explore the connection between your faith and your work in an intentional way with other Christ followers in the corporate world. Email Drew Scoggins (dscoggins@stlukemethodist.org) for more information.

SCRIPTURE+SHARED | WEEK OF JANUARY 28

A Relatable Faith: Peter's Journey

Peter was in Jesus' inner circle, walked on water, and preached to thousands. He also gave in to his fears and doubts on occasion, and he denied Jesus. But he was the rock on which God would build the church. We are a lot like Peter—faithful, hopeful, fumbling, persistent, forgiven, restored. Join us to learn lessons from his life and letters. Email Katie Brown (kbrown@stlukemethodist.org) to find a group or start a new one!

ONLINE SUNDAY MORNING GROUP

Are you worshiping from afar and looking for more connection? Want to meet others in our online community? A new online Sunday school class is coming in early 2024! Email Louise McEvoy (lmcevoy@stlukemethodist.org) for more information.

LOVE OUR CITY CHALLENGE

Join the movement to transform our city through small acts of love! More information to come.



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PERIODICALS
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