

## CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

St. Luke's United Methodist Church December 17, 2023 | 8:30, 9:45 & 11 a.m.

### The Moment

A seed is present potential, a tiny possibility, Spirit's fruit, lying fallow buried under lists schedules tasks shame politics exhaustion fears phonecalls conflicts hurts money (or none) addiction grief traffic newsreels divisions inflation regrets emails loneliness guilt expectations a compost pile of life's living. seed still buried, waiting.

and then something small, a smile. child. song. flame. photo. hug. story. the tiniest most insignificant thing activates and seed germinates, quickly, instantly, whoosh erupts, blows through the pile, exploding into its fullness. Joy! Joy! HaHa! What happened? Joy! Joy! the Pile now saturated with Grace, Presence. the Child is here. How did I miss that until now?

Tom Pace Christmas, 2023 I can't remember how many years ago we decided to move our major Christmas music offering to Sunday mornings, rather than have it be an evening event, but I'm certainly glad we did. Since that long ago year, we are able to share this celebration with far more people, and make a greater impact on St. Luke's and the Houston community, offering our music three times instead of one. It's a delightful and somewhat sobering fact that the festival has become the third largest Sunday of the year, after Christmas and Easter. In addition, our chancel choir is always thrilled to make music with world class instrumentalists such as these, our friends, some of whom have been "playing this gig" for two decades.

There are few things I enjoy more than "shopping," listening, and planning for this very morning, and I love the ability to program pieces that are unusual, and outside the norm for services such as this. But the unusual part of today's selections has nothing to do with whether or not the music is thought of as traditional Christmas music, but rather its origin. Christmas Festival 2023 features the music of (with the exception of the prelude) one composer - our son, Taylor Scott Davis.



I can clearly remember watching Taylor on the piano bench as a child, feet swinging because they had yet to meet the pedals, working out melodies and harmonies for future pieces. Cindy and I were so proud of him when, in elementary school (was that 3rd or 4th grade?) he won the Spring Branch PTA Reflections contest with his composition, "Houston Harmonies." He grew up here at St. Luke's, singing in Pure Sound for his middle and high school years, and composing two complete musicals for that group before he graduated. Throughout public school and college, it was apparent that Taylor didn't "have" music, rather, music "had" him. His work and career have proven him to be a natural orchestrator, as well as a fine choral composer, culminating in mornings like this one. So, forgive us a moment of parental pride while we enjoy the circle being completed as a son of St. Luke's (and ours!) helps us celebrate Christmas Festival 2023.

Sid Davis, Director of Music & Fine Arts

Overture

Kevin Kaska

### \*Hymn of Praise

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### Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

MENDELSSOHN

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King; Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies; With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ by highest heaven adored; Christ, the ever-lasting Lord; Late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th'incarnate Deity, Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel. Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,Born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH: LOVE

8:30 Blair Family 9:45 Baehl Family 11:00 Epalanga Family

Leader: Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.

- People: Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
- Leader: Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first."
- People: Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
- Leader: So, no matter what we say, what we believe, and what we do, we are bankrupt without love.
- People: Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
- Leader: In faith, we light this candle of love.

**CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** 



### Welcome

ANTHEM

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

**Taylor Scott Davis** 

#### SCRIPTURE READING

#### Luke 1:39-49 Sussex Mummers

**Taylor Scott Davis** 

**David Gow** 

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup>where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup>For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." <sup>46</sup>And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, <sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, <sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

### **SCRIPTURE RESPONSE**

The Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Anthem	Joy to the World	Taylor Scott Davis
Morning Prayer		8:30 Rev. Cliff Ritter ie Montgomery Mears 1:00 Rev. Amy Sumrall
Offertory	The Christmas Suites I. Journey into Light	Taylor Scott Davis

Praise! Final in the Series, "Prepare the Way!"

Anthem	The Christmas Suites	Taylor Scott Davis
	II. Ring Out, Wild Bells	

### \*Нуми ог Соммітмент

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Sermon

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

HYFRYDOL

Love divine all loves excelling, joy of heav'n to earth come down; Fix in us thy humble dwelling; all thy faithful mercies crown! Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art; Visit us with thy salvation; enter ev'ry trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit, Into ev'ry troubled breast! Let us all in thee inherit; Let us find that second rest. Take away our bent to sinning; Alpha and Omega be; End of faith, as its beginning, Set our hearts at liberty.

Come Almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive; Suddenly return and never, never more thy temples leave. Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above, Pray and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then, thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be. Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee; Changed from glory into glory, till in heav'n we take our place, Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise!

### INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

If you would like to become a follower of Jesus Christ, or if you are interested in joining St. Luke's United Methodist Church, we would love to talk to you about what that means. Please visit the Connection Desk after the service to meet with a member of our Hospitality Team and learn more.

### BENEDICTION

8:30 **Rev. Cliff Ritter** 9:45/11:00 **Dr. Tom Pace** 

### Postlude

Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella

Chapman

At places marked \* those who are able may stand.

**Leading in Worship Today:** Dr. Tom Pace, Rev. Cliff Ritter; Rev. Katie Montgomery Mears; Rev. Amy Sumrall; David Gow.

**Musicians:** Sid Davis, Director of Music & Fine Arts; Jim Roman, Organist and Artist-in-Residence; Victoria Shorokhova, Accompanist; Chancel Bells; Chancel Choir, Christmas Festival Orchestra.

#### St. Luke's Friends of Music

Today's guest musicians were made possible in part through the generosity of St. Luke's Friends of Music. If you would like to contribute or become a member of The Friends of Music, please contact Grace Roman: groman@stlukesmethodist.org or 713-402-5016

### Sermon Notes

*Praise!* Last in the series, "*Prepare the Way!*"

# CHRISTMAS E

# WESTHEIMER CHRISTMAS EVE

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### 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

# VE WORSHIP

# BRANCHES CHRISTMAS EVE

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

# GETHSEMANE CHRISTMAS EVE

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- 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.

## ADVENT DE

### The 2023 Advent Decorations are dedicated to the glory of God in loving memory of

Agnes and Artie Wisecup, Linda Wisecup Harney, Mary Ann Wisecup Martin, and Charles Wisecup by Bobbie Wisecup.

Alma McHenry Putnam and Dr. John I. McHenry, Sr. by Allison McHenry.

Amy Teufel by her husband Randy Teufel.

Ann Temple McDaniel, by Mary and Weston O'Black.

Barbara Clinton by Dan Clinton, Mary Kay Jackson, Laura Fulton, and Charles Clinton.

Belton G. Griffin, Jane and John Smith, and Brian Smith, by Gary Smith and Carol Griffin.

Berniece and Herschel Wood, Charlotte Wood Horton and Ann and B. W. Crain, Jr. by Kelty and Rogers Crain.

Betty and Bob White and Mattie Belle and Marshall Litton by Ted and Franna Litton.

Betty Brouthers by Paul and Michelle Williams.

Brother Dudley Bryant by Jamie Samuelson and Family.

Carolyn and Roland Wilson, Marylyn Hepp and Joe Hyslop by Monica Griffin and Alan Hepp.

Catherine and Wilbur Hess by John and Prissy Watson.

C. Michael Weldon by Jamie Samuelson and Family.

Chuck Leonard by his loving family.

Courtney Scott Massey by Gayle and Bill Barnett.

Danny Sherwood and Lesli Sherwood Ginther by Ann Sherwood.

Dennis Lyon, by Katy, Chris, Georgia, Everett and Hayes Turner.

Dr. and Mrs. R. H. Lofton, by Thad, Lindsay, Charlotte, Eloise and William Lang.

Dr. Paul N. Samuelson by Marc Samuelson and Family.

Ella Lea and Herbert C. Smith and Camille and Larry W. Morris by Wendy and Larry Morris.

Eloise H. Blades on her heavenly birthday by Sarah Gaye and Peter Conner.

George Bronson and William Anderson by Sharon Anderson Bronson.

Gloria Lois Dunkley and SMSgt Donald Lester Benoit (USAF); Ovedia and Ed Griffin; and Ivan Griffin by Rita and Robert Griffin.

Jack and Wanda Richardson by Marian Richardson.

Jack Blanton, Leslie Wheless, and Jo Nelson by Ginger Blanton and family.

Jane Owens and Lillian and Pender Love by Sharon Love Owens and Ken Owens.

## DICATIONS

### The 2023 Advent Decorations are dedicated to the glory of God in loving memory of

Jerry Ritcheson, Barbara Eason, Bill Denham and our parents by Karen and Don Eldridge.

Jerry Ritcheson by the Ritcheson family.

Jerry Tauber by Lynn Tauber.

Jim Elkins III and his granddaughters, Isabel James Davis and Olivia Davis, by Nancy Owen.

Jim McCartney by Susan and Bill Finnegan, Judy Ann and Jimmy McCartney and Catherine and Bill Miller.

Jinny and Bill Landes by Rob Landes and Roddy Young.

John and Patricia Mendius and Harry and Alma Graber by Ned and Cathy Graber.

John Russell Hapgood I, by the Hapgood Family.

Joseph Hyslop by Bill, Marsha and Jake Hyslop.

Joyce Wagner, from her family who love and miss her.

Kathleen Crippen by Dan, Matthew and Christopher Crippen.

Kay and John Henry Crooker, Jr. by Barry and Linda C. Hunsaker.

Ken Crow, Conley, Maxine and Butch Thrasher by Janet Crow.

Lee and Peggy Duggan by their children, Lee Duggan III, Debbie Gamble, and Pam Gray.

Leila Fisher Thomas, Robert Dies, Judge and Mrs. Joe J. Fisher, and Mr. and Mrs. Fay Munger by Kathy and Derek Munger.

Lilly Chandler by her thankful family.

Linda Oppenheim by Roger Oppenheim and family.

Marthanel Sandlin and Gib Walton by Martha Walton and family.

Mary Frances Platt by Marcia and Ben Mathes, Cynthia and Gary Poole, Jean and Randolph Watson, and Melissa, Alan, Nicholas and Celeste Watson.

Matt Hall Benton by his family.

Merle and Barry Hunsaker by Linda and Barry Hunsaker, Jr.

Molly Turner and Donna McShane by the Baehl family.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Blanks and Rick Blanks and Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Bardwell by Bruce and Wayne Bardwell.

Mr. and Mrs. T. H. Monroe, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald T. Botts and Rev. William J. Hodge by Mr. and Mrs. Gerald M. Botts and Thomas and Katherine Botts.

Mr. William B. Head, III by Janet H. Head and family.

M.S. "Frost" Haenchen, by his grandson, Henry, and his loving family.

Muriel and Arnold Smith by Bob, Janet and Roseanne Bodin and Chris and Christina Smith.

## ADVENT DE

### The 2023 Advent Decorations are dedicated to the glory of God in loving memory of

My husband, Bill by Debby Leighton.

My husband, John Wildenthal by Carolyn Wildenthal.

My husband, Rev. Herman Bulman and my daughter, Teri Leanne Brown by Mary Bulman.

My parents, John and Betty McKimens by Jane McKimens Adams.

My parents, Shelley and Ann Davis by Nancy, Ben, Davis, Nathaniel and Zachary Barnett.

Nick Finnegan by Susan and Bill Finnegan, Scotty Finnegan and Maggie Archer, and Terrell and Spencer Branch.

Our grandmothers, Joyce Wagner and Sue Dezendolet by their granddaughters.

Our parents, Jean and Lud Kucera and Polly and Marvin Andress by Lilly and Thurmon Andress.

Our parents, Lorry and Bob Murdock and Irma and Bill Dismer by Jeff and Sandy Murdock and family.

Richard B. Wilkens III and Brenda Daly Hackedorn by Mary Lee, Richard, Brady and James Wilkens.

Ricky Ray Behrend, "Grandpa", by Greta, Barbara, Susie and Mary Elaine Seidel.

Robert (Bob) James Scott by his wife of 44 years, Patricia Scott and their daughters.

Sara Nan and Tony Peterson by Corey, Kristi, Craig, and Cameron Johnson.

Stacy Owen by Sally Penning.

Stuart Hawkins Toomey by his family.

Sue Dezendolet by Robb and Audrey Moses.

Sue Dezendolet from her family who love and miss her.

Susan Garver and her sister Cynthia Sarver by Robb and Audrey Moses.

Terry L. Richardson by the Richardson, Loocke, and Cooley families.

Thomas Monroe by Kendall and Will Monroe.

Truman Arnold by Becky Arnold.

Valrena and Eduard Van Belle and Olivia and Donald Traynor by Kimberly Van Belle and family.

Virginia and Frank King and Alan Brooks by the Brooks family.

William Franklin Stanley by Morgan Stanley Debnam and family.

# DICATIONS

## The 2023 Advent Decorations are dedicated to the glory of God in honor of

Adair and David Holloman by Robb and Audrey Moses.

Audrey and Robb Moses, David Eldridge, David and Adair Holloman and Marsha Moody by Karen and Don Eldridge.

Brady and James Wilkens by Mary Lee and Richard Wilkens.

Dan Clinton, beloved father and grandfather, by Charlie and Mary Kay Jackson, Chip Jackson and Anna Skinner, and Ken Jackson.

David and Kelly H. Leonard, Dee and Richard Leonard by Linda and Barry Hunsaker.

Dorothy and Boyd Wagner by Robb and Audrey Moses.

Dr. and Mrs. Tom Pace and family by Gayle and Bob Eury.

John Henry Hunsaker and Lauren and Ryan Hunsaker by Linda and Barry Hunsaker.

Karen and Don Eldridge by Audrey and Robb Moses.

Karen and Don Eldridge by David Eldridge.

Mary Lou McGregor by Shirley and Michael P. Pearson, Ben Pearson and Lynsey McDonald, and Elizabeth Pearson and Michel Bigelow.

My grandchildren, Wills, Charlotte, Todd, Claire, Lane, and Kate Leighton by Debby Leighton.

Our children and grandchildren, Amanda, Sam, George, Charlie, Frank, Kim and Ben Tucker by Stephanie and Brad Tucker.

Our children and grandchildren by James H. and Jane Lee.

Our daughters, Elizabeth and Catherine Yow by Linda Goehrs and John Yow.

Our dear friends, Don and Sara Eggleston Wagner by Janet and Jim Mayo.

Our 25th Christmas together by Jason and Samantha Knecht.

### The 2023 Advent Decorations are dedicated to the glory of God in celebration of

Adam & Virginia Stout's 9th wedding anniversary by Adam Stout.

John, Walker, Anna Louise, George and Claire by Carol and Rihl Buckley.

Laura & Mark Ross by Beverly and Mason Neely.

Marsha Moody by her grateful Prayer and Dinner Group.

The beautiful music at St. Luke's by Carol and David Willis.

The wonderful music at St. Luke's UMC by Onalee McEwen.

# 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!





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

I FINALLY

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"



## What's Next

### January Sermon Series – Let It Go Sundays, January 7-21

On Sundays, the congregation arrives, and we congregants carry into the worship space invisible suitcases, the baggage of life. There are trunks full of guilt and shame, valises of resentment and sorrow, duffle bags crammed full of fears and anxieties. And each week, there is the opportunity to leave that baggage at the foot of the cross. But too often we just pick up our baggage at the end of the service and carry it back out, dragging it around every day. What would it be like if we could just let it go? God offers us that opportunity. Here at St. Luke's, we will begin our new year with a series titled "Let it Go!", considering together how we can trade our baggage for the joy and peace of a savior's love.

### You're Invited to Coffee with the Pastor Sunday, January 21 | 4-6 p.m.

We're so glad you're with us today, and pray you experience moving worship and the warmth of this congregation. Learn more about the vision and mission of the church from Senior Pastor, Tom Pace, and hear his story. It's the perfect chance to make some new friends and meet friendly lay and ministry leaders. Register: StLukesMethodist.org/cwp or contact Sarah Butler at 713-402-5006 or sbutler@stlukesmethodist.org/

### Working Faith Breakfast Gathering Wednesday, January 17 | 8- 9 a.m. | Fellowship Hall

Ready to take the next step forward in living out the gospel in your workplace? Join the first Working Faith monthly breakfast gathering with speaker Doug Meikle, founder of TrueWorks Houston, who will challenge and inspire us as we engage in table discussions with breakfast tacos. Register: www.stlukesmethodist.org/januaryworkingfaithbreakfast or contact Drew Scoggins: dscoggins@stlukesmethodist.org

## 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.

Give 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.

Questions? Stock Instructions, Tax ID, IRA Distributions, please call the Finance Office at 713-402-5026 or email: generosity@stlukesmethodist.org.

## **Something for Everyone**

### We want to help you live and love like Jesus in 2024!

Grow deeper in your faith and learn about God through scripture-focused studies that are open to all **adults** this spring. There are weekly Bible studies just for young adults, men, women, or moms in all stages of their kids' lives. This semester's Scripture + Shared, (studies created by St. Luke's clergy) "A Relatable Faith: Peter's Journey," starts the week of January 29. For more information, contact Kathy Neely: kneely@stlukesmethodist.org

**Students** in 6th-12th grade enjoy gathering at monthly fun Sunday Night Live events, worshiping with the student ministries band on Sunday mornings, meeting each week for meaningful conversations and study in small groups. Sixth through eighth-graders learn more about their faith during Confirmation. DNOW, a transformational retreat, points students deeper into their relationship with Jesus and happens January 12–14. For more information, contact Cat Kershner: ckershner@stlukesmethodist.org

We would love for your birth-5th grade **children** to join us on Sunday mornings for Sunday school, Children's Church, and family-friendly Contemporary Worship in the Fellowship Hall. Through Third Grade Bibles, Summer Vacation Bible School, and Parenting Center Speakers, we want to partner with you to help your family live and love like Jesus. For more information, contact Kiara Langford: klangford@stlukesmethodist.org

One of our habits is to give ourselves away in generosity and service. There are a myriad of ways to **serve** our community at St. Luke's, including monthly food drives and collections for non-profit partners, weekly opportunities to serve dinner and eat with folks in the Gulfton/Sharpstown neighborhood at Gethsemane, mentoring elementary students with Kids' Hope. January 28 launches the "Love Our City Challenge" and sermon series. For more information, contact Charity Autry: cautry@stlukesmethodist.org

Our pastoral and prayer team wants to **pray** for you! It is our honor to join you in lifting up your concerns and celebrating your joys in prayer. You can share prayer requests through the St. Luke's app or by texting 713-228-7033. We **care** for our church family through hospital visits, checking on our Friends at Home, as well as Grief Share and Divorce Care support groups, starting new sessions on January 9. For more information, contact Elizabeth Boudreaux: eboudreaux@stlukesmethodist.org



Scan the QR code to download our app. This app is packed with powerful content and resources to help you grow and stay connected.

St. Luke's UMC - Houston



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