



# Sharing Our Faith

## St. Luke's United Methodist Church

3080 Okatie Highway, between the back gates of Sun City on Hwy 170

**"Praising and Serving God Thru the Ages"**

**Worship times: 8:30 & 10:15 AM (5<sup>th</sup> Sundays 9:15 AM)**

Volume 21, Issue 1

JANUARY 2026



### Stepping Forward Together: A New Year Rooted in Faith, Gratitude, and Purpose

As we step into a New Year, the family of **St. Luke's United Methodist Church** does so with hearts full of gratitude and eyes lifted with hope. Only days ago, we celebrated the gift of Christmas—the coming of Christ, the *New Moses*—the One who leads God's people not out of bondage in Egypt, but out of sin, fear, and despair, and into new life. As Scripture reminds us, *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."* (Isaiah 9:2) That light continues to guide us as we cross the threshold into a new season together.

This New Year is also marked by thanksgiving for leadership—past and present. We are keenly aware that where we stand today is only possible because of faithful saints who prayed, served, sacrificed, and believed long before us. Like the words spoken to Joshua after Moses' death, *"Be strong and courageous...for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."* (Joshua 1:9), our new leadership steps forward grounded in faith, strengthened by legacy, and confident that God's presence goes before them. They stand firmly on the shoulders of those who paved the way, honoring the past while faithfully responding to God's call for today.

As we move forward, we recommit ourselves to our shared vision: **to be the Church where souls are healed, mended, and saved in love.** Healing hearts, restoring hope, and extending grace is not merely something we aspire to—it is who we are called to be. Jesus himself declares, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind."* (Luke 4:18) This sacred work continues through us.

Our mission remains clear and unwavering: **to go and make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.** In a time when many are searching for meaning, stability, and belonging, we are reminded of Christ's command in Matthew 28:19—to go, to teach, and to love boldly. Discipleship is not confined to our walls; it is lived out in our homes, our community, and our daily witness.

And as we do this work, we remain not just a house *"Where Friends and Family Meet,"* but a house *"Where Everybody Knows Your Name."* Like the early church described in Acts—*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship...breaking bread and praying together."* (Acts 2:42)—we are a people who know one another, care for one another, and walk together in faith.

As this New Year unfolds, may we step forward united—grateful for where we have been, confident in where God is leading us, and committed to being Christ's hands and feet in the world. *"Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, let us press on toward the goal."* (Philippians 3:13–14)

Together, with God's help, the best is yet to come.



Rev. Christopher L. Thompson, D. Min



### 2026 Officers

Chairman Church Council	Alan Bethel
Lay Leaders	Kathy Smith, Michelle Cramer & Charlene King
Pastor/Parish Relations Chair	Chris Hauck
Finance Chair	Alan Jordan
Trustee Chair	Jack Reed
Treasurer	Margo Cservek
Lay Member to Annual Conference	Pat Simmons
Alternate Lay Member to Annual Conference	Kathy Smith
Church Business Administrator	Pat Simmons
Hospitality/Social	Charlene King
Nurture/Discipleship	Marie Baldauf
Worship Chair	Nancy Sariscak
Children's Ministry	Michelle Cramer
Superintendent Church Sunday School	Jim Smith
Stewardship Chair	Joe Cservek
Outreach Chair	Linda Fisher
Epworth Local Representative	Phyllis Sippel
Missions Chair	Elizabeth Vance
Communications Coordinator	Pat Schwartz
Recording Secretary	Amy Erickson
Church Historian	Kathy Smith
Membership Secretary	Michele Elek
Financial Secretary	Nancy Sariscak
Music Director	Marsha Gerber
Members at Large of Church Council	Will Ross, Jim Smith
Finance Member at Large	George Batten

#### Committee of Nominations and Leadership Development

Class of 2026: Ouida Dell, Letty Husson, Leslie Richards

Class of 2027: Sandy Lowry, Diane Moery, Jane Tiffany

Class of 2028: Michele Cramer, LL; Michele Elek, Charlene Kind, LL  
Althea Serrant, Kathy Smith, LL; Megan Sytsma

#### Trustees: Class of 2026: Pat Simmons

Class of 2027: Alan Bethel, Jack Reed, Chair; Lois Willig

Class of 2029: Mary Cale, Don King, Chick Mazon, Stan O'Rear, David Sytsma

#### Pastor/Parrish Relations Committee:

Class of 2026: Linda Fisher, Leslie Richards, Elizabeth Vance

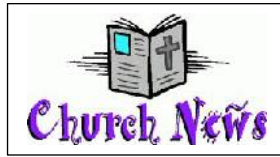
Class of 2027: Pat Simmons, LM

Class of 2028: Janet Baumeister, Margo Cservek, Chris Hauck, Chair PPRC  
Barbara Silcox, Kathy Smith, LL

Worship Committee: Amy Erickson, Linda Metcalf, Letty Husson

Office Supply Coordinator: Sandy Lowry

\*Committee Chairpersons have seats on the Church Council.



### **A Message from St. Luke's newly appointed Church Council Chair:**



I'm honored and humbled to serve as your council chair for the new year. I look forward to working alongside the other council members who continue to do great work for our church on the committees they Chair. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the previous council members and their Chair, Jim Smith, for his dedicated leadership and a job well done by the council.

It is an exciting time to be at St. Luke's as our membership grows, our spiritual growth expands and our outreach programs are consistently delivering to the needs of our church members and the surrounding communities. We will strive to fulfill our church mission and serve as a hospital for the heart!

Council meetings will be held on the third Thursday on the even months of 2026 with our first meeting being held on February 19<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 PM.

If you have ideas or insights that you wish to share, you can reach me at 404.805.9264 or [albeth130@gmail.com](mailto:albeth130@gmail.com) with your thoughts and suggestions. I look forward to serving with each of you.

Blessings,  
Alan Bethel  
Church Council Chair

## **LAY LEADERSHIP**

**Our 2026 Lay Leaders are: Michelle Cramer, Charlene King and Kathy Smith**

A Methodist lay leader is a non-ordained member of the church who plays a significant role in leadership and ministry within the congregation.

#### **Key Responsibilities:**

- **Leadership:** Lay leaders assist in guiding the church's mission and vision.
- **Support:** They support the pastor and church staff in various ministries and programs.
- **Communication:** Lay leaders often serve as a liaison between the congregation and church leadership.
- **Discipleship:** They may lead small groups, Bible studies, or other educational programs.

#### **Selection and Training:**

- Lay leaders are typically selected by the church's leadership or congregation.
- Training may be provided to equip them for their roles, focusing on leadership skills and church doctrine.

#### **Importance in the Church:**

- Lay leaders help foster community engagement and spiritual growth.
- They play a vital role in the church's outreach and service initiatives.

This role is essential for the functioning and vitality of the church, as it encourages active participation from the laity in church life.

*“Sweet friendships refresh the soul and awaken our hearts with joy, for good friends are like the anointing oil that yields the fragrant incense of God’s presence.” Proverbs 27:9*

2026 is a new year with new challenges and new joys to experience. Michelle Cramer, Charlene King and I have chosen to accept the position of lay leader, job sharing the responsibilities of that position. We are already friends and we know that our friendships will refresh our souls when necessary.

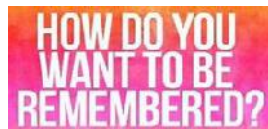
Pastor Chris is part of our friendship circle as we approach the new year and the new “job.” He has encouraged us to share this position, and we know he will provide extra help if needed. He met with us to decide how to divide up committees, newsletter articles and other lay leader duties.

Will Ross has been the lay leader since I first came to St. Luke’s. He set a high standard for us to reach. Once again, sweet friendship will refresh our souls, because we know we have Will’s support on our journey.

I loved St. Luke’s from the moment I walked into the door. I felt the warmth and love of the congregation. You, the congregation, provide us with friendship and support as we work together for others. Food, fellowship and fun are certainly a description of St. Luke’s, but we must mention the outreach that we feel is so important. Our missions continue to grow and flourish with leadership from our members. It’s the “fragrant incense of God’s presence” in our lives.

God’s presence is the guiding light for all of us. He will be there for the three of us on our journey. He is there for all of you. Relax and put your faith in God who loves us and supports us in life’s ups and downs. Rely on the fragrant incense of God’s presence.

Kathy Smith, Lay Leader



Whenever I’m asked the question of “if there’s one dead person you can revive and meet again in your life, who would it be,” I never hesitate to answer: “My father.”

I remember him as a hard-working man who rose every morning at 5.00 a.m., a loving father who devoted the entirety of himself to his family and friends, and a kind and generous human, loved and respected by many for his unwavering commitment to higher ideals and utmost self-respect.

Every time I am pulled back into the wave of his recollection, I smile, for it’s one that splashes with love, yearning, and nostalgia. He continues to be a big source of inspiration in my life, and to this very day, whenever I speak of him, my heart softens and my eyes sparkle.

It’s this warm memory of him and the impact it has left on me that has got me wondering.

*“How do I want to be remembered?”*

How do you want to be remembered, as a father or a mother? As a brother or a sister. As a friend. A parent. How do you want to be remembered as a colleague at work? As a manager or a leader. How do you want to be remembered as a human being?

This is the question we should be asking ourselves time and time again.

For me, as a human, a son, a brother, and a friend, I want to be remembered as a calm, kind, generous, and loving soul who reminds you of the joy of being alive. I want to be remembered as someone who was a pleasure to be around.

When you take a minute to consider all the roles you play in your life and then write down *how you want to be remembered through them*, you're slowly surfacing what truly matters to you—you're revealing your own cards to yourself.

Once you're clear on how you want to be remembered, all you have to do is start acting in that way, right now.

If you want to be remembered for being kind, then you clearly stand for kindness and compassion. Start acting with kindness and compassion, *today*.

If you want to be remembered as the caring person who helped others heal, then start guiding others onto the journey of healing, *today*.

And if you want to be remembered for your courage and fight for human rights—if that's what you stand for—then start being that conversation changer, *today*.

There's a beautiful quote that has been attributed to Maya Angelou:

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

Asking yourself, "how do I want to be remembered" is another way of asking, "how do I want to make people feel?"

Why? Because we humans are emotional creatures. We are feeling and sensing beings. We respond to another's actions emotionally, and our own emotions drive us to adopt certain behaviors.

So, if you're a leader, think about your employees and how you want them to feel when they work with you. If you're a worker, think about how the boss thinks of you.

And if you're a parent, think about your children and how you want them to remember their childhood. Is the most important thing for them to say, "We always had a perfectly tidy house?"

In short, decide what you stand for and show up to it, today. Decide what your story is going to be. Allow The Answers to Guide Your Actions and Your Actions to Shape You Into Who You're Becoming.

When we first reflect upon how we want to be remembered, we unravel what we stand for and what truly matters to us. This helps us better understand how we should show up in this world and what actions we can start taking today. And as we continue to follow through on that promise, so will we continue to become who we're *consciously* choosing to become.

If we begin by asking ourselves, "how do I want to be remembered," the answers will naturally lead us there. They will serve as a compass to guide your daily actions. And the actions you act upon day after day will more clearly shape who you're becoming.

How Do You Want to be Remembered?

When it comes to my father, I'm not exactly sure *how* he wanted to be remembered, but within our family, we remember him as a kind, loving, and generous soul who opened the beauty of his own heart and poured it upon every person who crossed his path.

Tomorrow is promised to no one. In the blink of an eye, in the flash of a second, we can be gone, stripped of the most precious blessing of all: *The gift of being alive.*

While you're still here, you're still writing your story.

So, *how do you want to be remembered for your time on earth?*

That's the first and foremost question that should guide our everyday life.

LIVE YOUR LIFE  
THE WAY YOU  
WANT TO BE  
REMEMBERED.



Will Ross,  
Lay Servant

Are you interested in becoming a "Lay Servant?" There's still time to signup.

**LAY SERVANT**

UMC Walterboro District Lay Servant School

Registration for each class is \$25 and does not include the cost for the textbook required for that class.

**DATE** February 7, 2026 8:00 AM  
**DATE** February 8, 2026 2:00 PM

**Church of the Palms UMC** 1429 Okatie Highway  
Okatie, SC 29909

**Courses Include** Lay Speaker Basic Course  
Leading Prayer  
Our Methodist Heritage  
Discipleship Begins with Relationship

A lay servant in the United Methodist Church (UMC) is a member of the church who is trained to serve in various ministries without being an ordained clergy member.

#### Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Service:** Lay servants assist in worship services, provide pastoral care, and engage in community outreach.
- **Leadership:** They may lead small groups, teach classes, or facilitate church programs.
- **Support:** Lay servants support clergy by taking on specific tasks or responsibilities within the church.

#### Training and Certification:

- Lay servants undergo training through the UMC, which includes courses on leadership, spiritual gifts, and church history.
- Certification is typically required, which may involve completing specific training programs and maintaining active participation in church life.

#### Connection to the Church:

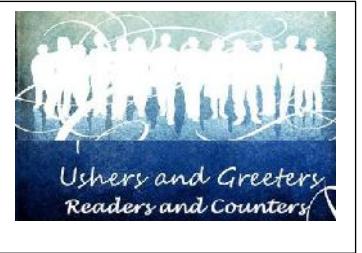
- Lay servants are often involved in their local congregations and may serve at district or conference levels.
- They play a vital role in the church's mission by extending its reach and enhancing its ministry efforts.

For more detailed information, refer to the UMC's official resources or local church guidelines.



# WORSHIP

Hello Church Family. Happy New Year! 2025 was a great year for St. Luke's because we were so blessed to have welcomed so many new members. Having said that we can't forget our faithful members who have passed and who hold a special place in our hearts. A church can't function without the members taking part in some of the opportunities the church has to offer. I get up at least once a month asking for people to sign up to be Greeters/Ushers, Readers, Candlelighters, Counters. Many of our new members have volunteered to fill these openings so necessary to make our Worship Service so beautiful. I know that some of you may not feel comfortable getting up to read or even light candles and that's okay. We would be happy to have you be a Greeter, Usher or Counter. Don't be shy – it's not hard and you don't know how much we appreciate it.



I would like to thank the Worship Team who prepares our bulletins, sets up the Altar, prepares the elements for Communion and many other things that some don't even realize are happening.

Also, thanks to everyone who donates the flowers. It really beautifies the church and honors our loved ones. If you would like to donate flowers, please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board at the back of the church. Without your help it would be very difficult to have such a wonderful service each week.



On February 8<sup>th</sup> we will have one Service at 9:15 a.m. followed by our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Souper Bowl Lunch. It will be a Football Theme Event since the Super Bowl is later that day. We will be serving delicious soups made by members of our congregation, dessert and beverages. **I am looking for soup donations.** Last year we had 11 delicious soups. I will have a sign-up sheet in the fellowship hall. Looking forward to the soups and the fellowship. You are welcome to wear your favorite team shirt or team colors. It will be fun!!!

If anyone has comments, questions or suggestions please feel free to call or email me.

In God's Love and Service

Nancy Sariscak  
Worship Committee Chair  
412.770.8092  
nlsack72@gmail.com



While it is too early to share end-of-year results for 2025, we are pleased to report that our church surpassed its full year budget for offerings a month in advance, as of November 30, 2025. It's great to be part of such a supportive congregation! All indications suggest we will post a net surplus for the year, continuing a tradition for several years. Thank you!

On October 9, 2025, the Church Council approved a surplus operating budget for 2026. A summary of that approved budget follows:

Operating Income		Operating Expense	
Weekly plate	\$225,000	Local Church Program Expenses	\$51,670
Interest & Other Income	\$2,000	Pastoral Ministry	\$123,020
<u>Facility usage fees</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>	<u>Total Facilities &amp; Grounds</u>	<u>\$32,225</u>
Total Operating Income	\$230,000	<u>Total Operating Expense</u>	<u>\$206,916</u>
		Operating (Deficit) or Surplus	\$23,084

It will soon be time for our annual church audit. We are looking for 3 members who are willing to serve on the ad hoc audit committee. There will be 2-3 meetings between mid-January and early March, with a final report due to the Finance Committee, who recommends adoption by the Church Council. Once adopted, the audit report is submitted to the District Office. Please let me know if you are interested in, and willing to serve on, the 2025 Audit Committee.

Finally, much thanks to our Treasurer, Pat Simmons, and Financial Secretary, Nancy Sariscak, both of whom have done Yeoman's work this past year.

Alan Jordan, Finance Chair  
akkcjordan@gmail.com



Epworth's mission is to serve children, youth and families through caring, safe Christian communities, where hurts are healed; hopes are nourished; and faith in God, self and others is developed.

Please keep Epworth in your prayers as they strengthen their Foster Care Program. Children thrive better in a loving home environment as opposed to institutional living accommodations.

The annual Mother's Day giving is our next organized method of support, but your gifts are welcome all year long.

With appreciation to all!

Phyllis Sippel, Epworth Representative





### **Spotlight on our Youth:**

Happy New Year! Our students have been enjoying their Christmas Break. Kennedy, Dash and Hudson got to enjoy time with their parents on a much-needed cruise while Aaron and Matthew spent time with their extended family.

As we step into the new year let's take a moment to reflect on this past year. Our students participated in sports, both travel and local, performed in musicals and plays, and worked hard in school. Through Change for Change the students donated to the American Red Cross, St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Water Missions and Palmetto Animal League. Our church has donated \$2,222.05 to these organizations.

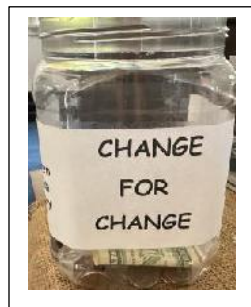
### **Student Activities:**

**Aaron** – Mark your calendars now for March 5-8, or 12 -15. Aaron will be performing *Newsies* with Main Stage Community Theater. More details to come!

All our other students are conditioning for their various sports.

### **Change for Change**

Last quarter, we collected \$71.85 for Palmetto Animal League. This organization is near and dear to Aaron and Mathew because that is where they adopted their newest cat Montana who they fostered last summer. This coming quarter we will be collecting for St. Jude's Children's hospital again. Don't forget to drop your donations into the container at the back of the church.



Thank you for your continued generosity and encouragement of our youth.

Happy New Year!  
*Michelle Cramer,*  
*Youth and Children's Ministry*



### MEETINGS IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

Every Monday—Men's Bible Study, 8:00 AM

Every Tuesday—Choir Practice, 7:00 PM

Tuesday, 01/06—Trustees, 9:00 AM

Thursday, 01/08 – Cemetery Tour Planning, 1:00 PM

Thursday, 01/08—Women's Bible Study, Meet & Greet, 5:30; Study 6:00-7:00 PM

Wednesday, 01/14—Missions, 1:00 PM

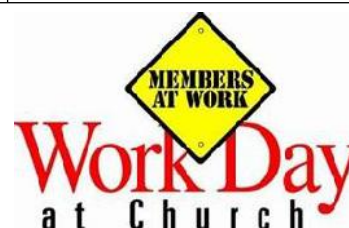
Wednesday, 01/21 – Project 150, 5:30 PM

### OTHER EVENTS FOR ST. LUKE'S FAMILY

#### **All Church Work Day—Saturday, Jan. 10<sup>th</sup> 2026—9:00 AM**

Come join us to help "Spruce-Up" our St. Luke's appearance. Wear your work clothes including gloves and if you have your favorite weeding tools, power washer, blowers, rags or other helpful tools available, bring those along! Tasks will be available for all energy levels!!! All that's needed is enthusiasm!

Come for Fellowship and Fun!!!



Please wear this color on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month.



**Saturday, Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>, Mexican Train  
Game night beginning at 4:00 PM  
in the Fellowship Hall**



## MISSIONS MATTERS



**Thinking of trying something new in 2026?** We would love to have you visit one of our Missions Team meetings to explore whether you would like to become more involved. We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. Most meetings last 1 to 1-1/2 hours. As a team, we decide which organizations St. Luke's should support, and how we will support them. We welcome new ideas!

We at St. Luke's put our faith into action through our donations and service. Our congregation is always generous and supports our mission's outreach. We hope you will consider joining us at our next meeting on Wednesday, January 14, at 1:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall. You may just find a new way to discover the joy of serving.

We look forward to seeing you!

Linda Fisher & Elizabeth Vance

St. Luke's Missions & Outreach Co-Chairs

## Bluffton Self Help First Sunday Food Drive, Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>

For more than 37 years, Bluffton Self Help has been providing support to economically at-risk families in our community. They are thankful for St. Luke's consistent support of their Market, where these families can "shop" weekly (at no cost) for food and hygiene items. By shopping in the Market, a family can save up to \$500 a month that can be re-allocated to another part of their budget.

Lois Willig will be in the parking lot between our worship services on January 4 to collect your donations. Although all food donations are appreciated, here is a list of the most-needed items:

**Unfortunately, they cannot accept open, expired, or damaged packages.**



Canned Tuna & Chicken	Chilli, Beef Stew, Hearty Soups
Canned Tomatoes	Pasta & Pasta Sauce
Pancake Mix & Maple Syrup	Cereal & Oatmeal
Jelly, Unsweetened Applesauce	Skillet Meal Kits (Hamburger Helper)
Taco Kits, Salsa, Refried Beans	Canned Beans (all types)
Canned Fruit	Shelf Stable Almond Milk
Rice & Rice Sides	Cooking Oil, Flour, Sugar
Mayonnaise & Ketchup	Shelf Stable Cheese
Baby Wipes	Diapers (size 4, 5, 6, & 7)
Feminine Hygiene Products	Deodorant
Soap & Body Wash	Shampoo & Conditioner
Shaving Cream	Toothpaste

Cont'd...



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In 2025, **with your generous support** St. Luke's provided nineteen dinners for the families at the Freedom House shelter, which included a cook-out in October and a hot meal delivered on Thanksgiving Day. This year, we will continue to provide these children and their parents with hot meals to show our support as they pursue their own housing and independence. However, in January, we would like to provide some of the household needs for the Freedom House. We will be providing this information with an insert in the worship bulletin later this month.

### PRITCHARDVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



**St. Luke's United Methodist Church,**

**Thank you isn't enough! Words truly cannot express how grateful we are for your generosity. Our students and families at Pritchardville Elementary School were overjoyed to receive the beautifully wrapped gifts you provided. All gifts have been distributed. The smiles, excitement, and gratitude we witnessed meant everything to us. Your kindness brought so much joy and warmth during this special Christmas season, and it will be remembered long after the holidays.**

**Thank you as well for the ML (Multi Language) Night gifts. This event will occur in January. Our ML families will feel seen and supported, and your thoughtfulness will make a meaningful impact on them. We are so thankful for your continued generosity, compassion, and commitment to our school community!**

**With sincere appreciation and gratitude,**

**Ashley Owlett, School Social Worker, Pritchardville Elementary School**







cont'd...

We continue to be utterly amazed at the love and care you put into your gifts for the children at Pritchardville Elementary. Can only imagine your efforts for the gift items seeing your time and selections in wrapping paper, bags and ID bag decorations.

Our sincere thanks go right along with staff at Pritchardville.



### Blanket Ministry, Monday, January 26

Everyone is invited to join us for the next meeting of St. Luke's Blanket Ministry on Monday, January 26, at 10:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. We spend about an hour tying knots to make no-sew blankets for our members and friends who are experiencing health issues. Please bring sharp scissors, if you have them. The Missions Committee provides the fleece material. Also, if you can, bring your lunch and stay for a time of fellowship and getting to know each other better after the blanket-making. Please contact Kathy Smith at [kishhi1947@gmail.com](mailto:kishhi1947@gmail.com) with any questions.

### Agape Family Life Center Food Pantry, 5855 Okatie Hwy, Hardeeville



Volunteers are needed every Wednesday and Saturday from 10:00 – 12:00 to help distribute fresh food to families and seniors in need. You do not need to sign up in advance. Just show up, sign in, and they will give you an assignment. You will not do any heaving lifting. This is a wonderful way to meet the clients they are serving, as well as other volunteers. If you can, please wear your church nametag. Please contact Leslie Richards at [lesliearichards717@gmail.com](mailto:lesliearichards717@gmail.com) for more information.



If you are going through an illness or another crisis and could use some support, please let us know. Marie Baldauf leads this ministry, which can help by providing a meal and caring phone calls. Please contact Marie at [baldaufmarie@gmail.com](mailto:baldaufmarie@gmail.com), if you need support or would like to help in this ministry.

Collection box for your "pull tabs" is located in the Fellowship Hall. Please see the letter on the next page about how important collecting these pull tabs are to the Ronald McDonald House.



*Helping families feel at Home— even when they can't be*

October 29, 2025

Lois Willig  
St. Luke's United Methodist Church  
PO Box 2779  
Bluffton, SC 29910

Dear Lois,

On behalf of the kids and families served by Ronald McDonald House Charities® (RMHC®) of the Coastal Empire, **thank you for your generous In-Kind donation of Pop Tabs.**

We believe in supporting families throughout the Coastal Empire and helping them access the medical care and resources they need. No family should have to deal with their child's medical crisis alone. For hospitalized kids and their families, it will be the most important House they will ever visit. RMHC® helps families of seriously ill, hospitalized children cope with the stress and expense of daily living while trying to be close and emotionally strong for their child. We provide for every child's illness and injury and serve all children from newborn to 22 years of age and their families. **Keeping Families Close is the true spirit of our mission.**

Caring for these special families since July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1987, RMHC® is located just 176 steps from the Dwaine & Cynthia Willett Children's Hospital of Savannah. Additionally, RMH serves St. Joseph's/Candler Hospital and all area medical facilities serving the Coastal Empire. The Savannah House is open 24/7/365, governed by a 17-member Board of Directors, and managed by a full-time staff of six. A community effort, RMHC® funding comes from events, donations (corporate, civic, and individual), as well as local McDonald's owner operators. Your gift enables us to touch the lives of thousands of individuals through our programs, including the Savannah Ronald McDonald House®, the Ronald McDonald Family Rooms®, the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile® and the Ronald McDonald Hospitality Cart®. The RMH Family Rooms® are an outreach program of RMH. Located in Memorial and St. Joseph Hospitals, these comfortable hospitality suite/resource centers offer families of hospitalized children light refreshments, the use of computers, TV, and laundry services. Most importantly, families are encouraged to simply take a much-deserved break while remaining steps away from their child's bedside. Finally, in 2022 we added the Hospitality Cart Program- a Cart With Heart- which visits the kids and families at Willett's Children's Hospital providing snacks, drinks, toiletries, clothing, and toys directly to their rooms.

*Thank you for making a difference.*

Sincerely,

  
Billy Soroach  
CEO/Executive Director

**Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Coastal Empire specializing in providing comfort, care, and kindness when it matters the most.**

Ronald McDonald House Charities® (RMHC®) of the Coastal Empire is a 501(c)3 registered, nonprofit organization that operates solely on donations. Your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Our tax ID# is 58-2630107. Please consult your tax advisor for additional information. Please visit our website to learn about what's new at RMHC: [www.rmhc.coastalempire.org](http://www.rmhc.coastalempire.org). Follow RMHCCE on twitter.com/RMHCsavannah [www.facebook.com/rmhccoastalempire](https://www.facebook.com/rmhccoastalempire) [www.instagram.com/rmhc\\_coastalempire/](https://www.instagram.com/rmhc_coastalempire/) #KeepingFamiliesClose

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*The mission of Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Coastal Empire is to create, find and support programs that directly enhance the health and well-being of children and families.*



**Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®  
of the Coastal Empire**

*Keeping families close®*





## HISTORY HAPPENINGS

Dr. Pam Cooper Hoel has been the historian at St. Luke's for several years. She is relocating to Colorado and I will take her place. I have been her assistant, her partner in history events, her choir buddy and best of all, her friend since we met. We are very good at making each other laugh. When I say that I will miss her, that feels like an understatement.

Pam's knowledge of St. Luke's history is inspiring. As we developed the plans for the bicentennial celebration in 2024, I was continually impressed by what she knew and how she wanted to share that information with the congregation. She has created a series of scrapbooks tracing the history of our church. What a legacy she is leaving us! I now have the responsibility of maintaining our historical records. I am so fortunate that Pam has provided me with a blueprint to keep that history.

Pam and I gave tours of St. Luke's during 2024 and 2025. (We love dressing in period costumes.) Pam would take visitors through the history of the church building while I walked people around the graveyard, telling stories about many of the people buried there.

My love of tours of the graveyard will continue this year. I have a wonderful committee of volunteers who will work with me to develop a plan for regular church/graveyard tours. I will also write a monthly article for the newsletter based on St. Luke's history. This is where Pam's diligent research will be invaluable. I am also available for questions. If you are curious about something in the church or the graveyard, let me know. I will be glad to have a topic to write about.

So now I am ready to continue the challenge of maintaining St. Luke's wonderful history. Thank you, Dr. Pam Cooper Hoel for all you have done to preserve our history at St. Luke's. I will miss your terribly.

*Kathy Smith,  
Church Historian*



# A **LOOK** BACK AT DECEMBER 2025

Not sure if this is Santa or Rudolph...but I do know that it's our outgoing Church Council Chair, Jim Smith at his last meeting!



Jack Reed & helpers placed Christmas wreaths on the Veteran's graves in our graveyard & cemetery.



Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> was our Christmas Cantata "Carols" by Heather Sorenson for Choir and congregation. Marsha Gerber, pianist; Choral Director, Tatyana Topoleski,



Then, we had our Christmas Eve Worship Service





December 28<sup>th</sup>, we had our Installation of Officers for 2026



We also welcomed two new members, Shirley Hamilton & Leslie Van



We visited the residents at Canterfield of Bluffton Assisted Living Facility and gave them bags filled with gifts of the donations received from you, our generous congregation. They were thrilled!!!



## Prayer Requests

### MEMBERS & CONGREGANTS

Ruth Dolan	Candace Payne	Judi & Gary Landin	Bill Trainer	Linda O'Connor
Mim Mazon	Andy & Sharon Makarick	Dave Fisher	Lois Finch	

### FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF CONGREGANTS

Hannah Nystrom, friend of Marie Baldauf  
 Beverly Byrd, friend of Cynthia Thompson  
 Daughter of Don McKay  
 Persephone, sister of Penelope Power  
 Elaine, friend of Michele Elek  
 Debbie Hamilton, sister-in-law of Diana & Walker  
 Hamilton  
 Nancy, friend of Janet Jacoby  
 Dorothy Riley, friend of Peggy Firtion  
 Rosalyn Perdue, mother of Allyn Perdue  
 Dale Lawrence, nephew of Jerry Vagnier  
 Stephanie, daughter of Nettie Peck  
 Michael, uncle of Megan Sytsma  
 Mother of Megan Sytsma  
 Robin, friend of Margo Cservek  
 Diana Oder, friend of Diana Walker  
 Kim Piehl, daughter-in-law of Fran Iacovo  
 Steve Rose, friend of Candace Payne  
 Pete Burger, friend of Jane Tiffany  
 Jan Demcsak, neighbor of Jane Tiffany  
 Edith, friend of Barb Silcox  
 Lucy, friend of Harriet McCauley  
 Dennis Adelman, friend of Diana Hamilton  
 Jeffrey and Lynette, friends of Amy Dauplaise  
 John, grand nephew of Meg Carmody  
 Debbie, friend of Carol Jackson



*Our deepest sympathy to friends and family of Ouida Dell on the passing of her sister, Barbara Cleland, Dec 7<sup>th</sup>.*

**Let us remember with cards, and prayers...**

CHURCH MEMBERS IN NURSING HOMES, ASSISTED LIVING OR HOMEBOUND

Ruth Dolan,  
 Summer Breeze  
 351 Wilmington Island Rd.  
 Memory Care, Room 107A  
 Savannah GA 31410

Elnora Ekholm, 173 May River Rd.  
 Bluffton SC 29910

June Hamilton, 4 Concession Oak Dr.  
 Bluffton SC 29909

Jerry Wick, 740 Middletrail Court  
 Mt. Airy MD 21771





# Happy Birthday!

# Happy Anniversary

## **JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

01 David Lynde  
06 Mariah Fair  
07 Dash Pryor  
13 Michele Elek  
13 Jean Tanner  
14 Mary Goldfinch  
15 Norm Stark  
17 Bob Heck  
18 Ottice Adkins  
18 Kevin Prosser  
21 Joann Sandruck  
22 Matthew Melancon  
25 Agnes Scarlett  
26 Rick Beebe  
26 Michelle Cramer  
27 Joe McCulloch  
30 Alan Bethel  
31 Tina Topoleski

## **FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

04 Tom Shelley  
04 Rikita Thompson  
06 Don McKay  
06 Stan O'Rear  
08 Tina Blount  
09 Michael Brown  
09 Linda Metcalf  
10 Sam Rossa  
10 Walker Hamilton  
11 Jack Reed  
13 Gary Landin  
13 Bill Trainer  
14 Bill Haskins  
16 Meg Carmody  
19 Linda Fisher  
21 Marge Skinker  
23 Bill Husson  
24 Janet Baumeister  
25 Tom Cook  
26 Linda Batten  
28 Candace Payne  
28 Rich Rohde

## **NO JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES**

## **FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES**

01 Arlene & Rich Schaltegger  
02 Letty & Bill Husson  
15 Bonnie & Lee van Rensburg  
26 Nancy & John Sariscak



**OR WATCH "ON-LINE" AT**

**ST. LUKE'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL**

<https://www.youtube.com/@st.lukesunitedmethodistchu8920/videos>

**Donate through Vanco**, go to our web page:

<https://stlukesumc-okatie.org/>, Click on the "Donate" button at the top of the page. This will link you to our Vanco donation tiles. Choose where your donation will be applied.



Please "like" our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100082060615677&mibextid=LQQJ4d>

**LET ME TAKE YOUR PHOTO!** If you are attending St. Luke's United Methodist Church, we would like to have you in our Photo Directory. We include visitors as well as members! Please see Pat Simmons to arrange a time to have your photo taken. It only takes a minute of your time!



**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF**

**ST. LUKE'S** – you may pick up an "Invitation to Membership" form (located behind the last pew) also on the bulletin board and in the Fellowship Hall. Or email [patsimmonsperdue@gmail.com](mailto:patsimmonsperdue@gmail.com) for a copy. Fill it out, bring it back and Pastor Chris will get in touch with you.

**If you cannot come to church, we Thank You for "mailing" your donations to:**

**St. Luke's UMC  
PO Box 2779  
Bluffton SC 29910**

