



The people of The United Methodist Church

E-MESSENGER

Open hearts
Open minds
Open doors

Saint Luke United Methodist Church

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Jesus is a Real Person

I first remember meeting Jesus in preschool in Nazareth, where the nun showed us a picture of a kind man with beautiful hair and brown eyes. She told us the most amazing stories: how he walked on water, healed a blind man, and rose from the dead. The nun made sure we knew that Jesus and Mother Mary loved us.

When I was in middle school, I met Jesus again. One of the periodic “He’s coming soon” panics was sweeping our corner of the world. It was during the the Yom Kippur War, also known as the Ramadan War, the October War, the 1973 Arab–Israeli War. I was told Jesus would come like a thief in the night. This was hard to integrate; thieves, in my world, were not nice people. But I remember what the nun said: “Jesus loves you, Mel (Kamal).” I was not sure how to wrap all this into one picture. Was Jesus the kind man who loved me, or the coming King who would judge the world and wipe out all the really bad people? I began to be afraid of Jesus. Just to be on the safe side, every night I would ask Jesus to save me, just in case I was not saved and just in case he came back during the night, broke in like a thief, took my family, and left me.

In college, I was introduced to Jesus, the radical. Someone put a copy of the Cotton Patch Gospel in my hand, and I realized Jesus cared about things like racial division and injustice. This was not new to me. I grew up in a culture of hate, prejudice, where people treated based on their nationality, religion, language, and were considered a second class citizenship. Somehow, my brain made the connection that Jesus was a Jew, probably with olive skin like me (being from his home town of Nazareth), and often mistreated because of his racial background. I knew Jesus really did want me to love my neighbors, regardless of their or their skin color, language, or religion, or any labels that are placed on people.

In seminary, I was exposed to all kinds of thinking about Jesus. Some scholars said he was not really God’s son, just a really good teacher. Other scholars said we could not know much about Jesus because he lived so long ago. There were other voices, each with an opinion about Jesus. The scholarly debates felt odd; they were like talking about a person who was standing right beside you, instead of talking to the person. The greatest temptation I faced in seminary was to talk about Jesus instead of talk to Jesus.

It was about this time, that I was introduced to the deep grace of Jesus. While I was surrounded by theories about Jesus, I began to experience at a soul level the grace of

Jesus, pouring over the wounds of my soul, healing the cuts, and transforming the pain of my own mistakes. It was coming full circle; I was back to Jesus as I first knew Him. But He was beyond the nun’s simple picture. He was the gracious, living Savior who knew me by name and the King with the power to restore what was broken.

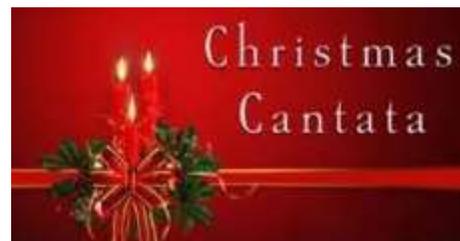
I had begun to serve Jesus as a pastor and a teacher by this time. People would come to me, telling me what Jesus would do, or telling me what Jesus would say, or remonstrating me because Jesus would make a different choice that would not make anyone mad. By this time, I knew Jesus well enough to know Jesus could not be fit into a box. Whenever we try to bend Jesus to be who we want Him to be, we end up with a picture that tells only part of the story.

In the years I have served and followed Jesus, what I have come to know is this: Jesus is a real person. You cannot caricature Him with a sentence or a few paragraphs. He is more than can be captured by words. You only really get to know Jesus when you do life with Him, when you Follow Him.

“Jesus, Jesus Jesus, sweetest name I know, filled my every longing, keeps me singing as I go.” “Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. There is something about that name. Master. Savior. Jesus. Like the Fragrance after the rain. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Let all heaven and earth proclaim. That kings and kingdoms will pass away. But there is something about that name.”

Make sure the Jesus you know is not just a picture; make sure He is the one you are following. Jesus does not, will not, and cannot fit in a box. The season of Christmas is all about Jesus. May He be born in your life now and forever.

In Christian love and grace, Mel



St. Luke United Methodist Church
Chancel Choir Presents:
An Ordinary Night with Orchestra
Sunday, December 19
10:30 a.m. Worship Service



Upper Room Disciplines *A Book of Daily Devotions*

Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

In this beautiful, powerful passage, we witness something great. Here, two of the first named prophets of the New Testament greet each other, rejoicing in the work God is doing in their midst. Mary is most often spoken in terms of her virginity, while Elizabeth is focused on in her "barrenness" leading up to her pregnancy with John. Both of these common signifiers brush past the vibrancy of these women as they appear in our scriptures, inviting us to flatten them and gloss past their full character.

In the New Testament, Mary and Elizabeth are the first to know of God's audacious, scandalous, world-upending plan. In response, both cry out in songs of praise, blessings on their journey toward birth and God's coming work. They prophesy to the nature of God and the coming Christ. They know deep within themselves the truth of what God has done for them. They can recognize what God has done in the life of the other, and share joy in the anticipation of what will come.

Many of us are not used to hearing Mary and Elizabeth described as prophets, or as heroes engaged in dangerous work. But just as other biblical heroes made great proclamations of faith and set their lives on the line, so too did Mary and Elizabeth. Their faith and recognition are constant examples to us. Rather than defining them by their sexual status or proximity to parenthood or hemming them into sanitized visions of saintly, unattainable motherhood, we can hear Mary and Elizabeth call us into God's revolutionary world—one of great risk but also of great, leaping joy.

God, make us like Elizabeth. Let us shout in a loud voice when a blessing walks into our midst and take notice when something within us leaps with recognition of your divine presence. Amen.



The church office will be closed
December 24, 27, 31 and
January 3 for the
Christmas holidays.

The church newsletter
will not be published
December 29, but will
resume January 5, 2022.



PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS THIS WEEK...

Continued Prayer Concerns: Jeanne Anne Pharis; Scott Paris; French Congregation & the people of the Congo; Pat Farmer; Doris Mobley's son, Don; Marilyn Smith's cousin, Kim Masters; Jack & Jerrie Lucko; Vicki Kovar; Hilaire Lukalema; Lisel Richardson's Aunt Vicki; Leslie Duncan's aunt, Ruth Smith; Joyce Hejl's brother & sister-in-law, Mike & Marianne Hejl; Sam & Ann Kiker; Judy White; Ross & Betty Longeway; Howard & Kara Schwoppe & their family; Sandra Mason; Pastor Ditu's sisters, Ruth & Marie; Wynelle Hencke; Byron Lechler; Bill & Roberta Reeves; Sarah Harris' husband, Tom; Lydia Acosta's daughter, Donna & her husband, Alfred; Carolyn Hodge; Martha Smith; Jane West; Bill Worthington; George & Karen Angle's daughter-in-law and sister-in-law, George & Mary Paris' sister, Jackie; David & Kay Stapp; Bill & Toni Hood; Ron Phippen; Linda Smith; Tommie Martin's nephew, Scott Pashby & his family; Betty Holshouser's daughter, Lori; Loree Paris; Norm & Betty Turnage; Patty Tucker's sister; Lydia Acosta; Art & Cathy Gordon's granddaughter & great-grandson; Jim Long; Bill Worthington with the loss of his brother; Mickie Fletcher & family with the loss of her nephew; Ruby Lane's nephew, Dan; Barbara Provenzano's sister, Patricia Wiles; Patty Tucker; Judy White; Joe & Betty Crawford; George Angle's brother, Jim; Jack Bostick

This Week's Concerns: George Conant; Georgia Duncan; those affected by the tornados in Kentucky, Arkansas, Illinois and surrounding states; Betty Holshouser; Burt Moore with the loss of his sister and cousin; kidnapped American missionaries in Haiti; the people of Haiti and Afghanistan; prayers for our nation; those affected by COVID-19; our first responders, doctors, nurses, essential employees & frontline workers

Military: Ryan Kelly Hampton; Kyle Johnson; Sam Burnett; Krystal Calvert; Evan Hill; Matt Miller; Nathaniel Hill; Alex Sullivan-Green; Harrison Lenox



Bonnie Richards wishes everyone happy holidays
and best wishes for the upcoming new year with
hope, happiness, peace and good health.



Wednesday Morning Bible Study
Book of Ephesians
December 22 • 10:00 a.m. • Fellowship Hall
We invite you to join us.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

EMMANUEL CLASS:

We had seven members in class last Sunday. Roxie spoke to us about various Christmas traditions. Please continue to pray for our class members who are on the prayer list.

GENESIS CLASS:

We want thank Linda Savell for hosting our Ladies Night Out group for our Christmas party last Thursday, it was absolutely wonderful to be together catching up and enjoying the festivities of the season. It is always special to enjoy all of Linda's beautiful decorations in every room of their home and we had so much fun. Amy Bibb presented us with a booklet full of all the thoughts I have shared in my weekly connections that she and Gene worked on together. What a gift that was for all of us! On December 19, let's have our class brunch during Sunday School. Cathy said she would make her cheese grits and Claudia will bring bow knots. Let's enjoy fellowship during class time and then we can enjoy the cantata that will be presented by the choir and an orchestra during the worship service. Amy and Keith have enjoyed having their kids here with them this past week. Nothing is better than the sounds of grandkids in your house! They look forward to traveling to Florida to enjoy Christmas with them. Cathy and Art are in HSV and will return this week. The Hill's granddaughter, Kennedy, was baptized last Sunday. Keep all those dealing with the tornadoes that hit this weekend in your prayers, most especially that town in Kentucky with so many fatalities. Many remember Tommy and Gale Boyd (former members of St. Luke). Tommy's father passed away last Thursday. Keep the Boyd family in our prayers. There are many others in our church family who are ill or healing from falls and other issues that we keep in our prayers as well.

PARTNERS IN FAITH CLASS:

PIF class celebrated the close of another year with a pot luck breakfast, each attendee brought their favorite morning food. Looking forward to final two Sundays of *Mysteries of the Bible*.



Upcoming Christmas Services

Friday, December 24

6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Sunday, December 26

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship Service

2:00 p.m. French Congregation

Christmas Worship Service

Friday, December 31

9:00 p.m. French Congregation

New Year's Eve Fellowship



Dear Rev. Bishara,

Thank you for your gracious and eloquent service honoring the life of my grandma, Mary Lee Bounds. St. Luke was an intricate part of my grandparent's lives and I am so thankful that her life could be celebrated in her church home. I have happy memories childhood memories of St. Luke, including attending Sunday School and youth group and my grandpa taking half of the donuts in the Spiritual Life Sunday School class and concealing them in a napkin for me! Thank you for being so generous with your time and counsel to my mother, Glenda. You offered her grace and comfort during one of the most heartbreaking moments of her life. I have enclosed a gift of thanks for St. Luke. Merry Christmas and thank you for your kindness to our family.

Sincerely, Lindsay Ballotta



United Methodist Men Poinsettia Sales

The United Methodist Men are taking orders for Poinsettia plants to decorate our Sanctuary for the Advent Season. The cost is \$20 per plant. If you would like to order a poinsettia, you can purchase your poinsettia on Sunday mornings or you can call the church office, 817/838-6834 or email Susan at office@st-luke-umc.com to place an order. You can pick up your plant after the Christmas Eve Service or donate it to one of our shut-ins.



Join us for worship every Sunday at 10:30 a.m.
for In-Person Worship or via our
Facebook page or YouTube.com:
SLUMC—Haltom City

Sunday, December 19, 2021
4th Sunday of Advent

Children, Youth & Adult Sunday School - 9:15 a.m.

Weekly Attendance

United Methodist Women • December 7—42

Adult Bible Study • December 8—10

United Methodist Men Breakfast • December 9—9

Sunday, December 12, 2021

St. Luke UMC—10:30 a.m.

Sunday School—93

In-Person Worship—69

Online Worship—168

French Worship Service—2:00 p.m.

In-person Worship—42

Online Worship—76



St. Luke United Methodist Church
 3200 Denton Highway
 Haltom City, TX 76117
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The *E-Messenger* newsletter is published weekly online. Deadline for submission of articles is 9:00 a.m. every Monday. The editor reserves the right to edit for content and space.

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mel Bishara
 Phone: 817/838-6834

Editor: Susan Briles
 Fax: 817/838-7631

Website: st-luke-umc.net

E-mail: office@st-luke-umc.com

Central Texas Conference website: www.ctcumc.org

Sunday Services: Sunday School • 9:15 a.m.

In-person and Online Worship • 10:30 a.m.

French Worship Service: In-person and Online Worship • 2:00 p.m.

Office Hours: Monday thru Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Friday 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

NEWS ESPECIALLY FOR YOU:

NEWSLETTER ONLINE AT:

www.st-luke-umc.net



Sunday, December 19, 2021

4th Sunday of Advent

9:15 a.m. Sunday School

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship Service

2:00 p.m. French Worship Service

Monday, December 20, 2021

9:00 a.m. Newsletter DEADLINE

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

No Activities Scheduled

Wednesday, December 22, 2021

10:00 a.m. Bible Study

Thursday, December 23, 2021

9:00 a.m. UMM Breakfast - Bluebonnet Café

5:30 p.m. Prayer Group

Friday, December 24, 2021

Christmas Eve—Office Closed

10:00 a.m. Second Chance Resale Shop

6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Saturday, December 25, 2021

Christmas Day

10:00 a.m. Second Chance Resale Shop—Closed

Sunday, December 26, 2021

1st Sunday after Christmas

9:15 a.m. Sunday School

10:30 a.m. Morning Worship Service

2:00 p.m. French Worship Service

Youth News:



Dear parents and youth,

We are continuing our study with the youth, and this Sunday, we talked about Advent. We shared about preparing the way of the Lord. Our text is found in the Gospel of Matthew 3, verses 1-12. The Gospel of Matthew is believed to have been written between the years 80-90. It was written way before we had Christmas started. Today, everybody celebrates Christmas. Even in an antichrist country, we see people celebrating Christmas. Why is it that Christmas is so popular, and what is the message of Christmas? As Christians, we believe that we are celebrating the birth of the Savior of humanity. His birth brings joy to our hearts, hope, and restoration. Right now, we are in the Advent season. The period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas. But what is the message of Advent? One can give different interpretations, but what stands out to me is that: Just like John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord, we as Christians are also preparing the way of the Lord. John the Baptist urged the people of his generation to prepare their hearts for the one coming after him. We also need to prepare our hearts for the one that is coming: Jesus Christ. When the wise men saw his star shining in the sky, they made their way to worship him. They didn't come empty-handed, but they came prepared with gifts, oils, aroma for the baby (gold, frankincense, and myrrh). Those oils represent our offering to him, our adoration, our worship. It needs to smell good. The oil frankincense has unique properties. It promotes feelings of relaxation, peace, and overall wellness. God wants us to come this Christmas, not worried about anything, but to come peacefully, in this quiet place and admire the son given to humanity. As we are getting ready to celebrate the birth of Christ, we need to prepare our aroma, prepare our heart, to receive him again. Once we see him, he will restore our souls, bring joy to our lives. And as we are entering a new year, we are joining with him, and he will walk us through the new year 2022 with great peace and joy.

Stanislas Ndecky