

JANUARY 2025

— AWAKENING —
HEARTS

Quarterly Magazine
Issue 2



“Imagine an entire **community** coming
ALIVE to the power of life in **CHRIST.**”



That’s what God is up to here in Central Florida and beyond. Inside this e-magazine, you will find several examples of incredible ministries that glorify our Savior and fulfill our mission of Awakening Hearts in every generation to the power of life in Christ. I pray that you find these stories encouraging as well as inspiring. As you read, please keep the names and ministries in your regular prayers, and consider how you might also get more involved!

This is a very exciting season at St. Luke’s! New doors are opening, and we have been entrusted with building upon our amazing heritage and traditions. God’s hand of favor has been on us for a long time, and he continues to provide new opportunities for our growth.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we grow in our discipleship whenever we engage in Worship Gatherings, Spiritual Formation, and Community Connections. This e-magazine is filled with amazing ways that our members are reaching out to our communities - both locally and globally. Jesus has a deep love for the community around us, and he longs to use you to engage them with his powerful gospel, in words and actions.

We believe that when we participate in Community Connections, the Holy Spirit deepens your love for your neighbors and uses you to share his love with them. Serve one person, or one family, or one community, and watch the ripples of God’s love spread. Eventually, the love of God will awaken each heart in our community - and our community will be forever changed as it comes alive to the power of life in Christ!

In the love of Christ,
Senior Pastor Tige Culbertson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Tige Culbertson".

PASTOR *Roberts*

HAS OFFICIALLY
RETIRED *24 yrs*
after

Pastor Roberts attended Concordia River Forest and then Concordia Seminary in Fort Wayne Indiana and received his first call to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Randolph, New Jersey in 1988. He met Ruth at a neighboring Lutheran congregation and they married in July of 1991.

He accepted the call to St. Luke's and was installed on April 16, 2000. His years of ministry at St. Luke's covered many areas until his retirement in October 2024. Pastor Roberts was responsible for our partnerships with Shepherd's Hope Health Clinic and Share the Care Alzheimer's Respite Care. Besides the regular preaching and teaching, he led our Wednesday night Community Night ministries and led our Generations worship. Primary responsibilities in Human Care and Evangelism for many years built our partnerships with Hope Helps, The Sharing Center, cancer support ministries, homeless ministries and so many others. As we built international mission connections, he became the leader of our Honduras church building and our partnership with our sister congregation in Latvia.

His wife Ruth has served multiple roles at St. Luke's through the years and continues as a teacher aide. All four of their children (Becky, Eric, Matthew, Elizabeth) attended school here and the family was active in music, athletics and all the other aspects of our school life. They have demonstrated their love for the Lord as can be seen in the friendships they created with so many members here.

Pastor's cancer diagnosis was a difficult message for him, his family and the congregation at St. Luke's. His faithfulness and witness to the Gospel of Jesus has continued to show His trust in the

Triune God even in the midst of these difficult times. At his retirement celebration, Pastor stated:



God's will is always good. If this is God's will, this is good. This is his plan. ... No, I don't understand it. I don't know what exactly God has in mind, but every day I trust that His will will be worked out in me and through me and it's going to be fine. God's will is being done here. It is a good will. There is a positive, blessed and purposeful outcome to this and I look forward to that.



We thank Pastor Roberts for his 24 years at St. Luke's and his 12 years at Good Shepherd. We can see the Lord's hand working as the Gospel has been shared in Oviedo and around the world. We pray that the Lord continues to bless him in his retirement.

new pastor ON THE BLOCK

We are excited to join the St. Luke's family! After nineteen years in Colorado this is a wild new adventure for us. I was installed to serve as pastor on Saturday, January 4th. My wife Teckla, daughter Kierra (a high school senior), and son Tavian (a sophomore), will move down after graduation this summer. There is great excitement and some nerves with all this transition. I am very thankful for all that St. Luke's has done to help us move.



a bit about our family

I grew up in Seattle and Teckla in Denver. After high school, I felt called into DCE ministries and Teckla felt called into teaching -- which landed us both at Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska. Teckla gravitated toward Early Childhood and has taught at, led as director, and grown EEC's in both Washington and Colorado. After eight years as a DCE, I jumped into our church body's distance education SMP pastors program and was ordained in 2010.



While we know I'm here to oversee and build community connections, we are excited to see what ministry God has in store for Teckla. Teckla is my best friend and we will celebrate our 25th anniversary this June. So, Happy Anniversary sweetheart, I'm moving us to Florida! Teckla is athletic, hilarious, and a gifted leader.



We so often focus on what our kids "do" instead of who they are. So while Kierra is a beautiful dancer and Tavian is a weight lifting beast, she has an amazing sense of humor, a huge heart and is loud like her parents. He has a quiet spirit, strength of character and fearlessness toward anything new. They both wear their faith on their sleeves and I am so proud to be in their lives.

As a family we love to travel. We have pulled off some phenomenal adventures on a budget, love Florida theme parks and anywhere with the last name "Beach." While our years close to the mountains were fun, God bringing us here is a dream come true. I am looking forward to our time together!

In Christ,
Pastor Scott



VICAR EDDIE KREZ

On April 23, 2024, which was my birthday, on our yearly call day I found out I would be serving as a vicar at St. Luke's. Needless to say, it was one of the best birthday gifts I've ever received. Having spent some time at St. Luke's, I am very grateful for the various ministry opportunities and learning experiences I've enjoyed over the past five months. From hospital and homebound visits, high school youth beach trips, to our Men's Bible study group on Wednesday mornings, I have seen so much here and I am so blessed to be a part of such an amazing dedicated staff who are fun to work with, and love the Lord.

I was a chaperone at the Middle School Youth Retreat this past year. This retreat was pivotal in helping me understand how to establish meaningful relationships with a generation that requires an ongoing message of the Gospel's love and joy amidst a rapidly changing world. Our activities ranged from pickup basketball games, scavenger hunts, and a giant glow stick party. The photo above was taken during our scavenger hunt adventure. I saw God at work in our giant worship gatherings, small group meeting times, and breakout sessions.

Seeing our students in worship singing at the top of their lungs with smiles on their faces praising the Lord was a sight to see. During our small group times these students shared their authentic feelings about the areas they struggle with and the areas they are successful. It was so moving to see these students share the impact the Gospel has in their lives. The theme for our gathering was **"Pressure"** and the Bible verse associated was from Matthew 11:28 which says, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* I think it's safe to say that all of us at some point have felt weary and burdened. Several of our middle school students struggle with identity crisis with their faith, experience anxiety, and feel the weight of expectations from so many places. Our main identity in this world never changes. We are a child of God. God's unconditional love will never cease for us, and even when we fall short, the love of our heavenly Father continues to remain.

The beauty of St. Luke's is its ability to show the depth of that unconditional love. Whether you're a Lutheran Haven resident or you just started preschool, together we share the identity of being a child of God. I've felt truly fortunate to be able to serve here, and I express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your prayers, support, and love. Coming into an entirely new place, I've felt so welcomed in such a short amount of time and give thanks for your constant hospitality and steadfast faith. I thought the best part of coming to St. Luke's would be the escape from the cold weather I used to have in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where I grew up, but I've come to find out that the best part is being a part of this church community and having my faith be inspired by so many of you.

God's Blessings,
Vicar Eddie Krez

a life of **FREEDOM**

As a young boy in school, I grew up in the age when you got your name written on the chalkboard whenever you stepped out of line, broke a rule, or did something wrong. Each infraction after that, and your name received a check mark. In First and Second Grade, at the end of most days, my name was on the board with a handful of checkmarks, reminding me of my many mistakes.

Do you know what my favorite part of the day was? First thing in the morning! Because when I came into the classroom, the chalkboard was clean. No names! The failings of yesterday were wiped clean. I enjoyed the freedom of a fresh start.

How do we measure discipleship at St. Luke's? One way is by considering how we experience a transformed life of freedom! Consider how you might grow in this measure of discipleship by:

- Remembering your baptism every day
- Spending time in the Word and in prayer every day
- Rejoicing that Jesus has fulfilled the law for you
- Finding peace in Jesus, even in stressful life circumstances

In Philippians 4:6-7, Paul soothes us with his words, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Regardless of yesterday, today is a new beginning. **You are set free!**

what
will YOU
do with your
FRESH
start?

Yours in Freedom,
Pastor Tige



a life of
FREEDOM

- I am baptized and remember the promises of my baptism daily.
- I abide in the Word and pray continually.
- I am set free from a life that is bound by the law, Christ has fulfilled the law for me.
- I find peace in Christ, even in stressful life circumstances.

Bible Verse

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." - Phillipians 4:6-7

Awakening
HEARTS in every generation to
the power of life in Christ.

GENEROUS LIFE

AWAKENING HEARTS in every generation to the power of LIFE in Christ. This is what St. Luke's strives to accomplish every day. As we consider this powerful mission statement, we see that our Generous LIFE initiative provides a road map to awaken hearts. Each of the four tenets of living a Generous LIFE provide a signpost in our journey with Jesus. The four principles of Labor, Influence, Finance, and Experience can be harnessed to engage others and build up the Kingdom of God.

LABOR

St. Luke's Catalyst Groups regularly choose to help local non-profit organizations with basic needs from repainting a women's shelter to serving the homeless or filling backpacks for school children.

INFLUENCE

Week-after-week our members are building up one another in Worship, sharing each other's burdens and praying for each other. Many are teaching and discipling young believers or helping new members. Plus, our teachers and staff are pouring life and spiritual skills into nearly 900 students!

FINANCES

It's important to pause here and recognize that a generous life does not pivot on one's ability to make monetary contributions. Yes, St. Luke's has been richly blessed, and as a result, our members are very generous. Yet, living a Generous LIFE puts Finances and donations on an equal footing with the three other core values of a Generous Life. Over the years, St. Luke's has continued its tradition of providing financial support in countless ways. The Lord's hand is extended through His generous people.

EXPERIENCE

Experience provides a wealth of opportunities to live a generous life. Have you ever wondered if your life experiences could be valuable when shared with others? We recently asked a member who was encouraged by the idea of a Generous LIFE. She reflected, "I have been a faithful donor for many years, but the principles of a Generous LIFE have helped me see how my life Experiences could be a blessing to others." Those experiences are her testimony. The Bible says that believers overcome darkness (in part) by the word of our testimony (Rev. 12:11).

Where are you on the path to a more Generous LIFE? Can you lend a helping hand? Could you influence others in their faith? Is the Lord asking you to give away more of what He's given to you? How can your life's testimony shine a light into another person's life? We encourage you to pray about these questions. We are confident our loving Lord will show you where your next step is.

- Doug Taylor, Director of Development & Stewardship



CHAPEL OFFERINGS

- Year 2023-24

Each month, St. Luke's Lutheran School collects chapel offerings during the weekly chapel services for various charitable organizations, many of which are familiar to the St. Luke's community. Throughout the year, the offerings go toward local, state, national, and international organizations with a similar mission of sharing the Good News while serving the community.

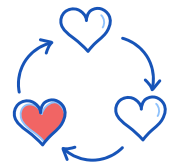


\$13,136
Monetary Donation



7,854
Food Items

Organizations such as the Kick Off For Kids food drive, Lutheran World Relief, and Mission Haiti are all staples in our chapel offering recipients the past few years and have all felt the blessings the St. Luke's community brings through their offerings. By collecting offerings each week, the students at St. Luke's are able to learn about tithing and the privilege of seeing just how impactful a giving spirit can be when the Holy Spirit is at work.



NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

LCMS: Concordia Theological Seminary

The school chose a chapel offering recipient that is rooted in the LCMS. In these months, donations were collected for the Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne Chaplaincy Project. This project has its focus on supporting chaplains within the LCMS to the Armed Forces. Through the support for this project, chaplains all over the world are equipped with theological resources and continued encouragement in their ministry as they serve fellow servicemen and women. Depending on the current needs of the chaplains, monthly packages are sent out

with resources such as Lutheran Service books, catechisms, study bibles, devotion materials, etc. These materials support these men in their call to minister to those who are actively serving. By the grace of God, this ministry has been thriving and making disciples through this project for many years.

We thank the generous hearts of those who continue to pray for and support our chapel offering recipients as we seek to grow the kingdom of God!

- Allison Kindred, 5th Grade Teacher

GOODS AND GRACE

God's Work through Groceries

Goods & Grace is a St. Luke's mission and ministry to the **ALICE** population (*Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Earners*). The **ALICE** population have income from employment, but have a difficult time making ends meet in their monthly budget. They don't qualify for Federal or State housing or food assistance and must make difficult decisions about how to allocate their hard-earned compensation.

The store is available for shoppers who have been qualified as "members" i.e. those who meet the income threshold for the **ALICE** population, based on earnings and family size. Goods & Grace stands in the gap for individuals who need a little help in making ends meet, by providing groceries for sale below typical retail cost.

Today, there are 431 active member families using the store. Goods & Grace currently carries some 425 basic items, predominantly shelf-stable food and hygiene items with some refrigerated egg, dairy and deli products.

ways to SUPPORT

- **Pray** for our volunteers, members, and our supporters.
- **Volunteer!** There are many opportunities for outreach.
- Support the mission of Goods & Grace through your finances.
- **Spread** the word about this mission.

To learn more scan the QR Code



stories

CUSTOMER

AGNES relies solely on her social security income, but earns just enough to be ineligible for any government aid. She shops weekly at the store and says, "Goods & Grace is a godsend."

LARRY Before he began shopping at the store, his family couldn't afford eggs. "Eggs were more expensive than a gallon of gas. I had to put gas in the car so I could get to work, so eggs became a luxury item."

TATI, works two part time jobs. She was so excited to be able to buy shampoo and conditioner at the store, "I am washing my hair with dish soap, so that I can make my pennies stretch."

MICHELE, a new member shopping for the first time, couldn't believe the total. She asked, "Are you sure?" The cashier confirmed the total, her eyes welled up with tears, as she said, "Thank God for this store."

- Linda Kirk, Goods and Grace Board of Directors



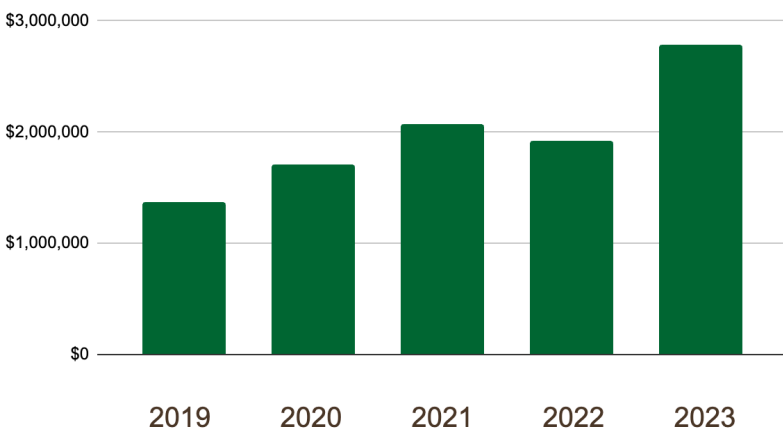
St. Luke's SJM MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

ST. LUKE'S SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

The St. Luke's scholarship funds exist to support families and children who are unable to afford the eternal, life changing benefits offered by a St. Luke's education. Donors who support these funds are transforming lives and bringing more children to hear the saving Gospel message of Jesus Christ. With the costs of education rising, the ability of our congregation to help these families is an important part of our mission.

We are educating our member children in the faith while opening the door for many who don't know Christ to hear the message of salvation. We are awakening hearts to the power of life in Christ in every generation!

SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT FUNDS



Our Shawn J. Metcalf Memorial Golf Classic Tournament keeps growing! This year we had another record player turnout, with several folks on a waiting list clamoring to play. We are so blessed to have many caring sponsors and players who want to come out and show support for the Metcalf Scholarship Fund that provides financial aid to deserving St. Luke's students.

For more than 27 years this Fund and its supporting golf tournament has honored the memory of Shawn Metcalf, a St. Luke's alumnus who was taken home to heaven at a young age. This year's event raised nearly \$35,000 in net proceeds and we have grown each year on our way to our goal of \$100,000.

The 2025 event is scheduled for Friday, October 10th at Eagle Creek Golf Course in Orlando. Sponsor registration opens in May, individual player registration in July.





missions

El Barrio Las Brisas - Choluteca, Honduras

- Rev. Dr. Edmund Auger, Em.

Ministry work began in El Barrio Las Brisas several years ago with Pastor Roldan Rios. Today, in mission partnership with the Honduras Foro, Pastor German agreed to serve as evangelistic missionary and church planter in Choluteca. He committed to pastoral visitation in Choluteca, Honduras with two visits each month and currently serves two congregations under the Lutheran Church of Nicaragua.



During the past year Pastor German made 24 trips to Honduras from Nicaragua. Equipped with the Word of God and Luther's Catechism, Pastor Espinoza has visited 80 families. The mission in Choluteca has enjoyed strong ministry support from the leadership of the emerging national mission. Alfredo Oseguera and members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Comayaguela, have made servant trips to Choluteca in ministry partnership. With prayerful support from St. Luke's LC and the Honduras Foro, physical improvements to the church building have been completed which has greatly enhance the capacity for worship, teaching, and community outreach.

Through Pastor German, God is drawing children, youth, and adults to Himself through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The fruits of Pastor German's labors are now evident in the celebration of Word and Sacrament ministry in Choluteca. God has given the gift of new life in His Son Jesus through Holy Baptism to children, youth, and adults. The teaching of the Catechism has produced confirmed members of Jesús El Redentor Lutheran Mission in Choluteca. People in El Barrio Las Brisas are celebrating their identity and purpose as the children of God by His perfect love in the Savior. (1 John 3:1) Members of the Lutheran mission in Choluteca are hearing Jesus call them to ministry in their own community.

Please pray for the health and safety of Pastor German Espinoza as he travels from Nicaragua to Honduras. Pray God's blessings upon the members and families being served by Jesús El Redentor Lutheran Mission in Choluteca, Honduras.

confirmation RETREAT 2025

Our annual confirmation retreat is designed to give our 8th grade students an opportunity to grow and take ownership of their faith. We take a quick walk through the Christian life together as they prepare to confirm the faith they received in baptism. We begin exploring who they are, where they learn that because of Jesus they are valuable, loved, victorious, complete and forgiven. The most important thing about who you are is who you belong to.

In the morning we were led through a low ropes course where our students learn how important it is to accept help, and to be a part of a team. It is a super fun time of growth. Next we talk about purpose: How do you fit in? We found a sweet scenic spot to do this devotion and it felt so special to talk about how we are the crown of God's creation while sitting and enjoying his creation. We spent the afternoon in fellowship: playing cards, basketball, volleyball and just talking. On this retreat, none of the students have their phones so it is very refreshing to just have a stress free afternoon.

In the evening, we spent time in the Word choosing confirmation verses. Students had opportunities to talk with Christian adults and high schoolers about verses that interested them and why. We finished the night with s'mores and lots of glow sticks!

The next morning, Pastor Sam prepared a mini worship service for us. He preached on the future, focusing on

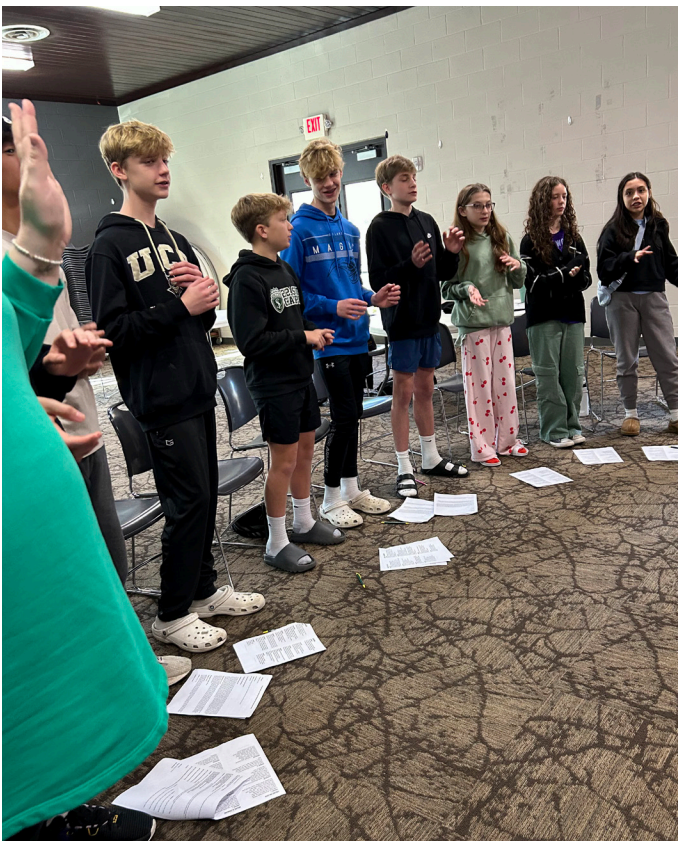
MATTHEW

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, ... But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

6:25-33

Going to high school can be anxiety producing for students and Pastor Sam assured them of God's love for them. He said "It's not about what the future holds, it's about who holds the future." We sang, had a time of confession and absolution and finished the retreat feeling refreshed and renewed. We are so thankful to God for our confirmation families and are so excited to see these students have their hearts awakened to the power of life in Christ!

- Annalisa Fitzsimons, DCE - Middle School Ministry



SPOTLIGHT

worship MUSIC **Nikki Peters**

What year did you start teaching at St. Luke's? 2011.

When did you transition to be the worship leader for our contemporary worship? 2019.

How did the Lord lead you to make that change?

I knew it was time to move on from teaching, but it was important that I continue to work in ministry, wherever that would be. Luckily, it was still here at St. Luke's.

I know your position means that you help both plan worship and lead worship. Can you tell us a little bit about both of those tasks?

It is very important to me that our services are meaningful. Of course, I want to see you smile and sing a song you love, but I also want to bring the message of our pastors to our lips as we sing. Being a worship leader means I am choosing songs that our congregation will sing in our sanctuaries. That's a BIG DEAL! What we choose to sing communally is precious, and I don't take that role lightly. That's why I'm particularly excited about the Songwriter Initiative and the music being produced by Lutheran worship directors, pastors, and musicians around the country.

I know that you have published a book and a few songs now. What led you to publish?

As a middle school teacher, I used to tell a story about a time in middle school when I prioritized popularity over true friendship. When I moved on from teaching, I wanted to put the story to paper so I could continue to share it. So now I have a fun book, *The Great Locker Break-in*. The songs I've produced, which is only three at this time, have been songs that really felt special to me and my co-writers. We wanted to have a way to share it with our community and give it the quality recording we felt it deserved.

How did your work with the Song Writers initiative begin?

I actually found the Songwriter Initiative through Facebook. The director, Kip Fox, put out a request for songwriters to join and find community. This was during the pandemic, so connecting with a group of musicians, pastors, and writers from around the country was a great new focus. We met monthly to share songs and kept in touch via Slack.



more than anything

We'd love for you to listen!

Written as a morning prayer, some dear friends of mine and I wrote and released a song called "More than Anything".

Scan **HERE** to listen!

What are some of the keys to writing a new worship song?

It's always important to think about your church community and what they need. Every church family is different. One of the first songs I wrote for St. Luke's was "Through a Child" for the school Advent services. I was able to write the next two songs as well, "Gloria! Gloria" and "Light of the World." This was a great way to share my love for writing music with St. Luke's and in a way that was useful and, hopefully, meaningful.

Can you tell us a little about what the WALi conference is?

WALi stands for Worship Arts Leader Initiative. It, along with the Songwriter Initiative are both under the Center for Worship Leadership out of Concordia University Irvine. Our now annual conference is an opportunity to support Lutheran worship directors, musicians, and leaders around the country. In addition, it's a space to grow the use of theologically sound contemporary music within the Lutheran church.

Why is music so important to worship?

Wow! This is a great question, and undoubtedly there are a lot of answers to this. In the same way we love reading liturgy together, it's a time where we lift our voices in unison to praise God. It's an expression of art, a gift that God has given us, and an opportunity for instrumentalists to worship with sound. In addition, we often put words to music to help us with memorization. This is why it is so important for our songs to be sound in theology and serve God and the needs of our church. A great melody is wonderful, but without solid lyrics, it's not going to sit in our heart the same way as Scripture does.



How can people support songwriters in the LCMS?

There are a lot of ways to support the Center for Worship Leadership (CWL) and their various initiatives: the Songwriter Initiative, the Psalm Library, and Liturgy Initiative. I would encourage anyone interested to go to their website and find the area that calls them the most. You can support CWL financially and share songs and videos through social media. Also, supporting our worship staff to continue to share these great resources and attend events such as the WALi Summit is integral to our growth as a Lutheran musical community.

What else would you tell people about using their passions to share the Gospel of Jesus?

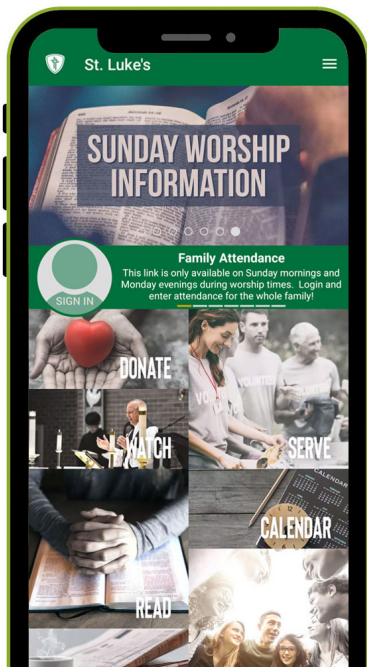
Martin Luther talks a lot about vocation. That where we are in life is where we are to serve, and we don't retire from this role. Whatever your age or skill, there is a use for you and what you do. I'd encourage anyone who is looking to do more to reach out to staff to see how we can assist.

When did you start writing songs?

I've been writing songs probably forever, but I didn't really make a point of it until high school. My sister Tina, cousin Mike, and best friend Dulani, and I were all in a band and had some fun writing our own songs to play. The first song I wrote about my faith journey was called "Not the Same Girl," and that spurred my love for writing about my experiences with God and Who He is.

Do you have a writing process?

I honestly don't. Every song comes about differently. Sometimes it's a melody I have in my head, and sometimes I have some words I love. In a co-write experience, my role changes depending on who I am working with. That's kind of the fun part about songwriting. It's never the same experience each time.



WORSHIP SERVICES

8AM

Traditional, *Sanctuary*

9:30AM

Traditional, *Sanctuary*

Contemporary with Sunday School, *Founders' Hall*

Traditional, *Lutheran Haven*

11AM

Traditional, *Sanctuary*

Contemporary, *Founders' Hall*

MONDAY 7PM

Traditional, *Chapel*

To learn more visit slcs.org