

FEBRUARY 2026

# AWAKENING HEARTS

Quarterly Magazine  
Issue 6

 **ST. LUKE'S**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

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



*Imagine, an entire community coming alive to  
the power of life in Christ!*

Thank you for taking the time to read this edition of our Quarterly Magazine. In the following pages you will find stories of faith engaged in meaningful ways. From everything that goes into planning for a big event like Christmas Eve, to how lives have been changed at the recent Middle School Youth Gathering, to opportunities in our community to invest your labor, influence, finances, and experience.

Each one of three key ministry strategies, Worship Gatherings, Spiritual Formations, and Community Connects are ways that the Holy Spirit engages your faith, awakens your hearts, and brings you transformed lives of freedom, joy, sacrifice, and renewal! And when all three of these strategies are a part of your life, your walk with Jesus will be vibrant and deep. As you read these articles, please

take time to pray for them. Praise God for what he is accomplishing, and pray for the blessings that are still to come. Please also pray for God to show you new areas to explore in Worship Gatherings, Spiritual Formations, and Community Connections.

I praise God for the joy of partnering in the Gospel with you,  
Senior Pastor Tige Culbertson

*Awakening*  
**HEARTS** in every  
Generation  
to the **POWER OF LIFE IN CHRIST.**

## stories **HEART** of our from the community

### The Gift of Guidance: How Estate Planning Changed Their Lives

Brenda and Harold were married for more than 50 years. During the last ten of those years, Brenda lovingly cared for Harold affectionately known as “Harry” as he slowly declined from Alzheimer’s disease. The couple lived modestly in their double-wide trailer, supported by a small nest egg from the sale of their site-built home. That nest egg was meant to fund their retirement, but as Harry’s condition worsened, it became clear that he would soon need a level of care Brenda could no longer provide on her own.

To make matters more challenging, Brenda and Harry did not have a will or any estate planning documents in place should something happen to either of them. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, they reached out to St. Luke’s Transfer the Blessing program for help in creating an estate plan.

As the process unfolded, Harry began leaving the house in the middle of the night, making his safety and care the top priority. Through the Transfer the Blessings program, Brenda was connected with a local attorney skilled in both estate and elder law. Without an estate plan, their hard-earned nest egg was at serious risk of being rapidly depleted to cover Harry’s care, potentially leaving Brenda with very little to live on.

Fortunately, through God’s perfect timing, the attorney team discovered that Harry qualified for several entitlements based on his military service and employment history. These benefits shifted the cost of long-term care away from their nest egg and onto established programs designed to help in situations like theirs.

Before long, Harry was living in a nearby care facility close to Brenda. Their estate plan was in place, and most importantly their nest egg was protected. The Transfer the Blessings Ministry offered by St. Luke’s was there at just the right time, connecting these senior saints with the help they needed. Had they waited much longer, the outcome could have been very different.



## Where Should I Serve Next?

One way that we measure our growth as disciples at St. Luke's is by our transformed lives of sacrifice (as well as freedom, joy, and renewal). To sacrifice for others means that our service to others impacts our lifestyle.

If we are following Jesus, we are called to serve. Following Jesus means acting like he did on earth. Jesus, who said, *"Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."* How does your calendar reflect your service and love for others?

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. At the washing of the disciples' feet he said *"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."*

When we are all serving, God can do really exciting things throughout our community! Our church staff is responsible for helping provide more and more opportunities for you, because when you serve, you grow in your faith. We are *"to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."* Remember, when you serve, you are engaging your faith and your discipleship is enabled to grow you more and more into the image of Christ.

***So let's serve together and grow!*** Perhaps you will take Stephen Ministry training and join our visitation ministry. If you have the gift of hospitality, you could join our Welcome Team and foster greater fellowship on Sunday mornings. I encourage you to reach out to Pastor Sam if you want to dig into helping with Bible Studies, small groups, and building relationships around God's Word. Or reach out to Pastor Scott if your heart is for reaching out to those in our community who need to hear and see the Word of God in action. Or reach out to Eric Coomer and find new ways to engage in our worship experiences.

Please prayerfully ponder where God is calling you deeper into service.

In His Service,  
Pastor Tige

***To get more involved or to learn more  
contact the church office.***

**slcs.org/serve**

# SERVE WITH US

***"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" – 1 Peter 4:10***

***Be a part of the team that keeps the church at St. Luke's working!*** We encourage everyone to use the gifts God has given to serve others in our church and in the community. Every weekend more than 100 members lend a hand to help provide a warm and welcoming worship experience.

## VOLUNTEER *opportunities*

- **Welcome Team;** help create a warm environment as people enter our space for worship.
- **Missions Collection Team;** help with the collection and distribution of various needs for our community partners throughout the year.
- **ACTS of Hope;** assist or play music in community venues around the area in order to help families in need.
- **Concert Series Corps;** aid in the annual concert series; greeting, helping the artists and guests, or set up and tear down.





# HOW CHRISTMAS Comes to Life at St. Luke's

## PLANNING

for Christmas starts a year in advance. The Board for Worship goes through the previous year's services one by one in order to recommend any changes for the following year.

The ministry team also goes through services to see what may be improved.

A rough draft of the services are drawn up in the summer. This is also the time when musicians are booked for Christmas Eve.

As Christmas approaches, usually in late October or November, a theme is chosen. The overarching theme of God sending salvation through His Son, Jesus, remains the same each year. However, pastors highlight a different angle from year to year, depending on what is happening in society.

Similarly, we make sure to include Christmas carols in every service. These carols are presented in different ways depending on the type of service. In Generations and FUEL services, Christmas carols are led by a praise band alongside other contemporary Christmas praise songs. In the Sanctuary festival services, carols are led by choir and orchestra.

**Many people** help make the Christmas services at St. Luke's a truly remarkable celebration. Pastors and musicians including volunteer vocalists, choir members, and instrumentalists are the most visible leaders. Alongside the pastors, acolytes add a powerful sense of ceremony and celebration. Ushers and elders play an essential role in helping as many people as possible participate in worship when the church is exceptionally crowded.

Volunteers decorate the church throughout the Advent season and put in extra time right before Christmas Eve. Communications staff ensure everyone is aware of service times and create the artwork displayed on the screens. Maintenance staff make sure the church is clean and functional and assist with managing large amounts of parking.

The celebration of Christmas is a unique time when many talents come together to celebrate the salvation we have received through Christ.

- Eric Coomer, Director of Worship Gatherings

## INTERVIEW

with Steve Cecchetti

1

### How did you get interested in Christmas decorations?

Christmas has always been my favorite time of year. For many people the excitement and awe that Christmas inspires fades a bit as each year passes. For me it has always been quite the opposite. As I age, the happiness this season brings only increases.

2

### When do you start planning out Christmas decorations for the church?

I began planning the Christmas decorations for 2026 immediately after we have finished putting up the decorations for 2025. The decoration theme for the church when I was asked to take over seemed to be "understated elegance". The people from whom I took over had done a fantastic job of adorning the sanctuary, and it was my hope that I could continue that tradition moving forward. I try to make sure the decorations only enhance the worship experience and never detract from it. I spend the rest of the year planning and creating the changes.

3

### What are some of the newest decorations that have been added?

Over the past few years I have added more garland, trees, and nativity items. We had a group that worked quite diligently some time ago to make new Chrismon ornaments to replace many that had become damaged over time.

4

### How long, and how many people does it take to put all the decorations up?

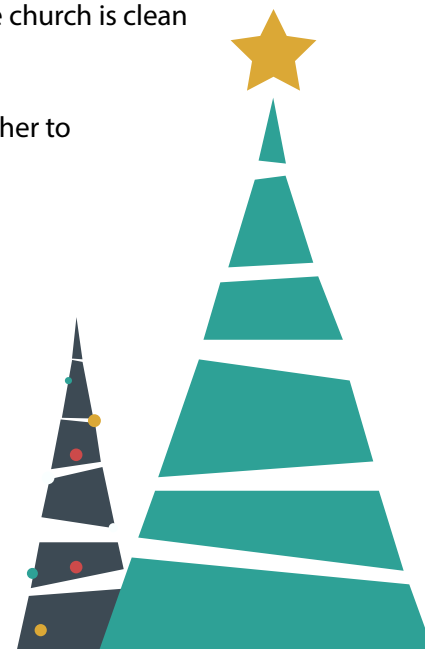
We have two groups of volunteers plus the maintenance crew that work to put the decorations up. It usually takes the volunteers 5 hours to complete their work.

5

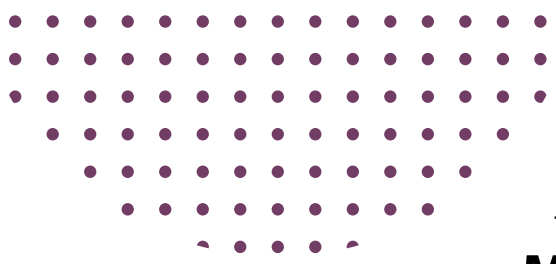
### Is there anything else that you would like people to know about Christmas decorations?

We are always looking for more volunteers. We have one team that meets after church the first Sunday after Thanksgiving. This team decorates the Fellowship Hall. The second team meets the first Monday after Thanksgiving at 9a and decorates the sanctuary, narthex, chapel and other areas of the church.

Anyone interested in helping can either talk to me or leave your name and contact information with the church office.

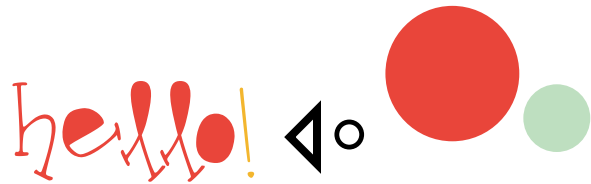






The Florida-Georgia District  
**Middle SCHOOL**

# GATHERING



My name is Mickey, and I'm the DCE Intern here at St. Luke's! Usually, I work with our High School students, but this past November I had the opportunity to go along with our group on the Florida-Georgia District Middle School Gathering. This annual gathering is something St. Luke's has taken students on for many years, but this was my first chance to get to join as a mentor. We love to take students on this trip as it really helps solidify their walk with Christ and it sets aside time for them to be centered on Him and relationships with other young believers!

Led by Annalisa, our church's DCE, our students got the opportunity to learn what it means to shine Jesus, and how we can both encourage others as they shine his light and be encouraged ourselves. In addition to this, students got the opportunity to go to breakout sessions about Christ-centered relationships, keeping their words about one another uplifting, and so much more. Annalisa puts a lot of time and energy into planning this gathering. Months ahead of time, she's calling and coordinating volunteers, transportation, and promoting the event in order to help students decide to sign up.

One thing that Annalisa is very intentional about cultivating is a culture of sharing with the small groups model she uses. Annalisa purposely recruits volunteers that she knows will guide students in small group conversations to help them take time to reflect on their learnings from the different sessions as well as to apply them to their personal walk with God.

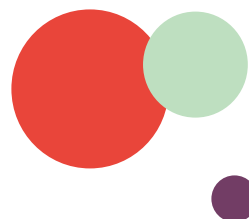
The Florida-Georgia District Middle School Gathering is an annual event that takes place just outside of Eustis, FL at a retreat center called

Lake Yale. This site offers so many fun activities for middle schoolers- our students especially loved getting to eat snow cones, play gaga ball and volleyball, go fishing, and do minute-to-win-it challenges.

As a church worker, retreats are one of my favorite activities because I'm always astounded by the way that students connect with God and with one another. This retreat, one of the most impactful things that our students got to do connect was to take the time to recognize people who let Jesus shine through them-people who inspire our students to recognize the ways God is moving in their lives. Our students recognized these people in their lives by writing their names on sticky notes. Then, they stuck the notes onto papers and throughout the weekend, we had time set aside for praying for these people and thanking God for the ways He uses them to shine His love into our lives.

When we take students on retreats like this, we tend to get really positive feedback from parents and students. Students have a great time and look forward to more chances to go on trips like this, and parents get to hear about that from their kids. Additionally, parents are usually pretty excited knowing that their student had a whole weekend filled with time in God's word and reminders of how He is active in their child's life. I'm always thankful to go on trips like this. It's truly a blessing to me to see the ways God moves in the lives of our students and the ways they grow from opportunities like this!

In Christ,  
Mickey Curl



## Shine Retreat Reflections

by Delaney Leventhal (Student)

This year I had the opportunity to attend Shine, a middle school camp and retreat that brought together students from different schools to worship, learn, and grow in our faith. I decided to go because I wanted to strengthen my relationship with Jesus and spend time with other people my age who love Him too. I didn't know exactly what to expect, but the experience ended up being even more meaningful than I imagined.

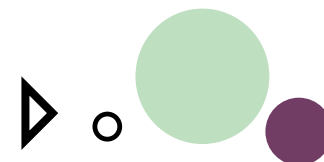
One of the best parts of Shine was the energy and joy in the worship sessions. Every day we gathered at the front of the church to sing, jump, dance, and praise God together. My absolute favorite moment was when we all jumped to the song "Praise." Hearing everyone's voices and seeing so many people worship with so much excitement made me feel connected, encouraged, and filled with God's love.

I also enjoyed the breakout sessions. I chose to attend the girls' breakout session and the CPR session, and I loved both. The girls' session gave us a chance to talk about faith, friendships, and what it means to shine God's light in our everyday lives. The CPR session was really cool because I learned a skill that could actually help someone in the real world.

One of the most impactful parts of Shine was the friendships I made. Meeting kids from different schools and getting to know them through worship, games, and small groups helped me build relationships I never would have had otherwise. It felt so special to be surrounded by people who love Jesus and want to grow in their faith just like I do.

If I could give advice to next year's attendees, I would tell them to be open—open to trying new things, meeting new people, and stepping out of their comfort zone. Shine is truly a place where you can grow, learn, and experience God in a new way, as long as you're willing to jump in (literally and figuratively!).

Overall, Shine was an incredible experience that impacted my faith and my friendships, and I'm already excited to go again.



## Calling All Children K-5 grades!

**412 children's ministry** is a recently created Kindergarten–5th grade fellowship opportunity centered on the love of Jesus, created to help students grow in their faith while building meaningful relationships with one another.

Through age-appropriate teaching, worship, and community, children are encouraged to know who they are in Christ and to experience God's love in a way that feels joyful, safe, and welcoming.

### 1 TiM 4:12

Inspired by 1 Timothy 4:12, **412 children's ministry** challenges students to set an example *"in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity."* We believe kids are never too young to lead by example, live out their faith, and reflect Christ in their everyday lives—at school, at home, and with their friends.

By nurturing both faith and character, **412 children's ministry** equips students to grow boldly and confidently as young followers of Jesus. For questions and to learn more contact: Katey at [kbattreal@slcs.org](mailto:kbattreal@slcs.org), Clare at [cgriffin@slcs.org](mailto:cgriffin@slcs.org), or Alison at [akindred@slcs.org](mailto:akindred@slcs.org).





## 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*

Learn more  
about St. Luke's

