



# The New Humanity

## January 2026

The New Humanity, affectionally referred to as the "NuHu," is inspired by Ephesians 2:15: *"that Christ might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace."* This longer, monthly newsletter includes articles from staff and one committee in addition to the regular weekly announcements. May we be reminded of our New Humanity in Christ as we read and reflect together.

This month's contents:

- From the Pastor's Fireside
- Committee Spotlight
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## From the Pastor's Fireside

*Pastor Jason Churchill*



## 2026 - A Year of Education

Just over a week into this new year, many of us are already carrying a sense of heaviness—both from events unfolding around the world and from pain closer to home. Lament is a faithful response to such moments; it is deeply human and deeply biblical. In recent days, following the murder of Renee Nicole Good, I found myself drawn to Psalm 109, as did many

others—a reminder that scripture gives us language not only for hope, but for grief, anger, and sorrow as well.

And yet, alongside lament, we are also invited to return to the basics of who we are. What grounds us? What sustains us? What does faith teach us when the world feels overwhelming?

For some, scripture becomes a place of refuge in times of distress and joy. For others, poetry, literature, or music offer words when our own fail us. Some find healing in gardens, walks, or quiet moments in nature. My hope and prayer is that our life together as a church—our worship, our conversations, our shared presence—might also be such a balm.

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the LEAD survey was **education**. Many of you named it as a core value of our congregation, and I suspect that for most—perhaps all—of us, education is something we hold deeply, both individually and communally. I do not mean education only in the formal sense of degrees or academic achievement. I am thinking more broadly, more generously.

An educated life, as I see it, includes curiosity about cultures other than our own. It may involve travel—or learning about distant places through books, stories, and even social media. It includes reading both fiction and nonfiction, engaging spirituality and religious experience, cultivating friendships and relationships, loving deeply, and remaining open to growth. I could go on, but I have a feeling you could add many things to this list yourselves.

With that in mind, I would like to name **2026 as a Year of Education at St. Luke**.

I will be honest with you: I do not yet have a glossy brochure or a neatly packaged plan that defines exactly what that means. What I do have is an openness to discovery. The year has begun at a pace that asks for endurance, and I am mindful that looking too far ahead can sometimes cause us to miss the gifts already present among us. Perhaps our first shared educational practice is simply this: learning to be present. To sit with our emotions, to speak them aloud, to listen to one another, and to name what we hope to learn together.

As we begin, I want to share a couple of educational opportunities on the near horizon.

### **Epiphany: What Is Being Revealed?**

We began the season of Epiphany with the chalking of the lintel above the old church doors—a visible reminder of blessing and belonging. You can read more about this practice in the bulletin from January 4th ([find it here](#)).

Throughout January and February, our worship will focus on Epiphany themes in scripture, prayer, music, and preaching. Together, we will ask what is being revealed to us in Christ Jesus here and now.

Our first Godly Play session of the year centers on the story of the Epiphany, as children gather around the carpet to wonder about the Magi and their gifts.

We will also celebrate **Candlemas** on February 1, marking the return of light in the depth of

winter—not to deny darkness, but to help us better see God's light when confusion and hopelessness abound.

### **St. Luke and Me: A Lenten Journey Through the Liturgy**

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 18 at our 7:00 p.m. service. Though the hour is late, we will include a special portion designed for children, offering clearer explanations of what is happening in worship.

During Lent, we will explore the structure of our liturgy—how it is both deeply scriptural and intentionally shaped. Each Sunday will build upon the last, focusing on one of the four movements of worship: Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending.

Following worship, we will offer a Forum@ session to deepen our understanding of these elements and to serve as training for worship assistants. You may even find yourself called to participate more fully in our shared leadership of worship.

Additional Lenten offerings will include a book group (details forthcoming) and brief reflections shared by members of the congregation, offering personal insights into Lenten themes and texts.

This is only a beginning. My hope is that by the end of 2026, we will feel more grounded in who we are, clearer about why we do what we do, and more deeply connected—to God and to one another.

My New Year prayer for you is this:

That the small epiphanies of your daily lives might gently guide you toward God, toward your truest self, and toward a love as wide and generous as God's own.

Grace and peace,  
Pr. Jason

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# **Committee Spotlight**

## **The Worship & Arts Committee**

*by Liisa Grigorov*

Greetings and Happy New Year from the Worship and Arts committee of St. Luke Lutheran Church and Lutheran Campus Ministry, in Ithaca, NY. Working with Reverend Jason Churchill, Senior Pastor and Campus Chaplain, and Erik Kibelsbeck, Music Director, we meet once a month to discuss upcoming seasons and events in the calendar.

As a group, we are chartered to oversee Ushers, Greeters, Readers, Assistant Ministers, Altar Guild, Music, Arts, and Seasonal Themes. Our latest task has been to try to organize some help with setting up and clearing Communion, and will be asking members of the congregation if they might be willing to lend a hand before or after worship. We are so grateful to Pastor Jason and Erik for their consistent and inspiring development and presentation of the liturgy.

Have you ever wished to contribute your thoughts about the services we hold? Please join us! We meet on the second Wednesday of the month, at 11:30 am, in the Campus Ministry Lounge. This next one, January 14th, will be via Zoom and we welcome your participation. [Contact me via email](#) for more information.



# From the Loft

Erik Kibelsbeck  
*Music Director*

The week before Christmas I went to London (an old friend had a student playing a recital for winning the Leeds Piano Competition, and so met up with him). Fun was had, including evensong at Westminster Abbey and a splendid Christmas concert at the Royal Albert Hall with orchestra, youth chorus, and Anna Lapwood at the organ (and curating the concert). There were many marvelous moments, but I was definitely partial to getting to sing Hark and O Come All Ye with 5000 people, orchestra, and organ. It's an immense instrument and I was sitting right close, getting the full effect. The chord on the word "WORD" (of the Father....) has gained a popular mystique and clearly many people knew it from the lean-in it received! I'm not crying, you're crying, as they say. [Here's a social media post about it.](#) I was about 40 feet away from the organist.

I wondered if back at St. Luke the same carol would be a let down. I'll save the suspense, it was NOT.

To me the second-best musical sound in the world is the rich conglomeration of organ sounds that is "full organ." There are the principal sounds of the organ, low, medium, and high, some very brilliant indeed; flutey sounds filling in the gaps, and powerful reedy sounds giving edge. The sound is complicated and rich. I say it's the second best, though, so what is the

first? The same, with a large contingent of enthusiastic singers overwhelming that overwhelming sound.

At St. Luke, while the crowd wasn't as large, I did get to be the organist, and the organ is smaller and noticeably less powerful at the bass end. But for the room and 21 stops, it's a splendid multilayered sound. Bob's trumpeting was splendid, soprano descants rang out with glee, and we hit WORD with all the gusto.

Good stuff.

*Listen to "O Come All Ye Faithful" from the [9pm Christmas Eve service here](#) (the song starts about the 35 minute mark)*

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# Statement on Venezuela

*from Pastor Jason*

We acknowledge the deep complexities of the situation in Venezuela, both as a church and as individuals. Many are holding this moment with relief and even hope, recognizing the real harm caused by leaders and systems that rely on fear, violence, and coercion to govern. There is no faithful defense of tyranny, nor of regimes that crush human dignity or silence the vulnerable. It is understandable that some are celebrating what feels like the end of a chapter marked by suffering and chaos.

At the same time, others are carrying serious concern about how this change came about. For many, the conviction remains that the means matter—that violence cannot simply be justified by the promise of a better outcome. Questions about international law, national sovereignty, and the moral cost of force have rightly been raised. It is likely that we will not have immediate or simple answers. These questions will be debated and examined over time, in courts, in governments, and in the court of public conscience.

What I can offer, as your pastor, is this grounding truth: a faith that stands firm on Christ. Jesus cannot be a faith that endorses violence, fear, or hatred. The uncertainty many are feeling is real and valid. Faith does not require certainty about politics or policy. What faith does offer is an anchor.

Our certainty lies in Christ—the one whose coming was proclaimed by the prophets as a day when swords would be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. This vision is not naïve. It is demanding. It calls us to hope for justice while refusing to surrender our souls to vengeance or despair. It reminds us that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice, mercy, and restored relationship.

Our Presiding Bishop has issued a statement regarding Venezuela, which you can [view here](#). In the meantime, let us set aside time—today and in the days ahead—for prayerful reflection: for the people of Venezuela, for those who fear what comes next, for leaders entrusted with

great responsibility, and for a world weary of unrest.

Above all, let us remember this enduring promise: the darkness has never once overtaken the light of Christ. That light still shines—steadily, faithfully—even when the way forward feels unclear.

Remember, God loves you.

And God loves all people across this beautiful creation called Earth.

Pr. Jason

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# Announcements



## Feeding the Hungry

**Code Blue Shelter Needs Breakfast Items:** We will continue our ministry to the homeless this winter by providing breakfast items for the Code Blue Shelter that is now located on Cherry Street (old "Found" building). Items can be placed in either the Blue or Red wagons in the Narthex.

**Items needed: 100% Juice boxes, instant oatmeal packets, and breakfast and energy bars.** In December 2025 St. Luke provided 170 items. Hopefully we can provide even more items in January of 2026.

Thank you!

**RED WAGON for the Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard** items for January: Soup and Beans (cans and jars are fine as these items are not left outdoors).

Winter is upon us and freezing weather means cans and glass containers could explode in our blue cabinet! For the next few months please bring packaged soups, tuna, and boxed dinners,



instead of canned. Pasta sauce, peanut butter and jam should be in plastic jars. Cereal, oatmeal, macaroni and cheese, pasta, protein bars and toiletpaper are always welcome. Thank you for supporting this ministry!

## Mittens 'N More

Mittens 'N More: Hats, gloves, scarves, and socks by the dozen have been donated by the good folks of St. Luke for kids in our local elementary schools! Over 170 items have been donated in the last two weeks! (This is amazing). Our last collection day will be Sunday, January 13th.



## We pray together for:

... the people of Venezuela and other nations experiencing unrest. We pray for Minneapolis and all victims of gun violence.

*Upcoming commemorations of saints, renewers of society, and other festivals can be [found here](#). Prayers are added weekly to our list and will remain for three weeks. If you wish to*

*extend the name of the person for whom we are praying please inform the office. To add someone to the prayer list please [email the Communications Manager](#).*

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# Calendar

## **Sunday, January 11th**

10:00 am     Holy Communion  
11:45 am     Godly Play

## **Tuesday**

12:15 pm     Bring Your Own Lunch Bible Study

## **Wednesday**

10:00 am     Staff Meeting  
1:00 pm     Collegetown Community Collective

## **Thursday**

9:00 am     Peace by Piece Quilters  
1:00 pm     CCC Events Committee

## **Sunday, January 18th**

10:00 am     Holy Communion  
11:45 am     Godly Play  
12:00 pm     Council

*St. Luke Office is generally open: Mon. 1 pm-5 pm, Tues. 9:30 am-1 pm,  
Wed. 8am-4pm, Thur. 9:30 am-5pm, Fri. 9:30 am-1pm*

*If you would like to be removed from this list, please reply or [send us an email](#) with  
UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line. We will be sad to see you go, but...  
Remember, God loves you!*

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# St. Luke Lutheran Church

Remember, God loves YOU!



## **Sunday 10:00 am Service of Holy Communion**

St. Luke is a [Reconciling in Christ Congregation](#) of the [ELCA](#). As a Reconciling in Christ Congregation, the people of St. Luke Lutheran Church are called by God to be a community of Christians, a part of the body of Christ. Because we believe we are one in God's eyes, we welcome the mix of ages, races, gender identities, physical and mental capabilities, and sexual orientations with which God's children are blessed. Everyone is invited to share in God's grace. We rejoice in the knowledge that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus--not our wealth, nor our poverty, nor our nationality, nor our political convictions, nor whom we love, nor anything else in all creation. We are called to follow God's mission of reconciliation and justice with all humanity, and we celebrate our journey of discipleship with a special appreciation for the privileged responsibility of our campus related ministry.

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