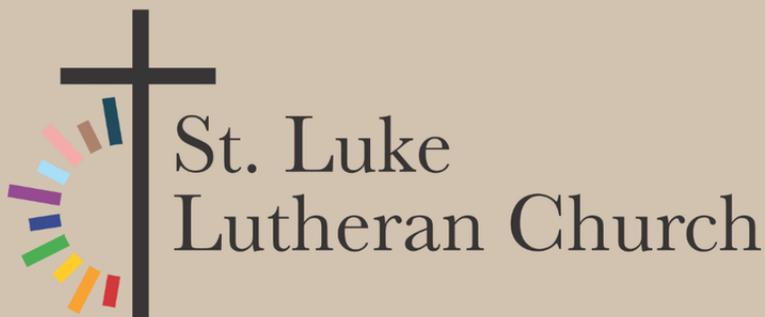


The New Humanity

a monthly newsletter from



March 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
- Point & Click
- St. Luke Olympians
- Announcements
- Pray together
- Calendar

From the
Pastor's
Fireside
Pastor Jason Churchill



For Such a Time as This

Within a single weekend, it felt like the world shifted.

Lines hardened. Rhetoric intensified. The distance between the Church of Christ and the church of empire became impossible to ignore.

On March 5th at 1:00 p.m., I will defend my doctoral project at United Lutheran Seminary. But I want you to hear this clearly:

This work was never simply academic.

It began years ago at St. Stephen's in Wilmington with a simple love for an ancient Christian poem called *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*. A strange, beautiful, paradox-filled text discovered among the Nag Hammadi writings — a voice speaking from the late first or early second century, before Christianity became aligned with empire.

At first, I was captivated by its poetry.

But as Christian nationalism rose, as gender and queer bodies were increasingly politicized and weaponized, as the name of Jesus was invoked to narrow belonging rather than widen it, this project became something else.

It became pastoral.
It became necessary.
It became a question:

What did Christianity look like before it had power?

And what might that mean for us now?

There are only a handful of doctoral works on *Thunder*. Most study its language or origins. But this project did something rare — we placed this extracanonical text into the hands of church members. Here. At St. Luke.

We gathered.
We wrestled.
We listened to a voice that refuses binary thinking — a voice that speaks in paradox: holy and harlot, strong and despised, mother and daughter.

Gender matters in this text. Queerness matters. The fluidity of identity matters. And so does history. Because when we peer through the window of the pre-imperial church, we are reminded that Christianity was once a movement on the margins — not a chaplain to empire.

My thesis is this:

When congregations engage extracanonical texts together, we loosen the grip of narrow interpretations, we recover the complexity of early Christianity, and we empower the church to choose Christ over empire.

This is not abstract work.

It has prepared us for this moment.

For a time when we must decide again what kind of church we will be.

The Church of Christ?
Or the church of power?

You allowed me to do this work here.

You trusted that your faith was strong enough for difficult texts.
You showed up with courage.
You made theology something we do together — not something done to you.

In a season when fear creates enemies, you chose curiosity.
When certainty shouts, you chose depth.
When empire demands allegiance, you chose Christ.

Thank you.

Whatever title follows my name, it will always belong to a pastor formed by this congregation — a congregation willing to face history honestly and step into the future faithfully.

With deep gratitude,
Pr. Jason



Committee Spotlight

The Finance Committee

The finance committee works quietly behind the scenes throughout the year to oversee the

financial business of the church. Our most visible activity through the year was seen in the last few months with the approval of the budget for 2026. Now it is the routine activity of supporting the work of the ministry and programs on a daily/weekly basis.

Our most recent focus has been the decisions regarding the use and allocation of the funds received from the Diane Conneman estate. These funds will be used to support our endowment fund and the capital campaign to support our building improvements. The endowment will assist in assuring our ministry remains active and engaged in the community and our building remains secure for another 100 years.

point & click

Kimberly Fick
Communications Manager



While it feels as though our world continues to descend into more and more chaos every day, we may wonder what it is that the church family of St. Luke has to offer in times like these. The truth is, many people are deeply suspicious of church and the people who call themselves "Christians", especially when so many of the loud voices in the public arena claim to be following Christ. But the Christ we follow was a radically inclusive leader who consistently invited the outsiders to become insiders and bypassed the cultural hierarchy to focus on the ones who were willing to change. This begs the question: are we the ones who are willing to change... or are we stuck in the comfort of our familiar cultural traditions?

The story of Zacchaeus has been on my mind a lot lately (see Luke 19:1-10). As a Rabbi, it was not unusual for Jesus to have disciples and travel and teach. Any time he entered a town, however, it was customary for the traveling Rabbi to pay honor to the leaders and religious rulers in that town. When Jesus entered Jericho, he intended to just pass through on his way to the next stop. However, he paused and noticed Zacchaeus. Then Jesus invited himself to the house of Zacchaeus. This was *beyond* inappropriate. It was wildly dangerous. You could almost equate it with making friends with the mafia or gang leaders as your first move when visiting a new town. Is that really the tone you want to set?

But something was different about Zacchaeus. For all the evil he had done, betraying and robbing people... he was willing to change. He gladly welcomed Jesus into his home and declared that he was going to change. *Dramatically*. He wasn't going to just give back what he had stolen, but he was going to return it times four; *and give half his possessions to the poor*. Is that what you would have guessed a greedy mafia boss would do?

Our fear-based assumptions of people are often what prevent us from living the dangerously

invitational way that Jesus lived. Jesus was not afraid of someone saying "No" when he invited them to come and follow Him. He just kept asking. He kept looking for the ones who were ready to change, and it was overwhelming the ones you would not expect.

The world is in desperate need of hope, and we have something to offer in the hope we have through Christ Jesus. But that means we have to be willing to turn our attention *outward* to find the ones who are ready for change. And that also means *we* must also be the ones willing to change from the comfort of our culturally safe traditions to meet those who are outside waiting for someone to notice them.

So what does this have to do with "Point" and "Click" and Communications at St. Luke? Every thing I produce, whether it is emails or announcements or reports or posters or social media posts... every point of communication carries *why*... a clarity of vision and purpose that hopefully will click with whoever reads or sees it. Why do we host a meal for students once a month? Because they are deeply loved by God and many of them don't know it. Why do we gather food to feed our hungry neighbors? Because they are deeply loved by God and we want them to experience the fullness of that love. Why do we invite anyone and everyone to worship on a Sunday morning, no exceptions? Because we want our neighbors to know that they are welcome, and the arms of Jesus have always been open wide... especially for the outsider.

Our message matters, more and more every day. God loves you, and that will never change.

St. Luke Athletes take GOLD in New York State Special Olympic Games!



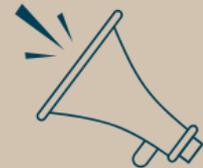
Emily Mahr, Hraun Kelleher, and Emma Dodici participated in the New York State Special Olympics last weekend (March 20-22). Emily and Hraun competed in alpine skiing and Emma competed in gymnastic against athletes from across the state. All three of them came home with GOLD medals! Well done, Ladies!



A special bonus: Terry and Diane Kelleher were able to attend the weekend event as well. They didn't earn any medals, but definitely showed Olympic levels of endurance for this fun filled weekend.

Emma will continue her Olympic experience in gymnastics. In the last week of June, she will compete in the USA Special Olympic games in Minneapolis, against other gold medal gymnasts across the nation.

Announcements



CONNECT in COMMUNITY

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES. BUT WHO ARE THEY?

An open book with a dark cover and gold lettering. The title 'The Origin of Satan by Elaine Pagels' is printed on the right page. The book is resting on a wooden surface.

ST. LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH

BOOK STUDY

STLUKEITHACA.ORG

Thursdays | 6:00 PM | Zoom | March 5, 12, 19, & 26

Lent is a season of truth-telling.

This year we will read *The Origin of Satan* by Elaine Pagels and ask how Christians learned to divide the world into saints and devils – and what Jesus actually teaches about enemies.

This study will help us:

- Break the spell of enemy-creation
- Reclaim the complexity of scripture
- Re-center Jesus' refusal to demonize

Because the church of Jesus does not survive by fear.
It lives by resurrection.

Join us for Book Study tonight at 6:00 pm via Zoom. We'll be discussing the Introduction through second chapter of the book, "The Origin of Satan" by Elaine Pagels.

Compline (night song)

Experience prayerful music by candlelight to heal your weary soul.
8:00 - 8:30 PM this Thursday.

**Immaculate Conception Church in Ithaca,
Thursday, March 5th at 8:00 pm.**
Forest Home Church, Thursday, March 12 at 8:00 pm.

FIRST FRIDAY SPAGHETTI DINNER

Finally, Ithaca is starting to thaw out. We've seen the sun, blue skies, and the birds are singing! So let's all come together and celebrate the coming of Spring at our March First Friday Spaghetti Dinner at St. Luke Lutheran.

It's FREE and FUN, with yummy food, and once again, there will be homemade oatmeal chocolate chip cookies! Bring a friend!

P.S. PLEASE NOTE: There will not be a dinner on April 3rd because that is both Spring Break and Good Friday.

FIRST FRIDAY SPAGHETTI DINNER
6PM
FREE SPAGHETTI DINNER ON THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH
ST. LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH 109 OAK AVE

Dinner starts at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall (basement).

There will be a dinner on May 3rd,
2026.

The St. Luke DIRECTORY is now available upon request. Email communications@stlukeithaca.org or leave a note on Kimberly's office desk and we will print and mail one to you.

Don't Forget To



Spring Forward

Set your clock forward one hour this Sunday.



Forum@
Join the conversion.



St. Luke & Me: Learning the Story We Pray

This Lent, we invite you to slow down and learn the story we pray every Sunday. Our worship is more than routine — it is grounded in Scripture, shaped by the early church, and formed to proclaim God’s love week after week. Throughout Lent, each Sunday will highlight one movement of the liturgy — Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending — followed by a Forum@ conversation exploring its biblical roots and how it shapes us as the people of God. These Forum@ conversations will also act as training opportunities for all worship assistants as well.

In this Year of Education, we invite you to embrace learning as a spiritual practice. Instead of (or alongside) giving something up, consider showing up — for worship, conversation, and reflection — as we journey toward Easter together.

Additional opportunities include a midweek book study and short “Pray and Reflect Together” moments on social media.

Wherever you are in your faith, you belong here. Come walk with us.



[Learn More](#)

Sunday, March 8th at 2pm at First Baptist Church in DeWitt Park

Join Singing Resistance Ithaca, Regi Carpenter & Penelope Voss and raise your voices for equality, justice, and community. Regi will be telling stories and Penelope will share original songs of hope, pain, and optimism for humanity. Community leaders involved in Singing Resistance will teach songs with themes of solidarity, freedom, and justice for all people. Please join us for this community event and sing out. Free to attend / donations accepted. Volunteers needed to usher. Please contact singingresistanceithacany@proton.me for more information.

SERVE in COMMUNITY



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Personal Care Kits- Who do they benefit? What does Lutheran World Relief do?

Lutheran World Relief is an international non-governmental organization that focuses on sustainable development projects and disaster relief and recovery. The organization was founded in 1945 to collect and send aid to people living in post-World War II Europe.

Today, Lutheran World Relief helps people around the world. One example is when a disaster hits — whether it's a drought, tsunami or civil war — Lutheran World Relief works over months and years to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to help people recover and adjust to new realities. In the past few years, they have assisted with the fires in California, floods and hurricanes in the southeast as well as Ukraine and many African nations.

For more information, please check out their website-<https://lwr.org/news>

To help support Lutheran World Relief we are putting together PERSONAL CARE KITS. Our goal is to do 50 kits.

You can participate by either shopping for the following items or give a donation and we will do the shopping. This is what is needed:

- **Light weight bath size towel** (between 20" x 40" and 52" x 27"), dark color recommended. *suggestion- \$4 towel at Target (Gray) Either purchase or donate money
- **Bath-size bars of soap** equaling 8 to 9 oz., any brand, in original wrapping *Either purchase or donate
- **Combs** *Donate and we will purchase in bulk
- **Metal Nail Clippers** (attached file optional) *Either purchase or donate
- **Donate** for shipping costs \$4/kit

How to donate items:

- 1) Shop for needed items and bring to St. Luke
- 2) Online shop for items and send to St Luke Lutheran Church, ATTN: Monica Vakiner, 109 Oak Avenue, Ithaca, NY 14850
- 3) Donate by Check with a note designating Personal Care Kit in memo
- 4) Donate with Cash and put in envelope with note Personal Care Kit
- 5) Give online via Tithely and choose the fund [Personal Care Kit](#)

Will be collecting until April 12, 2026.

Thanks for supporting St. Luke and Lutheran World Relief

Donate to the Personal Care Kit fund here.

Feeding the Hungry

Code Blue Shelter UPDATE for FEBRUARY:

Wow! St. Luke donated a total of 179 items to the Code Blue Shelter for Ithaca's homeless during the month of February. This included 56 100% juice boxes, 40 breakfast bars, 68 instant oatmeal packets, 11 protein sources (canned chicken, tuna, and peanut butter), and 4 condiments. During the cold month of February the Code Blue program provided shelter for about 68 clients per day. We will continue to collect items during March, and the first two weeks in April. Please place items in the Red Wagon in the narthex. Thank you for being a neighbor to those in need in our community.



March items for the Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard are Peanut Butter and Jelly.

Blue Wagon for the Blue Cabinet
Winter is *almost* over, but while the temperatures can still dip below freezing, please continue to bring items **not** in cans. 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!

We pray together for and with...

... Erik, Jane, David, Daniel, Kathy, Thomas, William, and Judy. We pray for places across this world that are experiencing war and violence, especially Iran and the Middle East, the Holy Land and Gaza, and all other places where there is fear, uncertainty, and unrest. We remember the six service members that lost their lives in the conflict in Iran and we hold their families in prayer.

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](#).

Calendar

Thursday, March 5

- 9:00 am Peace by Piece Quilters
- 1:00 pm CCC Events Committee
- 6:00 pm Book Study on Zoom
- 8:00 pm. Compline at Immaculate Conception Church

Friday, March 6

- 10:30 am. Tea and Tarot
- 6:00 pm. First Friday Spaghetti Dinner

Sunday, March 8 (Daylight Savings - Spring ahead!)

- 10:00 am Holy Communion
- 11:30 am Forum@ "St. Luke & Me: The Story we Pray"
- 11:45 am Godly Play

Tuesday, March 10

- 12:15 pm. Bring Your Own Lunch Bible Study

Wednesday, March 11

- 1:00 pm. Collegetown Community Collective

Thursday, March 12

- 1:00 pm. CCC Events Committee
- 6:00 pm Book Study on Zoom
- 8:00 pm. Compline at Forest Home

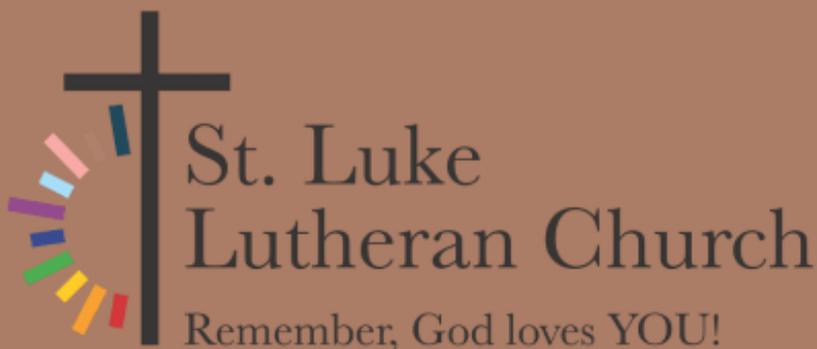
*St. Luke Office is generally open: Mon. 1 pm-5 pm, Tues. 9:30 am-1 pm,
Wed. 8am-4pm, Thur. 9:30 am-5pm, Fri. 9:30 am-1pm*

***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!***

Download Our Church App!

Download our St. Luke Lutheran church app for free.

[Download now](#)



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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Our mailing address is:
St. Luke Lutheran Church 109 Oak Ave Ithaca, NY 14850-4729 USA

[Worship](#)

[Website](#)

[Give](#)