

The New Humanity

a monthly newsletter from



St. Luke
Lutheran Church

MAY 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
- From the Loft
- Committee Spotlight
- Big Red Bagel Days!
- Pride in the Park
- Showtunes Singalong
- and More Announcements
- Pray together
- Calendar

From the Pastor's Fireside

Pastor Jason Churchill



A New Chapter for the Southern Tier Conference

Many of you may not have heard much about the Southern Tier Conference over the years because, for the past several decades, St. Luke Lutheran Church has not been deeply involved in conference-wide programming or activities. That reality is due in part to geography, the decreasing number of congregations in our region, and the changing realities of ministry. It is difficult to sustain large-scale programming with limited budgets, small staffs, and volunteers already stretched across the many demands of congregational life — especially across such a vast territory.

Conferences are regional groupings of congregations within the Upstate New York Synod that exist to foster collaboration, communication, mutual support, and shared ministry among congregations and rostered leaders. Conference Deans serve as resources and points of connection between congregations, pastors, and the bishop's office.

As Dean of the Southern Tier Conference, part of my role has been to support congregations and rostered leaders during times of transition, pastoral change, restructuring, and discernment. The dean also works closely with the bishop and synod staff while helping coordinate conference life and providing pastoral and administrative support to congregations.

For the past several years, the Southern Tier Conference has been engaged in ongoing conversations about sustainability, geography, and the future shape of ministry in our region. Those conversations are now leading toward the formal dissolution of the Southern Tier Conference and the redistribution of congregations into neighboring conferences within the synod.

The Southern Tier currently stretches across an enormous geographic region — from Sidney and Norwich to Binghamton, Elmira, Corning, Watkins Glen, and Ithaca. Over time, the conference has experienced congregational closures alongside the growing financial realities facing many small and mid-sized churches. At present, only two congregations within the conference are able to support full-time pastoral leadership.

One of the greatest challenges has simply been geography. There is no natural “center” to the conference. Our congregations are spread widely apart, with long travel distances and very few ELCA congregations between them.

Under the proposed restructuring:

- St. Luke Lutheran Church, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Redeemer Lutheran Church, and the Journey of Faith mission start in Vestal will move into the existing Central Crossroads Conference.
- Bethany Lutheran Church, Emanuel Lutheran Church, and Our Saviour's Lutheran Church will move into the Genesee Finger Lakes Conference.
- The congregations in Sidney and Norwich will move into the Foothills Conference.

For St. Luke, this means becoming part of a much larger conference structure stretching primarily along the I-81 corridor. St. Luke and the Binghamton-area congregations will become the southernmost congregations within Central Crossroads, joining ELCA congregations from Cortland and Syracuse northward toward Oswego.

While St. Luke has not historically been deeply engaged in conference-level programming, we will likely notice this transition over time as relationships, gatherings, and leadership structures adapt to a larger regional conference.

When I accepted the role of Conference Dean, I did so knowing that part of the work before us would involve helping guide the Southern Tier Conference through this transition. That work has involved not only administrative planning, but also helping congregations navigate change with honesty, care, and dignity.

Transitions like this are never only about boundaries or structures. They are also about people, histories, relationships, and the changing realities of ministry in our time. My hope is that this restructuring will strengthen collaboration, reduce isolation among congregations, and help position our churches for sustainable ministry in the years ahead.

The resolution regarding this transition can be found on pages 29–31 of the Synod materials, and additional information is available here:

[Conference Realignment Information Document](#)



From the Loft

Erik Kibelsbeck
Music Director

An Appreciation of the Choir

No one can be a choir alone. So when I thank them in person for their efforts, I sometimes remind them that the thanks I share is on behalf of those around them, who can sing but one note at a time. We need each other. If we don't all show up at 8:30 on Sundays (Yep, that's who's been getting the good parking spaces all these years!) things wouldn't work as well.

And I hear from the congregation that the choir's contribution is meaningful. So I share that with them.

And today, I thank them from me. Choirs don't serve the director. They serve the community, enabling the assembly's song, and enhancing it with rehearsed choral music. I will fling off modesty and say it: this choir is good. It's really good. I can throw music at them that none have seen before and within moments it's happening. I've been around a long time, and so they're used to me--the good bits and the clumsy bits of me and my musicianship. They consistently do an excellent job with whatever I've programmed. It is an

honor and a pleasure to work with them. My gratitude is truly too deep for words.

So! thank you Andy, Carol, Carol, Deborah, Ev, Geoff, Jeff, Jim, Judy, Katrina, Kristin, Lauren, Megan, Nicole, Patrice, Robert, Seamus, Sophie, Steve, Sue, and Susan.

Committee Spotlight

The Personnel Committee

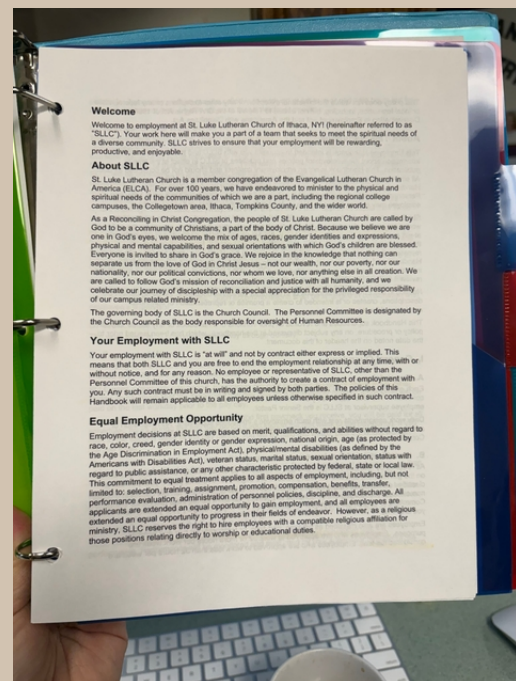
The life-changing work of St. Luke is facilitated by our wonderful staff - Pastor Jason, Erik, Kimberly and Dacia. But how do we ensure that our staff are properly supported and cared for?

This is the role of St. Luke's Personnel Committee. While it may be much less visible than most of the other congregational committees, its work is significant and impactful.

As specified in the Bylaws of the St. Luke, the Personnel Committee is responsible for all issues relating to the congregation's staff, including job descriptions, reviewing salaries and benefits, helping to address any staff concerns or complaints, and doing an annual performance review.

The past year was a very active one for the Committee. For the first time ever, the Committee took on the development of an Employee Handbook. The 22-page Handbook includes expectations of St. Luke as an employer, and policies concerning work hours, absence, holidays and leave time, benefits, resolution of disputes, confidentiality, use of electronics, dress and appearance, and so forth. A number of important new policies were created in order to be in compliance with NY State employment law.

The Committee strove to grant Erik's request to modify his job responsibilities, and created



A peek at the Employee Handbook

the new position of Communications Manager, welcoming Kimberly into that role. The Committee also reaffirmed St. Luke's commitment to be a recognized Tompkins County Living Wage Employer - we are currently one of only two faith communities in Ithaca to be so recognized, sharing that honor with Temple Beth-El.

The Committee is headed by the Vice-Chair of Council, and has two other members appointed by Council for two year terms in alternate years. Currently, the Committee consists of Jeff Snedeker, Neil Mattson and Kristin Zaryski. We ask for your prayers in helping us faithfully carry out these vital responsibilities!

Announcements



CONNECT in COMMUNITY

Study Hours Discontinued for Spring 2026: We thank all the monitors at St. Luke who have graciously and generously hosted our end of the semester Study Hours in the past. But, over the years, the need for study space during study days and final exams has diminished (fewer final exams given) and our turnout has been low for several semesters. We have decided not to hold Study Hours this semester, but instead, will be having "Big Red Bagel Days" to support and celebrate our students.



BIG RED BAGEL DAYS



Friday, May 8 & Tuesday, May 12 from 10am-2pm
St. Luke Lutheran Church, 109 Oak Ave, Ithaca

Big Red Bagel Days on May 8th and 12th: Yes, St. Luke's Campus Ministry is once again celebrating the end of the semester with "Big Red Bagel Days". Students, come over anytime between 10 am and 2 pm to the Campus Ministry Lounge and enjoy FREE bagels, cream cheese, juice, coffee and tea! The first Bagel Day is during Study Days on Friday May 8th and the second Bagel Day is during Final Exam week on Tuesday, May 12th. St. Luke Lutheran is located at 109 Oak Ave. in Collegetown. The Campus Ministry Lounge is the first room on the left when you come through the main double-door entrance to St. Luke.



On May 10th, top musicians from Ithaca College will present a chamber music concert at St. Luke Lutheran Church at 4pm. Chopin's cello sonata and Smetana's piano trio are on the program.



FAMILY FRIENDLY!

SHOW TUNES SINGALONG

**WEDNESDAY
JUNE 17, 2026**

7:00 PM

COME DRESSED AS YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER FROM STAGE OR SCREEN AND SING YOUR HEART OUT!
AT ST LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH: 109 OAK AVE, ITHACA

ITHACA PRIDE ALLIANCE

MUSIC AT ST. LUKE

Led by Kristin Zaryski, Mary Mulaney, and Mark Lawrence.
Refreshments included. Donations accepted for
Ithaca Pride Alliance and Music at St. Luke.
stlukeithaca.org

HOPE THAT WILL NOT BE EXTINGUISHED



ST. LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH

BOOK STUDY

STLUKEITHACA.ORG

Thursdays | 6:00 PM | Zoom | Start Date TBD

Order your book now and begin reading!

Written not only by a survivor of apartheid South Africa, but by a witness to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—a process that laid bare some of the darkest realities of the human condition—this work dares to proclaim something deeper: that we are, at our core, made for goodness.

With Tutu and his daughter as our guides, we will explore how that spark of goodness remains alive within us—and how hope, grounded in truth, can shape the way we live, love, and act in the world.

Details:

- Thursdays at 6:00 PM (via Zoom)
- Start Date TBD: we want to wait until everyone has their books first! So order yours now and begin reading.
- First session: Introduction + Chapters 1–3

SERVE in COMMUNITY



*Sign up to help with
Pride in the Park!*



Once again St. Luke will have a booth at the 2026 Pride in the Park celebration from 10 am – 6 pm in Dewitt Park on Sunday, June 14th, and all St. Luke members are invited to participate by signing up for at least one 2-hour time slot involving setting up, staffing,

and/or tearing down the St. Luke booth.

This is an opportunity for us to celebrate and interact with a part of the Ithaca population that otherwise may not know about our congregation.

We have gotten an excellent response from the community during the last two years at Pride in the Park, and our swag was extremely popular!

This year we also plan to have a "Photo Booth" with a Broadway Musicals theme to promote Music at St. Luke's Broadway Showtunes Singalong.

Please consider participating in this joyful event and supporting St. Luke's involvement, which are made possible by the Ithaca Pride Alliance and St. Luke's Outreach and Social Ministry Committee. Use this form below to sign up for one 2-hour time slot, and reach out to Kimberly at communications@stlukeithaca.org with any questions.

Sign Up Here to Volunteer



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Personal Care Kit final numbers:

Thank you so much for your generosity to help support the Lutheran World Relief Personal Care Kits Program. Thanks to you we have met and surpassed our goal of 50 kits.

We have received-

54 towels

112 bars of soap

23 Nail Clippers

6 combs

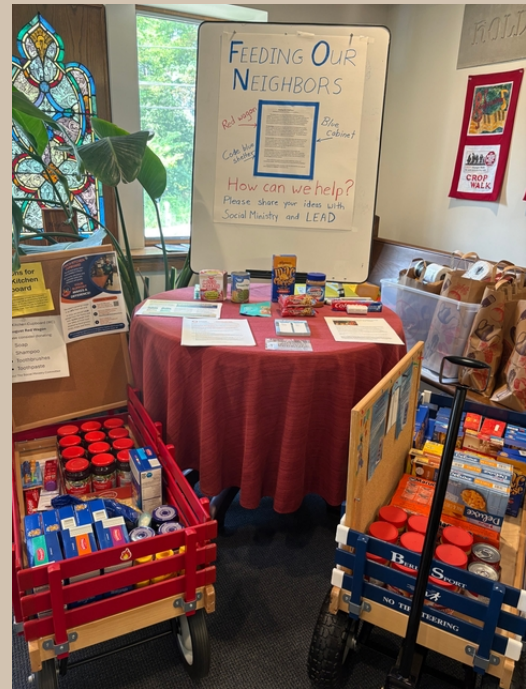
\$310 for the purchase of Clippers, combs and shipping.

Feeding the Hungry

Ithaca Kitchen Cupboard:

Thanks to all for the very generous gifts of shampoo and other personal care items and adult and child diapers. They were greatly appreciated since they are not available from the Food Bank. We donated a total of 259 items for the month of April!

For May: please donate into the Red Wagon canned or dried beans, especially garbanzo beans and red lentils.



BLUE WAGON for the BLUE CABINET:

Please consider donating canned soups, tuna, and plastic jars of pasta sauce, peanut butter and jam. Cereal, oatmeal, macaroni and cheese, pasta, protein bars and toilet paper are always welcome. Thank you for supporting this ministry!



Mittens N' More in the Summer!

Yes, the Mittens 'N More program is blessed to have ladies at Kendall who are crocheting and knitting for us all year long! They've just donated 23 hats and 3 sweaters to the program which St Luke will store until next Advent when our Mittens 'N More collection again resumes to benefit elementary school children in our area. And if you know of other knitters and crocheters in our community who would like to make and donate items, please contact Suz Snedeker at smsnedeker@gmail.com

We pray together for and with...

... Matthew, Kathleen, Keith, Dave, Rev. Henry Gathagan and Carole Gathagan, Lu, Grace, Hraavn, Terry and Diane. For Communities experiencing war, famine, and strife.

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, May 7

No Peace by Piece Quilters today

1:00 pm CCC Events Committee

Friday, May 8

10:00 am. Big Red Bagel Days

10:30 am. Tea and Tarot at Cornell

Sunday, May 10

10:00 am Holy Communion

4:00 pm. Music at St. Luke: Ithaca Chamber Music

Tuesday, May 12

10:00 am. Big Red Bagel Day

12:15 pm. Bring Your Own Lunch Bible Study

Wednesday, May 13

10:00 am. Staff Meeting

1:00 pm. Collegetown Community Collective

Thursday, May 14

1:00 pm. CCC Events Committee

*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

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