

ST. LUKE LUTHERAN CHURCH
1400 MARKET ST., WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17701
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St. Luke Online: www.stlukeweb.com



2025 NEWSLETTER

From the Pastor's Desk

*"Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts."*
Psalms 85:8 NRSV

How do we hear what God has to say to us? I suspect that very few, if any, of us can claim to have heard God speak in a loud clear, physical voice. I certainly have not had that experience myself. And yet, I believe that God speaks clearly and sometimes loudly to us all the time. The question is: are we listening?

Certainly God speaks to us through scripture. Hearing a weekly sermon, attending a Bible study, establishing a morning quiet time to read a few verses, or even embarking on a reading plan are all wonderful ways of listening to what God has to say to us through scripture.

God speaks to us through people, too. And often they are the people we don't expect God to use. People like Moses (a stutterer), John the Baptist (who wore camel's hair and ate locusts), and Mary Magdalene (a woman who witnessed and proclaimed the resurrection even to the disciples) were not necessarily people whom their contemporaries would have thought of

as “influencers”. And yet God used them powerfully to speak truth to others.

God can also speak to us through the events of our lives. Sometimes we are not even aware of it until we have the opportunity to do some retrospection. A few weeks back in the sermon I told the story about how I was inspired to put on a seatbelt towards the end of a long journey, and an hour later was involved in a massive crash. In the moment, I didn’t think the Holy Spirit was nudging me, but looking back, I am convinced that was the case.


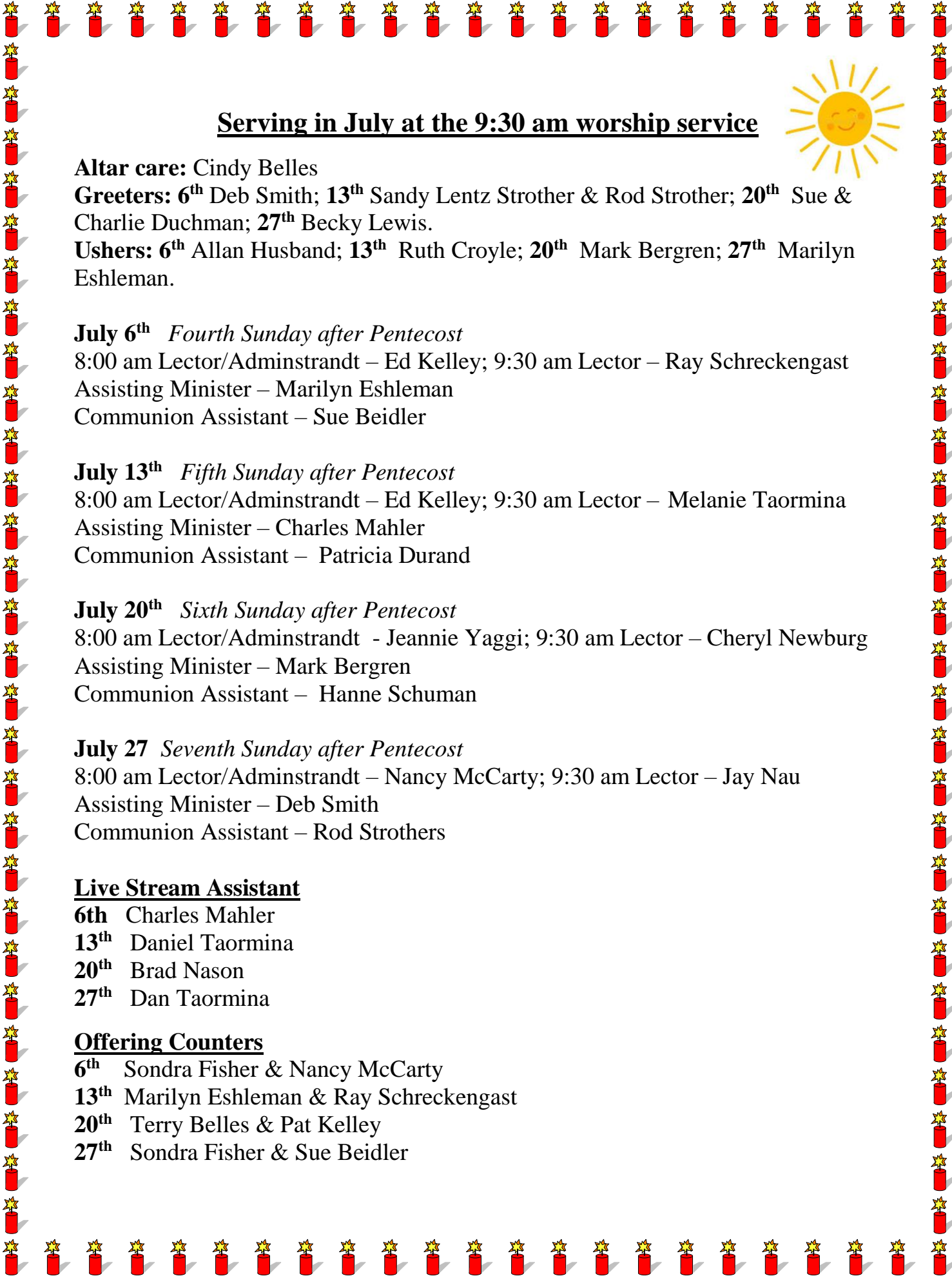
If I wasn’t trying to keep this article to a reasonable length, I’m sure I would be able to come up with more examples of the ways that God communicates with us, but the point is that God speaks all the time. We just need to listen.

During the last month or so, I have hinted in my sermons a desire to have St. Luke as a congregation take some time this summer to listen to the Holy Spirit. To that end, there will be at least three informal sessions to do just that. The first one will be on **July 14 at 7:00 p.m.** at the home of Keith and Nancy Wood. We’ll have an informal conversation about listening to the spirit as we begin to focus on listening to what God has to say about our congregation, our community, and where God is leading us. “Let us hear what the Lord will speak ...”

Peace,



OFFICE COORDINATOR: Please welcome Karen Spencer to her new role as Office Coordinator. The office hours are 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM Monday through Friday. We are delighted Karen has accepted the position and happy to Welcome her to our St. Luke family.



Serving in July at the 9:30 am worship service

Altar care: Cindy Belles

Greeters: 6th Deb Smith; 13th Sandy Lentz Strother & Rod Strother; 20th Sue & Charlie Duchman; 27th Becky Lewis.

Ushers: 6th Allan Husband; 13th Ruth Croyle; 20th Mark Bergren; 27th Marilyn Eshleman.

July 6th *Fourth Sunday after Pentecost*

8:00 am Lector/Adminstrandt – Ed Kelley; 9:30 am Lector – Ray Schreckengast
Assisting Minister – Marilyn Eshleman
Communion Assistant – Sue Beidler

July 13th *Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*

8:00 am Lector/Adminstrandt – Ed Kelley; 9:30 am Lector – Melanie Taormina
Assisting Minister – Charles Mahler
Communion Assistant – Patricia Durand

July 20th *Sixth Sunday after Pentecost*

8:00 am Lector/Adminstrandt - Jeannie Yaggi; 9:30 am Lector – Cheryl Newburg
Assisting Minister – Mark Bergren
Communion Assistant – Hanne Schuman

July 27 *Seventh Sunday after Pentecost*

8:00 am Lector/Adminstrandt – Nancy McCarty; 9:30 am Lector – Jay Nau
Assisting Minister – Deb Smith
Communion Assistant – Rod Strothers

Live Stream Assistant

6th Charles Mahler

13th Daniel Taormina

20th Brad Nason

27th Dan Taormina

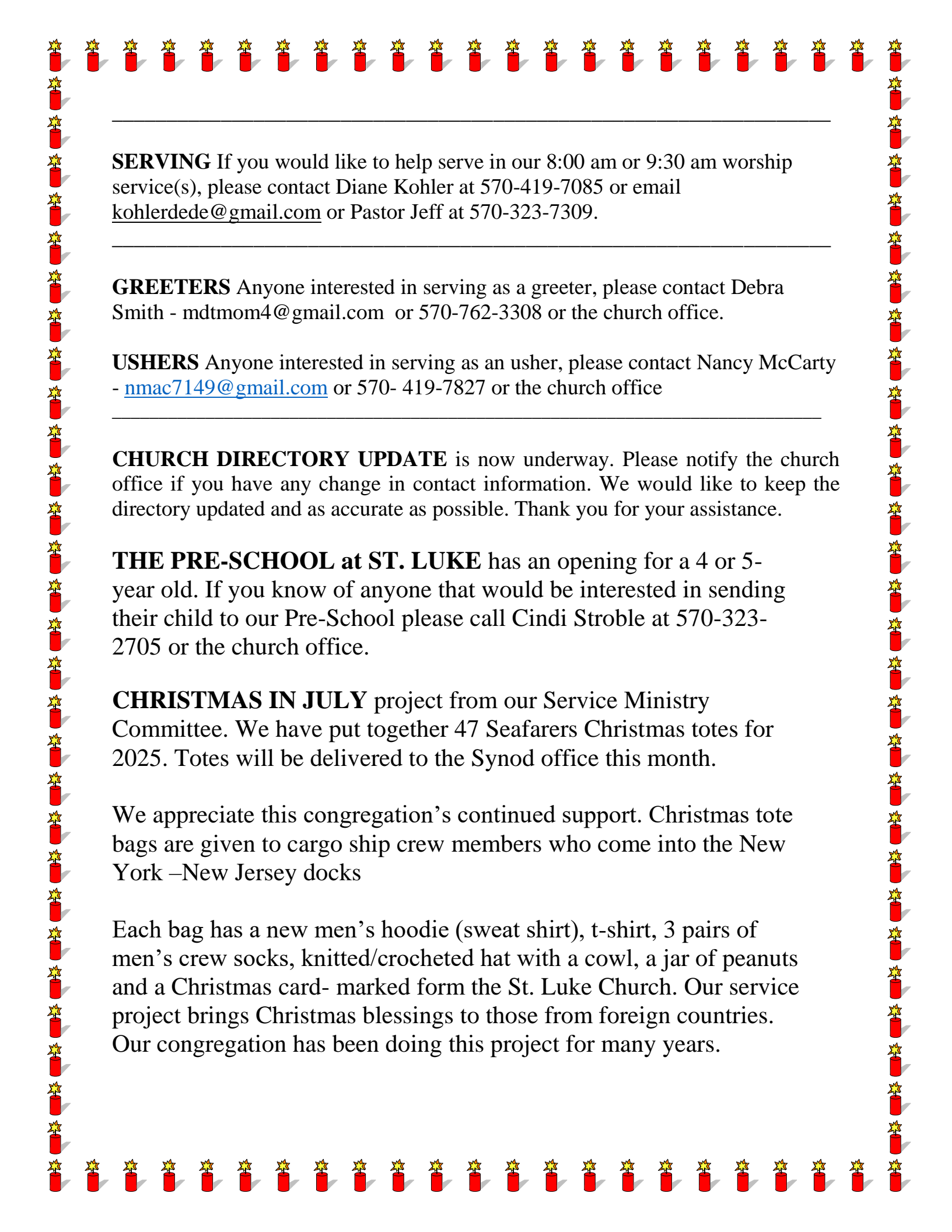
Offering Counters

6th Sondra Fisher & Nancy McCarty

13th Marilyn Eshleman & Ray Schreckengast

20th Terry Belles & Pat Kelley

27th Sondra Fisher & Sue Beidler



SERVING If you would like to help serve in our 8:00 am or 9:30 am worship service(s), please contact Diane Kohler at 570-419-7085 or email kohlerdede@gmail.com or Pastor Jeff at 570-323-7309.

GREETERS Anyone interested in serving as a greeter, please contact Debra Smith - mdtmom4@gmail.com or 570-762-3308 or the church office.

USHERS Anyone interested in serving as an usher, please contact Nancy McCarty - nmac7149@gmail.com or 570- 419-7827 or the church office

CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATE is now underway. Please notify the church office if you have any change in contact information. We would like to keep the directory updated and as accurate as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

THE PRE-SCHOOL at ST. LUKE has an opening for a 4 or 5-year old. If you know of anyone that would be interested in sending their child to our Pre-School please call Cindi Stroble at 570-323-2705 or the church office.

CHRISTMAS IN JULY project from our Service Ministry Committee. We have put together 47 Seafarers Christmas totes for 2025. Totes will be delivered to the Synod office this month.

We appreciate this congregation's continued support. Christmas tote bags are given to cargo ship crew members who come into the New York –New Jersey docks

Each bag has a new men's hoodie (sweat shirt), t-shirt, 3 pairs of men's crew socks, knitted/crocheted hat with a cowl, a jar of peanuts and a Christmas card- marked from the St. Luke Church. Our service project brings Christmas blessings to those from foreign countries. Our congregation has been doing this project for many years.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

DISCERNMENT SESSION This will be our first of at least three sessions over the summer where we will meet for informal conversation and talk about listening to where the Holy Spirit may be calling us as a congregation. **July 14, 7:00 pm** at the home of Keith and Nancy Wood.

*** **SUMMER WORSHIP** times are: 8:00 am and 9:30 am ***

ST. LUKE BLOOD DRIVE

Friday, August 15th

1:00 PM – 6:00 PM

St. Luke Lutheran Church, Bell Hall
1400 MARKET ST., WILLIAMSPORT



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF SCHOOL KITS

The Service Ministry is filling LWR school kits for this Fall. As in previous years the school supply items needed are the same. At least 50 bags will be filled

While summer sale shopping, please help us fulfill this goal by looking for these items needed to fill the school kits:

- Spiral notebooks - 70-80 sheet – wide or college ruled paper, 8"x 10 ½" (4 notebooks per bag)
- Ruler (centimeters on one side and inches on the other)
- Pencil sharpeners
- Eraser 2 ½"
- Blunt scissors (safety scissors with embedded steel blades)
- Unsharpened #2 pencils with erasers
- Crayon Box of 16 or 24-count

Items may be dropped off at the church office. Many thanks for your continued support!

ONGOING COLLECTIONS AT ST. LUKE

DANIEL'S CLOSET

Daniel's Closet needs your help! Summer clothing and accessories are needed for all ages, from infant through adult. **Seasonal clothing (*no winter clothing at this time and please NO hangers*)** for infants, children, and adults, as well as

accessories (belts, ties, shoes, purses, backpacks/bags, suitcases, etc.). All clothing must be bagged, no loose clothing, please. A collection box is located in our West Hall or items can be taken directly to Redeemer Lutheran Church at 1101 Washington Blvd., Williamsport.

SHEPHERD OF THE STREETS

Items most needed at this time are baby shampoo and wash, Size 3 diapers, XXL adult pull-ups (no tabs), paper towels, deodorant, and toothpaste. **These hygiene items are collected in the West entryway.**

THE FOOD PANTRY

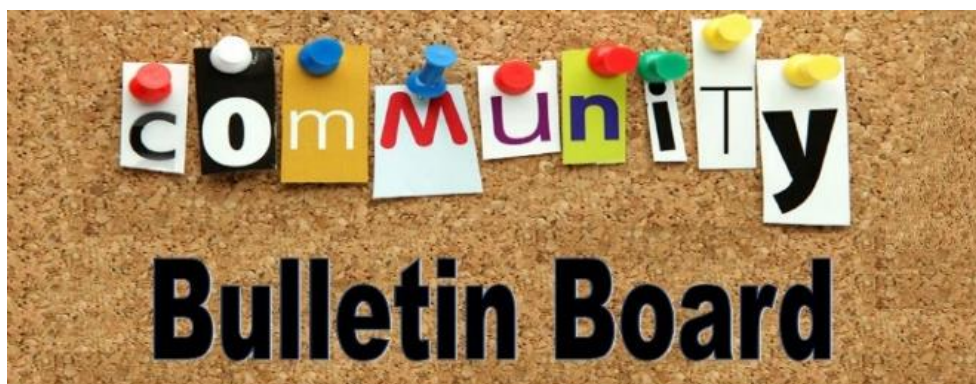
Below is a list of items that the UCLC Food Pantry needs your help desperately! Food supplies are very low. Here is a list of needed items:

Wide Egg Noodles
Flour
Sugar (white or brown)
Spam
Salt and Pepper
Ramen Noodles
Pork and Beans
Vegetable Soup

Canned Pineapple
Canned Mandarin Oranges
Alfredo Sauce
Ketchup
Relish
BBQ Sauce
Mayonnaise
Mushroom Soup

These items are collected in our West entryway. After office hours' drop-offs: Bell Hall foyer entrance. Items are taken to the Food Pantry on Mondays from 9:00AM -11:00AM. If you would like to join the volunteer team at the Pantry, please contact Tammey at 570-322-1110 for an orientation.





COMMUNITY VBS: St. Luke Church will be participating with the United Churches of Lycoming County Vacation Bible School “ROAD TRIP: On the Go with God”. Mark your calendars for Sunday, July 13th-, Thursday, and July 17th. Camp is designed for ages 4-12 and special ability adults. If you or your ministry would like to volunteer, please contact Saint John’s –Newberry UMC at seretary@stjnnumc.com

From Bishop Miller- June 2025

Given our congregation’s intent to spend some time to listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit this summer, I found Bishop Miller’s comments here to be particularly timely. – Pastor Jeff

In Bishop James Dunlop’s address to the Lower Susquehanna Synod assembly (June 5-7), he described the growth of Christianity around the world compared to what we experience in our area. He said, “The church is growing in the world; it’s just not growing here.” I have shared similar words in conversations and reports to our synod.

The danger in repeating these thoughts is that we begin to believe that what we experience is what is supposed to be—that the aging and decline in our congregations is inevitable. We have just celebrated the feast of Pentecost, the day on which God’s Holy Spirit alit on Jesus’ disciples and the evangelical mission of the church began. In readings, hymns, and prayers, we were reminded of the power given to the church to proclaim boldly the Good News of Jesus Christ crucified and risen for the salvation of the world.

“The Bible ought to come with a warning label,” said Bishop Dunlop in his sermon to the assembly: So should we be warned when we pray our Pentecost prayers, because when we pray for the Holy Spirit we might just be set on fire. We were

reminded that the church is not built on our efforts but by the power of the Holy Spirit to enflame the hearts of believers and to blow open the doors where we hide ourselves from the world.

I invite all our members to pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that we will be set afire with the love of Jesus and blown into our communities and the world to share the Good News. No congregation is too small to pray for this gift and to be awakened for the God's mission. May we all be filled until we burst with love for our world that God so loved.

***Bishop Miller** represented the synod at the Lower Susquehanna Synod Assembly where Rev. Stephen Herr was elected bishop. Our bishop will serve as a mentor to the newly elected bishop from Gettysburg.*

Synod Assembly Report

The Upper Susquehanna Synod held its 38th Annual Assembly at Camp Mount Luther on June 13 and 14, 2025. Pastor Jeff and I attended. Thank you for the privilege of representing St. Luke. The theme of this year's assembly was "Living into the Good News." The Scripture passage was Ephesians 4:1-6. How do we, as individuals and a congregation, live into the Good News? Over the past week, I have spent time in prayer and reflection on my experiences at Camp Mount Luther.

As a recent transplant from Northeastern PA, this was my first time at Camp Mount Luther. I was impressed by the facilities. In some ways, it reminded me of the Lutheran church camp in Bear Creek, which I hadn't visited in several years. On Friday morning, I attended two workshops. The first was: "Better Together: Mission Beyond Our Silos." Revs. Katy Moran, Justin Lingenfelter, and Gary Schaeffer, who are pastors in the Lewisburg and Milton areas, presented this workshop. Carol Winter from Messiah and I attended this together. Since Pastor Jeff serves as their interim, in many ways, we share a pastor. According to Pastor Justin, that is how some of their collaboration began. He was the interim at one of the other churches. Carol and I discussed this possibility. Starting with something small, something that neither congregation has done. One thing that drove home this point for me was what I had read in the #20 edition of Headwaters 2025, one of the newsletters that the Upper Susquehanna sends out. These facts are pretty sobering. There are currently 112 congregations in USS. There are 93 pastors, five deacons, and 37 authorized lay worship leaders, which appears fine until you examine the breakdown. Fifty-five of those pastors are retired, six are in special calls, one is disabled, and two are on leave. The average age of pastors serving in a call or an interim is 60. Sixteen pastors above the age of 65 are serving 35 congregations. It doesn't take long to do the math to see we aren't in a very good place. We, as congregations, need to collaborate so all can live into the Good News more fully.

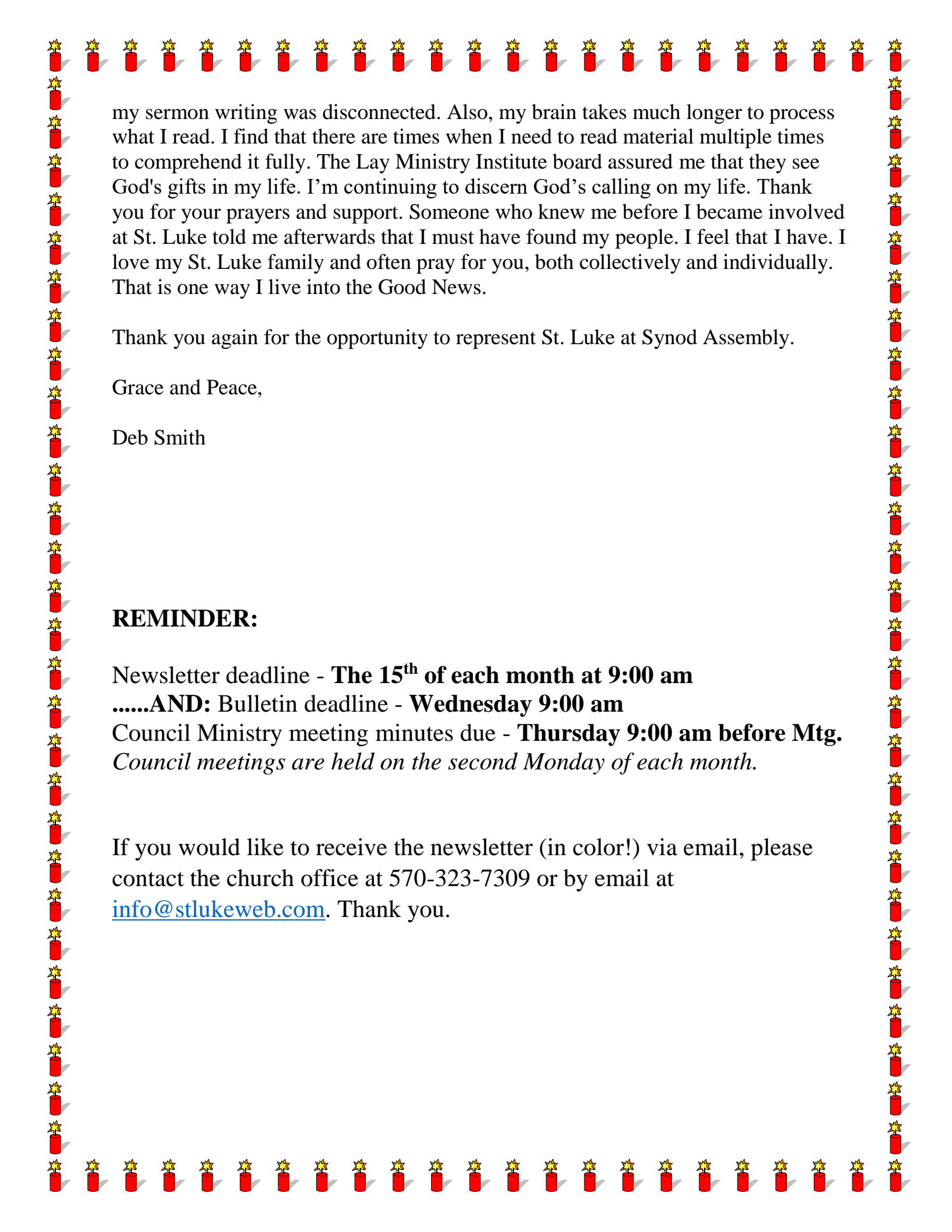
Rev. John Kratz presented the second workshop I attended. It was about the “Go Tell It In the Mountain” initiative. This is a collaboration of the Northwest PA, Allegheny, and Upper Susquehanna synods, being funded by a grant from the Lilly Foundation. Its goals are to provide opportunities for local congregations, pastors, lay worship leaders, and aspiring preachers to work toward the goals of compelling preaching and listening. Preaching is only part of the message; listening is the rest. How do we hear and process the message? How can we apply what we hear to living into the Good News?

Our church wide representative was Rev. Norma Malfatti, the Director for Director for Evangelical Mission Support in the Christian Community and Leadership Home Area of the ELCA. She led a Bible study on Saturday. One thing that she stated was that we are Resurrection people. “We are Easter people living in a Good Friday world.” This was truly brought home to us as she shared about the political violence that involved the murder of Minnesota state Representative Melissa Hortman and her husband, as well as the shooting of Minnesota state Senator John Hoffman and his wife, which rocked her home area in the early morning hours of Saturday, June 14.

A resolution was presented by the Juniata Valley Conference and passed by the Synod Assembly. This resolution is for the Office of the Bishop and synod council members to begin exploring the possibility of restructuring or combining existing synods in Pennsylvania. We can accomplish the mission of the church to follow Jesus, share the Good News, and care for those most in need with shared resources, rather than stretching God’s gifts by each synod.

Rev. Karla Leiby, Assistant to the Bishop for Leadership and Formation, encouraged us to recognize and uplift those members who possess gifts and talents that the church can utilize. A discernment event is scheduled for Saturday, October 11, 2025, at Camp Mount Luther. Rev. Dr. Martin Otto-Zimmann, the Senior Director of Kindling Faith at United Lutheran Seminary, will be there on that day. It is never too late to become a lay worship leader, pastor, preacher, or chaplain. I’m planning on attending as I continue to discern where God is calling me to use my gifts and talents so that I may live more fully into the Good News.

On a personal level, as many of you are aware, I was studying to be an authorized lay worship leader in Upper Susquehanna, but the Lay Ministry Institute board decided not to approve me for commissioning. I could have had a second year of study, but I chose not to pursue it. Some of you know that I am a fibromyalgia warrior. With fibromyalgia, my brain doesn’t think or write in a connected way, so



my sermon writing was disconnected. Also, my brain takes much longer to process what I read. I find that there are times when I need to read material multiple times to comprehend it fully. The Lay Ministry Institute board assured me that they see God's gifts in my life. I'm continuing to discern God's calling on my life. Thank you for your prayers and support. Someone who knew me before I became involved at St. Luke told me afterwards that I must have found my people. I feel that I have. I love my St. Luke family and often pray for you, both collectively and individually. That is one way I live into the Good News.

Thank you again for the opportunity to represent St. Luke at Synod Assembly.

Grace and Peace,

Deb Smith

REMINDER:

Newsletter deadline - **The 15th of each month at 9:00 am**

.....**AND:** Bulletin deadline - **Wednesday 9:00 am**

Council Ministry meeting minutes due - **Thursday 9:00 am before Mtg.**

Council meetings are held on the second Monday of each month.

If you would like to receive the newsletter (in color!) via email, please contact the church office at 570-323-7309 or by email at info@stlukeweb.com. Thank you.

To our members celebrating a birthday in July



Nancy McCarty	July 01
Hannelore Schuman	July 02
Jay Nau	July 09
Ross Mahler	July 13
Stephanie Confer	July 16
Wilson Durand	July 16
Jeffrey LeCrone	July 16
Marian Schaefer	July 16
Allison Bloom	July 17
Jimmy Labenberg	July 17
Douglas Durand	July 19
Cyle Hiller	July 21
Melanie Taormina	July 24
Judy DeWitt	July 25
William Yaggi	July 25
Janice Ranck	July 27
Luke Edmonds	July 28
Bill Liptak	July 28
Janna Seyler	July 30

Happy Anniversary.....

Ed & Pat Kelley	July 7
Mark & Karen Bergren	July 11
John & Laura McNassor	July 17

(We're sorry if we missed anyone. If we did, please contact the office so we can add you to our records.)

STAFF AT ST. LUKE



Pastor Jeffrey LeCrone, Pastor
Email: info@stlukeweb.com



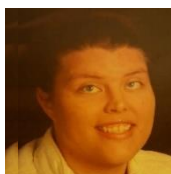
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Chris Knaur, Sexton
Email: info@stlukeweb.com



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