

# The Courier



Volume 84 ~ Number 1 ~ January 2026

Happy New Year, St. Luke's family! It's the beginning of a new year, new season of renewal, a time of starting anew and making goals and resolutions that we'll probably fail at keeping by the end of the year. Why is that? I now believe it's because it's us, making plans for ourselves, it's us taking "control". Do any of us turn to God first and ask what He wants us to do? What goals He wants us working towards? What He wants our obedience in and towards? Last year was the first time I fasted and prayed for 3 days after the new year to ask God, "What would You have me do, Abba?" Which I now know that question was too broad [Matthew 6:6-7 ~ *But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

*And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.] & [Mark 11:25 ~*

*And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.]* The Bible has so many examples of how we should pray.

We are to pray to God in secret, the enemy has ears and can hear, but God is omniscient and can hear petitions said in your heart and privately. Yes, we are also called to "cry out to our Lord" [Psalm 34:17 ~ *When the*

*righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.] [Psalm 57:2 ~ I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.]* There are so many other examples of crying out to our LORD, to Jesus. I find that prayer needs to be specific, "Lord heal me." Ok, God says, heal what? Your stubborn heart that refuses to forgive, your hateful or unpure thoughts, your lukewarm faith stance that still allows for worldly acceptance? Or do you mean your anxiety, depression, physical ailments? See? Too broad a prayer. We



prayed for specific healing over Bryan, we were specific when praying over Perry. Our prayers were so specific that

answers were just as specific.

So back to last January, I fasted and prayed for God to tell me what he wanted me to do in the new year, and He literally downloaded so many things that I started to freak out. "Ok, OK! My bad, please Lord, give me five things You call me to in this year." God gave me five things: 1. Bible Study ("Get my flock back into the My word.") 2. Service ("Serve my flock") 3. Spiritual Warfare ("Learn and teach about spiritual warfare.") 4. Missions (Focus on how to steward helping the least of these) and 5. Youth (work on refocusing and taking care of

our youth). So those were my five things, want to know what God did with my “yes”? We started a Bible study in between services and are really thriving digging into God’s word, that Bible study led into a study of spiritual warfare through the 8 prayer watches of the day. Service led to me, now being the administrator for both our church and school here at St. Luke’s. Youth led to me creating very real bonds with incoming families and the kids in our preschool program, led to a discussion to start confirmation for our very own Elsie, and talking to one of our families who starting coming to church regularly from our preschool ministry about both children getting baptized and first communion. As far as missions goes I’ve sat with and prayed over so many homeless this past year, I’ve prayed and hugged some distraught and going through hard times, I’ve prayed over and seen the fruit of just how many donations were brought in by all of my St. Luke’s family to fulfill a need in our community and through LSS. None of it was immediate, it all took the full year to get started, be planted, or come to fruition, but it did. I was obedient to what God called me to do, and he used my “yes” to do His will. **[James 5:12 ~ *But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*]**



So in this new year, I pray that you give it to

Jesus and you allow your “yes to be yes” and then you hang on because it’s still a crazy ride, and it doesn’t mean it’s easy, or smooth, or a bed of roses. **[1 Peter 3:17 ~ *For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*]** I pray that we stand firm and hold to Jesus, even in the hard.

Amen? ~ **Jaime Doganes**

### CALL COMMITTEE

Stand by work is being done, pray for our committee and that God’s will be done, and God’s person be shown and provided!

### WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Worship & Music committee is meeting January 11<sup>th</sup> after both services to plan out our next coming seasons up to Resurrection Sunday! Stay tuned for updates.

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Well we hit the ground quickly in the New Year searching ...Searching for what, Pam? Glad you asked. We are looking for Servants for the

Lord. Yep, no experience necessary; no age limits, no classes to take. Easy peezy, don't you think?

## **YET NO ONE APPLIES FOR THE POSITIONS**

Why is that? Are these positions overwhelming you, and if so, why? Are you allergic to Council meetings or just meetings in general? What holds folks back from serving in the church? The following was taken from the internet when I posed the same question.

### ***AI Overview***

*People are kept from serving in church by feeling they lack skills, not knowing where to start, lacking a clear vision of how service fits the gospel, feeling overwhelmed, or struggling with time/commitment; conversely, they are drawn to serve through a sense of purpose, community, spiritual growth, using their unique gifts, and feeling a genuine call to love others, often sparked by personal experience, mentorship, and clear teaching.*

### **Barriers to Serving**

***Lack of Clarity/Purpose:*** *Not understanding how serving connects to their faith or finding meaning in it.*

***Self-Doubt:*** *Believing they don't have the right skills or talents to make a difference.*

***Unclear Pathways:*** *Not knowing what opportunities are available or how to get involved.*

***Logistical Issues:*** *Time constraints, feeling overwhelmed by commitments, or a poor volunteer experience.*

***Weak Community:*** *Not feeling connected or supported within the church body.*

### **Motivations for Serving**

***Spiritual Growth:*** *Serving strengthens faith and offers a firsthand experience of God's work.*

***\*\* Sense of Belonging & Community:\*\**** *Building deeper friendships and finding authentic connection with others.*

***\*\* Purpose & Fulfillment:\*\**** *Discovering their unique purpose and finding joy in helping others.*

***Using Gifts:*** *Utilizing their God-given talents and developing new skills.*

***\*\* Obedience & Love:\*\**** *Following Jesus' example to serve and love their neighbor.*

### **How Churches Can Encourage Service**

***Clear Vision:*** *Teach how serving is central to the gospel from the pulpit.*

***\*\* Mentorship & Support:\*\**** *Provide small groups, mentorship, and support systems.*

***\*\* Training:\*\**** *Offer training to build skills and confidence.*

***\*\* Personal Invitation:\*\**** *Reach out to members personally to invite them.*

***\*\* Lead by Example:\*\**** *Leaders and pastors actively serving.*

In this article, I will speak to the BARRIERS listed above. Next month we will go to MOTIVATION, and then in March we will discuss how ST. LUKE'S can ENCOURAGE SERVICE.

1. **Lack of clarity/purpose:** How can serving increase our faith, and give meaning to our church walk? Well let's look at our brothers and sisters from the Bible to get some answers. **Rahab** served by opening her door to Jewish spies sent out before the attack on Jericho. She really didn't know God BUT she had heard about Him from others. I just recently read in the bible where the words "the day of the Lord" (found in Zechariah) typically meant the day of the Lord's recompense. The Lord was going to act in a very powerful way. You may recall in the Old Testament where thousands of the enemy died even BEFORE Isreal's army started fighting! What about **Ruth**? A Moabite, she followed Naomi when she returned to Bethlehem after the death of her husband and sons. Ruth did not know the Torah, yet she told her Mother-in-law, "your God will be my God". Her son became the father of the father of David the king. Ordinary people who did their part to follow the Lord. Our purpose is to serve our God whether it be in small ways (making communion bread) or leading the Worship and Music committee.

2. **Self-doubt:** Let's talk **Jonah!** He was given a message by God to take to the people of Ninevah, and he ran away. He doubted his message would make a

difference, feared for his life, and at the end, knew God was a compassionate God who wouldn't destroy the city anyway!! Why do we doubt our abilities? We are made in God's image; His children wonderfully made. Don't doubt God's work, not ever!

3. **Unclear pathways:** So you see, we have this document called the Constitution of St. Luke's. It clearly outlines and describes each Committee function as well as descriptions for the Executive positions. More than that, if you still aren't sure about what a committee does; ask anyone on Council to speak to it. We are more than happy to help and to mentor.
4. **Logistical issues:** This one is often used by people. "I have a fulltime job and can't devote the time needed". Ever heard that one? Ok I am NOT bragging but I first went on Council when our son was a toddler. He is now 36 years old. I worked my full time job all those years and still made time. Did I get to EVERY Council meeting? Nope, but I did my best. Did I ever take a break from serving- sure. EVERYONE needs to recharge. **Moses** is a great example. Raised by Pharoah's family, he had everything he ever could want, yet he aligned with his Jewish community and did everything God said to save his people including taking this "stiff-necked" group into the wilderness and to the door of the Promised land.

5. **Weak Community:** If there was ever something St. Luke's is NOT it is being a weak community. Nobody that goes off Council steps away completely. WE are a church who helps each other in every possible way. If you are not feeling connected or supported here- LET US KNOW PLEASE! Remember when the disciples asked when it was that they clothed him, or gave him food or helped him. **Jesus** told them, "When they did it to the least of these, you did it to me"

So next month we will look into what **motivates people** to serve. Don't be surprised if I come up to you and ask if you would like to serve. Personal invitation is always a good start. You can say no, but just know, as you learn more about serving, I just might come back . In case you didn't know,

**Christians are on a mission and we are relentless!!!**

See you in church,  
Pam Garcia

**MISSIONS**

**FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

December started with the walking group strolling along the Naples canals in Long Beach to see unique Christmas Lights and architecture. We were not disappointed. Candice recognized a former St Luke's



Preschool family and we had a nice chat with the now high school and college girls. How fun that was!

The next weekend we ventured out to Virginia Country Club in Bixby Knolls to once again walk and view Christmas lights. There were many fabulous old mansions with interesting architecture and large unique



holiday displays. We got our steps in that night. Some of the group had to leave early and unfortunately missed our photo.

Finally, several church members participated in the Preschool Pasta Dinner and Movie Night.



So fun to meet the preschool families especially the kids. Great pasta, salad and bread. Thanks to all who donated food and cookies to decorate.

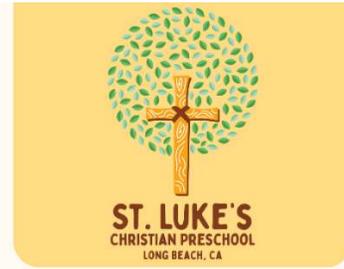
The kids as well as the adults had a great time.

Thank you to all preschool and church families who have participated in our various St. Luke's activities this year. We've had great fellowship over the year and have made a lot of new friends and have had many enjoyable times together. Our Fellowship Committee will be meeting in January to begin planning more activities for the new year. We look forward to more fun times!

**Berit Bode & Erin McCuan**

# The Courier

January 2026 | Christian Preschool Newsletter  
"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord...  
— Jeremiah 29:11



## WELCOME BACK!

(562) 420-7308

SLCP90808.org



We hope your Christmas break was filled with joy, rest, and special family moments. We are excited to welcome everyone back as school resumes on Monday, January 5, 2026. We look forward to a wonderful new year of learning, growth, and fellowship!

## PARENT BOOSTERS & SPIRIT NIGHTS

### 1 First Booster Meeting of the New Year Thursday, January 8th @ 6:30 PM

Our Parent Boosters Spirit Nights (food fundraisers) will be starting back up in January—stay tuned for dates and locations.

### 2 On the Horizon...

Let's get together to plan the rest of the school year! We have special activities on the horizon, including:

- Special Person's Day
- Child's Date Night

Your ideas and involvement make such a difference—we hope to see you there!



## NOTE FROM THE OFFICE

Summer & Fall Registration  
2026-2027

—Monday, January 26  
We will begin the registration process for our upcoming Summer & Fall programs. At this time, families will receive:

- Our new tuition rates (effective September 1, 2026)
- Summer registration options (weekly or monthly rates available)
- Fall Intent to Register information

Please be on the lookout for packets and additional details.

## CLASSROOM UPDATES & EXCITING CHANGES

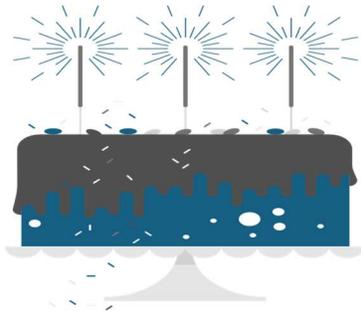
We have several updates to share as we begin the new year:

- Ms. Hutton, our Magnolia teacher, will be moving to part-time afternoons as she begins her student teaching schedule. We are so proud of her achievements and excited for this next chapter!
- We are thrilled to welcome 5 new families to our school community!
- After Christmas break:
  - Cherry Blossoms and Magnolias classes will combine, with a few students moving up to Maples.
  - We will re-open the Willows classroom with Ms. Marin, splitting the Ceiba classroom as we welcome our new students.

## JANUARY 19TH

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

SCHOOL CLOSED



**JANUARY BIRTHDAY'S**

- Jan 01**      **Maria Hartley**
- Jan 03**      **Carl Coleman**
- Jan 18**      **Ethan Reed**



- Jan 03 ~ Norm & Kellie Bernd**
- Jan 16 ~ Gerardo & Pam Garcia**
- Jan 17 ~ Randy & Cia Salisbury**



**Upcoming Events**

- Jan 01**      **Happy New Year!**
- Jan 04**      **Fellowship Committee Meeting in  
between services**
- Jan 5-23**    **Gathering goods for Savers  
Fundraiser.**
- Jan 08**      **Boosters Monthly Meeting @6:30PM**
- Jan 09**      **Taking down Christmas until next  
year @6:30PM dinner included**
- Jan**        **Walking with a Purpose walk TBD**
- Jan 11**      **Bible Study: Fruits & Gifts of the  
Spirit**
- Jan 11**      **Worship & Music Committee  
meeting after services**
- Jan 19**      **Martin Luther King Jr. Day ~ No  
school**
- Jan 20**      **Preschool Board Meeting @6:45PM**
- Jan 25**      **Church Council Meeting after  
services**
- Jan 26-30**   **Preschool Registration for '26/'27  
school year**

***The Courier*** is the newsletter of  
St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church & Preschool

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**SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

**In-Person & Online Services**

**9AM & 11AM**

**ONLINE STREAMING LINK**

<https://www.youtube.com/@stlukeslongbeach>

**Online giving link: [sllc90808.churchcenter.com/giving](https://sllc90808.churchcenter.com/giving)**

**Come visit us soon! You are welcome here!**

**St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
& Christian Preschool**

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