

St. Luke's Messenger

Dear Parish Family

December 2017—January 2018

As I sit in my office writing this message, it is the Friday afternoon before the "big celebration" of our new "Fellowship Hall" and



Greg Kronz
Rector

Meredith and I having been at St. Luke's for 25 years. Two of my three children are already here and one is on their way (with their spouses or "significant other" in one case). We have other family members coming in for the big celebration, and some close friends from out of town as well. Also traveling

to be with us is our guest preacher, Ted Schroder and his wife, Antoinette, who were here 25 years ago when Ted (my former "boss," mentor, colleague, and friend) preached at my Installation Service when I became Rector of St. Luke's.

I owe a big thank you to all of you reading this for this opportunity and blessing. In fact, my heart is full of thanks: I love God's many gifts that He has blessed me with, beginning with His Son, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of Meredith and our children, the gift of "about to be a grandfather," the gift of family and friends (including my golf buddies) that I have in my life, the gift and privilege of living on Hilton Head Island and serving at St. Luke's

Church. I love being here (at least most of the time).

As I ponder all these gifts.... I am reminded that Thanksgiving is right around the corner; then Christmas, then the New Year! More reasons to give thanks: especially at Thanksgiving; and the gift of Jesus at Christmas!

I know all of us have our ups and downs; pain and sorrow, joys and thanksgivings. I know, too, that life sometimes "just isn't fair." We often think or say that when bad things happen to us; but not usually when we are filled with abundant joy and thanksgiving!

When you are thankful, how do you show it? I know when we are sad, we usually get quiet or maybe cry; maybe even get angry! But, when you are filled to overflowing with thanksgiving, how do you show it?

Ponder that as you consider how you can show thanks for all the blessings you have been given (which we, in the United States, who have all that we need and more, are better off than 90% of the world's population); and, we live on Hilton Head Island, to boot; and, we go to St. Luke's and have a blessed "Church family;" let alone your own family and friends! And, most especially, we have a God who loves us;

who sent His Son to die for us (that is what Christmas and Easter are all about) and He sent the Holy Spirit to bring us to Himself, to remind us to bear the fruit of the Spirit, and share the gifts that He has given us. Again, how do you show thanksgiving for the abundance of your blessings?

For family and friends....hug them, call them, send them a letter or email; let them know you are blessed by them and are thankful for them. Be sure to care for them and love them .

While we are thanking Him for all His blessings....pray, praise, worship, adore, share, serve....and, as we approach the season of Thanksgiving, Christmas and the end of the year, ponder...what might I give to the Lord for all He has showered upon me, because of His "worth" (what the word 'worship' is derived from: "worth/shippe;" what is worthy of our praise, our giving of ourselves in response to all He has given to us); that we might spread His kingdom, spread His Word, His work, that others might be thankful. Just a thought.

I hope you had a blessed Thanksgiving; and will have a blessed Christmas and New Year!

Love in Christ,

Greg Kronz

CHRISTMAS AT ST. LUKE'S

Sunday morning, December 24

Sunday night, December 24

Monday, December 25

Sunday, December 31

10:00 AM

4:30 PM

8:00 PM

10:30 PM

11:00 PM

10:00 AM

8:00 AM

10:00 AM

Holy Communion, Rite II

Christmas Eve

Family Christmas Service w/ Holy Communion

Christmas Service w/ Holy Communion (no nursery)

Festive Prelude

Christmas Service w/ Holy Communion (no nursery)

Christmas Day

Christmas Day Service

Holy Communion, Rite I

Holy Communion, Rite II



Our Focus

Upward: To worship and serve the Lord

Inward: To grow spiritually in the knowledge and love of Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Outward: To share our faith, our hands and our hearts, for the sake of the gospel, our community, and the world.

A CHURCH IN THE ANGLICAN TRADITION

Office Holiday Hours

The church office will be closed the afternoon of Monday, December 18 for the staff Christmas Party. The office will also be closed on Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26 for Christmas. We will be closed the afternoon of Friday, December 29, all day on Monday, January 1, 2018 for New Year's Day. Enjoy the holidays!



Bookshop Greetings

As we reflect on our blessings and enjoy the Holiday season, we invite you to "Shop Local" for all your Christmas needs. Stop by and discover the perfect book/gift for everyone on your list, and where else could you find such inspirational cards for only \$1? To all our loyal parishioners we send Merry Christmas wishes on angel's wings and multiple blessings for a wonderful New Year. See ya soon!



Transitions

Baptisms - Eloise Collier, Margaret Helmintoller

Deaths - None

New Members - Sheila Buck, Bob & Carol Linneman, Cheryl Meneely, William & Linda Okey, Jordan Simonis, Fabbie & Steve Stauffer, David Van Hoewyk

Transfer Out - Kimberly Stokes, Summer Settle

Calling ALL girls 7 and up

The Jr. DOK will be having their annual Christmas party on Dec. 10 right after 10 o'clock service. Please bring dish to share and a gift for the gift exchange. Do NOT spend more than \$8-10 dollars. Moms and Grandmothers are invited also. Please RSVP to Mary Hiers [843.816.6444](tel:843.816.6444). Not a member, please come anyway! Haven't been in a while? Come anyway! Lots of fun planned!!

Flower Guild

Altar flowers are available for 2018 beginning January 14 through February 11. During Lent through Easter Sunday we'll have greenery. The rest of the year is wide open until we get to Advent, December 2. Call the church office at 843-785-4099 to select a Sunday in honor or memory of a loved one or in celebration of a birthday or anniversary. Cost is \$100 made payable to St. Luke's Flower Guild. Leigh Ann Hoppe is in charge of the Flower Guild and always makes sure that the altar is bedecked beautifully.



Capital Campaign and Building Campaign THANK YOU

"They have been a wonderful encouragement to me, You must show your appreciation to all who serve so well." 1 Corinthians 16:18

Paul's words resonate today as we all consider the time and effort that the **Capital Campaign Committee** and the **Building Committee** have put forth over the last several years to make Fellowship Hall, the Preschool, and the entire campus improvement plan, a reality.

Yes, we do appreciate their service and dedication to St. Luke's Church, and the Lord has blessed their work and enabled it to bear the finest fruit.

Here's a Vestry thank you and "Job Well Done" to each of their members!

Capital Campaign Committee – Norm Galloway, Leanne Bickel, Frank Bowen, John Evans, Ric Gorman, Susan Hartmann, Mike Hellman, Hart Joseph, Brenda Lieberman, and John Wiggington.

Building Committee – Tom Conner, Frank Bowen, Chris Darnell, Kent James, Brooks Munch, Sam Tooma, Dan Wallace, with assistance from Milton Kirby, interiors by J. Banks Design & Joni Vanderslice, and construction by Graves Construction Co. and Ling Graves, our builder.

On behalf of the Vestry and humbly yours,

Rick Tranquilli
Rector's Warden

Church Staff



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VESTRY MEMBERS

<http://www.stlukesghi.org/administration---vestry.html>



St. Luke's E-Zine

We send a weekly email to help you prepare for Sunday and upcoming activities. We call it our E-Zine. That's E-'zeen', like maga-zine. It's our weekly 'E'-lectronic maga-'zine'. Or E-Zine. Get it? To be added to our list, send an email to publications@stlukesghi.org with "E-Zine" in the subject line.

Calling all Singers!

A SPECIAL CHOIR FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

10:30pm Festive Prelude -- 11:00pm Service

It's not too late to join the St. Luke's Choir for Christmas Eve at the 11 o'clock service! Even though rehearsals have begun, there's still time to learn the beautiful



carol settings that these singers are preparing for this magical midnight service, which concludes in the stillness of early Christmas morning, around 12:10am.

Rehearsal Schedule (Tuesdays, 5:15 – 6:30pm in choir room)

Tues December 5	5:15-6:30pm
Tues December 12	5:15-6:30pm
Tues December 19	5:15-6:30pm
Sun December 24	9:30pm before 10:30pm Festive Prelude

To join or for more information, contact Nina (843.422.0490 or ninarodman@aol.com). Come, celebrate the birth of our Savior on Christmas Eve with others who love to sing the unforgettable music of this season!

December 24 Service Schedule

This year Christmas Eve falls on Sunday and creates a full day of both Advent and Christmas services. Sunday morning is ADVENT IV but in the afternoon our services switch focus to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Below is the worship schedule for the rest of December and early January.

Sunday, December 24

8:00am service – NO SERVICE

10:00am service – service with communion (Advent IV)

4:30pm – Family Service with communion

(Christmas Eve)

(St. Luke's Praise Team, Children's Choirs)

8:00pm -- Service with communion

(St. Cecilia Choir, trumpet, flute, organ)

10:30pm – Festive Prelude

11:00pm – Service with communion

(St. Luke's Choir, Ring & Rejoice handbells, brass quartet, flute, organ)

Sunday, December 25

10:00am – Service with communion

Sunday, December 31

8:00am – Service with communion

10:00am – Service with communion

Sunday, January 7, 2018

8:00am – Service with communion

10:00am – Epiphany Lessons & Carols



Advent Carol Story

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

The origins of this plaintive Advent carol date to medieval times. In the 800's, a series of Latin hymns were sung each day during Christmas Vespers from December 17 to 23. Each of these hymns began with the word "O," and were called the "Great" or "O" Antiphons (the word antiphon meaning psalm or anthem). These hymns were apparently restructured into verse form in the 1100s, and finally published in Latin in 1710. In the mid-1800s, they were discovered by an English minister names John Mason Neale, who wove together segments of them to produce the first draft of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," which was published in 1851. Neale's original version said, "Draw nigh, draw nigh, Emmanuel."



Neale is a man worth knowing. He was born in London on January 24, 1818, the son of an evangelical Anglican clergyman. He attended Cambridge University and proved to be a brilliant student and prize-winning poet. While there, Neale was influenced by the Oxford

Movement and became attracted to Roman Catholicism. In 1841, he was ordained into the Anglican ministry; but his poor health and Catholic leanings prevented him from gaining a parish ministry.

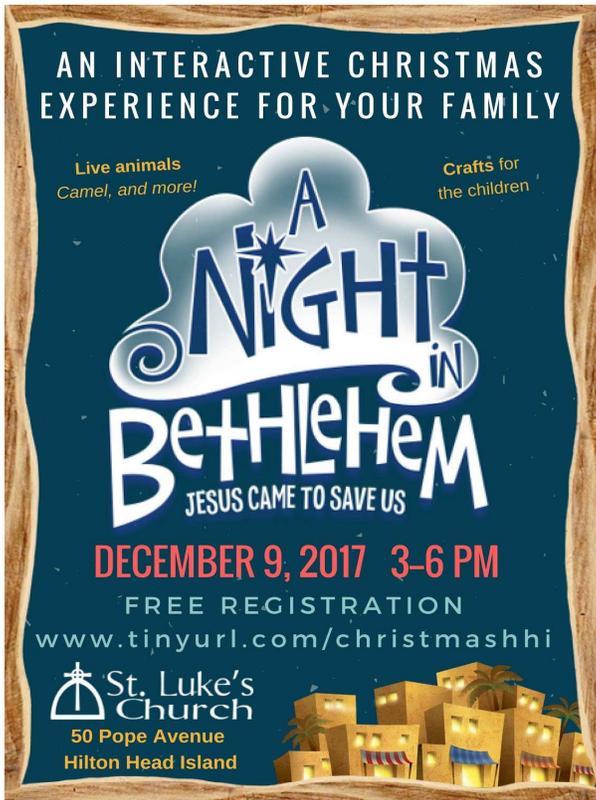
He was appointed instead as the director of Sackville College, a home for old men. (Sackville College, started by Robert Sackville, Earl of Dorset, in the early 1600s as home for the elderly, is still going strong today in East Grinstead, Sussex.) This was the perfect job

for Neale, for he was a compassionate man with a great heart for the needy, but he was also a scholar needing time for research and writing.

As a high church traditionalist, Neale disliked the hymns of Isaac Watts and longed to return Christianity to the liturgical dignity of church history. He was an outspoken advocate of returning church buildings to their former glory. He campaigned, for example, against certain types of stoves that spoiled the tastefulness and charm of English churches. He also worked hard to translate ancient Greek and Latin hymns into English.

In today's hymnals, we find Neale and Watts side-by-side, the old differences having been forgotten. We owe a debt of gratitude to John Mason Neale every time we sing one of his Christmas carols "Good King Wenceslas," "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," "Good Christian Men, Rejoice," and his Palm Sunday hymn, "All Glory, Laud, and Honor."

(THEN SINGS MY SOUL, Book 2. Robert J. Morgan. Thomas Nelson, Inc. publisher.)



A Night in Bethlehem

In just a few days our Christmas outreach will be happening in our fellowship hall. Several families from Bluffton and Hilton Head have registered online to come walk around Bethlehem marketplace, interact with the shopkeepers, see live animals and hear about the night Jesus came to save us! Thank you to everyone who has donated items, will be working and have prayed for this event.

Please continue to pray for:

- * the families who will come on that day
- * everyone working on the event
- * the presence of the Holy Spirit touching lives
- * safety

Winter/Spring programs:

- * Sunday School for children 10-11 AM
- * Wednesday after school 3-6PM

Starting on January 17, our after school program for children age 4 through 5th grade. The public school buses stop at the preschool and we will be there to pick up the children and escort them into the building. We are having snacks, recreation, Bible time and choir.

After the children program, there is an optional dinner for the families (more info to come) followed by a Bible Teaching with Greg Kronz.

St. Luke's Kids WEDNESDAY AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Glow!
Matthew 5:16

“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Music Bible Recreation
Age 4 through 5th grade
Wednesdays from 3:00 - 6:00 PM

<i>Bus riders: we are the first stop from the Public Schools.</i>	<i>Family dinner at 5:30 PM followed by Adult Bible teaching</i>	Sign up today!
More info: Veronica Chisholm (843)540-4024 * Nina Rodman (843)422-0490		

St. Luke's Youth Ministry

A Year in review:

This has been a year of Gospel centered ministry, growth, and continuing our great traditions with our annual trips.

We are growing!

We have been growing and averaging 25 to 30 high school students on a Sunday Nights. Our Middle School group has between 10-15 kids coming out Wednesday Nights. This is between 40 and 50 teenagers that are hearing the good news of the Gospel every week!

Great Traditions!

In 2017, we brought 34 students on our 7th annual ski trip, 36 students on our 8th annual surf retreat, 20 high school students to our 5th annual international mission trip with Urban Promise Honduras, and 29 high school students on our 3rd annual fall retreat. These trips are designed for building friendships, participating in new adventures, hearing the Gospel in a fresh way, and serving and learning from others on our mission trip to Honduras. The majority of these same students who participate in our trips (approximately 90%) were involved in our regular weekly meeting throughout the year.

What we are doing now?

This semester we have been challenging our kids to memorize this verse from John's gospel: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (10:10). Our hope is that they will truly see that following the Lord will bring them more life than they could ever imagine. His story for them is the way better than all the false narratives the world is trying to sell them. We are encouraging them to choose the life that only comes from faith in Christ!

As we move into 2018 we have an upcoming ski trip in January and Surf trip in May. We are planning our 6th annual trip with Urban Promise Honduras in June. Thanks for all your support and prayers and we are looking forward to all that the Lord has planned for 2018!



Youth Group Schedules

High School Youth Night

(Grades 9-12)

Sundays from 6:30-7:45PM in the Mission and Ministry Building.

Middle School Youth Night:

(Grades 6-8)

Wednesdays from 6:15-7:45PM in the Mission and Ministry Building.

We have already kicked off our fall middle and high school groups. We have over 30 kids coming to our weekly high school group and our middle school group is steadily growing each week!

Psalm 34:8

Taste and see that the Lord is good!



FLOWER HOUSE OF PRAYER

Suzy McCall

Dear Friends,

Peace and blessings in the Name of Jesus! May our hearts be truly thankful each and every day, and especially during this season of Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas! The Lord has enriched our lives with His neverending mercy and unconditional love! Alleluia!

I was asked for a report on the House of Prayer, so decided to send to everyone, especially since we had such an interesting time this morning.

An old friend, Kristen Bergeron, is visiting my family, so she went with me to open the house of prayer this morning. When we pulled up in front of the house, we were greet by two women selling clothes on the sidewalk in front. I did not recognize them, but they were super friendly, and very interested in the house and its ministry. They asked me if they could sell their clothes inside, on our porch, and I explained that we neither sell nor buy at the House of Prayer. So sorry. One of them, Fanny, talked and talked about her own relationship with Jesus, her church, and what we should be doing at the house of prayer. :-) Kristen and I eventually were able to get the coffee made and sit down to begin the worship and devotional. Fanny joined us, enthusiastically, and then went outside to sell clothes. She also began to run people inside the house for prayer!

Before Fanny was able to convince people to enter, one of our regulars, David, who is an alcoholic came in. He settled in his chair with his coffee and started talking to Kristen and me. Then Fanny came in with three taxi drivers, who looked a little bewildered. I think she kind of dragged them inside, but one of them was eager to receive prayer. The taxi drivers are all paying extortion to the gangs, to

they live under a cloud of fear. I shared with them how the Lord doesn't want us to have a spirit of fear, that we need not fear death when we are walking with Jesus, and I prayed prayers of protection over them. They left. We continued talking with David, and then Fanny came in with a guy who sells fruit. He stayed quite awhile, and talked our ears off. We listened for a long time, and then I asked him if he wanted me to pray a prayer of reconciliation over him, which I did, and then he took off his hat, bent his head, held his hands out, and prayed a short, sincere prayer himself. It was very moving.

The last visitor was an older man who looked like a street person. He told us that he is an orphan, that he has no family at all, and lives alone. He asked for coffee, which is the only thing we give away at the prayer house -- a good policy, although sometimes difficult to stick with because of all the needs and requests -- and we prayed for him, too.

Most days we don't have so many people, but Fanny was like a recruiter out front! I told Kristen that maybe we needed to adopt that strategy. :-) I'm not so extroverted, though, that I want to stand out on the street and run people into the house. Still, I think all of those people appreciated the loving attention, prayer, and hot coffee.

We are still open from 9-11am every weekday. Three of us take turns opening. My days are Tuesday and Thursday. We would like to keep the house open more, but we don't have people to open it. The churches really have not responded, sadly. I was hoping that the house of prayer would be a unifying ministry for the neighborhood churches, but that hasn't been the case. The churches in Flor del Campo have always been competitive with one another, and wary of one another's doctrines. It's very sad. One of our regulars at the prayer house, Martha, was actually put into discipline by her pastors because she

comes to the prayer house!! She keeps coming, though, and even opens it on Fridays. Some of the people who come tell us that there is no opportunity in their churches to be heard, to be prayed for. Nobody listens. I wonder if that it a widespread problem in churches. People come to listen to what is being offered, but there is no opportunity for them to be heard, really heard. We all need opportunities to share what is burdening our hearts and minds. A sympathetic ear is a treasure, and especially if prayer is offered as well.

The Flower House of Prayer is an oasis of Light in the darkness, and I so love going there. We now have a play corner for young children who sometimes accompany their moms. Thank you, St. Peter's. I was telling Kristen this morning that our rule about not giving anything away has been "a terrible discipline" for me because I want to give people whatever they ask for, especially if they are in need. Today I was asked for a Bible (twice), money, medicine, and Wilson asked me to buy him a shirt from Fanny and her friend. I explained each time that what we offer is prayer, that we do not buy or sell. I'm happy that we can also offer coffee and sometimes bread because it's hard to say no to folks. However, I know in my heart that if I had given those people what they asked for today, then we would receive many visits from folks who wanted/needed these things, instead of spiritual seekers in need of prayer.

Thank you for your prayers, and also for your financial support. I really believe that the House of Prayer is becoming what the Lord wants it to be, and that it has been a blessing to many, including me.

Much love to all,

Suzy

Bill Phillips, Interim Missions Committee
Chairperson
phillipskb@aol.com

How can I give, let me count the ways...

As we get closer to year end we hope to see a spike in receipts of offerings. Some of you will make gifts towards your 2017 pledge or even in excess of it. Others will want to pay ahead for 2018. Here are two payment vehicles to consider when making an offering to St. Luke's Church: **The IRA Charitable Rollover has been made permanent!** The IRA Charitable Rollover provision allows individuals who have reached age 70½ to donate up to \$100,000 per year to St. Luke's Church directly from their IRA, without treating the distribution as taxable income. This tax benefit of the IRA Charitable Rollover is available to taxpayers regardless of whether they itemize

their returns. The distribution counts towards the donor's Required Minimum Distribution, but is not included in calculating the individual taxpayer's charitable deduction limitation. In particular, this helps older Americans, some who have paid off their home mortgage and are not eligible to deduct charitable gifts as they no longer file itemized tax returns. The IRA rollover provision removes these negative tax consequences and encourages Americans to give back to their churches and communities during their lifetimes.

Buy low, give high... When you make a charitable donation of stock, you generally are entitled to a tax deduction equal to the market

value of the securities given. When the gift is appreciated property, the donor does not have to recognize the gain on the donated securities, but still gets the benefit of the deduction. This gives the donor twice the tax benefits - a charitable deduction on their tax turn, plus avoidance of income taxes on the appreciation in value of the donated property.

Thank you for your 2018 pledge! The Stewardship and Finance Committees are grateful to everyone who has made their 2018 pledge. If you have not done so as yet, it is not too late! Join your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ by responding to God's grace with joy and gratitude. Questions – call Susan Hartman, Stewardship Chair or the Church office.

December Outreach—Hilton Head Heroes

Not long ago, I was approached by a man who said, "You don't remember me, do you?" His face seemed vaguely familiar, but I did not immediately recognize him. He told me who he was and I was instantly taken back almost twenty years ago to the formation of Hilton Head Heroes.



At the time, this gentleman had a healthy young son who would attend some of my shows in Harbour Town. The boy and I struck up a friendship and we would send each other short letters during his school year. I didn't hear from him for a while, until his Mother wrote to me and explained that their son was very sick.

The boys last letter to me was a story about the horrible "cancer dragon" that he was fighting. In his story, he called me the "gentle wizard under the tree" who made him feel safe and protected. I tried to encourage him the best that I could. His Mother wrote me a sweet note after he had passed away and told me that one of the things that had kept his hopes up was the thought of coming back to Harbour Town again that summer. His passing gave birth to the idea of Hilton Head Heroes.

Now, almost twenty years later, we have welcomed hundreds of families with a child suffering from a life threatening illness for a week long stay in the Hero House in Sea Pines. The heart and soul

of one special little boy remains alive in the hopes and dreams of so many who have come after him. My young friend, little Herbie Womble, left behind a legacy that lives on to this very day.

Thank you for your amazing support of Hilton Head Heroes!



January Outreach: ACTS Counseling

"Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Since our inception in July of 1996, it has been our mission to offer affordable, professional Christian counseling to all people in need, regardless of church affiliation or ability to pay. Our counselors are licensed professionals who hope to present the love of Christ to each client that enters our door. We do not push our faith on others, but we pray for our clients and present the gospel when the opportunity arises as we believe that the Holy Spirit is crucial to the healing process.



For twenty-one years we have been an outreach to the greater Hilton Head/Bluffton community, and we have been blessed to see God work in the lives of our clients to bring peace in what seems to be hopeless circumstances. Marriages have been healed and broken relationships restored. Many have grown in faith as they see the power of God at work in their lives.

The funds we receive are used only for our Scholarship Fund which allows us to provide services to those unable to pay our full fee. In addition, each counselor accepts

half of our normal fee per session in order to use the funds to the fullest extent. In this way your donations allow the body of Christ at St. Luke's to join with us in reaching out to many hurting people who would otherwise have received secular counseling or no counseling at all. So we ask you to partner with us, not only with your donations, but also with your prayers for us and our clients.

May you be greatly blessed as you bless others.

Sharon Smith, LMFT

Director/Counselor

Jamie Evans, Outreach Chairperson
jsevans129@gmail.com

Update: The Esther Project

The Esther Project, a fund established in 2010 "for such a time as this," assists St. Luke's families struggling to make ends meet--a special challenge when dealing with job loss, unexpected illness, medical expenses, or other family crises. The Esther Project has helped many families as well as single individuals with short-term needs throughout the year. Recently the Esther Project helped a family dealing with a cancer diagnosis and loss of



work. Others have received gas and food cards to help them get by. The Esther Project is supported solely by donations from people like you. On behalf of the many families blessed by your past generosity, we thank you.

As the holiday season approaches, needs also increase. The Esther Project Board asks that you prayerfully consider a contribution to assist St. Luke's families who need help to have a joyful Thanksgiving or Christmas. If you feel led to support this ministry, checks should be written to St. Luke's Church with Esther Project noted in

the memo line and placed in the offering plate or left in the Ministry Center. Gift cards for groceries, gas, or Walmart are also welcome. If you know of a family in need or have any questions concerning this ministry, please contact Janis Schluchterer through the church office.

God's Word tells us to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2) What better way can we share our love of Christ than by helping those within our church family?

Counselor's Comments: True Blessing

Sharon Smith

As I write this, it is not even Thanksgiving and the stores have already been decked out with Christmas paraphernalia. Every year the birth of Jesus becomes less of a focus as we are bombarded with the idea that love and family values are shown by the special gift we choose to give for the holiday. Our culture has all but forgotten the Good News of Jesus coming into the world as a sacrifice for our sins and to bring us forgiveness and eternal life.

In a similar way, I have been thinking of the challenge of living out the love of Jesus in a culture that encourages us to focus on what makes one "happy" versus what God would have us do. For many years I have noticed that God's commands say things like "Honor your Father and Mother" and "Husbands love your wives and wives respect your husbands." I especially notice that it doesn't say "if they deserve it." So what if they don't treat you as you'd like to be treated? Does that mean that you can ignore the command?

I have prayed about this for many years, and I have decided that the command still stands. But how do we remain obedient

despite the circumstances? It seems to me that the first thing is to acknowledge to ourselves the feelings we have about how we've been treated. We cannot help the feelings that we have, but we can help the action that we take. In Proverbs 4:23 we are called to "Above all else guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." This means we must protect ourselves from unsafe people while making sure to treat them with respect as we set healthy limits on how their behavior affects us. True and healthy relationships are made better by honest confrontation and clear limits.

It seems to me that we begin by telling our loved one how we feel about a particular action and how we would like to be treated instead. If the person refuses to acknowledge responsibility, then we need to find a way to limit our exposure to that behavior. For instance, when I would visit my parents as an adult and stay in their home, my father would treat me as he did in high school. Rather than totally cut off the relationship, I began to stay



in a hotel when I visited so I could leave if I became uncomfortable. This broke the unhealthy cycle and strengthened our relationship.

Often people struggle with the concept of forgiveness, thinking that one must remain in an unhealthy relationship in order to truly forgive. In my opinion, there is a large difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Sometimes it isn't safe to remain in contact with a person, but this doesn't mean that we cannot forgive him or her. If we need to break ties with the person who has hurt us, the important thing is to refrain from holding resentment in our heart and to continue to pray that he or she finds healing.

During the holidays, as we meet with family and friends, guard your hearts from the family tensions that never fail to pop up as we try to be the perfect TV families. If you need a break from Uncle John's sense of humor, take a walk outside. If you need help, ask for it. Treat others as you'd like to be treated, and take time to breathe. Remember to celebrate Jesus' birth.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!



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