



The people of the United Methodist Church

E-MESSENGER

Open hearts
Open minds
Open doors

Saint Luke United Methodist Church

Volume 2024, Number 24

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Available at: stlukeumchaltomcity.org



The entire staff of St. Luke United Methodist Church wishes you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Rev. Mel Bishara, Pastor Abel Ditu,
Susan Briles, Mark Chandler, Randy Fox,
Stanislas Ndecky, Debbie Diviney,
Anna Allen, & Ray Savell



Join us on Christmas Eve for our
Candlelight Worship Service
6:00 p.m.



2024 Christmas Cantata

We wish to thank Mark, Randy, our choir, orchestra, guest vocalists, Kelly, Sherry and Ray for the wonderful performance of **The Gift** on Sunday, December 15.

If you were unable to attend worship on Sunday, you can watch it on our Facebook page SLUMC-Haltom City.



Christmas Does Not Have to Be Empty

Manger Square in Bethlehem on December 23, 2023, stood eerily empty. In most years, every inch of this space would be teeming with people, making it difficult to navigate through the crowds. However, last year, Christian Palestinians in solidarity with those in Gaza have made the heartbreaking decision to cancel the Christmas Celebration. Reflecting on the current state of affairs, a Lutheran pastor remarks, "If Jesus were born today, it might be amidst the rubble of Gaza."

Meanwhile, the horror and sorrow that gripped Israelis on October 7 continue to haunt the region. Families torn apart, children killed, women violated, and hostages enduring unspeakable torture - the anguish and trauma persist and widen.

Both Israelis and Palestinians deserve a better future. Yet, the deep-seated anger and mistrust accumulated over decades have now erupted into unimaginable violence. Political deceit, terrorism, and prejudice, largely fueled by falsehoods, are depriving all sides of viable solutions. The void is palpable, leaving no space for reason or compassion.

Deceit upon deceit has inflicted countless wounds on the souls of the people, rendering them incapable of mutual understanding, camaraderie, or love. The divisions have severed the rational mind from the instinctual, reducing life to a cycle of unending revenge.

As witnesses with heavy hearts and conflicting emotions, we find ourselves in a different kind of emptiness. Those who cherish relationships with both Jews and Palestinians are left in a desolate landscape of shattered hopes for a better world. We confront our own biases and prejudices, contemplating how we marginalize those we fear or overlook the plight of the homeless, the afflicted, or the immigrant seeking refuge.

We share a sense of emptiness that resonates with many this Christmas. The mangers of our souls may appear vacant, symbolizing the longing and searching for deeper meaning and connection amid the turmoil and despair.

Yet, we are also aware that the essence of Christmas is to refrain from despair, embrace hope, spread love, dwell in peace with neighbors, yourself, and with God.

O little town of Bethlehem how still we see thee lie, above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by, Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light, the hopes and fears of all the years are met with thee tonight. O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray, cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

**Merry Christmas to all,
Mel Bishara**



The church office will be closed due to the observance of the Christmas holidays:

December 25 & 26
December 31 & January 1



We would like to acknowledge Tommie Martin for all she does for our church. You can find her every Sunday morning greeting everyone who attends our worship service. We appreciate her sweet smile that she offers everyone who comes through our church doors. Tommie also attends Bible Study each week and she always brings cake. She has spoiled all of us. Tommie is also a member of the United Women of Faith and the Administrative Board.

Along with Tommie we want to say thank you to Clifford Smith and Michael Turner who usher each week and are also members of the Administrative Board. We want to extend a big thank you to Gary Henderson for taking over the usher duties these past few weeks. Ushers play an important role in the ministry and life of the church as they welcome and greet people who come to worship at St. Luke United Methodist Church and we are so grateful for their service.

There are many of you that do so much for the church each week, we want to thank you as well.



Holy Communion
Sunday, January 5, 2025

Communion will be served during our in-person worship service. We will invite all who are able to come to the altar to receive communion. As usual during our online worship service we will invite you to participate in communion by having your own elements ready.



The church office has a new email address, please update your contact info for Susan:

office@stlukeumchaltomcity.org



PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS THIS WEEK...

Continued Prayer Concerns: Jeanne Anne Pharis; French Congregation & the people of the Congo; Pat Farmer; Jack & Jerrie Lucko; Betty Holshouser; Scott Paris; Barbara Jones; Charles & Pat Hooper; Byron Lechler, Melissa Lechler & her son, Lucas; Toni Hood's granddaughter-in-law, Christin; Buddy & DeeDee Hill's grandson, Milo; Darren Isbell; Ed Baker; Bonnie Richards; Sandra Mason; Mel & Susan Bishara's family in Nazareth and their nephew, Jimmy; Bob Watkins & family; Rory Yocum; David Stapp; Joe Crawford; George & Karen Angle's daughter, Sarah & daughter-in-law, Kristine; Roy & Joan Hudson's son, Richard; Barbara Kimbrough; Ann Kiker; Barbara Provenzano; sister, Lynn; Kelly Roberts; Lydia Acosta & her husband; Jean P. Isbell; Roy Hudson; Peggy Fallin; Ruby Lane's nephew, Dan Reynolds; Mary Stewart; Linda Schmidt; Mel & Susan's friend, Lisa Hart; Betty Turnage; Linda Savell; Burt Moore; George & Libby Conant's daughter, Cheryl with the loss of her husband, Bob; Art & Cathy Gordon; family of Alice Cook; Ron Phippen & family with the loss of Larea

This Week's Concerns: Toni Hood; Bill Whisenant; Anita McCullar; Doris Crocker; Gary & Jackie Wommack; Kristine & Jerrad Angle in the loss of her father; those affected by Hurricane Helene & Milton; the people of the Nazareth, Israel, Gaza, Lebanon & Syria; those affected by flooding; wildfires; isolation & loneliness; gun violence each day in our country; the people of Ukraine & the world; prayers for our nation

Our Military: Ryan Kelly Hampton; Kyle Johnson; Krystal Calvert; Evan Hill; Matt Miller; Nathaniel Hill; Alex Sullivan-Green; Harrison Lenox; Junior Chowe



Please continue your financial support of St. Luke United Methodist Church. There are several ways to contribute that include mailing your offering to the church office or giving online through our website, stlukeumchaltomcity.org.

You may also use your banking online payment services to make your contributions every month.

Thank you for your continued support of St. Luke United Methodist Church!

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

EMMANUEL CLASS:

We had a wonderful day on Sunday celebrating Ruby Lane's 99th birthday. Her birthday is December 23 and we hope she has a wonderful birthday while she celebrates Christmas with her family. Her daughter, Barbie was with us as well and a beautiful cake was served.. Members from other classes came in to wish Ruby a Happy Birthday and even the youngest members came in to sing songs for Ruby. The class gives Barbara Blair a big thank you for getting all of this together. It was a great day honoring Ruby! Also, we wish to thank Mark, the choir and orchestra for a job well done!

Mary Ross

UPPER ROOM CLASS:

Greetings to all. The Upper Room Class had an attendance of twelve. We rejoiced for that. Our joys were for the successful class Christmas Party. Everyone commented on what a good time they had. We celebrate with Ruby on her 99th birthday. Earline is looking forward to visits from her son and daughter this week. The Van Schuyver's have a new little active puppy who keeps them hopping, and they celebrated Christmas with their neighbors having a potluck meal. What a nice way to share the joy of Christmas. One of our most joyous events was at the funeral of Larea Phippen. A butterfly landed on the casket flowers during the graveside service. It stayed long enough for all to see. We took it as a sign that everything was okay and that Larea was renewed and with our Lord. Virgil has crafted a metal work depicting the event as a gift to Ronnie, her husband. Gifts have been delivered to Cheney Hills Elementary to help our adopted family have Christmas. Thank you Dr. Martha and Debbie for seeing this was done. Prayer Concerns: Toni Hood is in ICU; Bill Whisenant; Anita McCullar; Doris Crocker; Sherry; Ronnie and his family; Riley Phippen and his wife, Deborah; Kyle and Thelma Kromer, Everett, and Rose Mascari. We thank Cindy for the delicious dessert and Earline for the beautiful story on the importance of prayer at just the right moment. Her devotion was taken from *Invitation to Prayer* based on 1 Peter 4:7. Peter tells us to always be alert to conditions that need our prayers. Finally, we would like to thank the choir for the beautiful performance of "The Gift." It was my first opportunity to be in the congregation rather than being a member of the soprano section. The sound was absolutely beautiful and sent me heavenward. We graciously thank you for this beautiful gift to us and blessing the count down of the days to Christmas.

Resale Shop: \$338

Devotion/Refreshment: Ann and Virgil

Prayer Group: January 8 • 9:30 a.m. • Fellowship Hall

Lesson: John 18:25

Gloria Lechler

Youth News:



This Sunday we shared with the youth on the importance of remembering that Christ is the reason for the season. Our Bible verse is found in the Book of Isaiah 9:2. I am so glad and happy when I walk around and see decorations everywhere in the streets. The beautiful lights, the joy of gifts, everybody is happy, it is great. But in the mist of that, let us not forget the center of this joy is Christ. Christ was born to take away crisis. Let us remember the poor in this season, the needy, the homeless, the orphans and the widows. Not only for this season but the whole year. Amen.

Stanislas Ndecky



We wish to extend congratulations to Pastor Abel and Esther Ditu who celebrated 41 years of marriage on December 11.

We wish you both another 41 years!

We also want to congratulate their daughter, Marthe who received her Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and she is also expecting a baby girl at the end of the month!



The next *E-Messenger* Newsletter will be published **January 8** and all submissions need to be in the church office by **January 6**. Thank you!



Wednesday Morning Prayer Group & Bible Study

January 8, 2025

Prayer Group † 9:30 a.m. • Bible Study † 10:00 a.m.

Book of Exodus • Fellowship Hall

We invite you to join us.





St. Luke United Methodist Church
 3200 Denton Highway
 Haltom City, TX 76117
Open hearts, open minds, open doors

The *E-Messenger* newsletter is published bi-weekly online. Deadline for submission of articles is 9:00 a.m. Monday. The editor reserves the right to edit for content and space.

Senior Pastor: Rev. Mel Bishara
 Phone: 817/838-6834
 Website: stlukeumchaltomcity.org

Editor: Susan Briles
 Fax: 817/838-7631
 E-mail: office@st-luke-umc.com

Central Texas Conference website & phone: www.ctcumc.org • 817/877-5222

Sunday Services: Sunday School • 9:15 a.m.
 In-person and Online Worship • 10:30 a.m.
 Expansion Hispanic Church Service • 1:30 p.m.
 French Worship Service • 2:00 p.m.

Office Hours: Monday thru Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
 Friday 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

NEWSLETTER ONLINE AT:
www.stlukeumchaltomcity.org



Sunday, December 22, 2024

4th Sunday of Advent

9:15 a.m. Sunday School
 10:30 a.m. Morning Worship Service
 1:30 p.m. Expansion Church
 2:00 p.m. French Worship Service

Monday, December 23, 2024

No Activities

Tuesday, December 24, 2023

6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Wednesday, December 25, 2024

No Wednesday Activities in observance of Christmas Day

Thursday, December 26, 2024

Church Office Closed—Christmas Holiday
 9:00 a.m. UMM Breakfast—Bluebonnet Café

Friday, December 27, 2024

10:00 a.m. Second Chance Resale Shop

Saturday, December 28, 2024

10:00 a.m. Second Chance Resale Shop

Sunday, December 29, 2024

1st Sunday after Christmas

9:15 a.m. Sunday School
 10:30 a.m. Morning Worship Service
 1:30 p.m. Expansion Church
 2:00 p.m. French Worship Service

Monday, December 30, 2024

No Activities

Tuesday, December 31, 2024

Church Office Closed—New Year's Eve

Wednesday, January 1, 2025

No Wednesday Activities in observance of New Year's Day



*Join us for worship every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. for
 In-Person Worship or Online Worship
 via our Facebook page & You Tube:
 SLUMC—Haltom City*

Sunday, December 22, 2024 • 10:30 a.m.

4th Sunday of Advent

Sunday School • 9:15 a.m.

Weekly Attendance • December 4, 2024

Prayer Group—7

Bible Study—12

Youth Activities—4

French Congregation Bible Study—8

UMM Breakfast • December 5—5

Sunday, December 8, 2024

Sunday School—61

In-Person Worship—66

Online Worship—291

French Congregation Sunday School—8

French Worship Service—36

Weekly Attendance • December 11, 2024

Prayer Group—7

Advent Bible Study—17

Youth Activities—5

French Congregation Bible Study—8

UMM Breakfast • December 12—4

Sunday, December 15, 2024

Sunday School—53

In-Person Worship—106

Online Worship—590

French Congregation Sunday School—8

French Worship Service—29