

ST. LUKE'S NEWSLETTER

Demonstrating God's Love to the Community and to the World

What's Cooking at the Food Pantry

So much has happened at the new St. Luke's Somers Food Pantry. Read about recent changes in management, how the Pantry has adapted during the Pandemic, and more. Pg. 5-7

Staying Positive in the Pandemic

We asked members of the congregation to tell us what positive moments they have experienced during this last year in spite of the Pandemic. See what they said on Pg. 8-9

A Message From Father Mike

Reflection and looking ahead. Read Father Mike's message in "The Pastor's Corner" on Pg. 13-14

And More.....



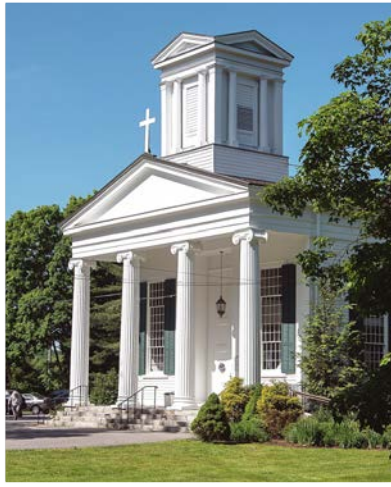
St. Luke's Parish, Summer 2019

Welcome to the latest issue of the St. Luke's Newsletter!

2020 was a trying year for many, including the church, but despite it all we were determined to move forward. Early on in the shut down we introduced virtual services to keep everyone connected, and in early July we happily re-opened with limited in-person services.

The Thrift Shop thrived despite its temporary closure, and the Food Pantry reorganized and quickly adapted to accommodate patrons with newly imposed protocols in place. Learn more inside the issue.

Also in this issue are several new sections. "Who's New in the Pews", "Staying Positive in the Pandemic", and "The Pastor's Corner" are a few. We wanted to get to know some of our newest parishioners, gain insight into how members of the congregation stayed positive during the pandemic, and hear from our Vestry members as well. We hope you enjoy the issue.



Ongoing Ministries at Saint Luke's

Some of the many ongoing ministries at St. Luke's:

- Altar Guild
- Counters
- Eucharistic Ministers
- Plant Sale
- Thrift Shop
- Food Pantry
- Morning Prayer Services
- Discovery Hour
- Sunday school
- Music

Full ministry reports including the Wardens' and Treasurer's reports are available in the Annual report on our website

www.slcsomers.com

Who's New in the Pews

By Duanne and John Simon

We asked a few of our newest parishioners a series of questions to get to know them better and share their stories with you. Read on to learn more.

Meet Fran and Doug Hager

While Fran and Doug have a Methodist background, when their church closed they decided to look for a house of worship that was both convenient and close to home and family. When they found St. Luke's website, they felt it embodied all the attributes they were looking for in a church, and started attending services when St. Luke's reopened in July.

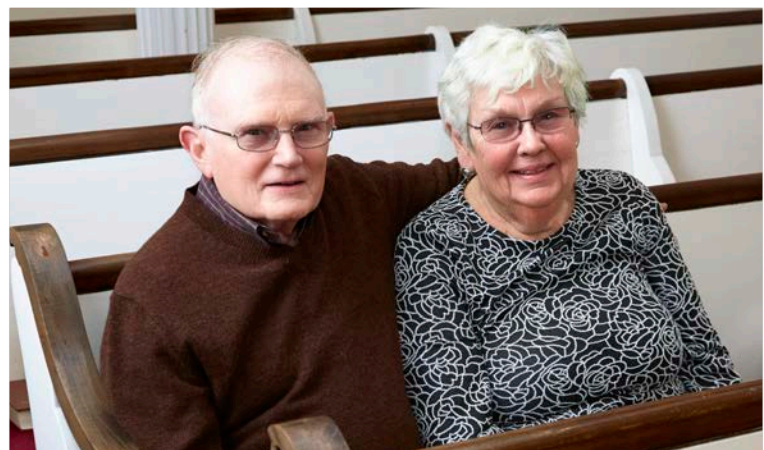
From the very first day, they were taken by the genuine kindness, friendliness, and welcoming nature of the parishioners at St. Luke's.

Fran and Doug find Father Mike's sermons extremely interesting and practical, and appreciate that he takes great care to include ideas, thoughts, and lessons that can easily be applied to everyday life.

Going forward, they would like to be involved in the church and assist in St. Luke's ministries, particularly the Food Pantry and the Thrift Shop.

Their outlook on life is strengthened by the belief that God smiles at the mistakes we all make each and every day.

Fran and Doug love to tend to their garden in Heritage Hills, so, if they were to be a plant, it would be any vegetable, such as lettuce or carrots - fun to plant, grow, and eat!





Services, Events and Ongoing Outreach

Holy Week

- Palm Sunday, March 28
- Maundy Thursday, April 1
- Good Friday, April 2
- Holy Saturday, April 3
- Easter Sunday, April 4

Outreach

- Food Pantry
- Drive for Mothers & Babies

Events

- Virtual Plant Sale
- Blessing of the Animals
- Fall BBQ

Learn more about outreach ministries on our website. Details on services and events will be emailed.



Who's New in the Pews

By Duanne and John Simon

Meet Stephanie Keegan

Stephanie's family moved to Somers when they were disenchanted with their experiences in the Catholic Church. When her oldest son died in January of 2016, the tragedy hastened her search for a place of worship where she would be able to settle her faith. Not knowing how to begin looking for a new church, Stephanie came upon a fortuitous article in a local paper about the new Pastor, Father Mike. After a chat with Father Mike, it was clear to Stephanie that St. Luke's was the church that could satisfy her needs and she began attending services soon after Father Mike's arrival.



St. Luke's has become more than a place of prayer and reflection for Stephanie. It's become home, and the welcoming nature of the Parish has not only brought her comfort and joy, but a feeling of family.

Stephanie has great admiration for Father Mike, and feels his wisdom and kindness has brought her a tremendous sense of peace and grounding. She often feels as if Father Mike's sermons were prepared specifically for her, and she has learned more about faith and purpose at St. Luke's than any church she's attended before.

While Stephanie's life has been incredibly busy, she strives to participate in any Adult Education opportunities, and makes herself available to assist the church as often as possible. She strongly believes that God finds great joy in the pure innocence of children, and the commitment to kindness of adults.

Stephanie likens herself to climbing hydrangeas; slow to grow, but thriving and flowering in spots where nothing else will. When it might look as if they have nothing left to give, they manage to blossom again. Just as, at 61, Stephanie finds herself doing some of her most rewarding work, and like hydrangea, growing stronger roots to give her the strength to bloom anew over and over again.

Who's New in the Pews

By Duanne and John Simon

Meet Vincent Tuccillo and Dale Schweizer

Vincent and Dale are returning parishioners to St. Luke's, having previously attended in 2013. Former Roman Catholics, they were both confirmed into the Episcopal Church five years ago at a memorable service at St. John the Divine in Manhattan.

They have been together for 20 years and have lived in Somers for 17 years. Both of their adult children live locally and are regulars at Sunday dinner, along with their spouse/significant other. Other family members include 2 Hungarian Vizslas, 10 chickens and 2 love birds!



Dale's career in car sales ended due to the Covid crisis, but this turned into an unexpected blessing as his new gardening/light landscaping business is flourishing. Vincent is in Information Technology and Human Resources and has led global system implementations for Goldman Sachs, Starwood Hotels and Pitney Bowes. Cruises are their vacation of choice, including a Mediterranean getaway just months before the lockdown. They eagerly await the day they can enjoy sailing again.



New to St. Luke's?

If you are new to St. Luke's and want to be featured in this section of an upcoming newsletter, or just want to get involved, talk to one of our Vestry or Communication Committee Members. We would love to include you!

Both Vincent and Dale love the intimacy and the genuineness found at St. Luke's. Familiar with Father Mike from his time at St. Mark's, they knew he would be a remarkable priest and rector - and that it was just a matter of time before they followed him for worship.

They find his sermons relatable, meaningful and understandable. One impactful lesson focused on how the powers of evil are all around us and break down our faith as we are subjected to the voices of hate. Father Mike reminded us to resist evil and hate and follow love and inclusiveness.

In six years at St. Mark's, Vincent and Dale participated in ushering, lectoring, food delivery and special events. Vincent served on the Vestry for five years as a member and also as Clerk of Vestry, produced the website and served on the Finance Committee.

Vincent and Dale believe God smiles at them when they "give back" or "pay it forward" with their God-given abilities, kindness, respect and help to others. God smiles when we act in ways that answers the "What would Jesus do" question.

What's Cooking at the Food Pantry

By Lynda Magrath

New Management

The Food Pantry management changed in early August, due to an upsurge in the number of weekly patrons and an increase in donated goods and funds. We reacted to the pandemic by creating the “drive-thru” format. As many volunteers asked to be excused due to personal health concerns, St. Luke’s asked for new volunteers from the parish and the community, and for Vestry leadership.

An advisory Committee was formed to create an updated Pantry reflecting current needs. While extensive effort was spent, the desired outcome was not achieved. As a result, the Vestry decided to accept the former director’s resignation and appoint an interim chair and vice chair for the remainder of 2020.



Donations and Patronage

Collection drives were held by Heritage Hills, The Somers PTAs, Girl Scout Troop 1413, Somers High School Class of 2020, and citizens of the community.



Regular donations were delivered by Somers Firehouse. Food was collected in bins at DeCicco’s, and generous checks were given by the Somers Lions’ Club, The Somers Rotary, and many individuals.

Thanksgiving collection and distribution was organized by Somers school teachers, social workers, PTAs, and volunteers. Donations came from local organizations, restaurants, and civic groups.

Drive-thru pantry patronage ranged from 50 cars in March - May to approximately 35 cars during the Thanksgiving and Christmas season.



Friday Drive-Thru Distribution

The current format began in late March, with volunteers placing pre-packed bags of non-perishables and fresh food directly in patrons' car trunks. On several Fridays, Il Forno donated 30 pizzas. In summer, we offered options including flour, coffee, cleaning supplies, masks and hand sanitizer, and diapers. An added First-Saturday-of-the-Month Drive-Thru was held in October through December. The last Drive-Thru, on December 18th, provided patrons with a double supply of staples and produce, bonus holiday groceries and goodies, and gift cards to local stores and CVS.

Volunteers

17 individuals including Father Mike are on the email volunteer list. 9 are St. Luke's parishioners, and 7 are from the local community. On Thursdays the "Super Sorters" and "Power Packers" store recent donations and prepare the non-perishable bags for Friday. On Fridays, additional volunteers pack produce bags, set up and take down the tables and tent, and place all grocery items in patrons' cars



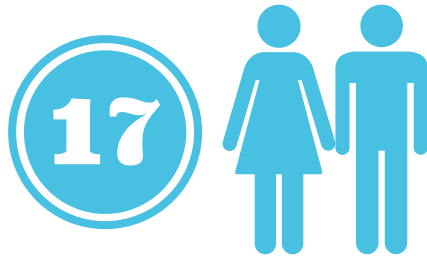
Westchester Planning Office Grant

The execution and implementation of the \$25,000 grant, to refurbish, outfit, and restock the Food Pantry took priority in the final months of the year. While the chair and vice chair, Lynda Magrath and Karen Kellogg took the lead in planning, organizing, and purchasing needed items, many thanks go to Joe Ciavardini and John Currie for coordinating with Apap Painting, handling the purchase of appliances, shelving, cabinets, and a storage shed. Helpful assistance was provided by Marion Comins, Duanne Simon, Janet Repman, and of course Father Mike.

~ Lynda Magrath, Food Pantry Chair

Pantry Recap by the Numbers

Volunteers



*9 St. Luke's Parishioners
7 Community Volunteers*

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Friday Distribution



*30 Pizzas donated by Il Forno
several weeks*

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Finding Positives in The Pandemic

By Sue Willis

During this protracted and pesky pandemic, many of us have understandably felt discouraged, lonely, and despondent. Others among us have battled physical illness and incurred economic challenges brought on by a pernicious and elusive virus. However, amid moments of frustration and sadness, even anger and desolation, we might paradoxically experience God's grace. Such light in the darkness is welcome refreshment at a time like this. St. Benedict advises "Listen with the ear of your heart." If we do this, we may glean something positive during this pandemic. Personally, I found the early weeks of the pandemic upsetting and disquieting, but I gradually adapted to the strictures and protocols and realized I could endure despite dramatic changes. Of course, I want to revert to the happier and freer days of 2019, but in the meantime I have learned a lockdown lesson: I have resilience.



Here are some of our fellow parishioners' recollections of beautiful moments

A testimony to God's fidelity and presence in the throes of our suffering. May their hope-filled statements fortify your soul and provide an antidote to the months' long anguish.

Getting Our Lives Back

"I work for the Bedford seniors, who have met at our Community Center for almost a year. They are lonely, isolated, and scared. I accompany 12 of them to get their shots. I am the last to get my shot, and I begin to cry. The nurse says, *Oh, I am sorry that I hurt you.* I look toward the waiting room at my smiling seniors and say, *I'm not hurt. I am crying because you are giving us back our lives.*"

~ Caren Wagner-Roth

A New Discovery

"I was able to join our church Discovery Hour via Zoom and have met wonderful people, while growing in faith through reading and discussions. I'm grateful for this opportunity."

~ Patti Pojer



"I have learned a lockdown lesson: I have resilience."

A Baptism

“My granddaughter, Jillian Faith, was baptized by Fr. Mike on August 14, 2020.”

~ Barbara White

A New Life

“I can share something positive - the birth of my son Ashton in July! He’s been a shining light in an otherwise negative year.”

~ Corinne Hoffman

Remaining Open

“The positive thing for me was that St. Luke’s kept the doors open even though it was in a remote way.”

~ Pat Schilpp

Continued Service

“I see that our Thrift Shop and Food Pantry are still operating at full capacity, with volunteers appearing with happy faces to serve the community. I want to include what a wonderful thing Doug Abdelnour did every Sunday from July through October running video out to a tent so more people could worship (an idea generated by Regina Davenport.) I can’t leave out the ever present greeters, LEM’s, readers, and counters that are here every Sunday. What a great group of people we have even in difficult times.”

~ Fr. Mike

Finding Positives in The Pandemic



Abundant Gratitude

“Not a day passes where I do not feel gratitude for having a job that allows me to work from home, giving me the opportunity to spend more time with my 2-year-old son Zachary and husband Ryan. I am grateful for the feeling of new life growing inside me - there is nothing more miraculous than the flutter of a growing baby inside your womb. I am grateful for a church that allows us to feel connected through its inspiring congregation, and through email and YouTube communications. I am grateful for a church that provides ample opportunities to give back to the community. I am grateful for the beautiful music in the services- music that stops Zach in his tracks and mesmerizes him. I am grateful for the glimmer of hope that we are reaching the other side of this pandemic, and the promise of a better tomorrow. And finally, I am grateful for unwavering faith in an unwavering God.”

~ Amanda Loveless

Meet The Vestry

"What do you bring to St. Luke's?
And what does St. Luke's offer you?"

The Vestry is responsible for the business affairs of the church and represents the congregation in decision making. Vestry members are elected at the Annual Parish Meeting, serve staggered three year terms, and meet once a month on either Tuesday or Wednesday evenings.

We asked each member to tell us about themselves, by asking them what they feel they bring to St. Luke's, and what St. Luke's offers them. Here's what they had to say.

Karen Kellogg, Senior Warden



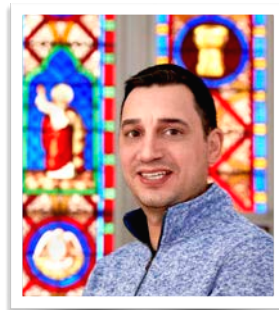
I like to think that I bring to St. Luke's an earnest appreciation for the genuine spirit of love that exists here, and I have been humbled to serve in a variety of leadership roles in more than 20 years as a parishioner. Over those years my service has included membership on the Vestry twice, serving at the Food Pantry, Chairing the Search Committee, and Directing an active Sunday school Program years ago. I am honored to have been elected to currently serve as Sr. Warden. Tapping into my experiences in Corporate Human Resource Management and then Public Education as teacher and school/district administrator has helped to ground me as a servant leader.

St. Luke's has become more than a spiritual home for my family and me. It is a place of warmth and comfort in fellowship of others whom we consider to be dear friends. We laugh and cry together and celebrate God's love in meaningful ways. I am truly blessed to call St. Luke's our spiritual home.

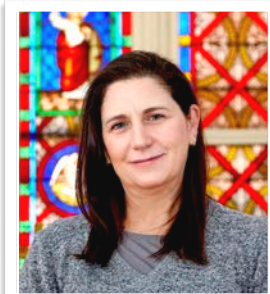
Joe Ciavardini, Junior Warden

I would say the most important thing I bring to St. Luke's is my desire to be involved: from Vestry, Jr. Warden, to just building relationships. St. Luke's is a family to me and one that I want to be very active in. I bring my family, in hopes that we can provide a spark to the congregation with the energy of the kids, with fresh ideas and a willingness to be more involved. I bring a thirst for faith.

You all know my story as a recovering addict, and without St. Luke's I'm not sure where my path would have led. My desire to walk down a path with Jesus and learn more has inspired me in many ways. St. Luke's has offered me more than I can offer in return. I came with a need to rebuild my faith, and I have that opportunity daily. It has given me a way to give back, not just to our congregation, but to those around me. It has opened my eyes in many ways: to be more present, more aware, and to be a blessing to others. It has given me new relationships to foster and grow. I especially enjoy my relationship with Father Mike, but I enjoy all my relationships at St. Luke's. The church offers my family a place for quality time every week: to build our faith, keep us on a straight path, and to teach our kids and show them what it feels like to love God. It has been an amazing addition to our family life.



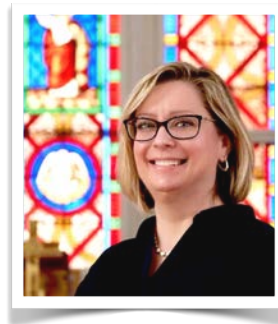
Regina Davenport, Class of 2022



While I believe I bring to St. Luke's Somers my experience with volunteer non-profit work and a 25 year career in the legal profession, I hope and pray to bring an attitude of positive thinking and creativity about what we can accomplish in our community and beyond as an enthusiastic and committed faith based group. Fundraising through activities like the Plant Sale and forward thinking about the future of St. Luke's as a member of the Vestry is a great joy for me. St. Luke's brings to me a beautiful place for worship and spiritual growth, and opportunity for outreach and fellowship with lovely people.

Michelle Kessel, Class of 2022

I bring to St. Luke's over 30 years of worship, having joined as a parishioner with my parents as a teenager. My husband Ken and I were married here. My son James was baptized and confirmed at St. Luke's, and he has served an acolyte/crucifer for several years, while I serve as a greeter. St. Luke's is a constant in my often hectic life. I look forward to attending weekly worship services and enjoy the wonderful fellowship that we have.



Angela Garr, Class of 2023



I bring to St. Luke's a desire to deepen my worship, connect spiritually with others, and find ways to serve and give back to the community. Professionally, I bring years of marketing and design experience, which I use to create print and digital media projects for the church. I also help manage the social media accounts for both the church and the Food Pantry.

I was honored when asked to be part of the Vestry and am excited to be a part of St. Luke's and all of the wonderful things we are accomplishing. St. Luke's offers me all that I am seeking in the church and more, and for that I am truly grateful.

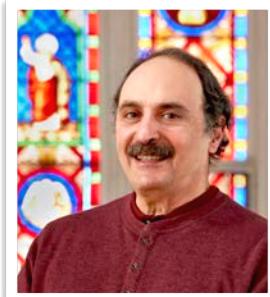
Lynda Magrath, Class of 2023

I bring to St. Luke's 45 years of professional and volunteer experience with the Episcopal Church, faith-based non-profit organizations, and higher education. Along with relevant skills acquired along the way, I have plenty of time to contribute since retiring in 2019. As I've always been involved in community outreach, I'm particularly pleased to serve in the leadership of the St. Luke's Food Pantry.

When I moved to Heritage Hills in 2018 it was my hope to find a welcoming Episcopal Church of committed parishioners and clergy, offering meaningful opportunities for worship, fellowship, and service. I am thankful to have found it at St. Luke's.



Doug Abdelnour, Class of 2024



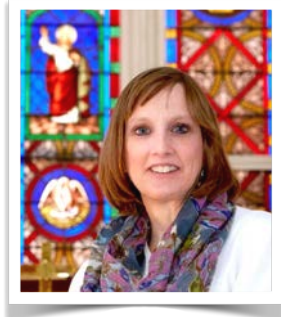
I've been a parishioner at St. Luke's for over 25 years. As a "renewed" member of the Vestry, I hope to bring some experience and perspective to the group. Throughout my years here I've enjoyed serving: as a Vestry member for several terms, as part of the 175th Anniversary Committee, as a greeter, reader, and in other capacities as they might arise. I headed the annual Mothers' Day Breakfast when we had them for several years running, joining the other men of the parish in cooking and serving; I accompanied the St. Luke's kids on skiing and canoeing trips.

I encouraged my sons to attend church and to be confirmed. My dad was a regular in our Port Chester parish, and I've tried to follow his example. I feel it's important to just show up, help out, and generally keep an eye on things, especially when the parish is dealing with challenges, including Covid. I've been glad to help with tech projects, organizing the video set-up for the Sunday services in the summer tent, and the wi-fi for the Messiah Concert in 2020. I've contributed my skills as a professional photographer and graphic designer to produce banners, photos, and more materials than I can remember. St. Luke's offers me the opportunity to experience peace of mind, serenity with God, and fellowship with some really fine people, not to mention Fr. Mike, our wonderful priest-in-charge.

Mary Churchill, Class of 2024

I bring to St. Luke's a desire to grow in my faith by helping others. Since I was received into the Episcopal Church in 2017, I have felt that I found where I belong. Now the task is to develop more fully into the person God is calling me to be. I believe I am being called to the diaconate and would welcome the opportunity to serve God by serving others.

St. Luke's offers me community, love, and support. I think when we work together for a common goal, wonderful things can happen. I am honored to be a part of the Vestry.



Herman Clarke, Class of 2024

As a Vestry member of St. Luke's I think I can provide some knowledgeable inputs to the good functioning and stability of the church and its various ministries. St. Luke's provides me with spiritual guidance, knowledge, and contentment.

The Pastor's Corner A Message From Fr. Mike

By the Rev'd Michael T. Watson

It is still hard to believe that there are only three Episcopal parishes out of ten in our Sawmill Clericus (in all of Northeastern Westchester County) that are having live worship with Communion every Sunday.

We were the first to start live-streaming when the pandemic began, and the first to open live on July 5, 2020, and the first to offer an outdoor Sunday service. One other parish is doing live Morning Prayer (limited to 9 people) and others are doing only live-streamed without their congregation present together. The reason that we have been able to do what we do is the dedication and effort of so many of you who help in setup, altar preparation, communications and electronics, ushering, reading, and welcoming others.

The Eucharist is central to our worship experience and important to our community time together. Based upon the fact that we have a large group assembling at both of our services (8:30 and 10:00 on Sundays), it appears that most of you believe that, too. We always have room for more who would like to serve in one capacity or another, so please let me know if you would be interested in doing that.

This newsletter is the first one that we have done in over a year, so our Communications Committee wanted it to be thorough and informative for all of you. In this issue of the Newsletter, you can see that, despite the pandemic, there are many who are hard at work, keeping the parish functioning well, welcoming newcomers, reaching out to the community of Somers and beyond, and strengthening our servant leadership. I wish I could give you an exact date that we will all be able to safely worship together without social distancing, and being able to share a sip of wine together.

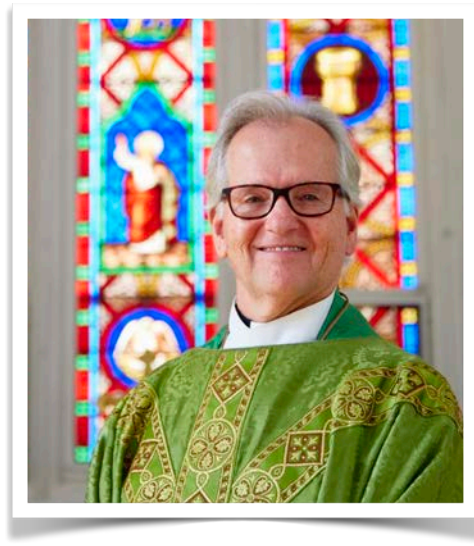
What I can tell you, however, is that I will do my best to continue to serve all of you pastorally, spiritually, and in worship, to the best of my ability, no matter how many or few of you are present.



*“If I can stop one heart from breaking; If I
can ease one life the aching, Or cool one
pain, Or help one fainting Robin, Unto his
nest again, I shall not live in vain.”*

- Emily Dickinson

Please know that I invite you to reach out to me in your time of need. Our parish phone and email system are at your service, and even when the office is closed, Janet receives and listens to the recordings of the voice mail messages regularly.

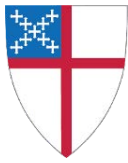


No matter whether you have been able to participate in live worship, I want to be available in the times when you just need someone to talk to. I do not want anyone to feel forgotten, including myself!! So if we have not talked in a while, give me a call, 'cause I would love to hear your voice again.

When we can worship together, with full communion and without restrictions, it will indeed be a joyous occasion. Until then, you can continue to worship either on Facebook Live, or by the recorded service, which you can view on Youtube, with the link that Janet sends each week via parish email. I ask your prayers for all in our community who have been ill; for all who still feel unable to be present in face-to-face worship; and for all who have lost loved ones in these difficult times. Please also pray for a return to what seems to have been a “long-lost normalcy.” Pray also for our Outreach Ministries (Food Pantry, Thrift Shop, and twelve-step recovery groups, who have begun to return to be with us as of March 1).

We are deeply grateful for those who are continuing to give and to pledge, both in time and in treasure. So let's roll up our sleeves, get a vaccination, put on a mask, disinfect our hands and our hearts, dive in, stay working and build the beloved community we all want to be, for all who enter our doors. Remember the words of Emily Dickinson: “If I can stop one heart from breaking; If I can ease one life the aching, Or cool one pain, Or help one fainting Robin, Unto his nest again, I shall not live in vain.” God bless you all.....go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord. Thanks be to God!!!

~ Father Mike+



ST. LUKE'S NEWSLETTER



The St. Luke's Newsletter is one of the publications produced by the Communications Committee. Our charge is to implement St. Luke's Mission by sharing news of our worship and ministries to the parish and to the larger community.

Current Members

Doug Abdelnour, Photography, Printing

Angela Garr, Print & Web Design, Social Media

Ann Hanson, Contributor

Lynda Magrath, Contributor

Janet Repman, Parish Office Liaison

Duanne Simon, Contributor, Photography

John Simon, Guest Contributor

Sue Willis, Editor, Contributor

Fr. Mike Watson, *ex officio*

We thank everyone who submitted articles and photos to this issue, and invite parishioners to share suggestions and material for future issues. Please speak to one of the Communications Committee members, or contact the Parish Office.

St. Luke's Church

The Rt. Rev'd Andrew M.L. Dietsche, Bishop of NY

The Rt. Rev'd Allen K. Shin, Bishop Suffragan

The Rt. Rev'd Mary Glasspool, Assistant Bishop

The Rev'd Michael Watson, Priest-in-charge

Joyce Ottinger, Director of Music

Lester Ottinger, Organist

Janet Repman, Parish Administrator

Debra Ramnarace, Bookkeeper

Santos Cardona, Sexton

St. Luke's Vestry

Karen Kellogg, Senior Warden

Joe Ciavardini, Junior Warden

Eric Rieder, Treasurer

Class of 2022

Regina Davenport, Michelle Kessel

Class of 2023

Angela Garr, Lynda Magrath

Class of 2024

Doug Abdelnour, Mary Churchill,

Herman Clarke

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

331 Route NY-100 Somers, NY 10589

Tel: 914-277-3122/email: fathermike@slcsomers.org