



the CHALLENGE



Winter Quarterly Edition!

Feb - May - Aug - Nov

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 A Word from Bill
- 4 Pastoral Search Process
- 4 Adult Education
- 5 What's Been Happening
- 6 Grounds Restoration: Bringing It Home
- 8 Youth and Families
- 9 News and Events
- 9 Library Corner

NATIVE PLANT SPOTLIGHT

Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*) is a very tall (6 feet), striking and vigorous species that grows in moist soils and full sun. It is the sole host plant for the Joe Pye Weed Borer Moth (right). This small insect wins no beauty contests but is oh so tasty!

By Phyllis Messenger, Clerk of Session

As we move from the dark and cold of winter into the promise of spring, we are also in a time of transition at St. Luke. We have said good-bye to our senior pastor, Brennan Blue, and have hired a bridge pastor, Bill Chadwick, to help with preaching, pastoral care, and moderating session, as we search for a transitional pastor. That individual, in turn, will guide us as we prepare to call a new senior pastor and head of staff.

While this could feel a little overwhelming, I am full of hope and optimism for our future. We have an amazing staff! Our strong and compassionate associate pastor, Nora Elliott, has stepped up in so many ways to fill our hearts and minds with hope. Our beloved and talented minister of music, David Lohman, moves us with the beauty of song. Our many lay leaders continue to do their work faithfully, as well as taking on added responsibilities. And our office staff, Anne Deuring and Darla Monson, are the glue that holds it all together.

There are so many things to look forward to in the next few weeks. In February, we will receive the 2022 Annual Report and the 2023 budget, and Nora will introduce us to results of our Vital Church Assessment. During Lent, our adult ed series will explore the blessings of gratitude and grace that thrive in sacred communities. There will be youth activities, a new member class, receiving of confirmands, and so much more.

So the life of our St. Luke family continues. We will lean in to our ethic of mutual care and seeking to live well together, with each other and with the wider community. We will work for justice for the earth and for communities in need. I am looking forward to this time together as we continue to affirm who we are, while also exploring our future together.



A Word from Bill Chadwick

Dear Friends:

I hope this finds you well and not only surviving winter, but thriving. Of course, some of you aren't in "winter"...

"How's it going?" is on people's minds. Of course, we continue to mourn and adjust to the departure of Brennan. And we are also very sorry to say good-bye to long-time custodian, Randy Lofgren.

Given those two realities, I believe things are going well within our St. Luke community. Let me say once more that I am very grateful for this opportunity to be in ministry with you again for a brief time. Nora, Anne and David are doing a fantastic job of guiding me through the current practices and activities of the congregation. You are so blessed to have them, as you know.

One of my favorite aspects of parish ministry is pastoral care. Please don't hesitate to contact me (952-738-1783) with any pastoral concerns, for yourself or others.

Finally, we are saddened, of course, to say farewell for now to two long-time St. Luke saints, Curt Hill and Dick Oberg. Thank God for resurrection promises!





* * *

I've been invited to share with you a brief outline of our **worship planning process**. Our goal is for worship to give glory to God, speak prophetic truths into our lives, remind us of the promises of God, be welcoming to newcomers, and offer both comfort and challenge for each of us gathered.

The planning is a collaborative effort. "Two heads are better than one," and three heads are better than two. Our Associate Pastor, Nora Elliott, and Minister of Music, David Lohman, and I meet each Monday to put the finishing touches on the upcoming Sunday's order of service, and to look ahead a few weeks to service themes, possible music, etc. We know weeks ahead who will be preaching, but on Monday we decide who is going to lead the non-sermon portions of the next service (children's time, benediction, etc.) Know that we are always open to your suggestions for worship—possible sermon themes, hymns or anthems, poetry, prayers and so forth.

We are so grateful to be able to livestream and record worship for those unable to be present. A huge thanks to all of you who make that happen. At the same time, let me encourage those who are able, to please come in person. We miss you when you are not here! (No guilt trip, just encouragement for those who are able.)

* * *

As always, please let me know if there are things I am missing or can improve upon. I am here to serve.

Faithfully,
Bill

Pastoral Search Process

Update on Pastoral Search

By Phyllis Messenger, Clerk of Session, and Peg Keenan, Chair of Human Resource Committee

If you missed the posts in "News from St. Luke," here is a recap of our current and upcoming activities moving us toward calling our next Senior Pastor.

For the next several months, Bill Chadwick is serving as our Bridge Pastor until we hire a Transitional Pastor. Bill collaborates with Associate Pastor Nora Elliott and Director of Music David Lohman to provide our worship experiences on Sundays. Bill also provides pastoral care, moderates the Session, and is available to our various member groups.

Our Transitional Pastor Search Team is already at work, with the guidance of Anne Fisher, a member of the Presbytery's Pastoral Position Team. The Transitional Pastor request is now being sent throughout our Presbytery. In addition, Nora is helping us post this position with the United Church of Christ and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, which have formal relationships with the Presbyterian Church.

Once approved by Session, the Transitional Pastor will lead our congregation in preparing for the Senior Pastor search. A big part of this process is assisting us in a Mission Study that will look at our individual church data, information on what makes our church unique, our strengths, and our challenges. This Mission Study will be used by St. Luke members on our Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC) to search for our next Senior Pastor. Once the PNC is convened, a good Mission Study will make their job easier.

If you have questions about this process, please feel free to contact anyone on the Transitional Pastor Search Team: Nancy Anderson, Judy Gregg, Christina Gregory, Peg Keenan, and Mark Taintor.

Adult Education

It's a new year and with it comes a renewed plan for Adult Ed from our Adult Ed Focus Group (AEFG). Moving forward the AEFG will discern and prepare an in-depth study on a timely topic for our community. This will differ from previous years by being a series of several Sundays in a row, instead of a single offering.

The premier offering this year will be a 6 part Bible study, hosted by Pastor Nora, called: Gratitude & Grace: Journeying with Sacred Community. Nora says, "this Lenten Bible study is not going to be like your grandmother's Bible study" and will seek to deepen our understanding of this often misinterpreted text as well as our own sense of peace, while building relationships with other participants. Participants are encouraged to attend each week.

This program is offered at no cost for all, thanks to the support of members' and friends' pledges. A free will offering will be available.

What's Been Happening?



Our youth and children got some help telling the sacred story of Christmas at our **Intergenerational Pageant**



The Annual **Gift Making Workshop** brought children of all ages together for crafts, music, and laughter



Many of our older congregants took on the sometimes daunting task of learning about human sexuality and relationships, with our first two **Our Whole Lives** cohorts.

A new spring cohort as been opened for April 16 – May 28. Contact nora@stluke.mn to register today!

Grounds Restoration: Bringing It Home

The Myth of the Green Thumb

By Anne Deuring

Have you heard anyone say this? "I'm no gardener. Everything I try to grow dies. I spend tons of money, I water and fertilize, weed and deadhead—and still everything conks. I can't even grow grass. I just hate yardwork!"

Does this sound familiar? Could it be that our idea of a nice lawn and garden is really a forced fit? The pressure of trying to achieve a manicured look (just like the neighbors') can be soul-crushing.

Most of the trees, shrubs and flowers that are available in the traditional nursery industry are not native to Minnesota or even the U.S. Think lilacs, hydrangea, peonies, hosta, mums — even grass. Kentucky bluegrass is native to Europe, North Asia and North Africa. It is not native to North America. The botanical name is *Poa pratensis*. See? It's "pratending" to fit in.

While we can create conditions that these non-natives will tolerate – amend the soil, add fertilizer, water a bunch, remove competition, spray for pests and diseases, etc. – this is a lot of time, money and effort for species that really don't want to be here in the first place, and might conk anyway.



Swamp White Oak planted on the edge of the wetland.



A bumblebee butt inside a Turtlehead bloom (*Chelone glabra*). So cute!

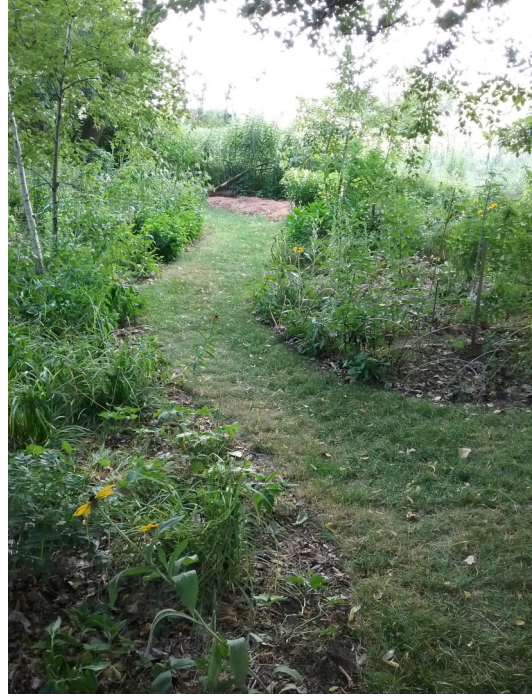
Maybe you don't hate yardwork. Maybe you just don't like having your soul crushed. Or maybe you just don't feel good about contributing to environmental degradation.

What if yardwork were joyful, healthy, satisfying, successful, fascinating, safe, cheaper, fun and easier? It definitely can be with native plants – species that were meant to grow here.

Where does the grass not grow well in your yard? Is it too shady, dry, wet, rocky, sandy, clayey, infertile? What areas are too steep to mow easily or afflicted with road salt. Good news – there is a native species that would love to make its home there – no questions asked (read: no modifications required).



Sweet Joe Pyeweed, Sprengel Sedge and a rock —a good combination.



Paths are important for maintenance and legibility.

American author Howard Thurman once said “Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

I have discovered that gardening with native plants is truly what makes me come alive. I have been a gardener all my life (ever since I transplanted poison ivy from the woods into my mom’s flower garden when I was 5).

I was a collector type of gardener, wanting to grow at least one of everything no matter where it came from. I have read and digested hundreds of books on gardening. Most of these years I gardened traditionally—amending, watering, fertilizing, dead-heading, mulching (oh, the mountains of mulch that I’ve trucked in!), cutting down and cleaning up. I grew native and non-native plants.

40 years ago I actually started keeping track of everything I bought and planted in the garden. Now as I leaf through these (multiple) 3-ring notebooks I am struck with how many non-native species didn’t last very long (except for the notoriously invasive ones), while long-time natives are still reseeding, increasing and (re)colonizing very nicely.

About 3 years ago I decided to remove non-native species from my yard and replace with natives.

Now my yard is mostly native with no invasive species. While I still spend significant time and effort (mostly weeding out tree seedlings), it is a joyful endeavor with mostly soul-lifting moments. Some irritations are universal no matter the origins of the plant species: rabbits still mow down the Aster just as it’s about to bloom, and sticks still drop everywhere. But even if I were to neglect the “yardwork” for a week, a month or even a season, my native plant community would thrive and proliferate all on its own. It would continue to spread—via seeds by wind, gravity and digestive tracts, by outward reaching rhizomatic roots—creating only more nativey goodness. The world would be a better place. And I can be confident my neglect would not cause any degradation to my neighbors’ property or the planet.

My soul is at peace (and uncrushed).

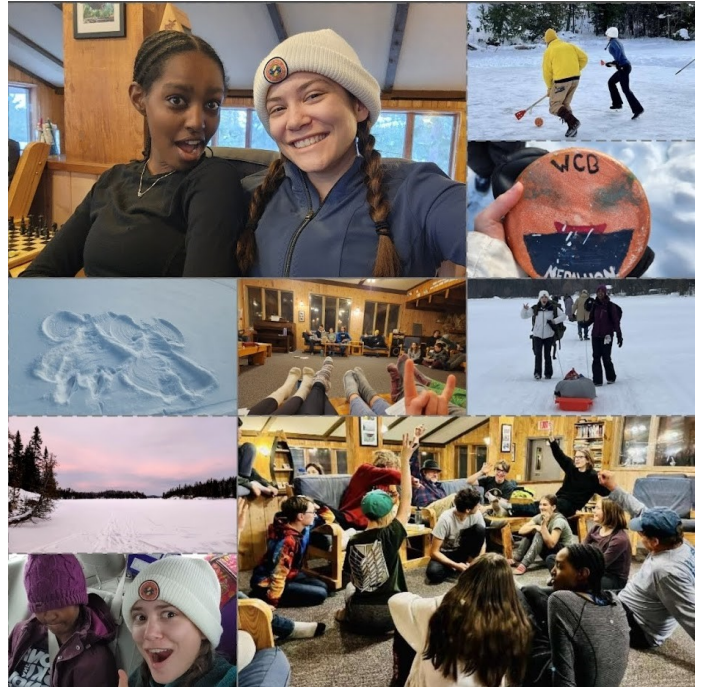


Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)—probably my favorite!

Youth and Families



After many years away, half a dozen of us made the trek back up to the boundary waters for FIRE & ICE!



Our Sunday School team continues our winter Sacred Stories and Crafts series, but can't wait to get back outside when the weather warms up.



As we look to the spring, we joyfully await welcoming a local artist into our midst to guide our youth and families through the process of developing a new mural which highlights our continued commitment to care for our natural world. Stay tuned for updates!



We're also VERY EXCITED to announce our Summer Community Connections Service Trip to ALASKA!

Youth and volunteers will travel to Juneau, Alaska, to be immersed in native Alaskan culture, while working to develop an outdoor community space for a low-income Alaskans. MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Youth will host a spaghetti dinner and silent auction fundraiser on April 16, and if we meet our goals Pastor Nora will dye her hair bright pink!



News and Upcoming Events

February 22 at 7:00 pm: Ash Wed Bonfire & Ashes To-Go.

Join us in the backyard at St. Luke for a communal bonfire and blessing to start our Lenten journey. Our theme for Lent this year is Reclaiming Virtue; a call that invites us to give up our focus on the destructive powers of the world, to make space for life-giving blessings and virtues.

Gratitude & Grace: Journeying with Sacred Community, a Lenten Bible study with Pastor Nora.

Sundays in Lent, February 26 – April 2, at 9:15 am. Participants are encouraged to attend each week with a journal and their favorite translation of the Holy Bible. Extra Bibles will be available.

Holy Week Services, April 2 - 9

- Palm Sunday Worship, 10:30 am - Celebration with homegrown "palms"
- Maundy Thursday, 7:00 pm – Foot Washing Service; embracing an ancient tradition of humble service
- Good Friday, 7:00 pm – Tenebrae Service; honoring & grieving loss of life from state sanctioned violence
- Sunrise Easter Sunday Service with Mtka United Methodist 10:00 am; Groveland Cemetery, with coffee
- Easter Sunday Service at St. Luke; 10:30 am
- Easter egg hunt in the backyard at 10:00 am; volunteers please arrive at 9:30 to hide eggs

Youth Alaska Trip Fundraiser, April 16

MARK YOUR CALENDARS for this opportunity to support our youth as they prepare for an immersive trip to Alaska to learn about and serve low-income native Alaskans. Join us for dinner, music, a silent auction, cake walk, and much more! Help our youth reach their goal and make Pastor Nora fulfil her promise to dye her hair BRIGHT PINK!

Member Ministries Dialogue Sermon Series, April – May

Through the pandemic many of our most sacred ministries have been continuing thanks to the unsung efforts of our members. This unique dialogue series will highlight some of our life-giving ministries and invite us to consider what new avenues of service we might find ourselves called to support in the coming year.

Library Corner

Black History Month

By Julie Mall

There are books and videos for all ages in our church library about the civil rights movement, and biographies about people such as Martin Luther King, Ruby Bridges, Rosa Parks, Maya Angelou, Harriet Tubman, Richard Wright, Thurgood Marshall, Langston Hughes, Medgar Evers, and Sojourner Truth.

There is a **list of some Black History Month titles** in a handout on the Library counter and also in a link in the weekly eblast.

Please sign the checkout card and then return the item within three weeks to the black return bin just inside the Library door (rather than to the counter or shelves). Enjoy!

St. Luke Staff and Communications

Rev. Bill Chadwick (he/him), **Bridge Pastor**
952-738-1783, billchad52@gmail.com

Rev. Nora P. Elliott (she/they), **Associate Pastor**
952-473-7378, nora@stluke.mn
801-556-1881 cell

David Hovick Lohman (he/him), **Minister of Music**
david@stluke.mn

Alayna Winters (she/her), **Childcare Worker**

Anne Deuring (she/her), **Secretary**
952-473-7378, office@stluke.mn or anne@stluke.mn

Darla Monson, **Finance Secretary**
952-473-7378, darla@stluke.mn or finance@stluke.mn

Joe Anderson & Brenda Davis, **Sunday Morning Custodians**

Phyllis Messenger (she/her), **Clerk of Session**,
pmesseng@umn.edu, 612-790-5587

Connie Branson, **Moderator of Deacons**

Ginny Larson (952-210-8388) and **Janie Warner** (612-747-1373), **BeFriender Coordinators**

Every member and friend is a minister of God's love and justice.

St. Luke Presbyterian Church
3121 Groveland School Road
Minnetonka, MN 55391

GENERAL QUESTIONS
Email Anne at office@stluke.mn

WEB ADDRESS
www.stluke.mn

Note: Notices of timely events are now found in our weekly congregational email. Notify office@stluke.mn to receive weekly emails or to join the prayer chain.

St. Luke is a joyful, inclusive and compassionate community on a spiritual journey seeking to do justice, make peace, act mercifully, and walk humbly with God.