

The *Strangers No More Campaign* seeks to make St. Luke's like an oasis in the desert of life where people can find springs of water of new life and a place of rest and relaxation in the shadow of God's presence. The 2023-2024 Annual Membership Campaign calls us to exercise our gifts in generous support of one another and of all who seek a place in the household of God. Your generosity towards the *Strangers No More Campaign* will help us to meet the financial challenges we will face in 2024.

Jesus said, "And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'" (Matthew 25:35-40)

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Formation of Christian Character: Practicing hospitality is a means of shaping one's character in line with Christian values by encouraging us to be more loving, compassionate, and generous with one another and with all we encounter.

Service and Outreach: Hospitality is a form of service to others, which is a fundamental aspect of Christian formation. It teaches us to put our faith into action by caring for those in need.

Community Building: By fostering a sense of community and belonging, hospitality creates an open and welcoming atmosphere within our community, making it easier for individuals to engage in their formation journey.

Imitating Christ: We believe that Jesus Christ exemplified the highest form of hospitality. Following Christ's example is central to Christian formation, and hospitality is a practical way of doing so.

Christian formation and the virtue of hospitality contribute to the development of a Christ-like character and the fulfillment of the Christian mission to love and serve others. Practicing hospitality is not only a way of living out one's faith but also a means of deepening and enriching one's spiritual formation.

MERCY WORKS

Hospitality and compassion enhance our interactions and relationships by making others feel welcome and valued, while we seek to understand and alleviate the suffering or difficulties of others. Combining these qualities in our outreach efforts through Mercy Works programming leads our parish to increasingly positive relationships with the larger community and contributes to a kinder and more empathetic world.

Our continuing support of the programs of Lebanon County Christian Ministries (LCCM), renewed initiatives with Harding Elementary School, growing partnerships with the Chestnut Street Community Center and other area organizations like the LGBTQ Center of Greater Reading strengthen St. Luke's commitment to bring the grace and love of God to a greater circle of God's children in our community.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church Lebanon, PA



Strangers No More
Annual Membership Campaign 2023-2024
The Power of Christian Hospitality

STRANGERS NO MORE HAS SIX MISSIONAL GOALS

To open our hearts to the leading of the Holy Spirit to recognize and respond to the needs of those around us.

To increase our generosity by giving of our resources, time, and energy to bless others.

To walk humbly as we recognize that we all receive God's grace and acknowledge our common need for God's love

To extend Christ's compassion through listening with greater empathy to others' stories, joys, and struggles.

To foster unity amidst our differences by bridging cultural, social, and generational gaps that may exist among us.

To grow spiritually as we engage with new perspectives and learn from one another.

BUILDINGS AND PROPERTIES

The physical environment of our parish plays a significant role in shaping the experience and can influence people's perceptions of our faith community. Through your support, St. Luke's strives to provide our parishioners and friends with a physical environment that is welcoming, comfortable, clean, safe, and well-maintained. All our buildings must remain accessible to the wider community regardless of ability. Through constant improvements in technologies and careful attention to layout and aesthetics, we hope to improve our capacity for service and for future sustainability. Regular maintenance and a program of incremental improvements will help us communicate the warmth and welcoming spirit of our community in the built fabric of our parish buildings.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Hospitality in Worship: Worship is the principal place we exercise the grace of hospitality as we extend ourselves to fellow believers, newcomers, and seekers. By providing a warm and welcoming environment we can create a sense of community and fellowship that becomes the first impression many will have concerning the place that Christ has in our lives.

Communion and the Eucharist: As our central form of worship, the celebration of the Eucharist shares what we believe to be the body and blood of Christ with those who seek a closer relationship with God. It is a form of spiritual hospitality, where we partake in a sacred meal together, symbolizing our ultimate unity in Christ.

Music in Worship: Music plays a significant role in our worship through which we praise and worship God, express faith, and create an atmosphere of reverence. Hymns, contemporary music, and choir anthems seek to draw people into the worship experience by helping them connect with God on a deeper level.

Inclusivity and Diversity: Our hospitality in worship extends to being inclusive and embracing diversity as we strive to welcome people from varied backgrounds and cultures. Moving forward, we hope that our music and worship will incorporate a variety of styles and languages to make all feel included and valued.

OUR COMMON LIFE

No matter how we are "wired"—introvert, extrovert, socially adept or socially awkward—something in our soul longs for meaningful relationships with others. We long to know others and be known by them. We treasure friendships that allow us to truly "be ourselves." In many ways, this is the essence of the Church — a fellowship in faith that grows in the love of Christ. Like all communities, we need a support system to sustain our common life. This includes the faithful presence of clergy, the administrative demands of effective communication and interaction, as well as our relationship to the larger Church, to name a few. Without these supports, we may not be able to become that "spiritual house" that God seeks to build.

Vestry and its committees, clergy, and lay staff carefully manage our resources to provide the services we need to grow strong bonds of love and friendship. Your continuing support makes this possible.

HOSPITALITY 101

STEP ONE: INVITING NEW PEOPLE.

The most important inviting work comes long before Sunday morning. People don't usually come to church because they saw a great sign or a social media post. More than 85% of newcomers attend *because a church member invited them.*

STEP TWO: GREETING NEW PEOPLE

Inviting congregations know the first impression is everything. So they literally imagine the pathway someone travels into the church, and try to make it as smooth and pleasant as possible:

Outside: There's clear signage and a well-kept exterior.

At the door: A greeter is stationed at the open door—at every door that might be used—eyes and energy directed out to offer a warm, genuine welcome to all who enter.

Inside the door: This is the time to help people if the worship gathering needs some explaining, or if visitors need assistance getting to their seats.

Inside the church: A genuinely inviting parish depends on more than a team of greeters. *Everyone* takes this ministry seriously. Members is encouraged to slide into the pew to *make room for a stranger.* They should also be on the lookout for new faces and be ready to help struggling visitors to find their way through the liturgy.

Getting around the church: Greeters and other members should be prepared to escort newcomers to Sunday School, forums, restrooms, etc. We could call this the "the ministry of shepherds"—literally, connecting with new people and guiding them around the church.

After-church fellowship: Coffee hour, breakfast between services, brunch after church—whatever is happening and whenever it happens. Make sure someone escorts visitors and newcomers to where the actions is. And once there, introduce them to some of our "regulars!"

STEP THREE: INCORPORATING NEW PEOPLE

When the newcomer leaves, the work isn't over!

Follow-up contact: A lay visitor or clergy person should make a follow-up call or send an e-mail or a card, and suggest a one-on-one get-together to share stories and answer questions. This is the time to listen and connect.

Follow-up groups: New people need a variety of entry points to find their way inside a congregation. Seasonal newcomers' gatherings, regularly scheduled small groups, easy-to-access volunteer opportunities, inquirers' classes to learn about the tradition, the community and membership—all these are great ways to create space for people to explore and test their calling into community.

THE OUTLOOK FOR 2024

The total pledged in 2023 was \$ 207,000. So far this year, we have maintained a giving rate that will meet that goal by the end of the fiscal year!

In 2023, there were 64 individual pledges of support:
The average pledge was \$3235.
The smallest pledge was \$160
The largest pledge was \$18,200

Projected expenses for Fiscal Year 2024 indicate that we will need a modest increase in revenue if we wish to fully fund our normal operations. Some of these challenges result from current economic conditions (e.g., increase in the consumer price index). Clergy and vestry have increased their pledges to help lead the way to a stable financial condition.

As Episcopalians, we do not recommend a standard level of giving. Instead, we leave it **entirely up to you** to decide *how much you can give* and *what is appropriate* given your monthly budget.

As a parish community, if we all increase our level of giving by an *average* of 1.5%, we can meet a goal of
\$ 210,000

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PLEDGING

Why should I pledge?

- Pledging helps our leadership team and staff plan for the year ahead. Making a pledge is part of a larger spiritual practice of giving your time, talent and financial resources. Pledging is making a statement that you are a part of this faith community.

Do I have to pay my pledge all at once?

- No. Many people fulfill their pledge weekly, monthly or quarterly. Some use offering envelopes while others set up a regular payment schedule by automatic bank payments.

What if I need to change my pledge amount?

- Not a problem! Simply call or email the parish at any time. We realize that people's financial situations change over time, both up and down, and we keep all stewardship related conversations/materials confidential.

I've filled out my pledge card. Now what do I do?

- Thank you and congratulations. You have made a choice and a commitment!
- Place your completed pledge card in a sealed envelope into the offering plate or mail your pledge card the parish office by In-gathering by Sunday, October 30th.

How can I include St. Luke's in my will or estate plan?

- At St. Luke's, part of our Stewardship Committee is ready to provide you with information to guide you through the planning process. If you are interested in this topic, please contact Father Zwifka or Mr. John Feather.



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The Power of Christian
Hospitality**

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