

ST. LUKE'S 2024 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING



St. Luke's Church

Anglican (Episcopal)

The Parish Church of the Mountains

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The Parish Church of St. Luke, Blue Ridge, Georgia

The Parish Church of the Mountains

2024 ANNUAL PARISH REPORT

JANUARY 21, 2024

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint, teach me Lord, teach me Lord to wait

Opening Prayer

The Rev. Victor Morgan

Approval of Minutes of the
2023 Annual Meeting (Attached)

Tony McConnell

Current Vestry Members: Sr. Warden, Jim Noblett; Jr. Warden, Jennifer Higdon; Lauren Burgreen; D. J. Fulton; Jodi Beauregard; Todd Lyons; Bob Bradley and Bill Baio

Election of 2 new Vestry Members:

The nominee is; Frank Rule and Kevin Sartain

Election of Jr. Warden:

The nominee is: Jennifer Higdon

Review Reports of 2023 Parish Group Activities

Review the 2023 Survey Results (Attached)

Jodi Beauregard

Review 2024 Budget (Attached)

D. J. Fulton

Rector's Remarks

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan

Closing Prayer

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan

Adjournment

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

RECTOR'S REPORT THE REV. VICTOR H. MORGAN

Serving as Rector of St. Luke's for 37 years gives me a unique perspective and advantage. As I look back, I can see God's hand at work in the life of this congregation at every turn in its history. I can only say with the psalmist: "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (118:33).

The story has been told many times before, but God had prepared a place for a parish church over 20 years before there was any talk of building one. David H. Haight, Sr., a Canadian by birth and an Anglican by faith, died in 1968 while on a hunting trip. In his will, the parcel of ground on which the church now stands was earmarked for "a church of the Protestant faith." His widow, Willa Mae Haight, herself a stalwart Baptist, signed over the lots to the Wardens and Vestry of St. Luke's Church in 1987 a few weeks after the fledgling congregation had been formed.

God has continued to bless and provide for the needs of St. Luke's down to this present day. This past year has been an exciting one. One of the high points has been re-establishing the choir following the Covid pandemic. Many thanks to Diana Burden and Randy Wilbur for all they have done and are doing in the area of music.

We are also fortunate to have two stellar people serving as Wardens. Senior Warden Jim Noblett assumed this role after Pat Dearing stepped down after he and his wife Sherron decided to relocate to Marietta. There is not enough paper to record the many contributions Pat made to this church over several decades. Happily, Pat and Sherron remain a part of the worshiping community of St. Luke's attending online.

No Senior Warden was better prepared than Mr. Noblett. During the Covid pandemic while serving as Junior Warden, he proved himself week after week being God's man of the hour. The Rector would conceive an idea of how to keep the worshipping life of the community going: he with his technical and practical know-how would make it happen.

Mrs. Higdon, meanwhile, assumed the position of Junior Warden after Mr. Noblett's 'ascension'. She has already proved herself to be a capable leader. No detail of the building or grounds escapes her eye.

As we look forward, I think I should say that whether it is maintaining a high standard of music or the preservation and upkeep of our iconic building, the larger focus must be on the promulgation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Music and edifices are tools and means.

In many ways, St. Luke's is unique in North Georgia. In a religious market (and that is what it has become), St. Luke's has not succumbed to the zeitgeist of the age, pursuing relevance by holding onto the tail of the dog of culture. Whereas

in many places entertainment and me-centered worship experiences has replaced encounter with the awesome God of creation and redemption, St. Luke's has doggedly maintained worship that is Biblical and relevant, ancient and ever modern.

We maintain a gracious orthodoxy nourished and grounded in the inspired scriptures and turned into prayer and worship in the Book of Common Prayer. Sunday by Sunday those who attend either in person or online hear the wonderful words of God in their own language (the language of the soul), clean, thunderous and salty. With these ringing in their ears, they go forth to be about their Father's business.

More than that, St. Luke's as the parish church is a community center. Our building is open daily for those seeking a place of quiet refuge from the storms of life. Support groups gather here throughout the week. Concerts and other events are held. We are not a members-only operation. Our doors are open to all.

In short, there is no place like St. Luke's in these parts, and here is what you can do. Let others know there is a place where they can worship the living God in beauty and holiness, a place where both mind and heart are engaged, a place where love and kindness is practiced, a place for all sorts, a place of growth and transformation, a place that points to heaven's gate.

With the lofty vision I have just shared, practically I would like us to:

- Improve our signage to the church.
- Produce some videos for the Internet introducing the church, perhaps including short clips of members of St. Luke's sharing their journey to the church.
- Explore ways to attract those visiting the area to tour the church throughout the week.
- Expand opportunities for equipping members for explaining and sharing the Christian faith.

Thank you for your faithfulness. St. Luke's is truly a team effort. All hands are needed on board. With St. Paul we say: *"forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:13,14).

**DEACON'S REPORT:
W. A. "TONY" MCCONNELL**

As we reflect back on 2023 and look ahead to 2024, we give thanks for the opportunity to worship and send our requests and supplications to the Holy Triad in this wonderful environment we call St. Luke's Anglican (Episcopal) Church.

As beautiful, functional and comfortable as our Church is, it does not operate on its own. It takes all of us, collectively, to make it truly provide all that we have come to expect and appreciate.

Yes, it takes ALL of us....clergy, Vestry, committee members and the rest of the entire congregation to provide the time, talent and treasure if St. Luke's is to continue its role in spreading the Gospel and bringing Jesus to our community.

And St. Luke's needs your help. None of us can do everything, but all of us can do something. Just take a prayerful look around and there is no doubt the Lord will show you an opportunity for service, such as helping on one of the committees or service groups, pledging your tithe, volunteering as Lector/Reader or Acolyte .. the list goes on. And, quite obviously, we all should be praying fervently for the welfare of our Church, Country and this troubled world.

There is a place for you and the Lord will help you find it.

**Peace and Blessings to you all.
Deacon Tony McConnell**

**VERGER'S REPORT:
JIM NOBLETT**

2023 was a wonderful year for St. Luke's Vergers, Acolytes and Readers. Dr. Al Cash was installed as a Verger this fall and has started training to be an Acolyte and Chalice bearer. Deacon Tony and I welcome Al to St. Luke's Verger's staff.

We have also had several individuals express interest in becoming either Acolytes or Readers or both. We will begin training those folks immediately after the celebration of Our Lord's Birth.

I want to thank our existing Acolytes and Readers:

Al Cash

Reed Ferrell

Linda Gerlock

Sally Hess

Roger Johnson

Ruth Johnson

Kim Such

Stan Wyllie

We appreciate ALL you do to make each service at St. Luke's a fulfilling experience for our congregation and help our Clergy to focus on the service itself.

**In His Service;
Jim Noblett**

**SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT:
JIM NOBLETT**

2023 was a very good year for St. Luke's. We are financially sound, and the services were well attended.

Our Vestry received 3 new members in 2023; Jodi Beauregard, Todd Lyons and Bill Baio. Pat Dearing unfortunately moved away and was no longer able to serve on the Vestry or as Senior Warden. Victor asked me to become Senior Warden and I agreed. The Vestry then appointed Jennifer Higdon to the Junior Warden position. We will be filling 2 Vestry positions at our Annual Meeting. Many thanks to Lauren Burgreen and Bob Bradley for their service to St. Luke's and our community. You will both be missed.

Our Community Outreach events were back to normal after the covid years. Our Easter egg hunt was well attended in spite of inclement weather. Sharing Tuesdays have proven to be a hit during the times between our more formal Teaching Tuesdays. The Women of St. Luke and the St. Luke's Men's Group held a very successful joint yard and barn sale. The groups both decided that this would be the last year we did the sales. The WSL Annual Bazaar was a huge success, as always. Our St. Luke's Concert schedule was well presented by all the musicians and highly received by our community.

Thanks to all our congregation members and church volunteers for all that you do to make St. Luke's the amazing place it is.

**In His Service;
Jim Noblett**

**2023 JUNIOR WARDEN'S REPORT
JENNIFER HIGDON**

With the help of gracious volunteers and benefactors, 2023 saw a frenzy of improvements in the Parish House and Church grounds at St. Luke's. The Parish House has new upgrades, including molding, electric, and paint in the kitchen, restroom, conference room and living room. Extensive work was done to the foundation to make sure it will be secure for the future. The gutters on the Parish House and Pavilion were cleaned and the Parish House was pressure washed.

There were two clean up days this year to get the yards back into shape, as well as pruning and cutting down trees, shrubs, and bushes.

Jose Moranes has been hired as the new groundskeeper. Gary Stanley is now our dedicated housekeeper. Elisabetta Best is St. Luke's videographer. Please take an opportunity to welcome them when you see them.

**In His Service,
Jennifer Higdon**

**WOMEN OF ST. LUKE'S REPORT (WSL):
TERESA WANKEL, PRESIDENT**

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-16 New King James Version (NKJV)

It was another busy year for the Women of St Luke's. We continued our support at St Luke's Church as members of the Altar Guild and as ushers, choir members, Acolytes, Lay Readers, and Vestry members. Our service extends to the community as well as many WSL members volunteer at the local Food Pantry and are involved at Feed Fannin and with Toys for Tots. This year, we also assisted the SLMG with renovations at the Parish House. We began the year considering forming a chapter of the Daughters of the Holy Cross. After prayerful consideration, we agreed not to pursue establishing a chapter.

We held our annual Yard Sale in September, which turned out to be our last Yard Sale. Thank you to Ruth Johnson for coordinating the yard sale for more years than we can remember. We love and appreciate you, Ruth! We also held our annual Christmas Bazaar in December. Proceeds from these events fund our outreach programs which include Fannin County Family Connection, Feed Fannin, Good Samaritan Fund, Her Hope Pregnancy Center in Blue Ridge, Immanuel Church, Safe Choice Pregnancy Center in Ellijay, Snack-in-a-Backpack, Sunny D Children's Theater Camp, and the Women's Enrichment Center in Blairsville. Proceeds from these events are also set aside in our Benevolence Fund which is used to assist St Luke's parishioners and the extended community as needs arise.

Our members participated in winter and fall Bible studies. Our winter study took us through the book of Acts and in the fall, we studied the book of Philippians. Both were very enlightening studies. Our thanks to Judy Brooten, Darlene Dunnigan and Teresa Wankel for facilitating the sessions. This year's winter Bible study titled Angels, Who They Are and How They Help based on the book by Dr. David Jeremiah.

We invite all women to join this active and vibrant group in our mission to serve Christ, our Church, and our community. The WSL meets every other month on the second Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. in the Yellow Room and via Zoom.

**Thanks be to God for His continuing blessings,
Respectfully submitted by Teresa Wankel, President , WSL**

**ALTAR GUILD REPORT:
TERESA WANKEL**

The Altar Guild is a lay ministry to serve God in His house by preparing the Sanctuary for worship, maintaining, and caring for the sacred vessels and altar linens and serving the clergy and parish.

The Rector, Victor Morgan, is the head of the St Luke's Altar Guild, which functions under his guidance and direction. Altar Guild members should be congregants confirmed in the Anglican Church and should view their service as a sacred duty.

Members of the St Luke's Altar Guild are:

Anna Bradley
Priscilla Cashman
Judy Evans
Jennifer Higdon
Teresa Wankel
Patsy Williams
Meredith Yacavone

A special thank you to Anna Bradley, Priscilla Cashman, and Jennifer Higdon for supplying and arranging greenery for the altar during Lent and Advent.

We gladly welcome anyone who would like to serve in this ministry. If you are interested in becoming a part of the Altar Guild, please contact anyone of the members listed above.

Respectfully submitted by Teresa Wankel

**ST LUKE'S MEN'S GROUP REPORT (SLMG):
NEIL MCDONALD, CHAIRMAN**

Our 2023 officers were Chairman Neil McDonald, Secretary Deacon Tony McConnell, and Treasurer Bob Bradley. All men who attend St. Luke's services are considered as members and are cordially invited to attend our meetings and all other activities. There are no dues, and no special skills are required to

participate—just join us. We generally meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month (unless otherwise on St. Luke’s website calendar).

As a men’s fellowship group, we assist parishioners and community members who lack resources to perform certain tasks for themselves. As a form of stewardship, SLMG also performs some maintenance and repairs for our church that would otherwise require payment to vendors.

This summarizes SLMG activities:

Sponsored the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper.

Organized the annual churchyard Spring cleanup.

Organized the community Easter egg hunt with Blue Ridge Kiwanis Club.

Overnight Fellowship outing: US Medal of Honor Museum, and Chattanooga.

Lookouts’ baseball game.

Participated with the WSL in St. Luke’s annual yard sale.

Raised \$1200 during annual SLMG yard sale.

Sponsored St. Luke’s annual church picnic.

Assisted with our WSL Annual Christmas Bazaar.

Donations:

\$500.00 for Mineral Springs Center to defray storm damage repairs for transportation vehicles.

\$500 to ARDF for tornado and hurricane disaster victim relief.

Community Involvement:

Monthly delivery of Feed Fannin food boxes serving 30 residents at North Court Apartments.

Split firewood for Family Connection’s clients.

Assisted parishioners:

Assisted Pat and Sharron Dearing with area relocation.

Assistance to St. Luke’s & Jr. Warden:

Completed Parish House bathroom, kitchen, parlor and conference room renovations that began in 2022.

Addressed tree encroachment issues: trimmed limbs, and removed a tree from the Memorial Garden.

In Closing: As always, our Lord has blessed with many opportunities to serve Him and our fellow man by sharing our God given gifts of time and talents.

**MUSIC COMMITTEE REPORT:
(Including Information About The St. Luke’s Choir)
DIANA BURDEN, MUSIC DIRECTOR**

The Music Committee (North Georgia Concert Series) is made up of both members of St. Luke’s and those from the larger community. Members include

Cheryl Starr, Randy Wilbur, Diana Burden, Kathryn Noblett, Jennifer Higdon and the Rev. Victor Morgan.

Seven concerts were held in 2023 featuring musicians from Young Harris College, vocalist Larry Kevin Garland, organist Andrew Atkinson, classical guitarist Scott Plato and associate, and three Christmas concerts, the last under the direction of Randy Wilbur.

Music-wise St. Luke's had a very good year. The choir resumed in June with seven core members New members are being aggressively sought. At the moment, the choir sings once a month. St. Luke's is very fortunate to have stellar organist Steve Cagle playing two or three times a month, along with the capable assistance and direction of Randy Wilbur (who knows everyone in the musical world of North Georgia). A key triumph in 2023 was a Choral Evensong on St. Luke's Day.

The Music Committee has begun work on drawing up a schedule of concerts for 2024. Already on the calendar for 2024 is a Blue Ridge Chamber Music concert featuring Lissa Knight, pianist; Maggie Flavin, woodwinds and Jana Young, soloist.

Many thanks to members of St. Luke for their support of both the North Georgia Concert series and the Sunday choir.

--Respectfully submitted by Diana Burden.



"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." **Hebrews 10:24-25**



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The Mission of St. Luke's Church is to grow spiritually in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and to share our faith, our hands and our hearts for the sake of the Gospel, our community and the world.