

# DiscipleShip

Spring Issue, 2015

St. Luke Lutheran Church & School

## Charitable Contributions and Taxes



Six common questions (and answers) regarding how to deduct your charitable contributions.

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## School News



Did you know that we are celebrating our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year? Find out more about all the celebrations we will be hosting throughout the year!

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## VBS is around the corner!



Mark July 20-24 for our summer VBS, Camp Discovery. Volunteers needed!

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Connect with us:



## Three Reasons Why You Should Go to Church

Believe it or not, the local church is not dead. It is very much alive. And not only is it alive, it is, as Bill Hybels says, “the hope of the world.”

But if you listen to the news or surf the web you may find naysayers spouting a very pessimistic view of church attendance. (And we all know what we read on the internet *must* be true). But it still causes people to ask, why go to church? Why should I make the effort in my already packed schedule to get out of bed on Sunday morning? Here are three reasons why it’s important to find your place in a pew:

### Scripture Says So

Going to church is not a suggestion; it is God’s mandate for believers. Hebrews 10:25 says we should “not [be] 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.”

C.E. Stowers of Mars Hill Baptist Church of Chicago explains that “even in the early church, some were falling into the bad

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## Official Acts

### Baptisms

Caleb Andrew Kupec

1-11-15

Parents: Julie and Zach Kupec

Ryleigh Lynn Misera

3-8-15

Parents: Danyelle and Matt Misera

### Funerals

Wayne Pflueger

1/4/1950 – 12/20/2014

Anthony S. Bucholz

11/14/1939 – 1/8/2015

Elizabeth Nelson

3/31/1913 – 1/9/2015

Joseph E. Lerch

8/22/1938 – 2/5/2015



## Your Charitable Contributions 6 Things You Need To Know

1. If I make a contribution in early January 2015, can I claim it on my 2014 taxes?
  - a. No, charitable contributions must be claimed in the year in which they are delivered.
2. If I mail my contribution in December 2014, but it doesn't reach my church until January 2015, for which year should I claim it?
  - a. On your 2014 tax return. A check that is mailed to a charity is deductible in the year the check is mailed (and postmarked), even if it is received in the next year.
3. Can I deduct the value of volunteer work I did for the church?
  - a. No, the value of personal services is never deductible as a charitable contribution. However, unreimbursed expenses you incur in performing services on behalf of a church or other charity may be. For 2015, you can use a "standard mileage rate" of 14 cents to compute a deduction for any miles you drive in performing services for your church. Be sure to maintain accurate records.
4. I gave \$135 to my church when I registered for a spring retreat. Can I deduct that?
  - a. No, assuming you received benefits (e.g. lodging, instruction, materials) worth \$135 or more.

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## Jr. High Upcoming Events

April 19, 4-6PM

Youth Group in Activity Center

May 1-3

Confirmation Retreat  
(Grades 7 & 8)

May 17 4-6PM

Youth Group in the Old School House

## (Continued from page 1)

habit of not meeting with other believers. The author of Hebrews says that's not the way to go. We need the encouragement that church attendance affords.

## It's Keeping Your Vow

If you are a member of a church, more than likely you solemnly swore to faithfully support the church in its worship and work. The weight of this vow is somehow diminished in this day and age when going back on your word is so easily accepted. But even if you don't take your vow seriously, God does. "You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn," Matthew 5:33 says. Taking a membership vow ups the ante of your commitment to the body of that congregation. Your attendance moves from casual to expected. But it isn't just your pastor and church leaders that expect to see you. God expects to see you. He delights in your worship and He wants you to show up. After all, that's what He created you to do!

## We Crave Fellowship

In a survey performed last year by the General Social Survey, "The National Science Foundation (NSF) reported that unprecedented numbers of Americans are lonely. Published in the *American Sociological Review (ASR)* and authored by Miller McPhearson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and Matthew Brashears, sociologists at Duke and the University of Arizona, the study featured 1,500 face-to-face interviews where more than a quarter of the respondents — one in four — said that they have no one with whom they can talk about their personal troubles or triumphs. If family members are not counted, the number doubles to more than half of Americans who have no one outside their immediate family with whom they can share confidences. Sadly, the researchers noted increases in 'social isolation' and 'a very significant decrease in social connection to close friends and family.'" (The American Spectator)

And while technology brings information to our fingertips, literally, what it doesn't deliver is human connection. We are created in the image of God, the trinity. His very essence is relationship so it's only logical that we want to spend time with others. Gathering with the body of Christ during Sunday services provides the cure for isolation, loneliness, and fractured relationships. Are you—or your neighbor, or son, or daughter, or spouse, etc.—feeling disconnected? Getting back into the routine of attending church is the simple remedy to bring you back to a place of connection and belonging.



On Saturday, January 24 a group of volunteers from St. Luke went to World Vision in Sewickley, PA. They spent the morning packing leftover Pittsburgh Penguin t-shirts and jerseys to be sent overseas. It was a great opportunity for mission work. Look for more opportunities to come. Pictured from left to right in the front row: Beth Koegler, Bailey Baptiste, Brenda Fett, Hannah and Annette Pasquini. Back row left to right: Ray Koegler, Kevin and Lori Rockwell, Eileen Geary, Nancy McWilliams, and Dave Pasquini.



## St. Luke Lutheran School News

### St. Luke School Celebrates 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

"Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation." Joel 1:3. Sharing God's word through the generations has been occurring at St. Luke Lutheran School for 150 years this upcoming school year 2015-16—150 amazing years of educating God's children in God's word and preparing them for service in His world! We are pleased to share just a glimpse of the celebrations occurring through the next school year. The first weekend in June, 2016 will be filled with commemorations of the many blessings God has given us throughout the past 150 years. On Friday night, families from the congregation and school, as well as alumni will be celebrating with a bonfire. An elegant alumni reception is planned for Saturday night. Culminating at a special worship service on Sunday, St. Luke congregation will be honored for all of her support through the

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### Art & Science Fair



Clockwise from top: Josh McCoy (8<sup>th</sup>) and Mr. Wilt; Kelli Kovalick (4<sup>th</sup>); Natalie Reitano (6<sup>th</sup>) and Blair Bowen (6<sup>th</sup>); Kelsea Relihan (4<sup>th</sup>); Mike Formica (6<sup>th</sup>).

## St. Luke Lutheran School News


### “No Crib for a Bed” Performance

Back in the fall, our own music teacher, Mrs. Diane Beckstead authored a production, called “No Crib for a Bed”, in support of Cribs for Kids, a national organization based in Pittsburgh which provides safe cribs to low-income families, safe sleep education for parents of infants, SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) awareness, and grief counseling for families who have experienced SIDS. While the topic is a sobering one, the message is important. We want all families to know how to safely care for infants, and that includes brothers and sisters.

This past December, our kindergarten-fifth graders performed “No Crib for a Bed” at their Christmas service. The story of “No Crib for a Bed” tells about children rehearsing for a Christmas play, and are unhappy with the girl playing Mary, because of her reluctance to put the baby in the manger. As the musical progresses, the children learn how the girl’s brother died when he was a baby because of unsafe sleeping conditions. Although there are many lively, child-friendly songs, some of the subject matter is quite serious. We are reassured that, while sad things sometimes happen, it is an important message to convey.


The National Cribs for Kids Convention meets in Pittsburgh this spring. We are very excited to have received an invitation to present our Christmas play at the Omni William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh on Thursday, April 16. It will be a thrilling experience for the children and staff to share this story and a wonderful opportunity to offer a Christian witness through this touching production. We also plan to present the children’s chapel and Christmas service offerings of \$2000 to the organization at this time.

For more information regarding the Pittsburgh performance of “No Crib for a Bed” please call the school office at 724-352-2221.



**St. Luke Lutheran  
22nd Annual  
Plant-A-Seed  
Golf Outing**

**Saturday, June 13, 11:00 AM  
Stoughton Acres**



For more info: 724.352.2221

### Important Dates

- Easter Egg Hunt  
April 4, 1PM (doors open 12:30PM)
- National Cribs for Kids Conference  
April 16, Omni William Penn Hotel
- Special Friend Day  
May 1
- Band & Chorus Concert  
May 6
- 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Dinner Theater  
May 15
- Spring Musical  
May 27
- Last day of School  
June 9
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation  
June 6

## Contributions cont'd.

5. Is there any limit to the amount of my contributions I can deduct on my taxes?

a. Yes, a contribution deduction ordinarily cannot exceed 50 percent of a donor's adjusted gross income ( a 30 percent rule applies in some cases). Donors who exceed these limits may be able to "carry over" their excess contribution and deduct it in future years.

6. I designated my contribution to the church benevolence fund. Is it deductible?

a. That depends. "Designated contributions" are those made to a church for a specific purpose. If the purpose is an approved project or program of the church, you can deduct the contribution (if you claim itemized deductions on Schedule A).

If you designate a \$100 gift to the church benevolence fund, it is deductible, unless you specify that your contribution be applied to a named individual; then no deduction is allowed.

Contributions to a church or missions agency that designate a particular missionary may be tax-deductible if the church or missions agency exercises full administrative control over the contributions and ensures that they are spend in furtherance of the church's tax-exempt purposes.

For more information or a specific charitable contribution question please contact your tax accountant.

April Congregational Verse

Throw your burden  
upon the Lord, and He  
will sustain you. He will  
never allow the godly to  
be upended.

~ Psalm 55:22, NET

## Recipe

### Avocado Dip

*1-2 large avocados, mashed*

*2 TBSP fresh lemon juice*

*8 oz. cream cheese*

*1/8 tsp salt*

*1/8 tsp pepper*

*2 TBSP milk*

*1 TBSP onion, minced fine*

### Directions:

*Cut avocado in half and scoop out, mash*

*Add lemon juice, cream cheese, onion, salt, pepper and milk to avocado and beat with hand mixer until smooth.*

*Serve with tortilla chips or crackers.*

*Taste tested by your church office ladies!*

Be sure to visit us online!  
**stlukecabot.org**



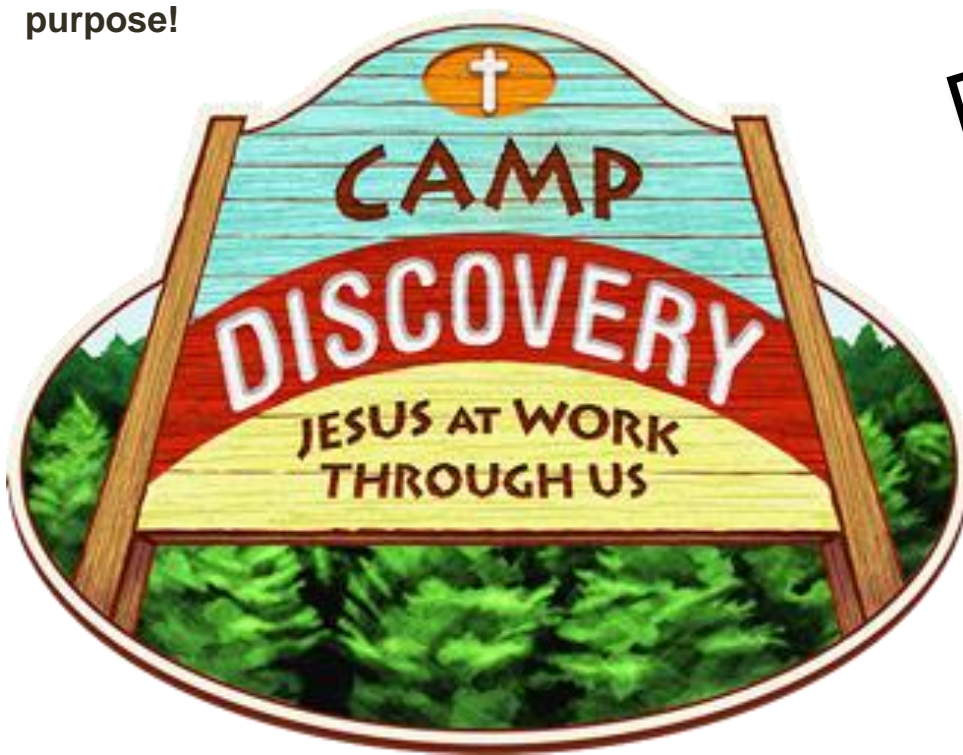


Our 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders met at the end of February to help fight hunger by hosting a World Vision 30-hour famine.



# At VBS, It's All About Jesus! July 20-24, 2015

At **Camp Discovery**, kids have fun as they **explore the Bible, make new friends, sing songs, and learn how Jesus works through them in their everyday lives**. Campers discover **5 Bible truths** that excite and challenge them. Jesus, their True North, gives them the wisdom and the courage to step out in faith and serve—whether they're at school, playing with friends, or helping out at home. **Now, that's a VBS with purpose!**



150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
cont'd

## Places to Serve

### July

20-24 : VBS; 9:00am - Noon

### October

Saturday, 24: Mark your calendars now for this day of serving others!



### Praise and Thanksgiving:

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the "Care Bags" for Light of Life Mission in Pittsburgh. 216 bags were delivered along with a few boxes of miscellaneous items. May the Lord bless our efforts as we continue to reach out to those in need.

generations, with a dinner afterwards. There will also be monthly events celebrating the many fantastic years of education. Please keep your eye out for the many wonderful events that will be occurring! If you are or know an alumnus of the school, please visit the school's website and update your information or call the office. We would love to have the opportunity to contact as many alumni as possible! For more information, please call the school office at 724-352-2221 or visit our website at [school.stlukecabot.org](http://school.stlukecabot.org).



## 40 Days in the WORD Update

Over 140 people registered to be part of a small group in our Lenten Congregational Journey of 40 Days in the WORD. The Journey has been a helpful and meaningful one for most as we have been engaged in learning six different devotional methods of Bible Study.

Part of our small group journey is to be “doers” of the Word and not just “hearers”. As such, each group is completing a Micah 6:8 project. Some of those projects include: providing free childcare for a Congregational “Date Night;” volunteering and cooking a meal at Good Samaritan hospice at Concordia; sponsoring a deployed soldier with letters and care packages; volunteering at Fisher House in Pittsburgh, a home where military families stay free while their loved one is at the VA Hospital; making hygiene bags for the homeless who end up at the Butler Memorial Hospital ER; and sponsoring a congregational food drive for our St. Luke Food Pantry.

There are a few books left for anyone who did not have a chance to join the small group journey, but would like to do the material on their own. Contact DCE Cyndi Alviani through the church office if you are interested.

## A Fun Walk Thru the New Testament

On Saturday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, over 120 people “walked through” the New Testament in a fun and interactive way with a little help from Pastor Dennis Whitmore, our Walk Thru the Bible presenter. Participants, ages 10-92, learned physical signs to help them remember 77 key people, places and events in the New Testament as well as how God was at work setting up the world during the 400 years of silence for the arrival of the Messiah! A great time was had by all!



**Sign up for Will Run For Food!**  
[stlukecabot.org/willrunforfood](http://stlukecabot.org/willrunforfood)

**WHAT: Pittsburgh Marathon, Half Marathon, 5-Person Relay and 5K**

**WHERE: Pittsburgh, PA**

**WHEN: May 2 & 3, 2015**

**WHO: All runners and walkers welcome!**

**WHY: Benefits Sonshine Ministries, Katie's Kitchen and other relief efforts locally and internationally.**



A peek into what our Walk Thru the Bible day looked like!



St. Luke Lutheran  
CHURCH & SCHOOL

330 Hannahstown Road  
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724-352-2777  
www.stlukecabot.org

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By the power of Christ, we carry the power of hope to the poor, the broken and the outcast.

## Pictures from Pastor Unity in Tanzania, Africa



Crowded classroom  
of 110 kids!



Loading food to  
distribute.

We appreciate the support we get from St. Luke Lutheran Church. I remember you in my prayers all the time. We have one hundred and forty (140) children total! We are seeking God's provision for two classroom buildings to allow these beautiful kids to feel at least comfortable. ~ Pastor Unity