

Inspired by the Episcopal Church's Way of Love initiative, the wardens at St Luke's have been praying for their congregation before church on Sunday.

Following the Way of Love

The Episcopal Church initiative [The Way of Love](#) encourages individuals and communities to follow Jesus as they Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest, and Turn. Inspired by North Carolina Bishop Sam Rodman, Phillip Bass began to seek ways to incorporate these seven steps in his daily life. As senior warden at St Luke's, Phillip felt called to integrate these practices with his parish leadership role. Together, Phillip and Junior Warden Amy Kiser invited their community into a time of prayer with them, with hopes that the act of prayer would shape their community, and that others would also choose to incorporate the Way of Love practices into their daily lives. In the paragraphs below, Phillip reflects on their process.

Time for Community Prayer

We gather each week twenty minutes before our main worship service. The first few weeks, we gathered in a side room, so as to be out of the way. Quickly we realized that we wanted our prayers to be more visible and present in the worship space. Our choir rehearses in the worship space between services, so we spoke with Music Director Kaye Saunders about our idea of moving the Wardens' Prayer Time into our worship space. Kaye was confident our praying would not interfere with their rehearsal, and we were hopeful that their rehearsal would not negatively impact our prayer. We moved into the side chapel in our main sanctuary, and it feels "just right." When people walk into the sanctuary, they see us in prayer and are curious or simply thankful. As we pray, we see and hear the life of our congregation as we prepare for worship, and that enriches our prayer time.

We pray using a modified Anglican rosary that our Rector, Helen Svoboda-Barber created to fit our needs. When we gather, some people bring their own Anglican Rosaries and we also have a pile to borrow. One of us holds a large poster board rosary, and points to each bead as we recite our prayer. This helps any newcomer, as well as those of us who need the reminder! Another member introduces the prayer and leads us. Together, we say the Lord's Prayer and our Mission Statement. Our leader introduces one topic on each Cruciform Bead, and then we go round-robin style on the week beads praying for specific people or

intentions. We say a final closing together, along with our Mission Statement and the Lord's Prayer. We hand out this outline, and some people take it home and pray it during the week. Our prayer can be found [here](#).

Where Two or Three Are Gathered

Some weeks, we are literally "where two or three are gathered" and other weeks we are pushing double digits. It is a small group that participates in these prayers, but this small group really does make a difference. Others see and know that these prayers are going on, and are encouraged by this. Both greeters and choir members have stopped us as we gather and ask for us to pray for someone.

Even though these parishioners are engaged in other duties as we pray, this prayer time is also a vehicle for their prayers. We have shared on Facebook that we do this, and friends of parishioners have seen it and asked us to pray for them during this time. So this has become a bit of "accidental evangelism," helping others get to know and participate in the life of St. Luke's even when they are not physically present. Our rector has felt strengthened and encouraged by the prayers offered during our prayer time, and she reports being able to engage more courageously in her work throughout the week because of these prayers.

Pray Turn Bless

Phillip says, "Without a doubt it has strengthened my experience of worship. I feel comforted and more peaceful as we move into worship time. It has also helped in my role as Sr. Warden. Due to the inevitable conflicts that arise within a congregation, stopping to pray for the ministries and individuals that can be challenging has helped me immensely. It has reminded me that worship is not just for me, but also about my role in the service. Praying for others, and especially for our leaders, reminds me of my responsibility as a member of StL and the body of Christ."

Phillip Bass is the current Senior Warden of St. Luke's, Durham, NC. He holds a Master of Divinity and Master of Theology from Duke Divinity and a Master of Counseling from NCCU and is a Licensed Professional Counselor in private practice. Phillip and his husband, J. are taking their son Brock to Disneyworld this week.

Helen Svoboda-Barber is the rector of St Luke's, Durham, NC. In her free time, she is the director of Women Embodying Executive Leadership (WEEL), a cohort discernment program for Episcopal clergywomen, and is active in her co-housing community, Eno Commons. Helen and her husband have two children and a ridiculous Clumber Spaniel named Izzie.

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