



DEO ♦ OPTIMO

THE CATECHUMENATE PROGRAM
at THE CHURCH OF ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS

2026 - 2027 Handbook

Come to the place where every breath is praise,
And God is breathing through each passing breeze.
Be planted by the waterside and raise

Your arms with Christ beneath these rooted trees,
Who lift their breathing leaves up to the skies.
Be rooted too, as still and strong as these,

Open alike to sun and rain. Arise
From meditation by these waters. Bear
The fruit of that deep rootedness. Be wise

In the trees' long wisdom. Learn to share
The secret of their patience. Pass the day
In their green fastness and their quiet air.

Slowly discern a life, a truth, a way,
Where simple being flowers in delight.
Then let the chaff of life just blow away.

“I: Beatus vir qui non abiit”

by Malcolm Guite

from David's Crown: Sounding the Psalms



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WELCOME TO THE PROGRAM!

Dear Friends in Christ,

Jesus came into the world, and lived and died for us, so that we might have deeper life, deeper peace, deeper hope, and deeper joy. *He came to show us that God is Love, and that we are loved by God.* Jesus has called us into relationship with himself. He has called us into a life of faith, of trust, in him.

The life of faith is a bit like a continual journey or pilgrimage. We find ourselves constantly “on the road,” so to speak: learning and re-learning; resting and then moving again; exploring and re-exploring; questioning, answering, and then asking anew; speaking and being silent; falling and rising; living and dying and reviving. And Jesus promises to be with us every step of the way.

The poet T.S. Eliot was a Christian well-acquainted with the long and winding pilgrimage of faith. He wrote about it in his masterpiece *The Four Quartets*. Here are some of his words:

Old men ought to be explorers
Here and there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion...

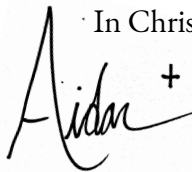
Being a Christian means being “an explorer”; it means being on the move, going further and further into God’s life, into “a deeper communion” with him. It means seeking and refusing to settle for anything less than God. *And the exploration is not something we do alone; it’s something we undertake together, in Christian community.*

And so: *wherever you are on your own journey, it is my prayer that the Catechumenate Program at St. Luke in the Fields can support you on the way.* If you're preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, or Reception into the Episcopal Church, this program is for you. If you're a long-time Christian wanting to re-ground yourself in our tradition, this program is for you. If you're a community member who simply wants to explore your spirituality in fellowship with others, this program is for you.

Maybe you want to better understand the Bible; maybe you want to learn about prayer; maybe you have questions about all the ancient rituals we do every week; maybe you're trying to figure out what this whole Gospel thing is about, and discerning your relationship to it. *Whatever the case, you're welcome to share in this experience with us.*

The Catechumenate Program is comprised of three parts: two series of classes, and a series of "milestones" designed specifically for those preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, or Reception into the Episcopal Church. *This little booklet is intended to serve as a guide to the whole program.* I hope you find it helpful! And if you have any questions or want to talk, feel free to email me anytime.

I hope you'll consider joining us for this wonderful opportunity to learn together. *Let's go exploring!*

In Christ,
 +

The Rev'd Aidan Stoddart
astoddart@stlukeinthefields.org





SERIES I: DISCOVERING CHRISTIANITY

These classes take place on select Sundays from 1:15pm - 3pm in Laughlin Hall. A light lunch will be provided. Adults preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, or Reception are expected to attend, but all parishioners are welcome (and encouraged) to participate in these classes, regardless of whether they are preparing for a sacramental rite. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with questions or concerns!

Session 1 | Jesus Christ: The Living Word of God

Sunday, September 27th, 2026

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

We start our exploration with Jesus, the Incarnate Word and Son of the Living God, whose Resurrection is the beginning and end of all Christian faith.

Session 2 | Scripture: The Library of God's Love

Sunday, October 25th, 2026

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

We call the Bible the Word of God, but what does that mean?

How do we read Scripture faithfully and lovingly?

How do we find God's Goodness in the parts that seem bad?

Session 3 | Church: The Community of God in History

Sunday, November 8th, 2026

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

Christianity isn't something you do by yourself. It's a life that unfolds in a community. We'll think this week about what it means to be companions in the Church, and we'll explore what the Church has looked like throughout history.

Session 4 | Liturgy: The Church Worshipping Together

Sunday, December 6th, 2026

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

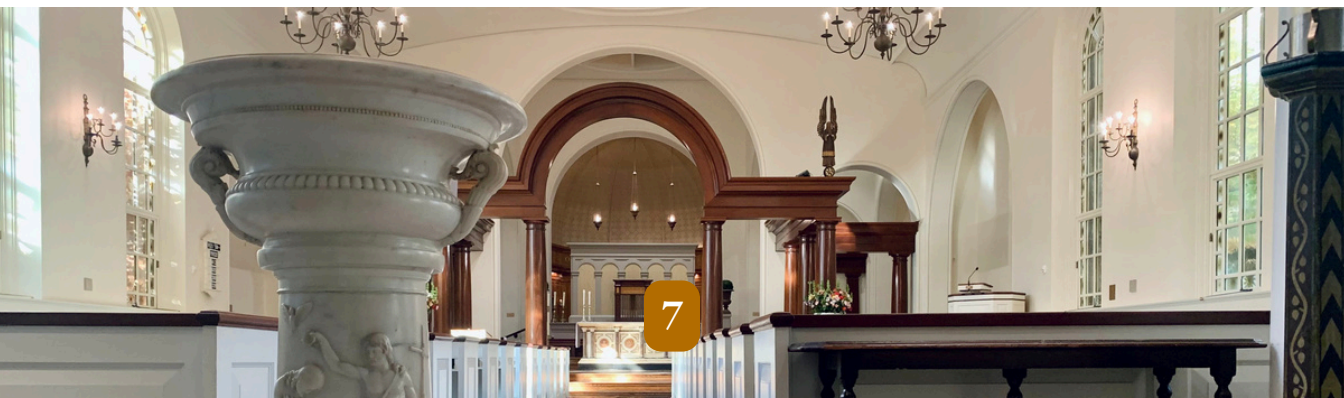
If you've spent time at St. Luke's, you know we love liturgy: that is, we love the ancient rituals that ground our life together. This week, we'll talk about what all those rituals are, and we'll talk about where they come from!

Session 5 | Prayer: Worship in the Rhythm of Life

Sunday, January 10th, 2027

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

Jesus encourages us to be together. He also reminds us to take time to pray alone. What are the different ways we can pray in our day to day life? How do we build a rhythm of prayer?





SERIES II: DEEPENING ENCOUNTER

The Series II sessions, like those of Series I, take place on select Sundays from 1:15pm-3pm in Laughlin Hall, with lunch provided. These sessions hone in on some more complicated theological topics, like Sacrament, Sin, Redemption, and the Holy Trinity. Whether you're a veteran Christian thinker wanting to refresh your mind, or a new believer wanting to dive deep for the first time, you're most welcome and encouraged to attend.

Session 1 | Trinity: The Mystery of God's Life

Sunday, February 21st, 2027

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

We say that God is One God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This paradox has confused and enchanted believers for centuries. What do we mean when we talk about God as “Triune”? And why does it matter? And how can we live in an embrace of the mystery?

Session 2 | Creation: God's Gift of Being

Sunday, February 28th, 2027

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

Everything that is, is God's. Everything that exists, exists because God called it into being. And God's creation is beloved to God—even when creatures like us mess things up! This week, we'll talk about what it means to be created by God; and we'll talk about what it means for creation to be in need of God's saving help.

Session 3 | Sacrament: God's Gift of Union

Sunday, March 7th, 2027

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

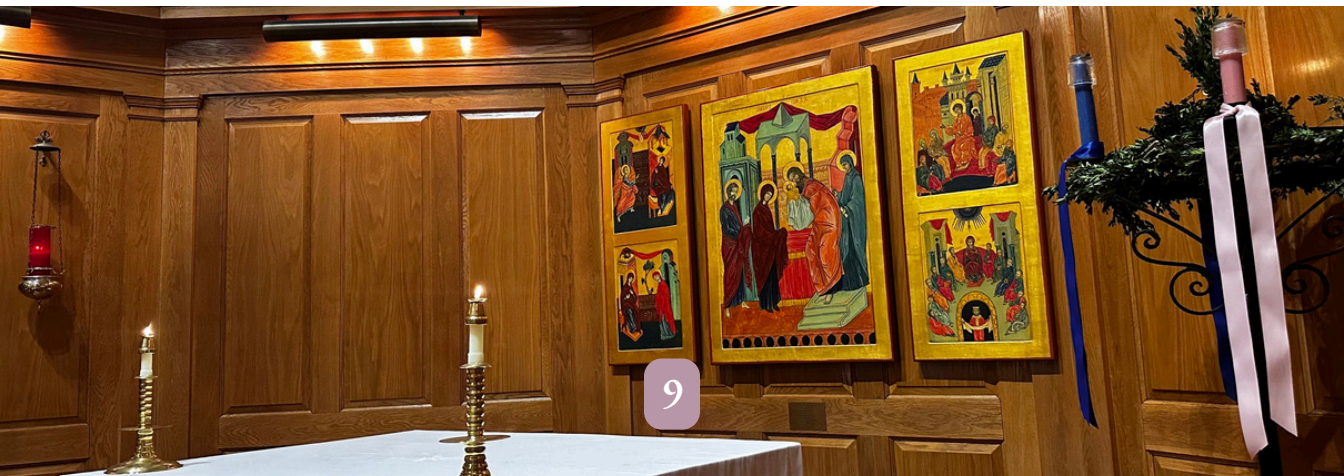
Jesus gave us two special, ritual commandments. He told us to be dipped in or sprinkled with water in the name of the Holy Trinity; and he told us to share bread and wine together in a meal commemorating his sacrifice for us on the Cross. These commandments are where we get Baptism and Holy Communion, two rituals in which God has promised to draw especially close to us. We call these rituals "Sacraments." This session, we'll explore what Sacraments are and why they matter.

Session 4 | Life in the Spirit: God's Gift of Freedom

Sunday, March 14th, 2027

1:15pm in Laughlin Hall

Jesus has ascended into heaven, but he has promised that he won't leave us alone. The Holy Spirit will dwell within us and lead us along the way. What does it mean to live in the Spirit? How are our lives different as a result of living in relationship with the God who comes to us as Holy Spirit? That's what we'll talk about this week.





MILESTONES



CATECHUMENS



The classes in Series I and Series II are open to the whole parish. If you are preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, or Reception in the Episcopal Church, this collection of “milestones” is the third component of the catechesis process. These milestones include activities and events that punctuate the Church Year and deepen the formation process. As with all other things, if you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to Fr. Aidan or any member of the St. Luke’s clergy team!

Milestone I: Ministry Volunteering

Faith involves both believing *and* doing, and in light of that, candidates for Baptism, Confirmation, or Reception are encouraged to join in one of the volunteer ministries of St. Luke’s Parish. Lent, the season of preparation leading up to Easter, is a particularly good time to take this on, but you are of course warmly encouraged to participate in ministries at any time. Examples of volunteer ministries at St. Luke’s include: the Altar Guild; the Acolyte Guild; the Lectors’ Guild; the Ushers’ Guild; the Sunday School teaching team; and Saturday neighborhood outreach team. If you need help getting connected with any ministry leaders, or if you have questions about these opportunities, just let Fr. Aidan know. We’re here to support you!

Milestone II: Weekend Retreat with Mo. Stacey

Candidates are expected to join Mother Stacey for a prayer retreat at Mariandale Retreat Center from *January 15th-17th, 2027*. This is a wonderful opportunity to rest in God’s presence together and to spend time in prayer before the Lenten season begins. For more information on the retreat, contact a member of the clergy.

Milestone III: Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday next occurs on *February 10th, 2027*. This day of fasting and penance is the beginning of Lent, and is the first step on the forty-day road to Easter. Candidates are encouraged to observe Ash Wednesday by attending one of the day's liturgies at St. Luke's.

Milestone IV: Induction of the Candidates

If you are a candidate for Baptism, Confirmation, or Reception, on *Sunday, February 14th, 2027*, we will induct you as an official candidate during the 11:15am Mass. This will be a special moment in which the community prays for you as you continue your sacramental preparation.

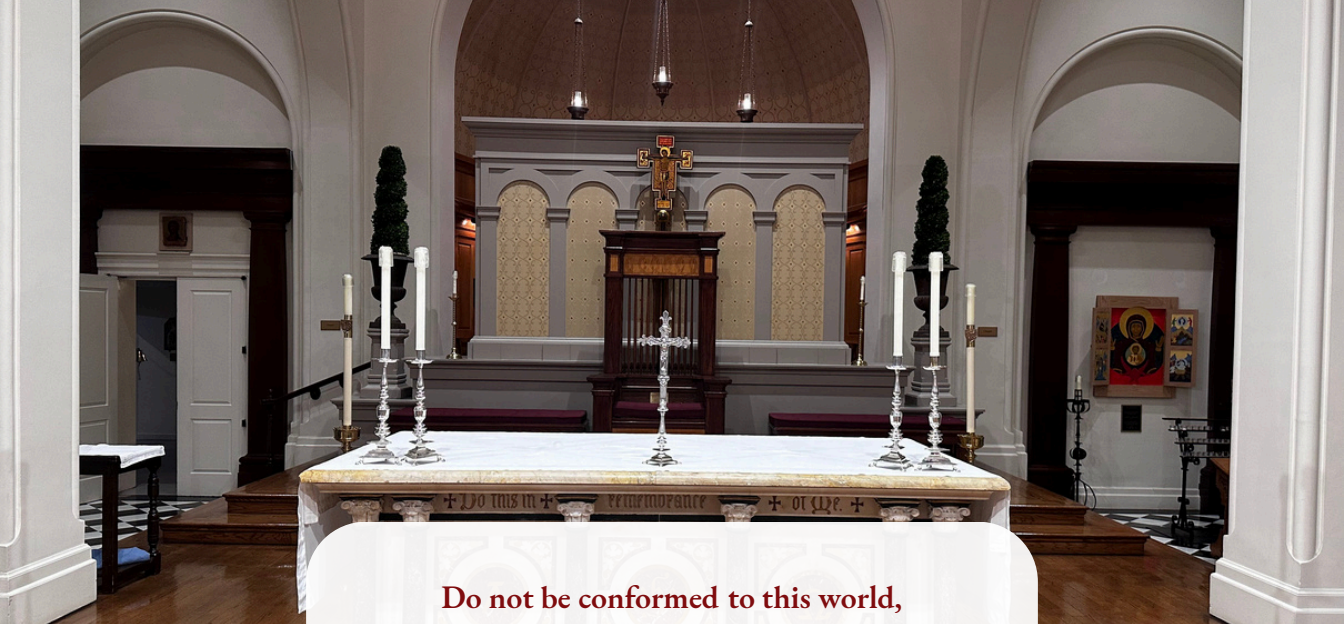
Milestone V: Instructed Eucharist

On *Thursday, March 18th, 2027*, candidates will gather for a special Eucharist and then share a festive supper at a local restaurant. This will be an opportunity to explore the details of Holy Communion.

Milestone VI: The Great Vigil of Easter

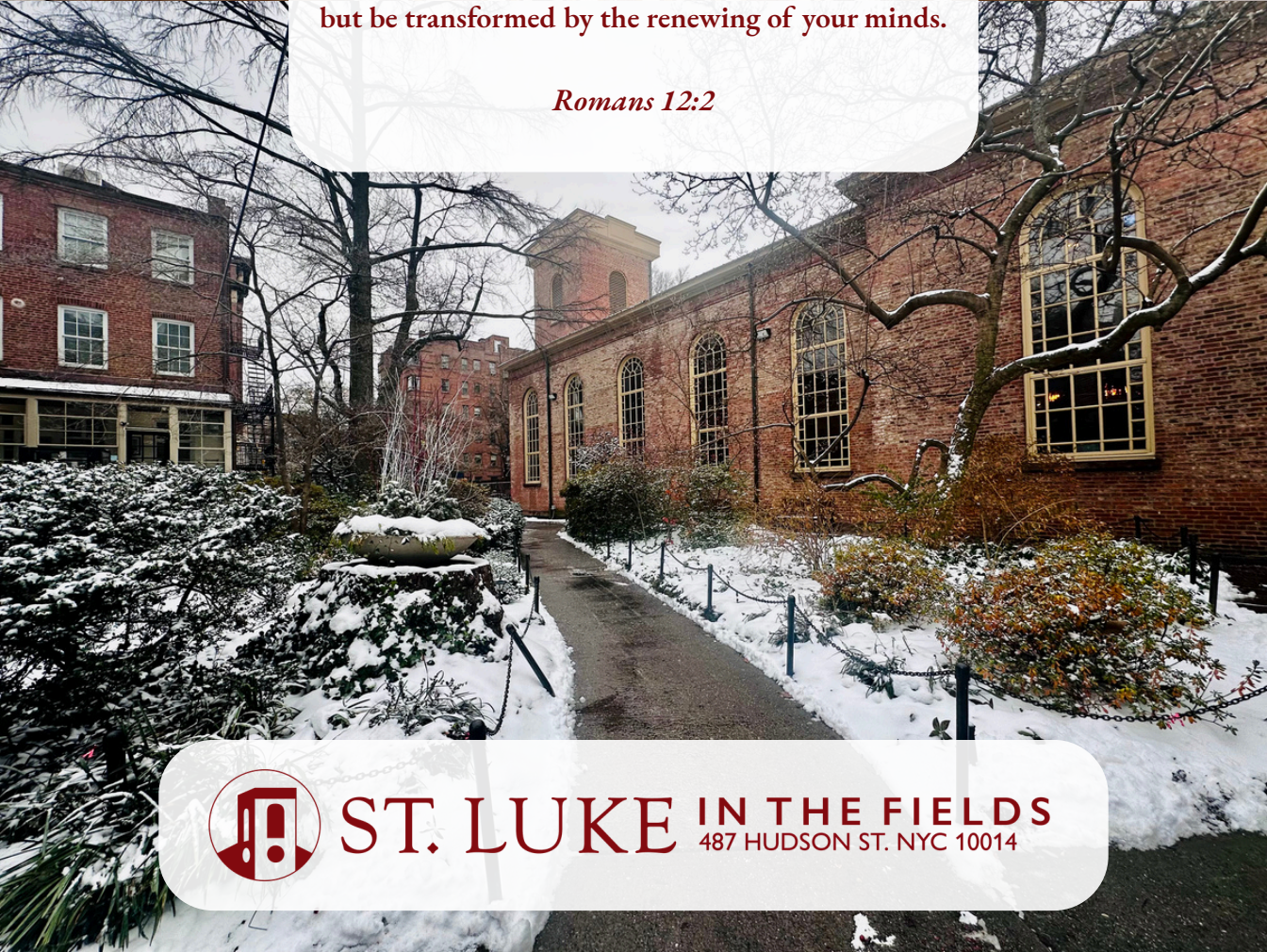
The whole year will have been building up to this moment! On *Saturday, March 27, 2027*, on the Eve of the Feast of the Resurrection, we will observe the Great Vigil of Easter. At the Vigil, all the catechumens who have been preparing for Baptism, Confirmation, or Reception will be baptized, confirmed, or received by our visiting bishop. The liturgy begins at 8pm, and is preceded by a festive supper in Laughlin Hall.





Do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.

Romans 12:2



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