

St. Luke's to undertake project to better reflect beloved community in our worship space

Come and See
the *difference* Christ makes



*Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
Oh, how good and pleasant it is when we dwell in
beloved community.
(Psalm 96:9, 133:1)*



At St. Luke's, we are blessed to have received the gift of a rich faith tradition. This faith has been nurtured through the generations, spreading from the apostles in Jerusalem to the British Isles, to the American colonies, to the establishment of St. Luke's Parish in 1753, and to our reception of this faith in our own day.

One of the legacies of this faith is our beautiful, historic, and Anglican worship space. Built in 1828 and expanded and renovated in 1883, 1909, 2003, and 2015, we have inherited a worship space that has cradled generations of Christians in the faith, worship, and service of the Triune God. We have all experienced the numinous sense of beauty and holiness that exudes from our worship space, and whether we are aware of it or not, we have all been formed in faith by this sacred space. Architecture can teach us as much as the words of faith themselves.

For this reason, we are not only inheritors of this faith and church, but also its stewards. It is our task to care for our church grounds and to share the Good News of God in Christ. Part of caring for our church means ensuring that it is not only kept in sound condition, but also that it does the work of properly forming people in the faith as the Spirit leads us.

While our worship space is full of beauty, it is also the product of the times in which it was built and expanded. In particular, our stained glass windows come from an era that does not reflect our identity and goal of [becoming the beloved community](#). In the fall of 2020, we had an in-depth study of the history of our worship space, with special attention being given to our stained glass windows and other religious art. If you did not take the opportunity to participate in this offering,

the [recorded sessions are available on the St. Luke's Salisbury YouTube channel](#). We learned much about the saints portrayed in our windows, as well as those who are memorialized in their dedications.

One thing that becomes obvious when studying our windows is that many of the saints depicted in them are not accurately represented. We know that the disciples and other Biblical figures were what we would call today “Middle Eastern.” However, in our windows, they are all depicted as Europeans. This is understandable given the era they were installed. For one, this gives us an impoverished sense of Biblical literacy and theological imagination. Furthermore, this lack of diversity and accuracy works against our aim of beloved community and makes our space less welcoming to many people.

To address this issue, we considered all options that came to mind. Some of these solutions were not at all desirable and were not seriously pursued. Such unfavorable solutions would include removing windows or changing them. This would be costly and controversial – neither of which would advance our goal of reconciliation and inclusivity. Instead, after study, prayer, discernment, and conversation, it has been decided that we will add to our space to pursue these goals.

With approval from the Vestry, a committee was formed to direct this project. Led by the Rector, the committee consists of our Deacon, the Rev. Bonnie Duckworth, Chip Carter (Junior Warden), Reg Boland, Anne Scott Clement, Davis Cooke, Edward Norvell, Dora Mbuwayesango, and Stephanie Phoenix. St. Luke's will be commissioning seven icons in the church to add to the diversity of saints represented, as well as more accurately depicting Biblical characters.

These icons will include:

- Four icons in the nave to be placed alongside the pilasters in the front section of the nave closest to the nave crossing. These icons will be written by the well-established Episcopal iconographer [Suzanne Schleck](#) and will be approximately 2 feet wide by 3 feet tall. Depicted will be:
 - Manteo: The first person baptized in the Church of England in the Western hemisphere (that we know of). As an indigenous person, he also honors the indigenous peoples of this land. By being placed next to the window of St. William of York (a line of windows which begins with St. Augustine of Canterbury and St. Aidan), a clear connection is made from the British heritage of our faith to the transmission of faith on our shores.
 - William Wilberforce: Was a member of British Parliament in the 1700 and 1800s who fought vociferously against the slave trade. His icon will be placed next to St. Wulfstan, who centuries earlier spoke out against the slavery trade in the 1000s. Wilberforce, though not a person of color, is an icon of a Christian who used his privilege and life to fight for justice.
 - Bishop Henry Beard Delaney: Served as Bishop Suffragan of North Carolina from 1918-1928 and was one of the first black bishops to serve in The Episcopal Church. Bishop Delaney visited Salisbury in his pastoral oversight of St. Philip's Episcopal

Church and is remembered for his spirit of reconciliation and perseverance. Placement of this icon next to the window of St. Alphege will portray two bishops who are remembered as strong and caring pastors of the flock.

- Elizabeth Duncan Koontz: Is remembered as a champion for equity, education, and justice. She was a member of St. Philip's and later, St. Luke's. She served as the Director of the Women's Bureau of the US Department of Labor and the President of the National Education Association. A graduate of Livingstone College, the Salisbury Human Relations Council bestows the Elizabeth Duncan Koontz Humanitarian Award annually and St. Luke's has recently begun commemorating her on January 7. This icon will appear next to the window of St. Hilda - both strong women who championed education.
- One icon of St. Luke will be added to the Baptistry. Luke, as our patron, is portrayed in the Good Shepherd window, but is not accurately depicted. This icon will be written by [Dorothy Perez](#), an accomplished iconographer and artist, and will include many aspects of Luke's identity as a physician and evangelist. This icon will also be 2 feet by 3 feet.
- Two larger icons (approximately 4 feet wide by 7 feet tall) will go on either side of the Ascension window. The windows in the back section of the nave all depict scenes from the life of Christ (Nativity, Ascension, and Easter) and these icons will supplement those windows. These two icons will be written by [Kelly Latimore](#), an iconographer known for both his skill and for bringing the faith to life through iconography.
 - The Transfiguration: This Biblical event is seen as one of the fullest revelations of the glory and identity of Christ, as he is transfigured on the mountaintop and appears with Moses and Elijah. This event includes a Passion prediction and is interpreted as prefiguration of the Resurrection, so it fits quite well thematically between the windows depicting the holy myrrh bearers (Easter) and the Ascension. The Transfiguration also highlights the importance of the Jewish foundation of our faith, and will help to correct some stereotypical and caricatured depictions of the (Jewish) women at the tomb on Easter morning.
 - Pentecost: The Holy Spirit is (mostly) noticeably absent in most of the religious artwork of our space, and therefore a sense of vocation and mission is not represented in our worship space. This icon will correct that and complements the themes of Ascension and Incarnation, both of which are depicted in windows that flank this icon. The motifs of Pentecost as described in Acts 2 also lend themselves to an icon that will portray beloved community across time, space, and identity.

The reason why we are commissioning icons is that icons more than religious art; they are prayers in color and line. These works are not simply about adding more faces, but rather expanding our witness and deepening our prayers. All of these icons will be of the highest quality and will fit well in our worship space.

When we studied the history of St. Luke's, it also became clear that every few generations, a project such as this one has been undertaken to commemorate and honor the saints of the previous generations at St. Luke's. Such a project has not commenced in quite a while, and we want to take this opportunity to invite all of the St. Luke's community to give thanks for the saints of St. Luke's and our own loved ones. As such, there will be plaques that accompany each of these icons. However, this will not be a standard named memorial project in which only seven donors (of a certain financial means) can contribute.

Instead, this project is about pursuing beloved community and will be pursued by our entire community. We plan to have a larger donor plaque that will name all who wish to contribute to this project, even if they are not able to sponsor the cost of an entire icon. If you would like to fully sponsor the cost of an entire icon, that opportunity will be available - but it does not take away from the fact that this is a project of the entire beloved community of St. Luke's. If you are interested in making such a donation, please speak with Father Robert. Should we raise funds above the total needed, a donation in the name of Elizabeth Duncan Koontz will be made to the scholarship programs at Livingstone College.

We also have a planned Phase 2 of this work to include some additional artwork in the Chapel, but we are seeking to begin this project in the church first. The plan is to have most of these icons finished and dedicated this upcoming winter (2021-2022).

This project is a significant and generational one at St. Luke's. Not only will it make clear our desire for beloved community, but it will shape us and future generations in the faith. You will hear more in the coming weeks about how to be a part of this project. If you have any questions about this project, you can reach out to any member of the committee named above.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Father Robert +". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Father Robert Black

Rector