

# Nomination for the Willis Harman Spirit at Work Award

## 1. Basic Data

- St. Luke's Episcopal Health System
- Founded in 1954
- Approximately 7000 employees
- Healthcare services
- Main Website [www.stluketexas.com](http://www.stluketexas.com) Episcopal Health Charities [www.slehc.org](http://www.slehc.org)

## 2. Contact Person

Lara Hill-Pavlik, Senior Organizational Development Specialist  
832-355-4764 or [lhill-pavlik@sleh.com](mailto:lhill-pavlik@sleh.com)

Rev. James Alcorn, Director Pastoral Care and Education  
832-355-3258 or [jalcorn@sleh.com](mailto:jalcorn@sleh.com)

3a.

### **Mission Statement St. Luke's Episcopal Health System**

St. Luke's Episcopal Health System, serving all God's children as the health ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, seeks to raise the quality of life by enhancing community health through the delivery of superior value health services.

### **Values Statement**

St. Luke's operates on these principles:

**Integrity.** Being completely honest in everything we do is the basis of our actions.

**Valuing People.** Taking care of people, including patients and employees, is the reason we exist.

**Excellence.** Striving to enhance high quality is our constant pursuit.

**Goal Orientation.** Focusing on what we want to achieve helps us design the best way to realize our vision.

## 3b. How does St. Luke's define "Spirit" or "Spirituality"? How do we talk about the "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions of spirituality?

*"We will not build just another hospital. That would be a betrayal of our commission as a Church of God. We shall build a Church Hospital in which all the mountain-moving powers of faith and prayer and human skill can be brought to bear upon individuals in need. It will be a hospital in which the Chapel will stand close to its very heart. It will be a witness to a gallant and decisive fact of human experience namely, that "we are Children of God."*

--Right Reverend John E. Hines

Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas 1955 – 1964.

Bishop Hines' quote above is scripted in beautiful letters on the wall by the entrance to the chapel in the hospital. It is a testament to St. Luke's commitment to honor the spirituality of every patient, family member and employee who walks through the door. This welcoming and acceptance reaches far beyond the precepts of any single faith. The vast majority of the patients and employees here are not Episcopalians. All faiths are honored, be they Jewish, Muslim, Bahai, Roman Catholic or one of many other systems of belief.

Much of corporate America requires people to check their spirituality at the door. Policies and procedures are driven by fear. At St. Luke's, the expression of spiritual beliefs is not merely tolerated. All employees are encouraged to embrace a higher sense of purpose into their everyday work. How is this accomplished? There are many vehicles, but one example is that all major meetings or events begin with an ecumenical invocation. When members of senior leadership bow their heads in prayer, it sends a clear message to every employee that they are safe expressing their beliefs.

From a horizontal perspective, one of the strongest attributes of the St. Luke's culture is its alignment with its mission and values. From the first day of employment, expectations are communicated to new employees that their behavior and attitudes must align with them. The values *Integrity, Goal Orientation, Valuing People, and Excellence* are words used every day. Projects routinely specify which values they are helping to support. Managers mention them in almost every department meeting. All strategic decisions are made within the context of the mission and values, and St. Luke's works hard to walk the spiritual talk.

For example, in 1997 the decision was made for St. Luke's to take a proactive approach to caring for people who are at high risk due to socioeconomic factors by extending its reach deep into the community to care for those in need. To accomplish this goal, St. Luke's created a new entity within the health system, St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities (SLEHC) as a grant-making public charity. SLEHC increase opportunities for health enhancement and disease prevention, especially among the underserved, and makes possible measurable improvement in community health status and individual well being. Since its inception, SLEHC has awarded over \$52 million to non-profit service organizations throughout the 57 counties of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. SLEHC is the area's largest faith based charity and St. Luke's takes great pride in this community outreach.

**3c. How do you handle concerns about diversity of religions and what boundaries do you set around employees trying to convert each other, or in any way make others uncomfortable?**

The following are excerpts from the vision statements of the Department of Pastoral Care and Education. These statements set the basis for inclusiveness and understanding. Responsibility for inclusiveness does not, however, rest solely on the shoulders of those in Pastoral Care. But rather, this responsibility is shared by all St. Luke's family members and is embraced willingly. Just one example of this inclusiveness occurred

about 11 years ago when St. Luke's was the first hospital in the Texas Medical Center to establish a Muslim prayer room complete with a Koran and prayer rugs.

*The Department of Pastoral Care and Education is called: to be a vehicle through which the healing ministry of Jesus the Christ is lived out with love, respect and dignity for every individual.*

*To be centered by God in a living chapel, which is a mysterious, uplifting and powerfully gentle sanctuary; we respond to the proclamation of what and who we are together.*

*We are powerful voices of reason in the ethical dilemmas of our age and with respect for one another, to strive to enrich each other's ministry in ways that allow for creativity and growth.*

*Our inclusiveness generates courageous, independent thought, and rich pilgrimages of faith.*

*Knowing we pass this way but once, we seek to touch our souls... that we might hear those around us who call upon us.*

### **Diversity and Commonality Advisory Council**

Several years ago a special group of employees was developed called the Diversity and Commonality Advisory Council (DCAC). The intent of the DCAC initiative is to enhance the quality of care delivered to our diverse community, and to expand opportunities for the growth and development of our employees. This is accomplished through an unwavering commitment to an environment that embraces and celebrates the uniqueness of all people, and builds bridges between individuals.

The DCAC reviews issues of a religious, societal, age, racial nature etc., They advise senior leadership on developing and implementing programs, communication, education, and activities that build awareness and support for diversity and commonality throughout St. Luke's. The council also provides all managers with an international holiday schedule each year. This schedule highlights cultural and religious holidays from around the world. This enables managers to anticipate the scheduling needs of their employees and juggle days off when needed to honor the varied belief systems of each employee.

### **Solicitation, Boundaries, Harassment, etc.**

St. Luke's has never encountered significant issues surrounding inappropriate religious behavior between employees. However, should any such event occur, it would be addressed within the contents of our policy on harassment; excerpts from which state:

- St. Luke's has established valuing people as one of its core values and insists that all employees be treated with dignity and respect. It is St. Luke's policy to conduct all employment relationships in an environment that is neither hostile nor offensive. St. Luke's does not condone intimidation or harassment of any person for any reason, including race, color, *religion*, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, or disability. It will be the responsibility of all employees to maintain a work environment free of intimidation, harassment, or

insult of any form. St. Luke's will take corrective action, up to and including discharge, to address and eliminate these actions.

*Religion Defined* -- This includes all aspects of religious observance and practice as well as belief or non-belief.

### **3d. What policies, programs, or practices explicitly promote or enable spirituality at work?**

Any visitor to St. Luke's can observe the high-tech equipment and the state-of-the-art intensive care units. They can watch the interaction between top medical specialists and highly skilled nurses and other professional staff. But the atmosphere that patients and visitors soon come to recognize goes beyond the obvious. It's the heart-felt qualities of compassion, hope, and trust that transform a major health system into a caring, healing environment—one that touches each patient, each employee, and values each life. It's the culture that all staff members at St. Luke's have come to appreciate and it's the culture that makes them call St. Luke's their home away from home. This culture that we know and love has grown from the seeds of our Values, Vision, and Mission, all of which have a rich foundation in spirituality.

While founded and still run by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, St. Luke's embraces the faiths and spirituality of all employees, patients, families and visitors. Departments and programs have been established, yet these programs are born out of a life lived together. They are the natural effects of a culture based in spirituality rather than attempts to create such a culture or to drive the nature of the relationship employees have with each other or the higher powers in which they believe.

#### **The Pastoral Care and Education Department**

Members of the Pastoral Care and Education Department share responsibility with senior leadership for shepherding the evolution of a culture that honors every employee—body, mind and spirit. Staff members represent various faiths, but all share the common goal of ministering to St. Luke's patients and retouching the souls of those who entered helping professions. A requirement of the department, established when St. Luke's was first founded back in 1954, is that staff chaplains, ministers, etc. spend 50% of their time and resources ministering to employees.

This ministry takes many forms including the organization of many activities where St. Luke's employees can volunteer within the community to enrich their own lives. For example, Pastoral Care coordinates volunteers at a local weigh station where 250-300 homeless people are fed each day. Volunteers include employees from many departments including Nursing and Pharmacy. The department was also instrumental in the development of The Lord of the Streets, a church comprised of the homeless. As the church grew, a clinic staffed with volunteers was opened following Sunday services to provide medical care. Additionally, upon discovering that 37% of the children in a local school had no health insurance the Incarnation Clinic was born to provide charity care to meet their needs. All of these activities are performed under the umbrella of serving all

God's children and allow St. Luke's employees the opportunity to directly observe the impact of their spirituality and volunteerism.

Each year the Pastoral Care Department sponsors 8 year-long internships. Participants come from around the world and represent every religious persuasion. Additionally there are 10 students each year that complete a summer seminary program.

There are many programs and practices that speak to the heart of spirituality within the workplace at St. Luke's. Several are profiled below.

### **The Sacred Vocations Program**

Initially created to improve patient satisfaction at the hospital, the Sacred Vocation program has evolved to help employees relate their work to what gives meaning in their lives and to create a work environment that supports a view of work as sacred vocation. Interventions are conducted during regularly scheduled work hours to emphasize the importance of the process. The interventions are participative in nature and all employees are encouraged to participate and freely share their work experiences without fear of potential criticisms from the facilitator or other participants. The purpose of the intervention is to encourage employees to examine their lives and how their work creates meaning in their lives.

There are four phases to the Sacred Vocation process. The structured nature of the program speaks to St. Luke's commitment to follow-through with respect to nurturing spirituality in the workplace. All facilitators are required to complete a comprehensive training program prior to conducting interventions.

Phase I--Becoming embedded in the organization.

- This is a diagnostic phase where interviews are conducted, an environment of support is created, and a team is formed to complete the process.

Phase II-- Recognition of Work as Sacred Vocation.

- The intervention itself. The purpose of which is to increase employee's knowledge of work as sacred vocation and evaluate the connectedness of work and spiritual selves. Three one and a half hour sessions are conducted:
  1. Building Trust
  2. Finding Meaning in Life Through Work & Connecting Spiritual Identity and Work Identity
  3. Training for Healing Behaviors & Development of a Portrait of an Ideal Nurse or other healing employee.

Phase III--Reinvent the Work Environment as Sacred Vocation.

- A participatory action research process is used to strive to empower employees to increase control over their lives. Again, three one and a half hour session are conducted:
  1. Identify obstacles and facilitators to work as sacred vocation.
  2. Deciding how the work environment can be changed to increase work as sacred vocation

3. Developing an action plan to implement changes identified in previous sessions and assess the accomplishments to date.

#### Phase IV—Maintenance

- Creating an environment for reflexive learning is a necessary step to building a learning organization and to developing a sustainable support structure for the sacred vocation program. Information gained in Phase III is used to develop measures of success and organizational tools for sacred vocation in-service programs. In doing so, these activities help coalesce the organization and its staff around health care work as sacred vocation.

#### **Community of Hope**

Community of Hope is a Lay Chaplain program started in 1994 where employees receive special training in hospital ministry. Participants in the program speak of it as a life changing and affirming process. Most come to the hospital one day a week either after or before work and spend three hours ministering to patients. The program has been of particular interest amongst administrative and support staff employees who do not participate in direct patient care, as it allows them to observe directly the impact of the healing works performed every day at St. Luke's. Please see the testimonials section with remarks from Mike Churchman and Linda Trekell who have both completed the program. Graduates also serve on the Critical Incident Counseling Team, profiled below.

#### **Critical Incident Counseling Team**

Created in partnership between Pastoral Care and the Social Services department, the sole purpose of this team is to counsel employees through hardships of either a personal or professional nature. Any St. Luke's employee can call the team and ask for their help and support. The team was called to action within minutes of the terrorist attacks on September 11th. Over the course of the next several days and weeks, they held prayer services regularly and sessions of a "Faith in Crisis" workshop were offered. Scheduled to last only an hour, the attendees remained long after the workshop was over. Together they decided that the workshop had been so meaningful to them that they established a Bible study group that met regularly during lunch once a week. Members of the group represent several different faiths.

The Critical Incident Team has been called to action on many occasions. They responded when an employee's daughter was killed in a car accident, and when an executive secretary was murdered in her home. The team gathered when a nurse manager nearly died on her unit from an asthma attack on Christmas Eve and the employees in her department had to resuscitate her. The employees possessed tremendous clinical skills and provided this type of critical care on a daily basis, but suddenly they found themselves questioning the very actions they had performed to save her life. For example, they were concerned that perhaps they had violated her dignity by removing pieces of her clothing for emergency treatment. They were traumatized by nearly losing someone for whom they had so much respect. The CIT team helped them process their feelings and fears, regroup themselves in their faith in a higher power, and get them on the road to recovery.

### **Tropical Storm Allison and The Great Flood**

There has perhaps been no greater example of the Spirit at St. Luke's than the events surrounding Tropical Storm Allison, which even though three years in the past, are still talked about with animation and reverence.

Tropical Storm Allison dropped 36 inches of rain within 24 hours on St. Luke's and other parts of Houston during the summer of 2001. After first losing city power, then auxiliary power, St. Luke's employees came together in a true crisis and worked around the clock. There was only one objective that night, to ensure the safety of the more than 500 patients who were in the hospital and the employees who were caring for them. Not a single life was lost that weekend due to the flooding, thanks to the amazing focus, tenacity, and skill of the nursing staff and other employees. This is truly astounding when one considers that there is only a matter of minutes to begin manual bagging for respirator-dependent patients when back-ups fail. The employees at St. Luke's had a job to do that night, and they did it with remarkable focus and energy.

There was, however, a brief period of time that night when things were looking tenuous. But just as the night supervisors were beginning to worry, employees started showing up to pitch in. There had been very few calls for help due to phone lines being down all over the city. There had even been a mistaken announcement made on one of the local news channels telling St. Luke's employees to stay home. But the staff knew they were needed. Some of them had to try five or six different routes to get to the hospital, and many had to spend the night when St. Luke's became completely cut off. But they came, and they persevered.

### **Employee Hardship Center**

Monday morning, following Tropical Storm Allison, there was still water in the Emergency Room, Cafeteria, Pharmacy, Radiology Department, Employment Offices, and parking garages. Parts of the hospital were still without lights, air conditioning and potable water. Operating rooms and equipment were still contaminated. Research labs were completely devastated, and computer networks were offline. Yet, in spite of all the operational issues and millions of dollars in damages that needed to be addressed, one of the first things to be put into action was the establishment of the Employee Hardship Center to help identify and assist St. Luke's employees who had suffered personal losses in the flooding.

Over the course of the next few weeks, more than 150 employees were identified as flood victims with one third of them having suffered catastrophic losses. Every flood victim received an assistance grant. In addition to financial support, the Employee Hardship Center gathered information about everything from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Red Cross assistance, to sanitation procedures for flood-damaged items, to local businesses providing discounts for replacement items, to making minor home repairs safely.

A flood drive was organized to collect food, clothing and monetary donations to help those in need. An adopt an employee program was started as well, which paired up

employees in need with departments or work groups that could give them personal help with recovery.

### **Celebrations and Services**

Every **Martin Luther King Day**, a formal service is held to commemorate the spirit and teaching of this great leader. A renowned keynote speaker is brought in, video clips are played and the St. Luke's Choir sings from their heart. The auditorium is packed with employees of all races who join hands and lift their voices in song as well. Many employees bring their children to share in this spiritually uplifting event.

The choir also set the stage for the memorial service held on the one-year anniversary of the **September 11<sup>th</sup>** terrorist attacks. As the choir sang, behind them pictures from that terrible day were shown. Emotions ran high and tears ran down the faces of the audience. At the end, following prayers and moments of silence, people began hugging one another and no one wanted to leave.

Each year on **Ash Wednesday**, more than 1,000 people receive ashes. Special services are held in the Chapel during the Easter season which all are welcome to attend.

This year the Diversity and Commonality Council sponsored the St. **Luke's International Festival**. Many booths were set up representing the societies, beliefs, art forms, culinary arts, and religious practices of cultures throughout the world. Wedding garments were modeled, dancers performed and food was sampled. Employees, patients and visitors were able to gain greater appreciation for the cultures and belief systems of countries ranging from Antarctica to Australia to Africa.

The **Blessing of the Hands** is another practice directed at aligning the work performed every day at St. Luke's with a higher purpose. All employees are welcome to participate be they nurses, environmental service specialists, or patient care assistants as a reminder that their hands are instruments of healing. A special Blessing of the Hands ceremony was held on the opening day of a new St. Luke's community medical center in The Woodlands last year so that from the very first day there would be an affirmation of faith in healing.

**Memorial Services** are held following the passing of any employee to provide employees the opportunity to grieve and to support one another. Also, a special service is held periodically to honor the passing of patients who passed away while in the hospital or upon returning home. This service is open to all and provides a way for employees to mourn the passing of those who were in their care. Employees are reminded that while all our patients cannot be cured, they can all be healed.

### **Paid Time Off Donation Bank**

The Paid Time Off (PTO) program provides flexibility and gives every employee who works at St. Luke's greater control over the use of paid leave. Many use this program to continue receiving pay while performing various volunteer activities. Extra hours many

be donated to co-workers in need. The following testimonial is from an employee who received a donation.

*“To the St. Luke’s family: I want to take this time to thank you for opening up your hearts to allow me to be able to benefit from the PTO Donation Bank. I’ve only been here three years and needed to be on extended leave due to my surgery. St. Luke’s is an extension of my family. I don’t take my PTO for granted and put in a request for the PTO Donation Bank. I am grateful that it was granted, for my surgery took a toll on me and was something that I didn’t expect. Because of people like you, my mind was at ease during the time I was on extended leave. I just want to say to you THANK YOU from my heart to yours. And I hope in the future I am in a position to give back what was given to me.”*

### **Educational Events**

Many learning opportunities that support the culture of spirituality at St. Luke’s are offered throughout the year. The following is a sample of recent offerings.

#### **Integrating Spirituality in Healthcare**

This weekend retreat is sponsored by The Episcopal Diocese of Texas, St. Luke’s Episcopal Health Charities, and the Texas/ Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. The retreat has been so popular that it has been repeated several times.

“The purpose of this conference is to expose healthcare professionals to research results and current practices in medical centers and medical and nursing schools, which have observed a positive relationship between spirituality and health in a clinical setting,” said The Rev. Bob Wells, Conference Chair. “Additionally, we wish to give healthcare professionals a chance to share their experiences and provide opportunities for worship and spiritual growth.”

#### **Anti-Semitism Workshop**

Anti-Semitism, defined as hostility toward or discrimination against Jews, was the subject of a brown bag seminar offered in April of last year. Guests watched *The Wave*, a film about an experiment by a high school teacher who formed one of his classes into a group with its own salute, belief system and power structures. It shows how a group—such as Nazi Germany—can be molded into fascists. A discussion followed the film.

Anti-Semitism’s origins began centuries ago and have negatively impacted world events ever since. This seminar, presented in a partnership with Holocaust Museum Houston, promoted education about its dangers and provide solutions for combating it.

#### **Journaling Workshop**

By jotting down thoughts, dreams or stories in a journal, one can gain perspective on their career, family and relationships. It’s like having a conversation with a close friend who lets you make mistakes and say whatever is on your mind. There are many

journaling techniques, ranging from recording family history to writing about future hopes. Attendees learned about journaling techniques, resources, and benefits.

### **Culture: When Worlds Collide**

This session covered the challenges that sometimes occur when people from different cultures work together and how to overcome those challenges.

### **Social Behaviors: Longing to Belong**

This session explored the universal desire to be accepted in the workplace as well as contribute and bring value to the bottom line success of the business.

### **Communication Skills: Say What?**

This session shares effective strategies that can be used to minimize unnecessary conflict by being clear in what we say and being willing to verify what we hear.

### **Violence Prevention in the Workplace**

St. Luke's latest interactive workshop, "Violence Prevention in the Workplace," was designed to prevent hostility and conflict in the workplace and promote respect, service and safety. Attendees participated in a variety of exercises promoting the use of comfort zones, which prevent rising agitation and negative attitudes.

### **Care for the Care Giver**

Care for the Care Giver is an annual experience of restorative healing of the body, mind and spirit for St. Luke's employees. Those who attend enjoy free chair massage, sample healthy energy foods and participate in demonstrations of yoga, NIA (neuromuscular integrative action), tai chi and other healing remedies. A comedy show and Stress Busters techniques are also included in the event, which takes place over the course of several days and evening to enable as many employees to participate as possible.

### **3e. What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on stakeholders?**

This August, St. Luke's will have been caring for the body, mind, and spirit of the community and its employees for 50 years. From a clinical perspective, the first successful heart transplant in the United States was performed here, more cardiac catheterizations have been performed here than anywhere else in the world, tens of thousands of babies have been born, and St. Luke's has been named to *U.S. News and World Reports* list of the best hospitals in the nation each of the 14 years the list has been in publication. St. Luke's has been and will continue to fulfill its mission.

Employees have benefited as well. Every two years St. Luke's conducts a health system wide **employee opinion survey**. Results have always met or exceeded established internal goals and external benchmarks. Once the surveys are completed, train-the-trainer programs are held to teach executives and managers how to interpret the results and develop action plans to address employee opinions. Each manager then holds departmental sessions directly with staff members where the results are communicated and discussed. Employees are given copies of the data and given the opportunity to discuss areas of success as well as opportunities for enhancement. St. Luke's has

implemented many new benefits and policies resulting from the information received by employees on the survey. Just a few examples include the 403(b) Matching retirement program, free parking, business casual dress, and flexible scheduling.

More importantly than competitive compensation and benefit policies, however, the employees recognize the spirit of St. Luke's all around them. St. Luke's employees, feel an acknowledgment that whatever they choose to believe regarding the higher powers or purposes in life will be honored. This stems from St. Luke's Core Value of Valuing People. Many people who enter the healthcare profession do so because they feel "called". They know that **the work performed here is sacred in nature**. Miracles occur here every day. The enrichment that comes with this work nourishes the soul. St. Luke's employees take this richness home with them, and it in turn nurtures their personal lives, families, and children. Even when the tragedy of those lives that couldn't be saved is experienced, it serves as a reminder to hold the ones you love that much closer to your heart.

Finally, a significant effect occurred very recently as the **Baylor College of Medicine** and St. Luke's Episcopal Health System have entered into a **new affiliation agreement** that significantly expands St. Luke's relationship as Baylor's private adult affiliated teaching hospital. For more details on this newly strengthened relationship and the impact it will have on the community, patients, physicians, and employees, please refer to the attached document.

### **3f. What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on business success?**

By embracing patient and employee-centered philosophies, St. Luke's has twice been named to *Fortune* magazine's list of "100 Best Companies to Work For". The most important component for determining placement on the list is a random employee survey. The tenure of St. Luke's employees clearly supports this recognition. Additionally, St. Luke's has been recognized by The *Houston Business Journal* each of the last three years as the #1 Health Care Employer in Houston, with accolades as the Best Place to Work in Houston (regardless of industry) in 2002.

More than 10% of St. Luke's employees have an excess of twenty years of tenure. Retaining the best and the brightest allowed St. Luke's to be recognized in 2001 as the first Magnet Hospital in the southwestern United States. This honor, given by the American Nurses Credentialing Center, the foremost authority on nursing, was only held by 34 hospitals nation-wide at the time. Some of the data collected during the Magnet process reveal the following:

- Patient satisfaction scores rate nursing care in the 92nd percentile
- Higher R.N. to patient ratio: one nurse for every six patients
- Higher retention rate of nurses; turnover at St. Luke's is 12 percent compared with the national average of 18 percent
- Hospital-acquired infections are lower than the CDC national average
- Mortality and complication rates are lower than the national average

- Vacancy rate of staff RNs is four to six percent—much less than industry norm of 14 percent
- RNs rate in 93rd percentile for staff satisfaction, higher than the national average
- Higher ratio of nurses with baccalaureate and masters degrees
- 86 percent of nurses are involved in professional development

### **Closing**

Reverend James Alcorn, Director of Pastoral Care, sums up St. Luke's Spirit at Work eloquently. "People derive strength from working here. We work hard to honor the faith-walk of all people. 500 – 600 employees start and end each day in the Chapel. They are of every color, speak every language and practice every form of prayer. Something in that reverence honors their day and helps prepare them for the day ahead and the evening they will spend with their family. The St. Luke's culture is a way of life that struggles to a higher plane."