



Messiah Messenger

June 2020

Messiah's Mission: *To know Christ and to make Christ known through the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all through a Word and Sacrament ministry of worship, Christian Education, fellowship, outreach and service.*

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THE BEST-LAID PLANS OF MICE AND MEN

Human beings are always making plans for the future, and in general that is good. But the "dark side" of planning is that we do so to try to gain peace and comfort for ourselves as we move into the future. The larger question about the future is: Who do you trust in to guide you and bring you into a future that is good and bright? As most Americans have learned to be "self-reliant" they trust in themselves to figure out a successful future. One of the most successful generals in our nation was General George S. Patton, a brilliant strategist in mechanized warfare (i.e. tank warfare). Patten made detailed battle plans with literally hundreds of "contingency plans." When he was once asked how all that planning worked out, Patton responded, "Well, it all goes to heck as soon as the first shot is fired." So what was the real secret to his success in battle? He always demanded to have a reliable chaplain who "knew how to pray for victory." (By the way, Patton went through a long list of wishy-washy chaplains who were afraid to be specific enough to boldly ask for victory).

In the Old Testament King Solomon was a very successful ruler. In Proverbs 3:5 he says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." Of course we should go to wise counselors, remembering that true wisdom comes only from God and His Word. And so King Solomon says in Proverbs, "Without counsel plans go wrong, but with many advisors they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22). But the key to the future is ultimately faith in God. As King David once declared to God, "...Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:10). Jesus, our Good Shepherd, assures us in John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

This peaceful trust in God's almighty and gracious care for us is so well expressed in the hymn *On Eagles' Wings* (Lutheran Service Book 727). The beautiful refrain of that hymn declares:

And He will raise you up on eagles' wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of His hand.

The Lord God who cares for us at all times is the great "I AM" (cf. Exodus 3:14). He is the beginning, the present, and the completion of our life. The totality of history is already complete in Him. The Triune God declares to us: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). He proclaims this at the beginning of the book of Revelation and then again at the end, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 21:6). So, why be afraid of the future? Our gracious and merciful Lord God is in charge of all the days of our lives.

As we begin the month of June and enter the season of summer, we will celebrate the great festival of the Holy Trinity (June 7th). The trinitarian nature of the true God is a further assurance of a blessed future. The beginning of all things comes from God the Father, who proclaims the eternal Word of creation, and whose Spirit lovingly hovers over all things like a mother hen spreading her wings over her little chicks (Genesis 1:1-3). So, our best plan for the future is to keep studying God's Word, which alone reveals God's good and gracious will for us. Then, by faith, we should strive to order our lives according to His will. It is as St. Paul says: "We know that in all things God works for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Therefore we can go ahead and make our "little plans" for the summer, trusting in God to take care of all the "big things." And we pray the simple prayer of the ancient Church:
"Help. save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. Amen."

Blessed summer in Christ!
Rev. James H. Blain, pastor emeritus
Vacancy pastor

Messiah Updates for June

THANK YOU, PASTOR BLAIN! Pastor Blain has informed the Board of Elders and the Church Council that he will be stepping down from his responsibilities as Messiah's Vacancy Pastor (administration, education and spiritual care) as of **Monday, June 8th**. He will continue to lead worship services until **Sunday, July 19th**.

We thank Pastor Blain for the 17 months he has served as our shepherd, and wish him and Linda God's continued blessings. If you would like to thank Pastor Blain personally, please request his contact information from the church office.

Rick Krueger and the Board of Elders are working with our Circuit Visitor (Rev. Jason Peterson of St. Peter-Rockford) and the Michigan District-LCMS to recruit a vacancy pastor for the duration of our pastoral call process. Please keep them in your prayers as they do so!

UPDATE ON IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES: At their April 27th meeting, Messiah's Board of Elders suspended in-person activities indefinitely, choosing to monitor the situation and revisiting their decision as the circumstances warrant it. The Elders' goal is to safely re-open in-person activities as soon as possible.

In light of the state of Michigan beginning a phased, regional re-opening process, the Church Council and Board of Elders have drafted *Guidelines for Reintroduction of In-Person Worship and Education*; we've enclosed a copy of them with this newsletter. These *Guidelines* are a working draft, subject to change as the situation develops and meant to guide our operations once in-person activities resume.

Messiah Updates for June, continued:

We want your feedback on these draft *Guidelines*; please review the document and contact your elder with your suggestions and concerns, in advance of the next Board of Elders meeting on **Monday, June 1**. (Elder families are listed elsewhere in this newsletter.)

We all yearn for the day when we can gather in person as God's people, to hear His Word and rejoice in His fellowship; your review of and feedback on these *Guidelines* will help us get a head start on preparations for that day. Thanks so much!

ONLINE ACTIVITIES: As we move into the summer months, we are changing our online schedule. Our worship services are now being livestreamed on our YouTube channel **every Sunday at 10 am**; thanks to Ali Ahrens, Josh Gardner and Kurt Veitengruber for helping us make the move to video! Thanks also to everyone who's tuned into our video services so far: you can do so at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyZrtHBIfblruk9OSpk0pIg>

To hear audio recordings of recent services, point your web browser to www.messiahgr.org/worship-resources and click on the arrow in the box under the service date. You can also view or download bulletins by clicking the link below the box. Audio of services will be posted **every Sunday by 12 noon**.

In addition, Rick Krueger continues to offer *Video Bible Studies* every Sunday during the suspension of activities. Beginning **Sunday, May 31st at 9 am**, we'll look at Martin Luther's letter of 1527, "Whether One May Flee from A Deadly Plague". Written to a brother pastor, it's rich in Scripture, with a surprising amount to say about our lives here and now! You can get a head start by downloading the letter from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's website at <https://blogs.lcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plague-blogLW.pdf>. Bible studies will be livestreamed on YouTube and available for viewing at www.messiahgr.org/bible-studies afterwards.

Previous worship services and Bible studies are still online at Messiah's YouTube channel; Search for "Messiah Lutheran Grand Rapids Michigan" at www.youtube.com or point your browser to the link at the end of this article's first paragraph.

Messiah's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/messiahgr) will also have links to all services and Bible studies on the day they're released.

ONLINE DEVOTIONAL RESOURCES: Messiah's "Worship Resources" page also includes links to the following special resources for these extraordinary times:

- A daily devotion Monday-Saturday mornings (Psalm verse, Scripture readings with direct online links, and a prayer) at Messiah's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/messiahgr).
- Daily video devotions from *the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* by leaders of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Watch them live at 10 am EDT each weekday at www.facebook.com/TheLCMS, or access them all at www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDu0iVoFL_d4xe2e-Mwyoxh-rR_hYiKXw
- Daily video devotions based on classic Christian hymns, presented by Rev. Dr. David Maier, president of the Michigan District-LCMS. Watch them live at 7 pm each weekday at <https://www.facebook.com/miLCMS/>, or access them all at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eg_UpehAMQE&list=PLj8v28O0X9LUAzEx0grfYS8gWaeaA4OZd

Messiah Updates for June, continued:

- Sister congregation *Our Savior Lutheran Church of Grand Rapids* is also providing services on Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at www.facebook.com/oursaviorgr and www.youtube.com/user/OurSaviorGR.
- *The Lutheran Hour* is an audio service sponsored by Lutheran Hour Ministries. It's available online at www.lutheranhour.org and broadcast locally on WSRW 105.7, Sundays at 6:30 am.
- *Worship Anew* is a video service sponsored by Lutheran Ministries Media. It's available online at www.worshipanew.org and cablecast locally on Sundays at 11:30 am (AT&T channel 24, Comcast channel 21, Direct TV channel 377, Dish channel 54).
- Free devotional resources from *Concordia Publishing House* are available at www.cph.org/t-bestill-home.aspx.
- Sacred hymns and music from Lutheran Public Radio are available at www.lutheranpublicradio.org.

Thank You!

FINANCIAL UPDATE: Thank you to those that have continued to send their contributions! We have been blessed by your generous giving and are pleased to report that we are able to pay current expenses. We have been paying preschool staff and have refunded tuition to families for the remainder of the year. We have replaced the furnace this past month as it was past the point of repairs and had served us well for almost 20 years. The capital improvement fund continues to grow and we will use that to fix the front of the church this summer.

If you are wondering what funds are available for contributions:

- General Fund for operations
- Capital fund for major items in the building
- For others fund - to help those in need managed by Pastor and the elders
- Memorial fund
- Debt reduction fund - used as additional reduction to principal on the loan

Please note there is no longer an organ fund. The organ balance was rolled into the mortgage, therefore the debt reduction fund can be used for this purpose.

We have electronic giving available for all members. There is a link on the church website www.messiahgr.org/give-now or go to www.kindrid.com and sign up to give to Messiah Lutheran Church Grand Rapids. Please let us know if you have further questions.

THANK YOU

A BIG thank you to the Trustees for the fresh coat of paint in the offices. It looks amazing!!! Thank you for all your hard work.

CONFIRMATION UPDATE: We congratulate Jetta Dengler, Callan Reickard and Connor VanderTuig on their upcoming confirmations! Their confirmation examination was held on Monday, April 27th; you can watch the livestream on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ubx-058Wfyc&t=>

We look forward to celebrating the rite of confirmation for Jetta, Callan and Connor when in-person services resume. Stay tuned for details as they come together!

Messiah Updates for June, continued:

THANK YOU! We're grateful for all our staff members and volunteers who have given of their time and talents to lead Messiah's educational efforts during 2019-20:

- **Sunday School:** Jim Hoffman, Rick & Deb Krueger, Tina Veitengruber, Sabrina Slagter
- **Junior Confirmation/Pre-Confirmation:** Pastor Blain, Pete Garchow, Deaconess Doris Kayser, Kendal Khodl, Kurt & Tina Veitengruber
- **LifeLight:** Dwight Anderson, Dan Bohlinger, Randy Gerke, Shirley Hoese, Lynette Stayton
- **CARES:** Tammy Ahrens, Laura Altemann

ASSIGNED ELDER FAMILIES: The new assignments are below. These are your "official" Elders, but remember you can always approach ANY Elder at any time with a concern.

<u>Elder</u>	<u>Last Name Begins With</u>
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Jack Keller	A thru B
Rich Griffis	C thru Di
Kevin Mueller	Dj thru Gil
Dwight Anderson	Gm thru Hoo
Bill Brinkman	Hop thru Kru
Max Conner	Krv thru Mee
Pete Garchow	Mef thru Pe
Randy Gerke	Pf thru Sha
Larry Goodlander	Shb thru Tr
John Lueders	Tu thru Z

RECOGNIZING OUR GRADUATES: Messiah congratulates our 2020 high school graduates: **Sorrell Dean, Andrea Glenn, Noelle Kaminski, Kate London and Nicole Ottenjan!** We are working on a way to recognize these dear sisters in Christ in the coming weeks; stay tuned for further details.

Congratulations to Sorrell, Andrea, Noelle, Kate, Nicole and to all other graduates! May God continue to bless you and guide you.



THROUGH DIRECT YOUR DOLLARS, the Parish Service Guild has a great way to raise money to help with the ongoing needs of our Preschool! Every time you shop at your local **Family Fare or D & W Fresh Market** store, save your receipts.

To reach our goal, we'll be collecting eligible receipts in our Direct Your Dollars box. The box has the logo on it, and it's located on the shelving outside the office. Or, you may drop them off in Sharon Hula's mailbox.

Please make sure you drop off the entire original receipt. Also, the receipt must have the words **DIRECT YOUR DOLLARS** on it to qualify.

From the Parish Assistant's Desk

There's a lot for all of us to process in this newsletter! I'm grateful for Pastor Blain's loving service to us during the last year and a half, as well as for your ongoing financial support of Messiah's mission. I look forward to working with our next vacancy pastor, and to the time when we can gather in person for the Divine Service and the study of God's Word. And I continue to pray that, in His time and according to His will, God brings our next shepherd to us.

For now, God's gifts continue, bountiful, rich and gracious – but at one remove, in ways we're still not used to, wrapped in uncertainty and unpredictability, meant to move us to greater trust in Him.

And that brought this beautiful historic prayer to mind; I hope you'll pray it with me in the days and weeks to come.

O Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Yours in Him, Rick Krueger

Other Items

WEST MICHIGAN LUTHERAN is now enrolling for the 2020-2021 school year. An affordable and exemplary Christ-centered education that is within your reach. Contact the WML office at (616) 455-2200 or email office@wmlhs.org to get the simple and easy enrolment paperwork. WML Looks forward to teaching your child!

WEST MICHIGAN LUTHERAN is looking for families to host exchange students for the 2020-21 school year. If you are interested in this joyful and rewarding opportunity contact the WML office at (616) 455-2200 or email office@wmlhs.org.

MUSTANG GOLF CHALLENGE is **July 18th** at Yankee Springs Golf Course. Be the first to contact Mrs. Angers at kangers@wmlhs.org to get registered and win 4 free Mulligans.

WEST MICHIGAN LUTHERAN CLASS OF 2020 graduation has been rescheduled for **Thursday, June 25th**.

IN OUR PRAYERS



- ✦ Those with immediate prayer concerns: **(Rick Quackenbush, Elaine Jingles, Arline Woosley, Sharon Navarre), Brenda Eller and Family**, friends of Larry & Sandy Goodlander; **Larry Wilson**, brother of Dick Wilson; **David Canonn**, friend of Judy Spencer; **Zoey Brinkman**, great granddaughter of Bill & Barb Brinkman; **Debby King Lang**, stepdaughter of Shirley Lang; **Alexis White**, granddaughter of Rev. & Rosy Masih, **Janet Powers**, friend of Shirley Lang; **Rosie Schutter**, Preschool student; **Janet and Karen Bartholomew**, nieces of Bill & Barb Brinkman and **Lisa VanEtten**, daughter of Bill & Rita VanEtten.
- ✦ Those with ongoing prayer concerns: **(Boston Dengler, Mike Mull, Doris Kayser, Dody Reinke, Bernie & Eileen Ottenjan, Claudia London, Kathy Mueller); Dawn Feorene**, niece of Elaine Jingles; **Robert Neuman**, brother of Theona Gee; **Dawn Metivier**, mother of Leah Kearney; **Carol Shick**, friend of Nyha French; **Tina Eikenroth**, friend of Matt VanEtten; **Simon Leavit**, grandson of Bob & Jan Ringel, former members.
- ✦ Those serving in the military: **Eric Gerke**, grandson of Judy Gerke; **Clinton Gibson**, son in law of Bill & Diane Legate; **Andrew Feigel**, nephew of Al & Renee Davis; **Raymond Bartman**, son of Carla Bartman and **Nicholas Jackson**, grandson of Sharon Fahling.
- ✦ Our Missionaries: **Pastor Masih & Pastor James**.
- ✦ This congregation, especially the members of our pastoral Call Committee, that we all may be guided by the Holy Spirit in our preparations to call a suitable pastor according to God's will, for the blessing of His Church in this place.
- ✦ All who have suffered physically, emotionally, financially, mentally and spiritually during the worldwide outbreak of coronavirus, including all those currently ill with COVID-19 and all health care providers who treat them.
- ✦ All those effected by the recent flooding throughout Michigan.



“Worship Anew” is a Lutheran television, 30-minute worship service with no commercials or repeats. It is not a tape of a Sunday morning service, but a special taping done just for the viewer at home. Worship for Shut-Ins airs locally **Sunday mornings at 11:30 am** on Comcast (channel 21), Charter (channel 2), AT&T (channel 24), Dish Network (channel 54) and DirecTV (channel 377). Services may also be viewed online at www.worshipanew.org

June 7, 2020 – The Holy Trinity

“I Believe in God!” - Sermon Text: Matthew 28:19 - Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

June 14, 2020 – Second Sunday after Pentecost

“Christ’s Death is Amazing” - Sermon Text: Romans 5:6-9 - Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

June 21, 2020 – Third Sunday after Pentecost

“A Bold Faith” - Sermon Text: Matthew 10:27 - Rev. Thomas Eggold

June 28, 2020 – Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

“Sword of Peace” - Sermon Text: Matthew 10:34 - Rev. Shayne Jonker

SERVING YOU

Staff:

Rev. James Blain, Vacancy Pastor

Richard Krueger, Parish Assistant

Doris Kayser, Deaconess

Sandy Goodlander, Office Manager

Mildred Rathbun, Office Assistant

Vonda Smestad, Pre-school Director

Guidelines for Reintroduction of In-Person Worship and Education

Updated 5/18/20

Please note: This is a working draft, subject to change as the situation continues to develop. If you have suggestions or concerns about any of these guidelines, please address them to your family's elder.

This document is intended to guide Messiah's operations during the initial period after in-person activities have resumed. The focus is more on the "how" than on the "when."

What additional worship opportunities will be offered?

- Worship service video will continue to be livestreamed and archived on YouTube.
- Worship service audio will continue to be recorded and uploaded to messiahgr.org.
- The Board of Elders will continue to explore alternative delivery methods.

What general CDC guidelines apply to us at Messiah?

- Stay home when you are sick or have underlying medical conditions.
 - Take your temperature and verify that it is below 100.4°F.
- Maintain minimum 6-foot social distancing and avoid people who are sick.
- Avoid unnecessary touching of surfaces, handrails, and doors.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze. Discard soiled tissues at home.
- Wearing of face coverings is encouraged.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.

How will we maintain 6-foot distancing between family units?

- The Fellowship Hall will be open as an overflow space with a livestream of the service, as needed to maintain distancing.
- We will sit on both sides of sanctuary, every third pew.
- Within a pew, family units will space themselves 6 feet apart (approximately 3 people) from other family units.
- Adult Bible Class will be held in the fellowship hall; remote access options will continue to be explored.
- Smaller Bible studies and children's educational activities can be held in larger, well-ventilated areas of the church, or held outdoors as weather permits.

How will we minimize cross-contamination?

- Friendship pads, hymnals, etc. will be removed from pews.
- Offering plates will not be passed. Offerings can be given electronically or will be taken at the sanctuary door. *Note: We will need to develop an offerings protocol for collecting, bagging, and depositing in the safe.*
- The entire service will be printed in the bulletin. Congregants should take bulletins with them for reference, then recycle or discard at home.
- Volunteers will attend the outside door for entry and exit. Inner doors will be left open.
- No handshakes or hugs. Pastor will greet those who wish to chat in the front of the sanctuary.
- No food served after worship for now; kitchen remains closed.

- Restrooms will remain open. Water fountains will remain out of service.
- The nursery will be closed.

What sanitation practices will we follow?

- The sanctuary will be sanitized between services.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be provided.
- Protocols for safe distribution and reception of Holy Communion will be developed by the Board of Elders in consultation with the Altar Guild.

When will in-person activities resume?

- In-person worship and educational activities will be considered:
 - When large gatherings are allowed to resume (viz. MI Safe Start stage 5*)
 - When the Board of Elders determines that adequate volunteers are available to perform necessary supporting tasks (e.g. elders, ushers, altar guild)
- When these activities resume, the Board of Elders will determine the service schedule.

*MI Safe Start plan, modeled after CDC and White House recommendations:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI_SAFE_START_PLAN_689875_7.pdf

