



Messiah Messenger

November 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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A sixth declined call is probably not something any of you anticipated when we began the process of seeking Messiah's next pastor. From the time I was in seminary, we were warned that a shortage of pastors was imminent, but we saw some of the smallest numbers of calling congregations in decades, and just 5 years ago, pastors who had been hoping for a call for years did not receive any.

The past few years have definitely seen a change in those circumstances, though. Even with many of our inner-city and rural congregations closing or combining ministry, the number of new pastors becoming available is fewer than those retiring, and we see that the number of calling congregations is rising dramatically, with it becoming much more common for them to call several times before a call being accepted and installing their next pastor.

Although Messiah's younger members might not recall, members older than myself, especially those who might have been part of other congregations in other places 30 years ago, might notice that this is not a new circumstance, just one we haven't seen in a while. Rather than going years without being called, pastors might receive multiple calls per year in those days, and congregations then also found themselves calling several times before finding their next pastor. Things look much more similar to those days today than they do the years of more recent memory.

The teaching that has been handed down to us from Scripture, the Reformation, and our Missouri Synod forefathers is that the congregation's call is a Divine Call--that is God's call. When a pastor receives your call, he now is divinely called to two places, and he is left to discern which of the two he will serve, and which he will decline. That process, much like the process of selecting whom to call, is a divine one, not in that there are trumpets from heaven revealing the path which should be taken, but that through them, God's will is being worked out--as Paul tells us in Romans 8, "All things work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to His purpose."

As I've said in the call meetings, "The pastor you call is the one God wants you to call, the answer he gives is the one God wants him to give, and the pastor you ultimately receive is the one God wants you to have." I've been the pastor to accept a congregation's first call, and I've been the one to decline a call

that is far from their first. Ultimately, though, even in those congregations I declined, I saw who ultimately became their pastor, and it was a pastor I knew from seminary or served near in a neighboring congregation. Each time, knowing him, and knowing the congregation, it appeared that they ultimately did receive a pastor who was a better fit for them than I would have been.

Similarly, at Messiah, my hope with you is that we are able to observe the same thing--that the one who becomes your pastor was the one you were meant to have all along, and that the events along the way were all part of the process of finding him so that he can work with you for God's will of making Jesus known through Word and Sacrament so that sins are forgiven and souls receive everlasting life.

Pastor Peterson
Vacancy Pastor and Circuit Visitor

Messiah Updates for November

HOW TO CONTACT US: With Preschool and other meetings and classes in full swing, our staff has resumed regular office hours. Parish Assistant Rick Krueger is regularly at church on Tuesday and Thursday mornings; Office Manager Sandy Goodlander is regularly at church on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings. Both of them continue to work at home through remote access at other times during the week. Pastor Peterson's office hours vary, and are listed on this month's calendar.

If you need to contact Rick or Sandy, call the church office at any time. If no one is in the office, your phone call will transfer over to Sandy's personal phone, so that she can assist you. If Sandy happens to be on her other line or otherwise occupied, please leave a message and she will return your call as soon as possible. You can contact Pastor Peterson directly by phone; his number is listed at the end of this newsletter. All three can also be reached at the email addresses listed on the first page of this newsletter. Thanks for your flexibility and patience!

WORSHIP UPDATE: Working together with Pastor Peterson, the Board of Elders recognizes Messiah's continuing duty to conduct our services in a safe and prudent manner that minimizes risk during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the Elders continue to update their *Guidelines for Re-Introduction of Worship and Education*. They are also exploring further options for providing the Word and the Sacrament of the Altar, especially for those who are at risk or otherwise effected by the pandemic. Watch for further updates on our website and Facebook page or through our weekly email chain. Thank you all for your support, help and cooperation through this process!

As worship continues on **Sundays at 10 am**, you can continue to help us all by:

- Staying home if you are sick or have underlying medical conditions.
- Maintaining minimum 6-foot social distancing by sitting on both sides of the sanctuary, with family groups alternating at the ends of every other pew. "No Seating" signs have been placed to assist with spacing. Family groups should space themselves 6 feet (approximately 3 people) apart from other family groups.
- For the Divine Service, Holy Communion will be brought to you in the pews by the pastor and elders (who will be masked and gloved). Please plan to stand as able when they approach your seat, receiving the body of Christ in your open hand, taking an individual cup from the tray to receive the blood of Christ, and returning the cup to the glass bowl carried by an usher.

Messiah Updates for November, continued:

- Leaving in family groups starting from the rear of the Sanctuary at the end of the service. If at all possible, please greet each other outdoors following the service.
- Wearing face coverings (mask, scarf, or bandana), which are recommended though not required. Masks will be available at the Welcome Center.
- Offerings can be given electronically or will be taken at the sanctuary door.
- Watching or listening to our worship service video (livestreamed and archived on YouTube) or audio (recorded and uploaded to www.messiahgr.org) if you cannot attend.
- If you have questions, please feel free to contact Pastor Peterson, Rick Krueger or any Elder.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS ONLINE: *Adult Bible Class* continues online in November, with Rick Krueger leading devotional studies on the appointed Psalm for that Sunday. These studies last about 30 minutes; they'll be posted on Messiah's YouTube channel by **8:30 am every Sunday**.

You'll find our online studies at www.youtube.com/channel/UCyZrtHBIfblruk9OSpk0pIlg/videos; study guides for each week will be available with each video or at www.messiahgr.org/bible-studies. Here's what we'll explore in the coming weeks:

Sunday, November 1st: Psalm 149

Sunday, November 8th: Psalm 70

Sunday, November 15th: Psalm 90

Sunday, November 22nd: Psalm 95

Our next study begins on **Sunday, November 29th**; during Advent, we gather in the name of Jesus and consider His great story anew! Isaiah prophesied, "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." (Isaiah 11:1) The story of *The Jesse Tree: Jesus' Family Tree*, is the story of our Savior, told in the Old and New Testaments alike. Jesus is the *Seed, Root, Life* and *Firstfruit* of Jesse's tree, who brings life to a world of death, and light to His people in darkness. Let's dive deeper into God's Word of power and promise together!

LIFELIGHT UPDATE: in-person LifeLight classes continue during November as follows. If you're interested in participating, contact each class leader for details:

- *The Book of Revelation*, led by Shirley Hoese on **Tuesday mornings at 10:30 am**. This class concludes on November 10th.
- *The Gospel of Luke*, led by Dan Bohlinger on **Wednesday evenings at 6 pm**. This class concludes on November 18th.
- *Ruth/Esther*, led by Randy Gerke on **Sunday mornings at 9:00 am**. BYOB (bring your own beverage). This class concludes November 29th.

Since *activities outside of religious worship services* (meetings, classes, office operations etc.) continue to be subject to the State of Michigan's emergency health orders on gatherings (currently limited to 20 people or less per 1000 square feet indoors; 1000 people or less outdoors) and the use of face coverings, these classes are being held in Messiah's large upstairs classroom (Rooms 27-29).

Messiah Updates for November, continued:

SUNDAY SCHOOL CONTINUES for children in preschool through 2nd grade will resume on **Sundays at 9 am**. With our duty to conduct classes safely and prudently in mind, our Sunday School staff will follow precautions based on our preschool's current practices (including health checks, face coverings and disinfection protocols).

In November, our Sunday School lessons focus on how *God Works Through Prophets and Kings*; Children will discover the mercy and love that God revealed in the lives of His Old Testament saints -- from King Solomon through the prophets Elijah and Elisha to the exiles Daniel and Esther! If you have questions, or would like to volunteer to help with the spiritual growth of our children, contact Rick Krueger.

CONFIRMATION/PRE-CONFIRMATION continues through online access on **Monday evenings at 6 pm**. Thanks to Pastor Peterson for teaching this class!



FALL BACK: remember that *Daylight Savings* Time ends on **Sunday, November 1st at 2:00 a.m.** Be sure to set your clocks back one hour before you go to bed on **Saturday evening, October 31st**.

SPECIAL VOTERS' MEETING: Sunday, November 1st after the 10:00 am service! Voters will hear an updated report of the Call Committee, then prayerfully work together to call a new shepherd for Messiah. See the update below and the enclosed letter for more details.

PASTORAL CALL UPDATE: The Rev. Paul Doellinger has declined our call to serve as pastor at Messiah. An extended excerpt from his October 17 letter to us follows below:

"After earnest and careful deliberation and consideration, many prayers, discussions with brothers in the ministry, and the support and counsel of my wife, I have decided to respectfully return the call to Messiah."

"This is undoubtedly one of the most difficult decisions I have ever had to make. I have been absolutely torn while considering this call. There are many things about Messiah that are extremely striking. The Lord has blessed you with a rich, vibrant community of saints, and has endowed you with many gifts. You are a warm, loving family of believers with strong and capable leadership, [and] a top-notch preschool and director ... Your welcome, hospitality, openness, patience, and conscientiousness with me and my family during this time of deliberation has been exceptional and humbling. I can assure you that my decision has nothing to do with any deficiency on your part, nor are there any concerns or "red flags" that compelled me to stay in Cassopolis. In the end, my reason for staying has to do with timing for our family and continuing and completing the ministry and undertakings that I am currently engaged in at St. Paul."

"I know that this letter is disappointing, as you have fervently and patiently waited for the Lord to send you a pastor and shepherd. I will continue to pray that God will grant a servant of the Word in your midst, and I am fully confident that when that man arrives, you will abundantly support and care for him and his family, as you have all of your pastors."

We thank Pastor Doellinger for his prayerful consideration of our call. We pray for God's blessings on him, his family, and those he currently serves at Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Cassopolis, Michigan.

Messiah Updates for November, continued:

UPCOMING SPECIAL SERVICES: The Board of Elders have scheduled the following special services for November and December:

Wednesday, November 25th, 7 pm: Thanksgiving Eve
Wednesday, December 2nd, 7 pm: Advent Midweek Worship
Wednesday, December 9th, 7 pm: Advent Midweek Worship
Wednesday, December 16th, 7 pm: Advent Midweek Worship
Thursday, December 24th, 7 pm: Christmas Eve -- non-communion service
Friday, December 25th, 10 am: Christmas Day communion service

Please note that there will be no daytime Advent services, and no meals served before the Wednesday night services. We currently plan to livestream these services (in addition to our regular Sunday services) for viewing and listening by those who are unable to attend.

FOOD PANTRY--due to the COVID-19 epidemic the pantry has been closed down. we ask that no one drops off any food items to the church until the epidemic is over! Dale Reinke will continue to serve people in need in a different way. THANKS for all your support over the years and we look forward to a time when we will be able to re-open.

HOLIDAY BASKETS with a 2020 twist. It's been a crazy year, and rougher on some folks than others. NECOM is expecting to have more requests this holiday season than last year. We would like to collect \$15, \$25, and \$50 gift cards for them to use for purchase of food items, or give to those families in need. If you feel the spirit move you to help please put your gift card in an envelope in our mailbox. Let's make this holiday season the best it can be for those who need a little more help! Please have your cards turned in by **Sunday, November 8th**. Thanks and God's blessing to you, Joe and Becky Buss.

From the Parish Assistant

As with so many other activities, professional conferences have taken a very different format these days; I'm currently watching and listening to the 2020 online version of Concordia University-Chicago's annual Lectures in Church Music, which I've attended regularly over the years.

This year's keynote address for Lectures is titled "Congregational Music in a Time of Upheaval." In it, noted scholar Paul Westermeyer recalls several of the Church's greatest hymns written by Lutheran pastors under trying circumstances:

- "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright" (LSB 395), written in 1599 by Philipp Nicolai, who conducted as many as 30 funerals a day during an outbreak of the plague. The hymn sets God's "Word and Spirit, flesh and blood" at its exact center (the middle of the middle stanza); when the words are centered on a printed page, each stanza has the shape of a communion chalice.
- "Now Thank We All Our God" (LSB 895), written in 1637 by Pastor Martin Rinkart as a table prayer, despite the devastation of the Thirty Years War which left him as the only surviving pastor in his town, burying 40-70 people a day (including his wife).

From the Parish Assistant, continued:

- “Entrust Your Days and Burdens” (LSB 754), written in 1651 by Paul Gerhardt, who suffered the loss of his house, goods, children and spouse during his long life – then was relieved of his pastoral duties for proclaiming the Gospel! The first words of this hymn’s original 12 stanzas conceal the message: “Entrust to God your ways, and take heart. In Him all cares will be well.”

Westermeyer goes on to say, “What the Church provides the world is not the good – or evil – things of the world writ large. It channels to the world the mercy and grace of God who gives us good things, who cares about us, and who alone supplies us the help we need” in Jesus Christ. The Son of God said to the paralyzed man brought to him via rooftop, “Your sins are forgiven,” then called him to his vocation with the words “take up your bed and walk” (see Matthew 9:1-8). Two thousand years later, the same Son of God grants us the same forgiveness and issues the same call to us, His redeemed children, now!

But in a world that stubbornly refuses to be shaped by our desires and wants, in the face of our prayers that are answered according to God’s will – but so often, not ours! – to what can we cling? To the Word and Spirit, flesh and blood granted us in Baptism, Scripture and the Lord’s Supper for forgiveness, salvation and eternal life. To the God that we trust with our days, burdens, and cares, who also gives us *each other* – faithful pastors who’ve met our spiritual needs in the past 22 months, faithful staff and leaders, faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. Living in Him, we rejoice in our forgiveness, trust that He is with us for our good, take up the burdens of each day with His strength, and praise the Lord “who from our mother’s arms/Has blessed us on our way/With countless gifts of love/And still is ours today.” May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ continue to bless us all, help to recognize His grace, and move us to give Him thanks!

Yours in Him, Rick Krueger

Other

WMLH: Friday, November 20th at 7:00 pm, and Saturday, November 21st at 3:00 pm! West Michigan Lutheran High's fall play *All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* is a storytelling piece based on Robert Fullghum's first five best-selling books. These entertaining stories deliver a heartfelt perspective on everyday life, and the profound echoes that reverberate through it. Tickets need to be reserved in advance as seating at the door will be restricted due to COVID-19. Watch for updates and directions on how to reserve your seating.

IN OUR PRAYERS



- ✦ Our Call Committee and our Voters Assembly, in preparation for our next pastoral call meeting on **Sunday, November 1st**.
- ✦ Those with immediate prayer concerns: (**MaryAnn Snell, Roger Drehs, Rick Quackenbush, Elaine Jingles, Arline Woosley, Sharon Navarre**); **Ruth Mackie**, sister of Pete Garchow; **Jim Mull**, friend of Max & Barb Conner; **Carrie Datema**, daughter in-law of Bonnie Datema; **Ken Harrington**, friend of Bill & Rita VanEtten; **Wayne Kober**, brother of Marlene Anderson and Maryann Snell; **Larry Wilson**, brother of Dick Wilson; **Zoey Brinkman**, great granddaughter of Bill & Barb Brinkman; **Debby King Lang**, stepdaughter of Shirley Lang; **Alexis White**, granddaughter of Rev. & Rosy Masih; **Janet and Karen Bartholomew**, nieces of Bill & Barb Brinkman and **Lisa VanEtten**, daughter of Bill & Rita VanEtten.
- ✦ Those with ongoing prayer concerns: (**Mike Mull, Doris Kayser, Dody Reinke, Bernie & Eileen Ottenjan, Claudia London, Kathy Mueller**); **Janice Reister**, mother of Debbie Krueger **Dawn Feorene**, niece of Elaine Jingles; **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**.
- ✦ **Thomas and Dana Mollhagen**, parents of preschool student Addie Mollhagen. Thomas is currently in India, where he runs a faith-based children's home; the rest of the family has been repatriated to the USA due to the worldwide pandemic.
- ✦ 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 in our country who have been affected by recent hurricanes, tropical storms and wildfires.
- ✦ All those in authority, especially Donald our president, Gretchen our governor, and all those who make, administer and judge our laws.
- ✦ Peace in our world, our nation and our community.

“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



November 1, 2020 – All Saints’ Day

“What We Will Be” - Sermon Text: 1 John 3:2 - Rev. Thomas Eggold

November 8, 2020 – Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

“Foolishness and Wisdom” - Sermon Text: Matthew 25:13 - Rev. Shayne Jonker

November 15, 2020 – Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

“Investing Your Gifts” - Sermon Text: Matthew 25:14-30 - Rev. Paul Shoemaker

November 22, 2020 – Last Sunday of the Church Year

“In Order” - Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 - Rev. William Mueller

November 29, 2020 – First Sunday in Advent

“The Happiness Watch” - Sermon Text: Mark 13:37 - Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

SERVING YOU

Staff:

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Richard Krueger, Parish Assistant

Doris Kayser, Deaconess

Sandy Goodlander, Office Manager

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