



Messiah Messenger

January 2021

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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Perhaps as the new year begins, you have felt a sense of relief that the frenzied activity of the holidays is over. Leftover Thanksgiving turkey is nothing but a memory. Christmas celebrations are done and the gifts have been put to their intended use. You've finally recovered from that late night on New Years. A year that will always be remembered in infamy has come to an end, and although routines aren't "normal" again yet, they are at least more routine than they were at about any time in the past 10 months.

So also, in church, it can be easy to see January as the beginning of a sort of intermission between Christmas and Lent/Easter. The torrent of services in the Christmas season having passed, it can be easy to leave that Bethlehem baby in the manger of our minds until Lent awakens us to a grown man marching toward Calvary.

While we might simply think of it as the dead of winter, the church year calls this season Epiphany. Having celebrated Jesus birth during Christmas, the church's calendar continues to follow the life of Jesus, ending in His death and resurrection during Holy Week. In the time between, we remember the events of His life by which he showed His followers His Messianic Identity as their God-made-flesh savior.

His Baptism by John in the Jordan River reveals the Triune God, as the voice of the Father and the Spirit's dove descend over the anointed Son. Miracles and signs mark this portion of the church's time as Jesus showed His role as creator of all things. Finally three disciples will witness a glimpse of Jesus' divine glory as during His conversation with the prophets of old, Moses and Elijah, the Father's voice comes again from Heaven to announce His Son on the Mount of Transfiguration. These are literal "Epiphanies" of God, that is revelations of Jesus Christ as the One True God.

Through the events of His earthly life, Jesus showed the world that He was indeed God Himself, and in His church, he is continually revealed to believers in His Word, Body, and Blood. May God bless you, not during an intermission between holidays, but as you remember once again the revelation of Christ to the world this Epiphany.

Pastor Peterson

Messiah Updates for January

2021 CALENDARS: please pick up a complimentary 2021 wall calendar provided by Reyers North Valley Chapel.

GENERAL UPDATE: due to the recent extension of the state of Michigan's emergency epidemic order, Messiah's building will continue to be closed through **Friday, January 15th** for all activities except worship services, preschool and essential functions that must be done onsite:

- In-person worship has resumed; see below for further details.
- Preschool will resume classes the week of **Monday, January 4th**.
- The restart of Sunday School and LifeLight classes has been postponed. We hope to resume classes the week of **Sunday, January 17th**. (Watch for online Adult Bible Studies as well, resuming on **Sunday, January 10th**.)
- Board and committee meetings will be held remotely.
- Staff and volunteers will only be onsite for basic operations (worship preparations and services, preschool sessions and preparations, financial work and recordkeeping, drop-offs for volunteer efforts, trustee projects, etc.) To contact staff members, please continue to call the church office; the phone will be answered remotely.

Thanks for your patience and ongoing support throughout an especially challenging time!

WORSHIP UPDATE: We are grateful that, following a time when we only offered livestreams in November and December, we were able to resume in-person for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Worship services on Sundays have also resumed, with two identical services at 8:30 and 11 am each week (each Sunday's 11 am service will also be livestreamed at www.tinyurl.com/messiahgryoutube).

The following precautions are currently in place for in-person worship:

- Please exercise personal discernment when it comes to your health. If you are feeling sick, waiting for COVID-19 test results, in recommended quarantine or isolation from COVID-19 exposure, in a high-risk category, or not comfortable or ready to attend in person, please stay home. You will be welcomed in person at the sanctuary door as you enter. All inner doors will be kept open.
- To minimize potential spread of COVID-19 in this public setting, wearing of face coverings (fabric masks) is required at all services, from when you enter the building to when you leave. If you forget a face mask or don't have one, please don't let this keep you from attending; we will gladly provide you with one.
- To assure social distancing during worship, advance RSVPs are required for all services. You can sign up by calling the church office, emailing goodlans@messiahgr.org or RSVPing at www.messiahgr.org/events. 26 spots for families or individuals are available in the nave of the sanctuary for each service.
- Worshipers will sit on the opposite ends of alternate pews. Designated seating will be clearly marked for "8:30 (1st service)" or "11:00 (2nd service)"; other pew entrances will be roped off to assure social distancing.
- After the first service of each two-service day, worshipers will leave through the side door of the narthex, using the classroom hallway and exiting the building through the exterior doors in the fellowship hall foyer.

Messiah Updates for January, continued:

- Following announcements, dismissal by families will begin from the back of the church. Please maintain social distancing and, weather permitting, wait until you are outdoors to greet others.
- If you want to receive Holy Communion, but do not feel comfortable attending these services, please call (734-645-4353) or email (revjpeterson@yahoo.com) our vacancy pastor, Rev. Jason Peterson, to make arrangements to receive the Lord's Supper by individual weekday appointment, either at the church, at home, or another location that meets your needs.

General guidelines for sanitation and other current practices (complete service bulletins, simplified giving of offerings, Holy Communion protocols, nursery and kitchen closures, restroom availability, post-service sanitizing) will remain in effect. Please see the full version of our Guidelines available at Messiah's website or Welcome Center for complete details. And feel free to contact Pastor Peterson, Rick Krueger or any elder with your questions! The updated Guidelines are subject to change pending further developments.

VOTERS MEETING REPORT: The annual meeting of the Messiah Voters' Assembly was held on December 13, 2020. Due to coronavirus-related precautions, the meeting took an abbreviated format and was held over video conference. 25 members attended.

The following members were elected to new positions or renewed terms:

Christopher Ahrens, Board of Outreach	Steve Kaminski, Board of Education
Dave Ahrens, President	Steve Kaminski, Board of Elders
Bill Brinkman, Board of Elders	Ruth Lueders, Treasurer
Joe Buss, Board of Trustees	Christopher Mueller, Board of Outreach
Max Conner, Board of Elders	Carol Mushong, Board of Trustees
Sherry Garchow, Board of Trustees	Shanna Schulte, Board of Outreach
Rich Griffis, Board of Elders	Kurt Veitengruber, Secretary
Dan Hula, Vice President	Dick Wilson, Board of Trustees

Thanks to all those serving, whether they are starting a new term, renewing to serve again, or continuing a term. Thanks also to those whose terms of service were completed in 2020:

Dwight Anderson, Board of Elders	Jack Keller, Board of Elders
Debra Domine, Board of Education	John Lueders, Board of Elders
Rick Domine, Board of Trustees	Mel Troutwine, Board of Trustees

The Voters' Assembly also voted to request a 2021 seminary graduate through the Michigan District-LCMS. Messiah can continue calling from the field while in consideration for a seminary candidate. The request may be withdrawn before March 1, 2021. If the request is not withdrawn, all pending calls from the field must be resolved by March 1, 2021.

Finally, the annual budget for the 2021 fiscal year was approved.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this unusual meeting. We look forward with anticipation to our next opportunity to hold a congregational meeting in person.

Messiah Updates for January, continued:

A HUGE THANK YOU: I want to thank everyone during this holiday season for all the cards, well wishes, gifts and most of all, for your support! This has been a trying year, to say the least. Your continued support has been so overwhelming and appreciated. Thank you again and I pray we all have a wonderful New Year. *Sandy Goodlander*

PRESCHOOL UPDATE...

We are excited to begin 2021 with 3 new families. This brings our total to 24 students. While this is significantly lower than last year, it is the perfect number to be at while dealing with COVID-19 and trying to remain open. We give God ALL THE GLORY for keeping our staff and students healthy thus far. A few families have needed to quarantine, yet our protocol and extra cleaning have played a roll in keeping us open. As we look ahead, we continue to postpone any "extra" events (VIP day, Father's Night, etc.) as our main goal is to offer families an in-person preschool experience for their child.

Please keep preschool in your prayers as enrollment opens the end of January for the 2021-22 school year. We hope to hold an Open House the evening of Jan. 26 with online sign-ups required and staggered time slots. The status of COVID will continue to affect what we are and are not able to accomplish. We know that God is ultimately in control of all things...including the children He brings to our program each year.

Finally, I thank you for the cards, goodies and gifts that came my way this Christmas from Messiah members. I am continually reminded what a special church family Messiah is and I am grateful to be on staff as preschool director!

Vonda Smestad

HELPING GOD'S KITCHEN: NEEDED, 4 CORN BREAD BAKERS, the 1st Monday of every month. Signup sheet on the Welcome Center. Questions, contact Laura Altemann or Judy Gerke.

From the Parish Assistant's Desk

Once again, Deb and I want to thank all of you for the prayers, Christian care, cards, notes and gifts that you showered on us during this past Christmas season. The constant support, help, friendship and generosity that we experience from Messiah's leadership and from each of you is both utterly humbling and deeply heartwarming! We cannot be grateful enough for your ongoing kindness to us.

Throughout 2020, I continued to hope and pray that we'd arrive at this point with a full-time shepherd leading us forward. God *has* a pastor for us – that's His promise – but *not yet*. I also hoped and prayed that God would have mercy and deliver our world and our country from the COVID-19 pandemic – but *that hasn't happened yet, either*. Believe me when I say that I share whatever impatience and frustration you may feel on both these counts!

So what do we do when God doesn't answer our prayers as we want? I believe that the best thing we can do – in 2021 as before -- is immerse ourselves ever more deeply in His Word, asking Him for the faith to trust His promises as we wait.

After all, the prophet Jeremiah continued to proclaim God's promises to the unrepentant people of Judah in troubled times: *"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and*

From the Parish Assistant's Desk, continued:

not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11 ESV) Even after the fall of Jerusalem, the book of Lamentations pointed to those promises:

*'The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;*

*they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

*"The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"therefore I will hope in him."* (Lamentations 3:22-24 ESV)

And the apostle Paul, writing to the Christians at Rome, pointed to the ultimate reason we can trust God's promises:

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?"

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 ESV)

As we heard once again in Advent and during the 12 days of Christmas, Jesus Christ has truly come! He died and rose again for us, as we'll hear during the coming Lent and Easter. He comes even now through His Word and Sacraments, as we are reminded every time we worship. And He is coming again to judge the living and the dead, and to bring us to Himself in the new heaven and new earth.

Over the long haul, *these* are God's promises that will sustain and energize us, so that we can run our race with perseverance, no matter how difficult. In the year to come, we have the continued opportunity to trust our heavenly Father, not knowing yet where we go, but knowing His hand is leading us and His love is supporting us. Again, I am grateful for all of you and for your companionship on this journey, and I ask for your ongoing prayers as we all continue that journey together.

Other

FROM REV. ROGER AND AMY JAMES: "It is with very mixed emotions that I write to inform you that Amy and I are leaving missionary service with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. I have been with the Office of International Mission since 2012, and we deployed to Asia in January of 2014. Some of you have been with us the whole time, supporting us with your gifts, encouraging us with your kind words and upholding us with your prayers. I am happy to have this opportunity to thank you for making these last eight and a half years possible. What an unbelievable honor it has been to be able to teach, preach,

Other, continued:

counsel, guide, pray, worship, laugh, weep and live in Asia on your behalf, bringing the Word of Christ in both Law and Gospel to our partner churches as they reach out in their lands.”

There is an emptiness that comes with ending this part of our lives, a sort of homesickness. We leave dear colleagues in Asia, both missionaries and nationals. It would be impossible to convey to you the loving devotion of your missionaries and staff in the Asia region and your brothers and sisters in our partner churches.”

“We also remember with gratitude those in our LCMS headquarters in St. Louis. During these years we have been well cared for by these dedicated coworkers who have done all to help us in every need. Without them toiling behind the scenes, we never would have gotten to Asia nor stayed here. I dare not begin naming names. I would almost certainly forget someone who particularly deserved our thanks. Instead may I ask that you frequently remember in your prayers all those who serve the LCMS. They are tireless in serving your mission, that is the mission of our Lord Jesus to bring His saving Word to all people.”

“Our feelings of loss are tempered by the anticipation of what lies ahead for us. I have been asked to serve as an assistant to the general secretary of the International Lutheran Council (ILC), the Rev. Dr. Timothy Quill. I anticipate that my missions experience will be a great asset as I continue to serve our Lord’s church in this international organization. As an added blessing, ILC headquarters are in Fort Wayne, Indiana, so we will be moving closer to our children and grandchildren and other family.”

“So, dear Christian friends, again I thank you. I pray that you will find it in your heart to continue support for the LCMS and for LCMS missions with the same generosity and love that you have given us. Yours in Christ, Roger and Amy.”

Messiah thanks the James family for their service on our behalf. Our Board of Outreach and Church Council will be in contact with the LCMS’ Together in Mission program to discuss options for transferring our mission support, which is funded by a budgeted percentage of your offerings.

DRAMA PRODUCTION POSTPONED DUE TO COVID CONCERNS

West Michigan Lutheran High's fall play *All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* will now be on **January 29th & 30th**. The production is a storytelling piece based on Robert Fulghum's first five best-selling books. These entertaining stories deliver a heartfelt perspective on everyday life, and the profound echoes that reverberate through it. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, tickets need to be reserved in advance as seating at the door will be restricted. Watch for updates. **Be sure to save the dates Friday, January 29th at 7pm and Saturday, January 30th at 3pm.**

IN OUR PRAYERS

✠ This congregation, especially our Pastoral Call Committee and Voters Assembly, along with the Michigan District-LCMS, that all may be guided by the Holy Spirit in preparations to call a suitable pastor according to God's will, for the blessing of His Church in this place.



- ✦ Those with immediate prayer concerns: **(Glen Ottenjan, Theona Gee, Mike Mull, MaryAnn Snell, Roger Drehs, Elaine Jingles, Sharon Navarre); Paul (Pete) Lucas**, friend of Max and Barb Conner; **Ruth Mackie**, sister of Pete Garchow; **Jim Mull**, friend of Max & Barb Conner; **George DeRuiter**, step son in-law of Shirley Lang; **Ken Harrington**, friend of Bill & Rita VanEtten; **Wayne Kober**, brother of Marlene Anderson and Maryann Snell; **Larry Wilson**, brother of Dick Wilson; **Debby King Lang**, stepdaughter of Shirley Lang; **Alexis White**, granddaughter of Rev. & Rosy Masih; **Karen Bartholomew**, niece of Bill & Barb Brinkman and **Lisa VanEtten**, daughter of Bill & Rita VanEtten.
- ✦ Those with ongoing prayer concerns: **(Doris Kayser, Dody Reinke, Bernie & Eileen Ottenjan, Claudia London, Kathy Mueller); Bob Krueger**, brother of Rick Krueger; **Sharry Milner**, daughter in-law of Shirley Lang; **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 Missionary: **Pastor Masih**
- ✦ **Pastor Roger James**, our former missionary, who has returned to the United States to serve with the International Lutheran Council. (More details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.)
- ✦ **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 ongoing 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 authority, especially Donald our president, Gretchen our governor, Joseph our president-elect, 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

January 3, 2021 – Second Sunday after Christmas *The Epiphany of Our Lord Observed

“Your Light Has Come!” - Sermon Text: Isaiah 60:1-6 - Rev. William Mueller

January 10, 2021 – First Sunday after the Epiphany *Baptism of Our Lord Observed

“Our Servant King” - Sermon Text: Mark 1:11 - Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

January 17, 2021 – Second Sunday after the Epiphany

“Your Connection to Heaven” - Sermon Text: John 1:51 - Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

January 24, 2021 – Third Sunday after the Epiphany

“God’s Call” - Sermon Text: Jonah 3:10 - Rev. Thomas Eggold

January 31, 2021 – Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

“Authority of God” - Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 18:15 - Rev. Shayne Jonker

SERVING YOU

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