

*Messiah Lutheran Church
Mechanicsville, Virginia*



October 4, 2020

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*To share the Good News of Jesus Christ
and to invite all to join us in faith, worship, and service.*

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
(October 4, 2020)

GATHERING SONG, "Lord, Be Glorified"

(ELW 744)



1 In my life, Lord, be glo - ri - fied, be glo - ri - fied;
2 In our song, Lord, be glo - ri - fied, be glo - ri - fied;
3 In your church, Lord, be glo - ri - fied, be glo - ri - fied;
4 In your world, Lord, be glo - ri - fied, be glo - ri - fied;



in my life, Lord, be glo - ri - fied to - day.
in our song, Lord, be glo - ri - fied to - day.
in your church, Lord, be glo - ri - fied to - day.
in your world, Lord, be glo - ri - fied to - day.

Text: Bob Kilpatrick, b. 1952
Music: BE GLORIFIED, Bob Kilpatrick
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***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray together:

C: *Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen*

***THE FIRST LESSON**

Isaiah 5:1-7

1 Let me sing for my beloved
my love-song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.
2 He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.

4What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

5And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
6I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

7For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

***THE SECOND LESSON**

Philippians 3:4b-14

7Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

12Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

13Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

***THE GOSPEL READING**

Matthew 21:33-46

[Jesus said to the people:] 33“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. 34When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. 37Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ 39So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” 41They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

42Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures:

‘The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord's doing,

and it is amazing in our eyes’?

43Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. 44The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

45When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. 46They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE

The county we recently moved out of, San Luis Obispo County in the Central Coast of California, was home to more than two hundred fifty wineries. Just imagine that! The Paso Robles region, in the northern part of the county, is one of the fastest up-and-coming wine regions in the country. We've even seen some familiar labels in the stores here.

There is a lot of money wrapped up in the wine industry in that county. Land isn't cheap, that's for sure. And you have to have the right kind of vines and maintain the right kind of soil, and irrigation, and everything else that goes into industrial agriculture. You need tons of equipment, and storage, and the right kind of oak barrels to age and ferment things in, then you need the bottles, the labels, the corks. You need shipping and distribution. You need warehouses and storage, you need marketing and probably a tasting room. It helps to get entered in some competitions and win some awards that you can advertise. It helps to partner up with the dozens of other businesses and industries that have cropped up related to the wine industry, that rely on the wine industry. The investment to start a winery is astronomical, and then you have to build it, and

maintain it, and grow it, or you're toast – there are plenty of others ready to move in.

Just imagine, after that much investment of time and work and money, if something went wrong. There was a prominent winery that got into trouble for cutting down a bunch of protected, old-growth oak trees on their property. They had to pay a huge fine and their reputation took a serious hit, too. It actually made the local news! But they still kept making wine. Imagine if, after that much investment, the grapes themselves came out wrong. Imagine if, after tending the those vines all season, you discover at harvest time that they morphed into something else entirely. I don't know – vinegar-flavored grapes. Stink-berries. Or something less silly, more harmful: cyanide fruit. Adds a nice hint of almonds to the bouquet, but deadly to the drinkers.

Clearly, I made those up. There is no such thing as stink-berries or cyanide fruit. But I want to try to get us all in the mindset of wine country. And not the profit-turning, sleek and flashy wine country of the Central Coast of California. I mean the basic, no-frills vines that grew all through the region of what's now called Israel and Palestine, the grapes that made the table wine that everyone drank, the wine that filled the big jars at the wedding in Cana, the wine that filled the simple cup at the Last Supper. The wine that was just a staple, not a luxurious pairing to your dinner. That's the wine and those are the vineyards that we hear about today from both Isaiah and Matthew.

Isaiah shares a critique of Israel in the form of a love song, just to highlight how broken the relationship has become between God and the people. The song goes into great detail about how much God invested in this vineyard of a relationship: finding a fertile hill to plant on, digging out the hill for the planting, clearing away the stones, planting the choicest of vines, building a watchtower, hewing out a wine-vat for the pressing. And when it came time for harvest, instead of usable grapes, the vines produced only wild grapes: not fit for wine. Sour and undrinkable. And so we hear the promise of war and exile, because instead of producing the wine grapes of justice and righteousness, God's people Israel only turned out a vintage of bloodshed and cries, suffering and turning away from God.

This is the passage of Isaiah that Jesus builds on in his tense interaction with the chief priests and Pharisees. It starts the same way: the landowner invests in a vineyard: planting it, putting a fence around it, digging the wine-press, building the watch-tower. In this version, the grapes were fine enough, but the tenants soured the harvest. Instead of giving the produce to the landowners' servants, they beat them and killed them. Repeatedly. They tried to keep the harvest for themselves, tried to withhold the fruits that weren't theirs, that they worked with, but did not invest in. And then they go a step further, killing the landowner's son to try to seize his inheritance, too.

Jesus connects the dots for the chief priests and elders: they are abusing God's representatives and trying to keep the fruits of God's planting all for themselves. And Jesus foreshadows his own death on the cross as he predicts the chief priests' role in that soon-to-come death. He quotes a Psalm and says

that the chief priests are rejecting him, but that he is and will be the cornerstone of God's kingdom. By rejecting him and abusing John the Baptist and others, by lording righteousness over the vulnerable and sinful, these chief priests are producing nothing but a vintage of suffering and undrinkable, even poisonous, wine. And Jesus describes the consequences for souring God's investment of love and care: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom."

God has invested so much in Creation, and especially in humanity, and especially in us who bear the name Christian. God has planted us in the world to love and serve, to produce kingdom-fruit. God has planted us in the good soil of scripture and prayer, of supportive church communities. God has dug out the stones of sin and shame with tireless forgiveness and grace. God has built us up, protected us, nurtured us. God has planted gifts and hope and service within us so that we might bear fruit that nourishes the rest of the world in turn. Nothing flashy – just the table wine of good news that is the staple of abundant life.

God invests so much, and in return, all God desires as a harvest, as the produce of that investment, is that we love God back – both directly and through the love we show our neighbors and the world. But we sin. We mess up. We get selfish and short-sighted and scared and mean. Instead of producing the kingdom-fruits of faithfulness, obedience, stewardship, generosity, and gratitude, we get sour. In effect, we abuse God's servants and messengers when we choose to hoard God's goodness instead of giving it away freely. We kill the gospel when we receive forgiveness but don't extend it in our words and deeds. We try to steal the Son's inheritance when we aren't willing to sacrifice for the needs and well-being of others. We are too often wrong-fruited, producing a poisonous bouquet and an undrinkable wine.

Both Isaiah and Jesus tell what happens when we wreck God's investment. God is profoundly disappointed. And there are consequences. For the Israelites it was conflict and exile. To the chief priests, Jesus says that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them and given to a people that produces kingdom-fruit. Where does that leave us when we are wrong-fruited?

As you read through the depth and breadth of scripture, there are plenty of stories about God's people facing the consequences of their actions, of their wrong-fruitedness. But God's last word is never punishment; God's last word is always mercy. Grafting in new branches. Tending to the crops. Re-planting if necessary. But always walking back to the vineyard, desiring good fruits, planting the seeds of the restoration of the original garden, until the last days when the kingdom of God comes down to renew all of creation.

Jesus tells the chief priests that the kingdom of God will be taken away and given to a people that produces the fruit of the kingdom. You know, I checked – it never says that it can't be the same people, but with new hearts planted in them by God. It never says that God can't take those of us who produce sour or even poisonous grapes, and make an investment in us. Find the fertile soil. Plant the choicest vines. Dig out the stones and build up the protections. Lovingly prepare us to produce an abundant harvest of kingdom fruit for the world.

This is God's harvest. The things we do – good or bad – we can count as loss, as Paul did. We can lose everything, count it as rubbish, with full confidence and faith that God will put Christ in our hearts and give us a new life and a new start: a resurrection. Paul wasn't talking about wine, but he does say that he'll press on, to make this new life his own – all because Christ Jesus has already made us his own.

God has made tremendous investments in each of us, because God loves us. And the fruit that we produce is given away to the world, to the communities we serve and all of creation. When we are wrong-fruited, God will start in us again. And when we do produce kingdom fruit, God will rejoice in the harvest, and we will rejoice in the giving. Thanks be to God. Amen

HYMN OF THE DAY, "How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord"

(ELW 580)



1 How clear is our vo - ca - tion, Lord, when once we heed your call
 2 But if, for - get - ful, we should find your yoke is hard to bear;
 3 We mar - vel how your saints be - come in hin - dranc - es more sure;
 4 In what you give us, Lord, to do, to - geth - er or a - lone,



to live ac - cord - ing to your word and dai - ly learn, re - freshed, re - stored,
 if world - ly pres - sures fray the mind and love it - self can - not un - wind
 whose joy - ful vir - tues put to shame the ca - sual way we wear your name,
 in old rou - tines or ven - tures new, may we not cease to look to you,



that you are Lord of all and will not let us fall.
 its tan - gled skein of care: our in - ward life re - pair.
 and by our faults ob - scure your pow'r to cleanse and cure.
 the cross you hung up - on, all you en - deav - ored done.

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903–2000
 Music: REPTON, C. Hubert H. Parry, 1848–1918
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***CREED**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;**

he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

PRAYERS

A: With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. *[Brief silence]*

A: Holy God, you call us to work for peace and justice in your vineyard. Refresh the church with your life, that we may bear fruit through work and service. Lord, in your mercy,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: Thank you for the abundant harvest of the earth. Bless and care for those whose hands bring the fruits of the earth to the tables of all who hunger. May we be inspired by your servants who cared deeply for your creation (especially Francis of Assisi, whom we commemorate today). Lord, in your mercy,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: Curb the impulses of greed and pride that lead us to take advantage of others. Grant that world leaders (especially) seek the fruits of the kingdom for the good and welfare of all people. Lord, in your mercy,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: Sustain all who suffer with the promise of new life. Assured of your presence, heal our pain and suffering, and equip us to embrace all bodies aching for wholeness of mind, body, and soul. We call to mind those who are struggling today (especially). Lord, in your mercy,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: We pray for all managers in our community and for all who seek employment. Give hope and a future to those who lack meaningful work, those who have been marginalized or abused in the workplace, and those who desire new opportunities. Lord, in your mercy,

C: *hear our prayer.*

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, our church as we face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones, for the sick and their families, for those fearful of an unknown future. We pray for the millions of unemployed, for children and others at home - that they be safe from abuse. We pray for those who are alone and isolated during this time that they may feel your loving presence. We pray for all the hospital and health care workers, and all first responders, that they receive needed supplies and be kept protected in the work they do. We pray for those making decisions about how to live into the future and when that will happen. Keep us all in your care as we wait for a new day. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of families. For all our Messiah families and especially this week for the Warmbrod, Weaver and Whirley families. For the talents and good things You have given each of them. Keep them united and faithful to You and each other. Guide them, protect them and equip them to do Your will. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: Thank you for the saints who teach us to live faithfully in your vineyard (especially Theodor Fliedner, renewer of society). May our chorus join theirs until our labor is complete. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray:

**C: *Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.***

BENEDICTION

P: Mothering God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life.

C: **Amen**

SENDING SONG, "How Firm a Foundation"

(ELW 796)



1 How firm a foun - da - tion, O saints of the Lord,
2 "Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis - mayed,
3 "When through fi - 'ry tri - als your path - way shall lie,
4 "Through - out all their life - time my peo - ple shall prove



is laid for your faith in Christ Je - sus, the Word!
for I am your God and will still give you aid;
my grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be your sup - ply.
my sov - 'reign, e - ter - nal, un - change - a - ble love;



What more can he say than to you he has said
I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand,
The flames shall not hurt you; I on - ly de - sign
and then, when gray hairs shall their tem - ples a - dorn,



who un - to the Sav - ior for ref - uge have fled?
up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand."
your dross to con - sume and your gold to re - fine."
like lambs they shall still in my bo - som be borne."

Text: J. Rippon, *A Selection of Hymns*, 1787, alt.
Music: FOUNDATION, Early American

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTOR RYAN'S OFFICE HOURS

Here are Pastor Ryan's office hours (posted below)! Dedicated drop-in hours (= Pastor Ryan is there if you want to drop in) will be: Tuesdays from 2-4:00 pm. Otherwise during posted hours he will either be in the office or making visits, but still in the area. Other times Pastor Ryan will be working from home (to help with his kids' distance learning), and will still be available via phone and email, which are: messiahmechpr@gmail.com and 507-360-7276. Pastor Ryan's day off is Monday.

Pastor Ryan in the office - Tuesdays 1-5

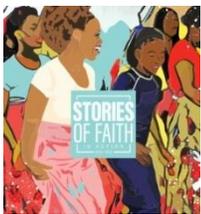
Pastor Ryan in the office- Thursdays 1-5

Pastor Ryan in the office- Fridays 9-3

PASTOR RYAN'S WEEKLY UPDATE

After even more delays, the truck will finally be unloaded into storage by the end of this weekend. We do have an offer on a house – praise God! We've cleared inspection and are seeing what happens next. Barring any other surprises, we should be able to move in in early November. Again, I look forward to finally getting in a house and unpacked and for life to have a little more “normalcy” (as much life can be normal in these times). And I'm excited to continue our journey together serving up God's love to Mechanicsville and beyond. God is good!

“STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION”



“Stories of Faith in Action” is an annual publication highlighting how God changes lives through ministries funded by Mission Support. Mission Support is the portion of your offering that your congregation shares with your synod, and your synod shares with the ELCA churchwide organization. This publication and the resources that accompany it illustrate how your congregational offering sustains and advances the work of this church. Stories, videos and an interactive flipbook of the publication are available at ELCA.org/SOFIA.

CHURCH DIRECTORY IS BEING UPDATED

Davina will be updating the church directory in the near future. Please let her know if you've had changes to your address, phone number, or email address.

PRAYER LIST TO BE RESET

The current prayer list will be reset October 4 to begin the fourth quarter. Please contact Davina with names that need to remain on the list. Email her at [MessiahMech@gmail.com](mailto: MessiahMech@gmail.com) or phone 746-7134 with your requests.

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Beginning March 8th, we began providing a summary of the financial well-being of our congregation. Here is this week's information:

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$2812 through September 27th (slightly down from \$2837 on September 20th.)
- We are \$23,072.61 behind the year-to-date budget needs (increasing from \$21,565.11 behind the budget the week prior).
- Weekly budget need is \$3404.00.

SAD NEWS

Word was recently received that Pastor Timothy Waltonen passed away on September 24. For those that don't recognize the name, Pastor Tim was Messiah's interim pastor for 2 years prior to Pastor Lou being with us. He holds a special place in the hearts of those who knew him. Although there are no funeral arrangements pending at this time, you can go to <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/fredericksburg-va/timothy-waltonen-9377113> to leave a personal message for the family.

CAROLINE FURNACE UPDATES

NEW! Winter Camp at Home (online) - Session One starts on October 18. Winter Camp at Home meets weekly on Sunday afternoons, from 4:30-6pm. Join in for community building, small group discussions, and engaging activities! Session One is October 18 to December 13. Session Two is January 17 to March 14. Cost is \$20 per three month session. Sign up for Camp at <https://carolinefurnace.campbrainregistration.com/>

Adventure Weekend, October 30 to November 1 - Come and get outside with your family! Late October will be perfect for horseback riding, rock climbing, hiking, biking, and fishing. Our family rate is \$200-250 per night for your own heated cabin + meals provided; some activities may cost extra. Contact us at (540) 449-0012 or julie@carolinefurnace.org to reserve your cabin. Basic health pre-screening is required for all overnight guests. Book at least 14 days in advance!

SMALL GROUPS

Hopefully everyone has received the guidelines for Small Group Meetings and Cleaning Protocols either through email or hard copy. Please contact Davina when wanting to schedule a time you would like your group to meet at church. The only areas open at this time include the Fellowship Hall, the hallway to the restrooms, and the restrooms. All other parts of the building remain 'closed' for now. There will be copies of the forms at church on the kitchen counter for you to use at your meeting along with necessary cleaning supplies. Davina will maintain the completed forms in her office. Although apart, we are still Messiah! Stay well everyone!

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE: HURRICANES AND CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Following the devastation caused by hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, as well as the impact of wildfires across California and the Northwest, Lutheran Disaster Relief (LDR) is responding. You can help LDR as they assist the communities who have been impacted by these natural disasters, through prayer and giving through Lutheran Disaster Relief. Your gifts designated for "Hurricane Response" or "U.S. Wildfires" will be used entirely (100%) for direct response until it is complete. Together, we can help provide immediate and long-lasting support for those whose lives have been impacted by hurricanes or wildfires.

QUILTS & KITS FEARED DESTROYED IN BEIRUT EXPLOSION FOUND INTACT

Some good news from Beirut: Three 40-foot shipping containers filled with thousands of mission quilts and school, personal and baby care kits, which reported as destroyed in the August 4 explosions at the port of Beirut, Lebanon, have been found intact.

It took several weeks Lutheran World Relief's partner to gain access to the port area where the containers were stored. While some of our partners shipping containers were heavily damaged, it appears that the three containers containing the quilts and kits were stored behind a concrete block building, a spot that protected them from the blast. The quilts and kits have been transferred to a warehouse, from where they will be distributed to refugees living in Lebanon, principally from Syria and the Palestinian territories.

In addition to distributing the quilts and kits, Lutheran World Relief is also working to address immense shelter needs in the wake of the explosion, helping poorer families to repair and return to their homes. Learn more and Donate to LWR at <https://lwr.org/blog/2020/once-feared-destroyed-quilts-and-kits-found-near-site-beirut-blast>.

WEBSITE CHANGE

A new tab has been added to our church website entitled "E-Messages". Under this tab you will find links to Bible Study Handouts, weekly Sunday Bulletins, and the monthly Messenger. Hope you find this change helpful when you're looking for these items.

REBUILD RVA GRANT PROGRAM

The Rebuild VA Grant Fund is a program to help small businesses and non-profits whose normal operations were disrupted by COVID-19, including restaurants, brick and mortar retail, exercise and fitness facilities, personal care and personal grooming services, entertainment and public amusement establishments, and campgrounds. Businesses and non-profits that are approved for a Rebuild VA grant may receive up to 3 times their average monthly eligible expenses up to a maximum of \$10,000.

VIRGINIA RENT AND MORTGAGE RELIEF PROGRAM (RMRP)

The Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) is designed to support and ensure housing stability across the commonwealth during the coronavirus pandemic. Depending on availability of funds and household need, the RMRP may provide financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments for eligible households. This includes financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments past due beginning April 1, 2020 and onward. Financial assistance is a one-time payment with opportunity for renewal based on availability of funding and the household's need for additional assistance and continued eligibility. For more information please visit: Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD): www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT – COMING BACK

We've started to get together again – the parking lot now, and hopefully the building soon. Small groups have already been meeting. As we come back together in person, we also encourage you, prayerfully and as you are able, to come back in your giving, too. Thank you for the generosity you have already shown through these difficult times! Please mail in your offering to the church office, 8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111, or use on-line giving through Vanco which is available on the church website. See messiahmech.com for more details. Thank you!