

*Messiah Lutheran Church  
Mechanicsville, Virginia*



*October 11, 2020*

*The Nineteenth 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.*

## **NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

**(October 11, 2020)**

**For video go to:**

<https://messiahmech.com/messiah-digital/>

### **GATHERING SONG, "We Are Called"**

**(ELW 720)**

1 Come! Live in the light!  
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!  
We are called to be light for the kingdom,  
to live in the freedom of the city of God.

Refrain

We are called to act with justice,  
we are called to love tenderly;  
we are called to serve one another,  
to walk humbly with God.

2 Come! Open your heart!  
Show your mercy to all those in fear!  
We are called to be hope for the hopeless  
so hatred and blindness will be no more. Refrain

3 Sing! Sing a new song!  
Sing of that great day when all will be one!  
God will reign, and we'll walk with each other  
as sisters and brothers united in love. Refrain

### **\*PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray:

**C: *Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen***

### **FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 25:1-9**

**Lector**

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, you are my God;  
I will exalt you, I will praise your name;  
for you have done wonderful things,  
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.  
<sup>2</sup>For you have made the city a heap,  
the fortified city a ruin;  
the palace of aliens is a city no more,  
it will never be rebuilt.  
<sup>3</sup>Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;

cities of ruthless nations will fear you.  
4For you have been a refuge to the poor,  
a refuge to the needy in their distress,  
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.  
When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,  
5the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,  
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;  
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

6On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

7And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
8he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

9It will be said on that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: *Thanks be to God.***

## **SECOND LESSON: Philippians 4:1-9**

**Lector**

2I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **\*THE GOSPEL READING**

Matthew 22:1-14

<sup>1</sup>Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: <sup>2</sup>"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup>He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.'<sup>5</sup>But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.'<sup>10</sup>Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. <sup>11</sup>"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'<sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen."

### **SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE**

*I have always struggled with this passage, with this parable. As I read it, I keep asking, "Why?" Why is Jesus comparing the kingdom of heaven to this mess? Why wouldn't the guests attend the wedding feast that the king has prepared? Why would they disrespect the king by making light of his invitation, by abusing his messengers? Why would they kill those messengers – this isn't even like last week's parable where they thought they could get some inheritance out of it. They just kill them out of, I don't know, spite? But I could maybe make sense of all of that in the context of Jesus' ongoing feud with the chief priests and elders and Pharisees. But that's when we get the kicker: why – why – when the king finally gets the guests off the streets to fill the hall and complete the celebration, why does he care if there is one guest who is not wearing the wedding robe? Lots of biblical scholars say that it was the host's responsibility to provide the robes to the guests in the first place. And he binds this poor guy hand and foot and throws him into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Why? And why would I want to say, "The gospel of the Lord" at the end of this parable?*

*So, like I said, I struggle with this one. And apparently I always have. I looked back in my files of old sermons for inspiration, and I found that –*

somehow – I have preached on this lesson every single time it comes up in the cycle. We use a three-year cycle called the Revised Common Lectionary. This lesson comes up once every three years. And going all the way back to internship, I've preached on it every time but once, and that one time I even had notes on what I would have said when my colleague's sermon fell flat for me. In fifteen years of sermons, today is my sixth crack at this. And I'm still not sure what to tell you today. I'm still not sure what we are supposed to do with this.

And in the wee hours of the night, it hit me: maybe this parable isn't as much about what we are supposed to do with it, and more about what God does with us. How God handles us, whether we are the scoffing invitees who turn the king down and abuse the messengers, or the random folks off the streets who get to attend an amazing banquet above our social stations, or the crowd gathered around Jesus listening to the parable. And so, on this sixth go-round with this challenging parable, that's what I'll try. Let's talk about what God does. Let's figure out how this scene gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven.

First off: in the kingdom of heaven, God prepares a feast. God goes all out – oxen and fatted calves in the parable, rich foods and well-matured wines from Isaiah's prophecy. God sets the table with the very best, spares no expense, opens the best vintages. It's lavish. It's a celebration. And it's a feast to celebrate the Lord's goodness. Isaiah says, "And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over the all nations; he will swallow up death for ever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth." Despite the people's sins, despite their fear of death and the mistakes their fear drives them towards, despite all of that, God spread a rich feast of forgiveness, serving not only the choicest foods and wines, but also the free delicacies of mercy and grace.

Second: in the kingdom of heaven, God invites. The table is not just something pretty to look at, something to share on Instagram and Pinterest, but that we don't get to participate in. God invites. From Isaiah again: "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast..." From the gospel, the king invites: first the "expected" folks, but then everyone, the good and the bad. A feast is meaningless without anyone there to eat the food and join the celebration. And God invites you, invites me, invites all of us to the table to share in the goodness that awaits.

Third, in the kingdom of heaven, God knows us, warts and all. God knows of our tendencies to think our own affairs are more important than God's, and to scoff at God's invitations. God knows that we sometimes abuse His messengers and His message. God knows that we argue amongst ourselves, as apparently was happening with Paul's co-workers in the Gospel, Euodia and Syntyche. God knows that we worry. God knows that we get scared. God knows that we are disrespectful. God knows that we don't love our neighbor

when it inconveniences us. How many people still disregard masks and distancing? I pray that our president and all the others in his orbit can recover from this disease, and I also pray that the knowledge that even the White House is not immune to it could finally inspire more people to take this more seriously, so that our national health, our economy and local business, our schools, our churches, and our way of life can resume once more. God has laid us a feast of gifted and dedicated doctors and epidemiologists and research and data and guidance, and invited us to partake of all of that goodness. But instead, it seem like too many of us, still, make light of that invitation and that feast and instead make jokes, and find our own junk food of ease and convenience, and pull the shroud of death up even higher around our neighbors.

Fourth, a repeat of the second part, with a slight addition. In the kingdom of heaven, God invites us anyway. The king in the parable probably knew that the original invitees were proud and disrespectful, but he invites them anyway because it was the right thing to do. The king knew that some of the people in the streets were sinners and bad seeds, but he invites them anyway. Isaiah's vision has God prepare a feast of forgiveness even after the people are punished for their unfaithfulness. The guest who didn't wear the robe gets thrown into the outer darkness with the weeping and gnashing of teeth, yes; there are consequences for sin, for dishonoring God and not loving our neighbors. But Isaiah says to all those in Israel who would later find themselves exiled: God is a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and shade from the heat. God silences the songs of the ruthless. God prepares a feast and gathers the people – all the people – to the table, and their disgrace will be taken away from the earth. God knows us, warts and all, and God invites us anyway.

Paul has similar words of grace: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." I don't understand this parable. I don't understand how God can prepare a feast and invite us to it anyway, knowing us warts and all. But God's peace surpasses my understanding, and I can sit at God's table and rejoice and give thanks.

And that's when I can finally come back to what we do. We come to the feast, despite unworthiness. We are honest about our shortcomings and give thanks for God's grace. We work towards reconciliation and try to bear the kingdom fruit from last week's parable, taking our leftovers from God's table out into the world to feed the hungry, lost, and hurting, into the world to feed even the disrespectful and dishonorable, with the hope that God's rich food might change their hearts and ours. We do what we can to honor God, to wear the feasting robe of humility and justice, because we know, every time we see a

*cross, that's God's grace isn't cheap, and God's feast, though open to all, was not free. God invites us, but it's not about us. The feast is all God's.*

*We are receiving Communion today. It's been a long time. More than six months. We've been waiting. We've been waiting, delaying this feast out of love for our neighbors, even though it's been sorely hard for us. But Isaiah says about the feasting day: "It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*

*We don't save ourselves. God saves us. And we wait on the Lord, the Lord who spreads the feast, the Lord who invites, the Lord who knows us, the Lord who saves us. And every time we come to the Communion table, whether it's been six days or six months, we get a foretaste of that final feast, that kingdom of heaven. And we are called to live every day of our lives with signs of that feast apparent: generosity borne of contentedness, crumbs of grace and stains of mercy on our shirts that advertise what God has given us, despite our messiness. Because, like all the inexplicable parts to today's parable, we are a mess, and we don't make sense. And yet...it's not about us. It's about God. And God invites us to the feast. Amen.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY, "Now We Join in Celebration"**

**(ELW 462)**

1 Now we join in celebration  
at our Savior's invitation,  
dressed no more in spirit somber,  
clothed instead in joy and wonder;  
for the Lord of all existence,  
putting off divine transcendence,  
stoops again in love to meet us,  
with his very life to feed us.

2 Lord, as round this feast we gather,  
fill our hearts with holy rapture!  
For this bread and cup of blessing  
are for us the sure possessing  
of your loving deed on Calv'ry,  
of your living self, our vict'ry,  
pledge of your unfailing presence,  
foretaste here of heav'nly gladness.

3 Lord, we share in this communion  
as one fam'ly of God's children,  
reconciled through you, our brother,  
one in you with God our Father.  
Give us grace to live for others,  
serving all, both friends and strangers,

seeking justice, love, and mercy  
till you come in final glory.

### **\*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 OF INTERCESSION**

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: Gracious host, fill your church with a spirit of joyous hospitality. We pray for bishops, teachers, church leaders, and all children of God as they invite others to your table of boundless grace. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: *hear our prayer.***

A: Gracious host, as creation waits with eager longing for redemption, protect your creatures that are mistreated. Restore valleys, mountains and pastures, and still and running waters. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: *hear our prayer.***

A: Gracious host, as you set a table in the presence of enemies, so bless the efforts of diplomats, international peace workers, and world leaders who navigate conflict. May they proceed with dialogue and understanding, so that justice and peace prevails. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: *hear our prayer.***

A: Gracious host, let your gentleness be known among those who are weary or ill (especially). Strengthen doctors, medical care workers, and caretakers who see to their needs. Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: Gracious host, when we are quick to judge outward appearance, remind us how you clothe all in your mercy. We pray for ministries that provide needed clothing and other personal care assistance in this community (local ministries can be named). Lord, in your mercy,

**C: hear our prayer.**

A: Gracious host, as we remember those who have died and are gathered at the heavenly banquet, comfort us with your presence. Assure us of your peace at all times. 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 Wightman and Williams 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.**

*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.***

## **BLESSING**

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

**C: *Amen***

## **SENDING SONG, "Sent Forth by God's Blessing"**

**(ELW 547)**

1 Sent forth by God's blessing,  
our true faith confessing,  
the people of God from this dwelling take leave.  
The supper is ended.  
Oh, now be extended  
the fruits of this service in all who believe.  
The seed of Christ's teaching,  
receptive souls reaching,  
shall blossom in action for God and for all.  
Your grace shall incite us,  
your love shall unite us  
to work for your kingdom and answer your call.

2 With praise and thanksgiving  
to God ever-living,  
the tasks of our ev'ryday life we will face--  
our faith ever sharing,  
in love ever caring,  
embracing God's children, the whole human race.  
With your feast you feed us,  
with your light now lead us;  
unite us as one in this life that we share.  
Then may all the living  
with praise and thanksgiving  
give honor to Christ and his name that we bear.

# 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**

## **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.

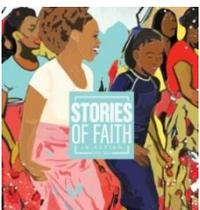
## **PRAYER LIST TO BE RESET**

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 or phone 746-7134 with your requests.

## **PASTOR WALTONEN SERVICES**

Due to Covid restrictions, calling hours will be held on Saturday, October 17, 2020 at the Mullins and Thompson Funeral Service portico, 1621 Jefferson Davis Highway, Fredericksburg, from 4:00 to 5:30. The funeral home asks that you wear a mask and offer in-person condolences from your car. A private funeral service for the immediate family is scheduled at Christ Lutheran Church in Fredericksburg. It will be posted to the Mullins and Thompson Funeral Service web site, on Tim's page. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Lewy Body Dementia Association. Online condolences may be sent to MullinsThompsonFredericksburg.com.

## **"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](http://ELCA.org/SOFIA).

### **WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE**

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

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$2918 through October 4 (slightly up from \$2812 on September 27<sup>th</sup>.)
- We are \$23,385.50 behind the year-to-date budget needs (increasing from \$23,072.61 behind the budget the week prior).
- Weekly budget need is \$3404.00.

### **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](mailto: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.

### **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](http://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](http://messiahmech.com) for more details. Thank you!