

*Messiah Lutheran Church
Mechanicsville, Virginia*



*December 20, 2020
Fourth Sunday of Advent*

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(December 20, 2020)

For video go to: <https://messiahmech.com/messiah-digital/>

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome visitors! May the Spirit of Christ fill your heart as we worship today. You are invited to make Messiah your church home.

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever.

C: Amen

P: Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

P: Loving and forgiving God,

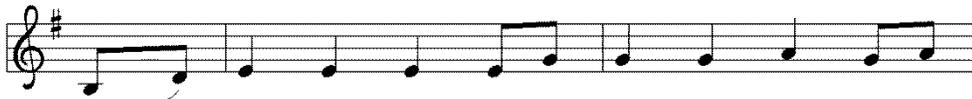
C: we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

P: People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free— free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, ☩ comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

GATHERING HYMN *Canticle of the Turning*

Canticle of the Turning



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
 2 Though I am small, my . . . God, my all, you . . .
 3 From the halls of pow'r to the for - tress tow'r, not a
 4 Though the na - tions rage from . . . age to age, we re -



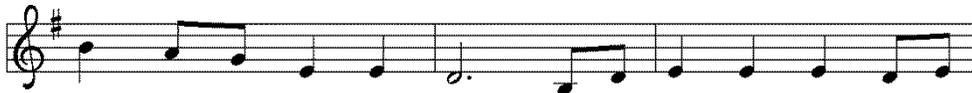
God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
 work great . . . things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
 stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
 mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
 depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
 jus - tice tears ev - 'ry ty - rant . . . from his throne.
 liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
 Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
 The hun - gry poor shall . . . weep no more, for the
 This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
 those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
 food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
 prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
 strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
 mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
 crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus - tice burn.



Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

Text: Rory Cooney, b. 1952, based on the Magnificat
 Music: STAR OF COUNTY DOWN, Irish traditional
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THE GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: *And also with you.*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray:

C: *Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen*

FIRST LESSON: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Lector

A reading from 2 Samuel.

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: *Thanks be to God.*

SECOND LESSON: Luke 1:26-38

Lector

A reading from Luke.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: Luke 1:46b-55

P: The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

⁴⁶And Mary said,
"My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: *Praise to you, O Christ.*

SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE

I don't want to alarm anyone, or burst anyone's bubble, but there's something I have to tell you all: not everything you see on TV is real. Shocking, I know. Pick your jaws up off the floor.

Specifically I'm talking about the whole house-buying/house-renovating collection of shows, like Love It or List It, Property Brothers, and House Hunters. Credit where credit is due, they are fun to watch. It's fun to play along and say which things you like or don't like in a house, to put yourself in the position of the folks in each episode and what you would do if you were in their shoes. Or their house. But they are not at all that realistic – renovation takes way longer and way more money than they make it seem. And a lot of what they do is completely for the camera.

Case in point: some friends of former parishioners were on House Hunters. The show's premise is that there is someone wanting to move into a new house. They look at three properties, weigh the pros and cons, and eventually make a decision. You "play along" at home, rooting for your favorite house, commenting on the home-buyers, and dreaming about what you would do if you could pick a new house. Here's the thing, though: this particular couple had already selected their new home by the time they filmed the episode. The other two houses, the little arguments they had about pros and cons, the deliberation and "hard choice" they had to make – that was all window dressing.

Now, I'm sure that in real life they went through a lot of deliberation, and had disagreements, and made compromises, and looked lots of houses. But that's not what the show represented. The couple in question said after the episode aired that they were a little miffed about the whole thing; but they still got to move into a new house, so congrats to them.

If you watch these shows on a regular basis, you can tell that a lot of what you see is "made for TV." Some of what you see is real; a lot of it isn't. But the most unreal things about these shows and watching a lot of them are the expectations they create. Watching too many of these shows can easily create very unreal expectations about what a house should be, and what a family needs for their house to be "nice." To be valuable. To be desirable. To be current. And if you start to think that your house isn't good enough, or new enough, or improved enough, then maybe you start to think that there's something wrong not only with your house, but also with your home, too.

In our lesson today from 2 Samuel, we have a Love It or List It situation going on. David is sitting in his brand new house, safe and secure and at rest

from his enemies, and he starts to think that it's time for God to move out of the starter house that is tent of the ark of the covenant. David is thinking that it's time to upgrade to a house of cedar, to a proper house, a more appropriate and regal dwelling for God. But God, through David's friend the prophet Nathan, flips the script.

God says: "Are you the one to build me a house to live in?" "The LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house." God says that He was happy to dwell in the tent, in the ark of the covenant, moving around among and with the people through the Wilderness and the Promised Land alike. God moved with the people, through both the good and the bad, both the faithful times and the straying times. The house didn't matter; God was at home with the people. God's not looking for an upgrade. God's not looking for a new house. God lives among and with the people; and that's what God wants. When God wants to build a house, God will build a house. And God will be the one to plant Israel, too, and give them a place where they will be safe and secure and have rest from their enemies. And so the word of the LORD came to Nathan and instructed him to say to David: "Are you the one to build me a house to live in?"

As it turned out, the answer to that question was "No." Not David. Solomon would end up building a temple, even though God warned folks it wouldn't really be what they needed. And sure enough, that temple got destroyed. Twice. Like all the crazy fancy things they put in a house on Extreme Makeover: Home Edition; in time the temple created more problems than it solved.

No, when God was ready to build a house; when it was time for the word of God to Love It, God didn't build a palace or a temple; God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary. Mary, the young virgin of seemingly no consequence, would house the Word of God. Mary would be the one who would make a home for the Word of God, the Son of God, the promised Messiah. It would be within Mary's womb that the Word would be made flesh. It would be Mary who would later be given the name theotokos: the bearer of God.

Mary is surprised to find this all out. She is perplexed at having an angel show up and call her "favored one." She has to ponder at the prospect of housing the Lord, of bearing the Son of God. But the angel reassures her; tells her not to be afraid; explains what is happening; and reminds her of her cousin Elizabeth, thought to be beyond the possibility of bearing a child of her own, but now six months pregnant with John the Baptist, the forerunner of God's good news. "Nothing will be impossible with God."

And so, after a visit to Elizabeth herself, Mary sings this song, now called "the Magnificat," because of her first words: "My soul magnifies the Lord." And that ends up being a literal thing – the Lord is magnified in Mary, and not just in her soul; the Lord grows within her, as she bears this incarnate promise into the world. And as her song unfolds, her spirit rejoices that God is in the habit of flipping scripts, and not houses: "he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his

servant...He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever."

Just like the tent of the ark of the covenant, God seems to prefer dwelling among the people, among the lowly, and raising them up. This time, it's not a tent; it's a young girl, and a humble carpenter's house, and the backwater town of Nazareth, and a manger when there is no room at the inn, and smelly shepherds to herald the birth of a king. It is true that Joseph is descended from the lofty house of David; but God chooses to make His home among such humble surroundings as these. It is from the lowly that God is better magnified. And God is faithful, always.

God was not looking for a grand gesture or a lavish palace or the window dressing of an HGTV house-hunting show. What God was desiring from the people, both then and now, was a home in us, in our hearts, in our congregations, in our communities, moving with us and among us wherever we go. What God is desiring is for us to respond, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." God wants to move into our hearts, do a little structural renovation, nothing too fancy, and more than anything be at home in us. And we say: Here I am. And become God-bearers in our own right.

Your own homes might have crosses on the wall. Maybe you have some nativities out right now. But is Christ present in your house? Is Christ at home in your heart? Are you bearing Christ, carrying the Word of God right now, into the world? Are you magnifying? I think we fall into the same trap as David: "Gee, God, wouldn't you rather have a house of cedar, or a palace? Let me make something really special for you."

The problem is, that's based on the assumption that we aren't good enough for God. That we need to make an effort to build something up; rather than praising God for making His home in the lowly, in us, and being magnified from there. We'd rather put God in His own house, at a safe distance, something we could watch and admire on TV but that isn't really real. It's perplexing and frightening to ponder God making a home within us; for us to be responsible for bearing God into the world; to risk having our lives and our carefully curated homes disrupted by God's presence in our midst. But that's not what God wants; God is happy with the tent; God chooses the young girl of seemingly no consequence; God puts on flesh to move among and with us. God lifts up the lowly. God makes a home within us.

Don't fall into the trap of window dressing, of unreal expectations. God blesses the lowly. God stays true. God enlists Christ-bearers, Word-bearers – like Nathan; like Mary, to help us not be afraid or perplexed, and makes a home in our hearts so that we can be Christ-bearers and Word-bearers in turn. God understands "perplexed." God encourages pondering. But let us never forget

that nothing is impossible with God. Let us find our home within the loving promises of God; and may God always be at home within us as well. Amen.

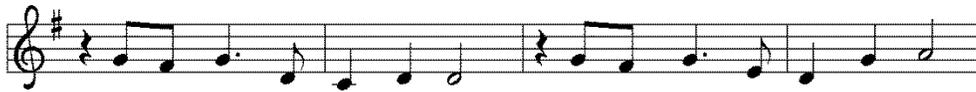
HYMN OF THE DAY Here I Am, Lord



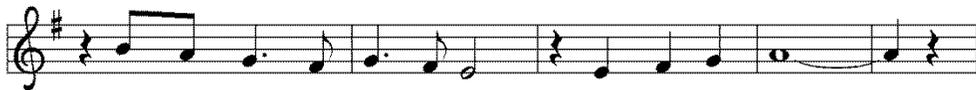
1 "I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my peo - ple cry.
2 "I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my peo - ple's pain.
3 "I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.



All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
I have wept for love of them. They turn a - way.
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.



I, who made the stars of night, I will make their dark-ness bright.
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love a - lone.
Fin-est bread I will pro-vide till their hearts be sat - is - fied.



Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?"
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?"
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?"

Refrain



Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you



call-ing in the night. I will go, Lord, if you



lead me. I will hold your peo - ple in my heart.

Text: Daniel L. Schutte, b. 1946

Music: HERE I AM, LORD, Daniel L. Schutte

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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: God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need. *[Brief silence]*

A: Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths (Nearby churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues may be named). Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community. Hear us, O God

C: *Your mercy is great*

A: Creator God, you scatter the proud. Everything we have belongs first to you. Bless and protect the seas, mountains, plains, forests, skies, and soils that surround us. Give us humility as we tend them. Hear us, O God

C: *Your mercy is great*

A: Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish. Hear us, O God

C: *Your mercy is great*

A: Compassionate God, you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Encourage others to provide for their neighbors in need. Hear us, O God

C: *Your mercy is great*

A: Healing God, you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence (especially). Hear us, O God

C: *Your mercy is great*

A: Eternal God, you are faithful to the promises you made to our forebears. We give thanks for the ministry of Katharina von Bora Luther and other ancestors who organized, planned, dreamed, encouraged, and reached out as they served you. We give thanks for the bold leadership of female leaders in our own time. Inspire others with their steadfast witness. Hear us, O God

C: Your mercy is great

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, and 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. Hear us, O God

C: Your mercy is great

A: God of all families, you have given us families to be sanctuaries of blessing, comfort, and love for each other. Under your protection fill us with harmony, hope, and health. We pray this week for the Gigante, Gilnett and Glatfelter families as well as our Messiah family. Guard all of our hearts that we may display love instead of hate, anger, or bitterness. Lead us all to be grateful for your abiding love and enable us to glorify you by sharing that love with others. Hear us, O God

C: Your mercy is great

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

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.*

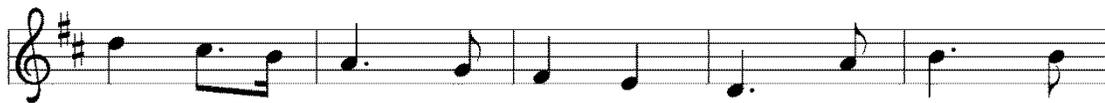
BLESSING

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

C: **Amen**

SENDING SONG *Joy to the World*

Joy to the World



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
plains re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing
flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
found, far as, far as the curse is found.
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792-1872

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTOR RYAN'S OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Ryan and his family were in close contact this past Sunday afternoon with someone who has since tested positive for covid. They are quarantining at home for now, and will share further updates on the situation as they have them. Pastor Ryan apologizes deeply for the effects this will have on worship in this season of Advent and Christmas, and asks for your prayers. He will not have office hours this week, but will still be available via phone and email.

BLESSING OF TEDDY BEARS AND TOYS

To all the kids of Messiah (no matter your age): please bring your favorite Christmas present with you to worship on December 27th. We'll be having a service of lessons and carols, and we'll also be blessing your teddy bears and toys!

MCEF FUNDRAISER

Monday, December 21 is a "FUNdraiser" for MCEF at Chicken Salad Chick, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. Mention that you support MCEF and 10% of the sale will be donated to MCEF. Your food donations are appreciated but donations of clothing are NOT being accepted until after January 15. Thank you for your support in 2020.

ADVENT MIDWEEK MESSAGES

This week we'll conclude our series of Faith Ponderings. A Faith Pondering is any question or wonderment or curiosity you have about the Church, the Bible, Lutheranism, or faith in general. Thanks for the good questions through this season, and if you still have some, send them in and we'll find a time to talk about them.

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 \$3,099 through December 13, 2020 (up from \$2,750 on December 6).
- We are \$15,261.70 behind the year-to-date budget needs (decreasing from \$32,020.70 behind the budget the week prior).
- Weekly budget need is \$3404.00.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

We will celebrate the birth of Christ on Thursday, December 24th, at 4:00 pm. This will still be a parking lot service. We ask that you would bring your own candles for the candlelight hymn to cut down on the time and logistics of passing candles out, but we will still have some candles on hand for those who need them. Please stay tuned for more information.

2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES

Envelopes for 2021 are ready. Envelopes will be distributed before services. Please note numbers have changed so in order to get proper credit for the correct year use the new envelopes only for Sundays in 2021. Let Bill Weaver know if you do not receive your envelopes.

FYI

There will be no Worship Opportunities/Christian Formation Blast for January 3. See you again on January 10, 2021! Have a very Merry, blessed, and safe Christmas. – Donna Shaw

ONLINE WINTER CELEBRATION REGISTRATION IS OPEN

Winter Celebration, January 22-24, 2021, is the Virginia Synod annual weekend faith-formation retreat for youth in 9th through 12th grades and adult leaders. This year they will gather ONLINE for Large Group experiences with lots of singing and skits and fun and Small Group experiences with lots of new friends, games, conversation, more games, and faith sharing! Deadline to register is Jan. 5, 2021. To register after this date, please contact Rev. Dave Delaney at delaney@vasynod.org, or 540-529-6893. For more information, and to register online for Winter Celebration, visit www.vasynod.org/event/winter-celebration

VANCO

The Vanco Account have been closed and the donation button removed from the church website. If you were previously using Vanco as the means for your electronic donation, please contact your bank to have them automatically send a check to Messiah Lutheran Church, 8154 Atlee Road Mechanicsville Virginia 23111 or you can send a check personally. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact Bill Weaver Financial Secretary, his number is 804-908-3861 or wweaver701@comcast.net.

SMALL GROUPS

If you'd like to have a small group or committee meeting at the church, please check out the Small Group Meetings and Cleaning Protocols. You can contact Davina when wanting to schedule a time for your group to meet and get the latest protocols. 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 are also 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. Thanks for all you do! Stay well everyone!

NO ROOM AT THE INN

Experience A Thrill of Hope In this year of fear and struggle we need the hope and joy of Christmas. Our 13th annual No Room at the Inn will be a virtual event with a live online Preview Gala on Friday December 4th, 2020. The virtual Nativity Exhibit will be available online through Christmas. Funds raised will be shared with My Path Forward, MCEF's emergency housing assistance program, and AFAL in Haiti building modest homes for their neediest families. Visit churchredeemer.org/no-room or call 730-7980 for details. Like and Share us on Facebook by searching for us on Facebook at No Room at the Inn Mechanicsville VA.

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.

UPDATED: REBUILD RVA GRANT PROGRAM

On October 28, the Governor's Office released information about an expansion of the Rebuild Virginia Grants. The grants are available to small businesses and non-profits. Unlike the last time round of Rebuild Virginia grants, the expansion specifically says that an organization can receive funding even if the organization received CARES Act Funding. Qualified recipients can receive a grant of up to three months' worth of expenses to help with salaries, mortgage, utilities, etc. The FAQs aren't as entirely clear, but when you combine the FAQs with the application guide (pg 4 in particular addresses what is excluded for those with CARES Act funding), it appears that most organizations in Virginia are eligible. This funding may prove particularly helpful for child care and preschool ministries that had issues with part-time employees and PPP Loan calculations. One potential hurdle for an application is the requirement for a DUNS number. The DUNS numbers appear to be standard practice in the for-profit world and almost unheard of in the non-profit world. It is possible for a church or non-profit to apply for a DUNS number, but the online process to get the number can be confusing.

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.

FUNERAL FOR HELEN PENKALSKI

Helen was an active member of Messiah many years ago. The family will receive friends from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM on Friday, December 18, at the Bennett Funeral Home, Mechanicsville Chapel, 8014 Lee Davis Rd., where a funeral service will be held at 12:00pm on Saturday, December 19, 2020. Interment to follow in Signal Hill Memorial Park. Please keep her family in your prayers. Obituary link:
<https://www.bennettfuneralhomes.com/obituary/hellen-may-penkalski>

SMILE! MESSIAH RECEIVES .5% DONATION WHEN YOU SHOP ON AMAZON!

This holiday season, online holiday shopping is expected to increase over 33% more than last year. More people will be browsing Amazon this year more than ever. With the shopping season among us, the Stewardship team would like to remind everyone to sign up for Amazon Smile! Signing up is easy and does not interfere with Prime Membership benefits. Amazon donates .5% of eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice.

Step 1: visit smile.amazon.com

Step 2: sign in with your amazon account credentials

Step 3: Search for "Messiah Lutheran Church Mechanicsville"

Step 4: Start SHOPPING! *please remember to bookmark smile.amazon.com for easy access every time you shop. You must add the "smile" for this program. Thank you all and happy shopping!

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we give thanks for the good news of great joy for all people - all around the world! Here are some ways that Christmas is celebrated around the world, with some connections with us here in Virginia.

- Watch this very short video of **Christmas worship in Finschhafen, Papua New Guinea**. The Virginia Synod's Global Companion Synod is the New Guinea Islands District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea.
- Read about **Christmas in Hungary**, from **Maren Corliss**, who served as a Young Adult in Global Mission (YAGM) in Hungary last year. Maren is a member of St Timothy, Norfolk, and a former Virginia Synod Council member.
- Check out these photos of Lutheran seminary students, faculty, and their kids from **Christmas worship in Madagascar**, from **Jayme Kokkonen**. Jayme is a member of Reformation, New Market and served as a YAGM in Madagascar last year.
- Learn about **Christmas in Finland**, thanks to info from VA Synod pastor - and Finland native - **Pastor Tarja Stevenson**, who serves at River of Life Parish in Shenandoah.
- Listen to **an interview from 2016 about being Black Santa** - are there any Black Santas in your community?
- Listen to this podcast, **So Long, Black Pete** (2020), from NPR's *Rough Translation* podcast, about a Dutch Christmas tradition and discussed at the December Synod Council meeting.