

*Messiah Lutheran Church
Mechanicsville, Virginia*



*January 10, 2021
Baptism of Our Lord*

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

Baptism of Our Lord **(January 10, 2021)**

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.

PASTORAL STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON THE CAPITOL

On the Day of Epiphany, the day that the light of a star guided the magi, the wise men, to their final destination, the newborn Messiah; we saw some dark things happen in our country. We told our kids: "January 6, 2021, is a date you'll be learning about in history class." A day where protesters turned into rioters and worse. A day where lives were lost. A day where the Capitol was breached and vandalized by its own citizens, where the process of democracy was interrupted. A day where our standing around the world was diminished. A day of shame. On Wednesday our country was seized by fear and unease as a result of this violence, this hate, and this ignorance.

I know that in our country we have this principle about separation of church and state. That means that we don't get to impose our religion on others, or on the government, and that the government doesn't get to impose any religion on anybody else. So why am I talking about this? Well, I'm not here to impose. I'm talking about this because our Christian faith does inform our personal choices, including our politics, and how we live our lives. Martin Luther taught us about our Christian vocations, the various roles and ways through which we live out our faith. They include our family relationships, our jobs, our activities, and also the vocation of being citizens in this democracy. So, I'm speaking right now not just to once again condemn violence, but to speak just a little bit about our civic vocations.

In John's Gospel Jesus gives a multiple-chapters-long monologue often called "the farewell discourse." Before the events of the Passion, Jesus was preparing his disciples for his impending death and resurrection and ascension. Jesus gives them instruction and promises the Holy Spirit. Jesus prays for them. In John 17:11-15 Jesus says this: "And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one... But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one."

As followers of Christ we are both in the world and out of the world, and we pray in the Lord's Prayer that God's kingdom would come in and through us. And Christ prays that the Father would protect us while we carry on with Christ's commandment to love others the way he loves us, to protect us from the world and the evil one, who has definitely been busy. And part of the way we follow Christ's commandment and example, part of the way we love and serve the world Christ died to save, is to be honest.

One of Martin Luther's central, hallmark teachings was about the Theology of the Cross. Here's a helpful explanation: "The cross of Jesus Christ is the most important and powerful thing in Christian faith. But it's easy to misunderstand what this means. A 'theologian of glory,' based on nothing more than individual wishes, tries to use the cross as a starting point for personal gain – to make people healthy and wealthy, successful and popular. A 'theologian of the cross,' in contrast, thinks of the cross as the last stop for sin, death, and delusions of grandeur. In other words, the cross is an end point."

Luther wrote, "A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls a thing what it actually is." The cross was an evil instrument of execution and torture and humiliation, and through it God brought about life and salvation. We can't gloss over the first part. We need to call a thing what it is.

Is any part of government perfect? By no means. But in this country we have the right to speak, and to protest, and to assemble, so that we can work for change and justice and a more perfect union. These actions are guaranteed and protected by the Constitution, and are patriotic exercises of citizenship. Violence like we saw on Epiphany is not patriotic. We need to call the thing what it is.

It is also not patriotic to ignore facts, or to close your eyes to evident, provable truths. That could apply to an election that has been certified and counted and challenged and affirmed, on multiple levels, multiple times. This election wasn't stolen. To ignore plain facts and continue to proceed as though some great wrong was done is irresponsible, and, clearly, dangerous. Call a thing what it is, and let's not support, in any way, the perpetuation of violence and ignorance. If you see others doing so, online or in person, call a thing what it is. Speak the truth in love.

This can also apply to the science of epidemiology and the fact that masks and social distancing stop the spread of a virus. The pandemic is not a hoax. To those who say so, grow up. Love your country and protect your neighbors and yourselves. Call a thing what it is. Speak the truth in love.

This could apply to the cries and the movement for racial justice in this country. Think of this contrast: On the one hand, we have tanks that rolled down the street at a predominantly peaceful Black Lives Matter protest in D.C. last summer, with Christians getting tear-gassed for handing out water and medical aid. On the other hand, we have this past Wednesday, where a protest became a riot and a desecration of the democratic process, and the perpetrators traipsing around Congress with confederate and white supremacist flags – and Christian flags – and daring the police to stop them. For the most part, they were walked out of the building and off the premises peacefully. How can anyone not see the double standard? This wasn't quietly kneeling before a sports game, or peacefully protesting the killing of unarmed black people. This was intimidation and terrorism, because their candidate lost an election. Because the challenges didn't hold up.

This was threatening the lives of people. This was trying to disrupt democracy. This was ignoring truth. This wasn't patriotic. And it wasn't Christian, either. Call a thing what it is. Speak the truth in love. May God protect us from the evil one, and all the lies and distortions of truth that people use to justify their violence and ignorance.

Back to John, this time chapter 17, verses 20-21: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." The Christian flags flying during the riot and the breach of the Capitol are not helping the world believe in our God of love. The great number of Christians saying and doing nothing about everything that happened and everything that led to it happening are not helping the world believe in our God of love.

I implore and exhort you all, again, to be theologians of the cross. Please, with God's help, call things what they are, even with those closest to you, and when necessary with yourselves, which of course makes such conversations the most difficult. Speak the truth in love. Work towards unity – not uniformity. Work towards peace and justice through all of your God-given vocations, including that of citizen. Be public witnesses to Jesus' self-sacrificing way of the cross, and condemn these acts of violence and all of the willful ignorance of far too many people that enabled and encouraged it, for far, far too long. To those who actually say they approve of the actions that took place in the Capitol, you must overcome hatred with love, and ignorance with truth, with your words and actions alike. You must not remain silent, or wait for it to blow over, or settle down. If we all aren't working to spread the good news of our God of love, this will only get worse.

A new hymnal just came out in November, called *All Creation Sings*. And because of the world we have stewarded in recent years, it includes such pages as "A Prayer of Lament," "Lamenting Racism," and "Service after a Violent Event." I'd like to share some prayers from this last one, a *Service after a Violent Event*:

Let us pray...

Gracious God, the news of these last days has ripped our hearts and torn our souls. We are walking through the valley of the shadow of death. In the depths of pain and anger, we gather before you, O God, our rock and our refuge. You are our only comfort. You are our only hope. Merciful God, you know the depth of our suffering. We have only begun to mourn all that we have lost.

We wait for you, Lord, and in your word we hope. Our help comes from you, O Lord, you who made heaven and earth. In the face of our grief, you are our solace. In the face of uncertainty, you are our rock. In the wake of tragedy, you are our hope. So even as we weep, we praise you, and place our trust in you. We pray in the name of the one who suffered and died and was raised for us, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

And I give you this charge:

Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold on to what is good; return no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak, and help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God.

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who was in the beginning, who makes a dwelling among us, who covers us with justice and mercy.

C: Amen

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

P: God of goodness and lovingkindness,

C: we confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbors. We have turned away from your invitation to new life. We have turned away from the lowly and downtrodden. In your abundant mercy, forgive us our sins, those we know and those known only to you, for the sake of the one who came to live among us, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

P: Hear the good news of peace and salvation! God forgives us all our sins, not through our own work, but through † Jesus Christ, made known to all people. With all who come to the manger, rejoice in this amazing gift of grace by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN *God, Whose Almighty Word*

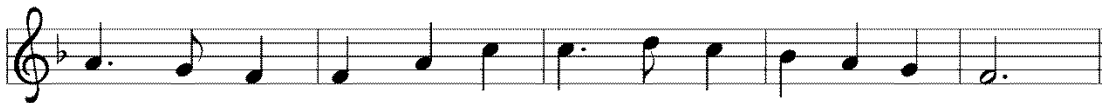
God, Whose Almighty Word



1 God, whose al - might - y word cha - os and dark - ness heard
2 Christ, who once came to bring, on your re - deem - ing wing,
3 Spir - it of truth and love, life - giv - ing, ho - ly dove,
4 Ho - ly and bless - ed three, glo - ri - ous Trin - i - ty,



and took their flight: hear us, we hum - bly pray, and where the
heal - ing and sight; health to the trou - bled mind, sight where il -
speed forth your flight; move on the wa - ter's face bear - ing the
Wis - dom, Love, Might: bound - less as o - cean's tide, roll - ing in



gos - pel day sheds not its glo - rious ray, let there be light.
lu - sions blind; oh, now to hu - man-kind let there be light.
lamp of grace, and in earth's dark - est place let there be light.
full - est pride, through the earth, far and wide, let there be light.

Text: John Marriott, 1780–1825, alt.

Music: ITALIAN HYMN, Felice de Giardini, 1716–1796

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: ***Holy God, creator of light and giver of goodness, your voice moves over the waters. Immerse us in your grace, and transform us by your Spirit, that we may follow after your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen***

FIRST LESSON: Genesis 1:1-5

Lector

A reading from Genesis.

Out of chaos, God brings order. Out of the formless void, God brings light. This familiar story was good news for the Israelites, who experienced much chaos in their history. It remains good news for us. God created and continues to create new life.

1In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: *Thanks be to God.*

SECOND LESSON: Acts 19:1-7

Lector

A reading from Acts.

In Ephesus, Paul encounters people who had received John's baptism of repentance but had never heard of the Holy Spirit or of baptism in the name of Jesus. After Paul baptizes them, the Holy Spirit comes upon them and empowers them with gifts of the Spirit.

1While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. 2He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." 4Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." 5On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— 7altogether there were about twelve of them.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: *Thanks be to God.*

GOSPEL: Mark 1:4-11

P: The Holy Gospel according to Mark.

C: *Glory to you, O Lord.*

Mark's gospel reports the story of Jesus' baptism with some irony: the one on whom the Spirit descends is himself the one who will baptize others with the Holy Spirit.

4John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

9In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Ryan Radtke

I've already said a bit today, so I'll keep this message short. Which, as it turns out, shouldn't be too tough – because the story of Jesus' baptism helps us understand some core things about God, and about our own baptisms. But let's start at the beginning. Like, all the way at the beginning.

Today we heard the first five verses of the first book of the Bible, Genesis. We heard about how God started the Creative process. In the beginning, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Now, that wind, or in Hebrew ruach, or in Greek pneuma, is the very same word that gets translated as spirit, or breath. That's right, folks – the Holy Spirit was right there at the beginning, stirring things up. Not too much later, God separates the lights of the sky, into Day and Night. God brings order to Creation, to the world. And God saw that it was good.

Fast forward to Jesus' baptism. God was starting something new with this Savior. We're back in the water, and the Spirit's action this time is to descend, like a dove, onto Jesus. Jesus had come, as John the Baptist told everyone, to baptize with the Holy Spirit, to complete what John started with the baptism of repentance. In other words, once the heavens were separated, torn apart, Jesus began the real work of bringing order to sin, through forgiveness. And God saw that it was good, saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Fast forward once more, to our baptisms. God creates something new in us, with us, and for us, through baptism. Our life in Christ starts in the water, too, and the Spirit comes down to mark us with the cross of Christ and seal us with the same Spirit forever. I can't guarantee that the heavens are torn apart, or that the sky is separated at each of our baptisms; but I can share the words we say immediately after a baptism: "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Separate the darkness of the sin of our souls and of the world by the light of Christ that shines in us and out from us, bringing the Kingdom of God to order in this world. We are each named and claimed as a beloved child of God, and we declare it good with our amens.

God comes down from heaven; the Spirit stirs and descends and seals; God brings order, through creation and repentance and forgiveness; light shines through the darkness and overcomes the sin. God works through this order so that all might see the goodness of God through our words and deeds and glorify God. And God calls all of this good.

I thought about getting into different competing understandings and theologies of baptism, and how the reading from Acts gets into the discussion on which types of baptisms "count" according to different Christian denominations. How much water, infant baptism versus believer's baptism, does it count if there isn't some sort of sign like speaking in tongues. But today, let's just keep it simple: God is the one who baptizes; God is the one who comes down. God through the Spirit stirs things up. God brings order and washes away sin. God is the one who gifts us and calls us good. God is the one who is consistent from the first day to our baptism day and beyond. God is the one who makes us a new creation by joining us, in the waters of baptism, to the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

God is the one who commands us to let our lights shine, and God is also the one who gives us the abilities, the opportunities, the gifts, and the vocations to do so. Each day we remember our baptisms, and we die to sin and are raised to new life in Christ. Each day is a creation day. Each day we are new creations. We don't live each day like it's our last; we live each day like it's our first, full of promise and hope, coming up out of the water.

How do we navigate the challenges of life? How do we not get bogged down in the old cycles of sin, the variations on an unending theme of crisis and hardship and bad news, especially in the world we're living in right now? By remembering God's constancy and goodness, from the first day to our baptism day and beyond. Heavens opened, order created, Spirit moving, freed from sin, called good. Lights to shine. Living each day as the new creations we are; living each day like it's our first, to overcome the disheartening and the terrifying things in this world. Able to go out into this world as truth-tellers, calling things what they are, speaking the truth in love, and glorifying God.

Promises are made at a baptism; affirmed at a confirmation; recommitted to each new day: to live among God's faithful people; to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper; to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed; to serve all people, following the example of Jesus; and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

People of God, do you promise to support and pray for one another in your life in Christ, in your life of living out these promises? If so, please say, "We do and we ask God to help and guide us."

Let us pray: We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give your daughters and sons new birth, cleanse them from sin, and raise them to eternal life. Sustain each of your children with the gift of the Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. Amen.

Brothers and sisters; new creations: let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. May God – and all peoples – see that the lights are good. Amen.

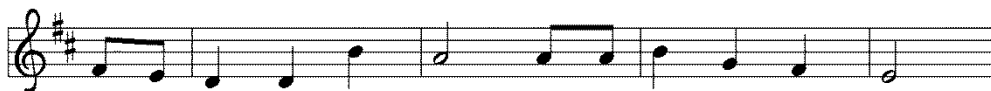
HYMN OF THE DAY Baptized and Set Free



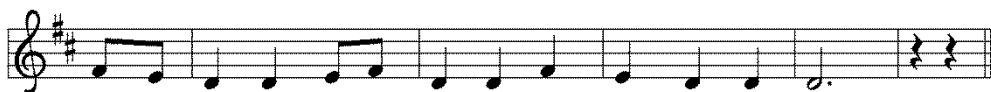
1 We are peo - ple cre - at - ed, cho - sen by God.
 2 We are fed and we're nour - ished, filled and re - freshed.
 3 We are nour - ished by wa - ter, all liv - ing things,
 4 Now with praise and thanks - giv - ing, we join the song.



Then we're washed, ev - er gent - ly, in mer - cy and love.
 Then our hun - ger re - turns and a - gain we are blessed.
 and by life that the Spir - it a - bun - dant - ly brings.
 All are wel - come! We gath - er to sing loud and strong.



Sin has pow - er no more. Je - sus o - pened the door
 For what - ev - er the need, God is great - er in - deed:
 As we jour - ney toward home, may your pres - ence be known:
 Not en - slaved, but set free! From now on, all will be



to a foun - tain bring - ing heal - ing, and whole - ness and more.
 end - less o - cean, al - ways deep - er than all of our need.
 pre - cious riv - er, ev - er - flow - ing, now car - ry us home.
 one in Je - sus, one in wa - ter, bap - tized and set free!

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS

A: Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need. *[Brief silence]*

A: For the church throughout the world and its leaders, that guided by the Holy Spirit they proclaim the forgiveness of sins, let us pray.

C: Have mercy, O God.

A: For wilderness and water, wind and wild beasts, and all living things on earth, that God's goodness is revealed through creation and faithful stewards care for all God has made, let us pray.

C: Have mercy, O God.

A: For the nations of the world and their leaders, for laborers busy both day and night, and for peacemakers amid strife, that God inspire all people to use their strength wisely, let us pray.

C: Have mercy, O God.

A: For the sick and those who provide medical care, for the imprisoned and those who show them mercy, for the lonely and those who provide companionship, for all who suffer (especially), that God shower compassion, let us pray.

C: Have mercy, O God.

A: For the congregation gathered here, for students returning to school, for those seeking renewal in their daily work, that all the beloved of God experience grace and peace, let us pray.

C: Have mercy, O God.

A: In thanksgiving for the faithful departed who now rest from their labors, that their witness inspire us in our baptismal vocations, let us pray.

C: Have mercy, O God.

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, let us pray.

C: Have mercy, O God.

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 Hatfield, Honan and Hubert 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, let us pray.

C: Have mercy, O God.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

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: Almighty God, who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary, proclaimed joy through the angels, sent the shepherds with good news, and led the magi by a star, bless you this day ☩ through the Word made flesh.

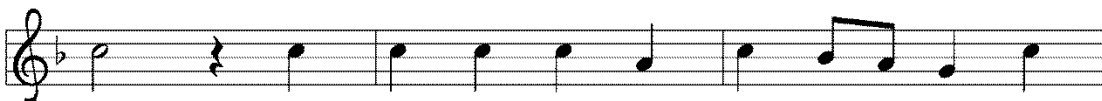
C: Amen

SENDING SONG

Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized



1 Christ, when for us you were bap - tized, God's Spir - it on you
2 God called you, "My be - lov - ed Son"; you are God's ser - vant
3 Straight-way and stead - fast un - til death you then o - beyed the
4 Bap - tize us with your Spir - it, Lord; your cross on us be



came, as peace - ful as a dove, and yet as
true, sent to pro - claim the reign of heav'n, God's
call to serve with free and will - ing heart, to
signed, that like - wise in God's ser - vice we may



ur - gent as a flame, as ur - gent as a flame.
ho - ly will to do, God's ho - ly will to do.
give your life for all, to give your life for all.
per - fect free - dom find, may per - fect free - dom find.

Text: F. Bland Tucker, 1895–1984, alt.

Music: LOBT GOTT, IHR CHRISTEN, Nikolaus Herman, 1480–1561

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTOR RYAN'S OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Ryan's office hours for the week of January 10th are posted below. You can also reach Pastor Ryan via email at messiahmechpr@gmail.com or by phone at 507-360-7276 if you'd like to talk or set up an appointment.

Pastor Ryan hours:

Tuesday: 10-4 pm / Wednesday: 9-1 pm / Thursday: 10-3 pm

THANK YOU!

To the good folks of Messiah, thank you for your generous Christmas gift, your kind words, the yummy treats, and the cards. May God continue to bless us all in this New Year!

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.

FOSTER CHILDREN FAMILIES

The Social Ministry Team would like to thank the Congregation for their generous gift cards to the Foster Children Families. We were able to give \$75 worth of gift cards to twelve families and help make their Christmas special. Thank you for all you do! Social Ministry.

ANNUAL REPORTS MEETING (SUNDAY, JAN. 24, 2021)

Our Annual Reports meeting is set for Sunday, January 24 (snow day, 1/31), join your brothers and sisters in Christ as we share the story of our past year and look toward a future filled with hope. It is our Annual Reports Meeting. The new council for 2021 will be installed and ministry reports shared.

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Here is this week's information based on newly passed budget.

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$2,037 through January 3, 2021.
- We are \$19,540 behind the year-to-date budget needs.
- Weekly budget need is \$3991.
- We ended 2020 behind budget by \$14,959.70. With the usage of our PPP loan of \$17,700 however we ended the year plus \$2,740.30 and met all expenses.

DEATH

Charlie Schwerdtfeger's Uncle Carlton (Billy) Vaughan passed away in the early hours of December 26. Further arrangements pending. Charlie and Judy appreciate all the prayers, calls, and support from our Messiah family during Billy's illness.

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

GLOBAL BARNYARD RESULTS ARE IN

Based on the amount of \$630 that was collected for the Global Barnyard Project along with the input from the 37 people who responded to a recent survey, here is what was 'purchased' with your donations: **10** - *Clinic visit for a child*, \$10 each = \$100; **4** - *Feed a child for a month*, \$25 each = \$100; **3** - *Goat and flock of chickens*, \$60 each = \$180; **5** - *Fruit tree seedlings*, \$10 each = \$50; **5** - *Honeybees*; \$20 each = \$100; **4** - *Soap and Sanitation Supplies*, \$25 each = \$100; Total = \$630. Thank you to all who contributed to this project. What a great way to begin 2021!

VANCO

The Vanco Account has 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!

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.

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!