

*Messiah Lutheran Church
Mechanicsville, Virginia*



February 7, 2021

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

(February 7, 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.

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: In the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen

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

P: Most merciful God,

C: we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

P: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

GATHERING HYMN Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing



- 1 Oh, for a thou-sand tongues to sing my great Re-deem-er's praise,
- 2 My gra-cious Mas-ter and my God, as-sist me to pro-claim,
- 3 The name of Je-sus charms our fears and bids our sor-rows cease,
- 4 He speaks, and lis-t'ning to his voice, new life the dead re-ceive;



the glo-ries of my God and king, the tri-umphs of his grace!
to spread through all the earth a-broad the hon-ors of your name.
sings mu-sic in the sin-ner's ears, brings life and health and peace.
the mourn-ful, bro-ken hearts re-joice, the hum-ble poor be-lieve.

- 5 Look unto him, your Savior own,
O fallen human race!
Look and be saved through faith alone,
be justified by grace!
- 6 To God all glory, praise, and love
be now and ever giv'n
by saints below and saints above,
the church in earth and heav'n.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–1788, alt.

Music: AZMON, Carl G. Gläser, 1784–1829; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

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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: **Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen**

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 40:21-31

Lector

A reading from Isaiah.

The Judeans in exile have a good reason to be hopeful: the one who will bring them to freedom is the God who created the world, the God who subdues the rulers of the earth and gives strength to those who are weary

²¹Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

²²It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;

who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;

²³who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

²⁴Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,

“My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God”?

²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Lector

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

God entrusted Paul with the responsibility of bringing the gospel to diverse people. Hence the focus of Paul's ministry is not his own rights or privileges as an

apostle but the privilege of serving God by freely sharing the good news of Christ with others.

¹⁶If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

¹⁹For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: Mark 1:29-39

P: The Holy Gospel according to Mark.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Everywhere Jesus goes, many people expect him to set them free from oppression. Everywhere he goes, he heals people and sets them free. Disease, devils, and death are running for their lives. The forces that diminish human life are rendered powerless by Jesus.

²⁹As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he

went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Ryan Radtke

A couple of years ago, something unusual happened. At least, it was unusual for me: I actually opened an email that promised a huge sale! Usually I ignore these. But this one got my attention, professionally – there was a big markdown on a ton of books from Fortress Press, which publishes lots of books on theology and church history. A little nerdy, I know, but these books are usually pretty expensive – specialized books for church geeks like me, printed in smaller numbers, so the price is usually higher. So, I opened the email, clicked on the link, and started browsing.

There were a few books that looked pretty cool, but there was one that made me stop and go “Hmmm....” It’s called *The Life, Works, and Witness of Tsehay Tolessa and Gudina Tumsa, the Ethiopian Bonhoeffer*. Ethiopian Bonhoeffer? Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who stood up against the Nazi regime in Germany and died in a concentration camp shortly before the end of WWII. His writings and his witness have inspired generations (and we’ll be reading his book, *Life Together*, for our Lenten study starting in a few weeks). There was someone who received the nickname, “the Ethiopian Bonhoeffer”???

So I read the description: “This book opens a window into the lives and extraordinary witness of a Christian couple whose faithful life of service has earned them the moniker of Ethiopia’s Bonhoeffer. Part One introduces the reader to the [surviving] writings of Gudina Tumsa. Part Two is a highly personal account of Gudina and Tsehay’s life, witness, and sufferings...Gudina lives on in the many Ethiopian Christians who continue to be inspired by his life and witness.” I was interested – I’d never heard of this chapter of Lutheran witness and history.

And here is what the back of the book said: “Why was Gudina Tumsa, the Ethiopian Bonhoeffer and general secretary of the Lutheran Church in Ethiopia, assassinated by his government? Why was his wife, Tsehay Tolessa, tortured and imprisoned without trial or sentence for ten years? This book illuminates the cost of their discipleship.” I was hooked. The book went in the cart, and before long it arrived.

It came shortly before we moved. I started reading it, but then, you know, life. But over the last few weeks I’ve started chipping away at it, and I keep being amazed at the stories and the writings, and especially by how relevant they still are today. And the Holy Spirit seemed to know what She was doing when I picked this book back up – because the chapter I just finished seemed perfect for the Gospel reading we just heard.

To understand how they fit together so well, I'll share a little background first. Tumsa's and Tolessa's childhood was during the Italian-occupied Ethiopia of WWII. Tumsa grew up being educated by Swedish Lutheran missionary institutions, both in medicine and in theology. He also studied at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, for three years, and was influenced by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Tumsa and Tolessa served and led their church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church Mekane Yesus (which means, "Jesus saves") through the fall of the imperial government in Ethiopia to the tyranny of Marxist regime, and all the while the church's numbers grew and grew. But the growth was not without obstacles.

The Lutheran church in Ethiopia was started and supported by missionaries from Norway, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and the U.S. For a while, those benefactors called a lot of the shots. They helped build churches and train leaders. They had hospitals and schools and other development and relief efforts. Their focus was on sharing the good news, and saving souls, and the other ministries were secondary.

WWII disrupted things. A lot of the outsiders had to flee the country when Italy occupied Ethiopia. And something happened: the church kept going. Layfolks stepped up. The good news burned bright, giving hope to all. And the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus started directing their own ministries and setting their own priorities.

After the war, the Westerners came back, but their focus shifted in the fifties and sixties – their primary efforts were now almost entirely on *just* the relief efforts, so as not to upset the government. "We're just here to offer help – we're not trying to influence your people." And, while the Ethiopian Lutherans had started to call the shots, they still needed the financial support of the western churches to keep up with the exponential growth of the church. But what they didn't need was the western churches placing *conditions* on the aid, dictating how the money could be spent. The Ethiopians said, respectfully, to these other members of the Lutheran World Federation: we are all equals in Christ; please trust us to follow where God is leading us. We need to use this support to train leaders and build churches; not so much at this moment for relief work.

And here is what Gudina Tumsa wrote in a presentation to some European church leaders in 1973, asking them to remove the conditions on the aid and not make them have to choose between serving *either* people's spiritual needs or their physical ones: "The division that you have made between what you call body and soul is unfair to man. Now, we are telling you that there is a contradiction in your thinking...On Sundays you confess that you believe in the resurrection of the body; during the rest of the week you tell the world that the body is of secondary importance – what matters is the soul. Therefore, preach the gospel, the most important thing in the world! For us it is very difficult to dissect human life into various parts, ministering to one aspect while neglecting the other. Man is created by God as a totality..."

“‘Proclamation,’ as we understand it, is based on Luke 4, where it states the blind receive sight, the poor hear good news, the oppressed are given liberty, prisoners are set free. You know the text. Now to us, proclamation is not some kind of spiritual activity as understood by the Western mind. But it is a saving power to release man from whatever conditions he finds himself in. It involves the total human personality.”

Today we heard Jesus say, “Let us go to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And then Mark writes, “And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues, and casting out demons.” Jesus, fully human and fully divine, had a mission: to proclaim the message. The proclamation included teaching and praying. *And* the proclamation included curing diseases and casting out demons. The proclamation was for the whole person. Not just body. Not just soul. You can’t separate them. Jesus came to redeem the whole of humanity, the whole of each person.

He healed Simon’s mother-in-law of her fever. He cured the diseases of the clamoring crowds at the door, and cast out many demons. *And* he proclaimed the good news, as we heard last week, with unprecedented *authority*. Jesus wasn’t Lutheran, but he sure was good at our whole “both-and” thing.

And so that’s what we’re called to do, too. Tumsa was right, following the example of Christ. We can’t separate out body and soul in our proclamation of the gospel. We serve the whole person. So we comfort people in their times of crisis with prayers, *and* with casseroles. We help build Habitat for Humanity houses, *and* we help build up people’s hope with our own stories of God at work in our lives. We encourage our youth to go to gatherings and events, both to nurture their faith, *and* also to run around and have fun and make friends. We share Facebook posts of scripture or inspiration, *and* we share our food and other items with MCEF. We celebrate God’s goodness with a Creation Fair for the community, proclaiming our love for animals and our stewardship of the earth, *and also* providing a place for our neighbors to be in community. Body and soul. Both/*and*.

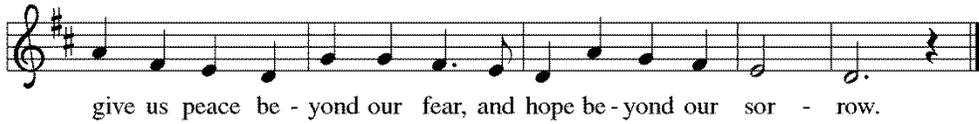
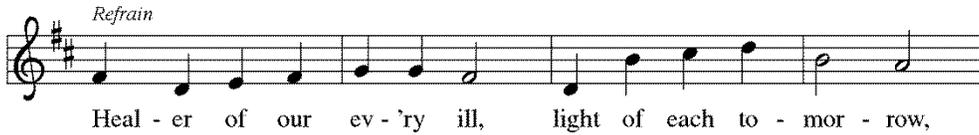
Just like the disciples and the crowds hunted and searched for Jesus when he went out in the early morning to pray, people are searching and hunting for Jesus’ whole-person message and good news today. People are searching, but God finds *them*. Jesus comes down. And Jesus doesn’t stay still, waiting for folks to find him – he moves around from town to town, teaching *and* healing, both inseparable in the overall proclamation of salvation. Paul became all things to all people, making the gospel free of charge, meeting people where they were and ministering to them there. The proclamation is for the whole person, and it bears the cost of discipleship when it encounters powerful resistance from both ill-meaning oppressors and well-meaning but out-of-balance friends alike.

Sometimes our proclamation gets out of balance. We do the charitable works as an end unto themselves and assume that folks will just get the whole message part by implication. Or we quote the Bible or say a prayer and assume that if folks need more than that, they'll just ask. Sometimes they don't. Or we act like those Western church Tumsa was addressing, assuming we know best and prescribing an either/or when all of us need the both/and of God's love and care. We assume instead of listening, instead of accompanying, instead of working alongside, instead of following the example of Christ who taught *and* healed. And you know what they say about assuming...it makes an astronomical mess sometimes. (:

Isaiah tells an anxious people that God, who is eternal, and who created everything and who is above and beyond any of us mortals, who has no equal...this God who does not faint or grow weary...this God of ours *still* gives of that infinite power to us finite mortals. God gives power to the faint, and strengthens the weary. "Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint."

God loves us, whole persons, and God provides for us, whole persons. And when we love and serve our neighbors, whole person to whole person, humble and equal, then we can say along with Paul, "I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessing." Like Tumsa and Tolessa or Bonhoeffer, too, we can speak up when things are out of balance, and we can continue to share the good news even when it is dangerous and costly to do so, and not grow faint or weary. The more we share the message, for bodies and souls together, the more we share in the blessings ourselves. May we see others, whole persons, as Jesus sees. And may we give everything to others, whole persons, as Jesus gave everything for us. Mekane Yesus. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY Healer of Our Every Ill



- 1 You who know our fears and sad - ness, grace us with your
- 2 In the pain and joy be - hold - ing how your grace is
- 3 Give us strength to love each oth - er, ev - 'ry sis - ter,
- 4 You who know each thought and feel - ing, teach us all your



peace and glad - ness; Spir - it of all com - fort, fill our hearts.
still un - fold - ing, give us all your vi - sion, God of love.
ev - 'ry broth - er; Spir - it of all kind - ness, be our guide.
way of heal - ing; Spir - it of com - pas - sion, fill each heart.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950
Music: HEALER OF OUR EVERY ILL, Marty Haugen
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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: 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: for ministries of healing and wholeness, for hospital, hospice, and military chaplains, for those serving in prison ministry, for all who proclaim freedom and release in the name of Christ, let us pray.

C: *Have mercy, O God.*

A: For creation: for insects in the grass, clouds on the mountaintops, for cattle and the rainwater they drink, for the humility to take our place among all creatures of the earth, let us pray.

C: *Have mercy, O God.*

A: For the nations: for all who lead in cities and towns, states and countries; for community organizers, school officials, and CEOs; for international health organizations, that in times of trial, fear, or hopelessness, they find freedom in service to those most in need, let us pray.

C: *Have mercy, O God.*

A: For all wearied by life's burdens: for those who are poor, for those lacking supportive relationships, for those crushed by debt, for those struggling with chronic pain or other sickness, for those exhausted from overwork or stress, and for all who cry out to you (especially), let us pray.

C: *Have mercy, O God.*

A: For this congregation: for outreach and social ministries centered here (especially); for parish nurses and visitors; for ministries of companionship and support, for the young people in this place who open us to new understandings, let us pray.

C: *Have mercy, O God.*

A: In thanksgiving for the faithful departed, who were called by name and now rest from their labors, that their lives serve as witnesses to the goodness of God, 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 Mason, McAlister and McKenna 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: 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

On Eagle's Wings



1 You who dwell in the shel-ter of the Lord, who a-bide in this shad-ow for life,



say to the Lord: "My ref - uge, my rock in whom I trust!"



And he will raise you up on ea-gle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,



make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.



2 The snare of the fowl-er will nev-er cap-ture you, and fam-ine will bring you no



fear; un - der God's wings your ref-uge, with faith-ful-ness your shield.



3 You need not fear the ter-ror of the night, nor the ar-row that flies by



day; thou-gh thou-sands fall a - bout you, near you it shall not come.

Leader or All

4 For to the an-gels God's giv-en a com-mand to

guard you in all of your ways; up - on their hands they will

bear you up, lest you dash your foot a - gainst a stone.

Final refrain
All

And he will raise you up on ea-gle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,

make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.

And hold you, hold you in the palm of his hand.

Text: Michael Joncas, b. 1957
 Music: ON EAGLE'S WINGS, Michael Joncas
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTOR RYAN'S OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Ryan's office hours for this coming week 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:

Tue. 10:00 am-3:00 pm / Wed: 9:00 am-1:00 pm / Fri: 10:00 am-3:00 pm

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

There is no weekly financial update due to the service being cancelled last Sunday on account of snow.

MCEF DONATION INFORMATION (CURRENT NEEDS)

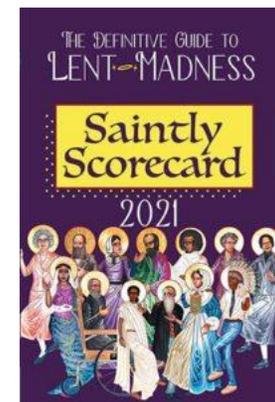
Hygiene items: Soap, Shampoo, Deodorant; Canned Meats: Spam & Vienna sausages; Soups, Beef Stew & Broth; Ketchup, Mustard & Mayo, Canned Tomatoes, Canned Spinach & Collards, Canned & boxed Potatoes, Pancake mix & Syrup, Crackers: graham, saltines & Ritz, Queen-sized sheets, Towels. Please, please, please...NO MORE clothing donations. We are completely full and totally out of storage space. Thank you for blessing us so richly!

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

Please join us in the parking lot for an Ash Wednesday service, February 17th at 5:00 PM, as we embark on another Lenten passage. We will provide individually-wrapped kits of ashes for individuals and families to apply to themselves. We will also celebrate Communion. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," might feel different this year; but God is constant, and Jesus saves.

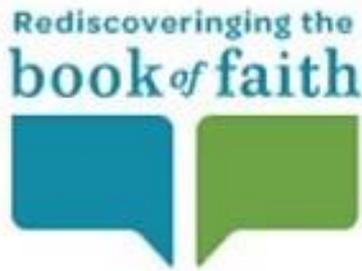
WHO WILL WIN THE GOLDEN HALO?

Lenten Madness is back and getting ready for Lent 2021. In seeking a fun, engaging way for people to learn about the men and women comprising the Church's Calendar of Saints, this unique Lenten devotion is now in its 11th year! Fashioned after NCAA March Madness, the format is straightforward: 32 saints are placed into a tournament-like single elimination bracket. Each pairing remains open for a set period of time and people vote for their favorite saint. 16 saints make it to the Round of the Saintly Sixteen; eight advance to the Round of the Elate Eight; four make it to the Faithful Four; two to the Championship; and the winner is awarded the coveted Golden Halo. Go to <https://www.lentmadness.org/about/> to learn more about Lenten Madness and to fill out a bracket go to



<https://www.lentmadness.org/bracket/>. Be creative and have some fun while learning about some amazing people!

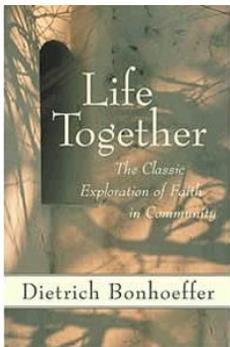
"REDISCOVERING THE BOOK OF FAITH" - MIDWEEK MESSAGE MINI-SERIES



You are all invited to a three-week series called "Rediscovering the Book of Faith," on the Wednesdays of February 3rd, 10th, and 17th at 10am. This series walks through the story of our Scriptures: how the present form of the Old Testament and New Testament came to be, and the impact the Reformation had on the Bible. We're going to try an experiment - we'll be offering this course over Zoom. The Zoom invite will be sent out prior to each session, and all are welcome. Invite your friends!

A Zoom account is not required. Because of some copyrighted material such as videos, we can't post the videos of our class on the church website, but Pastor Ryan will provide a summary each week. Please contact Pastor Ryan if you have any questions.

LENTEN BOOK STUDY: LIFE TOGETHER (APART)



You are invited to join in a Lenten book study on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book *Life Together*, Wednesdays at 10:00 am, beginning on February 24th. This book was written out of Bonhoeffer's experience leading an "underground" seminary for church leaders in Germany in the build-up to WWII. What does genuine Christian community look like? And for us today, what does community look like when we are separated in so many ways? You should be able to find this book through bookstores, libraries, online vendors, or through some form of digital download. Please read the Chapter 1 - "Community" - in preparation for our first session.

"SEVENTH DAY" RETREAT – MARCH 6TH

Calling all 5th & 6th graders, registration for the annual faith formation retreat is now live. To register go to <https://www.vasynod.org/event/7th-day/>. The deadline to register is Tuesday, Feb. 16th. The cost is just \$25. If you have any questions or if you need to register after the deadline, please contact Rev. Dave Delaney at delaney@vasynod.org, cell# 540-529-6893.

MAKE A RIPPLE

Over the past several months, words of inspiration along with scripture passages, Messiah videos, and church announcements have been posted on our church Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/MessiahMech/> on a daily basis by me, Donna Shaw. Little did I realize, until I started sharing many of these posts with friends, that the encouraging words posted were not only welcomed but were needed. People responded with thankfulness and asked me to continue sharing during this strange time that we're in. It dawned on me that while I was evangelizing in a very small way, the ripples were going far and wide. Would you like to join me in making a ripple? All you have to do is share a post or video. You never know how far your ripple will go.

NOW ACCEPTING REPAIR PROGRAM APPLICATIONS!

Thanks to a grant, Hanover Habitat for Humanity is able to serve low income senior citizens in the 23111 or 23116 Zip Code in the Hanover suburban service area, or 'Old Mechanicsville.' Repair work will be for health and safety issues or code violations. However due to COVID, we will only be able to do exterior repairs at this time. If you or a loved one is in need of a repair in this area, please visit their website at <https://www.hanoverhfh.org/programs/critical-repair-program/> for more information and an application. Repairs will be based on a first come, first serve basis while funding is available.

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!

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!

Even though the most recent holiday shopping season is behind us, the Stewardship team would like to remind everyone to sign up and use 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!