

Messiah Lutheran Church Mechanicsville, Virginia



March 7, 2021
Third Sunday in Lent

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111

Pastor: The Rev. Ryan Radtke

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Third Sunday in Lent

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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 the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer.

C: Amen

P: God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

P: Fountain of living water,

C: *pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.*

P: Beloved, God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are ☩ forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus.

C: Amen.

GATHERING SONG

God Is Here!



1 God is here! As we your peo - ple meet to of - fer
2 Here are sym - bols to re - mind us of our life - long
3 Here our chil - dren find a wel - come in the Shep - herd's
4 Lord of all, of church and king - dom, in an age of



praise and prayer, may we find in full - er mea - sure
need of grace; here are ta - ble, font, and pul - pit;
flock and fold; here as bread and wine are tak - en,
change and doubt, keep us faith - ful to the gos - pel;



what it is in Christ we share. Here, as in the
here the cross has cen - tral place. Here in hon - es -
Christ sus - tains us as of old. Here the ser - vants
help us work your pur - pose out. Here, in this day's



world a - round us, all our var - ied skills and arts
ty of preach - ing, here in si - lence, as in speech,
of the Ser - vant seek in wor - ship to ex - plore
ded - i - ca - tion, all we have to give, re - ceive;



wait the com - ing of the Spir - it in - to o - pen minds and hearts.
here, in new - ness and re - new - al, God the Spir - it comes to each.
what it means in dai - ly liv - ing to be - lieve and to a - dore.
we, who can - not live with - out you, we a - dore you! We be - lieve!

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903–2000

Music: ABBOT'S LEIGH, Cyril V. Taylor, 1907–1991

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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: Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON Exodus 20:1-17

Lector

A reading from Genesis.

After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how to live in community. The Ten Commandments proclaim that God alone is worthy of worship. Flowing from God, the life of the community flourishes when based on honesty, trust, fidelity, and respect for life, family, and property.

¹God spoke all these words:

²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me.

⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³You shall not murder.

¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵You shall not steal.

¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Lector

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

The word of the cross is pure foolishness and nonsense to the world because it claims that God is mostly revealed in weakness, humiliation, and death. But through such divine foolishness and weakness, God is working to save us. The center of Paul's preaching is Christ crucified.

¹⁸The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: John 2:13-22

P: The Holy Gospel according to John.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus attacks the commercialization of religion by driving merchants out of the temple. When challenged, he responds mysteriously, with the first prediction of his own death and resurrection. In the midst of a seemingly stable religious center, Jesus suggests that the center itself has changed.

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "This temple has been under

construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: ***Praise to you, O Christ.***

SERMON

Pastor Ryan Radtke

A couple of years ago I led a Bible study on the book of Leviticus. Yes – Leviticus. I threw it out there as an option because Leviticus is a book everyone seems to refer to, but usually negatively. Leviticus is the book with all the purity laws, the food laws, the relationship laws, the leprosy laws. (You really learn a lot about how God wanted the Israelites to handle skin conditions.) Folks write the book off as the prime example of why Christians shouldn't be concerned with the Old Testament laws. Folks use this book as a cautionary tale for what is or isn't considered an abomination. It's a book that seems to either be used to exclude certain people or that certain people seem to think should be excluded.

So, I figured, let's actually read it together. Let's see what's actually in there, and talk about it and learn from it. And we did. Some of it was just as weird as we expected. Some of it was disturbing. We were surprised to find how many rituals and practices prescribed by Leviticus were still a part of, or paralleled in, our practices of worship and offering today. It helped us make sense of some of the things Jesus did. And it also contained some moments of grace among all the laws.

There is a long section on sacrifices. There are different types of sacrifices for different occasions: grain and oil offerings, incense, and various animals that would be slaughtered and prepared in special ways to make thanks-offerings, guilt-offerings, sin-offerings, and more. The guilt-offerings and sin-offerings were offered up to God to offset transgressions, to make atonement for the regular sinning, known and unknown, that broke God's laws for the people. The priests would receive and prepare the offerings, and burn them on the altar, and the smoke would be a pleasing dedication to God.

But let's say your family was poor. Maybe you couldn't afford the sheep, or especially the bull, that was supposed to be offered up. The Leviticus system made allowances for that: if you couldn't afford a sheep, you could bring two turtledoves or two pigeons. If you couldn't afford the birds, you could bring choice flour with aromatic incense on it. This sheds a new light on Mary and Joseph offering two doves at Jesus's dedication, since Leviticus 12 says the offering should be a lamb; unless, that is, you couldn't afford that.

There is a reason that there were folks at the great Temple in Jerusalem selling cattle and sheep and doves: so that everyone could make the sacrifices they were required to, to make things right with God. There is a reason why there were moneychangers there, too: to make sure that Jews making the

pilgrimage to the Temple from other places with other kinds of coins could still secure their sacrifices and make things right with God. The laws laid out by God in Leviticus about sacrifices made sure that everyone could have a way to participate. Everyone could have a way to make a visible, tangible sacrifice, to offset their sins and make things right with God.

That was how the system was intended to work, back in the wilderness wandering and the early days of the Promised Land. Long before the first Temple was built, and destroyed, and long before the Second Temple was built, the one Jesus encountered in our Gospel today. That's how all the laws, from the minutiae of the Leviticus sacrifice and purity laws, to the "Big Ten" of the Commandments we heard today, were supposed to work: they were a gift to the people to make their relationship with God right and their relationships with one another better. As it says after the Fourth Commandment: "so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you."

Jesus sees the cattle and sheep and doves and moneychangers, and busts their operation up. With a whip of cords! In the other three Gospels, this "cleansing of the Temple" scene, as it's usually called, happens right before the crucifixion. But John's Gospel places this scene at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, at the time of Passover, to lift up something important about who Jesus was and why he had come: Jesus was there to fulfill the law, all the laws, and change the way that God's people encountered God. The original gift of the Torah – the laws, instructions, and commandments – had gotten warped and distorted over the centuries. It was a for-profit industry now. It wasn't just so that the priests could keep some of the meat from the animals sacrificed to have something to eat and live on; it was so that the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, and the whole Temple economy could prosper. So, Jesus flips the tables and drives out the animals and pours out the coins. "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" This wasn't the way it was supposed to be.

The Temple leaders, understandably, say, "Why are you doing this?! Give us a sign!" And Jesus says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They don't understand that he was really talking about the temple of his own body dying and being raised, and no one understands until later, after the resurrection. What Jesus was really doing, near to the Passover commemoration, was something much bigger than cleansing the Temple; it would change everything.

Passover remembered how God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, guiding them safely through the dry land between the parted waters of the Red Sea, and placed them on the path to the Promised Land. Passover told the story, every year, of how the people prepared a lamb, and unleavened bread, and ate a hasty meal, ready for flight. Passover told the story of how the blood of the lambs, on the doorposts and lintels, signaled to the angel of death to pass over the houses of God's people, visiting the tenth and most extreme of the plagues on the Egyptians instead, pushing Pharaoh to finally release the people. Jesus arrives at the Temple as Passover is nearing to signal that *he* will be the Lamb. *His* blood will free people, not from slavery in Egypt, but from slavery to sin.

A different Jewish holy day, Yom Kippur, involves goats instead of a lamb, but Christians see Jesus as fulfilling this role once and for all, too. In Leviticus 16 and 23, it is decreed that the tenth day of the seventh month shall be a day of atonement – at-one-ment: an annual sacrifice of special significance to cover not just the sins and impurity of the individuals but the sins and impurity of the community, the whole of God’s people. One goat was sacrificed for the impurity of the people; the other had all the sins of the people laid on its head, and was then sent out into the wilderness, bearing their iniquities away.

Jesus comes as the Passover Lamb. Jesus also comes as the scapegoat, with all of our sins placed on his head. Jesus’ blood becomes the once-and-for-all sacrifice, and it changes everything, and it saves us. It is no longer about what we do, through keeping commandments or making sacrifices, or *us* making things right with God. Jesus says, “I will raise up this temple, my body, given for you.” God makes things right with us, through Jesus. It is no longer about what we do to make things right, the commandments we follow, the sacrifices we make; *Jesus* fulfills the law and the commandments, *Jesus* becomes the priest making the sacrifice and becomes the atoning sacrifice itself, for us. Jesus makes things right, for us.

In most sermons, I try to tie the message in to our daily lives. I try to lift up some concrete examples, or some tendencies we have in our hearts. I don’t have as much of a tie-in today. I just really want to make sure you all hear, again and again, that when it comes to God’s love and salvation, it’s not about what we do; it’s about what Jesus does for us. If it is about what we do, then there will always be imbalances, well-intentioned systems with grace built in that get warped into Temple marketplaces and for-profit, transactional, conditional love. There will always be lingering questions about whether we sacrificed enough, followed *all* the rules, did all the required things. Jesus comes to reset the system, and to bring us back from transactions to relationship.

It’s like the difference between a to-do list and a love letter.

A to-do list isn’t a bad thing. You get things done. You accomplish tasks. You make your world better. A set of rules hanging on the classroom wall isn’t a bad thing. It keeps order and fairness going. But there’s so much more to God’s love for us than just rule and checklists. God loves us so *much* that Jesus died to save us, to cleanse our temples, to pass over our sins, to carry our sins away. It’s not about us. It’s not up to us. It’s about what *Jesus* does, and then we respond to that.

I know it seems foolish. I know that on some level, we think, “We must have to do something...right? What’s the catch here?” We want to be the heroes of our own story. We want to be able to say what we did right, and maybe even what others did wrong, or not enough of. We tend to make our relationship with God, and with others, more transactional, like the scales on the moneychangers’ tables.

However: “the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who *are being saved* it is the power of God...God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than

human strength." Why would God make His only Son into the atoning sacrifice, the Passover Lamb, to be killed and descend to the dead? It does seem foolish. But God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Jesus fulfills these laws once and for all, and now anything we do, any offerings we make, any good works we carry out, aren't to "get in good with God" or to avoid punishment or to balance the scales. They are solely in response to God's love and salvation for us, and for the love and service to our neighbor. Anything we now do for God or in God's name, is simply our reply to the love letter God sent us through the cross and the empty tomb. Because everyone should know about this love God has for them through Jesus, the Lamb.

Before I close, I do need to say this: please don't hear the contrast I lifted up today as a condemnation of Jews or Jewish laws or Jewish practice. Our Jewish neighbors have a much more rich and nuanced relationship with God than the simplified contrast I used to make my point. If anything, that's one of the main things I learned from the Bible study I led on Leviticus: what I thought would be an antiquated set of weird rules taught me a lot about God love. It's just different. The to-do lists are there alongside the love letters in the Bible; and all of it shows God's love for us.

So, just remember this: God is the one sending the love letters; God is the subject to all the verbs when it comes to our salvation and life. God is the one who gives us structure and rules so that our days are long. God is the one who makes the sacrifice to save us, and God is the one who takes our sins away. God is the one who cleanses our temples and resets our waywardness. It's not ever about what we do; it's always about what God does. "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Holy God, Holy and Glorious



1 Ho - ly God, ho - ly and glo - ri - ous,
 2 Ho - ly God, ho - ly and pow - er - ful,
 3 Ho - ly God, ho - ly and beau - ti - ful,
 4 Ho - ly God, ho - ly and on - ly wise,
 5 Ho - ly God, ho - ly and liv - ing one,



glo - ry most sub - lime, you come as one a - mong us
 pow - er with - out peer, you bend to us in weak - ness;
 beau - ty un - sur - passed, you are de - spised, re - ject - ed;
 wis - dom of great price, you choose the way of fol - ly;
 life that nev - er ends, you show your love by dy - ing,



in - to hu - man time, and we be - hold your glo - ry.
 emp - tied, you draw near, and we be - hold your pow - er.
 scorned, you hold us fast, and we be - hold your beau - ty.
 God the cru - ci - fied, and we be - hold your wis - dom.
 dy - ing for your friends, and we be - hold you liv - ing.

Text: Susan R. Briehl, b. 1952
 Music: NELSON, Robert Buckley Farlee, b. 1950
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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: Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world,
and all in need. *[Brief silence]*

A: There is no God before you. Purify the faith of your church, that your people
place their trust in nothing beside you. Your name is holy. Guide your
church, that in every situation your people's words and actions honor your
name. Hear us, O God.

C: *Your mercy is great.*

A: The heavens declare your glory. Renew your creation. Provide leaders in the
struggle for clean air and water; protect creatures and crops that rely on
healthy ecosystems; give all people the willingness to repent when our way
of life pollutes the earth and skies. Hear us, O God.

C: *Your mercy is great.*

A: Your foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Fill leaders with the foolishness
of your peace and mercy. Your law defends the vulnerable. Work through
legislators, judicial systems, and systems of law enforcement to protect the
wellbeing and freedom of all (especially). Hear us, O God.

C: *Your mercy is great.*

A: Your weakness is stronger than human strength. Protect those who are
vulnerable and give courage to all who are suffering (especially). Defend
victims of crime and bring redemption to those who have harmed others.
Give sabbath rest to all who labor. Hear us, O God.

C: *Your mercy is great.*

A: You call us to proclaim Christ crucified. Give clarity to this congregation and our leaders, so that we might follow Christ beyond our own habits and comfort. Clear out anything in our common life that would obscure the gospel or that serves our own interests. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: The cross of Christ is your power for all who are being saved. Thank you for (Perpetua, Felicity, and) all the martyrs whose witness reveals the power of the cross. Give us the same trust in life and in death. 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 Schroeder, Schwerdtfeger and Shaw 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: We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

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

Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me



1 Lord, take my hand and lead me up - on life's way;
 2 Lord, when the tem - pest ra - ges, I need not fear;
 3 Lord, when the shad - ows length - en and night has come,



di - rect, pro - tect, and feed me from day to day.
 for you, the Rock of A - ges, are al - ways near.
 I know that you will strength - en my steps toward home,



With - out your grace and fa - vor I go a - stray;
 Close by your side a - bid - ing, I fear no foe,
 then noth - ing can im - pede me, O bless - ed Friend!



so take my hand, O Sav - ior, and lead the way.
 for when your hand is guid - ing, in peace I go.
 So, take my hand and lead me un - to the end.

Text: Julie von Hausmann, 1825-1901; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
 Music: SO NIMM DENN MEINE HÄNDE, Friedrich Silcher, 1789-1860
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DISMISSAL

A: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

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Announcements

PASTOR RYAN'S OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Ryan's office hours for this week are listed 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.

Wednesday-Friday 11:00 am-4:00 pm

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Here is this week's information based on our 2021 budget.

- Contributions to the general fund averaged \$3,422.88 (increasing from \$2,673.39 through February 28, 2021.).
- We are \$5,113.12 behind the year-to-date budget needs (decreasing from \$10,540.87 the last time reported erroneously at \$4,013.87).
- This week's report includes Ash Wednesday offerings along with a \$5000 RMD donation.
- Weekly budget need is \$3,991.00.

MCEF DONATION INFORMATION (CURRENT NEEDS)

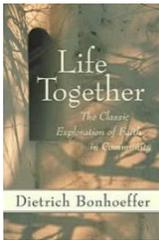
Spring is just around the corner and the clothing closets will be getting ready. Winter clothing will not be accepted until in the fall but spring and summer clothing is now being accepted. There is a need for women's 2X and 3X clothing. New underwear is always a need for ladies and boys, all sizes; and men's jeans in small to medium sizes. Double and King sized sheets are needed in the linen closet. Food needs include canned spinach, jelly, instant oatmeal packets, pancake mix and syrup.

The "Fun Raiser" at Chicken Salad Chick continues on the 3rd Monday of each month, mention that you support MCEF and 10% of the sale is donated to MCEF. Thank you for your support of your of your neighbors in need through MCEF.

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!

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 1:00 pm. The Zoom link will be sent by email at a later date. 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.

CALMED WATERS, STILLED STORMS: WHEN JESUS MEETS CHAOS

Since we can't get together with our friends from All Souls this Lent for worship and soup suppers, Pastor Ryan and Rev. Katherine reached out to some of our neighboring churches to work together. We are happy to present you with a Lenten series that will feature five ministers from our neighborhood called "Calmed Waters, Stilled Storms: When Jesus Meets Chaos." Each week one of us will share a brief message based on Jesus stilling storms and walking on water, while we are still hanging out in our "boats" during this pandemic. And, as a bonus, each week we'll share a soup recipe from one of the churches! This week's video is from Rev. Joshua Lewis from Indian View Baptist Church in King William. Check out this link each week for new videos and recipes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuvfwCfUzng>. If you have a soup recipe you'd like to share, please email it to Pastor Ryan.

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.

LENTEN OFFERINGS

Many of our ministry partners have felt the effects of the Covid restrictions this past year. One who has felt it in particular are the good folks at Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp and Retreat Center. We encourage you to give a special Lenten offering this year to Caroline Furnace. Just mark on your check, envelope, or electronic donation to Messiah that it's for the camp, and we'll send the collective offerings at the end of Lent. We pray that they'll be able to have a full load of campers soon, and we thank God for the amazing things that happen at camp!

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!