

The Messenger

A monthly publication from our Spirit filled church.

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We are a Spirit filled church following Jesus Christ.

The Month Ahead

Advent at Messiah

Advent, a time of preparation for Christmas and the coming of Christ, is a beloved season at Messiah. As we navigate such divisive times as a community, we'll be reflecting on how the season's four universal themes of hope, peace, joy and love can bring us all together. Each Sunday we'll worship through a beautifully adapted version of Holden Evening Prayer, celebrate as a different Messiah family leads us in the lighting of the Advent Wreath, gather round God's table in Holy Communion and be visited by a different "saint" during a very special children's

sermon skit series. Check out the blurbs below for more information about each Sunday.

First Sunday of Advent: Sunday of Hope Sunday, December 2nd at 10:15am

On the First Sunday of Advent we look toward the future and reflect on Christ's promise to always show up in our lives and the life of our community. We'll hear Saint Luke's call to bring Christ's hope to those who have none, be led in the lighting of the Advent wreath by Rianne and Lisa Johnson and be treated to a "visit" from Saint Nicolaus. After worship, all are welcome to help us set up

our sanctuary tree and decorate for the Season of Advent!

Help-Portrait Schenectady Saturday, December 8th from 10:00am - 1:00pm

Help-Portrait is a global movement of photographers, hairstylists and makeup artists using their time, tools and expertise to give back to those in need. On Saturday, December 8th at Messiah we'll be providing free high quality portraits for anyone in need along with snacks, a visit with Santa Claus, arts and crafts and music for all ages. Build some community with us this holiday season with Help-Portrait!

**Second Sunday of Advent:
Sunday of Peace
Sunday, December 9th at
10:15am**

On the Second Sunday of Advent we reflect on how we can live our Christ's call to build peace on Earth. We'll hear Saint Luke's story of John the Baptist, be led in the lighting of the Advent wreath by the Mathis-DeTeso Family and be visited by Saint Lucy. After worship, all are welcome to help us further decorate our sanctuary and assist our young people in painting sets for the Star Wars Christmas Pageant.

**Community Christmas Concert
Sunday, December 9th at
6:00pm**

Join us for our annual evening of festive Christmas music and singalong featuring a number of very special guests! All proceeds go to our Adopt-a-Family Christmas outreach ministry. Refreshments will be served we hope you can join us for this cherished community tradition!

**Third Sunday of Advent:
Sunday of Joy
Hope Comes to Earth: A Star
Wars Christmas Story
Sunday, December 16th at
10:15am**

The greatest story ever told is of course the story of God's love for us in the Bible. A distant second place though (at least in the opinion of one particular pastor), is the story of Star Wars! This year on the Third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Joy, we'll be treating everyone in our local community to the



Members Phil, Denise, Dave, Barb, and Kathy (and Jean not pictured) enjoying a Fall Creation Appreciation Hike!

best of both! "Hope Comes to Earth: A Star Wars Christmas Story" is a fresh, dramatic, contemporary reimagining of the Christmas story in five acts written and directed by acclaimed local playwright Cheryl Borski and performed by the children of Messiah Lutheran Church. Gathered in Spirit filled community, we'll also be led in lighting the Advent wreath by the Telfeyan family and there'll even be communion after the pageant this year! All are welcome, even if you've never been to Messiah before! Join us to hear a joyful story of galactic proportions filled with the Good News of Jesus Christ!

**Fourth Sunday of Advent:
Sunday of Love
Sunday, December 23rd at
10:15am**

On the Fourth and final Sunday of Advent we reflect on the love the Holy Family had for one another and how we too can act in love for our neighbors. We'll hear Saint Luke's story of Mary and Elizabeth supporting one another as a loving family, be

led in the lighting of the Advent wreath by the Bazicki family and be visited by Saint Katie Luther! After worship, all are welcome to help finish our decorations for Christmastide!

**Social Action Committee
Meeting
Tuesday, December 11th at
6:30pm**

Please join us on Tuesday, December 11th for our next Social Action Meeting, where we will continue to evaluate future options for Our Bread of Life Food Pantry.



Pastor Dustin and Bill Becker representing Team Carrot at God's Work, Our Hands day of Service with Concerned for the Hungry!



Special welcome to the Kane Family and Jacob Gooding (pictured) as well as Heather Zimmer, Emily Russo, The Tarbox Family, and the Veerasammy Family!

**Family, Church and Charity
Financial Workshop**

**Thursday, December 13th at
10:00am**

**Good Shepherd Lutheran
Church**

**547 Saratoga Road, Glenville,
New York**

Since the early 1990s, Messiah's endowment has greatly supplemented annual offerings at Messiah and has even kept us viable during very difficult periods. Perhaps you might be interested in learning how you can be a part of sustaining our many Spirit filled ministries long into the future? Join Thrivent Financial's Paula Christy Heighton and the people of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church for a free, delicious breakfast and a fascinating workshop on this subject.

Christmas Caroling

**Saturday, December 15th at
1:30pm**

Join us for a fun, meaningful afternoon for all ages as we bear the love of Jesus Christ is to our members in need of some community this Advent! We'll meet at Messiah and then carpool to the Glendale

Nursing Home, Holiday at the Atrium and to a couple of Messiah member's homes as well! In addition to some beautiful music and Spirit filled community, all our members in need will receive a small gift. All our carolers are invited back afterwards for a pizza party around the narthex Christmas tree. Help us share the love of Christ this Advent! Please sign up on the narthex bulletin board if you're able and speak with Betsy Ryan if you have any questions.

**Meeting of the Congregation
Council**

**Monday, December 17th at
7:00pm**

We'll have much to discuss this month including the ongoing development of the Messiah in Your Lifetime Master Plan and a first review of our draft budget for 2019. If you have any business you'd like the Council to discuss, please message President Dave Barnett.

**WELCA Christmas Party
Tuesday, December 18th at
6:00pm**

The WELCA Christmas Party will be held Jody Fleming's house. Please bring a \$10 grab bag and a personal care item. This will be held at 6:30 pm. Hostesses are Jody Fleming, Diane Fisher and Kristie Becker.

**The Mighty Men of Messiah's
Third Annual Brotastically
Inclusive Christmas Party!**

**Wednesday, December 19th
at 7:00pm**

The Mighty Men of Messiah will once again welcome everyone to our third annual Brotastically Inclusive Christmas Party! Pastor Dustin will once host us in the parish house for a potluck so be sure to bring something tasty but no peanuts please! We'll also conduct our beloved tradition, the "Yankee Swap of Ridiculous Gifts" (under \$10 please). Finally, Phil Bazicki stunned the party last year by winning our first annual award for "Best Hat" with a joyfully silly presentation despite stiff competition. All are invited to attempt to take the title by wearing the silliest hat you have for this year's contest! Be sure to sign up and list what you're bringing on the narthex bulletin board and if you have any questions, please speak with Pastor Dustin.

**Christmas Eve Family Service
Monday, December 24th at
5:30pm**

It's become a cherished tradition at Messiah that every year for Christmas a number of

our families team up together to provide a family friendly service for members of Messiah and guests from the community alike! Well this year will be no different, and we'll in fact have a number of exciting additions! Kristen, Grace and Sarah Olochnowicz will be accompanied on piano by Linda Buehler this year and we're pleased to announce that one of our awesome confirmands, Abriel McGuire, will give a sermon on the Good News of Jesus' birth. Folks of all ages are more than invited to join us for Christmas Eve at Messiah.

**Christmas Eve Community
Potluck**

**Monday, December 24th at
6:30pm**

For decades the whole community at Messiah has gathered together between Christmas Eve services to spread the holiday cheer, give thanks for the blessings of another year and celebrate Jesus' birth. Be sure to join us for an incredible potluck, and don't forget to sign up on the narthex bulletin board!

**Christmas Eve Candlelight
Service**

**Monday, December 24th at
9:00pm**

Join the people of Messiah on this most holy of nights! Jill Becker & Steve Friebel will light the Christ Candle while our choir treats everyone to some amazing music. Pastor Dustin will give a very special sermon and the service will conclude with the singing of "Silent Night"

as the light of Christ spreads throughout the assembly. All our friends and neighbors are more than welcome to join and build some community with us this Christmas Eve, at Messiah!

Pastor On Vacation

December 25th – January 1st

Pastor Dustin will be on vacation from Christmas Day to New Years Day. In case of a pastoral emergency, please contact Rianne Johnson and she will connect you to our covering pastor.

Lessons and Carols Service

**Sunday, December 30th at
10:15am**

Sister Polly Festa will lead our annual service of Christmas hymns and the stories of our faith. Come enjoy Christmastide with us as we get ready to ring in the New Year at Messiah!

**Epiphany Service of Holy
Communion and Home
Blessings**

**Sunday, January 6th at
10:15am**

Since at least the fourth century, Christians especially in the Western Church have taken time at the end of Christmastide to remember the visitation of Magi, the distant travelers and the first Gentiles to recognize the Good News of Jesus! With the visitation of the Magi, the end of the Christmas story reminds us that Christ was born for everyone, without exception! This Epiphany Sunday, we'll have a very special visit from the Magi,

traditionally known as Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar. Pastor Dustin will also make himself available throughout the rest of the day to briefly visit and bless the homes of congregation members, another traditional aspect of Epiphany. If you'd like to have home blessed, please sign up for a timeslot on the narthex bulletin board.

**Junior Luther League Epiphany
Party**

**Sunday, January 6th from 4:00
– 6:00pm**

Our Junior Luther is hosting a great way to reconnect with other Messiah families after the craziness of Christmas... an Epiphany Party! We'll have traditional Epiphany treats like king cake, fun games and a bunch of arts and crafts related to the holiday. If you have any questions, please ask Kristen Olochnowicz and sign up on the narthex bulletin board!

**3rd Annual Leadership Retreat
Saturday, January 12th from
9:30am – 3:00pm**

There's a lot going on at Messiah, and especially as we get ready for decisions around our Master Plan, the growth of our Bread of Life Food Pantry and more, it's important for as many of our leaders as possible to get together, reconnect and plan for the future. Following up after two highly successful annual retreats, this year will feature two topics. In the morning, Pastor Dustin is working with Pastor Chuck Schwartz to develop a helpful

curriculum about how we can continue growing from less of a pastor centered to a people centered church. In the afternoon, we'll discuss the rough draft of our Master Plan, finalize a short description of our vision for the future of the Food Pantry and more. All council members and committee chairs are highly encouraged to attend and a light breakfast and lunch is provided. Please sign up on the bulletin board in the narthex and speak with Pastor Dustin if you have any questions.

**An Earth Day Conversation
with Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda
Wednesday, April 11th at
7:00pm**

Messiah Lutheran Church and Siena College, in partnership with a growing list of local faith-based organizations will welcome Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda to the Capital Region to commemorate Earth Day in April 10-11, 2019. A professor of theological and social ethics at the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, CA, she has lectured around the world on theological ethics and economic globalization, moral agency and climate justice as related to race and class. While more details will be released soon, please join us for her lecture on Wednesday, April 11th, tentatively at 7:00pm at Messiah. Dr. Moe-Lobeda will also be giving a daytime lecture at Siena in Loudonville on the 10th. If you

have any questions, please speak with Merle Longwood.

News You Can Use!

Strengthening Ties in Our Growing Community!

Did you know we welcomed THIRTY-ONE new members into our Spirit filled church this year? That's incredible, but as we continue to grow in numbers it sometimes becomes challenging to put names to faces. With that in mind, we're asking everyone at Messiah to bring in a family photo and attach it to the designated board in the narthex. We'll provide tape for you to write your names on your photo. Let's get creative and have some fun this Advent making an awesome collage of our whole church family!

Care and Concern Update

We continue to visit our parishioners at Glendale as well as Gerald Hoffstetter at Kingsway Nursing Home. Judy Becker continues to remember any one sick, or in need of "pick me up". There is still time to get your voluntary medical forms to Barb Hallett. Many have already done so.

Social Action Update

On November 10th at the Regional Food Bank; 23 members of our parish sorted frozen foods for the Food Bank. As always, it was a fun but tiring event. We will be scheduling another visit to the Food Bank in February 2019. On November 17th, over 30 members of Messiah helped with the packed process for

the food baskets given out by Concerned for the Hungry. We continued our management of the potatoes, onions and carrot stations. Judy staffed the "inserts" station and one of those inserts was an invitation to our Help Portrait Event taking place on December 8th. 2278 baskets were given out on Sunday the 18th. Many thanks to those parishioners who stayed to help until the packing was done. We really appreciated it.

Creation Appreciation Hikes

Creation Appreciation Hikes were so successful this Fall that they will continue through Winter, some on skis or snowshoes. It will all be weather dependent so check your email for time and place. If you would like to be included on the email list contact Jean at dodgerjones@yahoo.com

Monday Crafter Update

Our outside group, Monday Crafters, typically meets on the first, second, and fourth Mondays of the month. Because of the holiday season, the group will be having a brief hiatus but will reconvene after the first of the year! (If you're interested in joining, please speak with Allison Bode for more information)

Reverse Advent Calendar

A new tradition will begin on Dec. 2 (the first day of Advent) here at Messiah. It is called a reverse advent calendar. How it works is, on Sunday, Dec. 2, you pick up a box and a list of items, frequently used at our food pantry, in the Narthex. Every day of Advent you add 1 food item to the box. Please choose items that are on the list. Then on Dec. 23rd, bring the filled boxes back to church to benefit our food pantry. We thought that this is a great way to give back this Advent season and bring good will to the clients at our pantry. If you have any questions, please see Judy Becker.



Tyler Jones and Sarah Olochnowicz exploring the onion bin while Pete Jones wonders if sending Messiah here was a good idea... *(nah, he's having fun too!)*



Messiah's WELCA crew hard at work making FIFTY apple pies! (pictured are Jill Becker, Joyce Gresham, Dotty Diegel, Sarah, Grace, and Kristen Olochnowicz, Judy Becker, Betsy Ryan, Jackie DeTeso, Linda Klein, Nancy Stellrecht, and Lisa Mell!)



Lots of Thanksgiving fun with Pastor Dustin, Steve, Jill, Kristen, Judy, Bill, Sarah, Jesse, Nadia, Grace, Willard, and Jonah!

Messiah in Your Lifetime Campaign Update

Our master plan taskforce has been hard at work over the past couple months with our architect Michael Roth and a number of mechanical engineers refining our wants and needs list and doing a full evaluation of Messiah's current building and mechanical infrastructure, and well, we finally got something to show for it! Our taskforce, made up of Diane Insero, Charlie Zitzmann, Dave Barnett, Tom Collins, Jackie DeTeso and Pastor Dustin, met with Mike's entire team last week, saw an initial rough draft of the master plan, and loved what we saw! While we asked for a couple minor changes to Mike's draft, in general, the draft plan allows for a number of different options regarding phasing, will create minimal disturbance to existing portions of the building and charts a path forward for our entire property for decades to come.

Our next step though is hearing feedback from you! Our taskforce is planning two "listening sessions" shortly after the new year to present Mike's draft plan (including VERY ballpark cost estimates) scheduled for after church on Sunday, January 6th and on Tuesday, January 8th at 6:30p. We'll also discuss the plan at our Annual Leadership Retreat scheduled for Saturday, January 12th from 9:30a – 3:00p. Then, we'll take feedback received from everyone back to Mike and **present a final master plan at our Annual Meeting of the Congregation, scheduled for after worship on February 3rd and discuss next steps.**

It's critical that we hear from you before the annual meeting however and we strongly urge everyone to attend either a listening session or the leadership retreat. If you're not able to provide feedback on any of those dates, please speak with Pastor Dustin after the new year and he can walk you through the Master Plan separately. It's an exciting time for sure, and we ask for prayers and participation of our members of all ages as we continue figuring out how to provide a lifetime of Spirit filled community here at Messiah!

Give Hope this Advent!

Need some additional ideas for giving hope to others this Advent? (Make sure you see the Reverse Advent article on the previous page as well!)

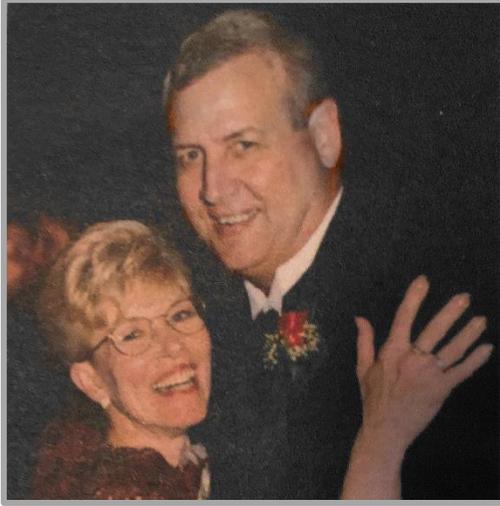
Christmas Adopt a Family

The family we are adopting this year was recently burned out of their home. We would like to brighten their Christmas. Jill Becker will be collecting money from now until Dec. 9th. Thank you so much for your generosity!

ELCA World Hunger Giving Tree

In combination with our Advent Gathering focus this year, our narthex Christmas tree will be decorated with ornaments from ELCA World Hunger. Each ornament will have a different dollar amount and the type of animal you could buy for a needy family with that level of contribution. Every Sunday before and after church one of our confirmation youth will be collecting contributions and then you can take home your ornament for use in your own home or as a gift to someone else! Finally, you can also add to the giving tree this year by once again donating new hats, scarves and mittens to be donated to the City Mission of Schenectady.

MINISTERS OF THE MONTH: PAUL & ALLISON BODE



Originally from the Richmondville/Cobleskill area, Paul and Allison Bode have been long time members of Messiah Lutheran Church. They have one daughter, Kelly, who lives with her husband in New Jersey with their two children, Megan and Ginny. Both love golf, Union College hockey, traveling, church choir and working in the church kitchen. They both lived in Germany while Paul was stationed there with the US Air Force and Paul also served with the Air National Guard in Scotia. He is retired from GE. While at GE, he was a roofer and also worked in their hazardous waste group. He is a past member of the Congregation Council, currently serves on the Property Committee and also serves as a mentor along with Alison for one of our confirmation class students.

Allison has a degree in early childhood education and was a teacher at Head Start in Schenectady. This included home visits to the student's homes prior to the start of the school year and she was also a teacher at the Schenectady Day Nursery. Over her many years at Messiah, Alison has taught Sunday School for our younger kids, is a member of WELCA, a past church gardener and belongs to the Monday Night Crafters group. She also assists planning New Member Dinners and worked on our 90th Anniversary Taskforce.

Many thanks to Paul and Allison for all the amazing ways they minister in our Spirit filled community!



Pastor's Letter: Pastor Dustin Wright

He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' " – Luke 3: 3 – 6

Dear siblings in Christ,

I write you after the first Sunday of the Advent season, a very busy time of the church year that's reminds us to watch for the hope, peace, joy and love we know in Jesus Christ. We're doing some new things this Advent to properly emphasize the season: switching our liturgical color from a penitential purple to a more hopeful blue (thanks Jill and team!), greening the church throughout the four weeks of Advent and starting a new ministry called Help-Portrait, where folks from Messiah and other volunteers will provide quality portraits for needy families as we approach Christmas.

It's paradoxical but true that in the midst of all the craziness that Advent always brings, both at church and in most other aspects of our lives, it's perhaps the easiest time of year to forget that

unifying sense of hope, peace, joy and love in Jesus that the season is all about. When it comes to our life together in Spirit filled community as well, it is important to confess that there are additional stresses and tensions that can also easily distract us from all the good things God is doing in our lives. Without a doubt, 2018 has been a banner year at Messiah... we've had more baptisms in the last few months alone than in all my other years of ministry for instance. Including our recent fall class we've welcomed THIRTY-ONE members into our Spirit filled church. We've seen great increases in things beyond numbers too, of course. Relationships between especially our young people have greatly strengthened, our congregation has increasingly become a leading moral voice in our local community and our membership has diversified greatly in just about every way from age to race to sexual orientation to political persuasion and more. On top of all that, a rough draft of the master plan for our Messiah in Your Lifetime Capital Campaign is almost near completion, with listening sessions on the plan scheduled for early this January.

These are all things to be thankful for, absolutely, but even the best of big changes bring about stress, and especially through some of the conversations I've been a part of in recent weeks, it's increasingly become clear those stresses are beginning to show. Folks sometimes struggle to put a name to a face in worship or there might be hurt feelings or disagreement around what someone else has said. Busy schedules and little time to touch base often leads to folks getting left out of the loop or misunderstanding one another's motives. Division around important issues in our society can all too often lead to division in our life of faith.

There is however, of course, Good News to be had! Just like the Holy Spirit showing up in John the Baptist to "prepare the way of the Lord," we know through faith that the hope, peace, joy and love of Christ especially likes to show up in the most complicated, difficult of times to guide us as we journey through the wilderness of a life together on the Way of Jesus. I know, it's hard for me to do this too, but take some time to slow down this Advent in order to really see all the ways God is at work. Each and every single Sunday, introduce yourself to a new face during the passing of the peace and maybe even sit next to a new family and get to know them! I really, really mean this... if there's an issue that's really bugging you, I very much want to hear about it... I believe it's one of my most sacred jobs as a pastor to hear folks concerns, and usually, with a bit of prayerful consideration, it's my experience that most problems can be resolved! Do your best to give folks you're upset with, whether it be someone in your family or in line at the grocery store or even in our congregation some grace and seek to understand their perspective before passing judgement... it's a hard time of year for many of us, for all sorts of reasons, and many of us will not be at our best.

As we move into our ninety-second year of Spirit filled community at Messiah, know that I and our Congregation Council are making it a top priority to find new ways to strengthen bonds between members of our rapidly growing and diversifying community. Know too, that gosh, many of the most meaningful conversations I've had in ministry thus far have involved hearing about something that's bugging someone, prayerfully considering how to remedy the situation, and then finding a new understanding with brother or sister in Christ.

Just like our John the Baptist story this Sunday, God promises to show up in the wilderness, in the most complicated and confusing of places and times, to guide us forward in hope, peace, love and joy. Let's remember, give thanks for and celebrate that incredibly Good News together, this Advent, at Messiah.

God's peace,

Pastor Dustin

PRESIDING BISHOP'S LETTER: BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Christmas comes at a descending time. The old year is coming to an end, the new year is not yet here. It is too late to accomplish goals set on the previous New Year's Day, and just enough time to realize that whatever shape or state you are in will be the shape or state in which you end the year. There is a hefty dose of "what might have been." In the Northern Hemisphere the trees are bare, fields are barren, birds have migrated, animals are hibernating, the days are short and the nights are long. The earth's colors are muted, and when there is snow the world becomes silent. Sometimes during these short days and long nights I find myself thinking about the brevity of life. This conflicts with my tendency to

believe that the possibility of self-improvement and renewal is limitless: there is always another day, more time, another chance.

I remember watching our first child as she slept in her cradle, thinking about the future before her and, at the same time, the reality that there would be an end. The Ash Wednesday declaration, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return," became more pointed and more poignant. The cradle-to-grave progression is our path; the inevitable and inexorable decline of our strength.

As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more (Psalm 103:15-16).

Maybe this is why the Christmas season can be so fraught. Of course, there is anticipation and celebration, but there is also pressure and stress. Perhaps we are trying to greet the Lord's birth with our best efforts (when I was a girl, Christmas preparations were not complete until the silver was polished, and that job fell to me), but desperation can creep into the urgency to get Christmas right, to hold back the night. "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 279). This is freight that Christmas can't carry when Christmas depends on us. Christmas comes at an opportune time. God did not come to us that first Christmas when we were at the top of our game or when the world was perfect. Even the circumstances of Jesus' birth were a sharp reminder that all was not well—forced migration to Bethlehem, no room for the young family, born in a stall. Emmanuel—God with us—came to us and comes to us precisely at the time when our need is greatest. Our attempts to bring about perfection actually get in the way of receiving the gift. When we try to fit into an unrealistic ideal of who we ought to be instead of welcoming God into our real self, no matter how messy, what then is left on the 13th day of Christmas? Fatigue, certainly, but also the dull acceptance that life moves from cradle to grave.

But on Christmas, God has reversed the cradle-to-grave progression. The angel announced to the shepherds: "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12). Here is the new reality. Here is the truth. Our lives are not a meaningless trudge from cradle to grave, but a joyful journey—true and lasting joy—from grave to cradle. All our brokenness and death meet life and healing and hope in the child in the manger. His cradle defeats the grave. We are loved. We are alive. Now we are free to greet this holy season.

Merry Christmas, dear church.