

The Messenger

A monthly publication from our Spirit filled church.

VOLUME 92, ISSUE 11 | DECEMBER 2019



Messiah Lutheran Church
2850 Guiderland Avenue
Schenectady, New York 12306
www.messiahschenectady.org

Email:
office@messiahschenectady.org

Phone:
518.355.2311

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/MessiahLC



We are a Spirit filled church following Jesus Christ.

Community Events

Mary's Song: A Musical Journey through Advent
Thursday, December 5th
(moved), 11th & 18th at
6:30pm

Be sure to join Pastor Dustin and Mr. Doug for a renewed annual tradition at Messiah... mid-week Advent gatherings! Each week we'll start off by lighting the Advent wreath with a brief time of contemplative prayer. Then we'll spend most of the hour with Mr. Doug teaching a master class on the Ave Maria and various portions of Mary's Song from Luke 1, Mary's song of liberation and freedom in Christ that we sing each

Sunday during Advent. Hot mulled cider and light snacks will be provided! Come and slow down in Spirit filled community for an hour during a busy time of year!

Help-Portrait Schenectady
Saturday, December 7th from
10:00am - 1:00pm

Come celebrate the season by providing free framed portraits for our neighbors in need along with local photographers, hair stylists and makeup artists! We'll also provide snacks with Santa, storytelling and holiday crafts for all ages. Join the international movement with local impact and build some community with us this holiday season! Please sign up on the

narthex bulletin board to volunteer! We generally need around 35 volunteers to pull off this major event with a goal of providing 100 local folks with portraits. We're also looking for cookie bakers for our cookie decorating station at Help-Portrait. We would like sugar cut-outs without frosting. Doesn't matter how many and if you make them early, bring them to church and we will freeze them until needed. Please see Judy Becker with any questions on cookies and otherwise please speak with Pastor Dustin.

Adult Education: Reading the Bible Again for the First Time Continuing Sunday, December 8th at 9:00am

Our current Sunday morning adult education discussion, led by Merle Longwood, is now focusing on Marcus Borg's *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously but Not Literally*. In this book, described by *The Christian Century* as "an accessible book, almost entirely devoid of scholarly jargon but filled with scholarly insight," Borg distinguishing his perspective from fundamentalism. He encourages his readers to move from precritical naivete (childhood) through critical thinking (adolescence) to postcritical naivete (maturity) in reading the Bible. Using the lenses of "history" and "metaphor," he asks us to hear many of the biblical stories as true stories, even though they may not be factually true, and their truth does not depend on their factuality. Borg suggests that reading the Bible through a combination of history and metaphor will help us appreciate that the Bible is a true story (and a collection of true stories) about the divine-human relationship. Furthermore, how we read the Bible will have a significant impact on how we understand our lives as people of faith. Copies of the book are available to all participants.



On November 24th we welcomed eight new members to our spirit-filled congregation! Welcome to Eric Cawley; Crystal, Katrina, and Nathaniel Murray; Linda Halbrend; Russell McDonald; and Gloria and Brian Maki!

The class meets Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 10:00 am. All are welcome!

Advent Worship at Messiah Continuing Sunday, December 8th at 10:15am

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.

Community Christmas Concert Sunday, December 8th at 6:00pm

A concert filled with music of the season will be held on Sunday, December 8, 2019 at 6:00 pm, featuring Doug Chilton, Jill Becker and Kristen Olochnowicz, along with some very special guests. Of course, refreshments will follow. Invite all of your friends and family for a wonderful festive evening. A free will offering will be collected with the proceeds going to help support our continuing partnership with the MohonCARES Anchor Rooms, Food Pantries and Weekend Backpack Programs.



**The Nutcracker at the Egg
Saturday, December 14th at
1:30pm**

Come see Messiah's very own Ella Roether in the Albany Berkshire Ballet's annual presentation of the Nutcracker! Tickets are \$41 for adults and \$26 for children. Tickets can be purchased at the www.theegg.org and if you need helping with costs, please speak with Pastor Dustin.

**WELCA Christmas Party
Tuesday, December 17th at
6:30pm**

The women of Messiah Lutheran Church will once again hold a Christmas party at Jody Fleming's house. This is one of the most beloved traditions of the year and we'd especially like all our new members to join us! Please bring a \$10 grab bag and a personal care item that will be donated to the Schalmont Central School District. Hostesses are Jody Fleming, Diane Fisher and Kristie Becker.

Our choir was at Proctors!! Hoping all who attended Sister's Christmas Catechism had a blast!

Please sign up on the narthex bulletin board or on Realm.

**The Mighty Men of Messiah's
Fourth Annual Brotastically
Inclusive Christmas Party!
Wednesday, December 18th
at 7:30pm**

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, all are invited to attempt to take the annual "Best Hat" award by wearing the silliest hat you have for this year's contest! As we recall Dave Barnett won last year! Be sure to sign up on the narthex bulletin board or Realm. If you have any questions, please speak with Pastor Dustin.

**Christmas Eve Family Service
Tuesday, 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 recent confirmands, Jesse Mathis, 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 Realm or 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! First we 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!

Lessons and Carols Service Sunday, December 30th at 10:15am

Join us for our annual simple service of Christmas hymns and the stories of our faith. Christmastide is a whole season, not just one day... let us celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Hope, into this world!

Volunteering at the Regional Food Bank

Saturday, January 4th from 1:00 - 3:00pm
965 Albany Shaker Road in Latham, New York

Golly friends we need your help putting the Good News into action! Join us shortly after the new year for our quarterly sorting of food at the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York! Please sign up on the narthex bulletin board or

Faith leaders from all of Schenectady gathered together for Schenectady Clergy Against Hate's annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service.



Realm and speak with Social Action Chair Pete Jones if you have any questions.

Youth Group Movie Night: The Breakfast Club Saturday, January 4th from 5:00 - 8:00pm

All middle and high school youth are invited to chaperones Tammi Crowther and Rachel DeTeso-Mathis for an evening of watching the classic teen movie The Breakfast Club in our newly decked out High School Youth Room! Conversation about all the challenges of teen life will follow. A tasty pizza dinner and popcorn will be provided so please sign up on the narthex bulletin board or on Realm asap!

Epiphany Service of Holy Communion and Home Blessings Sunday, January 5th 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. We'll also add another rite to this service as we bless Aaron Martin, a young adult member

of our congregation, who is heading off to basic training in service to our country. Throughout the rest of the day Pastor Dustin will once again make himself available to briefly visit and bless the homes of congregation members for the upcoming year, another traditional aspect of Epiphany. If you'd like to have home blessed, please sign up for a

Please sign up to help shovel our walkway so that our volunteers, visitors, and staff can safely enter and exit the church.

Many hands make light work!



timeslot on the narthex bulletin board.

Second Annual Epiphany Party
Sunday, January 5th at
11:30am

Our Youth Group 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. We'll also be celebrating Aaron Martin as he heads off for basic training! If you have any questions, please speak with Kristen Olochnowicz!

Special SICM Assembly on
Interfaith Partnerships
Tuesday, January 7th at
7:00pm
Emanuel Friedens Church
218 Nott Terrace in
Schenectady

A process that began way back on Easter Sunday at Messiah, when everyone

gathering for worship signed a letter urging SICM to become an interfaith rather than strictly Christian service organization, is near completion! In the subsequent months Pastor Dustin has been hard at work chairing the task force tasked with reaching out to potential partners, including our Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Unitarian siblings in faith, as well as drafting changes to the *Constitution and Bylaws of SICM* to formalize this historic change. Well, a new draft constitution that will rebirth the organization as the Schenectady Interfaith Community Movement is near completion and with God's help will be adopted by the SICM Assembly on January 7th. As Messiah's letter got this process started, it'll be important that we come out in force and stand in prayer that soon we will be able to build a better community together alongside our siblings of ALL

faiths in the greater Schenectady area!

Messiah in Your Lifetime: A
Conversation with Architect
Michael Roth
Wednesday, January 8th at
7:00pm

Following our last Special Meeting of the Congregation and at the direction of our Congregation Council, Pastor Dustin and Property Co-Chair Charlie Zitzmann went back to the architect of our master plan, Michael Roth, to develop a modified plan that would address our accessibility needs and expand our food pantry all in one simplified building phase for a much lower cost. During

the first two Sundays of Advent folks have been invited to give feedback on the initial draft of this new plan, but ahead of a historic vote at our Annual Meeting of the Congregation on February 2nd, we wanted the congregation to have the opportunity to meet directly with our architect, hear a presentation on the final draft of our building plan and lift up and final questions or concerns. This will likely be the last major opportunity to provide feedback on our capital campaign before our Annual Meeting, so please join us!

**Pastor Dustin's Coffee Club
Beginning Thursday, January
9th at 10:00am (and
continuing weekly)**

At Messiah we generally offer two different weekly faith formation opportunities for adults. On Sunday mornings, Dr. Merle Longwood leads a wonderful in depth discussion group, but beginning on Thursday, January 9th at 10:00am in the Parish House, Pastor Dustin will lead a more "entry-level" discussion about the Bible, core Lutheran teachings and other aspects of our faith. In fact, we'll be using the same curriculum our confirmation students and their parents are experiencing every week, called [colaborate](#). As our confirmation class is right smack in the middle of the Old Testament, we'll start right there along with them and then move into core Lutheran teachings as we journey into the spring. As there are study packets to be ordered, please let Pastor Dustin know if you're interested in attending! Coffee, as always, will be provided!

**Community Meditation Hour
Beginning Thursday, January
9th at 6:00pm (and continuing
weekly)**

Over the past few months we've heard a lot of positive feedback about our twice a month community meditation sessions in the sanctuary, but there has been indeed one

*Go, team
carrot! Once
again, it
looks like
Messiah has
had a great
time at
Concerned
for the
Hungry's
Thanksgiving
box stuffing
day!*



criticism as well... scheduling has been difficult, and a couple times guests and members of our congregation have showed up for canceled sessions. Thus, beginning in January, Pastor Dustin will begin "curating" a meditation hour each and every single week on Thursdays at 6:00pm. While some weeks we'll continue using the same wonderful meditation we have for a number of months under lay leadership, other times Pastor Dustin will lead and borrow from various traditions and practices he's studied over the years. Think of this as SORT OF a second weekly worship service at Messiah... just mostly grounded in meditative prayer rather than a corporate spoken and sung liturgy. If you have any questions, suggestions or would like to lead a session, please speak with Pastor Dustin or our Worship & Music Ministry Team Chair Rianne Johnson.

**Camp Calumet Sunday
Sunday, January 12th at
9:00am**

An annual trip to Camp Calumet Lutheran in New Hampshire has become a core part of our youth and family ministries here at Messiah, but there's also many of our newer families who might not yet know what it is or how to connect. Thus, all our youth and their parent/ guardians are invited to join us for our semi-annual Camp Calumet Sunday! During the Sunday School Hour we'll play a bunch of awesome camp games led by Pastor Dustin followed by a very festive Calumet style worship service as we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. Finally, after worship, join us for an important coffee hour info and planning session. We

very much need more parents to step up in terms of leading fundraisers, helping with rides, etc. this year, so coming to the planning session is essential! If



Ready for Christmas???
Me neither!
Be sure to enjoy some of Advent and check out our numerous giving opportunities in a few pages!

you have any questions, please speak with Pastor Dustin.

**Poor People's Campaign:
 People's Needs Not Corporate Greed!**

**Tuesday, January 14th at
 10:00am**

**New York State Capitol in
 Albany, NY**

For over a year now Pastor Dustin has been active in the Poor People's Campaign, a faith-inspired movement led by folks affected by poverty that seeks to pick up where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. left off in working for social, economic and environmental justice for all. As a new state legislative begins, join Pastor Dustin, other clergy and folks of faith from around our state in asking our elected officials to prioritize addressing the needs of the **50% of New Yorkers living in poverty** and the **over one million New Yorkers living without quality healthcare**. If have any questions or would

like to carpool, please speak with Pastor Dustin and RSVP online [here](#).

**All Are Welcome Sunday
 Sunday, January 19th at
 10:15am**

Every January as part of being a Reconciling in Christ congregation, we recommit to living out our welcome statement adopted back in October 2017, to be a faith community that "welcomes all people into full participation in the body of Christ without regard to race, nationality, ethnicity, ability, marital status, gender identity or sexual orientation." In a time when so many feel judged, hurt and shunned by churches across the country, it's more important than ever to proclaim that indeed, God loves, welcomes and celebrates everyone, no

matter how they identify! Please join us for this very important Sunday in the life of our congregation!

**MLK Soup Shabbat sponsored
 by Schenectady Clergy
 Against Hate
 Friday, January 24th at 5:00pm
 Congregation Gates of
 Heaven
 852 Ashmore Avenue
 Schenectady, NY 12309**

Join our friends at Congregation Gates of Heaven and the congregations of Schenectady Clergy Against Hate for an annual MLK Community Soup Shabbat! Worship will begin at 5:00pm followed by dinner with a variety of hearty soups, crusty breads and desserts will be served at 6:00pm with the suggested donation for dinner being what you would pay to go out to eat. All proceeds will benefit Schenectady Community Ministries. At 7:00pm a community conversation will

be held with Dr. Sarah Rogerson, a local Lutheran immigration rights lawyer and friend of Pastor Dustin's from Camp Calumet. RSVP by 1/17 to Kathy at klaws@cgoh.org or at 518.374.8173. Furthermore, if you'd like to make a soup for the event, please speak with Pastor Dustin!

**Sunday of Prayer for Christian
 Unity**

**Sunday, January 26th at
 10:30am**

**Trinity Reformed Church
 705 Curry Road in Rotterdam,
 New York**

For well over a century Christians around the world have spent late January in prayer for the reunification of Christ's Church and that all denominations might work closer together to build a better world. For our second annual recognition of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we'll certainly be doing our small part of bring Christ's church back together by worshipping with our neighbors at Trinity Reformed Church. We'll flip the script from last time, with Pastor Jonathan preaching and Pastor Dustin presiding over a joint Reformed/ Lutheran service. Folks at Trinity are well known for their hospitality, so get excited for a lovely reception after worship as well!

**First Communion Class 2020
Beginning Sunday, January
26th at 12:00pm**

We'll welcome two of our young people to our 2020 First Communion Class beginning Sunday, January 26th after worship at Holy Trinity using the ELCA's new "A Place for You" curriculum. From Daniel Erlander, the curriculum includes three fun and kid friendly hour-long lessons. The schedule will be as follows with a parent or guardian expected to join their child:

- Sunday, January 26th after worship: Class #1
- Sunday, February 9th after worship: Class #2

- Sunday, February 16th after worship: Class #3
- Transfiguration Sunday, February 23rd at 10:15a: Rite of First Communion with reception to follow.

Please stand in prayer with Atticus and Anthony during this important step in their life of faith!

**Candlemas Service of Holy
Communion
Sunday, February 2nd at
10:15am**

Candlemas, also known as the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord, is an ancient Christian tradition that marks the end of the Christmas -Epiphany season (many used to keep up their Christmas trees until this time). Held during the darkest, coldest part of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, the tradition of Candlemas includes a blessing of candles to be taken home as reminder of the returning light. Especially as so many of us struggle with seasonal depression this time of year, be sure to join us in a joyful service that looks forward to brighter days and gives thanks for the Light of Christ!

**Annual Meeting of the
Congregation
Sunday, February 2nd at
11:30am**

So without a doubt this will be a major, historic meeting in the life of our congregation, and we really need everyone present! Following worship in addition to electing new council members, receiving

our regular reports and adopting an annual budget, our congregation will be called to make major decisions in three areas that will affect Messiah for years to come. First, we'll be adopting a revised *Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions of Messiah Lutheran Church* that will reflect the restructuring of our many committees into five core ministry teams that meet briefly together and then break out into small groups. Second, we'll be adopting the second half our Strategic Plan: 2020 - 2025, that will build on our Vision, Values and Purpose and articulate general long term goals and specific objectives. Finally, and perhaps most notably, we'll be discussing (and perhaps vote) on a set of proposed resolutions committing us to a) immediately employ the services of a recommended capital campaign consultant and b) commit to building our long sought after expansion by Summer 2020. Two years back at our Annual Meeting, Bill Becker made a motion to get this process started, and with God's help, we've come a long way! After the meeting a light brunch will take place in the Fellowship Hall with food provided by our Congregation Council, so please RSVP on the narthex bulletin board! If you have any questions, please speak with Pastor Dustin or President Pete Jones.

2020 Youth Retreat Winter Weekend
Friday, February 14th at 8:00pm - Sunday, February 16th at 12pm

Join middle and high school Lutheran youth from across the Hudson Mohawk Conference for an awesome winter weekend of fun and faith at Camp Fowler! Two separate retreats for confirmation students and high school youth will be run by a team of clergy, chaperones and summer camp counselors! Activities will include fun outdoor activities like snowshoeing, sledding a service project and more! Cost is only \$50 per youth with scholarships available! We only have 26 spots available to please reserve a spot today with your pastor! All RSVPs are due by January 20th. If you have any questions, please reach out to Rev. Dustin Wright at pastor@messiahschenectady.org.

News You Can Use!

Volunteers Needed!!

Golly, in our rapidly growing congregation, we're always in need of all sorts of help to support our many new and existing ministries. If you'd like to volunteer, please speak with Pastor Dustin! Here's just a few keys areas where assistance is needed.

- Nursery Coordinator
- Nursery Leaders
- Fellowship Ministry Team Coordinator
- Tech Czar Worship Leaders
- Snow Shovelers

- Personnel Ministry Members
- Communications Ministry Members

Messiah in Your Lifetime Campaign Update

Things are getting exciting! With many thanks to three of new members, Linda Halbrend, Brian Maki and Gloria Maki, as well as all our siblings in Christ at the recently closed Christ Lutheran Church, we received a major contribution that has helped us do two things: 1) pay at least half the remaining \$10,000 cost of our new furnace and 2) pay for a revised and simplified master plan for our capital improvement campaign. This plan will allow almost our entire building to be fully accessible and for us to expand our Bread of Life Food Pantry all in one building phase for what should be around the two times our annual budget goal we've been working for. All of our three task forces are nearing the completion of their work and we'll discuss a final resolution to move forward with the project at our Annual Meeting of the Congregation on February 2nd. In the meantime, we've had two informal listening sessions on a revised master plan draft after worship during the first two Sundays of Advent and there'll be an opportunity for everyone in the congregation to meet directly with our architect, Michael Roth, on Wednesday, January 8th at 7:00pm. The journey we began two years ago with Bill Becker

making a motion to form our Master Plan Taskforce may be nearing the home stretch! Please stand in prayer and careful conversation friends in the weeks ahead!

Care & Concern Update

Continuing to visit Lore Ellis at Glendale, she really seems pleasant to see us. We've also stopped at the Underkofflers to visit with Laura and Ed and brought a meal. Betsy continues to send out cards to members for birthdays and other life passages and events. 5 cards were sent in November.

55 and Over Gang

Had great lunch at Maxon's Restaurant and the Whistling Kettle on Jay St. Our next trip will be to Lake George on December 12th at 2pm. We'll shop for two hours and have an early dinner at 4pm at Log Jam Restaurant. All 55 and over are invited (and Pastor Dustin!)

Social Action Update

First of all, a sincere thank you for all of you who came out to help prepare Concerned For the Hungry's Thanksgiving Food baskets on November 23rd. We ended up serving 2153 families (about 10,000 people, 50% of whom are children under 16. We will also be sorting food at the food bank on Saturday, January 4th from 1-3pm. A sign-up sheet will be on the bulletin board and Realm in December.

Ministry Team Meetings

Here's the thing! With our new streamlined governance structure, we'll be experimenting with over the next year, we can know when ALL our regular meetings are for the year in one place.

The idea here is that we'll be grouping our many and varied committees into five ministry teams: Worship & Music, Faith Formation, Fellowship, Social Action and Stewardship. Worship & Music will continue to meet monthly, generally on the first Monday of the month, but all our other teams will rotate on meeting quarterly on the second Tuesday of the month. Each team will meet briefly as a whole in the sanctuary to discuss over-arching items and say an opening pray together before breaking out into committees to discuss whatever business needs to be attended to. Pastor Dustin and each Ministry Team Coordinator will rotate amongst the separate committees throughout the evening assisting as needed. The goal is to help cut down significantly on the number of meetings for everyone and to assist in us growing from more of a pastor-centered to program-centered congregation.

Here's meeting dates and our structure for all of 2020:

Congregation Council: 3rd Monday, Monthly @ 7p

Faith Formation Ministry Team: 2nd Tuesday, Quarterly @ 7p (Feb 11, May 12, Aug 11, Nov 10)

This includes our Cradle Roll/ Nursery Ministry (needs to be formed), Children's Sunday School Ministry, Youth Ministry and Adult Education Ministry.

Fellowship Ministry Team: 2nd Tuesday, Quarterly @ 7p (Jan 14, Apr 14, July 14, Oct 13)

This includes our Young Adult Ministry, our WELCA Organization, our Mighty Men of Messiah Ministry, our Over 55 Gang Ministry, our Kitchen Committee, our New Member Ministry (needs to be formed) and our Arts & Culture Ministry (needs to be formed).

Social Action Ministry Team: 2nd Tuesday, Quarterly @ 7p (Jan 14, Apr 14, July 14, Oct 13)

This includes our Bread of Life Community Center, our Creation Care Ministry, our Community Service Ministry (think of this as current social action) and our Social Justice Ministry (needs to be formed to properly organize and vet advocacy activities, etc.)

Stewardship Ministry Team: 2nd Tuesday, Quarterly @ 7p (Mar 17, June 16, Sept 15, Dec 8... moved earlier b/c of Christmas)

This includes our Care & Concern Ministry, our Communications Ministry (formerly Outreach), our Budget & Finance Ministry, our Mission Support Ministry (think of this as current stewardship), our Property Ministry and our Personnel Ministry.

Worship & Music Ministry Team: 1st Monday, Monthly @ 7p (except for July & Aug)

This includes our Altar Guild, Choir, Prayer Ministry (needs to be formed), Meditation Ministry, Sanctuary Preparation Ministry (needs to be formed).

Flowers Update

Orders for Poinsettias are due on Sunday, Dec. 8th. The cost is \$8.00 and only red is available. Please fill out slip in the bulletin and either put it in the offering plate, with payment, or see Judy Becker.

Also, as we come to the close of 2019, we are completing our flower chart. If you have dedicated flowers in the past, please check the chart to see if you are paid up. If there is a check mark by our name, that shows paid. If not, please see Bill or Judy Becker. Thank you

Greening of the Church

Sunday, December 8th

While our youth spend time painting scenes for our annual Christmas Children's Programme, help us put bows on the candles sconces in the sanctuary.

Sunday, December 15th

As the reception after our Christmas Children's Programme wraps up, help us hang our handmaid crimsons on our Sanctuary Tree and hang our Christmas Wreath outside.

Sunday, December 22nd

Help us hang our sanctuary Christmas Wreath and change all our bows to red for Christmas Eve!

Give Hope this Advent!

This Advent we'll offer our members and friends a wide variety of ways to give hope to those in need. Let's also mention that especially given our new furnace and perhaps additional capital expenses next year, we want to emphasize these are simply OPTIONS for giving as you feel called this Advent. If there's a particular cause that doesn't excite you as much, no worries at all!

Reverse Advent Calendar

This year we will again be donating to the Bread of Life Food Pantry through our "Reverse Advent" Project. How it works is we have bags and a sheet of food pantry products that we give out and ask that you would donate a food item to that bag for each day of Advent.

Advent begins on December 1st and ending on Christmas Eve. Bags will be available on November 24th and December 1st. On December 22nd, the final Sunday of Advent, all families participating will be invited to bring up their bags to the Table during the offering. You can also drop off your bags on Christmas Eve or on December 29th as well!

MohonCares

In lieu of our annual adopt a family program we're excited to announce a new partnership with the Mohonasen Central School District! The freewill offering from our Annual Community Christmas Concert will benefit the MohonCares Clothing Closet program this year, but if you can't make it on December 8th, feel free to put a check in the offering plate with "MohonCares" in the memo line!

City Mission of Schenectady & ELCA World Hunger Giving Tree

Our narthex Christmas tree will once again 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. Simply put a check in the offering plate for that amount with "ELCA World Hunger" in the memo line. You can also add to the giving tree this year by donating new hats, scarves and mittens to be donated to the City Mission of Schenectady.

Give hope, this Advent, at Messiah!



PASTOR'S LETTER: REV. DUSTIN G. WRIGHT

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. – Isaiah 11:6

Dear siblings in Christ,

Whew! I write this ahead of what is one of the busiest but best weekends of the year at Messiah. This Saturday will be our Second Annual Help-Portrait event, where we provide quality framed photographs for folks and families in need. This Sunday evening will be our Sixth Annual Community Christmas Concert, with all proceeds going to benefit our local Mohonasen CSD's MohonCares program.

I'm also looking farther ahead, perhaps too far, to early January as well. You see, two separate and major initiatives we've been working on for at least two years at Messiah are, with God's help, about to come to fruition. On Tuesday, January 7th, Schenectady Communities Ministries will hopefully vote to become Schenectady Interfaith Community Movement. There's already conversation with our potential interfaith partners of doing a massive Schenectady Interfaith Day of Service this fall as a kick start this new movement. With God's help, our kids will soon be able to serve and learn alongside Muslim kids and Jewish kids, Sikh kids and Unitarian kids, thereby building a stronger community together.

The very next day on Wednesday, January 8th, Messiah will host a community conversation with Michael Roth, our hired architect, who will present his final proposal for a simplified one phase capital improvement of our facilities. A conversation two years in the works, we'll then discuss moving forward with this plan at this year's Annual Meeting of the Congregation on February 2nd. Two years, countless meetings and the hard work of so many has got us to this place. With God's help, we will soon be a congregation where all are truly welcome throughout our building, without regard to physical ability. With God's help, we will soon be a congregation where all in our local community are fed in body, mind and soul.

Just like Isaiah likely felt when he wrote the famous words above, historically interpreted as predicting the birth of the Christchild, I am filled with hope this Advent.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dustin G. Wright". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Dustin

PRESIDING BISHOP'S LETTER: BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



On Christmas Eve, there always comes a time when everything is finally still. Once all the preparations and decorations, extra choir rehearsals and Christmas pageants, shopping and holiday parties have been completed, peace descends.

For me, that time always came after the 11 p.m. candlelight service. After the congregation went home, after I turned off the lights and locked the doors, as my daughters and I drove home through the dark and quiet streets, I would then settle into silence. Once home and after my husband and children went to bed, I could continue in that Christmas Eve stillness and reflect on the mystery of

Advent and Christmas. Advent—a season of expectation. God is up to something. We are urged to watch and wait. “Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’” (Isaiah 40:9). “At midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’” (Matthew 25:6).

There are Advent calendars, with each opened window drawing one closer to Christmas. Advent wreaths light the way. In Cleveland in the late '50s and early '60s, every child would rush home from school to catch Mr. Jingling on TV. (Trust me, every Clevelander of a certain age can sing the Mr. Jingling song.) Advent is our time and is filled with longing—for peace, for a just world, for restored relationships, for God. The Advent lessons from the prophet Isaiah are filled with the sorrow of exile and the persistent hope that God still cares for God's people and will bring about their return to Israel. We sing, “Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 254). And come Jesus does, into our world and into our lives. For a brief time, generosity and goodwill break out. We wish strangers a “Merry Christmas.” We even practice a little patience in traffic and with relatives. Life is filled with possibility.

I think about all these things in the midnight stillness of Christmas Eve. I consider the miracle of the incarnation—that God is ever faithful; that God is not far off but is Emmanuel, God with us; that in Jesus the Divine set aside all glory in order to take on our nature and be truly glorified on the cross. A helpless baby in a wooden manger, a broken man on a cross—these are the gifts of Christmas. The Christmas carol declares that the angels' announcement to the shepherds “came upon the midnight clear” (ELW, 282). All of creation became the land of the midnight Son. The good earth and all its creatures, sun and moon, and stars and planets orbit in harmony around this center of love.

In the stillness, I think of another midnight—the Easter Vigil. It is the first celebration of the resurrection. In the vigil these words of the Exsultet (Easter proclamation) are sung: “This is the night when Christ, the Life, rose from the dead. The seal of the grave is broken and the morning of a new creation breaks forth out of night.” All Advent expectations and longings are met and exceeded. The ephemeral peace and hope we may feel at Christmas take substance and permanence. God's promise has been fulfilled.

There is a lot for the Christ child to do before the work on earth is done. Jesus will grow into adulthood. He will teach and feed and heal. Jesus will suffer the betrayal of his friends and will die that we might live. I think about this on Christmas Eve and pray, “Rest now, dear midnight Son.”