

The Messenger

A monthly publication from our Spirit filled church.

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Messiah Lutheran Church
2850 Guilderland 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.

The Month Ahead

**Annual Meeting of the
Congregation
Sunday, February 5th at
11:30am**

On February 5th we will gather immediately following worship for our Annual Meeting of the Congregation and then head to the Fellowship Hall for a light lunch. In addition to adopting budget for 2017, we'll also amend our Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions, elect new members to the Congregation Council and Nominating Committee as well as appoint delegates to the Upstate New York Synod Assembly, the Hudson-Mohawk Synod Assembly and to

Schenectady Inner City Ministry. You should have already received a copy of our proposed Constitution, Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions as well as our Annual Report for review. Nursery care will be provided during the meeting.

**Souper Bowl of Caring
Sunday, February 5th at
10:15am**

Super Bowl 51 is rapidly approaching and our confirmation students are once again gearing up to support SICM's annual "Souper" Bowl Fund Drive! One hundred percent of monies raised from this drive will be used to help the SICM Emergency Food Pantry. Confirmation students will be collecting funds in soup

pots in the back of the sanctuary before worship and during our Annual Meeting of the Congregation so be sure to contribute to a worthy cause!

**Adult Ed Starts at New
Date/Time
Sundays at 9:00am throughout
February**

Messiah's Adult Education classes will be held Sunday mornings at 9am for the month of February, focusing on the four gospels. Everyone is encouraged to attend; meet in the Narthex and follow the leader to where it'll be held.

Also, please check out the new lending library in the narthex. We are accepting donations of books with current social, religious, ethnic, and economic themes. Share the wisdom!

**Outreach Committee Meeting
Monday, February 6th at
7:00pm**

On February 6th we will have our next by monthly outreach committee meeting. At our last meeting, we've done some talking about possible future winter outreach events; how to better serve our new and disconnected members; Facebook advertising; a possible new small Facebook video series; and bring a friend to church day. Please join us even if you haven't attended any previous meetings!

**SICM@50: Celebrating the Past,
Visioning the Future
Tuesday, February 7th at 6:45pm
Mt. Olivet Missionary Baptist
Church
1068 Park Ave, Schenectady,
NY 12308**

As we begin to celebrate 50 years of partnering with other local congregations at Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM), we'll also begin looking to the future! Pastor Dustin will lead SICM delegates from congregations across Schenectady in a conversation about current needs in our community and what God might be calling us to do in the next fifty years to address those needs together. Even if you've never participated in a SICM event before, this is a fantastic opportunity to help us figure



out how to be God's Church together as we move forward in ministry!

**Social Action Committee
Meeting
Tuesday, February 7th at
7:00pm**

February 7th at 7pm there will be a meeting for the Social Action and Food Pantry committees. Anyone who may be interested in volunteering for either committee is welcome to join us. If you have any questions, please call Judy Becker at 374-5104. Thank you.

**Stewardship Committee
Meeting
Wednesday, February 8th at
6:00pm**

Interested in helping Messiah grow in terms of time, talent, and finances? We would love to hear your ideas! Our time and talent stewardship campaign is quickly approaching and it will soon be time to prepare for it. Please join us on Wednesday, February 8th at 6pm in the Narthex.

**Help a Homeless Pet Bake Sale
Sunday, February 12th before
and after worship**

Be sure to purchase some sweets for your sweetheart this Valentine's Day while supporting our Sunday School's annual Help a Homeless Pet Bake Sale! Baked goods can be purchased before and after our regular worship service with all proceeds going to benefit [Whiskers Animal Benevolent League](#) and the [Animal Shelter of Schoharie Valley](#).

**Mr. Doug in Concert
Sunday, February 12th at
2:30pm
Schenectady Public Library
99 Clinton St, Schenectady**

As part of the Schenectady Library's "Beat The Snow", Winter Concert Series, Messiah's Douglas J. Chilton will be performing on Sunday, February 12th at 2:30 in the McChesney Room. Mr. Doug will be performing his own arrangements of Beatles songs as well as other standard favorites. Sharing the concert will be local popular singer

Carla Metz and her guitarist. Please join us in supporting Mr. Doug! Admission is free.

**Coffee House Worship:
Recharge for the Week Ahead!
Sunday, February 12th at
6:00pm**

An innovative worship experience that uses the most ancient of Christian traditions to better understand contemporary life. The Stockade's own Douglas J. Chilton will treat us to some incredible music upstairs in the Fellowship Hall using our new piano and communion will be served more as an actual meal, similar to how the first Christians celebrated the Eucharist! Each monthly Coffee House worship is also centered around a specific faith question, with this month's being, "What's the deal with the afterlife?" This service is an important outreach ministry of our faith community, so please share our [Coffee House Worship Facebook Event](#) with friends, neighbors and family!

**Congregation Council
Meeting
Tuesday, February 14th at
7:00pm**

In order to increase transparency, we wanted to start putting a brief note in *The Messenger* about what our council (essentially Messiah's Board of Directors) is planning to discuss each month. Main items on this month's agenda include continuing to develop a long-term [theory of change](#) for our congregation and approving a Learning Covenant for Kody Schaffer to begin

an internship as Communications Coordinator through our Messiah Builds Leaders program. If you have something you'd like to bring up at our monthly council meetings, please speak with President Charlie Zitzmann or Pastor Dustin.

**Junior Luther League: Paint &
Sip Party
Saturday, February 18th at
2:00pm**

Join Messiah's Junior Luther League for kid-friendly paint and sip party! Our elementary school aged kids and their family will be led in doing a really cool painting and hot chocolate will be served. Be sure to sign up on the narthex bulletin board and bring a friend!

**February Book Discussion
The Curious Incident of the
Dog in the Night-Time
Tuesday, February 21st at 11am
and 7pm**

The February book will be *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, by Mark Haddon. It is a mystery novel centered around a 15-year-old boy who has behavioral differences like those on the autism spectrum. This book is appropriate for adults and young adults as well. Please join us for discussions on Feb 21 at 11am and 7pm.

**WELCA Presents: Freedom
Summer
Tuesday, February 21st at
7:00pm**

As part of our ongoing efforts to celebrate diversity at Messiah, WELCA is hosting a screening of

"Freedom Summer," a film produced by Cyndee Readdean, former SICM President Shirley Readdean's daughter. The film, which premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, combines archival footage and photos with contemporary interviews to recall the pivotal 10-week period in 1964 when hundreds of black and white activists worked together to register African-American voters in violently segregationist Mississippi. Cyndee Readdean will likely be joining us as well to talk about the film. Everyone is welcome and be sure to share our [Freedom Summer Facebook Event!](#) Hostesses are Jill Becker and Rachel Mathis.

**Property Committee Meeting
Wednesday, February 22nd at
7:00pm**

Our Property Committee has been hard at work at a wide variety of initiatives! The old Sunday School dividers in the Fellowship Hall are being dismantled to free up additional space for meals, Coffee House Worship, and other events. Messiah's Wi-Fi infrastructure is being improved to both greatly increase internet speed throughout our church building and save our congregation roughly \$1500 a year! Finally, we've begun initial discussions around how to transform the Parsonage basement into a dedicated Adult Education and meeting space. Finally, of course, we'll continue weighing possibilities for our long-term goal of becoming handicap acces-

sible. Join our next committee meeting if you'd like to weigh in on these issues!

**Sunday School Special Project:
Caring for Our Homebound
Members
Sunday, February 26th at
9:00am**

Our incredible Sunday School Superintendent Cheryl Borski, along with our Sunday School Leaders, will help our kids create cards to be shared with Messiah's homebound members. We'll be sure to talk about caring for one another at church as well. Join us for an awesome morning!

**Shrove Tuesday Pancake
Supper, February 28th from
5:00-7:00pm**

Later this month, Messiah will continue the tradition of our Shrove Tuesday Eve Pancake Supper. The day takes its name from the "shriving," a pre-Lenten confession and absolution of the faithful. Feasting on foods historically prohibited during Lent such as meat, eggs and milk products was integral to the Shrove Tuesday Eve observance (and the feasting part still is)!

Check out the bulletin board in the narthex to sign-up, and

please bring pancake mix, syrup or pre-cooked sausage links if you're able. Whatever is leftover will be contributed to our Bread of Life Food Pantry. As part of our annual tradition (and if weather permits), Pastor Dustin will burn last year's palms from Palm Sunday to prepare ashes for the following day at about 7:00pm outside by the fire pit, and he'd love for you to join him as we prepare for the Lenten fast.

**Schenectady County Point of
Dispensing Exercise**

**March 1, 2017 from 4-6pm
Niskayuna High School Gym**

Schenectady County will be having a Point of Dispensing (POD) preparedness drill on **Wednesday, March 1, 2017 from 4 - 6 pm at the Niskayuna High School in the Blatnik Gym**. This drill will be a test of the dispensing plans in the case of a real public health emergency. The County is seeking volunteers to go through the POD and invite you to participate. It will be a MOCK medication dispensing drill. We plan for the MOCK medications will be M & M's. Each POD participant will pre-register (sign up) for an appointment providing basic demographic information as well as health information to determine which MOCK medication they should receive. The preregistration sign up will be on-line. Each appointment is made for a specific time. It is not necessary to show up at Niskayuna more than 10 - 15 minutes before your appointment, otherwise

**Ash Wednesday
Wednesday, March 1st**

**7:00am - 11:00am at the Jay Street Pedestrian Mall
12:00pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
7:00pm at Messiah Lutheran Church**

We're trying something new this year as an outreach effort to our local community! Pastor Dustin will be down at the Jay Street Pedestrian Mall in Schenectady (perhaps with other local Lutheran clergy) giving out ashes and a short blessing for folks on their way to work.

We'll once again hold a joint noontime service with Rev. Deron Milleville at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 547 Saratoga Rd, Schenectady, NY 12302 with Pastor Dustin preaching and Pastor Deron presiding. A simple lunch of soup and bread hosted by the people of Good Shepherd will follow.

Our primary Ash Wednesday Vespers service will take place at 7:00pm back at Messiah.

Ash Wednesday is one of the best opportunities of the year to get out there and share the good news of Christ, so be sure to share our [Ashes to Go](#) and our [Ash Wednesday Vespers](#) events on Facebook with friends, neighbors and other loved ones!

you will just be waiting for your appointment time. We will provide instructions on how to pre-register if you decide to participate. These instructions will become available about 1 – 2 weeks before the exercise. Please let Lisa Whitman, Supervising Public Health Nurse / Preparedness Coordinator know if you are interested by calling her at 518-386-2824. If needed, she can register you. Thank you for your consideration of this volunteer opportunity allowing you and the County to learn in a safe environment.

March Newsletter Released! March 1st, 2017

In order to ensure that our newsletter will be released on time, please get all newsletter articles in by February 27th at 9:00am. If you or a loved one won't be available as a worship assistant for any week in March, please let Rianne know so she can avoid making scheduling errors. Thanks!

Bring a Friend to Sunday School/Church Day Sunday, March 3rd, 9am & 10:15am

Do you ever get so excited about your church that you want to bring all of your friends along with you to show them how awesome we are?

Maybe you're bored in Sunday School (which you aren't! We have loads of fun!) and think bringing a friend with you can help cheer you up? No matter how you feel, bring a friend or two along with you to Sunday School – or if you're an adult, to

The 2018 ELCA National Youth Gathering is Coming!!!



It might seem a long way off but we're beginning to get organized for the [2018 ELCA National Youth Gathering](#), taking place from **June 27th to July 1st, 2018**. If your youth will be entering high school by the summer of 2018, make sure they attend this incredible formative experience with over 30,000 ELCA youth across the country. We'll be joining with youth from other local ELCA congregations as well and we'll be sure to have an informational event soon.

our 10:15 service! Show friends how things work here, what Messiah is like, and why you feel it's important to get out of bed really early in the morning on a Sunday just to come here. Friends are always welcome at Messiah, but on March 3rd they will be even extra welcome! For more information about what your friends can expect on March 3rd, please speak with Tom Collins or Molly Karrel, or Cheryl Borski if you'd like to bring some kids to Sunday School.

News You Can Use

Rich Hallett Memorial Accessibility Fund

Following the suggestion from multiple members of the congregation, our Congregation Council recently voted to create a new Accessibility Fund in memory of Rich Hallett. It is our hope that monies collected will eventually pay

for a new wheel chair lift or elevator for our building as well as a handicap accessible bathroom. To contribute to this fund, simply place a check in the offering plate with "Hallett Fund" in the memo line. If you have any questions, please see Financial Secretary Penny Incitti.

Messiah Welcomes Rachel Mathis as Luther League Coordinator!!!

After our very successful Luther League trip to the Flight Trampoline Park in Albany (we had EIGHTEEN JUMPERS!!!), Rachel Mathis (mother of Sophie and Jesse) agreed to help coordinate future Luther League events for our middle and high school youth!!! Along with Kristen Olochnowicz and Molly Karrel assisting as coordinators of our Junior Luther League for younger children, we now have a strong team of volunteers working to

Messiah experience the joy of Christian community! **If you or your kids have any ideas for future events or programming, please speak with Rachel!**

Care and Concern News

This past month, our Care and Concern Committee has sent out fourteen cards. Keep an eye out for more Care and Concern news in March; their next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 21st at 2pm.

Grapevine News



Hannah Crowther and Shelby Miller were honored at Pine-wood Intermediate School during the Character Counts Awards Breakfast on January 20th. Shelby received the award for respect & Hannah received the award for responsibility. There were only a few kids recognized out of the whole school and it was great to see Messiah represented.

Congratulations, Hannah and Shelby!

Meanwhile, at Messiah...



Our property committee has been working hard at making some extra room in the Fellowship Hall for our Coffeehouse Worship, Potlucks, and other events! Thank you for the hard work you all have done at our Winter Cleanup!



Speaking of potlucks... we had an awesome 90th Anniversary Kickoff! Thank you to our Kitchen Crew, 90th Anniversary Taskforce, Pastor Rieger, Bishop Macholz, and all for attending! If you've yet to get your pictorial directory, please reach out to Rianne or Susie Schaffer and they'll happily supply you with one!

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) News

After our recent Temple Talk discussing the possibility of Messiah becoming a [Reconciling in Christ \(RIC\)](#) congregation we wanted to answer some frequently asked questions and lay out exactly what the process looks like:



- 1. What exactly is RIC?** Simply put, RIC is the process through which Lutheran communities develop, approve and ultimately live out a statement that publicly affirms the community welcomes LGBT+ folks (and folks of all identities) as beloved children of God.
- 2. What's the point of RIC... isn't Messiah already a welcoming community?** The answer is yes... of course we're welcoming! The issue is that Christians are regularly portrayed as actively hostile in the media and our wider culture and LGBT+ folks therefore often feel uncomfortable about even stepping foot in a church unless it's specifically states they're welcome beforehand.
- 3. Why is Messiah beginning the RIC process now?** There's a bunch of answers to this really but here's three... first, many of our long-time members have stated they would love their LGBT+ relatives to feel more welcome at Messiah. Second, the majority of our newer members (and geesh, we have a lot of em!), have specifically asked whether LGBT+ folks are welcome in our Spirit filled church. Finally, many nearby ELCA Lutheran congregations (particularly larger ones like Prince of Peace in Clifton Park and First Lutheran in Albany) have found it extremely beneficial to adopt an RIC welcoming statement.
- 4. What does the RIC process look like?** The process actually began this past fall when our Congregation Council voted to commission a taskforce to begin the process. We very much want everyone's opinion to be heard and concerns to be address, so **from now until Monday, March 27th**, the RIC Taskforce has made itself available for one on one conversations about whether you think adopting an RIC welcoming statement is a good idea. **Taskforce members include Merle Longwood, Barb Hallett, Molly Karrel, Cheryl Borski, Katie Becker, Rich Becker, Susie Schaffer and Kody Schaffer and we invite you to speak with whoever you feel the most comfortable with. Especially if you're feeling uncomfortable with the RIC process, you're more than welcome to speak with Pastor Dustin as well.** Once we hear back from folks, we'll develop programming like Bible studies, adult forums, etc. to address concerns. Finally, if it seems like the vast majority of our congregation members are comfortable with adopting an RIC welcoming statement, we'll put it to a vote at our 2018 Annual Meeting of the Congregation a year from now.
- 5. What does an RIC welcoming statement sound like? How will this change our congregation?** Our current draft welcoming statement is the following: *Messiah Lutheran Church welcomes all people into full participation in the body of Christ without regard to race, nationality, physical ability, marital status, political affiliation, gender identity or sexual orientation.* Messiah will then be listed on the RIC website and a Welcoming Committee will meet a couple times a year to make sure we're living out our statement. Most congregations experience increased growth in membership after adopting an RIC welcoming statement.

Thanks so much for prayerful participation in this important process for our Spirit filled church!

FEBRUARY MINISTER OF THE MONTH: Kody Schaffer

Congratulations to our February 2017 Minister of the Month, Kody Schaffer! Kody is 17 years old, is a senior in high school, set to graduate in June! He goes to VOTEC for graphic arts. Kody has been accepted at SUNY Cobleskill for a major in graphic arts. He has a cat named Midnite, loves to play video games, draw, and absolutely loves his family. Kody is in Messiah's choir and sings bass.



On top of being a teenager and singing in the choir, Kody will be participating as an intern through our Messiah Builds Leaders program as our Communications Coordinator to help him build up his leadership skills as well as enhance his graphic arts and web design skills! Congratulations, Kody!

PARISH ADMINISTRATOR'S LETTER: Rianne Johnson



I'd like to thank everybody for keeping me in your thoughts and prayers as I was studying like a madwoman for my nursing school entrance exam – I put a lot of effort into it and am hoping that all of that effort was enough! (I've been out of high school for almost five years and haven't taken any science classes while in college – I forgot a **lot** of science!) I will know if I get in or not in March and will be sure to keep everybody posted.

As my vacation is now right around the corner, I'm tying up as many loose ends as I possibly can in preparation for being away for 10 days. I ask everybody to please bear with me if there are any mistakes with the worship assistant list or upcoming events as there may be last minute changes and the bulletins will be printed out way in advance. I may not be readily available to answer emails from February 8th – 18th, but I will be sure to reply back when I am able and forward anything important to somebody who may be knowledgeable in that area. Thank you all **so** much for being so supportive this month – it truly means a lot, from the bottom of my heart.

I cannot wait to come back fully recharged; now that a ton of stuff is out of the way and I no longer need to study 4+ hours a day, I can put a bigger focus on Messiah's Young Adult Group and finally begin to speak with outside organizations about volunteering opportunities with them. I can also begin to read the huge pile of books that I have stacked up on my desk at home so I can be more knowledgeable about the Bible and Jesus than Pastor Dustin! Just kidding. He's a really smart guy. I mean, he went to college for that stuff. I won't ever know more than he does. Chipping away at my learning covenant is still going strong!

PASTOR'S LETTER: REV. DUSTIN G. WRIGHT



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As I did during my sermon this past Sunday, I'd like to once again lift up a text message I received from Kiersten Becker a couple weeks back regarding why she thought things we're going so well in our Spirit filled church:

I think just involving the community plays a big role in all the members we've gained, it shows that we welcome everyone and it draws people towards our church because we are so welcoming.

She kinda said it all, right? We're out there, YOU'RE out there, with God's help, serving folks in so many different ways and improving our local community! On top of that, we're doing the hard work of prayerful figuring out how God might be calling us to tackle all sorts of tough issues like racism, immigration and welcoming LGBT+ folks into our Spirit filled church. For some of us, discussing such hot-button issues may feel uncomfortable, but geesh, amidst all the divisiveness and fake news across the political spectrum out there, figuring out these things in a Christ-centered and scripturally grounded way is more important than ever.

And here's something else to remember... we live in fearful and chaotic times, that's for sure, but we can also place our trust in a god who chose to be born into similarly difficult times in the person of Jesus Christ. We thus have nothing to worry about! In Christ, there is love, there is meaning, there is truth, there is purpose! Each and every single day, we can know in faith that our God in Christ is working to reassure us of such things. Grounded in and inspired by our faith, how can we not help but proclaim that good news to others!

May God's peace be with you,

Pastor Dustin

PRESIDING BISHOP'S LETTER: Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

At the end of the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to John, many disciples who had been following Jesus left him. Looking at the 12, Jesus asked, "Will you also go away?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:66-68). It was a kind of crisis at the beginning of the Jesus movement.

Jesus had been teaching about the gracious gift of life that comes from the Father through Christ. People were amazed by the multiplication of the loaves and fish and all of the talk about the bread of life. They wanted to know what they had to do to be doing the works of God. Jesus' answer, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (John 6:29)," didn't sit well the crowd. I suspect that the most fervent among them wanted marching orders and the more careful wanted a checklist to make sure they were on track.

Questions in Scripture are fascinating: they are often more revealing than the answers. "What do we do?" "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" (Matthew 19 :16). The people in John and the young man in Matthew wanted to know not only what they could do to save themselves, but to be assured that it was indeed in their power to save themselves. We don't ask different questions today. When it comes to the great metaphysical questions we ask, "How do I know? How am I sure?" It's a hard thing to believe that it's God's good and gracious will that all be saved from death, and since we can't save ourselves, God has done it through Jesus' death and resurrection. It's not what we do or even about that which we are certain, but what God has done, and God's faithful and sure promise. In a recent survey of ELCA Lutherans, Kenneth Inskip, director for research and evaluation, asked the question: "What must you do to be saved?" Fifty percent answered: "Do good works." Fifty percent of Lutherans. At least half of us admit that, deep down, we believe it's still up to us. Let's not beat ourselves up—this isn't a Lutheran phenomenon, this is not an American phenomenon, this is not a 21st-century phenomenon—it's a human phenomenon. We either disbelieve for joy or don't want to give up control.

This is precisely why we need well-trained confessional, scriptural, theological, liturgical, compassionate pastors and deacons: to keep us pointed to Jesus, to the law, to the cross, to the resurrection and away from the world's siren song of self-help, self-determination and self-righteousness. And this is precisely why we need confessional, scriptural, theological, liturgical, compassionate laypeople: so we "... fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching or God's word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear and learn it" (Martin Luther's Small Catechism). Two major initiatives requested by the ELCA Church Council and informed by your input have come to the same conclusion. The Theological Education Advisory Council and the Called Forward Together in Christ process both lifted up the importance of well-formed lay, consecrated and ordained leadership. We must keep the saving gospel of judgment and promise as our foundation and future. This is the work of the entire church. It's not up to the seminaries to identify and recruit pastors and deacons, nor is it the exclusive province of the ordained and consecrated to be grounded in the word. Start looking at fourth- and fifth-graders in your congregation. Support church camps, Lutheran campus ministries, and Lutheran colleges, universities and seminaries. Encourage Young Adults in Global Mission. We've received a \$3 million gift to the ELCA Fund for Leaders, which will provide full tuition scholarships for up to 60 additional students over the next three years. This is just one part of a multifaceted leadership initiative that we are launching now. When people ask how the ELCA can be relevant, I answer: only if we are sure that our hope is in the living Christ and only if we share that with the joy of the gospel.

