

# 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

### Epiphany Service of Holy Communion

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. Another traditional aspect of Epiphany is a brief visit and blessing of folks homes, so we give thanks for the gift of our homes and Christ's presence in them.

### Messiah in Your Lifetime: A Special Meeting of the Congregation Sunday, January 6th at 11:30am

After almost a year of hard work, a Special Meeting of the Congregation has been called for Epiphany Sunday, January 6th immediately following worship, during which our Capital Improvement Task-force will be present an initial

draft of the master plan for our Messiah in Your Lifetime Capital Campaign, receive feedback and begin brainstorming about the future. While no final decisions will be made during the meeting, we strongly urge as many friends and members of our Spirit filled church to attend as possible. It's critical that all stakeholders begin to engage in this discernment process prayerfully, respectfully and early. Our Junior Luther League is organizing an Epiphany Party following worship in order to help those with young ones to attend the meeting.

## **Junior Luther League Epiphany Party**

**Sunday, January 6th from  
11:30am – 1:00pm**

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 kid friendly "paint and sip" with hot chocolate related to the holiday. If you have any questions, please ask Kristen Olochnowicz and sign up on the narthex bulletin board!

**Epiphany Home Blessings  
Sunday, January 6th and  
Monday, January 7th**

As one part of the tradition of Epiphany, Pastor Dustin will be available throughout Sunday afternoon and the following Monday to briefly visit and bless the homes of our congregation members! Each visit will be about fifteen to twenty minutes with a traditional house blessing and an optional chalking of the doors if wished. Please sign up for a time slot on the narthex bulletin board, and save Sunday afternoon spots (1:30p - 5p) for working households if possible, with additional slots open on Monday from 10a - 4p for those who are home during the day. If you have any questions, speak with Pastor Dustin.

**Worship & Music Committee  
Monday, January 7th at  
7:00pm**

Evaluating a busy Advent and Christmas, looking forward to a variety of special services

during Epiphanytide, planning our first Candlemas service and more!!! The Worship & Music Committee needs your help! Join us friends!

**Messiah in Your Lifetime:  
Master Plan Listening Session  
Tuesday, January 8th at 6:  
30pm**

Couldn't make it to our Special Meeting of the Congregation? In order to provide as many opportunities for feedback as possible, our Capital Improvement Taskforce will hold an additional listening session to present our master plan and hear feedback. Please join us!

**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, the Rev. Greg Tennermann will join us to lead a conversation about how congregations can navigate stress, adapt to rapid change and better connect with one another. 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 Bread of Life 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.

**Capital Region Interfaith  
Creation Care Committee  
Monday, January 14th at  
7:00pm**

The Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition is meeting at Messiah on Monday, January 14th at 7 p.m. All are welcome to join us! This relatively new group is comprised of several area faith communities and was formed to encourage collaboration on efforts to mitigate and reverse global warming. For more information on the group, visit [www.capitalcreationcare.org](http://www.capitalcreationcare.org). Hope to see you on the 14th!

**Care and Concern Committee  
Meeting  
Tuesday, January 15th at  
2:00pm**

Please join us for our next Care and Concern meeting on Tuesday, January 15th at 2:00pm while we continue discussing needs of our homebound members and better meeting the needs of our congregation. For more information, please speak with Barb Hallett.



Many of our volunteers during our very first (and very successful) Help Portrait event! Thank you SO much to everybody who helped make this an awesome day!

**Christian Unity Service with Rev. Peter Carmen Sunday, January 20th at 10:15am**

For well over century Christians around the world have spent January 18th - January 25th in prayer for the reunification of Christ's Church and that all denominations might work closer together to build a better world. As our first annual observance of this week, Messiah will welcome the Rev. Peter Carmen, pastor of Emmanuel-Friedens Church in Schenectady and President of Schenectady Community Ministries to preach and preside over worship while Pastor Dustin will preach and preside at Emmanuel-Friedens. Be sure to join us for this exciting new ministry as we stand in Christian Unity!

**Congregation Council Monday, January 21st at 7:00pm**

On the agenda for January will be a final review of our annual budget for 2019, discussion of alternative funding sources, adopting a new Safe Church policy and more. If you'd like something added to the agenda, please speak with President Dave Barnett.

**January Book Discussion: Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson Tuesday, January 22nd at 11:00am**

Please join us on Tuesday, January 22nd at 11:00am for a discussion on Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and

children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever. Just Mercy is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice. Have a suggestion for a future book discussion? Please speak with Jean Jones.

**Pastor Dustin's Coffee Club: What it Means to Be a Lutheran Thursdays at 10am beginning on January 14th**

Want to get out of the house during winter lull and spend some casual time in Christian community? This January we'll be launching a new weekly community building opportunity called Pastor Dustin's Coffee Club! For four weeks will discuss a short reading from Daniel Erlander's Baptized We Live, a book that breaks the basics of Lutheran believe into four parts using fun, lighthearted drawings. Please RSVP on the narthex bulletin board in order to make sure we order enough copies. Coffee and light refreshments will be served!



Our Mighty Men of Messiah Christmas Party was incredible! Many thanks to all who came for a good time.

**MLK Community Shabbat  
sponsored by Schenectady  
Clergy Against Hate  
Friday, January 25th at 6:00pm  
Congregation Gates of  
Heaven  
852 Ashmore Avenue  
Schenectady, NY 12309**

Join Congregation Gates of Heaven and the congregations of Schenectady Clergy Against Hate for the annual MLK Community Shabbat! Dinner with a variety of hearty soups, crusty breads and desserts will be served at 6p with the suggested donation for dinner being what you would pay to go out to eat. All proceeds with benefit Schenectady Community Ministries. At 7p a community conversation will be held with Dr. David Harris, President of Union College. RSVP by 1/18 to Kathy at [klaws@cgoh.org](mailto:klaws@cgoh.org) or at 518.374.8173.

**RIC Sunday Service of Holy  
Communion  
Sunday, January 27th at  
10:15am**

Messiah is 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," and as part of our Reconciling in Christ certification, we are urged to take one Sunday out of the year to reaffirm our commitment to our RIC statement. Join us on Sunday, January 27th as we reaffirm our commitment to welcome, affirm and celebrate all God's children at Messiah!

**First Communion Class 2019  
Beginning Sunday, January  
27th at 11:30am**

We'll welcome six of our young people to our 2019 First Communion Class beginning Sunday, January 27th after worship using a brand new curriculum from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America called A Place for You. 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 27th after worship: Class #1
- Sunday, February 10th after worship: Class #2
- Sunday, February 24th after worship: Class #3
- Transfiguration Sunday, March 3rd at 10:15a: Rite of First Communion with reception to follow

Please stand in prayer with Nathan, Lilli, Max, Anthony, Liam and Ava during this important step in their life of faith!



Kristen Olochnowicz, Sophie Mathis, and Jill Becker singing in our annual Christmas Concert!

**Lutheran Perspective on the  
Environment  
Tuesday, January 29th at  
6:30pm**

Due to awesome feedback we have received after our Women & Justice Presentation a couple of months back, we will be hosting another presentation/discussion on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* which was adopted by the Churchwide Assembly in 1993. This statement offers a vision of God's intention for creation and for humanity as creation's caregivers; acknowledges humanity's separation from God and from the rest of creation as the central cause of the environmental crisis; recognizes the severity of the crisis; and expresses hope and heeds the call to justice and commitment. Please join us, it will be an enlightening discussion!

### **Candlemas Service of Holy Communion**

**Sunday, February 3rd 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 3rd at  
11:30am**

Join the people of Messiah as we celebrate all we accomplished together in the last year, break out into small groups to discuss our three priority mission areas for the year ahead, elect new leaders and approve a new budget. As a change in format from previous years, the meeting will take place over a light brunch 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 Dave Barnett.

### **New York State Ecumenical Advocacy Day**

**Wednesday, February 27th  
from 9:30am - 3:30pm**

**Emmanuel Baptist Church  
275 State Street, Albany, New York 12210**

Interested in connecting your faith to issues of social justice and building a more equitable society? Join Christians from across New York State, representatives of the New York State Council of Churches and other partners in Albany this February! We will begin the day-long event with spiritual grounding, followed by basic advocacy training, workshops on issues including care for creation, immigration, mass incarceration and poverty alleviation and then finally visits to the offices of our elected officials. Save the date, stay tuned for more details and be part of the Spirit's work in building a more just society for all in New York State! The cost of the event including lunch and refreshments is \$25.00 but if assistance is needed please see Pastor Dustin. If you have initial questions or would like to get involved in planning this event, please contact the Council's Executive Director, the Rev. Peter Cook.

### **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.



Santa and Joyce Gresham ready to sign families in at our Help Portrait event

## News You Can Use!

### Strengthening Ties in Our Growing Community!

Did you know we welcomed THIRTY-ONE new members into our Spirit filled church last 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 making an awesome collage of our whole church family!

### Care and Concern Update

One of our longtime parishioners Marion Lewis, passed away on December 17th. The committee members had visited her just 4 days prior and administered communion. We attempt to make a visit to nursing homes at least every 3-4 weeks. Gerald Hoffstetter is in Kingsway nursing home and is also visited. Our next care and concern committee meeting is January 15th, at 2pm. we are also planning a pot luck dinner during January/February, date to be announced. Judy Becker continues to remember parishioners through mail.

Bill Becker looking ritzy for story time during last month's Help Portrait event

### Adopt a Family

We adopted a family of 6, who was burned out this Fall. We received over \$1000 in donations and were able to help 4 families to have a nice Christmas. Very, very, successful outreach due to such a generous congregation. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!

### A Thank You from Pastor Dustin

Hi everyone,  
I just wanted to add a very brief note of thanks to this month's edition of the Messenger, for well, a number of things. Thank you all so much for the many gifts you gave Willy Bear and I for Christmas, including my Christmas bonus. Furthermore, and most importantly, thank you so much for holding up my family in prayer and sending so many messages of support as we navigate providing proper care for my grandmother. It wasn't an easy December, but your support means the world to me!

God's peace, Pastor Dustin

### Reverse Advent Project

Our Reverse Advent program was also a very successful project. We sorted everything last week and it filled up our pantry. We don't know how many products there were, but we took in at least 30 bags full of groceries. So, again, we could not have accomplished this without your generosity and support. We are thinking of repeating this during Advent next year. Thanks so much again.



## MINISTERS OF THE MONTH: OUR CONFIRMATION STUDENTS!

Our eight wonderful confirmation students are absolutely amazing! Through Help-Portrait, the Community Christmas Concert, God's Work, Our Hands Saturday, assisting with the Children's Christmas Programme and more, gosh, they've spent so much time over the last few months serving God in our Spirit filled community in so, so many ways! Many thanks to all our confirmation students for all the ways they minister at Messiah!



### Kyle Avery

Kyle is in 8th grade at Schalmont Middle School where he is on the bowling team, golf team, and he plays the trombone. Kyle enjoys outside activities like camping, fishing, hunting, and helping dad on his equipment. Kyle loves to help anyone out however he can. Kyle is an active member at the Duaneburg Fire Department as a Junior Firefighter. In church Kyle serves on the altar, is part of the kitchen team, helps make the candles and is always available to assist in so many other ways, from caring for our property to sharing his knowledge of the Bible with our confirmation class.



### Hannah Borski

Hannah Borski is an 8th grader at Duaneburg Central School. She loves volleyball, skiing, track and is a member of the Masterminds. She loves to hang with her friends and helping out in the nursery and other activities at church. She's especially great at asking crazily awesome and thought provoking questions in confirmation class! She also loves her dog Bonnie and her cat Daisy.

### Hannah Crowther

Hannah Crowther is a 7th grader at Draper Middle School where she plays violin, soccer and is on the Odyssey of the Mind team. Hannah loves to skateboard and spend time with her dog, Esme. Hannah is hooked on Camp Calumet and can be seen being crucifer on Sundays. A leader in our confirmation class, she's great at helping others and connecting with new people and plus, she has GREAT taste in music!



### Tyler Jones

Tyler Jones is a 9th grader at Schenectady high school where he is well liked for his friendliness and enthusiasm. He enjoys skiing, hiking, kayaking and camping. Last year he competed in the regional and state Special Olympics and won medals in all of his events in swimming. At church, Tyler is especially good at cheering folks up, making people feel welcome and helping us all to remember to be kids at heart.



### Logan Karrel

Logan Karrel is an 8th grader at Draper Middle School, and he enjoys anything outside, fishing, camping, playing football, and gold mining. He's a key person in helping us spread the Good News of Jesus by serving in our church A/V department recording videos of sermons to post on social media. He absolutely LOVES working the carrot station during our annual God's Work, Our Hands Saturday with Concerned for the Hungry.

**Jesse Mathis**

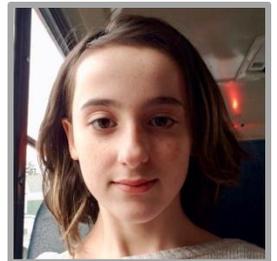
Jesse Mathis is an 8th grader at Draper Middle School. He enjoys singing, playing percussion, participating in plays, doing Taekwondo and playing soccer. At school, he is part of the morning announcement club and president of National Junior Honor Society. At church he enjoys lectoring during church services, helping out during children's sermon skits, cohosting men's group events to see Star Wars movies and just generally being an all-around awesome dude.

**Abriel McGuire**

Abriel is an 8th grade student at Ballston Spa middle school. She loves her dog Oreo. A wonderful leader, she likes doing crafts, swimming and activities at church, including making Pastor Dustin cry in the best possible way during her wonderful Christmas Eve sermon and going to Camp Calumet.

**Haileigh Thiessen**

Haileigh is twelve years old and in the 7th grade at Mont Pleasant Middle School. She is smart, funny and loves to draw. She enjoys playing with her brother Milo and sister Mabel. She likes to cook and hang out with her friends and family. She's great at making wonderful connections in confirmation class and is always ready to help out with whatever's needed on a Sunday morning.



Congratulations to all of you for some well-deserved recognition! Keep up the great work!



## Pastor's Letter: Pastor Dustin Wright

*In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." – Matthew 2:1*

Dear siblings in Christ,

If you're anything like me, even before Christmastide is technically over (it's supposed to be twelve days long as Mr. Doug so wonderfully reminds us every year at our Community Christmas Concert!), you start experiencing a sort of post-holiday withdrawal... it feels like it's time to take down that tree before it dries out and drops too many needles, or that it's time to start a new diet or attempt a new year's resolution or most of all, that it's time to put away all those ornaments and get on with slogging through the rest of another long, cold, Upstate New York winter.

A bummer though is that amidst all that post-holiday withdrawal, we always seem to sort of forget about a key part of the Christmas story this time of year, a part of the story that's especially helpful as we navigate the cold, winter months ahead... the magi. They sort of slip past us as background characters in our annual Christmas Children's Programme and we don't usually even call them by their proper names, instead thinking of them as kings or wise men! While certainly wise, if we took the time to open up more accurate translations of our Bibles (unlike our regular NRSV above), we'd see that the magi, or μάγοι in the original koine Greek, certainly weren't kings, and there wasn't necessarily only three of them and in theory they could have included folks of all genders, not just men.

The story of the μάγοι, traditionally told on Epiphany or the first Sunday of the new year, may not seem important, but golly, it truly is! The original hearers of Matthew's gospel would have known the μάγοι to be Zoroastrian astrologers, or in short, very weird, different sort of people, foreigners following a different religion from a difference place and different cultural background than the folks of first century Palestine. Yet interestingly, it's these very weird, different sort of people, not the rulers or religious leaders of the time, who seem to know who and where Christ is best! And in turn, it's these very weird, different sort of people who are joyfully welcomed in by Mary and Joseph, the Holy Family, to meet the baby Jesus!

In the story of the μάγοι, we're reminded that heck, all of us are weird, all of us are different in our own unique, God-given sorts of ways and furthermore that it's especially in our own unique weirdness that we're all brought together in Christ's unifying and liberating love. So, dear friends, let us this Epiphanytide, just like the Holy Family, in both our house of worship and in our individual lives, live out a sense of welcome and support for all God's children, no matter how different they may seem! Just like the μάγοι, we're all weird, beloved children of God, and thanks be to God for that!

Happy Epiphany,  
Pastor Dustin

## PRESIDING BISHOP'S LETTER: BISHOP ELIZABETH EATON



Ah, a new year! It opens up before us with infinite possibilities like brand new notebooks at the beginning of the school year or the beginning of football season in Cleveland—everyone has a 4.0, everyone is undefeated! At the turn of the new year it seems possible to slough off the failures and disappointments of the past, leave one's old self behind and start a new life. In this glow we begin to make all kinds of resolutions, not just for the amendment of our lives but for the perfection of our future. It's a wonderful space of hope and potential. It's also ephemeral—morning dawns on Jan. 2.

We are strange creatures—bounded and finite, yet aware of the infinite; marked by brokenness, yet with the memory of Eden. I think this tension becomes more acute at nodal times: the beginning of a new year, venture or relationship, the move to a new place or a new stage in life. We know, as the psalmist wrote: “Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:5). And we know that we are not quite right “since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

This is a very Lutheran understanding of the human condition. We know we are simultaneously saint and sinner. It's when we deny this truth or when we believe that we can fix the sinner and become the saint all by ourselves that we get into trouble. Our efforts for perfection bring frustration and real pain to ourselves and to others. The demands we place on ourselves to get our lives together, especially when can't quite bring it off, lead to despair or at least to fatalism. Or, believing that we have got it all together, we can fall into the trap of self-righteousness. Here is where the great gift of grace, especially as it comes to us in baptism, helps us make sense of our lives and resolves the stress of New Year's resolutions—it acknowledges that we are broken and does away with the false hope or the intolerable burden of our being able to make ourselves right. “It brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all those who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare” (Small Catechism).

And it joins us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). We have already died the only death that really matters—we have died to sin and its consequence, death. We are a kind of walking dead—with all of popular culture's fascination with zombies, we may have found ourselves a niche!

New Year's resolutions can be a burden because, except for the most disciplined among us, it's a good bet we will make the same resolutions next year. The old creature is to be drowned daily but, as theologian Karl Barth once wrote, “the old creature is drowned in baptism but is a good underwater swimmer.” Here is where it is necessary to hear Paul's letter to the Romans— “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”—not as final, nor as a bludgeon to get people to fall into line, but as the truth. The very next thing Paul wrote is: “They are now justified by his grace as a gift” (Romans 3:24).

Now we have the possibility of daily repentance because we have been given the gift of new life. Now resolutions can be made and attempted, not because our life depends upon them, but because we are free. Happy New Year!