

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

Care and Concern Committee Meeting September 6th at 1:00pm

During this meeting we will be figuring out how to give better emotional care and support for people of varying ages in our congregation. If you would like to participate in this discussion, we would love to have you join us!

SICM@50 September Assembly Tuesday, September 6th at 6:45pm at Mt. Olivet Missionary Baptist Church, 1055 Wendell Avenue, Schenectady

Over the next year, Schenectady Inner City Ministry (SICM) will be holding many activities

to celebrate its fifty years of serving the needs of the underprivileged in Schenectady. Over that time SICM has addressed food insecurity, low income housing, people affected by HIV/AIDS, teen homelessness, racial justice and many other issues. While celebrating past accomplishments, SICM also wants to look ahead to its next fifty years through a "Recovenanting Process" partially led by Pastor Dustin, who is currently serving as Vice President of SICM's Steering Committee. While details are still in the works, SICM will be kicking off its recovenanting process during its September Assembly by looking at the context that led to SICM's formation and

the history of the organization over the last fifty years. If you're looking to learn more about SICM, this is an important assembly to be part of! Please join us, and if you have any questions, speak with Pastor Dustin, or SICM Delegates Nancy Stellrecht and Betsy Ryan.

Choir Practice Begins Thursday, September 8th at 7:00pm

Where has the Summer gone?? Mr. Doug is ready to begin choir practice once again! Get ready to bring your beautiful singing voices to church at 7:00pm on Thursday, September 8th and each following Thursday after that.

Rally Sunday
Sunday, September 11th at
9:00am (Sunday School) and
10:15am (Worship)

Rally Sunday is not only the kickoff for Sunday school, it is also the day we go back to a later worship time. The congregation celebrates together with a cookout after service. Every-one should bring a side dish or dessert to share. If weather permits, service will be outside. It's a really great time for fellowship and food! Please signup asap on the bulletin board in the narthex!

If you're planning to enroll your child(ren) (pre-school to sixth grade) in Sunday School this year, please fill out our [Sunday School Student Registration Form](#) and bring it with you on Rally Sunday. If you filled out this form last year, you can simply update last year's form. Also, make sure a copy of your child(ren)'s health insurance card is attached.

Confirmation Class
Set to Begin!

Sunday, September 11th at
6:30pm

Confirmation classes will start once again on **Sunday, September 11th at 6:30pm**. We'll once again be using the collaborate curriculum, but this time to talk about core Lutheran concepts before moving on to the New Testament in the spring. Not only that, but a new family will be joining our confirmation class as well! If you have any questions, please speak with Pastor Dustin.

Worship & Music
Committee Meeting
Monday, September 12th
at 7:00pm

For this meeting, we will be focusing on talking about our Sunday Evening Coffeehouse Worship. Please join us!

Adult Education: Manna and
Mercy begins Wednesday,
September 14th at 7:00pm

The new Adult Faith Formation Class will provide an overview of the Bible along with opportunities to explore: (1) how Christians may develop a framework for reflecting on pressing moral and social issues; and (2) how Christians may interpret and respond to issues related to diversity as we encounter, for example, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) persons and others from the multitude of ethnic and racial backgrounds present in our community.

The text will be made available, one chapter at a time, throughout the course. *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe* was written by the Rev. Daniel Erlander, the author of an earlier book, *Baptized We Live: Lutheranism as a Way of Life*, we used last year. Like the earlier book, *Manna and Mercy* has drawings, cartoons, and brief summaries in each chapter, which make it accessible to persons who have not previously studied the Bible in a disciplined way, while also challenging those who have been deeply

immersed in the Bible for many years.

In his introduction, Pastor Erlander sets the tone for this study: "I am convinced that authentic God-talk can take place only in the context of trembling, laughing at oneself, praying for forgiveness, and understand that words never capture the reality to which they point...It is my desire that this booklet will be one call among many for a whole new way of thinking."

Please join us as we explore together how God continues to be present and active in human history and in all of creation.

Youth Cluster Retreat
Friday, September 16th –
Sunday September 18th at
Christ the King Spiritual Life
Center, Greenwich, NY

All middle school and high school age youth and their friends are invited to join their peers at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and Our Redeemer Lutheran Church for an incredible weekend of fun and learning at [Christ the King Spiritual Life Center](#) in Greenwich. Games, hiking, canoeing and more await! **Cost per participant is only \$20.00 and we're looking for a male and female adult chaperone as well.** To sign up, check out the sheet on the narthex bulletin board. If you'd like to serve as an adult chaperone or have any questions, please speak with Pastor Dustin.

Messiah @ Glendale
Sunday, September 18th at
4:00pm

After having such a huge success at our last gathering with the most "seasoned" members of our Spirit filled community at the Glendale Nursing Home, our Visitation Deacons decided to hold these special potluck events quarterly. They're a great opportunity to socialize and meet some of the incredible folks who have served Christ at Messiah throughout their lifetimes. If you're interested in joining us, please RSVP w/ the dish you'll be bringing on the bulletin board in the narthex. For questions, please speak with Bill Ellis or Pastor Dustin.

WELCA Planning Meeting
Tuesday, September 20th
at 7:00pm

Please Join us September 20th 2016 at 7:00pm for our WELCA Planning Meeting. Joyce Gresham and Dotty Diegel will be your hostesses. We have invited Pam Brucker, who is the Director of Support Services at the Center for Community Justice in Schenectady, to speak at our meeting. Pam oversees Community Service, Restitution, assists in the Reentry program, and monitors the Supervised Visitation Program.

The Center for Community Justice is a volunteer-based agency. Their mission is to provide programs and services dedicated to community-based remedies in pursuit of peaceful resolutions and accountability and justice.

Everybody in the congregation is invited to attend – bring a friend! This should be a very informative program.

Messiah Leadership Retreat
Saturday, September 24th
from 9:30am - 3:00pm and
Sunday, September 25th at
10:15am

In recent years we've experienced tremendous growth in both numbers and ministries at Messiah, that's for sure, and the good news is that due to your generosity, we're rarely short of volunteers or funding to carry out God's work for us. That said, we also need to rapidly increase and diversify our leadership at Messiah if we want to continue to grow! With those facts in mind, Rev. Norma Malfatti, Director of Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop for the Upstate New York Synod and Tom Collins, a Communications/Leadership Consultant, Conference Deacon and new Associate Member of Messiah, will be joining us for a weekend-long program to build leadership capacity in our Spirit filled congregation. On Saturday, we'll engage in a day long retreat which will include Bible study around how the first Christians built community in the Books of Acts, honest discussions about how our community has changed and opportunities for improvement as a congregation. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided and all Congregation Council Members, Congregation Officers, Committee

Chairs and other interested individuals are **strongly** encouraged to attend.

On Sunday, Rev. Malfatti will preach for us and be available for further conversation after worship. Outside of welcoming donations to cover food costs, **both these opportunities come completely free to everyone participating due to the generosity of mission support dollars we and other congregations send to the Upstate New York Synod each year!** As we prepare to enter our ninetyeth year of being "a Spirit filled church following Jesus Christ," it's essential that we have as many members of Messiah participate in this important weekend as possible, so mark your calendars and please join us! Please sign-up for the Saturday event on the narthex bulletin board.

Faith for a Fair New York
Conference
Sunday, September 25th
(evening) - Tuesday,
September 27th (lunch)
First United Methodist Church,
Liverpool, New York

Join people of faith from across New York as we learn and reflect together on how to organize, educate and advocate for justice across our state! Meet other faith-rooted justice leaders, learn about public issues through faith-rooted lens, build skills and be energized to continue working for justice! Event sponsors include Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS, NYS Council of Churches, Kairos Center,

Reform Jewish Voice of NYS, NY Board of Rabbis, Upper NY Conference-United Methodist Church, Interfaith Impact of NYS, Labor-Religion Coalition of Greater Binghamton and FOCUS Churches of Albany, so the event promises to be powerful ecumenical and interfaith experience. Cost of the event is \$125 plus lodging but scholarships are available and folks from Messiah are planning on carpooling! If you're interested you can check out a detailed schedule and register [here](#) or speak with Pastor Dustin (he's helping organize the event).

**Young Adult Group Outing
Vroman's Nose
Sunday, September 25th
following Worship**

It's very unfortunate that our trip to Lake George ended up being cancelled due to rain, but mother nature should cooperate with us for our next outing! We are planning on going to Vroman's Nose on Sunday, September 25th following our 10:15am Service. Vroman's Nose is a beginner-friendly hike and offers superb views (especially because some of the leaves should be beginning to change color!) You sure won't regret going!

Be sure to bring some comfortable shoes, water, and maybe pack a small lunch to take with you to the top. We are planning on carpooling to save on gas, so maybe even bring a few dollars to chip in as well (if you are able.) Please contact Rianne for more in-

formation and be sure to RSVP on our Facebook event page! Invites and links will be sent out soon.

**Newsletter Articles Due
Monday, September 26th
at 9:00am**

In order to successfully publish our monthly newsletter in a timely manner, please try to get all newsletter articles in by Monday, September 26th at 9:00am. Reminder emails will be sent out during the week of September 19th.

**Faith Formation Book Club:
Between the World and Me
by Ta-Nahisi Coates
Begins Tuesday, September
27th at 11:00am and 7:00pm.**

New to our faith formation group this year will be our book club sessions! Book clubs will meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 11:00am and on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. The first book to be discussed will be *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. The book is available at local libraries as well as online through library e-books for no charge. Please join us in the narthex for some interesting discussions starting Sept 27th, 2016!

**Stewardship Committee
Meeting
Tuesday, September 27th
at 6:00pm**

Our Stewardship Committee will be holding their meeting on Tuesday, September 27th at 6:00 to discuss survey responses and further fall campaign details. Please join us!

**Blessing of the Animals
Sunday, October 2nd at 4:00pm**

Calling all dogs, cats, fish, turtles, lizards (and their owners) to our second annual Blessing of the Animals Service! Set on the commemoration day for Saint Francis of Assisi, known as the patron saint for animals, this brief, fun and contemporary service will be a great way to celebrate all those pets who provide so much joy and support in our lives. Worship will be weather permitting, held outside and all manner of pets are welcome to attend (with leashes, etc. of course). Messiah's own church mascot Willard E. Bear will be serving alongside Pastor Dustin as Assisting Minister.

**Sunday School Book Fair
Sunday, October 2nd, 9th, 16th,
and 23rd**

Our church is having a Book Fair! Looking for that perfect Christmas gift for your kids or grandkids? Stop by our Book Fair and shop award-winning Bibles, books, and videos for babies to twelve-year-olds. Save up to 40% PLUS free shipping on all Book Fair titles.

Stop by the Narthex on the Sundays from October 3rd through the 23rd to get faith-filled books and videos for your kids.

Our Book Fair, sponsored by Sparkhouse Family, will feature a wide variety of new resources based on the beloved Spark Story Bible, including a family devotional, a collection of prayers for kids based on the Psalms, a picture book about

Noah's Ark, the first-ever animated Spark video (starring Squiggles the caterpillar!), and a new line of Spark Play and Learn Books to help make family faith formation easy and fun. Other noteworthy titles included in the upcoming Book Fair are a new Christmas picture book from the Frolic series and a gorgeous Advent pop-up book that will make a delightful gift.

Each book and video is designed to help parents instill an open-hearted, transformational, lifelong Christian faith in their children at every age and stage.

Sunday School Project Day
Sunday, October 9th at 9:00am
 We will be having a special project for all the Sunday school students on October 9th. Our project will focus on how our Diversity makes us all Special in Gods eyes! We would love it if the parents can make it along with their kids for this special day!

Generosity Project
Saturday, October 15th
From 9:30am-1:30pm
 Messiah is hosting a program of the Upstate New York Synod called "The Generosity Project," a lively, fun Saturday morning interactive experience for all ages. During the experience participants will explore attitudes and behaviors around money; earning, saving, spending and sharing. Drawing on our Lutheran roots, this event equips leaders of all ages to share how generosity is

an important part of who we are as baptized children of God and followers of Jesus.

Here's the thing, **we'll need 5 - 7 members of all ages from Messiah present**, along with similar sized groups from other nearby Lutheran congregations, to make this event a success. If you're interested, please sign-up on the bulletin board in the narthex ASAP, and if you have any questions, please speak with Pastor Dustin.

Worship Leader Mini-Retreat
Sunday, October 16th
following worship

Ever been interested in serving as a worship deacon, crucifer, acolyte, lector, usher, bread baker, announcer, altar guild member or greeter but don't know where to start? This roughly hour long tutorial is for you! All current and prospective worship leaders are strongly encouraged to attend, especially our new first communion students who can now begin serving as acolytes. Sign-up on the bulletin board in the narthex and please speak with Jill Becker or Pastor Dustin if you have any questions.

News You Can Use

What in the World!?!
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)'s Churchwide Assembly
 Every three years all sixty-five ELCA synods from across the United States and the Caribbean send voting members to a triennial Churchwide As-

sembly, the highest legislative authority of our national church body. The 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly took place in New Orleans from August 8th - August 13th. Pastor Dustin was blessed to attend as an observer working to urge voting members to support the development of investment screen against human rights abuses in occupied Palestine. The 945 voting members approved a number of additional initiatives as well, most notably electing William B. Horne II of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, in Clearwater, Florida the next Vice President of the ELCA, the highest lay office in our church. They voted to accept "Declaration on the Way," a unique ecumenical document that marks a path toward greater unity between Catholics and Lutherans. The voting members approved AMMPARO – the ELCA's strategy for Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities. There were also votes taken in support of the #BlackLives-Matter movement and divestment from fossil fuel companies. If you'd like to know more about what took place at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, please speak with Pastor Dustin!

Social Action
 The Food Pantry has done very well this summer, as we have served around 12 families.

We are looking into revamping our procedures so that we will be able to serve more families

every month. We will probably have the information by the next newsletter.

Many thanks to Joyce Gresham for covering for me while I was on vacation. She had a very busy week with clients and has done a great job. Also, many thanks to all who volunteered for the Summer Lunch Program.

2016 Stewardship Campaign: "Two are Better than One"

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken. - Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

This Sunday, September 4th, will kick off our 2016 Stewardship Campaign, an annual season of discernment around how we can best support the work of the Holy Spirit in our congregation, in our local community and around the world. As the first step of this campaign we'll release our annual Congregational Priorities Survey, along with an initial letter introducing our theme and the entire stewardship process. Please fill out these surveys either on paper or preferably digitally by

Sunday, September 25th, as this will in turn inform the rest of our process as we journey towards **Consecration Sunday on October 30th**, the day all members of our Spirit filled community are urged to make a pledge of estimated financial support for our many ministries in 2017. This will in turn help us understand where we can make new investments during our budgeting process later this year. If you have any questions about our 2016 Stewardship Campaign, please speak with Chair Beth Waugh or Financial Secretary Penny Incitti.

Care and Concern

This Summer, 28 cards were sent out by our Care and Concern Committee! If you know of someone who could use some cheering up, congratulations, sympathy, or a simple thinking of you card, please get in touch with Betsy Ryan.

Community Office Hours Tuesdays, 12:00pm - 2:00pm at Annabelle's Café

Want to meet up for some casual conversation over lunch or a cup of coffee? Have a faith question or need help planning a new ministry or event at Messiah? Join Pastor Dustin at the local favorite eatery of Messiah members, Annabelle's Café at 2621 Guilderland Avenue here in Rotterdam. He'll be available most Tuesdays from 12:00pm - 2:00pm, meeting with mem-

bers of the congregation and our local neighbors alike.

High School Youth Group

Our cluster youth retreat taking place from September 16th - 18th will kick off another incredible year of ministry and community building amongst our high school aged youth. This year we'll be doing most of our youth programming in conjunction with Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scotia and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Glenville. In addition to the September retreat other upcoming events include our annual haunted hayride and a service project in November. For more information, please speak with Pastor Dustin.

A Thank You from Our SICM Summer Interns

Amy and Harley not only did an incredible job learning, serving and growing as summer camp counselors with the SICM Summer Internship program, they also rocked raising the funds necessary to support this important ministry! Out of the \$2,800 total cost of this important leadership development opportunity for our young people, \$2475 has been raised! If you haven't yet had a chance to contribute, you can either check out their GoFundMe page at <http://www.gofundme.com/amyandharley> or simply make a check out to Messiah with "SICM Interns" in the memo line. Thank you so much to everyone who's supported Amy and Harley both financially and in prayer, and be sure to check out some stories from their experience below.

"First thing I want to say is THANK YOU to Schenectady Inner City Ministry!! I never thought that a job where I had to wake up at 6:00am every morning over the Summer would be my absolute favorite job I have ever had; but it was, I LOVED being a camp counselor. It's the most amazing opportunity that I would recommend to everyone. Yes, working at this camp stressed me out, made me frustrated, and at times made me question why I signed up to do it in the first place, the good days and unforgettable memories made up for all of it leaving it as the most rewarding experience of my life.

For someone who had never been to a summer camp before, working as a camp counselor sounded a little scary. I had no clue what I was getting myself into when I applied to be a counselor at Camp Steinmetz. I thought it would be all fun, just playing with the kids and making new friends; but that's only part of it. Working as a camp counselor was tiring and stressful; I got home between 1:30 and 2:30 every day to go straight to the computer and come up with lesson plans for the next day. I felt like I was trying to juggle the life of a teacher while still getting ready to leave for college and keeping a social life with my friends and family. I learned how to create lesson plans and be able to discipline kids when they misbehave, which I have never been that good at either. I also learned that I LOVE working with kids; the energy and the imagination they have is incredible, it made me wish I could go back in time to when I was that age. I made indescribable and unforgettable bonds with each of the kids at camp, gained five new best friends from working with the other counselors, learned about all different backgrounds and now have unforgettable memories that has shaped who I am today and how I look at the world.

On the last day of camp our director, Ariel, made a video with all different pictures from the past six weeks and not even half way through it I was in tears, already missing the new friends I had gained, then one of our campers came up to read a speech that talked about each of the counselors and how much she loved us and the camp. The kids at this camp change your look on life, starting on the first day and going all the way until the final five-minute goodbye hugs you get on the last day. You get to see a glimpse of their home life and the differences between their lives and your own. The kids I worked with this summer are ones that have left a mark on my mind and in my heart. I'm so happy with how this summer went although it was my summer "job", it didn't feel like a job at all.

I had so much fun working at Camp Steinmetz and I wouldn't change a single thing about how it went. The people and the kids in this program are amazing and I can't thank Schenectady Inner City Ministry enough for the opportunity I was given this Summer. The things that SICM does for these families whether it's the food pantry, the reading program, the lunches in the park, or the home furnishing program; SICM is changing the lives of so many people and in return we are being rewarded by seeing the excitement on their faces when the kids arrive at camp, get a new bed,

get to take a book home to keep or they see that food truck arrive. To see the kids' faces light up every day and know I have made a difference in their lives is the most rewarding feeling that I will never forget and I owe it all to SICM for that." – Amy DeMento

"While working with SICM and having an amazing experience of being a camp counselor for a full 6 weeks, I was able to have an amazing experience of working with children but also make friendships with the other counselors. Working as a camp counselor this summer has helped me break out of my shell but also to get a better understanding of what being a teacher could be like. Memories that I will take with me from camp was our field day. I was able to be the camp photographer. Each camper had smile on their face. Getting to know campers was also really important. One little boy name Kalab really impacted my life while working at the camp. He didn't really get much attention at home so he was always happy to be at camp. He didn't want camp to end and he also wanted to be able to spend every little moment with me. Working with the campers and counselors is a memory that I'm going to cherish for a lifetime. Working as a camp counselor has really shown me that I really do want to become an elementary teacher no matter how difficult each day could be." – Harley Crowther

2016 Capital Improvement Project Update

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you to everyone in our Spirit filled community who's been so supportive of 2016 property improvement goals. With a new furnace and central A/C unit and mold-free bathroom now installed in the parsonage, as well as completely new piping throughout the house, we'll ensure Pastor Dustin and any future clergy will have a safe and comfortable home to live in well into the future. With new landscaping and a resealed parking lot by our main church building, we're ensuring everyone will have a beautiful and welcoming place to learn, worship and grow in their faith for years to come! While numbers are still coming in, **we've currently raised about \$6,500 in pledged or actual funds to complete this important projects, about 50% of the complete cost.** If you have already contributed to this campaign, thank you! If you've already pledged but have yet to contribute, thank you as well! A follow-up letter will be out soon. If you'd like to contribute, please speak with Capital Appeal Campaign Chair Rich Becker.



Community Family Fun Day | Thank You!!!

We would like to give a special thank you to all of our Community Family Fun Day volunteers who helped make this day possible. We had such a successful turnout – around 100 children and their families were in attendance.



JULY MINISTER OF THE MONTH: Brian Karrell

Congratulations to our September 2016 Minister of the Month, Brian Karrel! A graduate of SUNY Cobleskill and resident of Rotterdam since 2004, Brian has served as Stuyvesant Plaza's Landscape Manager for almost ten years. A loving husband to his wife Molly and devoted father to his two sons, Logan and Austin, Brian and his family have attended Messiah for about a decade now. Being outdoors is what Brian loves, especially when fishing, gold mining and camping.



Over the past year Brian has stepped up in many incredible ways at Messiah, serving not only on our Congregation Council but furthermore saving us many thousands of dollars in repairs by getting things fixed following this past year's tree fall and water main break.

He plans on continuing to develop a long term landscaping plan along with our current Property Committee Chair, Rich Stigberg. Thanks so much Brian for all you do for your Spirit filled church!

PARISH ADMINISTRATOR'S LETTER: Rianne Johnson



Wow, is the Summer really ending already? Some of you parents may be excited because the house will finally be so much quieter, some of you college kids and high school kids may be having the most miserable few adjustment weeks of your lives because you have to get up hours earlier than you're used to, and some of you are probably laughing at the fact that kids are angry about having to go back to school because you'd do absolutely anything to have 12 weeks of vacation and very little responsibilities once again!

I've had such a hectic last month but I think I've managed to hold down the fort pretty well! Thank you so much to everybody who has helped me out in the past couple of weeks; I really couldn't have done my job without you! Progress with my Learning Covenant is definitely being made but I feel like that'll end up taking twenty more pages

if I even briefly cover what's been going on. I strongly encourage all of you to check out my blog at www.messiahschenectady.org/messiah-builds-leaders for more in-detail coverage of what's been going on - some weird ideas have been bouncing around in my brain, for sure! To make this short, sweet, and to the point, I've made progress in all areas of my Learning Covenant. I've learned tons, have experienced tons, and am excited about what's in store during this next month! I'll be getting sworn in as the leader of Messiah's Young Adult group on Rally Sunday and am looking very forward to helping make this group thrive. I'm currently in the process of planning out our September hiking event and October cornmaze event as well as brainstorming ideas of what kind of volunteer/service activities we should participate in. If any of you know of a place that the Young Adult Group should look into, please get in contact with me!

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

Lutherans don't often garner much media attention. In this country we don't make up a big segment of the population. When groups of Lutherans began arriving on these shores in the 18th and 19th centuries, they tended to stay in their nationality and language groups and didn't assimilate completely into the surrounding culture. We kept to ourselves and so went relatively unnoticed. Lutherans, with some exceptions, weren't part of the political or economic elite. There are both benefits and problems because of this. More later.

Our state of relative obscurity is about to change. In 16 months we'll mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. For a brief time, a spotlight will be turned on Lutherans in this country and around the world. Documentaries will be produced and aired, seminars will be held and, particularly if Oct. 31, 2017, is a slow news day, the media is going to seek us out and ask us to explain ourselves. When the local newspaper, radio or TV station comes knocking on our door, what are we going to say?



In our churchwide conversation about priorities for the ELCA, we have been asking what it means to be Lutheran. We aren't as good as we could be about giving a clear answer to that question. We speak about grace, about our work in advocacy, about the relief and development work we do, about our inclusiveness and diversity—though I believe these last two are more aspirational than actual—about our ecumenical and interreligious dialogues and relationships. These are true and beautiful and important. They are not exclusively Lutheran. Many religious and secular organizations are deeply committed to serving the vulnerable and working for justice and peace. The ELCA couldn't engage in ecumenical and interreligious partnerships if there were no ecumenical or interreligious partners. What is distinctive about us then? When trying to define Lutheran identity we sometimes default to cultural types—northern and central European heritage, a certain kind of hymnody, even standard entrees at church dinners. I'm not dismissing the faithful witness of the millions of Lutheran immigrants who left Europe to start a new life on this continent. They built churches and hospitals and universities. They cared for the poor, the widow and the orphan. They also lived in close-knit ethnic communities that, at first, helped maintain the Lutheran confessional movement. That is the benefit I noted above. The problem is that the Lutheran movement in this country has become over-identified with a particular cultural expression.

If we manage to not describe ourselves by a particular culture, we have the tendency of describing Lutheranism as a set of behaviors—we are inclusive, we work for justice, we stand with the vulnerable, we are an inviting church. Please, God, let it be so.

But the danger is we can slip into what scholasticism called "fides formata." Today we might say faith formation: not in the sense of a living faith that has first been given as a gift, but that correct action leads to faith. Either of these expressions—cultural or behavioral—can result in what Martha Stortz, a professor at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, calls the "presumptive we" that leads to the "othering you." Those in the majority assume their experience is universal and those outside of that experience aren't fully part of the tradition. Neither culture nor behavior define what is distinctive about the Lutheran movement. It's our understanding of the gospel. The gospel word creates faith. The gospel word is judgment and promise. Faith created by this gospel word sets people free to serve the neighbor. The church's proper work is to proclaim the gospel word. You know, in the end, it's all about God's fierce and tender love that drives us to the cross, and there, at the very point of death, gives us life. The world deserves to hear the gospel—when the spotlight is on us, and when it is not.

PASTOR'S LETTER: Rev. Dustin G. Wright



A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. - Ezekiel 36:26

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Wowzers... summer is almost over and here we go again! The start of another Spirit filled program year is upon us, and without a doubt, we have a lot of incredible successes to build on! Over the past few months we've upgraded our facilities in a number of important ways, ministered to about one hundred local kids and their families at Community Family Fun Day and supported the training of another generation of Christ-inspired leaders through the SICM Summer Internship and Messiah Builds Leaders programs (check out Rianne, Amy and Harley's reflections in this newsletter for sure!) We've also brought on key new leaders in other areas as well, including our two new co-Treasurers Lisa Mell & Pete Jones, our new Faith Formation Committee Chair Jean Jones and our new Sunday School Superintendent Cheryl Borski. We even we're able to effect the course of our national church body, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, through your support of my attendance at the 2016 Triennial Churchwide Assembly.

That said, as we kickoff another program year, there's so much left to be done, so many questions left to consider, all work that can be deeply guided by Ezekiel's wise words above. We're no longer a small congregation anymore, not by a longshot, and given that there's already four more families interested in joining Messiah in November, this growth will likely continue well into the future. Let us pray for God to be at work in our hearts, giving us hearts of flesh, helping us listen to one another and figure out how to continue in this bright future together. By the way, **please, please, please, show up at our Messiah Leadership Retreat on Saturday, September 24th... it's THE TIME to have those conversations about the future.** Especially after the horrific Orlando nightclub shooting this summer, there's been renewed calls from many members to begin what's called the [Reconciling in Christ process](#), a time for discernment and prayerful conversation around how we can better welcome LGBT folks into our Spirit filled community. Let us pray for God to be at work in our hearts, giving us hearts of flesh, helping us listen to one another and figure out how to move forward in this important new endeavor. Finally, let us remember that we're only one congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As we discern how to more fully share the amazing things happening at Messiah with the wider church, as we figure out how to better partner with other nearby congregations for youth events, service opportunities and more, let us pray for God to be at work in our hearts, giving us hearts of flesh, helping us listen to one another.

And luckily, while we pray for such things, my sisters and brothers, we can be assured by our God in Christ's promise to never lead us astray, to always be with us and to free us in liberating love.

God's peace,

Dustin G. Wright

Pastor Dustin

Worship Assistants for September 4th – October 2nd

	September 4 th	September 11 th	September 18 th	September 25 th	October 2 nd
Worship Deacon	Susie Schaffer	Pamella Ford	Linda Klein	Kristen Olochnowicz	Betsy Ryan
Acolyte	Devin Hodoroski	Hannah Borski	Kyle Avery	Hannah Crowther	Hannah Borski
Crucifer		Mark Lavenia	Hanna Avery	Olivia Tedford	Devin Hodoroski
Lector	Kody Schaffer	Rich Becker	Margaret Glennie	Rianne Johnson	Brian Karrel
Ushers	Kendal Fleming Danielle Sefcovic	Bill Becker John Diegel	Susie Schaffer Kody Schaffer	Paul Bode John Crowther	Amanda Avery Kyle Avery
Greeters	Marilyn Barnett Tammi Crowther	Betty Friebel Barb Sandmeyer	Marilyn Barnett Tammi Crowther	Allison Bode Nancy Stellrecht	Beth Waugh Rianne Johnson
Altar Guild	Jill Becker Grace Olochnowicz	Dotty Diegel Sarah Olochnowicz	Pamella Ford Denise Larrabee	Joyce Gresham Barb Sandmeyer	Betsy Ryan Beth Waugh
Bread Baker	The Karrel's	Jean Jones			
Nursery	Molly Karrel Amber Hodoroski	Kiersten Becker Vanessa Ford-Roether	Mark Lavenia Erica Lavenia	Melissa & Amaya DiGiovanni	Diane Fisher Hanna Avery
Announcer					

Your participation in these ministries essential to our life together in Spirit filled community are greatly appreciated!

If you cannot serve as scheduled, please arrange to switch with another worship assistant directly.

Parish Calendar for September 2016

				1 6:30pm Sunday School Leader Tips & Tricks	2	3
4 9:30 Service of Holy Communion	5	6 1pm Care & Concern Committee Meeting 6:45pm SICM Assembly	7	8	9	10
11 9:00 Sunday School 10:15 Service of Holy Communion 12:00 Rally Sunday Picnic	12 7pm Monday Evening Crafters 7pm Worship & Music Committee	13 7pm Congregation Council Meeting	14 7pm Adult Education	15	16 Youth Retreat @ Christ the King Spiritual Life Center	17 Youth Retreat
18 Youth Retreat 9:00 Sunday School 10:15 Service of Holy Communion 4pm Messiah @ Glendale	19 7pm Monday Evening Crafters	20 6pm GS Troop 2062 7pm WELCA Planning Meeting	21 7pm Adult Education	22	23	24 9:30 Messiah Leadership Retreat
25 9:00 Sunday School 10:15 Service of Holy Communion	26 7pm Monday Evening Crafters October Newsletter Articles Due	27 11am Book Club 6pm GS Troop 2062 6pm Stewardship Committee 7pm Book Club	28 7pm Adult Education	29	30	