

# The Messenger

## Messiah Lutheran Church

a faithful, serving community, joyfully sharing Christ's love.

The Rev. Courtney Smith Westerlund, Pastor  
Church phone: 201-337-4900  
Email: [info@messiahoaklandnj.org](mailto:info@messiahoaklandnj.org)

SUNDAY WORSHIP  
Worship Service: 10:00am  
In-person, live-streamed and on YouTube  
**January and February 2025**

### NUMBER 1

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#### From the Pastor

Words for the beginning:

You are a blessing

We can't go alone

Do the good that is yours to do

Hope is worth the risk

Love knows your name

Don't forget to laugh

The road isn't straight

Our Advent and Christmas theme this year provided us with an opportunity to hear and embrace these life lessons that seem so simple and yet can be so difficult to grasp. The theme came from the incredible artists at A Sanctified Art who explained the theme as this: "We imagined the words Mary would speak to her newborn son. What scripture and stories would she impart to him? What lessons would she teach him as he grew?"

While journeying through Advent I found these words for the beginning to be lessons, stories, and reminders that I myself needed. We are entering into a new year, how it's already 2025 I don't know because it feels like just yesterday it was 2020. Yet here we are, continuing on through life because with every ending comes a new beginning. As we begin this year together, I invite you to use these words for the beginning and their accompanying scripture to guide you through the next year.

**You are a blessing:** Luke 1:26-38 and Isaiah 43:1-7

**We can't go alone:** Ruth 1 and Matthew 1:1-17

**Do the good that is yours to do:** Luke 3:7-16 and Isaiah 58:9b-12

**Hope is worth the risk:** Luke 1:46-55 and Micah 5:2-5a

**Love knows your name:** Luke 2:1-20 and Isaiah 9:6

**Don't forget to laugh:** Luke 1:26 – 2:16 and Isaiah 55:12-13

**The road isn't straight:** Matthew 2:1-12 and Isaiah 43:16-21

Join us on January 5<sup>th</sup> to close out our celebration of the Christmas Season with Epiphany Sunday. Come in your favorite Christmas pajamas and join us for a festive worship service where we will pick Star Words to guide our congregation and our own lives for the next year.

I hope these words for the beginning and our soon-to-be guiding Star Words ground you in God and center you in faith, hope, and love for 2025.

Peace,  
Pastor Courtney

# What's Happening at Messiah

## Meetings and Dates to Remember

### January 5<sup>th</sup>: Epiphany Sunday

*The road isn't straight:* Epiphany Sunday, Pajama Worship, at 10:00 am – you are invited to wear your pajamas if you want for a fun and festive service to close out the Christmas season

January 6<sup>th</sup>:

- Annual Report Articles due to the Office
- Community Table at Ponds, see page #3 for more information

January 9<sup>th</sup>: Executive Committee Meeting

January 12<sup>th</sup>: Outreach Meeting after worship

January 21<sup>st</sup>: Council Meeting on Zoom

### January 26<sup>th</sup>: Annual Meeting following worship

Please plan to join us for our Annual Meeting and stick around after for a festive potluck celebration.

January 27<sup>th</sup>: Book Discussion, see page #3 for more information

February 2<sup>nd</sup>: Holy Huddle Tailgate after worship, see page #3 for more information

February 9<sup>th</sup>: Super Bowl Sunday Collection at Shop Rite, see page #3 for more information

## Church Council Highlights

At the November Council meeting the Council discussed tithing 10% of the \$540K received from the sale of the Perzin house. This will be spread out over time and needs. A committee will be formed to manage this. Many thanks to everyone involved in preparing the house for sale, and a special thanks to Joan Ludke for handling the whole project.

Pastor Courtney is working on developing a Child Safety Policy with the Council. It is a document that will be formulated until it best fits our congregation.

Sign-ups for the Annual Meeting Luncheon will begin soon. The meeting will be on January 26.

At the December Council meeting the Council moved to approve the 2025 Budget as amended.

The Council moved to add an expense called Youth and Family Ministry for group activities for \$400. The Council moved to adopt the proposed BOMs for 2025.

There is a new budget line for the Peacemaker Scholarship award of \$500. It would be on the income and expense side of the budget. The Boyce Family is starting a service-based scholarship.

### Nominating Committee:

#### We Need You to Help at Messiah!

The Nominating Committee is hard at work identifying leaders to serve in varying capacities in 2025. If you feel called to serve in a specific way or you just want to get more involved, please talk to Joan Ludke, Michele Weintraub, Alex Boyce, Eleanore Orman, or Pastor Courtney.

Ways to get involved in 2025:

- Serving on the Congregation Council or in a Council Officer position
- Serving on the 2025 Nominating Committee
- Attending the 2025 New Jersey Synod Assembly and Bishop Election
- Joining a committee: Outreach, Faith Formation, Fellowship, Finance, Altar Guild, and Property are some of the many committees always in need of help and new ideas.

### Help with Worship at Messiah

We need lots of volunteers to help make worship happen. If you're interested in serving in any of the roles, please let Ashley in the office or Pastor Courtney know! We always need more people to help out:

- Lay Reader: reading the lessons for worship
- Assistant Minister: helping with the prayers
- Communion Assistants: serving communion
- Ushers: welcoming people into worship and helping them during communion
- Greeters: greeting people as they enter the church
- Lay Worship Leaders: typically help fill in when Pastor is away
- Kids Sermons: anyone is welcome to give a message to the kids!
- Lay Preaching/Storytelling: are you interested in sharing your story or message one week?
- Video Tech Team: helping make worship online available and meaningful
- Counters: tending to the offering after worship

# Outreach

## **Ponds Community Table**

January 6<sup>th</sup> and February 3<sup>rd</sup> from 6:00 – 8:00 pm  
Join the Ponds Food Pantry for a community dinner on the first Monday every month. This is a great opportunity to gather with our local community and share a free meal together. If you haven't seen the food pantry, be sure to check it out and bring your donations to share! Please contact Sue Boyce if you can help Messiah serve on January 6.  
All are welcome, all are fed! Come out and join us.

To stay up to date on these events, follow  
@Ponds\_Food\_Pantry and  
@Ponds\_Pantry\_CommunityTable on Instagram

## **January Benevolence of the Month:**

Lutheran Disaster Response

"Lutheran Disaster Response shares God's hope, healing and renewal with people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need."

## **February Benevolence of the Month:**

St. Paul's Community Development Center

"SPCDC's initial objective was to improve service delivery, expand funding possibilities and increase volunteer leadership beyond the Vestry of St. Paul's Church. Today, SPCDC provides various human service programs to more than 5,000 families and individuals annually, including adult basic education, workforce development training, and affordable housing."

## **Thrivent Water Filters**

Pastor forwarded an email to the congregation about this program run by Thrivent. If you are a Thrivent member, you are eligible to obtain a water filter kit. This program pairs with Wine to Water, a global organization, bringing clean water to those in need by providing water access, filtration, sanitation and hygiene education. By hosting a filter build event, individuals can take part in the process of building water filters used to provide a household of up to 10 people clean water for 10 years. We are hopeful that all Thrivent members will order this kit and we, as a congregation, will have a "putting it together" party after church services in late January or early February.

## **Souper Bowl Sunday**

Souper Bowl food collection at ShopRite is scheduled for Sunday, February 9. Look for volunteer sign-up coming soon.

## **Book Club: The Red Tent**

We are trying to mobilize the book club once again....In January, we will have our first meeting to discuss another wonderful book. The tentative date is Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. We will be reading "The Red Tent" by Anita Diamant. In this modern classic interpretation of the biblical story of Dinah, she imagines the traditions and turmoil's of ancient womanhood--the world of "The Red Tent", a New York Times bestseller and the basis of the A&E/Lifetime mini-series.

Please check your local libraries to borrow the book or purchase the book for your home bookshelf. More information will follow as we are hopeful to have this a monthly gathering!

## **Holy Huddle Sunday**

On Sunday, February 2, 2025, Valerie and Len Nicolosi will host a "tailgating" coffee hour after church services. This is the week before the Super Bowl. Everyone is encouraged to wear a favorite team jersey, t shirt and fan gear. We will enjoy hot dogs, beans and cole slaw!! And maybe a few surprises too!! A sign up sheet will be posted closer to the event.

## **Rockland Boulders**

Plans are underway to have a fun afternoon catching the Rockland Boulders, playing in Pomona, New York, approximately ½ hour away from Messiah. This outing will also serve as a fundraiser for the church, as money will come back for each ticket sold. The cost will be \$20 per person, which includes a great seat and a Rockland Boulders hat!! The schedule is not quite out yet but we are hopeful that a Sunday afternoon game in June or July will be hosted. Please contact Valerie Nicolosi to express your interest and for further information.

## **Coffee hour**

Please consider signing up to host coffee hour. It is a wonderful time for fellowship. It's an easy set up of some coffee and provide some treats to share. It is a wonderful way to connect with each other after the service. Here are the dates that are available to host coffee hour: February 9, 16, 23.

# Faith Formation

## Faith Formation: In Print and Online

Did you know there are a variety of devotionals for your use? There are often seasonal devotionals (like the Advent ones!) but there are also a variety of daily devotionals available to you as well. Check out these opportunities:

**Word in Season and Christ in Our Home:** These daily devotionals are available in print format on the table in the narthex with the bulletins!

**The God Pause:** This daily devotional is an online message that comes right to your email inbox. It follows the Lectionary Readings, so you'll have opportunities to reflect on the week's readings more in depth. To sign up, visit:

<https://www.luthersem.edu/godpause/>

**Living Lutheran Online:** This previously printed magazine is now available online. Articles are posted regularly and cover a variety of topics. To learn more and subscribe for free visit:

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/subscribe/>. You can also follow @LivingLutheran on Facebook and Instagram for updates.

We have just received word that Living Lutheran will resume print editions in 2025 on a quarterly basis. We will provide more information when we receive it.

Are you a social media person? Follow these pages on Facebook and Instagram for entertaining and reflective faith formation memes, devotions, and more:

@NakedPastor – artist and pastor

@ELCA

@ELCAAdvocacy

@ELCAYAGM

@ELCAWorldHunger

@NJSynod – local and national information about Lutherans

@TheBestChristianMemes – entertaining images to make you reflect on faith

@Gather – magazine for women

@HaikuPrayers – short and meaningful prayers posted daily

As always, if you ever have questions about something you see, please reach out to Pastor and ask!

## Thrivent Members Action Teams

A huge thank you to everyone who applied for Thrivent Action Team cards in 2024. Thanks to Thrivent we were able to have \$3,000 in extra funds for programming.

It's a new year which means all of you Thrivent Members now have 2 Action Teams to use this year. The \$250 seed money is invaluable to our ministry and work here at Messiah. The application is easy and we can help you out. These Thrivent Action Teams are essential to helping making ministry at Messiah thrive! If you have an idea for a ministry project, please let Pastor know. Action Teams can be used for Sunday School, Faith Formation, Outreach, Fellowship, or Special Event projects at church.

## Messiah Singers Are Back!

Join us starting January 12<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am before worship to start singing again. Please talk to Bob if you have questions or want to get involved.

## Community Thrift Shop Midland Park

How do the Thrift Shop donations work? When you donate an item, the Thrift Shop places on a sale price and if the item is sold, Messiah receives a small percentage. The percentage changes from year to year. They decide the percentage based upon their profits and the volume of each charity's donations.

It's a win win situation for everyone. Messiah receives compensation, customers get to buy their treasures at a reasonable cost and each donor is able to pass their treasures to a new family. Donations are accepted only on Monday's from 9 to 11. Please call 201-652-7661 before going, to make sure they are open, since it's run mostly by volunteers. Please mark the bags/boxes of donations with Messiah's #35. If you have any questions, please contact Marilyn Rubner at 201-337-4035.



- 6- Michelle Todd
- 16- Gail Anderson
- 25- Jennifer Leininger
- 28- Scott Axtell
- 31- Kayla O'Neil, Kristina O'Neil

- 1- Tara Haymon
- 1- Barbara Hall
- 3- Joe Kurz
- 9- Terry Vollmin
- 9- Emily Zanetti
- 11- Alex Boyce
- 18- Michael Trouwborst
- 20- Jim Trouwborst
- 26- Nathan Boyce
- 26- Andrew Vollmin
- 27- Cindy Doran

# Budget Report

Below is a recap of church expenses as of November 2024. As you can see, we are running a significant deficit. Please prayerfully consider how you might help reduce our deficit. Thank you.

Regards,  
Karen Bell  
Treasurer

OPERATING INCOME & EXPENSES							
	Monthly			YTD			
	Budget	Actual	Variance	Budget	Actual	Variance	
<b>INCOME (+)</b>							
Ministry at Messiah	16,688.44	11,447.12	5,241.32	183,572.80	152,439.49	31,133.31	
Mission Support	758.33	737.00	21.33	8,341.67	9,493.29	(1,151.62)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,446.77</b>	<b>12,184.12</b>	<b>5,262.65</b>	<b>191,914.47</b>	<b>161,932.78</b>	<b>29,981.69</b>	
<b>EXPENSES (-)</b>							
Ministry at Messiah	16,021.91	13,277.60	2,744.31	176,240.96	167,877.59	8,363.37	
Mission Support	2,170.83	2,098.33	72.50	23,879.17	26,092.05	(2,212.88)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,192.74</b>	<b>15,375.93</b>		<b>200,120.13</b>	<b>193,969.64</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(745.97)</b>	<b>(3,191.81)</b>		<b>(8,205.66)</b>	<b>(32,036.86)</b>		

# January 2025

January 2025							February 2025						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Dec 29	30	31	Jan 1, 25	2	3	4
			Name of Jesus New Year's Day Office Closed	Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loebe, renewer of the church, died 1872 7:30pm Band Practice		Property Work Day
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Epiphany/ Sunday/ White Palama Sunday! 10:00am Worship	Annual Reports Due Epiphany of Our Lord 6:00pm Community Table (Pond's Reformed Church, 341 Ramapo Valley	6:30pm AA Meeting		10:30am Executive Committee Meeting 7:30pm Band Practice		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Baptism of Our Lord Sunday 9:00am Choir Practice 10:00am Worship 11:15am Outreach Meeting		6:30pm AA Meeting	Martin Luther King Jr., renewer of society, martyr, died 1968	12:00pm Bible Study 7:30pm Band Practice	Antony of Egypt, renewer of the church, died around 356 Pachomius, renewer of the church, died 346	Week of Christian Unity Confession of Peter
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
			Week of Christian Unity			
2nd Sunday after Epiphany Henry, Bishop of 9:00am Choir Practice 10:00am Worship	Office Closed Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday observed (USA)	Agnes, martyr, died around 304 6:30pm AA Meeting 7:30pm Council Meeting on Zoom		7:30pm Band Practice	Conversion of Paul	Conversion of Paul
26	27	28	29	30	31	Feb 1
3rd Sunday after Epiphany 10:00am Worship 11:15am Annual Meeting 12:00pm Luncheon	Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith 7:00pm Book Discussion - The Red Tent on Zoom	Thomas Aquinas, teacher, died 1274 6:30pm AA Meeting		7:30pm Band Practice		

# February 2025

February 2025							March 2025						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Jan 26	27	28	29	30	31	Feb 1 Property Work Day
<p>4th Sunday after Epiphany</p> <p>9:00am Choir Practice</p> <p>10:00am Worship</p> <p>11:15am Holy Huddle</p> <p>Tailgate</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Ansgar, Bishop of Hamburg, missionary to Denmark</p> <p>6:00pm Community Table (Pond's Reformed Church)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>6:30pm AA Meeting</p>	<p>5</p> <p>The Martyrs of Japan, died 1597</p>	<p>6</p> <p>12:00pm Bible Study</p> <p>7:30pm Band Practice</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Cyrl, monk, died 869; Methodus, bishop, died 885; missionaries to the Slavs</p>	8
<p>9</p> <p>5th Sunday after Epiphany</p> <p>Souper Bowl Sunday</p> <p>ShoreRite</p> <p>10:00am Worship</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>6:30pm AA Meeting</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10:30am Executive Comm. Meeting</p> <p>7:30pm Band Practice</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>16</p> <p>6th Sunday after Epiphany</p> <p>10:00am Worship</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Office Closed</p> <p>Presidents' Day (USA)</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Martin Luther, renewer of the church, died 1546</p> <p>6:30pm AA Meeting</p> <p>7:30pm Council Meeting on Zoom</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p> <p>12:00pm Bible Study</p> <p>7:30pm Band Practice</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>23</p> <p>7th Sunday after Epiphany</p> <p>Poly carp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyr, died 156</p> <p>10:00am Worship</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Elizabeth F edde, deaconess, died 1921</p> <p>6:30pm AA Meeting</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> <p>7:30pm Band Practice</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>Mar 1</p>

**Love makes us worthy**

Unlike God, who loves unconditionally, humans often make choices and set limits when doling out affection. But Thomas Merton reminds us, "Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody's business. What we are asked to do is to love, and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy." As for how to develop and maintain that type of love? Merton shares, "It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my [neighbors]."

**MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH**

*A faithful, serving community  
joyfully sharing Christ's love.*

228 Ramapo Valley Road  
Oakland, New Jersey 07436

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**SUNDAY WORSHIP**  
10:00 am Worship Service

In-person, live-streamed and  
posted on YouTube

