

MESSIAH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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



Christmas in July

July 26, 2026

228 Ramapo Valley Rd, Oakland NJ 07436

www.messiahoklandnj.org | 201-337-4900

@MessiahOaklandNJ

Sunday Worship 10:00 am

The congregation is invited to worship in any way that is comfortable and meaningful such as standing, sitting, kneeling, coloring, etc. You may join in worship by speaking the responses in bold type.

SILENT MEDITATION DURING PRELUDE

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

EXPLANATION OF WORSHIP

This morning we will celebrate Christmas in July with a festive worship of scripture, song, and reflection. In the midst of summer vacation season, it is good to take an opportunity to center and reflect on the ways God shows up in our midst.

As followers of Christ, we believe that God came to earth in the infant Jesus, to walk alongside humanity and truly understand what it means to be human. Jesus grew up to be a great prophet, teacher, and healer whom we call the Messiah. Jesus is both fully human and also fully God. The example he set of sharing God's love with all people, caring for all who are in need, and calling for justice for the oppressed and outcast continues to guide our work during the programming year and throughout the summer.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose compassion endures forever. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin to God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Compassionate God,

we confess to you all our sins. Our burden is heavy, and we cannot free ourselves. In your mercy, call us back to you. Your yoke is easy and your burden is light. Restore us to dwell in your peace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." In the name of God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, your sins are forgiven. Rest in God's love. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG Angels, from the Realms of Glory ELW #275

¹ Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth; once you sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth: Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.	³ Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar; seek the great desire of nations, you have seen his natal star. Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.
² Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night, God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light. Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.	⁴ All creation, join in praising God, the Father, Spirit, Son, evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One. Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Faithful God, most merciful judge, you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

EXPLANATION OF THE READINGS

Worship continues with readings from scripture paired with reflections from Martin Luther, followed by a hymn. Each reflection comes from the book "Martin Luther's Christmas Book" which is a compilation of extracts from sermons given by Martin Luther from over thirty years of his preaching ministry. We hope you find his 16th century reflections insightful and inspirational.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

FIRST READING: from Luke 2:1-7

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.³ All went to their own towns to be registered.⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guestroom.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

A REFLECTION FROM MARTIN LUTHER

From Martin Luther's reflections on the birth of Christ:

Behold Christ lying in the lap of his young mother. . . . What can be sweeter than the Babe, what more lovely than the mother! . . . Look at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet all that is belongs to him, that your conscience should not fear but take comfort in him. Doubt nothing. Watch him springing in the lap of the maiden. Laugh with him. Look upon this Lord of Peace and your spirit will be at peace. . . . You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust him! Trust him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation. To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to judge this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, p. 33)

¹Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

²The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

³Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

SECOND READING: from Luke 2: 8-16

⁸ Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" ¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

A REFLECTION FROM MARTIN LUTHER

From Martin Luther's reflections on the shepherds and angels:

Look at the shepherds. They were watching their flocks by night, and an angel came and made them apostles, prophets, and children of God. . . . This is a great miracle that the shepherds should have believed this message. They might easily have thought to themselves, "Are we two shepherds worthy that the whole host of heaven should be marshaled for us and all the kings on the earth and the dwellers in Jerusalem be passed by?" I know I would have appealed to common sense and I would have said: "Who am I compared to God and angels and kings? It is an apparition." But the Holy Spirit, who preached through the angels, caused the shepherds to believe. They were so strong in the faith that they were worthy to be spoken to by angels and to hear every angel in heaven singing a cantata just for them. This is a pure wonder that enters not into the heart of man. Our God begins with angels and ends with shepherds. Why does he do such preposterous things? He puts a Babe in a crib. Our common sense revolts and says, "Could not God have saved the world some other way?" (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 36, 40)

HYMN

What Child Is This

ELW #296

¹What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!

²Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christian, fear; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;
hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!

³So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, peasant, king, to own him.

The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!

THIRD READING:from: Matthew 2:1-12

¹ In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, ² asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:⁶ 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.' " ⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

A REFLECTION FROM MARTIN LUTHER

From Martin Luther's reflections on Herod and the wise men

When the Wise Men received the divine revelation that the king of the Jews was born, they made straight for Jerusalem, for, of course, they expected to find him at the capital in a lordly castle and a golden chamber. Where else would common sense expect to find a king? But because they were so sure of themselves, the star left them. Then they were sorely tried, and had they relied solely on human wisdom, would surely have said: "Confound it! We have come all this way for nothing. The star has deceived us. The devil has led us by an apparition. If a king had been born, would he not be in the capital and in a palace? But when we come, the star disappears and we find no one who knows anything about him. Can it be that we foreigners

should be the first to have news of him in the royal city? Everyone is so cold and unfriendly that no one offers to go with us and show us the child. They do not believe themselves that to them a king is born, and shall we come and find him? How desolate for the birth of a king! If a puppy were born there would be some little stir, and here a king is supposed to be born and everything is so still. . . Should not the people be singing, capering, lighting lamps and torches, bedecking the streets with roses and mayflowers? What a miserable king we are seeking! What fools we have been to let ourselves start on this quest!" Nature wants to feel and be certain before believing, but grace will believe before she feels. Faith steps gaily into the darkness, trusting simply in the Word.

But having come, they decided to inquire of the king before returning. At their report, Herod the king "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Why was Herod terrified and all Jerusalem with him? *He* had good reason to be afraid because he had tyrannized over the Jews for thirty years. . . Now Herod had a crafty plan. "The Jews," thought he, "will hide the truth from me, but I will find out the town where this king is to be born and also the time, and then if they hide him, I will catch him anyway. I will kill so many babies that he cannot escape." So he called the scribes to him and said, "Where is Christ to be born?" Then perhaps through fear, the scribes answered him that in the Prophet Micah it is written that He should be born in Bethlehem. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 50-52)

HYMN

We Three Kings

WOV #646

¹We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

Refrain: Oh, star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light!

²Born a king on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again;
king forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign. *Refrain*

³Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a deity nigh;
prayer and praising, gladly raising, worshiping God Most High. *Refrain*

FOURTH READING: From John 1:1-5, 14-18

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

A REFLECTION FROM MARTIN LUTHER

From Martin Luther's reflections on the Word made flesh

Let us, then, meditate upon the Nativity just as we see it happening in our own babies. I would not have you contemplate the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ, but rather his flesh. Look upon the baby Jesus. Divinity may terrify man. Inexpressible majesty will crush him. That is why Christ took on our humanity, save for sin, that he should not terrify us but rather that with love and favor he should console and confirm.

This is the word of the prophet: "*Unto us* a child is born, *unto us* a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). This is for us the hardest point, not so much to believe that He is the son of the Virgin and God himself, as to believe that this Son of God is ours. That is where we wilt. . . . Truly it is marvelous in our eyes that God should place a little child in the lap of a virgin and that all our blessedness should lie in him. And this Child belongs to all mankind. God feeds the whole world through a Babe nursing at Mary's breast. This must be our daily exercise: to be transformed into Christ, being nourished by this food. Then will the heart be suffused with all joy and will be strong and confident against every assault. (*Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, pp. 33, 16)

¹Hark! the herald angels sing, Jesus, the Light of the world;
"Glory to the newborn king," Jesus, the Light of the world.

Refrain: We'll walk in the light, beautiful light,
come where the dewdrops of mercy are bright.

Shine all around us by day and by night, Jesus, the Light of the world.

²Joyful, all you nations, rise; Jesus, the Light of the world;
join the triumph of the skies; Jesus, the Light of the world. *Refrain*

³Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Jesus, the Light of the world;
Christ, the everlasting Lord! Jesus, the Light of the world. *Refrain*

⁴Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace! Jesus, the Light of the world;
Hail the Sun of righteousness! Jesus, the Light of the world. *Refrain*

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God, who sees and knows all things, who hears our prayers and listens to our cries, we lift these prayers to you, out loud and silently in our hearts.

God of Mercy, we thank you for the resurrection dawn, bringing the glory of our risen Lord who makes every day new. We thank you especially:

For the sustaining goodness of your creation

For the gifts of healing and forgiveness

For the gifts of relationships with others

For the communion of faith in your church

For what else do we thank God?..... God of Grace,

Hear our Prayer

God of might, renew this weary world, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring about your peace for all in Christ Jesus, the living Lord. We pray especially:

For our Bishops, Yehiel and Christa, our missionary, Kristin
For those who govern nations of the world
For the people in countries ravaged by strife or warfare
For all who work for peace and international harmony
For all who strive to save the earth from carelessness and destruction
For the believers of Christ in every land
For those in need of healing and comfort
For what and whom else do we pray?..... God of Grace,

Hear our Prayer

God of Grace, we cry out to you and pray for all those in need, knowing that prayer changes lives. For what else do we want to pray to God?..... God of Grace, **Hear our Prayer**

God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, such as a handshake, hug, or peace sign and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.

OFFERING

Offering can be left in the plates at the back of the sanctuary, sent to the church office, or given online by using the QR code to the right.



OFFERTORY Come Now O Prince of Peace (vv.2&4) ELW #247

²Come now, O God of love, make us one body.
Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile your people.

⁴Come, Hope of unity, make us one body.
Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile all nations.

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray: **Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer: one in three and three in one. Thank you for the ways you show up in our lives and for the gifts of time, talents, and treasures you give to each of us. Help us to use these gifts to care for your creation and show others your abundant compassion, grace, and love. Amen.**

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

Let us pray. O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

BLESSING: The blessing of God, who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us, ☩ be upon you now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

Go Tell It on the Mountain

ELW #290

Refrain: Go tell it on the mountain, ²The shepherds feared and
over the hills and ev'rywhere; trembled
go tell it on the mountain when, lo, above the earth
that Jesus Christ is born! rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*
¹While shepherds
kept their watching ³Down in a lonely manger
o'er silent flocks by night, the humble Christ was born;
behold, throughout the heavens and God sent us salvation
there shone a holy light. *Refrain* that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

UPCOMING WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The 10th Sunday after Pentecost, August 2, 2026 | 10:00am Worship

JULY BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH

Strengthen Our Sisters

THIS WEEK AT MESSIAH

TUESDAY: 6:30 pm AA Meeting
THURSDAY: 7:30 pm Band practice
SATURDAY: Property Work Day
SUNDAY: 10:00 am Worship

TODAY'S MINISTERS

LAY LEADER: Joan Ludke	FLOWER GUILD: Michele Weintraub
LAY READER: Brigitte Albrecht	VIDEO TECH: Alex Boyce
BAND MEMBERS: Jerri & Klaus	COUNTERS: Nancy Krause & Tony Baglieri
Angermueller, Nick DeRoda, Nancy & Steve Krause, & Jack	COORDINATING COUNCILOR: Nancy Krause
USHER: Tony Baglieri	COFFEE HOUR: Weintraub
GREETER: Marilyn Rubner	
ALTAR GUILD: Marilyn Rubner & Kristen Rios	

ANNOUNCEMENTS

International Dinner: We will have an International Night on Saturday, August 22, at 6:00 p.m. There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex. Bring your favorite international dish and we'll have a great potluck. Please speak with Valerie Nicolosi if you have questions or are able to help!

Book Club on Zoom at 7:00 pm:

August 10th: "Miss Morgan's Book Brigade: A Novel" by Janet Skeslien Charles
September 14th: "Theo of Golden" by Allen Levi

Property Work Day: August 1st at 9:00 am

Please join us on Saturday, August 1st at 9:00 am for property work day at the church. We will be doing light cleaning, outside yard work, and a general cleanup, including inspecting the gutters on the roof. If you're able to lend a hand, let us know or come on out! Talk to Nick DeRoda for more info.

THE
POWER
OF PRAYER

Please keep in prayer the following people in our Messiah

family: Jonny & Natalie, Kim, Len, Mike, Sue and Alex. **And the following friends and family:** All affected by seasonal illnesses;

Those in the armed forces, especially those connected to our congregation including Evan and Joseph; Erika, Kristen's sister; June, Lee's mother; Keith, Karen & Clyde, Valerie's brother & friends; Marilyn & Vincent, Lisa's parents; Melinda & Paul, Eleanore's sister & nephew; Miro, Vesna's father; Ron & June, Karen's parents; Alexa and Hank, friends of Nancy; Gayle, friend of Joan & Eleanore; Janice, food pantry volunteer; Jennifer, friend of Sue & Eleanore; John, Joan, Todd, Peggy, Jim, Kathy, Carol, and Ellie, Ron and Marilyn's friends; Kim, friend of Sue; Mark and Keith, Susanne's friends; Michele H., friend of Weintraubs; Nancy, friend of Kim; Paula, friend of Nancy; Peggy & Christine, Alex's aunts; Peter, Terri's father; Julie, family friend of Nancy; Thomas, Maria. & Gary, friends of Tony & Edie

Please let us know if you have changes we should make to our prayer list

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