



The Messenger

Messiah Lutheran Church

228 Ramapo Valley Road, Oakland, NJ 07436

September and October 2026

Our Mission

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

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Messiah Staff:

Vice Pastor: Rev. Kimberly Schmidt Cooper,
St. Timothy Lutheran, Wayne, NJ
Office Administrator: Ashley Henion

Council Members: Valerie Nicolosi,
Victoria Boyce, Alex Boyce, Nick
DeRoda, Nancy Krause, Eleanore
Orman, Michele Weintraub, Tom White

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9am -12pm
201-337-4900 | info@messiahohaklandnj.org
Facebook and Instagram
[@MessiahOaklandNJ](https://www.facebook.com/MessiahOaklandNJ)

Sunday Worship at 10:00 am et.
on-site, on Zoom and YouTube

From the Vice Pastor

"Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong. They are weak, but he is strong." – Anna Bartlet Warner. In honor of the 250th birthday of our nation, I recently did a deep dive into the history of hymns written in the USA over that time period. It has been interesting to discover that many of them were written by women and African Americans. More recently Latin American, African, and Asian hymn writers have found their way into our Lutheran hymnals. In other words, the hymns we sing reflect the diversity of Christianity here in the USA. Regardless of their background, many hymns were written as prayers during very difficult times either for our society or the individual who wrote them. Some of the greatest hymns, like "When Peace like a River" and "Precious Lord, Take My Hand," were written by men who lost their families in tragic circumstances. Others, like "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Still, Still with Thee," were written by abolitionists before and during the Civil War. The history of "Jesus Loves Me" is as sweet as you might imagine. Anna Bartlet Warner and her sister, Susan Warner, were prolific writers, gardeners, and even game designers. They were dedicated Christians and Bible teachers to the cadets of the West Point military academy in NY. In 1860 Susan wrote the book, "Say and Seal." For the book, Anna wrote the poem, "Jesus Loves Me" for a scene in which someone is giving comfort to a dying child. In the real world, the song has been a comfort to many people of all ages. The history of American hymns is a history of the church in the USA. We are varied in our theology and experiences and style, but every single one of us has had times of trouble, doubts, and joy. Hymns are a reflection of all that life throws at us. They are also a reminder of things like God's grace, love, and care. As we look at the world around us, we may not always see how we are the *United States of America*. Divisions are often more apparent than connections, but that is where church can come in. We are one of the last places that are intergenerational, but that is definitely my favorite part of being in church. Getting to regularly interact with both little ones and O.W.L.s (Older Wiser Lutherans) is a huge gift! We may not always be able to find common ground in life or politics, but as Christians, we can all agree that "Jesus loves..." me, you, us, and even them over there "for the Bible tells me so."

With the love of Christ,
Pastor Kimberly
pastorkimberly@sttimothynj.org | 551-315-7151

A Message from your Council President

I'm pleased and excited to share that the Call Committee has been established as we enter the real "transition" phase of calling a new minister. The members of the committee include: Victoria Boyce, Lee Haymon, Alicia Abate Kurz, Kristin Steskel Rios, Megan Rotella, Ron Rubner.

Messiah is blessed to have these individuals willing to answer "the call" to serve on this committee. Several other individuals expressed willingness to serve as well, if needed. We owe all of them our thanks as they work to secure God's next pastor for us. The diverse committee, men & women, young and somewhat older, all bring differing views to the search for a new pastor, while taking into consideration all the comments made by many of you at our congregational coffee hour this past June.

Pastor Brown, New Jersey Synod Assistant to the Bishop, will be meeting with the committee at the end of August or early September to review this part of the process. You will recall that the council submitted a very detailed Ministry Site Profile (MSP) to the ELCA, which in turn forwarded it to the NJ Synod. Bishop Compton reviewed and approved our submission immediately!! (which from what I understand usually doesn't happen prior to a meeting with the Bishop to review and tweak!) Kudos to our Messiah Council members who dedicated four (4) evenings of several hours each to compile this document. Messiah is listed as being in the call process on the New Jersey Synod and the ELCA websites.

After meeting with the Call Committee, the synod will send a candidate our MSP to review and if interested, will indicate a willingness to meet with the call committee. That's the first step.... many more will follow. This may be a very long process, but maybe not, it is all in God's Hands!

I ask you all to continue to pray for the council and now especially our call committee:

Guide all who serve on the call committee with wisdom and faithful discernment, O God. Grant them patience and unity as they seek the pastor you are preparing for this congregation. Strengthen them in their work and bless this community at Messiah with trust as we await what you will provide. God of grace, hear our prayer.

Your sister in Christ!
Valerie Nicolosi

What's Happening at Messiah

Rally Day Service and Picnic
September 13th

Community Table at Ponds
September 14th and October 5th

Book Discussion at 7:00 pm on Zoom
September 14th "Theo of Golden" by Allen Levi

Council Meeting at 7:30 pm on Zoom
September 22nd and October 20th

Bible Study at 12:00 pm
September 3rd and 17th
October 1st and 15th

Property Work Day
September 5th
October 3rd

Office Closed:
September 7th: Labor Day
September 21st: Ashley Out of Office
October 12th: Indigenous Peoples/
Colombus Day
October 30th: Ashley Out of Office

Worship

Every Sunday at 10:00 am et. on-site,
on Zoom & YouTube

15th Sunday after Pentecost:
September 6: Service of the Word

16th Sunday after Pentecost:
September 13: Service of the Word

17th Sunday after Pentecost:
September 20:
Pastor Wayne Plumstead

18th Sunday after Pentecost:
September 27: Service of the Word

19th Sunday after Pentecost:
October 4: Service of the Word

20th Sunday after Pentecost:
October 11: Service of the Word

21th Sunday after Pentecost:
October 18: Service of the Word

Reformation Sunday:
October 25: Service of the Word

**We hope to secure pastoral
leadership for more Sundays.**

Church Council Highlights

July

✝ Ministry Site Profile & Call Committee:

Council approved the final Ministry Site Profile and appointed a 6-member Call Committee (Victoria Boyce, Lee Haymon, Ron Rubner, Alicia Kurz, Megan Rotella, and Kristen Rios) to lead the process of calling our next pastor.

✝ July Finances & Transition:

Despite higher-than-budgeted costs for supply pastors, our overall finances remain stable and positive for the year, largely because we are not paying a full-time pastor's salary and benefits during this transition.

✝ Looking Ahead to Worship & Outreach: Planning is underway for fall Sunday School, International Night (Aug. 22), and future advertising in the Oakland town calendar (for Holy Week/Easter, Blessing of the Animals, and Christmas) to keep Messiah visible in the wider community.

August

✝ Call Committee & Pastoral Transition

The call committee is now fully formed, with Megan and Kristen serving as co-chairs. Valerie will notify the Synod of the committee membership, and Pastor Brown will schedule an evening Zoom meeting with the committee after Labor Day as the pastoral search continues.

✝ Parsonage & Property Updates

The parsonage renovation is progressing well and remains under budget, thanks to the extensive volunteer work of Nick, Tom, Karen, Don, and others. Council is exploring an open house/coffee hour at the parsonage in October so members can see the improvements. We plan to gather photos for potential pastoral candidates. The council also reviewed ongoing property needs, including septic system inspection/pumping for both church and parsonage and obtaining quotes to remove a dead tree near the nursery school entrance.

✝ Upcoming Ministry & Worship Plans

Rally Day with installation of Sunday School teachers and Blessing of the Backpacks is planned for September 13. The council affirmed continuing popular seasonal blessings, including the Blessing of the Animals on October 4 and a future Blessing of Halloween Costumes, with plans to coordinate flyers and publicity through the office. The organist search continues, with candidate scheduled to play on September 13. The committee will meet afterward to decide next steps.

Transition Team Update

We have a lot of transitions coming in the next few months, here are a variety of ways you can help!

Come to Church! During this time, it's extra important to keep in touch with the community and take care of one another. A great way to do that is to keep coming to worship and program events.

Youth and Family Ministry

Rally Day

September 13th: Following worship, join us for food, games & fellowship as we kick off another year of Sunday School! Burgers and hot dogs will be provided, sign up at church to bring a side dish or dessert. Feel free to bring a friend!

Faith Formation

Noontime Bible Study

Join the Thursday Adult Bible Study group on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 12:00 p.m. either on-site or on Zoom. The next date will be September 3rd. We will be returning to the book **A is for Alabaster**. If you need a copy, check the church library or let Joan or Eleanore know.

September 3rd: J is for Joseph

Benevolences of the Month

September: Putting Prayers to Action

Our congregation, along with funds collected, participates in partnership with this group by sending handmade hats, scarves and mittens. On September 27th we will bless the sets made this year. Putting Prayers to Action provides support to children and their families throughout the Appalachia region.
<https://puttingprayerstoaction.com/>

October: Pony Power Therapies

Pony Power connects people with disabilities or life challenges to the wonders of horses, farming and nature. The Blessing of the Animals will be in conjunction with this BOM.

<https://www.ponypowernj.org/>

Another Message from your Council President:

I always found Messiah to be a welcoming church from the moment I walked through the door, met by a greeter, helped by an usher, included in conversation during coffee hours, asked to serve on council and now working with many of you on council and the call committee. Messiah greets people with open hearts and open arms.

The following was posted on Facebook by a friend who attends St. Mary's Church in Pompton Lakes. I asked her if I could "share" this with our congregation here at Messiah with a few edits. She graciously and enthusiastically agreed.

Dear Friends:

May the Lord give you peace!

It's time for this again. WELCOME TO MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH!

"We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, widowed, gay, confused, filthy rich, comfortable, or dirt poor. We extend a special welcome to those who are crying newborns, skinny as a rake or could afford to lose a few pounds. You're welcome if you've lived here forever or just passing by.

We welcome you if you can sing like Pavarotti or can't carry a note in a bucket. You're welcome here if you're "just browsing", just woke up or just got out of prison. We don't care if you're more Christian than the Pope, (remember, St. Mary's) or haven't been in church since little Jack's christening.

We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, and to teenagers who are growing up too fast.

We welcome keep-fit moms, football dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegetarians and junk-food eaters. We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted. We welcome you if you're having problems or you're in the dumps or if you don't like "organized religion." We've been there too! If you blew all your money on the horses, you're welcome here. We offer a welcome to those who think the earth is flat, "work too hard", don't work, can't spell, or because grandma is in town and wanted to go to church.

We welcome those who are inked, pierced or both. We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throat as a kid or got lost on Ramapo Valley Road and wound up here by mistake. We welcome tourists, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts...and you!"

Your sister in Christ!

Valerie Nicolosi

Ponds Food Pantry

September is Hunger Action Month nationwide, and Ponds Food Pantry in Oakland continues to serve a growing number of local families facing food insecurity. In August, nearly 100 families came in for food certain weeks, which is comparable only to when the government was shut down last November.

Ponds Food Pantry is hosting a free conference for Hunger Action Month. If you would like to learn about updates to SNAP, Feed NJ, Medicaid Housing, and the ways that Church World Service is supporting people in need, feel free to join us at Ponds on Friday, September 18th from 9 am - 12 pm. Continental breakfast will be served. Please RSVP to Michele Weintraub, Director of Food Security Programs: pantrydirector@pondsnj.org.

The Mission of Ponds Food Pantry is, "To use food as the gateway to strengthen families with dignity for all." Director Michele Weintraub and her lead volunteers build relationships with pantry guests and try to uncover what additional support they need. They have referred families to SNAP, legal services, medical offices, shelters, low-income housing, hospice, and have helped some find jobs. The pantry has a volunteer social worker who meets with pantry families. In September, a senior Social Worker major from Ramapo College will begin a nine-month internship at Ponds Food Pantry. Her role will be to work two days a week meeting and supporting pantry guests as well as expanding the resource center at Ponds Food Pantry.

Ponds is blessed to have Messiah Lutheran as a partner for both fresh produce from our Community Garden as well as the generous weekly non-perishable donations our congregation provides. Beyond food, toiletries such as bar soap, shampoo, and deodorant as well as toilet paper are always in demand, as guests cannot buy them with their SNAP Cards. Donations of cash or ShopRite gift cards are appreciated. There is an Amazon Wish List that allows you to ship donations directly to the pantry.

Fellowship

Book Club

Join us for a lively discussion on Zoom at 7 pm. Please check your local libraries to borrow the books or purchase the books for your home bookshelf. If you have any suggestions for books or questions at all, speak with Valerie.

September 14th: *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi.

Theo of Golden is the debut novel of Allen Levi, an attorney, judge, and singer/songwriter from middle Georgia. The novel follows the enigmatic yet kindly actions of Theo, an elderly Portuguese man who arrives in the southern town of Golden and discovers 92 pencil portraits displayed at a local coffee shop. He embarks on a mission to purchase these portraits and give them to their subjects, whom he considers to be the works' "rightful owners," and his "bestowals" create profound connections across the community before his identity is revealed.

October 12th: *The Only Woman in the Room* by Marie Benedict. Marie Benedict's work of historical fiction tells the life story of Hedy Lamarr, a famed actress of the 1930s and 1940s. The 2019 novel rewrites Lamarr's legacy by focusing on her path towards inventing a frequency-hopping radio technology that anticipates wi-fi. Benedict uses the political machinations of WWII and Hedy's experiences to explore performativity, guilt, and sexism.

International Night Recap

What a fabulous night was had by all those who attended our International Night on August 22! There were 37 people in attendance and so many food dishes it was hard to decide on dinner choices! We were so pleased to have Pastor Kimberly with us to share in the festivities. It also gave her a chance to meet some of our wonderful parishioners. Talk about food from different countries, from Sweden, Greece, Morocco, Japan, Germany, Mexico, Hungary, Italy, Iceland & Columbia to name a few. We feasted on Swedish meatballs, Greek chicken orzo salad, Moroccan Chicken, sausage & peppers, veggie sushi, taco bake, chicken paprikash, empanadas, enchiladas, as well as caprese towers, fruttu de mare (seafood salad), German potato salad, pizza, international cheeses and much more. Desserts were delectable and choices, again, too many to list, Irish potatoes, brownies, cakes, fruit, rugalach, oh my! In addition, we had an international sing-along, with favorites, That's Amore, Edelweiss, Danny Boy, The Lion Sleeps Tonight and Take Me Home Country Roads...there may be more but who can remember! After that, Linda Axtell hosted "Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader (well actually a 7th and 9th grader a/k/a Tristan & Keith)!! It was a close match, but I think the adults may have been bested by the kids! As this was our International Night, baskets were on each table for donations to our Benevolence of the Month: ELCA Global Mission. We collected \$120 which will be sent along with other monies collected during August. We look forward to next year's event and look ahead to Oktoberfest, which is always a fun evening too! More information on that will be forthcoming in the bulletins!

Garden Updates

No notable changes for the garden in August other than more of the tomatoes are beginning to ripen and the beans are slowing down--we are going to let the last round of beans mature and dry on the plant so we can save seeds to plant next year instead of having to buy more. I have new bean plants at home to transplant at church this weekend.

This fall, when it is cooler outside, I would like to start working on the bell tower area. My plan would be to weed as much as I can and add a thick layer of mulch into all the beds, including under the 228 and by the yews in front of the bell tower. Under the bell tower, I'd plant garlic since not too many critters will eat it and we can donate that to the pantry when harvested in late July. Once all the Thrivent project eligibility is reset in 2027, I would apply for a card to purchase plants. Using AI, I hope it can help me select those which are fully bunny & deer resistant, pollinator friendly, perfect based on the sun exposure of each bed and low maintenance. If it is ok to proceed, I'd like to have the mulch delivered to the inside corner of the parking lot, sort of where Pastor Johnathan used to park the Seafarers vehicle. I can also have a more detailed plan for next month.
- Linda Axtell

Living Lutherans

Remember to check out the "Living Lutheran" website, livinglutheran.org, for news about the ELCA. This includes its ministry here and around the world as well as inspiration for our lives today. An archive of past articles and issue is available. You can also sign up for free weekly emails.

Baptism Anniversary Corner

We don't always take time to remember, reflect on, or celebrate the anniversary of our baptism so we are including them in our newsletter. The promises made at baptism are a lifelong commitment to help one another grow in the Christian faith and life – not just those baptized, but all those who are part of Christian community. Take time this day, week, or month to say a prayer or give thanks for your baptism.

*Over the years many baptism dates have not been recorded or were lost in records. If your baptism date is wrong in the newsletter, it's wrong in our records! Please let us know and we will update it. If you don't know your date, we will celebrate you on either January 1st or June 1st.

September Baptism Anniversaries

1-Megan R.
1-Sue B.
9-Don B.
28- Keith A.
30- Tristan A.

October Baptism Anniversaries

13- Linda A.
25- John L.

Budget Report

From the Treasurer

Please continue to support our ministry with your offerings during these fall months.

Regards,
Alex Boyce

July 2026 Finance Report				
	Monthly		Year to Date	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
Income	\$18,479.41	\$11,974.36	\$130,955.95	\$126,300.33
Expenses	\$19,736.05	\$21,050.20	\$138,075.62	\$123,389.36
Total	(\$1,256.64)	(-9,075.84)	(\$7,119.67)	\$2,910.97

Note: Income figures include contributions from the nursery school and investment income.

September



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Aug 30 14th Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship	31 	Sep 1 6:30pm AA Meeting	2	3 12:00pm Bible Study 7:30pm Band Practice	4	5 Property Work Day
6 15th Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship	7 Office Closed	8 6:30pm AA Meeting	9	10 7:30pm Band Practice	11	12
13 16th Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship 11:15am Rally Day Picnic	14 6:00pm Community Table; Ponds Reformed Church, 341 Ramapo Valley Road, Oakland NJ 07436 7:00pm Book Club on Zoom	15 6:30pm AA Meeting	16	17 12:00pm Bible Study 7:30pm Band Practice	18 9:00am Hunger Action Month Conference	19
20 17th Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship	21 Office Closed	22 6:30pm AA Meeting 7:30pm Council Meeting on Zoom	23	24 7:30pm Band Practice	25	26
27 18th Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship	28	29 6:30pm AA Meeting	30	Oct 1 12:00pm Bible Study 7:30pm Band Practice	2	3 Property Work Day

October



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sep 27 18th Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship	28	29 6:30pm AA Meeting	30	Oct 1 12:00pm Bible Study 7:30pm Band Practice	2	3 Property Work Day
4 19th Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship 1:00pm Pet Blessing	5 6:00pm Community Table; Ponds Reformed Church, 341 Ramapo Valley Road, Oakland NJ 07436	6 6:30pm AA Meeting	7	8 7:30pm Band Practice	9	10
11 20th Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship	12 Office Closed 7:00pm Book Club on Zoom	13 6:30pm AA Meeting	14	15 12:00pm Bible Study 7:30pm Band Practice	16	17
18 21st Sunday after Pentecost 10:00am Worship	19	20 6:30pm AA Meeting 7:30pm Council Meeting on Zoom	21	22 7:30pm Band Practice	23	24
25 Reformation Sunday 10:00am Worship	26	27 6:30pm AA Meeting	28	29 7:30pm Band Practice	30 Office Closed	31



Reprinted from the NEWSLETTER Newsletter

“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22, NASB).

As autumn begins, we watch the world transform before our eyes. Leaves change color, the air turns crisp, and a new rhythm settles in. In these seasonal shifts, we are reminded of God’s faithful hand over all of creation. Genesis 8:22 assures us that the cycles of nature—seedtime and harvest, summer and winter—are part of God’s ongoing promise. Each season speaks of His order, care, and presence. Autumn, in particular, invites reflection. Just as the trees release their leaves, we are called to let go of what no longer serves us and make space for renewal. This season also marks a return to routines—school schedules, church programs, and community events. As we step into new responsibilities or revisit familiar ones, may we do so with gratitude and trust. God is not only present in the harvest but in the quiet letting go. Let this autumn be a time to embrace God’s steady rhythm, find beauty in change, and rest in His faithful promises that never cease—even as the world around us shifts.

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

A faithful, serving community

joyfully sharing Christ’s love.

228 Ramapo Valley Road

Oakland, New Jersey 07436

SUNDAY WORSHIP

10:00 am Worship Service

In-person, live-streamed and
posted on YouTube

