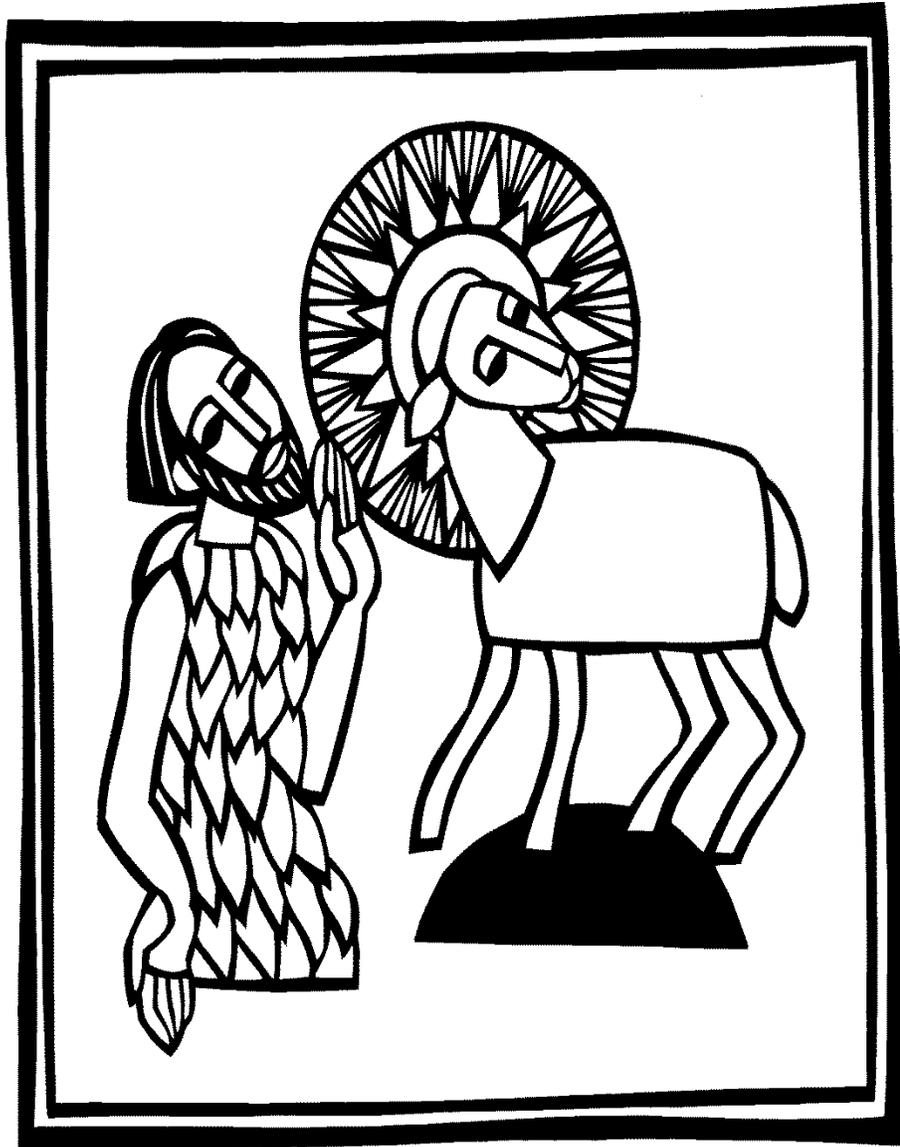


*Messiah Lutheran Church  
Mechanicsville, Virginia*



*December 13, 2020  
Third Sunday of Advent*

**OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

*To share the Good News of Jesus Christ  
and to invite all to join us in faith, worship, and service.*

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**(December 13, 2020)**

For video go to: <https://messiahmech.com/messiah-digital/>

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Welcome visitors! May the Spirit of Christ fill your heart as we worship today. You are invited to make Messiah your church home.*

**\*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P: Blessed be God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever.

**C: Amen**

P: Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

P: Loving and forgiving God,

**C: we confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.**

P: People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free— free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, ☩ comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit.

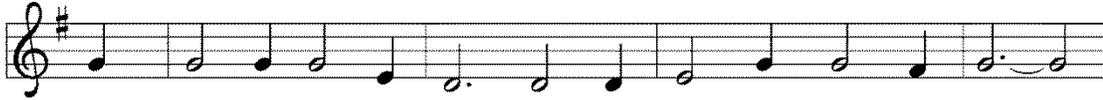
**C: Amen.**

**GATHERING HYMN** *Prepare the Royal Highway*

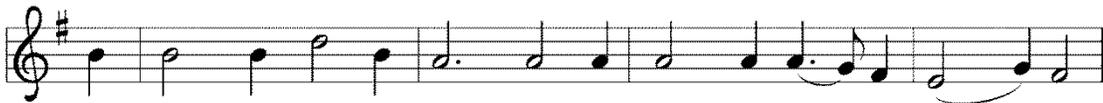
## Prepare the Royal Highway



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!  
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!  
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!  
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!  
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!  
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.  
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:  
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!  
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:  
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

*Refrain*



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*  
Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.  
Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

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### THE GREETING

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

**C: *And also with you.***

### \*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray:

**C: *Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen***

## FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Lector

A reading from Isaiah.

*Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.*

- <sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
<sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.  
<sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.
- <sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
<sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.  
<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,

so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## **SECOND LESSON: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

**Lector**

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

*Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.*

<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil.

<sup>23</sup>May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

L: The word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

P: The Holy Gospel according to John.

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

*John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.*

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No."

<sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup>He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

'Make straight the way of the Lord,' "

as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” <sup>26</sup>John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: ***Praise to you, O Christ.***

## **SERMON: PASTOR RYAN RADTKE**

Has anyone ever played “two truths and a lie”? It’s this icebreaker game that gets played at parties or team-building retreats. The concept is simple: you make three statements. Two are true; one is false. Everyone else has to guess which one is false. It’s a fun way to get to know one another.

Some people make it pretty easy. Here’s an easy one for me: I grew up in Wisconsin. I love listening to music. My favorite food is sauerkraut. Guesses? <...> Right. Can’t stand sauerkraut. Others, when they play this little game, like to make it really tricky. Here’s a tricky one for me: I like Star Trek better than Star Wars. For career day in kindergarten I said I wanted to be a masseuse. I refused to smile fully for any pictures at my sister’s wedding. Discuss amongst yourselves. <...> Lock in your final answers. It’s true that I wouldn’t smile at my sister’s wedding; I was five, and I had drunk a can of soda without brushing my teeth after, so I couldn’t dare show my dirty teeth in such important pictures! It’s also true that I said I wanted to be a masseuse in kindergarten; they had to use the “generic” paper cutout. But Star Trek and Star Wars? I like them both equally! That was the lie!

We Christians have a problem. It’s an identity problem, and it’s a marketing problem. And no, I don’t mean evangelism; I mean marketing, as in how non-Christians perceive us. I have this vivid memory from around ten years ago of a survey that was taken, asking what the defining characteristic of Christianity was. And most of the top responses were about what people saw and heard Christians being against. Against drinking. Against certain groups of people, like the LGBTQ community. Against certain practices, certain sins. Against other religious groups. There were a couple positives, too, but when non-Christians looked at Christians in our country, mostly what they saw were negatives as our defining characteristics.

This isn’t exactly a “two truths and a lie” situation – more of a “two againsts and a for” situation – but either way, folks aren’t getting to know us very well. It’s no coincidence that since that survey church membership in this country, as well as religious affiliation in general, has been on the decline. To be honest, it started long before the survey – it’s been going on for decades. And part of the problem is that folks perceive us Christians to be nay-sayers, literally. And if

they never hear what we're for, our identity and our mission and the core of our faith and beliefs, then why would they want to listen to anything we have to share?

It's kind of in our DNA, especially as Protestant Lutherans. Our whole movement was started by protesting, by talking a lot about what we didn't want to be, and how we weren't like the Catholic church of the day. And the Catholics did the same to Lutherans. And both the Catholics and Lutherans were horrible to the Anabaptists. And as more and more denominations spun off, and more and more schisms occurred, and, in our case, the Lutheran alphabet soup got more and more noodle-y, we just got used to that. People would say, "tell us about your church," and we'd say, "well, we're not like those fill-in-the-blanks with all their carrying on." I've heard stories from folks whose whole Christian identity was based on not being like some other denominations, or based on being deeply suspicious of other groups, like Masons, or demonizing other religions, like Judaism. At best, our Christian identity has been overly based on differences and againsts, at worst based on hate and prejudice.

Now, someone might walk into our building, or drive into our parking lot, and feel welcomed and get the good warm-and-fuzzies about our congregation. I know they do. But on the larger-scale, general-perception front? Not so much. And that's not great for marketing, folks. And not great for evangelism, either.

I'd like us to learn from John the Baptist. That guy knew who he wasn't, sure; but he also very much knew who he was, and focused on that. The delegation from the Pharisees came out to interrogate John and find out who he was and what he was doing – his identity and his mission. Right out of the gate, John says, "I am not the Messiah." They say, "Are you Elijah?" John says, "No." "Are you the prophet?" "No." "Well, who the heck are you, then?" And this is where we learn from John:

He doesn't dwell on who he isn't. He doesn't get bogged down on what he's against. He says: "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'" Who am I? I'm the promised frontrunner, the guy spinning the arrow sign on the sidewalk, preparing the way for the real Messiah. I'm not worthy to untie his sandals. It's not about me, what I'm against or what I'm for; it's about the Messiah who is coming, and I'll point to him. I'll follow him. Who am I? I'm not the Light; I'm the testifier to the Light. Let me tell you about the Light.

That's who John is. That answered the identity question. Second – what was he doing? It flows directly from his identity. Identity leads to mission, and mission makes you have to articulate your identity. He baptizes with water. He prepares the way. And he directs them to the Messiah. Prepares and points. Testifies.

And that goes both ways. If the general public only sees our mission as being against things, then they will assume that our identity is negative, too. And if we are similarly spinning arrow signs, pointing the way for others, serving as ambassadors for Christ, then folks will also naturally assume that Christ is negative, too. Only about againsts. And then folks miss out – they miss out on love and service and dying for our sins and new life. No one gets to know us, not really. And people aren't getting to know Christ very well, either – at least not from us. Whatever truths we have to share, they're getting buried. Maybe not in lies; but definitely in notes.

So, to all of you: “Let us have an answer for those who sent us, for those wondering: What do you say about yourselves? Who are you?” What is our identity? What are we for? What is at the core of who we are as disciples of Christ and children of God? What are our attributes and attitudes?

Our reading from 1 Thessalonians can help with this. Because we have been saved from sin and death and the devil, because we have received new life and salvation in Christ: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of the prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from what is evil.” When people see you, a Christian, they should see someone so full of joy that they are rejoicing. Not a Pollyanna, but someone who still takes the prophets seriously and tests things against God's will. They should see someone who prays without ceasing, because it's not about them, someone who conduits the Spirit, and never quenches it. They should see someone who gives thanks in all circumstances and holds fast to what is good even when assailed by challenges.

It doesn't matter so much what others are or aren't doing, and whether or not we're against them. What matters is what God has done, is doing, will do, and how live in response to that, in newness of life.

And then from our identity, our attributes and attitudes, flows our mission: our actions. I invite you not to despise the words of the prophet Isaiah when he describes what it is like to have the spirit of God upon you, to be set apart for service and life in the Lord: “he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners.” Prepare the way. Don't throw shade; testify to the Light.

Most non-Christians see Christians spending a ton of time and energy being against things. Even working against things. What would happen for evangelism – and marketing – if folks primarily, more than anything else, saw Christians binding up the broken-hearted instead of breaking hearts, proclaiming liberty to the captives instead of crafting cages of morality, serving

as ambassadors of release to anyone imprisoned, especially those trapped by addiction, systemic racism, poverty, and every kind of sin. What would happen if the first thing folks heard coming out of Christians' mouths was good news, and the first thing they saw our hands doing was pointing the way to Christ? What if the only "against" people identified with Christians was being "against injustice"? Testifying to the Light! What if indeed.

It's really easy to be against something. You just say so. Maybe yell about it. You don't even necessarily have to try to change it. It's an identity – I'm anti-whatever. I think it's much harder to be for something. Because then it's part of your identity. It's who you are, and you need to live it and stand by it. You maintain it in your attitudes and your actions, it flows out into your mission. You're pointing all the time, testifying all the time, in all you say and do. It's easy to be against something. It's much more work to be for something, for someone.

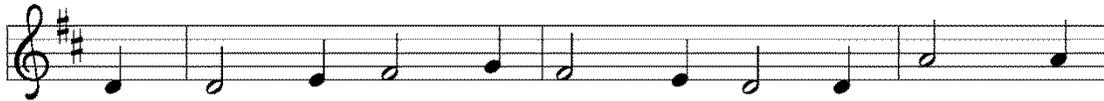
And because God knows that what he asks of us is hard, and is contrary to our sinful, against-ing nature, God anchors us in our baptismal identities, feeds us at the table, and keeps us steadfast in our mission. From Isaiah: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them...all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed." "For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations."

And from 1 Thessalonians: "May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this."

We have many truths to share: God is faithful. Jesus is the Way. The Christian identity is rooted in love. The Christian mission is rooted in building up and bringing good news to the oppressed and proclaiming release. We have much to rejoice and give thanks for, in all circumstances. God is love. The only real lie is the one we tell ourselves that we are defined by what we aren't, or what we're against. We are defined by God's love and salvation, and our mission and testimony flow from there.

Don't make people guess between truths and lies, fors and againsts. Testify to the Light. The Light shines in the darkness, and no darkness and overcome it. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## HYMN OF THE DAY On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es  
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; make straight the  
3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our ref - uge  
4 Stretch forth your hand, our health re - store, and make us  
5 All praise to you, e - ter - nal Son, whose ad - vent



that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,  
way for God with - in, and let us all our  
and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we  
rise to fall no more; oh, let your face up -  
has our free - dom won, whom with the Fa - ther



for he brings glad tid - ings of the King of kings!  
hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.  
waste a - way like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.  
on us shine and fill the world with love di - vine.  
we a - dore, and Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er - more.

Text: Charles Coffin, 1676–1749; tr. composite  
Music: PUER NOBIS, European tune, adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1571–1621

## 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

A: God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need. *[Brief silence]*

A: God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute their prayers and talents to public worship (the congregation's worship leaders may be named). Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: God of every living creature, you announce the year of your favor for all of creation. Extend your kindness and relief to endangered animals and plants. Strengthen the human beings who rely on the rhythms of nature to make their living. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: God of all peoples and nations, you plant us as your oaks of righteousness and ask us to care for one another. Be present with the leaders of every nation as they govern. Give them a spirit of righteousness, that your goodness and mercy is revealed through their actions. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm (survivors of recent natural disasters may be named). Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: God of the powerful and helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: God of sinners and saints, you offer joy even in the midst of our grief. We are grateful for the beloved, imperfect people whose lives testified to your radiant love (especially Lucy, martyr of the church). Anoint all who mourn with the oil of gladness. Hear us, O God

**C: *Your mercy is great***

A: God, you are life. We pray for our world, our country, our community, and our church as we face the challenges of coronavirus. We pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones, for the sick and their families, for those fearful of an unknown future. We pray for the millions of unemployed, for children and others at home - that they be safe from abuse. We pray for those who are alone and isolated during this time that they may feel your loving presence. We pray for all the hospital and health care workers, and all first

responders, that they receive needed supplies and be kept protected in the work they do. We pray for those making decisions about how to live into the future and when that will happen. Keep us all in your care as we wait for a new day. Hear us, O God

**C: Your mercy is great**

A: God of all families, you have given us families to be sanctuaries of blessing, comfort, and love for each other. Under your protection fill us with harmony, hope, and health. We pray this week for the Fulop, Garbett and Gardner families as well as our Messiah family. Guard all of our hearts that we may display love instead of hate, anger, or bitterness. Lead us all to be grateful for your abiding love and enable us to glorify you by sharing that love with others. Hear us, O God

**C: Your mercy is great**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

A: Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

#### **\*THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**C: Our Father, who art in heaven,**

***hallowed be thy name,***

***thy kingdom come,***

***thy will be done,***

***on earth as it is in heaven.***

***Give us this day our daily bread;***

***and forgive us our trespasses,***

***as we forgive those***

***who trespass against us;***

***and lead us not into temptation,***

***but deliver us from evil.***

***For thine is the kingdom,***

***and the power, and the glory,***

***forever and ever. Amen.***

#### **BLESSING**

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**C: Amen**

# SENDING SONG O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

## O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things  
3 O come, O come, O Lord of might, as to your tribes on  
4 O come, O Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
far and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;  
Si - nai's height in an - cient times you gave the law  
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
teach us your will and guide our way. Re-joice! Re-joice!  
in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.  
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

- 5 O come, O Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heav'nly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
and close the path to misery. *Refrain*
- 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;  
O Sun of justice, now draw near.  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*
- 7 O come, O King of nations, come,  
O Cornerstone that binds in one:  
refresh the hearts that long for you;  
restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*
- 8 O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

Text: *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite  
Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.  
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

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## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **PASTOR RYAN'S OFFICE HOURS**

Here are Pastor Ryan's office hours for this week (posted below)! Pastor Ryan is also available via phone and email, which are: messiahmechpr@gmail.com and 507-360-7276.

### **Pastor Ryan's hours:**

**Tuesday: 4 - 6 pm / Wednesday: 8 am - 12 pm / Thursday: 12:00 - 5 pm**

### **ADVENT MIDWEEK MESSAGES**

We'll continue our series this week of Faith Ponderings. A Faith Pondering is any question or wonderment or curiosity you have about the Church, the Bible, Lutheranism, or faith in general. Your questions will be the basis of the Midweek Messages in Advent. Thanks for the good questions so far!

### **WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Beginning March 8<sup>th</sup>, we began providing a summary of the financial well-being of our congregation. Here is this week's information:

- Contributions to general fund averaged \$2,750 through December 6, 2020 (no change from \$2,750 on November 29).
- We are \$32,020.70 behind the year-to-date budget needs (increasing from \$31,381.00 behind the budget the week prior).
- Weekly budget need is \$3404.00.

### **2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES**

Envelopes for 2021 are ready. Envelopes will be distributed before services. Please note numbers have changed so in order to get proper credit for the correct year use the new envelopes only for Sundays in 2021. Let Bill Weaver know if you do not receive your envelopes.

### **THANK YOU**

A letter with an accompanying donation of \$175.00 was sent to the Lewey Body Dementia Association in memory of Pastor Timothy Waltonen. A sincere thank you to those who contributed to honoring Pastor Tim in this way. The letter was sent on church stationery and signed 'Members of Messiah Lutheran Church'.

### **FUNRAISER FOR MCEF**

The third Monday of each month from 4 to 8 p.m. at Chicken Salad Chick, mention that you support MCEF and 10% of sale will be donated to MCEF. It is located at 6575 Mechanicsville Turnpike, Brandy Creek Commons. Available for drive-through, carry out, curbside pick-up or eat in. A large variety of chicken salads and more on the menu.

### **SMALL GROUPS**

If you'd like to have a small group or committee meeting at the church, please check out the Small Group Meetings and Cleaning Protocols. You can contact Davina when wanting to schedule a time for your group to meet and get the latest protocols. The only areas open at this time include the Fellowship Hall, the hallway to the restrooms, and the restrooms. All other parts of the building remain 'closed' for now. There are also copies of the forms at church on the kitchen counter for you to use at your meeting along with necessary cleaning supplies. Davina will maintain the completed forms in her office. Thanks for all you do! Stay well everyone!

### **NO ROOM AT THE INN**

Experience A Thrill of Hope In this year of fear and struggle we need the hope and joy of Christmas. Our 13th annual No Room at the Inn will be a virtual event with a live online Preview Gala on Friday December 4th, 2020. The virtual Nativity Exhibit will be available online through Christmas. Funds raised will be shared with My Path Forward, MCEF's emergency housing assistance program, and AFAL in Haiti building modest homes for their neediest families. Visit [churchredeemer.org/no-room](http://churchredeemer.org/no-room) or call 730-7980 for details. Like and Share us on Facebook by searching for us on Facebook at No Room at the Inn Mechanicsville VA.

### **LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE: HURRICANES AND CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES**

Following the devastation caused by hurricanes along the Gulf Coast, as well as the impact of wildfires across California and the Northwest, Lutheran Disaster Relief (LDR) is responding. You can help LDR as they assist the communities who have been impacted by these natural disasters, through prayer and giving through [Lutheran Disaster Relief](#). Your gifts designated for "Hurricane Response" or "U.S. Wildfires" will be used entirely (100%) for direct response until it is complete. Together, we can help provide immediate and long-lasting support for those whose lives have been impacted by hurricanes or wildfires.

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT – COMING BACK**

We're continuing the getting-back-together process. Small groups have already been meeting, and now we're making the first go and worshipping inside together again. As we come back together in person, we also encourage you, prayerfully and as you are able, to come back in your giving, too. Thank you for the generosity you have already shown through these difficult times! Please mail in your offering to the church office, 8154 Atlee Road, Mechanicsville, VA 23111, or use on-line giving through Vanco which is available on the church website. See [messiahmech.com](http://messiahmech.com) for more details. Thanks!

## **UPDATED: REBUILD RVA GRANT PROGRAM**

On October 28, the Governor's Office released information about an expansion of the Rebuild Virginia Grants. The grants are available to small businesses and non-profits. Unlike the last time round of Rebuild Virginia grants, the expansion specifically says that an organization can receive funding even if the organization received CARES Act Funding. Qualified recipients can receive a grant of up to three months' worth of expenses to help with salaries, mortgage, utilities, etc. The FAQs aren't as entirely clear, but when you combine the FAQs with the application guide (pg 4 in particular addresses what is excluded for those with CARES Act funding), it appears that most organizations in Virginia are eligible. This funding may prove particularly helpful for child care and preschool ministries that had issues with part-time employees and PPP Loan calculations. One potential hurdle for an application is the requirement for a DUNS number. The DUNS numbers appear to be standard practice in the for-profit world and almost unheard of in the non-profit world. It is possible for a church or non-profit to apply for a DUNS number, but the online process to get the number can be confusing.

## **VIRGINIA RENT AND MORTGAGE RELIEF PROGRAM (RMRP)**

The Virginia Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP) is designed to support and ensure housing stability across the commonwealth during the coronavirus pandemic. Depending on availability of funds and household need, the RMRP may provide financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments for eligible households. This includes financial assistance for rent or mortgage payments past due beginning April 1, 2020 and onward. Financial assistance is a one-time payment with opportunity for renewal based on availability of funding and the household's need for additional assistance and continued eligibility. For more information please visit: Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD): [www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/rmrp).

## **SMILE! MESSIAH RECEIVES .5% DONATION WHEN YOU SHOP ON AMAZON!**

This holiday season, online holiday shopping is expected to increase over 33% more than last year. More people will be browsing Amazon this year more than ever. With the shopping season among us, the Stewardship team would like to remind everyone to sign up for Amazon Smile! Signing up is easy and does not interfere with Prime Membership benefits. Amazon donates .5% of eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice.

Step 1: visit [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)

Step 2: sign in with your amazon account credentials

Step 3: Search for "Messiah Lutheran Church Mechanicsville"

Step 4: Start SHOPPING! \*please remember to bookmark [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) for easy access every time you shop. You must add the "smile" for this program.

Thank you all and happy shopping!

## **GLOBAL BARNYARD UPDATE**

This is a thank you to all who have already contributed to our Global Barnyard project. We currently have a total of \$300+ in the 'piggy' bank! Please continue to bring your donations through Dec. 20. When the collection is complete, a short survey will be sent out through Survey Monkey to offer choices to select for purchasing. What a wonderful gift(s) we can offer to someone in another part of the world! Your generosity is certainly appreciated! If you have questions please contact Donna Shaw, [dmslaw70@gmail.com](mailto:dmslaw70@gmail.com) or 205-2943.