



# MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

# MESSENGER

Volume 26, Issue 01

## Special Points of Interest

Sound Bath-Sunday, January 11  
4:00 pm

OWLs-January 13, 12:00 noon

Annual Meeting-January 25  
12:00 noon

Music Sunday— Sunday,  
January 18 2:30 pm

Daytime Bible Study-Tuesdays  
1:00 pm

Burning of the Greens-  
Tuesday, January 6, 7:00pm

## Inside this Issue

Pastor's Article	1
Contact Information	2
Interest Articles	3-5
Council Highlights	8
Ongoing Ministries	6-7
Committee Meetings	8
Members Page	8

### OWLs

**Tuesday, January 13  
12:00 noon**

Bring your own lunch. We  
will plan out the year.

### Sound Bath

**Sunday, January 11  
4:00 pm**  
Fellowship Hall.

### Baptism of Our Lord Sunday

**January 11  
Bring Your Baptismal  
Certificate!**

Celebrate the **Baptism of  
Our Lord** and give thanks  
for the gift of baptism in our  
own lives. **Worship  
attendees are invited to  
bring their baptismal  
certificates** as we  
remember God's promises  
and our baptismal identity  
in Christ. Pastor will  
incorporate the certificates  
in his sermon.

Don't have yours? Come  
anyway, you are always  
welcome.

### New Daytime Bible Study

**Tuesdays at 1:00 PM  
Starting January 6**

Looking for a gentle,  
midweek reset with God's  
Word and good  
conversation. We'll open  
Scripture together, ask  
honest questions, pray for  
one another, and leave  
encouraged for the week  
ahead.

**All are welcome. No  
homework. Just come as  
you are.**

### Annual Congregational Meeting

**Sunday, January 25  
12:00 noon Lunch  
12:30 pm meeting**

### Conference Announcements

### Burning of the Greens

**Tuesday, January 6, 2026  
7:00 pm**

Join the Congregations of  
the Erie Lutheran  
Conference at Faith  
Lutheran Church in  
Harborcreek. The guest  
preacher will be the Very

Reverend Dr. John P.  
Downey, vicar of St.  
Stephen Episcopal in  
Fairview.

There will be the "Burning  
of the Greens" at the  
conclusion of the Service of  
Holy Communion.

### Music for Sunday Morning

**Sunday, January 18  
2:30 pm**

Mount Calvary Lutheran  
Church  
1603 West 32nd St  
32nd & Greengarden

Mt. Calvary will be  
dedicating its new organ  
console and honoring Vicki  
Baldwin, our late organist  
and choir director for 33  
years.

Please join us for a program  
of "Music for a Sunday  
Morning" featuring Dr.  
Chris Petit, music director  
and organist at St. Paul's  
Episcopal, Phil Baldwin,  
violinist, and Margaret  
Andreso, soprano. In  
addition to their musical  
selections, there will be a  
hymn sing of favorites  
chosen by members of Mt.  
Calvary. All are invited.

**Contact Information**

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**Follow Messiah Lutheran  
Church on Facebook**

Live Stream Sunday YouTube-  
Messiah Lutheran Church Erie

**Church Office Hours****Monday**

Closed

**Tuesday**

10:00am-5:00pm

**Wednesday**

Closed

**Thursday**

10:00am-5:00pm

**Friday**

10:00am-5:00pm

**From the Desk of Pr. Tom****A New Beginning in the  
Depth of Winter**

January has a way of arriving quietly.

The decorations are packed away. The calendar pages turn. The world outside Messiah Lutheran Church is often hushed under cold air, bare trees, and long nights. Yet it is precisely in this stillness that God so often does something new.

Scripture reminds us, "See, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19). New beginnings do not always arrive with fanfare. More often, they begin in hidden places; in soil that looks frozen, in hearts that are tired but still open, in prayers that are whispered rather than proclaimed.

January invites us into a different kind of renewal, not the loud resolution-making of self-improvement, but the gentle re-centering of our lives in Christ. A new beginning in the Christian

life is not about becoming someone else. It is about returning; returning to the truth that we are already God's beloved, returning to the practices that anchor us when life feels scattered, returning to the quiet confidence that God is not finished with us yet.

This month, you might consider a small spiritual beginning, not a drastic change, but a faithful one. Perhaps it is setting aside five minutes each morning to sit in silence before God, resisting the urge to fill the space with words. Perhaps it is reading a single psalm each evening, letting ancient prayers shape your own. Perhaps it is lighting a candle and offering one honest sentence to God: gratitude, grief, hope, or longing. These small practices are not insignificant. In God's economy, seeds matter.

Winter teaches us that growth is often happening beneath the surface long before we see any signs of it.

The roots deepen. The soil prepares. The promise remains, even when the branches look bare.

As we begin a new year together at Messiah Lutheran Church, may we trust that God is at work in our lives in ways we cannot yet measure or name. May we release the pressure to fix ourselves and instead open our hearts to be formed by grace. And may we remember that every day in Christ is a beginning, not just January 1. Where might God be inviting you to begin again?

May this new year be marked not by striving but by trust, not by fear but by hope, not by isolation but by the quiet assurance that we walk this journey together held in the love of God made known to us in Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace to you in this new beginning!

Happy New Year's,  
Pastor Tom



## Epiphany: When Light Meets the Dark

Epiphany arrives quietly, almost modestly, just days after the brightness of Christmas fades. The trees come down. The lights are packed away. Winter settles in. Yet the church dares to proclaim that this is the season of light.

The word *epiphany* means revelation. It is the moment when something hidden is made known. In the life of the church, Epiphany proclaims that the light born in Bethlehem is not only for a stable or a small circle of witnesses but for the whole world. The visit of the Magi tells us that Christ's light reaches beyond familiar boundaries, languages, and expectations, shining even for those who begin their journey far away.

Scripture speaks honestly about darkness. Darkness is not denied or dismissed. It is named. It is real. It includes fear, uncertainty, grief, injustice, and the long nights of waiting when God seems distant. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light," Isaiah declares. Notice that the people are still walking in darkness

when the light appears. The light does not wait for the darkness to disappear first.

Epiphany teaches us that God's light does not eliminate darkness with force. It enters it. A single star guides weary travelers. A child rests in borrowed space. A quiet presence reveals a deeper truth: darkness is not the final word.

Light in the Christian story is not blinding or overwhelming. It is persistent. It shows the next step rather than the whole road. It invites movement, trust, and courage. The Magi do not receive a map. They receive a sign, and they follow it, step by step, through uncertainty.

In our own lives, Epiphany invites us to pay attention to where light is breaking through. It may appear in moments of clarity after confusion, in compassion that surprises us, or in hope that refuses to disappear even when circumstances remain hard. Often, God's light shows up - not by removing our struggles but by revealing God's presence within them.

This season also asks something of us. Light is meant to be reflected. As followers of Christ, we are called not only to receive God's light but to bear it. In a world that knows deep shadows, small acts of kindness, truth-telling, generosity, and mercy become points of illumination. We do not create the light; we carry it.

At Messiah Lutheran Church, Epiphany reminds us that faith is not about escaping darkness but about walking through it with trust that we are guided and never alone. Christ is revealed not as a distant beacon but as Emmanuel, God with us, even here.

May this season of Epiphany help us notice the quiet stars God places along our path. May we learn to trust the light we are given for today, and may we become, by grace, reflections of that light for others still finding their way.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."





## A Spirituality Plan for the Season of Epiphany:

### Walking by the Light You Are Given

Epiphany is the season of *revelation*. It is about noticing where Christ is being revealed in the ordinary, the hidden, and the unexpected. The goal of this plan is not spiritual achievement, but *attentiveness*. *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* (Psalm 119:105) Epiphany light does not show the whole road. It shows the next faithful step.

#### 1. A Simple Daily Rhythm (10–15 minutes)

##### Morning: Lighting the Day (3–5 minutes)

Begin the day by receiving light rather than generating energy.

- Light a candle or pause near a window.

Pray slowly: *"Light of the world, guide me today. Show me what is mine to see, and give me grace for what remains hidden."*

- Sit in silence for one minute. Do not rush this. Let the day begin quietly.

**Practice of the season:** Begin from *receptivity*, not urgency.

##### Midday: Noticing the Light (1–2 minutes)

Once during the day, pause and ask:

- Where did I notice light today?
- Where did I feel heaviness or shadow?

Do not judge either answer. Simply notice. Epiphany is about awareness, not evaluation.

##### Evening: Exam of Light and Darkness (5–7 minutes)

Before bed, reflect prayerfully:

- Where did I sense God's presence today?
- Where did I struggle, resist, or feel lost?

- What am I grateful for?
- What do I release into God's care overnight?

Close with: *"Into your hands, O God, I commend this day."*

#### 2. Weekly Scripture Practice: Following the Star

Choose **one Epiphany text per week** and stay with it slowly. Suggested texts:

- Matthew 2:1–12 (The Magi)
- Isaiah 60:1–6 (Arise, shine)
- Matthew 3:13–17 (Baptism of Jesus)
- John 1:1–14 (Light in the darkness)
- John 2:1–11 (Wedding at Cana)

##### Practice:

- Read the passage once early in the week.
- Read it again later in the week. Ask only one question: *What is being revealed here?*

Do not try to extract lessons. Let the text work on you.

#### 3. A Weekly Embodied Practice: Bearing Light

Each week, choose **one small, intentional act** of light:

- Speak truth gently.
  - Offer forgiveness without fanfare.
  - Practice patience where you usually rush.
  - Give anonymously.
- Listen without correcting.

These are not heroic acts. They are epiphanies in motion.

#### 4. A Journaling Practice: Epiphany Questions

Once or twice a week, write briefly on one question:

- Where am I being invited to trust rather than control?
- What feels illuminated right now?

- What remains unclear, and can I live faithfully without resolution?
- Who has been light for me recently?

Where might I be light for someone else? Keep responses short. This is reflection, not performance.

#### 5. A Seasonal Fast: From Artificial Light

Epiphany invites discernment, not distraction. Consider fasting gently from one of the following:

- Excessive news consumption
  - Late-night screen time
  - Reactive social media scrolling
- The need to have immediate answers.

Replace it with silence, reading, prayer, or rest. This makes room for truer light.

#### 6. Communal Practice: Walking Together

Epiphany is never solitary.

- Attend worship regularly, even when you feel distracted or dry.
- Listen for how others name God's light in their lives.

Pray for those who feel lost, discouraged, or overwhelmed.

Christ is often revealed through the faith of others when our own feels thin.

#### 7. A Closing Prayer for the Season

Pray this once a week: *Light of the world, you meet me where I am, not where I pretend to be. Teach me to trust the light I have, to walk faithfully when the path is partial, and to believe that you are present even when I cannot see clearly. Amen.*

##### **Remember:**

Epiphany is not about certainty. It is about faithfulness. The star does not explain everything. It simply invites movement. Walk by the light you are given.

## Why Are Churches Built in the Shape of a Cross?

From the earliest centuries of Christianity, worship spaces have preached the gospel not only through Word and Sacrament, but also through **architecture**. Even the very **shape of the church building** is a confession of faith.

Many traditional churches are built in the form of a **cross**, reminding all who enter that our salvation is rooted in Christ's self-giving love on Calvary. The building itself becomes a living symbol of Christ crucified - the heart of Christian worship.

### A Cross You Can Walk Through

If viewed from above, many church buildings resemble a **cross-shaped floor plan**, called a *cruciform*. This is no accident. Early Christians desired that worshipers would literally **walk into the cross** as they gathered - a physical reminder that we enter life through Christ's death and resurrection.

The symbolism goes further. Each section of the building tells the story of faith.

### The Parts of the Church and What They Mean

#### **Narthex — The Threshold**

The **narthex** is the entryway or gathering space. Historically, it was where catechumens and seekers stood before baptism. It symbolizes **the movement from the world into the presence of God**.

Today the narthex remains a place of welcome and hospitality - a threshold where strangers become neighbors.

#### **Nave — The Body of the Faithful**

Beyond the narthex lies the **nave**, the long central space where the congregation sits.

The word comes from the Latin *navis*, meaning **ship**. The Church has long been seen as the ark that carries God's people safely through stormy waters. As we gather in the nave, we remember that we are passengers on God's vessel, held securely by Christ.

#### **Transepts — The Arms of the Cross**

Crossing the nave at a right angle are the **transepts**, forming the "arms" of the cross.

This is what gives a church its cruciform shape. Historically, transepts expanded seating, housed chapels, or provided spaces for ministries and altars.

#### **Crossing — The Heart of the Cross**

Where the nave and transepts meet is the **crossing**, truly the "center" of the cross-shaped building.

In many churches, this is the most elevated and spacious area, sometimes crowned with a dome or tower reminding worshipers to lift their eyes to heaven.

#### **Chancel — The Place of Ministry**

Beyond the crossing lies the **chancel** or **choir**, the area where ministers, lectors, and choir lead worship. This is often slightly elevated to help services be seen and heard.

#### **Sanctuary — The Holy Place**

At the far end of the cross-shape is the **sanctuary**, the holiest space, where the altar stands. While popular language today often refers to the whole worship room as the "sanctuary," liturgically the sanctuary is specifically the area around the altar.

#### **Apse — The Crown**

Many traditional churches end in a curved space called the **apse**, often containing the altar and sometimes windows depicting Christ in glory.

### **A Building That Proclaims Christ**

The cruciform church proclaims that the death and resurrection of Jesus shape everything we are and do.

- When we **enter**, we step into God's story.
- As we gather in the **nave**, Christ guides us together.
- At the **crossing**, His presence surrounds us.

In the **sanctuary**, Christ feeds us with grace.

Even the walls quietly preach: **Our lives are lived within the arms of Christ**.

The next time you enter a sanctuary, pause to look around. You are standing within a great, stone-and-wood sermon, one that whispers the central truth of our faith: **We are held in the shape of Christ's love**.

**Committee Meetings****Altar Guild**

Bible Study Every Wed.  
Oct.-April 6:30 pm

Bound 1st Wed.  
Together 1:00 pm  
Sept.-May

CYFM 1st Thu.  
12:00 noon

**Church Life**

Grateful Every Thu.  
Prayer 10:00 am CC

Guided Every Mon.  
Meditation 6:30 pm

Property 2nd Sun.  
9:45 am

Sewing Circle Every Tue.  
10:00 am

Servant 1st Sun.  
Outreach 9:45 am

Stewardship / 3rd Thu.  
Finance 5:30 pm

Worship 1st Wed.  
11:00 am

**Church Council Leadership**

Art Anderson-President

Robin Curtis-Vice-President

Cyndi Allen

Laurie Hecht

Steve Porada

Nate Sprouse

Linda Voigt

Blaine Waters-Secretary



*Find out  
what is going on  
in the ELCA:*

Church-wide - [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

NWPA Synod -  
[www.northwesternpasynod  
elca.org](http://www.northwesternpasynod.elca.org)

**MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH PRELIMINARY 3-YEAR VISION**

Approved- 2025 to 2027

**WORSHIP****Technology**

Add Screens in sanctuary (DONE)  
Update website (On-Going)  
Obtain Hearing Assisted Devices (DONE)

**Music Ministry**

Build out the Band (2025)

**CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY**

Bubble Church (2025-2026)  
School Day Off Camp (2025)  
Milestone Ministry (Sept. 2025)

**PROPERTY**

Fix Front Electronic Sign (DONE)  
Repair/Purchase Boiler (DONE)  
Plumbing Upgrades/Restrooms (2027)  
Buy New Freezer (DONE)

**IN-REACH**

Recruit and Train More Volunteers (2025)  
Training for in-home communion ministry (2025)

**EDUCATION**

Bible Study (Adult and Children) - have more options (2025-2027)

**OUTREACH**

Maintain Community Garden (On-Going)  
Continue Back to School Bash (2025-2027)  
Continue participation in Community National Night Out (2025-2027)

**FELLOWSHIP**

Explore more group events (On-Going)  
Continue to grow OWLs ministry (spiritually and fellowship) (On-Going)  
Lutheran Walkers (2025)

## Ongoing Ministries

- Altar Guild open to training new members
- Bethany Outreach - collected men's and boys' clothing. Special need for underwear.
- Blankets for Babies - Through the Soldiers and Sailors Home we were asked if we could sew, knit, or crochet baby blankets 18x22 that will be part of a kit given to families in the National Guard.
- CYFM - Children, Youth, Family Ministries - Bible Studies, youth activities, milestones
- Church Life - plans fellowship activities. Open to new members to help
- Counter Ministry - open to training new members
- Guided Meditation - prayer ministry group
- Prayer Chain - email or call the office for prayer requests
- Prayer Shawl - available for all occasions; baptisms, baby shower/birth, weddings, illness, hospitalization, men, women, or children who need to feel God's love wrapped around them. Contact the office to pick one up.
- Property - takes care of the building and landscaping
- Servant Outreach - Outreach activities locally and globally
- Sewing Circle - sews blankets for various organizations including Lutheran World Relief, National Guard, Linus Project
- Stewardship/Finance - takes care of our financial well being
- Sound Booth Technician needed for both services - training available
- Worship Assistant/Lector blank availability schedule posted through the 15th of the month
- Worship Committee - plans worship services

## 2ND MILE GIVING APPEAL

Recipient for **January** is:

### Inter-Church Ministries

You may contribute through your regular envelope, marking how much to designate to 2nd Mile on the "other" line on your envelope, or by sending a separate donation.

Through **December 23 \$60.00** has been donated for the **Mercy Center for Women**

Thank you for your generosity!

### **Want to know more about our 2nd Mile Giving organizations?**

*The Mission of Inter-Church Ministries of Erie County is to be a network of Christian Churches committed to cooperation for the greater good of the religious community and people of Erie County, Pennsylvania.*

*The Vision of Inter-Church Ministries of Erie County is to: Witness to Christ through unity among Christian churches, Encourage interfaith cooperation, Share resources with those in need, and to Do nothing separately that can be done better together.*

*ICM runs the voucher system we used to help those in our community with grocery vouchers.*

## Wesleyville Food Pantry Volunteer Opportunities

January 6 at 5:00-6:00pm for Country Fair distribution.

January 12 at 10:00am to unload senior boxes.

January 19 at 10:00am to unload food delivery.

January 20 at 10:00-11:00am & 5:00-6:00pm for regular food distribution.

## Community Blood Bank Blood Drive

Thank you to those who have donated in the past. As you may know, you can donate every 56 days, so we have scheduled our next drive for **January 5-10, 2026** so that you can stay on schedule.

Needless to say, the Blood Bank is always in need of new donors!

For anyone who wishes to donate but doesn't have a ride, please call the church office and let them know when you would like to go.

If you would be willing to drive someone and wait for them to donate, please call the church office and let them know your availability.

If you have any questions, please contact Jean Parker at 814-528-5817.

## Bound Together Book Review

### **1st Wednesday at 1:00 pm**

**January** - Remarkable Creatures by Tracy Chevalier (Madalyn)

**February** - Women in War by David Yuzuk (Cyndi)

**March** - The Glassblower by Peter Benning (Bonnie M.)

**April** - The Berry Pickers by Amanda Peters (Sandy)

**May** - To be determined

***Our Mission:****Glorifying God through our worship, our witness, our service, and our support****Our Vision:****To build and strengthen the body of Christ***Unofficial Council Highlights**

- No December Council Meeting;
- Next meeting will be January 15 at 6:00 pm in the Conference Room.

**Altar Flowers**

\$30.00 for one, \$55.00 for two

**Bulletins**

\$7.00 each

**Vigil Candles**

\$3.00 a week

**January 4**

1.

2.

**January 4**

8:30:

11:00:

**January 4****January 11****January 11**

1.

2.

**January 11**

8:30:

11:00:

**January 18****January 18**

1.

2.

**January 18**

8:30:

11:00:

**January 25****January 25**

1.

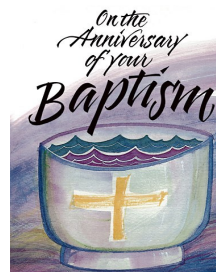
2.

**January 25**

8:30:

11:00:





*"Through baptism you have been received into the household of God, entrusted with the good news of Jesus Christ, and strengthened to serve by the holy and life-giving Spirit."*

3 Ron Damon, Sr.	18 Debra Tarasovich
14 Kaden Brainard	19 Gerrie Elias
15 Carole Pommer	25 CJ Brainard
Zachary Brown	Kathy Kiehl
17 Elijah Carner	26 Gemma Brainard

9 Gabriella Piccirilli  
22 Bonnie Stearns



## January

### New Beginnings

- Day 1: Isaiah 43:19
- Day 2: Lamentations 3:22-23
- Day 3: 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Day 4: Revelation 21:5
- Day 5: Ezekiel 36:26
- Day 6: Philippians 3:13-14
- Day 7: Romans 6:4
- Day 8: Psalm 40:3
- Day 9: Jeremiah 31:31
- Day 10: Titus 3:5
- Day 11: Psalm 96:1
- Day 12: Ephesians 4:23-24
- Day 13: Colossians 3:10
- Day 14: Isaiah 65:17
- Day 15: 2 Peter 3:13
- Day 16: Isaiah 42:9
- Day 17: John 13:34
- Day 18: Psalm 98:1
- Day 19: Isaiah 48:6
- Day 20: Galatians 6:15
- Day 21: Isaiah 62:2
- Day 22: Matthew 9:16-17
- Day 23: Hebrews 12:24
- Day 24: Revelation 2:17
- Day 25: Mark 2:21-22
- Day 26: Revelation 3:12
- Day 27: Job 42:10
- Day 28: Psalm 147:3
- Day 29: 1 Samuel 10:6
- Day 30: 2 Samuel 12:20
- Day 31: Ruth 1:16-17

*If we missed your Birth, Baptism, or Marriage Anniversary we apologize.*

*Please contact the church office to provide us with that information.*

## Thank You

Thank you everyone who brought an ornament for the family Christmas Tree!

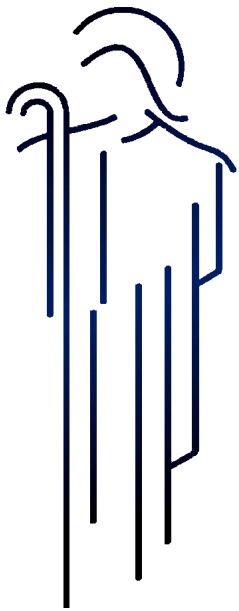
Special Thank You to the Alaniz family for the beautiful new star tree topper!

Thank you to the knitters and crocheters of Messiah Lutheran Church for the generous donation of prayer shawls and lap robes. Sunshine Group of East Erie!

Thank you for all the Christmas Love this year. I really appreciate my Messiah family!! Cindy



*"New beginnings are often disguised as painful endings." – T.D. Jake*



## MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

2025 Eastern Avenue  
Wesleyville, PA 16510

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*MESSENGER*



*Check out Messiah Lutheran Church on.*

