**Special Points of Interest**

Lifetime Recognition Dinner: Thursday, December 4

OWLs-December 4, 12:00 noon
Wesley Keenagers

Christmas Poinsettia: Due December 14

Holy Trinity Dinner-Thursday, December 18, serve at 5:00 pm

Christmas Breakfast: Sunday, December 21, 9:30 am

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: Thursday, December 24, 5:00 pm

Lessons & Carols: online only December 28

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Lifetime Recognition Dinner

**Thursday, December 4
6:30 pm**

Ricardo's Restaurant

Brad Bresee
Dave & Ann Kent
Barbara & Ron Martucci
Jean Parker
Brian Rogala, Jr.

Wesley Keenagers

Thursday, December 4

**12:00 noon
Wesley Center**

\$7.00 per person. Bring a dessert to share.
Gary Foster will be doing a chalk drawing.

CYFM

Date and Time change

**Thursday, December 11 at
11:00 am.**

Christmas Poinsettia

Please consider sponsoring a 6.5" potted Red or White Poinsettia to help decorate our Church for Christmas Eve Services or one of the 10" potted Poinsettias for behind the Altar.

Please use the sponsorship form in the Narthex and place your payment of \$9.50 each into a marked envelope in the offering plate or turn it into the church office before **December 7.**

HOLY TRINITY SLOPPY JOE DINNER

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church is in the heart of Erie's "Little Italy" neighborhood, and they have a long history of providing meals for those in need in that community. They offer monthly Sloppy Joe dinners provided by participating churches. Messiah has participated in the past and will be providing this year's dinner on **Thursday, December 18.**

We are asking the congregation to provide cookies for dessert. They will need to be delivered to the church by **Tuesday, December 16.** Thanks to all for your support

Christmas Breakfast

**Sunday, December 21
9:30 am**
in Fellowship Hall

All are invited to enjoy the fellowship!

Egg Bake, Pancakes, Sausage and Christmas Cookies. Several pet guests courtesy of Heartland Pets, thanks to Wendi Proper.

Calling all bakers!

CYFM/Church Life is looking for Christmas Cookies to serve at the Christmas Breakfast on Sunday, December 21.

There will be a signup sheet in the Narthex to let them know what type of cookies you will be making or bringing.

Christmas Eve Service

**Wednesday, December 24
5:00 pm Candlelight Service with Holy Communion**

Lessons & Carols

**December 28
Online Only**

2025 Eastern Ave
Erie, PA 16510
(814) 899-6386

Cindy Anderson:
(814) 881-2161

secretary@messiah-erie.org

Bonnie Stearns

(814) 460-0556
bettis1234@gmail.com

Michelle Flaherty:

mlcmusic@messiah-erie.org

Pastor Thomas Glasoe:

(814) 460-8529
pastor@messiah-erie.org

www.messiah-erie.org

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

Where God Lies Waiting

Most of us imagine God in the high places - on mountain peaks, behind golden altars, in words too holy to speak aloud. Yet when God slipped quietly into the world, He came small enough to hold, poor enough to need shelter, and humble enough to rest in a feeding trough - a manger; first throne of the King of Heaven, no velvet, no marble - only rough wood and the warm breath of animals.

Why would the Lord of all choose a place so low? Because God is not interested in staying far away. God comes where we live. God comes where we ache. God comes where we hide our shame and fear. Christ is born in a manger so we can never say,

“God is too holy for me.”

The manger is God’s answer:

From the Desk of Pr. Tom

“I have come for you - especially there.”

When you kneel at the manger, you kneel in a place where the world didn’t think God would show up - where there was no room, where there was no welcome, where there was only straw and struggle. Maybe you know places like that in your life, places inside you that feel too messy, too wounded, too ordinary for God to enter, but that is exactly where God delights to be. Luther once said that God “became small for us in Christ.” Small enough to meet us in our need. Small enough to enter every corner of our sorrow and worry. Small enough to climb into the manger of our hearts, so the manger is not simply a story from long ago. It is a promise!

God chooses the low places.

**God chooses the broken
places. God chooses you.**

This Christmas, linger at the manger. Stay awhile.

Look at the God who laid aside every privilege to draw near to you. Hold in your imagination the fragile infant whose tiny fingers already speak forgiveness, whose soft heartbeat is the rhythm of mercy, whose first breath is the beginning of your salvation. Come as shepherds who did with nothing but wonder.

Come as you truly are - confused, hopeful, tired, longing. Come to the place where God waits in the straw and whispers your name, for in that manger, you will find the One who has found you.

May you have a blessed and holy Christmas!

*In Christ,
Pastor Tom*

A Book Review from Pastor's Bookshelf

***The First Christmas* by Marcus Borg & John Dominic Crossan**

*A Lutheran Theological
Perspective*

Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan's *The First Christmas* is a compelling and provocative exploration of the nativity narratives found in Matthew and Luke. Rather than reading the Christmas stories as straightforward historical

reporting, Borg and Crossan invite readers to view them as “parabolic narratives” - theological stories that reveal meaning much more than they record “facts.” For many Christians, particularly those formed by historical-critical study, their work can enrich the Christmas story by broadening our imagination. Yet their interpretive strategy also raises questions that Lutherans must

thoughtfully navigate.

Summary of the Argument

Borg and Crossan contend that the infancy narratives, unique to Matthew and Luke, should be read as theological overtures to the whole Gospel. The authors argue:

- The narratives are **not historical accounts**, but **parables about Jesus' identity**.

A Book Review from Pastor's Bookshelf

continued

- Matthew's story highlights conflict between **Jesus and empire**, drawing parallels with Moses and emphasizing Jesus as the new liberator from oppressive power.

- Luke's narrative centers on **Jesus as Lord in contrast to Caesar**, redefining peace not as imperial domination but as divine reconciliation.

The stories, they say, are rich in symbolism—wise men representing the Gentile world, shepherds representing the marginalized—communicating early Christian convictions through imaginative narrative rather than memory alone.

The authors conclude that reading these stories non-historically allows Christians to embrace their “truth” without being bound to factuality.

Strengths of the Book

1. A Clear Emphasis on Meaning

Borg and Crossan call attention to the theological richness of the nativity stories. Their insistence that Matthew and Luke are interested in **the significance** of Jesus' birth rather than the mechanics of it aligns well with the Lutheran recognition that Scripture is always proclaiming Christ.

2. Engagement with Empire

Their analysis of the nativity as a confrontation between the reign of God and the reign of Caesar offers fruitful reflection for modern Christians living amid competing political loyalties. Lutherans can appreciate the reminder that faith has public implications and that Christ stands over and above all earthly powers.

3. A Call to Ethical Response

They interpret the birth of Jesus as an invitation to join God's work of peace and justice - a message consistent with the Lutheran understanding that faith is active in love.

Limitations from a Lutheran Perspective

1. The Historical Question

Lutherans happily employ historical-critical tools, yet stand with the church catholic in confessing that the incarnation is not merely theological symbol but **historical reality**—“born of the virgin Mary.” Borg and Crossan treat historicity as unnecessary, even dismissible. While symbolic reading deepens the story, Lutheran theology resists the reduction of incarnation to metaphor. **For us, God truly became flesh—not merely narratively but physically.**

2. The Nature of Scripture

The authors' approach can imply that Scripture is primarily human testimony expressing theological creativity. Lutherans, however, understand Scripture as **Spirit-breathed**—though human in form and literary diversity, it is trustworthy through the divine action at work in it.

Borg's and Crossan's handling may leave readers unsure whether the evangelists' claims can bear the weight of faith.

3. The Incarnation and Salvation

For Lutherans, salvation is grounded in the real, bodily incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus. If the nativity accounts are taken only as parable, the concrete particularity of the incarnation risks being spiritualized. Lutherans can celebrate symbolic meaning, but not at the expense of the God who actually comes to us in time and space.

Lutheran Reception

A Lutheran reading can affirm the authors' central insight: **the nativity narratives proclaim that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not**, and that the coming of Christ overturns worldly systems. Their focus on God's solidarity with the lowly resonates strongly with Luther's theology of the cross, in which God reveals himself

paradoxically in weakness, humility, and the margins of society.

Yet Lutheran theology insists that the “stumbling block” of Christianity is not merely symbolic subversion of power, but the literal enfleshment of God in a particular infant in Bethlehem. Without this, the proclamation of grace risks losing its grounding.

Thus, Lutherans can embrace Borg's and Crossan's political and theological reading, emphasizing Christ's challenge to earthly power, while also confessing - boldly - that **Jesus' birth happened in real human history**, not only in parabolic imagination.

Conclusion

The First Christmas is a stimulating work that invites Christians to look deeper into the Gospel birth narratives. Borg and Crossan illuminate the rich theological and political dimensions of Matthew and Luke, offering insights that can broaden understanding and deepen appreciation of Advent and Christmas.

Lutherans can benefit from this study - especially its emphasis on God's kingdom confronting oppressive power and its call toward justice and compassion. At the same time, Lutherans must hold firmly to the **incarnational concreteness** of the story: that the eternal Word truly became flesh, not only metaphorically but bodily, “for us and for our salvation.”

In the end, the book provides valuable conversation partners for the church. It prompts us to ask not only: “**What happened?**” but also “**Why does it matter?**” For Lutherans, the answer remains: It matters because God has come -truly, bodily, humbly - to save.

Two Kingdoms in a Manger

The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Rome

The story of Christ's birth unfolds quietly - in a borrowed stable, among animals and shepherds, under a night sky pierced by song. It begins not in a palace, nor before the eyes of emperors, but in obscurity. In that surprising setting, Scripture invites us to see the clash of two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God revealed in the child Jesus and the kingdom of Rome embodied in Caesar Augustus.

To read the Christmas story faithfully is not only to hear ancient poetry; it is to encounter a profound contrast that still shapes how Christians - especially Lutherans - understand the world today.

1. The Kingdom of Rome: Power, Peace, and Glory

When Jesus was born, Caesar Augustus ruled the Mediterranean world. His authority seemed absolute. His empire promised security, prosperity, and what it called *pax Romana* - "the peace of Rome." But this was a peace built on conquest, enforced by soldiers, funded by heavy taxation, and justified by propaganda, perpetuated by power.

Caesar was celebrated as "savior," "lord," and "son of god."

These titles were not merely flattering metaphors; they were the politics of religion and the religion of politics. Rome announced its good news with monuments and armies. Its message was clear: **Power makes peace. Strength makes truth. Empire makes the world right.**

The only question for ordinary people was where they belonged in the imperial order. Some prospered; most endured. Rome did not ask trust, it demanded allegiance.

2. The Kingdom of God: Vulnerability, Hope, and New Creation

Into this world comes Jesus. Not enthroned, but laid in a manger. Not welcomed by emperors, but by shepherds. Not announced with speeches, but with angel-song. Every detail of the nativity puts the Kingdom of God against the kingdom of Rome.

Rome's lord sits in marble halls; Israel's Messiah is cradled in a feed trough. Rome boasts armies; Jesus arrives in the arms of a young mother. Rome builds peace by the sword; Jesus brings peace through mercy and justice. The infant Jesus bears none of the marks of worldly power, yet he bears the fullness of God.

The Kingdom of God begins not with force, but with love. Not with domination, but with self-giving. Not with a throne, but with a manger.

This is the profound claim of Christmas: the Creator chooses vulnerability; the Almighty enters as a child. The birth of Christ proclaims a kingdom where the lowly are lifted, the hungry fed, the stranger welcomed, and the sinner forgiven. True peace comes not through domination but through the healing presence of God among the world's wounded.

3. The Clash of Claims

Rome and Christ both proclaim "peace," but they mean different things.

- **Rome's peace** is the absence of conflict secured by force.
- **God's peace** is the presence of justice secured by divine mercy.

Rome proclaims Augustus as savior by decree; the angels proclaim Jesus as Savior by grace. Rome demands taxes; Jesus brings good news to the poor.

Rome builds roads and armies; Jesus builds community. Rome says, "Trust us or else." Jesus says, "Do not be afraid."

This is not accidental. The Gospels consciously place Jesus' birth in the shadow of empire to show that God's reign contradicts the world's assumptions about power. The Christmas story is not sentimental; it is subversive.

4. How Lutherans Read This Story Today

Martin Luther taught that Christians live in **two kingdoms**: the worldly kingdom of law and order and the spiritual kingdom of grace and gospel. We do not withdraw from society; we discern our place within it. But we confess only one Lord. Today, we inhabit a culture still enamored with power, spectacle, and self-assertion. We are told:

- Security is found in wealth.
- Importance is measured by success.
- Glory belongs to the strong.

Yet Lutherans read the manger and hear a different truth. The Kingdom of God comes hidden, under weakness, humility, and mercy. God appears not in the palaces of privilege but among the poor, the struggling, the overlooked. God is found not in domination but in crucified love. Therefore:

- We resist equating prosperity with blessing.
- We resist confusing nationalism with faith.
- We resist imagining that God's purposes are advanced by coercive force.

We debate anyone believing they can bring peace through strength and manipulation.

As Lutherans, we look for God where God has promised to be: in Word and Sacrament, in the neighbor in need, in the unlikely places where grace takes root.

5. Living the Christmas Gospel

The question for us is not merely: *Do we believe the story?* The deeper question is: *Which kingdom do we live for?* If Christ is Lord, then every Caesar is not. If Christ reigns, then the church becomes an embassy of mercy in a world of might. We bear the gospel by:

- welcoming strangers
- defending the vulnerable
- feeding the hungry
- speaking truth to power

Two Kingdoms in a Manger

- living peaceably
- forgiving generously

None of these looks impressive to the world, but they are signs of the Kingdom that began in Bethlehem and was revealed fully on the cross. **The manger prepares us for the cross; the cross prepares us for resurrection; the resurrection sends us into the world as citizens of God's new creation.**

Conclusion

At Christmas, we do more than remember a birth; we proclaim a new kind of kingdom. One child in a manger is more true, more holy, more powerful than every empire. Rome is gone. Augustus is dust, but Christ lives.

Continued

We watch for the places where the Kingdom of God is quietly unfolding in hospitals, food pantries, and congregations, forgiveness is exchanged, bread is broken, and peace offered. In the birth of Jesus, God shows that the world is saved not by the sword but by love and justice. This is the Christmas gospel. This is the way of the Kingdom.

Let us embody this Gospel now and always. Let us eschew our love of power and wealth. Instead, let us embrace love, grace and mercy in our everyday lives, and show this society and the world in Christ that love can still be the light that guides all humanity.

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

Please consider sponsoring a 6.5" potted Poinsettia to help decorate our Church for Christmas Eve Services. The plants will be purchased from Stan's Garden Center.

Please fill out the following form, enclose it in an envelope with your payment and return it to the Church office, or place it in the offering plate, **no later than December 7.**

Only ONE dedication per plant, please!

A complete memorial list will be included in the Christmas Eve Bulletins.

I would like to sponsor:

Red @ \$9.50 each

White @ \$9.50 each

To the Glory of God and in Memory of [deceased]

To the Glory of God and in Honor of [living]

To the Glory of God and in Celebration of [event]

To the Glory of God and in Thanksgiving for

By: (Your Name)

Plants may be picked up after the Christmas Eve Service.

Please do not take the plastic trays under the plants, because they belong to the church.

Thank you!

Committee Meetings	
Altar Guild	
Bible Study	Every Wed.
Oct.-April	6:30 pm
Bound Together	1st Wed.
Sept.-May	1:00 pm
CYFM	1st Thu.
	12:00 noon
Church Life	
Grateful Prayer	Every Thu.
	10:00 am CC
Guided Meditation	Every Mon.
	6:30 pm
Property	2nd Sun.
	9:45 am
Sewing Circle	Every Tue.
	10:00 am
Servant Outreach	1st Sun.
	9:45 am
Stewardship / Finance	3rd Thu.
	5:30 pm
Worship	1st Wed.
	11:00 am
Church Council Leadership	
Art Anderson-President	
Robin Curtis-Vice-President	
Briana Alaniz	
Cyndi Allen	
Laurie Hecht	
Tim Smock	
Blaine Waters-Secretary	
Vacancy	
	<i>Find out what is going on in the ELCA:</i>
Church-wide - www.elca.org	
NWPA Synod - www.northwesternpasynodelca.org	

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH PRELIMINARY 3-YEAR VISION		
Approved- 2025 to 2027		
WORSHIP		
<u>Technology</u>		
Add Screens in sanctuary		(DONE)
Update website		(On-Going)
Obtain Hearing Assisted Devices		(DONE)
<u>Music Ministry</u>		
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 December is:

The Mercy Center for Women

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 November \$92.00 has been donated for the **Christmas Needy Fund**

Thank you for your generosity!

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

The Center provides safe and supportive transitional housing, education and support services for homeless women with or without children. Connections with social service agencies and volunteers to form a network of ongoing support, mentoring and education for residents. An environment based on spirituality, responsibility and ethical values.

Wesleyville Food Pantry Volunteer Opportunities

- December 2 at 5:00-6:00 pm for Country Fair distribution.
- December 8 at 10:00 am to unload senior boxes.
- December 15 at 10:00 am to unload food delivery.
- December 16 at 10:00-11:00 am & 5:00-6:00 pm 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

December - The Book of Lost Names by Kristen Harmel (Mary)

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**

- Review minutes from the October meeting;
- Thank you to the out going Council Members: Briana Alaniz and Tim Smock;
- Welcome to the new Council Members: Steve Porada, Nate Sprouse, and Linda Voigt. Returning members: Art Anderson and Laurie Hecht;
- Next meeting will be December 18 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

December 7

1. 8:30:
2. 11:00: Karen Pistner

December 7**December 7****December 14**

1. Jean Parker 8:30:
2. 11:00: Jean Parker

December 14

Ethelynne Cunningham

December 14**December 21**

1. Linda Voigt 8:30:
2. Robin Curtis 11:00: Jean Parker

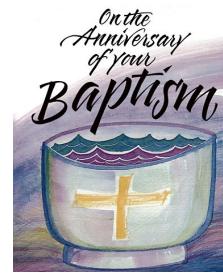
December 21

Linda Voigt

December 21**December 24**

1. Candy Sprouse 5:00: Candy Sprouse
- 2.

December 24**December 28**



"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."

1 Brad Bresee	13 Abel Van Horn
3 Ann Kent	14 Lois Hollenbeck
4 Sandy Hough	19 Marie Harman
5 Sally Berlin	Bill Roth
10 Heather Bartlett	20 Chase Brown
11 Jace Brainard	

7 Savanna Conner	13 Rich Shatzer
8 Nathan Sprouse	Cheyenne Paananen
9 Cindy Anderson	23 Gail Wolf



December SAVOR OUR SAVIOR!

- Day 1: Isaiah 7:14
- Day 2: Matthew 1:21
- Day 3: Luke 2:6-7
- Day 4: Matthew 2:10
- Day 5: John 1:14
- Day 6: John 1:1-4
- Day 7: Isaiah 9:6-7
- Day 8: Matthew 1:18-25
- Day 9: John 3:16
- Day 10: Micah 5:2-5
- Day 11: Psalm 72:9-14
- Day 12: Isaiah 11:1-2
- Day 13: Romans 8:1-3
- Day 14: Numbers 24:17
- Day 15: Matthew 2:10
- Day 16: Luke 1:26-28
- Day 17: Luke 1:29-31
- Day 18: Luke 1:32-33
- Day 19: Luke 1:34-35
- Day 20: Luke 1:36-37
- Day 21: Luke 1:46-48
- Day 22: Luke 1:49-50
- Day 23: Luke 1:51-52
- Day 24: Luke 1:53-55
- Day 25: Luke 1:66-69
- Day 26: Luke 2:7
- Day 27: Luke 2:8-9
- Day 28: Luke 2:10-11
- Day 29: Luke 2:13-14
- Day 30: Luke 2:29-32
- Day 31: Luke 2:33-35

"Rejoice, that the immortal God is born,"
so that mortal man may live in eternity"

Anonymous



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

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

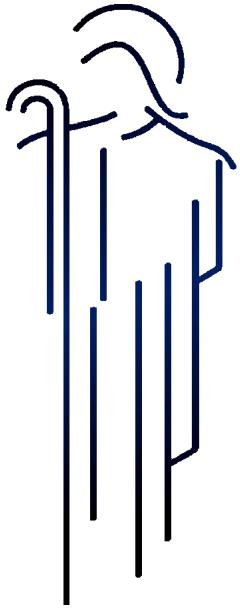
Memorials

Bernice Fryer

Ernie & Carol Ann Wolf	Lisa Booth
Ethelynne Cunningham	Robin Curtis

Thank You

Thank you to Karl of KK Custom Construction for restoring light to our Rose Window! The job was precarious and especially appreciated in time for Reformation/Confirmation Sunday. Karl is an electrician and also known for exceptional interior & exterior remodeling as well as beautiful woodworking.



MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH
2025 Eastern Avenue
Wesleyville, PA 16510

Address Service Requested
Dated Material

Volume 25, Issue 12

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH
MESSENGER



Check out Messiah Lutheran Church on.

