



MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

MESSENGER

Volume 26, Issue 10

Spiritual Walk

**Sunday, October 4
4:00 pm**

Come walk with us at
Wintergreen Gorge.

Fall Congregational Meeting

**Sunday, October 25
12:00 noon—lunch
12:30 pm meeting**

Meeting will be held in the
Fellowship Hall. Soup and
salad provided. Signup in
the Narthex.

Bible Study

**Tuesday afternoons
1:30 pm**
Study Lounge

**Wednesday night
6:00 pm**
Study Lounge

Lectionary Bible Study

**Sundays, 9:45 am
Study Lounge**

Join Pr. Tom as he talks
about the readings for the
week.

Sound Bath

**Sunday, October 25
4:00 pm**

Join us in Fellowship Hall for
an uplifting meditative
service. Bring a comfortable
chair or yoga mat if you like

OWLs

**Tuesday, October 13
1:30 am**

2 Grumpy Brothers will be
here to perform a comedy
show. Fell free to bring a
friend. Come, relax and
enjoy the show. We will
not have lunch together
for this meeting.

Signup in the Narthex by
October 4.

Trail of Treats

We will have a table at
Iroquois Elementary School
again this year. We are
taking donations of
individually wrapped candy.

Special Points of Interest

Spiritual Walk-Sunday,
October 4, 4:00 pm

Lectionary Bible Study,
Sundays, 9:45 am

Faith Pub-Tuesday, October 6
6:00 pm

OWLs—Tuesday, October 13
1:30 pm

Fall Congregational Meeting:
Sunday, October 25
12:00 noon

Sound Bath-Sunday, October
25, 4:00 pm

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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

Nothing Gold Can Stay: Learning to Trust What Endures

Almost as certain as the sun rises in the morning, every autumn I am reminded of Robert Frost's short poem *Nothing Gold Can Stay*. This poem contains only eight lines; yet it captures one of the deepest truths about life:

*Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.*

The first leaves of spring shimmer with a brilliance that soon fades. Morning gives way to afternoon. Childhood becomes adulthood. Health yields to age. Relationships change. Seasons pass. Even our happiest moments cannot be held forever.

We know this instinctively. We spend much of our lives trying to preserve what cannot be preserved. Frost isn't cynical. He is simply honest. Life is beautiful precisely because it is fleeting.

As Christians, however, Frost's observation is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of a deeper one. Scripture never promises that earthly life will remain golden. Jesus himself tells us that moth and rust destroy, thieves break in and steal, flowers wither, and earthly treasures disappear. The Bible consistently reminds us that this world is temporary.

Yet, Christianity does not teach us to despise the temporary. It teaches us to receive it with gratitude while anchoring ourselves in what lasts forever.

The first bloom of spring is a gift.

The laughter of a child is a gift.

A loving marriage is a gift.
Friendships, churches, careers,
and good health are gifts.

None of them are meant to bear the weight of eternity. Perhaps that is why so many of us struggle. We try to make temporary things permanent. We grasp tightly at seasons that were always meant to pass. We mourn change not simply because it hurts, but because we secretly hoped this chapter would never end. Discipleship is learning to loosen our grip. Jesus never asks us to stop loving the gifts of creation. He asks us to love the Giver even more.

The spiritual journey is one of continual surrender. Every season teaches us to release something—a dream, a certainty, a relationship, a title, a fear, an ambition, or even an image of ourselves. At first, surrender feels like loss. Over time, we discover that each surrender makes more room for Christ.

In that sense, every ending becomes an invitation.

The fading of youth invites wisdom.

The ending of success invites humility.

The loss of certainty invites faith.

The experience of suffering invites compassion.

The reality of death invites resurrection.

The Christian faith does not deny that "nothing gold can stay." It simply points beyond it.

The leaves fall each autumn, yet spring returns.
Jesus dies on Friday, yet Easter dawns on Sunday.
The empty tomb reminds us that God specializes in bringing life where we expect only endings.

Perhaps the greatest irony of the Christian faith is this: nothing earthly remains golden forever, but what God forms within us does. If we pay attention, our faith deepens, our hope matures, our capacity for love expands and ultimately, our grace transforms.

As the Apostle Paul writes, "Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." Those are treasures that death itself cannot erase. Robert Frost reminds us that beauty fades. Christ reminds us that love does not. Thus, enjoy the golden moments. Celebrate them. Give thanks for them. Hold them gently rather than desperately.

For the One who created every golden sunrise has prepared something even greater—a kingdom where beauty no longer fades, joy no longer ends, and the love of God remains forever.

Perhaps that is the true destination of the spiritual journey: not learning how to keep the gold, but learning to trust the One whose glory never fades.

Pr. Tom



Lech Lecha and the Third Resurrection

There is a Hebrew phrase in Genesis that has become an anchor for my life: **Lech Lecha**.

Most English Bibles translate it simply as, "Go." But the Hebrew carries a richer meaning. It can also be understood as "Go for yourself," or even "Go toward who you are meant to become."

When God called Abram, He was doing far more than relocating a man from one place to another. He was calling him into a new identity.

The older I become, the more I realize that this journey of becoming is not a one-time event. There are seasons in life when we are asked to become someone new. Looking back, I can identify three such "resurrections" in my own life.

My First Resurrection

I was eight or ten years old when I came to the United States from Vietnam. (*I really don't know my true age. I think I'm really 35.*)

I had spent nearly a decade in orphanages. Suddenly, I found myself living with a family in a country whose language I did not understand and whose customs were entirely foreign to me. Everything changed.

I had to learn English. I had to learn what it meant to belong to a family. I had to make friends. I had to understand American schools, American humor, American holidays, and American life. I never saw the people from my former life in Vietnam again. That was my first resurrection.

My Second Resurrection

Years later, God called me into ministry. That calling required another departure. I left Minnesota, the state I love deeply, and moved to Pennsylvania.

Once again, I had to learn a new culture. Western Pennsylvania carries the influence of Appalachia, with its own history, customs, vocabulary, and food. Ministry required me to become a student of the people God had called me to serve.

Unlike my first resurrection, modern technology allowed me to remain connected to many of the people I loved back home. Even so, I was building a new life in a new place. Again, I was becoming someone new.

My Third Resurrection

This resurrection has been entirely different. I have not been asked to leave. I have been asked to stay.

Following my arrest several years ago, my life changed dramatically. Some relationships ended. Some colleagues distanced themselves. My marriage ended. Other friendships quietly disappeared.

Every day I continue serving in the very place where many people know my story. I see reminders of my failures. I encounter people who knew me before. I know there are still those who dismiss me or quietly mock me.

Unlike my first two resurrections, I cannot put physical distance between myself and my past. Instead, I must learn to live faithfully in its presence. Perhaps this is the hardest resurrection of all.

Becoming in Front of Witnesses

Anyone can begin again in a place where nobody knows them. The harder task is becoming a different person in front of people who remember your worst chapter. That reality has given me a deeper appreciation for Peter.

After denying Jesus three times, Peter was not sent to another country to begin again anonymously. Jesus restored him among the very people who knew about his failure. Likewise, Paul eventually returned to Jerusalem, where many remembered him as Saul the persecutor.

Neither man escaped his past. Instead, God transformed them in full view of those who remembered. Perhaps that is what God is doing with me.

Kipling's If—

During this season, I have returned often to Rudyard Kipling's poem *If—*. One stanza especially speaks to me:

*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;*

Another reminds me that life's work sometimes requires rebuilding:
*Or watch the things you gave your life to,
broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;*

Those words have become deeply personal, not because I have mastered them, but because I am still trying to live them. Character is not formed when life is easy. It is revealed when life becomes difficult.

Grace Beyond Character

As much as I admire Kipling's poem, Christianity offers something even deeper. Kipling emphasizes resilience and character. The Gospel proclaims grace. Abram did not become Abraham through sheer determination. Peter was not restored because he willed himself into becoming stronger. Paul did not transform himself through discipline alone. God called them. God walked with them. God completed what He began. That is the promise to which we cling.

Keep Walking

The greatest lesson of *Lech Lecha* may not simply be "Go." It is "Keep becoming." There are seasons when becoming requires crossing an ocean. Sometimes it requires moving across the country. Sometimes it requires remaining exactly where you are, allowing God to reshape your life while surrounded by people who remember your failures. That may be the most difficult journey of all.

I believe God still calls us forward—not toward perfection, not toward vindication, but toward the people He created us to become. My story is still being written. Perhaps yours is too. So, keep walking. Go toward who you are meant to become!

Heinrich Muhlenberg: The Pastor Who Gathered a Scattered Church

When we think about the history of the Lutheran Church, our minds naturally turn to Martin Luther standing before the authorities at the city of Worms, translating the Bible into German, or preaching the gospel of justification by grace through faith. If we ask how Lutheranism became firmly established in America, another name deserves our attention: Heinrich Melchior Muhlenberg.

Muhlenberg did not bring the first Lutherans to America. Swedish Lutherans had worshiped along the Delaware River since the seventeenth century, and German immigrants had already established congregations throughout Pennsylvania. By the time Muhlenberg arrived in 1742, however, many of these congregations were isolated from one another. Some had no regular pastor. Others were served by poorly trained or self-appointed preachers. Worship practices differed from congregation to congregation, and there was no larger church organization capable of connecting them. The Lutheran Church existed in America, but it had not yet learned how to live as one church.

Muhlenberg had been born in Germany in 1711 and trained in the Pietist tradition associated with the University of Halle. In response to requests from German Lutherans in Pennsylvania, he was sent across the Atlantic to provide pastoral leadership. When he arrived, he discovered that his calling would require far more than serving a single congregation.

He traveled constantly, often under difficult conditions, visiting Lutheran communities scattered across Pennsylvania and neighboring colonies. He preached, baptized, celebrated Holy Communion, taught the faith, organized congregations, settled disputes, and worked to provide communities with trustworthy pastors. At times, he functioned as pastor, missionary, administrator, mediator, and bishop-like overseer—all while traveling by horseback over rough colonial roads.

Muhlenberg understood that congregations could not flourish indefinitely in isolation. The Church is more than a collection of separate communities gathered around their own preferences. Christians belong to one another because we have been joined to Christ. The same gospel is proclaimed among us, the same baptism unites us, and the same Lord meets us at the table.

In 1748 Muhlenberg helped to organize the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, the first enduring Lutheran synodical body in North America. Pastors and congregations could now gather for mutual support, examine and hold clergy accountable, resolve disagreements, coordinate missionary work, and discern together how God was calling them to serve.

That gathering represented an important turning point. American Lutheranism was beginning to become more than an assortment

of immigrant congregations. It was becoming a connected church with a shared mission.

Muhlenberg also worked to bring greater unity to Lutheran worship. The immigrants arriving in America came from different German territories and carried different hymnals, liturgies, and local customs. Muhlenberg did not believe that every local difference had to disappear, but he knew that shared worship could help a scattered people recognize themselves as one church. He wanted Lutherans to hear the same gospel, confess the same faith, and recognize one another at the Lord's table.

Muhlenberg's lasting importance was not simply organizational. He did not build church structures merely for the sake of preserving an institution. The structures existed to serve the gospel. Congregations needed dependable pastors so that people could hear the Word of God. They needed cooperation so that the sacraments could be administered faithfully. They needed accountability so that clergy would serve Christ's people rather than themselves. They needed relationships with other congregations because no Christian community possesses the whole Church by itself.

Muhlenberg reminds us that the Holy Spirit often works through ordinary and unglamorous acts of faithfulness: traveling to a distant congregation, preparing another sermon, training a young pastor, sitting through a difficult meeting,

Cont'd.

reconciling people who have quarreled, and bringing Christians together around Word and Sacrament.

Martin Luther helped recover the evangelical heart of the Church: that sinners are justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Muhlenberg helped give that gospel an enduring home in colonial America. He did not find every branch of American Lutheranism, nor could he have imagined all the Lutheran traditions that later immigrants would bring. Nevertheless, he provided American Lutheranism with organization, continuity, and a vision of shared ministry.

For this reason, he is often remembered as the "Patriarch of American Lutheranism."

His witness remains relevant today. Churches can still become isolated. Congregations can become preoccupied with their own survival, traditions, or disagreements. We can forget that we belong to something larger than ourselves. Muhlenberg's ministry reminds us that the Church becomes stronger when congregations pray together, support one another, share their gifts, hold their leaders accountable, and work together for the sake of the gospel.

The Church of Jesus Christ does not depend upon one heroic pastor or one remarkable congregation. It depends upon Christ, who gathers scattered people into one body. Muhlenberg's greatness was that he understood his calling was not to make people dependent upon

him. It was to connect them more deeply to Christ and, through Christ, to one another.

Nearly three centuries after Muhlenberg rode among the scattered Lutheran communities of colonial America, we continue the work he helped begin. Every time we gather around the Word, come to the baptismal font, receive Christ at the table, support a neighboring congregation, or join with the wider Church in mission, we bear witness to the same truth:

We do not follow Christ alone. By grace, Christ gathers us, joins us together, and sends us into the world as his Church.

Fall 2026 Sermon Series: Purpose Driven: What is Life For?

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE REALLY FOR?

At some point, most people ask it—quietly, honestly, sometimes desperately: *Is there more than this?* More than the routine. More than the pressure. More than just getting through the week. This fall, Messiah Lutheran Church invites you to explore that question through a 5-week sermon series:

The Purpose Driven Life

Discover the five purposes that shape a meaningful life:

- A life connected to God
- A life shared with others
- A life that is growing
- A life that gives
- A life that matters

The following are the last three in our five—part series. You don't have to have it all figured out. You just have to be willing to take the next step: **because your life was made for more!**

Date	Text	Text Title	Series Theme
10/4/26	Romans 8:29, Colossians 2:6-7, John 15:1-8	Discipleship	You Were Made to Grow
10/11/26	1 Peter 4:10-11, Ephesians 2:10, Mark 10:42-45	Ministry	You Were Made to Serve
10/18/26	Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20, Matthew 28:18-20	Mission	You Were Made for a Bigger Story

Committee Meetings**Altar Guild**

Bible Study Every Tues.
Oct.-April 1:30 pm
Wed.
6:00 pm

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

CYFM 1st Thurs.
12:00 noon

Church Life

Grateful Every Thurs.
Prayer 10:00 am CC

Guided Every Mon.
Meditation 6:30 pm

Property 2nd Sun.
9:45 am

Sewing Circle Every Tues.
10:00 am

Servant 1st Sun.
Outreach 9:45 am

Stewardship / 3rd Thurs.
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

NWPA Synod -
www.northwesternpasynod.elca.org

**BOUND TOGETHER****Messiah Lutheran Church Book Club**

We meet on the first Wednesday of each month during the school year.

School Year – September 2026-2027

First Wednesdays of each month at 1PM in Study Lounge

September to May

Everyone is welcomed at all Bound Together gathering

Month	Title	Author	Presenter
October	The Nine	Gwen Strauss	Jean P
November	This Impossible Brightness	Jessica Bryant Klagmann	Linda F
December	As Long as the Lemon Tree Grows	Zoulfa Katouh, Rasha Zamamiri	Sandy H
January	Theo of Golden	Allen Levi	Bonnie M
February	The Alchemist	Paulo Coelho	Cyndi A
March	The River is Waiting	Wally Lamb	Mary R
April	The Stolen Life of Colette Marceau	Kristin Harmel	Candy S
May	The Midnight Library	Matt Haig	Madalyn S

Please go to the church's website for ordering information for these books.

www.messiah-erie.org/books

For more information, please contact the church office.

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH 3-YEAR VISION

Approved- 2025 to 2027

WORSHIPMusic Ministry

Build out the Band (2026)

CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

School Day Off Camp (2026)

Milestone Ministry (2026)

PROPERTY

Plumbing Upgrades/Restrooms (2027)

IN-REACH

Recruit and Train More Volunteers (2026)

Training for in-home communion ministry (2026)

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)
OWLs ministry (spiritually and fellowship) (On-Going)
Lutheran Walkers (2026)

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 **October** is:

THE HIGHMARK CARING PLACE

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 **September 22 \$84.00** has been donated for **Bethesda Trinity Center**

Thank you for your generosity!

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

The death of a loved one is devastating to a child. The impact can be overwhelming and the children and family often need support. The Highmark Caring Place can provide that support through its various programs.

Thousands of community members are helped by the Caring Place each year at no cost through our peer support programs, and our education, consultation, and referral services.

Wesleyville Food Pantry Volunteer Opportunities

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

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

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

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

Fall Congregation Meeting

Sunday, October 25,
12:00 noon lunch
12:30 pm-meeting

Meeting will be held in the Fellowship Hall. Soup and salad provided. Signup in the Narthex.

Bible Study

Tuesday afternoons
1:30 pm
Study Lounge

Wednesday night
6:00 pm
Study Lounge

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:
October 26-31, 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.

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 Business Meeting this month.
- Next meeting will be October 15 at 6:00 pm in the Conference Room.

Altar Flowers

\$30.00 for one, \$55.00 for two

October 4

- 1.
- 2.

October 11

1. Porada
- 2.

October 18

- 1.
- 2.

October 25

1. Alaniz
- 2.

Bulletins

\$7.00 each

October 4

8:30:
11:00: Jean Parker

October 11

8:30:
11:00: Jean Parker

October 18

8:30:
11:00: Jean Parker

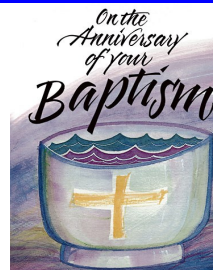
October 25

8:30:
11:00: Jean Parker

Vigil Candles

\$3.00 a week

October 4**October 11****October 18****October 25**



"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."

2	Savanna Conner	14	Dave Frick		
	Eva Edwards	17	Kayla Bresee		
5	Ernie Wolf	21	Kristine Edwards	9	Winifred Gardner
	Nevaeh Peters	24	Rich Alaniz	10	Cyndi Allen
12	Tim Smock	28	John Needham	17	Kay-Leigh Conner
				20	Al Schell
					Jennifer Bliss
				26	Candy Sprouse
				30	Blaine Waters
				31	Ray Bennett



"Bless them so that all may see in their lives together within the community of your people a vision of your kingdom on earth."

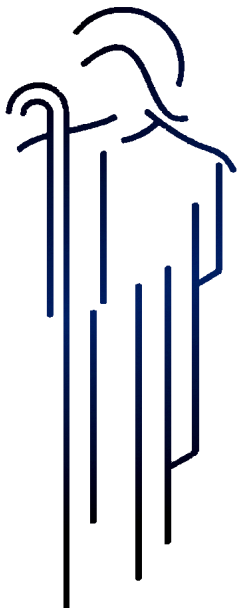
- Day 1: 1 John 4:4
- Day 2: Romans 8:37
- Day 3: James 4:7
- Day 4: Ephesians 6:10-11
- Day 5: 2 Timothy 1:7
- Day 6: Psalm 23:4
- Day 7: 2 Corinthians 10:3-4
- Day 8: Revelation 12:11
- Day 9: Luke 10:19
- Day 10: Isaiah 41:10
- Day 11: 1 Corinthians 15:57
- Day 12: Psalm 27:1
- Day 13: John 16:33
- Day 14: Psalm 91:4
- Day 15: Colossians 2:15
- Day 16: 2 Corinthians 2:14
- Day 17: Psalm 34:4
- Day 18: Hebrews 2:14-15
- Day 19: Psalm 18:32
- Day 20: 1 Peter 5:8-9
- Day 21: Psalm 118:6
- Day 22: 2 Thessalonians 3:3
- Day 23: Psalm 56:3-4
- Day 24: 1 John 5:4
- Day 25: Isaiah 54:17
- Day 26: Romans 16:20
- Day 27: Psalm 34:7
- Day 28: 1 John 3:8
- Day 29: Revelation 20:10
- Day 30: John 8:12
- Day 31: 1 Peter 1:13

- 5 Al & Pat Schell
- 6 Brad & Lori Bresee
- 8 Mark & Pam Van Horn
- 10 Steve & Linda Porada
- 22 Art & Cindy Anderson
- 24 Marilyn & Steve Rizzo
- 28 Marie & Michael Harman

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

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

"God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile." — Max Lucado



MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Dated Material

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