

# December 2018 Newsletter

## Messiah Lutheran Church

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## 2018 Council

### EXECUTIVE

**Chairperson:** Cheryl Bauer Hyde

**Vice Chairperson:** Merv Bender

**Secretary:** Jean Meyers

### CHURCH COUNCIL MINISTRY TEAM:

#### **Caring Ministry & Community Service**

Lois Manchur

Jean Meyers

#### **Education Ministry:**

Merv Bender

Jean Meyers

#### **Worship Ministry Team:**

Colleen Bowen

Donna Silver

#### **Property Management Ministry Team**

Dick Honch

Darren Sundbo



#### **Our Mission Statement:**

“Through the hearing and sharing of God’s Word, we, as a worshipping community, encourage a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In faith, we reach out with Christ-like caring for the community and the world in which we live.”

## Worship during Advent and Christmas 2018 at Messiah

*1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent, December 2*

### **Hanging of the Green Service @ 10:30am**

Reflection on the message of Advent and Christmas as the church is decorated with the help of youth and children.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent, December 9*

### **Worship service with Holy Communion @ 10:30am**

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent, December 16*

### **Christmas Pageant - Lessons and Carols service @ 10:30am**

Children and youth will reenact the Christmas story during the reading of lessons

*Friday, December 21 – Winter Solstice*

### **Blue Christmas service @ 7:00pm**

Service of worship on the longest night of the year to honor those who struggle with darkness and grief. (See more elsewhere in this newsletter).

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent – December 23*

### **Worship service with Holy Communion @ 10:30am**

*Christmas Eve, December 24*

### **Christmas Candlelight Service @ 7:30pm**

*Christmas Day, December 25*

### **Worship service with Holy Communion @ 10:30am**

*1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Christmas, December 30*

### **Worship service @ 10:30am**

## MEMORIAL CHRISTMAS TREE 2018

This year Christmas cards are being provided to memorialize and decorate the Memorial Christmas tree at the back of the sanctuary. Write a personal message inside the card you choose. Write your name on the envelope (clipped onto the back of the cards) so that after Christmas we know who the card belongs to. Your message can be for one person or for multiple people.

Isaiah 40:31

But those who trust in the Lord  
will receive new strength.

They will fly as high as eagles.

They will run and not get tired.

They will walk and not grow weak.

## Door of Freedom — A Picture of Advent

by Iris Kristjánsdóttir



Long ago, there ruled in Persia a wise and good king. He loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived. He wanted to know about their hardships. Often he dressed in the clothes of a working man or a beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one whom he visited thought that he was their ruler. One time he visited a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the coarse food the poor man ate. He spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, "I am your king!" The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the course food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!" (Source unknown)

The holiday season is upon us, Advent and Christmas. Homes are about to or have already been beautifully adorned with festive lights, nonstop seasonal advertising assaults the senses, and songs about reindeer, sleigh rides, and snowmen will soon echo in every public space. People start running hurriedly from one appointment to another — a holiday party here, a Christmas program there — all while trying to find the perfect gifts for friends and family.

The search for the perfect gift is not easy. I'm in the midst of doing just that these days — finding the perfect gift for each member of my family, which of course is going to cost me an arm and a leg. I should probably be putting more energy into embracing the meaning of Advent and Christmas. I should be focusing on the one that actually gave himself. For you and I, for all. To set us free.

The season of Advent is a season of waiting and listening on God as God prepares to enter into our world in the form of an infant. The name "Advent" is derived from the Latin *ad venire*, meaning "to come." In earlier times, Advent was a period of prayer and fasting in preparation for the coming Savior. It still is, but we have made it into something quite different. In the middle of all the commotion and festiveness, we are reminded that our brokenness is the reason the Christ had to come in the first place, and call us to "prepare the way of the Lord."

One of our beautiful Advent hymns tell us of the anguish of God's people as they waited for the Savior's coming:

O Come, o come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appears.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel!  
Shall come to you, o Israel!

This hymn and many other Advent hymns do not present a cheery image of our sanitized nativity scene. Rather, they are calls to God for rescue, and the reassuring response from God that God has not forgotten us, God's people. And in the midst of that darkness the coming light shines so brightly.

German Lutheran pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, understood this darkness. Imprisoned for his role in a failed assassination attempt on Adolph Hitler, Bonhoeffer wrote these words to protégé Eberhard Bethge while at Tegel Prison in Berlin in 1943.

*"A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes—and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent."*

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas*).

From his cell, Bonhoeffer understood, all too well, the need for a Savior — one who would lower himself, come into the darkness, and free the captives. While Bonhoeffer would never again celebrate another Christmas outside of prison (he was executed in April of 1945—weeks before Allied troops arrived and liberated prison camps throughout Germany), he was able to cling to God’s promise of Messiah, rejoicing that God had come to save mankind. And while his prison cell remained closed, Bonhoeffer knew that in Jesus’ birth, the gates of salvation had been opened through the good grace of God.

This Advent, when you enjoy the festiveness, watch the holiday specials with your family, trudge heavily in yet another shopping mall trying to find a present for your loved ones at the last minute; do it as a prisoner awaiting release from captivity, and knowing that our freedom is the reason Christ came. Take some time to ponder on God’s redemption, birthed as a baby in a stable over 2,000 years ago, and know that through Christ’s birth, his life, death and resurrection, we have been set free. The King is coming—prepare your hearts.

## December Greetings

Intern Brooklynn Lane

### Winter Greetings,

May the love of Christ guide and keep you this Advent and Christmas season. As we get busy with festivities, Christmas shopping, and parties may we all take a few moments to pause and see Christ in our lives.

Happy Advent and Merry Christmas,

**Intern Pastor Brooklynn Lane**

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## *Church Council Update*

Bishop Sid met with Council to begin planning the call process. Although Pastor Iris will be with us until the end of February, we know that time will go quickly.

Council will focus on the following areas in the next few weeks:

- Contacting some rostered ministers regarding their ability as a supervisor for our Intern Brooklyn, and to serve as an Interim Pastor,
- Reviewing and updating the congregational profile,
- Appointing the call committee, and
- Preparing for Pastor Iris’ departure.

It’s good to see people wearing their name tags. The new style means no pins or magnets, with an easy off/on over the head. Wearing name tags at Sunday Service and church functions will help us know each other’s names and welcome visitors.

It has been a couple of busy months gathering items for the YWCA, Women’s shelter, and Children’s Haven. In addition, the Men’s group provided socks and underwear for mem, and the Women’s group Mitten/Scarf tree will provide items for local schools. In addition, Christmas Hampers will be provided to families through Princess Margaret and John Diefenbaker schools. If you donate to the ongoing food item baskets at Sunday Service, please consider items that could be included in the Christmas Hampers (stuffing mix, canned vegetables, Christmas goodies, etc.).

Thank you to everyone who completed and returned the Share your Gifts forms. It was great to see the number of people who already do so much here at Messiah. We had a few people who participated in the online version (Survey Monkey), unfortunately two responses did not include their names. If you are one of those people, please let me know so that we can be in touch. There are still paper copies available on the table in the Narthex/foyer if you would like to participate. Ministry team and committee members will be in touch with you if you indicated an interest in assisting in one or more ways.

We won't have a potluck lunch in December, so the next potluck is scheduled for January 13. The Annual General Meeting will be held following the service on February 24, 2019. Please check the December calendar for services and events during Advent and Christmas.

The next Council meeting is Tuesday, January 15, at 5pm.

**On behalf of Messiah Council,  
Cheryl Bauer Hyde**

## *Caring Ministry & Community Service*

Several boxes of clothing, a box of books, and a box each of household items and miscellaneous items were donated to the PA Women's Safe Shelter during the month of November. Thank you to everyone who donated items. The Shelter is very thankful for the donations.

During the month of December, we will be collecting donations for the Children's Haven. Children's Haven provides emergency care for children when a family crisis occurs. They operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and accept children up to 12 years of age. They have facilities to support up to 17 children at one time. Their support and consultation staff are trained and experienced and provide services for both parents and children.

They have indicated that they can use donations of toothbrushes, socks, and pajamas as well as toys and puzzles (48 pieces or less). There will be boxes in the Narthex available to collect these items.

### **Christmas Hampers for Schools**



The Caring Ministry and Community Services team will prepare six Christmas Hampers for families associated with the John Diefenbaker and Princess Margaret Schools. The hampers will be distributed to families that struggle during the holiday season and need a little extra support to provide a special meal during the holidays for their family.

When contributing to the Food bank, also think about contributing to the Christmas Hampers. If you would like to contribute, we are collecting non-perishable items to make a Christmas meal. We are also accepting monetary donations to purchase supplies for these hampers. Monetary donations can be put in the collection plate and noted on your envelope that the donation is for the Christmas Hampers.

**Jean Meyers and Lois Manchur  
Caring Ministry & Community Service**

## *Messiah Lutheran Women (MLW)*



**MESSIAH LUTHERAN WOMEN CHRISTMAS PARTY** will be held on **Tuesday, December 11, beginning at 7pm in the Peace Chapel**. Bring a potluck snack or goodies to share, and enjoy an evening of fellowship and Christmas caroling. We will collect a cash donation, if you wish, to give to Hope's Home – Receipts available upon request.

## *MESSIAH YOUTH*

### ***Hanging of the Green Service, December 2***

On the first Sunday of Advent, December 2, we begin our preparation for Christmas with „The Hanging of the Green“. In this service we decorate the church with various Christmas decorations and reflect on how they can remind us of the true message of Christmas. We ask children and youth to help us out with decorating so we hope you can all be there!



### ***H2H & T4T Christmas Party, December 9***

The annual youth Christmas Party will take place on December 9. Confirmation youth (H2H) and older youth (T4T) are invited to attend. Fun games, Christmas message and great snack are just a few of the things that will happen. Make sure you'll be there!

### ***Christmas Pageant – Lessons & Carol Service, December 16***

In our Lessons & Carol Service on December 16, children and youth will reenact each lesson read from the Bible in a special way. We invite and encourage our youth to participate and help us create a wonderful visual experience for everyone present. Please let Pastor Íris know if you want to help out in the service.

## *SUNDAY SCHOOL*

**December 2:** Hanging of the Greens — all Sunday school children are invited to participate in decorating the sanctuary during the service, and will be singing the song they prepared "Soon and Very Soon". 3rd graders will be presented with Bibles.'

**December 9:** Preparation for next week's Christmas Pageant

**December 16:** Christmas Pageant - Lessons and Carols service. Children and youth re-enact lesson read from the Bible that tell the Christmas story.

**December 23:** Regular Sunday school

**December 30:** No Sunday school

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### ***More about a few of our December Services***

#### ***Hanging of the Green Service, December 2***

On the first Sunday of Advent, December 2, we begin our preparation for Christmas with "The Hanging of the Green". In this service we decorate the church with various Christmas decorations and reflect on how they can remind us of the true message of Christmas. People of our congregation read scripture readings and also tell the story behind different decorations that we see everywhere during the Christmas Season. Children and youth are invited to help decoration the church and everyone present can join the in decoration of the tree. This service marks a wonderful beginning to Advent and hopefully gives us the spiritual encouragement we need to begin our preparation for Christmas.

#### ***Blue Christmas Service, December 21***

Christmas is for the most part a time of celebration and joy. For many, however, this is a difficult time of year. Many people are carrying significant weights: grief, loss, depression, anxiety, financial stress, unemployment, uncertainty, aging parents, sick children, recent diagnoses, unknown illnesses. The public tone of the season does not resonate with many people's private experience.

In various churches Blue Christmas services have been celebrated to offer special recognition of the struggles that many people face during this season. Its somber tone also testifies to the struggles of Mary, Joseph and Jesus that are often overlooked. On December 21, on Winter solstice, the longest day of the year, **we invite you to join us for a Blue Christmas service at Messiah**, where the struggles that we all face are acknowledged, and a safe place of rest, comfort and healing is provided. The service starts at **7pm this Friday evening of December 21**. Come join us!

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### **Meatballs, Beef Supper & Beef on a Bun**

Thanks for the great congregational support for the Annual November 11 Beef Supper. Thank you to the meatball rollers that gathered in September, everyone who donated food and pies, our musician Gordon Dixon, the youth group lead by Pastor Iris and Brooklyn, the workers and clean-up crews on Remembrance Day and the following Sunday's Beef on a Bun, and Donna in the office for her assistance.

And Thank You to everyone who bought meatballs and roast beef, came out for the supper and supported the Beef on a Bun lunch. We raised just almost 4,000 in total which is a significant contribution to our church finances.

At the time of writing this thank you, there were 10 packages of meatballs for sale – the signup sheet is in the Narthex/foyer.

**Anne & Roger Mayert**

**Cheryl Bauer Hyde & Wayne Hyde**

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**Caroling anyone?** We will meet at the **church at 5:15pm on Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup> and leave promptly at 5:30pm** to go caroling. Everyone welcome!

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### **1 Corinthians 13 — Christmas Version**



If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights, and shiny balls; but do not have love, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals, and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime; but do not have love, I'm just another cook.

If I work at a soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity; but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels, and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties, and sing in the choir's cantata; but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the spouse. Love is kind, though harried and tired. Love does not envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love does not yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love does not give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who cannot. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails.

Toys will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust; but giving the gift of love will endure.

(Source: Unknown)