

The SPIRIT *December 2025*

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year



Christmas Traditions

As Christmas comes around, I have been thinking about my family's tradition of building Lego sets on Christmas day. I imagine that many of you also have memories of building and playing with Lego sets with family, or maybe even buying Lego sets for someone important in your life. Lego building is all about connecting one brick to another until you have a whole building. Each one of those little connections is necessary to create the whole.

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and all the connections that Jesus Christ made with us and each other. Connections like this start small, a few at a time, but like a Lego set, they grow into something much larger and stronger than we could ever be on our own.

Our connection to God has brought us together in this church. We are bound together by a shared faith and love for each other. These connections are what allow us to be a one body of Christ, a body that would be incomplete without all the individual parts and a body that is made up of individuals who are stronger together.

God's Blessings,

Vicar Abbey

This Month's Highlights

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From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Saints,

Greetings in the name of our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord and coming Savior, Jesus Christ!

As we enter the holiday season with Advent's light growing brighter each week, I want to pause and offer heartfelt gratitude for your faithfulness throughout this past year. Amid the candles, carols, and celebrations of Christ's coming, we are reminded that God has been present with us in every challenge and every joy.

We began 2025 with a budget offer a challenge. Trusting in the Spirit's guidance, we moved forward with confidence, yet we find ourselves nearing year's end still behind. In October, the Finance Committee made the difficult decision to use operating reserve funds to reduce the deficit, which fully depleted those reserves. As we navigate this together, your awareness, prayers, and support are deeply valued. And yet, even in a lean year, the Lord has been abundantly generous through you. Your service, stewardship, and compassion have allowed Messiah to shine Christ's light locally and globally.

2025 Ministry Highlights

Caring for Our Campus & Worship

- Installed new AC units for the sanctuary and A/V room
- Hired a new A/V technician
- Created a comprehensive church facility plan
- Remodeled the sanctuary sound booth

Added a safety rail to the choir loft albeit temporary

Serving Our Community

- Continued Ukrainian Refugee Ministry, assisting two family units (nine individuals)
 - Completed another pastoral internship
 - Supported local outreach:
 - Blood Drive
 - Crosslines Pantry—served on average 130 family units per month and Diaper Drive
 - Provided twice-monthly treats for teachers at Holland Elementary and coats for students
- Hosted women in the Messiah House throughout the year

Global Mission Impact (LWR)

- 104 Quilts (17 boxes)
- 2 blankets
- 134 Baby Care Kits (31 boxes)
- 100 School Kits (10 boxes)
- 152 Personal Care Kits (13 boxes)

6 Fabric Kits (1 box) Total: 73 boxes sent to bless neighbors around the world

Other Significant Milestones

- Childcare facility renovation to serve 56 children
- Tree removal and new fence at 2135 S. Kings
- Endowment Grants awarded: \$41,500

Piecemakers quilts for Southwest Missouri

Looking Ahead to 2026

As we prepare for the new year, we anticipate several important projects:

- Upgrading the church monument sign, our only exterior signage will cost about \$35,000
- Replacing the 10-year-old sanctuary projectors will cost about \$40,000
- Renovating **2145 S. Kings** and preparing it for lease and securing market-value rent for **2135 S. Kings**

Continuing progress toward mid-2026 "Upon This Rock" debt retirement with an estimated balance of **\$195,000**

During this holy season, we hear again the promise: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." This year, that truth has taken shape in your generosity, your prayers, and your willingness to serve. Thank you, dear saints, for embodying Christ's light in this community and far beyond it.

May God bless your Advent preparations, your Christmas celebrations, and your New Year with peace, joy, and hope in Christ.

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Pastor Orin

From the Desk of Council President

A Call to Faithful Stewardship: Strengthening the Mission of Messiah

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we approach the final weeks of the year, weeks traditionally filled with reflection, gratitude, and anticipation we, are also called to a moment of deep honesty and spiritual responsibility as a church family. Messiah Lutheran Church stands today at a critical crossroads in its ministry. Our mission continues, our faith remains strong, but the reality before us demands that we come together in sacrificial stewardship for the sake of the Gospel.

As you will see in the financial summary included in The Spirit, we are operating at a significant loss this year. In order to help with the year-to-date deficit on the Profit and Loss Statement, money from an operating funds savings account was moved to the P&L statement. The money from the operating savings account (\$47,232.96) is shown on the P&L in The Spirit after the net loss (\$49,551) so the congregation can see that Messiah is operating at a significant loss. If pledges/contributions in November and December reduce the deficit, the money not needed from the savings account will be put back in restricted funds for future use.

This is not a mere accounting entry. It is a wake-up call. The savings account we pulled from was created to fund yearly ministry, it was created to preserve the future. Yet today, we are forced to use it just to meet basic expenses. If nothing changes, that reserve will eventually run dry, and the ministries we love— worship, children and youth programs, Bible studies, care ministry, outreach and missions—will face increasingly hard decisions. As of now, Messiah is running close to \$50,000 in deficit.

But this is not a message of despair this is a call to faith.

The early church faced these moments too. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” – 2 Corinthians 9:7

And just before that, Paul reminds us of the spiritual truth behind stewardship:

“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” – 2 Corinthians 9:6

The purpose of giving is not simply to pay bills or balance columns, it is to sow into the Kingdom. Every gift is a seed. Every dollar given to God returns as transformed lives, strengthened community, and a church that stands as a beacon of hope and truth in a world that so desperately needs Christ.

As Paul wrote to the Galatians:

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” – Galatians 6:9

The future of this church will not be determined by what we have, but by what we do with what we have. And I believe deeply that God will provide through His people.

In these final months of the year, may we rise together in faith. Not reluctantly, not fearfully, but boldly, cheerfully, and united in Christ. Messiah Lutheran Church belongs to all of us, but even more importantly it belongs to Him.

May your heart be stirred toward generosity. May your spirit be moved toward commitment. And may the Lord bless the seeds we sow today 100-fold for the sake of His Kingdom.

To God be the glory,

Frank Noto
President, Congregational Council
Messiah Lutheran Church

Announcements

12/03--Advent Midweek Service
12/06--WELCA Christmas Gathering
12/10--Advent Midweek Service
12/14--Christmas Program
12/14--Parish Life Congregational Dinner
12/17--Advent Midweek Service
12/18--MLCFDC Christmas Program
12/19--Marilyn Boston Student Piano Recital
12/21--Christmas Cantata
12/24--Christmas Eve Family Service 5pm
12/24--Christmas Eve Candle Lighting 10 pm
12/25--Church Office/Daycare Closed
01/01--Church Office/Daycare Closed

Altar Flower Committee



If you are interested in contributing to the altar flowers, we still have openings in the book throughout the year. Please check with the church office by calling 417-881-2192, stopping by or emailing officemanager@messiahmo.org. The cost per vase is \$20.00. If you pay by check please put "for altar flowers" in the memo section.

Midweek Bible Study

Meeting on **Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.** in the sanctuary. Will resume January 14, 2026

Crosslines

November 6th was a busy day at Crosslines. Becky Roark, Carolyn Gerdes, Mary Anne Johnson, Annetta Svagera, Martha Morris, Lisa Melgren, Sandra Carlson and Vicar Abbey served 146 families/ 342 individuals. Vicar Abbey volunteered to bag produce as the other volunteers shopped with the guests. This was a huge help keeping the "traffic" flowing in the produce area. We also had 3 volunteers from United Way helping out. Crosslines was very appreciative of Messiah's diaper donation. Fortunately, they did not run out of diapers in the pantry that day! Just a reminder to check expiration dates on canned goods and boxed food going into the wagon.

Crosslines Toy Store

Believe it or not it's almost time for the Crosslines Toy Store. Messiah will participate again this year to help make Christmas a wonderful holiday for the kids in Springfield. Crosslines is predicting it will help over 1,000 families this year!

We have chosen "Teen" age group again, because it is a difficult group to get enough presents to fulfill the need. Of course, any toy for any age group will be gratefully accepted! In addition, wrapping paper, gift bags, ribbon and bows, tape and tissue paper, all are needed for families to wrap the gifts.

IMPORTANT INFO:

Wednesday, November 26, 2025- Collection box will be in Narthex ready for toys.

Sunday, December 14, 2025- Toy Drive @ Messiah ends.

Tuesday, December 16, 2025- Toys and check for donated funds taken to Crosslines Toy store.

TO DONATE FUNDS: Make checks to Messiah Lutheran Church, memo line: Toy Store OR If using your giving envelope under OTHER write: Toy Store and the amount.

TO VOLUNTEER: If you are interested in volunteering (they have lots of opportunities)

Please sign up online @ CCOzarks.org/Holiday

GIFT IDEAS: We will be handing out gift ideas for all ages in the upcoming weeks!

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!!!! ANY QUESTIONS?
Please call Terry Dunham 417-631-9795

WELCA Christmas Gathering

CALLING ALL MESSIAH WOMEN!

Please join us for our annual WELCA Christmas Gathering. You do NOT need to belong to a circle; we would love for ALL women in our congregation to attend.

DATE & TIME: Saturday, December 6th, 9:30 a.m.

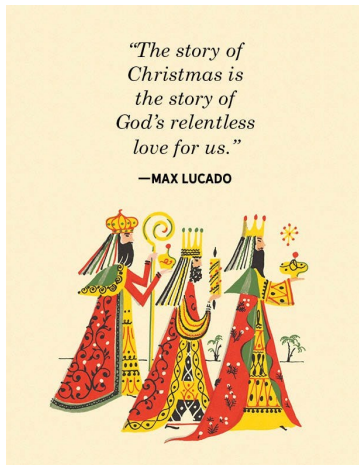
PLACE: Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: Breakfast refreshments, Christmas devotion, door prizes, ornament-making craft, Christmas hymn sing (bring your requests), and optional cookie exchange. *If you would like to participate in the OPTIONAL Christmas cookie exchange, please bring two dozen cookies. (Take-home containers will be provided.) *Feel free to dress in a festive manner. Hope to see you there!

Messiah Book Club

We will meet December 11 at 2:30 p.m. in the Library at church.

Lovers in Auschwitz, published 2024, by Keren Blankfeld, is an unbelievable true story of romance, sacrifice, loss, and resilience. It chronicles the lives of two young people ensnared in the Nazi horrific creation, who discovered hope and humanity in history's darkest hour.



Parish Life

Christmas Congregational Dinner, December 14

Come join us for the annual Christmas congregational dinner following the Sunday school Christmas program. Chicken will be provided, and there is a sign-up sheet for side dishes, desserts, and bread or rolls.

Mark your calendars for January 25 following worship for a potluck and board games get-together. There will be a sign-up sheet for this as well in January.

We continue to have fellowship hour following Sunday morning worship. Please come join us for this great opportunity to get to know your church family better.

Lunch & Scripture

Everyone is welcome to join us at MaMa Jean's on the corner of South Campbell and Sunshine for Lunch and Scripture on **December 9 at 12 noon.**

If you have any questions please reach out to Ileen Kendall.

Christmas Love

We all love Christmas. In addition to celebrating the birth of the Christ child, it is a time when families gather joyously for food and to share gifts and family love. But for some of our church members it can be a time of loneliness which the festivities just emphasize. So we would like to invite you to share a little of your Christmas love with one of them.

In the Narthex you will find a poster which contains the names of a church member who might need a little extra cheer at this time. Please consider taking a name and paying a visit to them, taking a small gift such as some cookies, a plant or some item of care. Your time is much more important than the gift. Let's spread some Christmas love.

The Congregational Care Committee

Peppermint Almond Bark

Chocolate Layers

6 oz dark chocolate
canes

12 oz white chocolate
3 tsp. vegetable oil

Topping

10-12 crushed candy

Directions

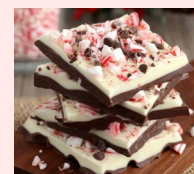
Prepare Pan: Line the bottom and sides of a 9" x 9" square baking pan with non-stick aluminum foil to prevent sticking and allow for easy removal.

Melt Dark Chocolate Layer: Melt the dark chocolate and 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil together in the same double boiler setup, stirring until smooth. Spread even layer in bottom of the pan.

Melt White Chocolate: Melt the white chocolate with 1 teaspoon vegetable oil using the double boiler method. Pour the melted white chocolate over the dark chocolate layer and tilt the pan to create an even layer. Immediately sprinkle the remaining crushed candy canes evenly over the white chocolate while still warm and soft, pressing lightly to adhere.

Final Freezing: Place the pan back in the freezer for 20 minutes or until fully set.

Serve: Lift the peppermint bark out using the foil edges and break it into chunks. For clean squares, dip a knife or cookie cutter in hot water before cutting. Store in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.



A Joyous Season

Dear Church Family,

As we approach the joyous season of Christmas, I am reminded of the profound message of love, family, and giving that this time of year brings. The celebration of Christ's birth invites us to reflect on the significance of love within our families and the importance of sharing that love with others.

The Bible teaches us about the essence of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV): "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." This passage reminds us that true love is selfless and enduring, qualities that we can strive to embody in our families and communities.

During this season, we also remember the ultimate gift given to us—Jesus Christ. In John 3:16 (NIV), we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This incredible act of giving inspires us to reflect on how we can extend our love and generosity to those around us.

As families come together during this festive time, let us create an atmosphere of love that reflects Christ's love for us. We can do this by engaging in acts of kindness, supporting one another, and reaching out to those in need. In Galatians 6:2 (NIV), we are encouraged to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." What a beautiful way to embody the spirit of Christmas!

I encourage our church family to embrace the joy of giving, not just through material gifts but through our time, attention, and love. Whether it's volunteering for charitable causes, visiting those who are lonely, or simply being present for one another, let us make this Christmas a time of heartfelt connection and generosity.

May this season fill our homes with love and our hearts with compassion. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas filled with the warmth of family and the joy of giving.

With love in Christ,
Lindsey Dillion



Messiah Lighthouse Child and Family
Development Center is now enrolling!

We are licensed to care for children ages 6 weeks-6 years. We have openings in all of our classrooms currently. If you know of anyone looking for a playful, family-oriented, faith-based childcare center please send them our way!

If you would like more information, call the church office, or reach us directly at 417-881-4119.

Wine, Wit and Wisdom will meet at Olive Garden on South Glenstone, December 4 at 5:30 p.m.

Ladies are welcome to join us!

Let me know if you'd like to attend or if you have questions. Email debbiecorlett@sbcglobal.net or text me at 417-848-9426.

Sanctuary Projectors

We are currently in the process of replacing our projectors. They need to be replaced because they are 10 years old and approaching the end of their lifespan. One of the projectors has also started to shut off intermittently, which requires someone to go up on a lift to unplug and restart it. Another issue is that the current projectors are inadequate for serving the needs of the visually impaired members of our congregation. Purchasing new projectors would improve visibility for our visually impaired members.

New projectors would have an increase in contrast ratio and lumens. The contrast ratio is the difference between the brightest white and the darkest black a projector can produce. A higher contrast ratio translates to deeper blacks, richer colors, and a more vivid overall picture. Lumens measure a projector's brightness, with a higher lumen resulting in more brightness. Our current projectors have a contrast ratio of 500,000:1; the new projectors would have a contrast ratio of 3,000,000:1. The current projectors have 4,200 Lumens, and the new projectors have 11,000 Lumens. That is a 600% increase in contrast ratio and 260% increase in lumens.

We currently have \$20,000 raised to replace these projectors. We still need another \$20,000 in order to fully fund replacement projectors. It's important that these funds are obtained soon, so that the projectors can be replaced before one of them fails.

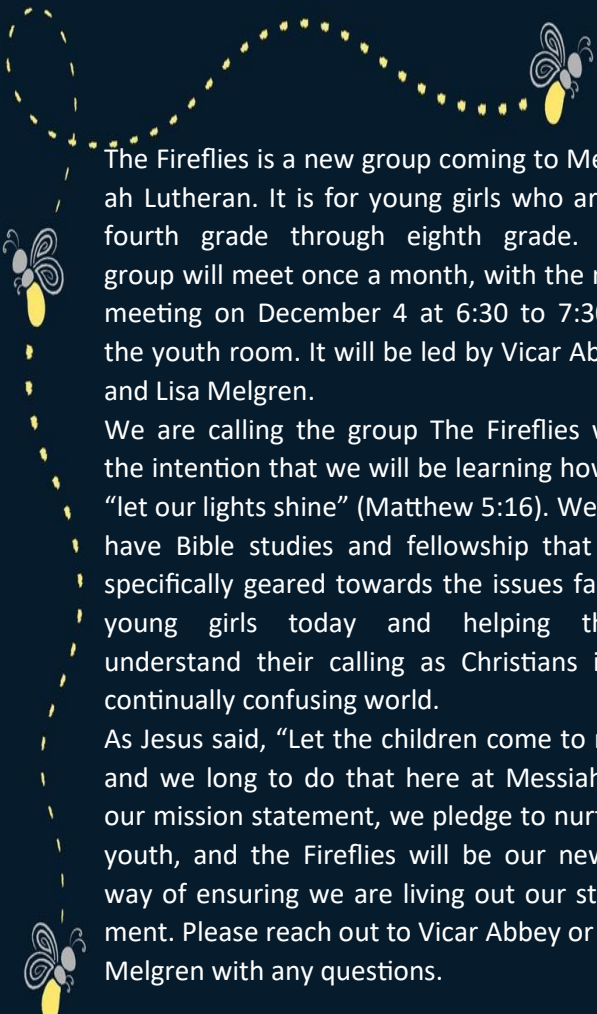
Please consider making a financial contribution towards the projector fund prior to the end of the year; note "Projector Fund" in the Memo line.

Please contact me if you have any questions.
Drew Bowman, A/V Technician-
drew.bowman@messiahmo.org

Thank You

Harold Lokensgard would like to thank the Church and the flower committee for the flowers he received this month. He said, they were very beautiful.

Fireflies



The Fireflies is a new group coming to Messiah Lutheran. It is for young girls who are in fourth grade through eighth grade. The group will meet once a month, with the next meeting on December 4 at 6:30 to 7:30 in the youth room. It will be led by Vicar Abbey and Lisa Melgren.

We are calling the group The Fireflies with the intention that we will be learning how to "let our lights shine" (Matthew 5:16). We will have Bible studies and fellowship that are specifically geared towards the issues facing young girls today and helping them understand their calling as Christians in a continually confusing world.

As Jesus said, "Let the children come to me" and we long to do that here at Messiah. In our mission statement, we pledge to nurture youth, and the Fireflies will be our newest way of ensuring we are living out our statement. Please reach out to Vicar Abbey or Lisa Melgren with any questions.

Christmas Crockpot Candy

- 16 oz pkg roasted salted peanuts
- 16 oz package roasted unsalted peanuts
- 1 pkg chocolate almond bark
- 1 pkg white almond bark
- 1 4 oz baking chocolate bar broken into pieces



Directions:

Pour salted and unsalted peanuts into the bottom of crockpot. Add half pkg of chocolate almond bark, whole pkg of white almond bark and the 4 oz of chocolate baking bar. Cook on low heat for 1.5 to 2 hours stirring the mixture with a wooden spoon at the 1 hr. mark.

Drop by the spoonful's onto parchment or wax paper. Let candy sit at room temperature about 1 to 2 hrs. Serve and enjoy.

December Flowers

	6/7	13/14	20/21	24	27/28
Vase 1	Tom Wiswall & Bonnie Luder	Vic & Peggy Shelton	Dan & Beverly Carlson	Weaver Family	Michael & Nancy Hoeman
Vase 2	Gene Chrisman	Gene Chrisman	Dave & Patty Hangen	Weaver Family	Pat Schultz



Flower Vase Costs

Cost per vase is \$20. Please make checks payable to Messiah Lutheran Church, and then in the memo line, write "Altar Flowers" and the date for which you are paying. If you are using an offering envelope, you will find a line for "Altar Flowers" and the amount.



Merry Christmas

www.messiahmo.org



messiah@messiahmo.org

MessiahMOELCA



MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA



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MessiahMoELCA



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**Return Address Requested*

*He restores my soul, He leads me in the paths of
righteousness, for His name's sake. Psalms 23:3*

December Scripture Readings

Date	First Reading	Psalm	Second Reading	Gospel
6/7	Isaiah 11:1-10	72:1-7, 18-19	Romans 15:4-13	Matthew 3:1-12
13/14	Isaiah 35:1-10	146:5-10	James 5:7-10	Matthew 11:2-11
20/21	Isaiah 7:10-16	80:1-7, 17-19	Romans 1:1-7	Matthew 1:18-25
24 -5 pm	Isaiah 9:2-7	96	Titus 2:11-14	Luke 2:1-14, [15-20]
24-10 pm	Isaiah 62:6-12	97	Titus 3:4-7	Luke 2:[1-7], 8-20
27/28	Isaiah 63:7-9	148	Hebrews 2:10-18	Matthew 2:13-23

Mark Your Calendars

12/03--Advent Midweek Service
12/06--WELCA Christmas Gathering
12/10—Advent Midweek Service
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