

December
2025

Volume 32
Issue 12

In this Issue

- Pr. Jeff's Message
- Treasurer's Report
- Visitation Ministry
- Christmas Schedule
- Children's Program
- New Members/Baptisms
- Adult Education
- Women's Ministry
- Children Youth Family Ministry
- Senior Adult Ministry
- Divine Yoga
- Human Trafficking
- Habitat for Humanity
- Community Outreach
- Christmas Collections
- Flower Chart
- Ladies Lunch



This past October my family gathered at St. Gabriel Parish in Neenah to say goodbye to my mom. As part of the ceremony I wanted to share some words, yet I also knew that I would be too emotional. I would probably break down in tears. I was so relieved when my son Joe offered to read them for me. My reflection began like this.

I remember leaving for the seminary in the autumn of 1982. I was off to Belgium and likely wouldn't be home again for nearly two years. My Dad's eyes welled with tears. He was always so very emotional. My mom however was more stoic - just a kiss and hug - "Love you Jeff. Call us when you get there." I am sure she cried later but in that moment she knew what I needed, or rather what I didn't need. I didn't need a gushing, crying, worrying, "grand airport weepy farewell." Just a simple "Love you Jeff. Call us when you get there." That's our mom - responding to what we needed and knowing what we didn't need.

*The university that I attended has a famous sculpture that is the basis for the academic motto. It is a statue of Mary and upon her lap the infant Jesus, in Latin, **the Sedes Sapientiae** - the **Seat of Wisdom**. It always reminded me of my mom. She was always our Sedes Sapientiae - our seat of wisdom - knowing what we needed, and what we didn't need.*

I went on to speak of the things that my mom taught us - this woman of "earthy" wisdom - who taught us about being truly present to one another; to love people for who they were and not what we wanted them to be; to take time to have fun along the way and stay in touch throughout the journey of life - my mom was truly a seat of wisdom.

Each Christmastide we remember the child Jesus, born into the world as Emmanuel, God with Us, and yet we also remember the woman who birthed him, cared for him, and upon whose lap Jesus learned wisdom. That is why the church has always referred to Mary as *Sedes Sapientiae* - the seat of wisdom.

Office and Contact Information

PHONE 608-222-3833

OFFICE EMAIL

..... ourchurch@messiahchurch.com

OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE DROP BOX

.....outside the main front entrance

WEBSITEmessiahchurch.com

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - email/phone monitored

Tuesday - Thursday .. 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Friday8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

LEAD PASTOR Jeff Vanden Heuvel
..... pastorjeff@messiahchurch.com

ASSOCIATE PASTOR Dan O'Brien
..... pastordan@messiahchurch.com

BUSINESS MANAGER Tim Coulthart
..... timc@messiahchurch.com

EXECUTIVE MINISTRY ASSISTANT

..... Judy Armelin
..... ourchurch@messiahchurch.com

WORSHIP AND MUSIC Clyde Nyhus
..... music@messiahchurch.com

MINISTRY SUPPORT COORDINATOR

..... Elizabeth Crummy
..... volunteer@messiahchurch.com

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY Brittany Rusch
..... CFM@messiahchurch.com

YOUTH MINISTRY Teresa Palumbo
..... youth@messiahchurch.com

SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY

..... Keith Schlesinger
..... SAM@messiahchurch.com

FACILITIES MANAGERS Dan Battist
..... Rich Valenta, John Nerad
..... building@messiahchurch.com

VISITATION TEAM Pastor Dan

MEDIA & AV Clark Kellogg
..... AV@messiahchurch.com

VIDEO SPECIALIST Steve Cheramy
..... video@messiahchurch.com

JANITORIAL SERVICES Larry Kaltenberg

In Luke's gospel, the narrative that we read throughout Advent, Mary is the one who teaches Jesus. In the Annunciation she shows herself to be a person of faith, giving her *fiat* - her yes to God, in a complete leap of faith. How could she not have been the seat of wisdom for Jesus showing him what it meant to say yes to the Divine call wherever that call might lead? Not long after, in chapter 2, Mary makes the arduous journey to Bethlehem along with her espoused Joseph - nine months pregnant, 70 miles by foot, with no place to stay. This is Mary in Luke's infancy narrative. She is the seat of wisdom for her child, teaching him that life would not always be easy but we can do hard things, one step at a time. At the end of that chapter she meets the old man Simeon in the temple, and he predicts that her heart shall be pierced. Again, she is teaching her child - the first to show him what it means to carry pain, and sorrow, and ultimately a cross. Perhaps this Christmas these are the lessons that we continue to learn from the *Sedes Sapientiae*.

In this New Year, we will recommit ourselves to giving our *fiat* to God, saying yes, to the call of justice and inclusivity, kindness, sacrifice, and love. In the midst of trials, we will move forward one step at a time, assured that we too, can do hard things. And most of all, we will shoulder the crosses of life knowing that God is always found in the cross - and where God is, there will also be love to carry us. And if we move forward in love, one day there will also be life, resurrection, and joy. When you hear the Christmas story this year, learn from the *Sedes Sapientiae* - our Seat of Wisdom.

Merry Christmas my friends.

Pastor Jeff



We are 10 months into the budget year and Pledge Revenue is \$748,200 compared to the budget for the same time period of \$669,400, so we are ahead of the budget by \$78,800. General Fund Expenditures were \$665,600 compared to the budget of \$686,900, so we are \$21,300 under budget. The balance in the General Fund is \$175,200 and the balance in the Capital Projects Fund is \$100,400.



We mailed 911, 18 more than last year, stewardship letters on October 24th and as of November 16th there have been 310 pledges returned, 298 returned last year after the same time. This includes the members who automatically give on a weekly or monthly basis. The current amount pledged for 2026 is \$592,509, or \$58,526 more than pledged at the same time last year. *Tim Coulthart*

Visitation Ministry

Dear Messiah friends,

Jen Justeson came into my life this past year through the visitation ministry, and I'd like to tell you about her. Her son Randy attends the 8:15 service at Messiah and he had asked if his mom could join Tom and Marlene Green for communion when I visited Tom at McFarland Villa. After Tom went home to God in January I continued to visit Jen.

Her given name was Lila Mae, but she went by Jen. I immediately was taken by her because my grandma went by Jen. She was 100 years old when we met. That day she had a pretty multicolored sweater on. I told her I liked it and she said her mom had made it for her. I asked her how old she was when her mom made it, to which she replied I think about 20! She remembered her mom walking around with a crochet hook and a ball of yarn in her apron pocket so that whenever she had a free moment, she could work on something. She had that 80 year old sweater on every time I visited.

Jen and I sometimes attended the Lutheran service they have at McFarland Villa. It was an experience of the kingdom of God, worshiping with elderly people in varying stages of aging. When we sang the hymns, Jen would have her right hand in the air and she would be moving it to the beat of the song. And I loved her hearty amen at the end of the Lord's prayer.

Marlene Green and I visited her for her 101st birthday. Marlene had brought her a card - I forgot a card, but I did bring cookies. She asked if she could open it and then read us Marlene's message with an absolute look of delight - a favorite memory.

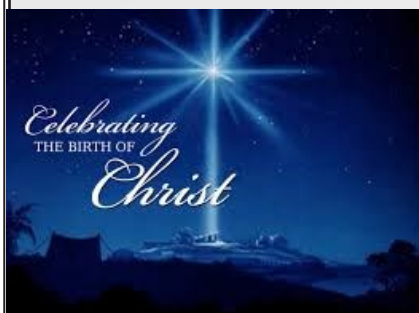
Jen went home to God at the end of September. As Jeff sang a few Sundays ago, she is now up yonder with her parents, husband and brother. I'm so glad God brought her into my life.

Written by Jody Dahmen



Christmas Worship Schedule

The Column
DECEMBER 2025 | page 4



Christmas Eve
Wednesday, December 24th
4:00 & 7:00 PM

Christmas Day
Thursday, December 25th
10:00 AM

Sunday School Sings & Christmas Program

Please join us on Sunday, December 7th following the 10:30 AM service for the annual Sunday School Christmas program!

Our littlest members will perform songs for the congregation and this will be followed by the Nativity Story featuring music by our Angel Choir. Immediately after the program, cake and juice will be served in the Social Hall.



Welcome New Members

*Please Welcome
New Members*

Jan Hamielec
Associate Member

**Gary & Gretchann
Dalgaard**

Phil & Mickey Jensen
*We're Glad You Have Chosen
Messiah as Your*

Holy Baptism

Krew Xavier Kasten

Child of Sara & Klayton Kasten

*I have called you by name,
you are mine.*

Exploring the Lectionary Through Advent

We will meet in the Social Hall between the services. In these sessions, we'll consider questions such as:

- *What is the Lectionary?*
- *How do the texts relate to each other?*
- *Why do Lutherans use the Lectionary in worship?*
- *How do we read the lessons—and how do the lessons read us?*

Each session will include reading portions of the Sunday texts and discussing them using both ancient and modern approaches, helping us hear Scripture in fresh ways and apply it to daily life.

Meeting Dates:

Nov 30 - Exploring the Lectionary, Advent 1
Dec 7 - Exploring the Lectionary, Advent 2
Dec 14 - Exploring the Lectionary, Advent 3
Dec 21 - Exploring the Lectionary, Advent 4



Women's Ministry

Women's Ministry Conversation Group December 18 - 10:30 AM -12:00 NOON

This is an informal conversation opportunity to discuss practical ways we live out our faith. Sometimes we have a topic chosen ahead of time such as an article or podcast to discuss, and sometimes we just open the floor to thoughts and discussion. The group is open to all women of Messiah and their friends. Contact Pr. Renee Kiel for more information. If you would like to receive email reminders of when the group meets, contact Pr. Renee to be added to the group. adulthoodeducation@messiahchurch.com

Women's Book Study - Beginning January 8, 2026 - 10:00AM - NOON

In this 8 week study, we will be reading and discussing Philip Yancey's book, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* In this book, Yancey explores the radical, unsettling, and life-changing nature of God's grace. He contrasts grace with the judgmentalism, hypocrisy, and "ungrace" often found in the modern church. Yancey calls Christians to rediscover grace as the central message of Jesus — the kind of grace that welcomes prodigals, forgives enemies, and heals broken lives.

We will meet for about an hour and a half to allow time for fellowship, prayer, and perhaps even a group song :)

If you plan to join this study, please contact Pr. Renee Kiel or the church office know so we can order you a book. Pr. Renee - adulthoodeducation@messiahchurch.com



Trunk or Treat was a success!

We served pizza to 145 people.

We had 16 trunks and treat stations outside, 4 tables inside and lots of pans of treats in the hallway.

Thanks to everyone for their creative decorations and costumes and making this a fun and memorable event!

YOW Fall Retreat

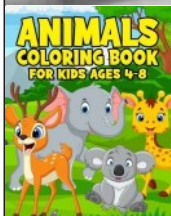
What a holiday hoot! Last weekend, 30 youth from Messiah ventured to Bethel Horizons for an overnight retreat to learn, grow, play, and discover "Love that Transforms!"

Through conversations, crafts, hikes, games, and a movie to end the night (after some s'mores of course!). And they even got to celebrate Christmas a little early! Take a look at the Youth Ministry webpage to see pictures of some of the fun ways they experienced the love that transforms!

Big thank you to all of our leaders: Teresa, Clark, Mandy, Holly, Marshall, Camille, Ray, Kathy, Jill, and Pastor Dan!



Coloring Books Needed



If your family has any new or lightly used coloring books that you would like to donate, we can use them for the nursery and the activity bags children use during the services.

Please bring them to the office with a note designating them for the nursery. Thank you!

Limited Dates Open at Second Harvest Food Bank

Have you been thinking about volunteering with SAM at Second Harvest Food Bank? To check availability, send an email to SAM@messiahchurch.com. Be sure to indicate if you are willing to go on the wait list.

Virtual Apple Pie Sales Are Strong

As of November 25th, when this newsletter was printed, virtual pie sales were over \$22,000! That will provide a lot of food for the more than three hundred food pantries that Second Harvest Food Bank serves in sixteen south central Wisconsin counties. Keep putting virtual pies in your freezer! The sale officially ended on Sunday, November 30th.



Every dollar donated is multiplied four times! That means a \$10 donation becomes \$40 for the food bank. Every dollar has a big impact. Thank you for helping provide food for some special people.

SAM Christmas Party On December 17th



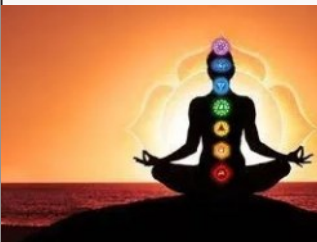
Join your SAM family and celebrate Christmas with the sounds of the Monroe Brass Quintet.

Enjoy a complimentary baked potato bar complete with chili!

Since SAM provides this complimentary meal, you are encouraged to bring extra items for The Empty Table which benefits the Extended Hands Pantry.

Divine Yoga

Advent Series - December 2, 9, 16, and 23



Divine Yoga sessions are open to all members of Messiah.

The yoga sessions are free with an optional free-will offering to benefit a charity selected by the group.

Outreach "Thank You's"

The Column
DECEMBER 2025 | page 8



Thank you so much to all who donated to Madison Area Jail Ministry's request for items to assist inmates as they transition out of jail during the cold months of winter.

We received many, many blankets, personal care items, socks and underwear. Your caring is very appreciated!

Thank you for donating to the special Triangle Ministry food collection to help bridge the gap in their November SNAP benefits.



Human Trafficking Awareness Speaker

Thank you to Jennifer Ginsburg from Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center for speaking at our Services on November 29-30. Jennifer told about the work that Safe Harbor does and her endeavor to do the work she does. She spoke about the effect of trauma on young people and what occurs when children are victims of Human Trafficking and sexual crimes made against them.

Messiah has brought awareness of the cruelty of Human Trafficking over the past years. If you have information to share on Human Trafficking issues please email Nancy Battist at battistnancy@gmail.com so she can share with all.



A walk in their shoes

Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Opportunities



We recently were contacted by Habitat for Humanity with two important opportunities:

Donation Processing

Help out at our ReStores, (unloading, sorting donated items, assembling /repairing items, merchandising the store floor)

Construction:

Help to build habitat houses that our homeowners will live in!

For more information on these opportunities and contact information in the Habitat for Humanity section of the [**Community Outreach webpage**](#).

Triangle Community Ministry Monday Meals

The Monday lunches are on hold until further notice pending some updates in their community space.



Healing House Meals

We will provide a meal the week of December 14-20. Please contact Elizabeth if you are interested. volunteer@messiahchurch.com



Craft & Bake Sale Information



The Annual 2025 Messiah Craft and Bake Sale was very successful raising \$1,400 more than last year. The charities (Briar Patch, Babies and Beyond, and Movin' Out) chosen by the Social Outreach Committee will each receive a total of \$3,738.

The entire Messiah community embraced our sale. Thank you to all who contributed to our success with your time and talents, baked goods, donations for the Kris Kringle Shoppe, and gift baskets. The 37 craft vendors filled our 50 spaces and provided a diverse selection of treasures. The YOW lunch filled an empty tummy with a smile. Boomerang Bags carried everything home.

Save the date for next year, November 7, 2026, first Saturday in November.

Dignity Project

Our last workshop for the year was on November 8th. We will be taking the month of December off so everyone has a little more time to get ready for the holidays. Our next workshop will be on January 10th.

As of the end of October we have been able to send 3,589 pads and 832 panties to Little Dresses For Africa this year. Thank you to everyone who has helped make this possible.



Just a reminder to everyone who is sewing the pads. The church provides the pins that go along with the pads so you do not need to buy those. Just put your sewn pads in a bag and put them in the top drawer of the cabinet. Or if you want some pins you can request some by contacting June. They will be put in a bag with your name on it and you can pick them up in the church office, or come and pick up some at any workshop.

A special welcome to a the new people that have joined us as a result of Spirit Weekend. Anyone that would like to come and see what we are doing can drop by any of our workshops or contact June Nyhus at 608-516-4364 or at jnyhus1@yahoo.com.

YWCA Christmas Collection►



The Community Outreach Team is once again asking the congregation to provide Christmas gifts for the women who are permanent residents at the YWCA. There is no other group sponsoring them at Christmas and our help is needed.

There is a poster on an easel in the offering table in the Gathering Space with names and their wishes.

Messiah members should write their name next to each person they wish to buy for. Then bring the item UNWRAPPED to church by December 10th. Remember to attach the name and room number to the unwrapped gift. Thank you!

Bernie Hartwig – Project coordinator

Mittens & Glove Collection ONLY►

Please note the change from last year.

We will be collecting **ONLY child-sized waterproof gloves/mittens** for several Madison schools. We recognize these can cost more, but they are really what the children need to stay warm and dry.

We are **NOT** collecting scarves, hats or gloves in any other sizes.

If you would prefer, you could make a donation to "Mitten Collection" and we will shop for the gloves and mittens.



Donations for the Christmas Fund, pudding and mittens/gloves can be dropped off Tuesday-Thursday from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM and Friday from 8:00 AM to noon.

Collection bins are located in the Collection Area by the Community Room.

The Road Home Christmas Collection►

The Community Outreach Team will again collect money to provide gift cards to individuals through The Road Home.

Whether they choose a gift card to Walmart, Woodmans, Kohl's, etc., this may be one of the few gifts these individuals receive for the holidays.

You may donate online at "Giving" on our website ***messiahchurch.com*** or by check with Road Home Christmas in the memo line so it gets to the appropriate place. This collection will run through the month and end on November 30th.

Thank you for your continued generosity to The Road Home!

Pudding Collection►

We will be collecting **LARGE** boxes of **INSTANT** pudding (all flavors) to be included in the Christmas food boxes for the East Madison Community Center.



**Our goal this year is 200 boxes.
Please help us meet this goal!**

Triangle Ministry Christmas Collection►

As part of a collaborative Christmas gift drive, we will be collecting bath towels and washcloths which are lightweight and dark colors.

The Triangle Community Ministry provides support to low income adult residents in Madison, many of whom struggle to find full-time, life-supporting income due to various circumstances, including developmental disabilities.



St. Stephen's Food Pantry Wish List

**Clear 16.9 oz.
Soda Bottles**

*no water, green or Gatorade bottles
please be sure they are rinsed & dry.*

Ronald McDonald House

We collect pull tabs from all
types of aluminum cans.



Kennedy School Wish List ►

- Boots
- Smaller sized sweatpants sizes 5-8
- **Waterproof** mittens/gloves
- New, unopened packages of socks and underwear for boys and girls



**WE ONLY COLLECT CHILDREN'S CLOTHING
FOR KENNEDY SCHOOL**

No Adult sized clothes for any groups

Boomerang Bag Workshop

**Tuesday, January 20th
10:00 AM - 12:00 NOON**

In the
Social Hall



Circles of Support Wish List ►

*(Just Dane's Circles of Support
provides a support system for
individuals leaving prison)*



Items needed include:

laundry detergent, laundry basket
shampoo/conditioner, soap, toilet paper
bath towels, hand towels, washcloths
toothpaste, deodorant, razors, shaving cream
dish soap, kitchen towels, dish cloths and scrubbers
facial tissues, paper towels, garbage bags
multi-surface spray cleaners
blankets (full or queen)

The Prayer Shawl Ministry will meet

**Monday, December 15th
1:00 PM**

**LOWER LEVEL
MEETING ROOM**



Dignity Project Workshop

**Saturday, January 10th
9:30-11:30 AM**

In the last Sunday School classroom
on the right

Last Dignity Shipment

381 pads - 94 panties

Project Total

17,529 pads - 3,638 panties



The Road Home Wish List►

- Cleaning supplies
- Diapers
- Baby wipes
- Laundry and dish detergent
- Feminine hygiene products
- Toilet paper and paper towels
- Gift cards for gas and groceries



We only accept unopened full-sized items.

No Adult sized clothes for any groups

Messiah

LUTHERAN CHURCH - ELCA

5202 Cottage Grove Rd.
Madison WI 53716

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. Postage
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Madison, Wisconsin
Permit No. 999

Streamed Worship Schedule

Saturdays

5:00 PM Evening Worship

Sundays

8:15 AM Worship Service

10:30 AM Worship Service

You can watch services
anytime from the "Recent
Sermons" on our website.

Office Hours

Monday- Office closed

Tuesday - Thursday

8:00 AM-2:00 PM

Friday 8:00 AM-12:00 NOON

2026 Altar Flowers



The Flower Chart is Back!

Last year we returned to the use of our flower chart. Please sign up for flowers on the flower chart for 2026.

The chart is on an easel in the Gathering Space for people to sign up.

Cost of flowers is \$35.00 which can be paid by check or online

We will only have 2 bouquets each week.

Please put only your name on the chart.

The office will email/call those signed up the month prior to find out the bulletin message. You can contact the office at any time to let us know 608-222-3833
ourchurch@messiahchurch.com

Ladies Lunch Bunch



We will be meeting on

**Wednesday
December 10th
11:15AM - 1:15 PM
at Kavanaugh's**

1025 N Sherman Ave Madison, WI 53704

Sign up sheet is posted on the Kiosk in the Gathering Space.

Women of any age are invited.

Please be sure you are there by 11:30AM as orders will be taken at that time.

If you have any questions, please contact Claire Gensch at (920) 319-6731