

February
2026

Volume 33
Issue 2

In this Issue

- Pr. Jeff's Message
- Visitation Ministry
- Hospital Visits
- RIC Weekend
- Lenten Devotionals
- Lenten Mid-Week Services
- Treasurer's Report
- Adult Education
- Family Ministry
- Directory Photos
- Blood Drive
- Senior Adult Ministry
- Dignity Project
- Women's Book Study
- Wednesday Bible Study
- Social Justice Ministry
- Community Outreach Ministry
- Ladies Valentine Lunch Bunch



*Jesus, keep me near the cross, There's a precious fountain;
Free to all, a healing stream, Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.*

*In the cross, in the cross, Be my glory ever. Till my ransomed
soul shall find, Rest beyond the river.*

I love this song, and yet it makes me uncomfortable as well. We have a tendency to romanticize the cross. We sing songs about its beauty, wear it on necklaces, and hang it on our living room walls. We sometimes forget that the cross was an instrument of torture. It was used by ordinary people to accomplish a brutal means of silencing one who spoke for inclusion, acceptance and love. We distort the cross, and before long we forget that we too have a part to play in the crucifixion of Christ.

There is an old episode of MASH, in which a rather cocky young pilot comes to the MASH unit because his plane has been shot down, but he is not seriously injured. He tells everyone in a rather boasting voice that flying really gives him a high. *If I could not fly, this war would really be a drag*, he says. He brags that every time he flies a couple of missions, they send him back to Japan for several weeks of R & R. The war to him was really quite a lark.

Then one day a Korean child is brought to the MASH unit and her arm has been horribly mangled in an air attack. The young pilot is taken aback. Even though it was not his plane that did it, for the first time, he must face his own complicity in the brutality of war. For the first time, he sees things not from the perspective of 10,000 feet, but from the eyes of a child.

There is a danger in romanticizing the cross. I love the old hymns about the cross as much as anyone. But the cross is not meant to lull us, it is meant to jolt us. I suppose that is the real purpose of the Season of Lent that we begin this month. Lent is a time to reflect on our brokenness, what the church has always called *sin*, and to remember that all of us are

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..... outside the main front entrance

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Monday - office closed

email/phone monitored

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

Friday 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

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complicit in the structures of sin, the silencing of the God who speaks for inclusion, acceptance and love. In theology, this is referred to as *structural evil*.

I am not personally responsible for the racism and sexism that continues to move through our body politic, yet the truth is I make significantly more (by as much as 15%) than black pastors or women pastors. I live in a system that advantages me more than others - this is *structural evil*. I am not personally responsible for the alienation of the LGBTQ+ community, or the difficulties of those living with disabilities, yet the fact remains that I have never been excluded from marriage, communion, or basic rights because of my sexuality; I've never had to explain my gender identity, or correct the pronouns people apply to me; I have never been excluded from a building due to access, had trouble crossing the street, or been prohibited from using a restroom because of a narrow doorway. I live in a system that advantages me more than others - this is *structural evil*. I am not personally responsible for the poverty in the world or the climate crisis. Yet every time I buy from Amazon or Walmart or wherever, and I purchase a low priced item made by workers in an underdeveloped country whose wages are a fraction of mine, or place my items in plastic bags that cannot biodegrade, or turn my heat up or cooling down, I am part of a system that advantages some and excludes others - this is *structural evil*.

Lent is a time to confront and admit the injustices of the world, and to remember that we participate in systems that exclude and harm others. This is the crucifixion and the silencing of God. We must be jolted by the cross again - to change what we can, repent of our complicity, and remind the world of the *reign of God*, so different from this world - a place of equity and justice, a kingdom of inclusion, acceptance and love.

Pastor Jeff

"So, if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash on another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." – John 13:14-15, 17



This past month, nearly all of the visitation ministry team gathered for a morning of connection, learning, story-sharing, and worship. We are so grateful for Pastor Renee who led worship in the round, and with some jamming guitar!

And we were beyond thankful for Deacon Jessica McCarty, who serves as the Congregational care minister at Bethel Lutheran Church and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. She also spent a number of years serving at Oakwood Village as a chaplain. She brought a wealth of wisdom and practice to get us outside our routine and box. She led us into some great conversations and gave us the space to dwell in the profound work that we get to do with one another.

And if that wasn't enough fun, we also welcomed five people from Hope Lutheran Church, led by interim Pastor David Kiel, who are just forming their visitation team and wanted to learn with us. They only deepened the conversation and widened our perspective.

Thank you to Mary Marshall, Deacon Jessica, and Pastor Renee for all their leadership to make such an impactful day!

Pastor Dan

Next Sacred Circle: February 22nd between the services



If you or a Family Member are in the hospital...

Each morning, Judy calls the Madison hospitals to see if any of our Messiah family have been admitted. But recently we have missed a few of you, and Pastor Jeff and I want to apologize for this.

Sometimes the hospital care team forgets to ask if you are a part of a church community and when they do, we are not notified.

To be as proactive as we can, Pastor Jeff and I ask that if you or your loved one is admitted to the hospital, please give the church a call, or you can call or text Pastor Jeff and myself directly.

If you let us know, we will come. Pastor Jeff and I are never too busy to come sit with you, pray with you, and laugh or cry with you; we want to see you. And always remember, you have a whole community of faith supporting you in your times of need.

Pastor Dan



safe, inclusive space, always working to advocate, uplift, and engage in the work of justice for our LGBTQIA+ community and engage in anti-racism work.

We could not have this designation without the support, voice, and hospitality of all of our Messiah family, and we thank you so much for all that you do to ensure Messiah is a place of welcome for every person who comes through our doors.

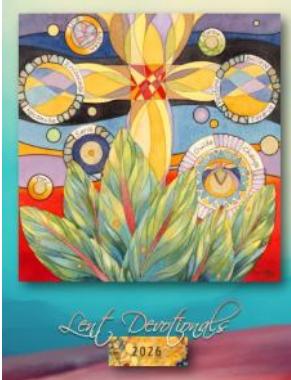
With grace, Pr. Dan

Worship and Prayer Ministry - Lenten Devotional

**The Theme for the 2026 Lenten Devotional is
"Abundantly Called".**

Copies of the Lenten Devotional will be available for you to pick up in the Gathering Space February 1st.

Daily reflections will be posted on Messiah's Facebook page and there will also be a link to the document in the Weekly News or [here](#) if you are reading *The Column* digitally.



Ash Wednesday and Lenten Mid-Week Soup

Ash Wednesday - Soup Supper - 6:00 PM
Service with Imposition of Ashes - 7:00 PM
ASH WEDNESDAY Speaker - Pastor Greg Armstrong - St. Paul AME Church

Mid-Week Soup Supper and Holden Evening Prayer

We will hold two Midweek Lenten Soup Suppers on March 11th and March 25th. After supper we will pray Holden Evening Prayer in the Sanctuary.

Soup Supper at 6:00 PM - in the Social Hall
Evening Prayer at 7:00 PM - in the Sanctuary





We are three weeks into 2026 and the Pledged Revenue received to date is \$83,800, compared to the budget for the same time period of \$49,300, so we are \$34,500 ahead of the budget. The financial results for 2025 were very positive; we had a General Fund surplus of \$129,628. Thank you to everyone who participated in the Annual Meeting. Your input is always important to the operation of Messiah. Year-end statements were emailed January 6th to those that have an email address (509 families) and for the remaining 117 families the statements were mailed January 6th. If you have not yet received your statement, please contact the office at 608-222-3833 or email timc@messiahchurch.com.

Annual meeting recap: Thank You to all who attended in person and online. This year, 88 people join us in-person and 28 families joined us on Zoom for the Annual Meeting and were able to vote during the meeting. We approved the 2026 budget and we approved the Excess Distribution plan with \$12,960 going to staff, \$21,000 going to the Reserve Fund and \$9,566 going to each of the following: South Central Synod Lutheran Campus Ministries, Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, Madison Area Jail Ministry, Just Dane, Porchlight, The Road Home, Dane County Project Home-Serving Those Who Served, NAMI, Pierre Outreach Service Safe Home, South Central Synod Lutheran Camps (Bethel Horizons, Lutherdale and Sugar Creek). **Tim Coulthart - Treasurer**

Sunday Morning Adult Education

Adult Education is offered on Sunday mornings from **9:20 – 10:20 AM** between services. Grab a cup of coffee and a cookie, and join us as we explore a variety of topics this February:

- **February 1** – *Jennifer Ginsburg, Safe Harbor Child Advocacy* (Social Hall) Learn about Safe Harbor's mission to reduce trauma and promote healing for children and adults with intellectual disabilities who are victims of, or witnesses to crime.
- **February 8** – *Jeff Wild, Guns to Gardens* (Social Hall) Discover how this nationwide ministry works to reduce gun violence and death. Jeff will also share about the **Safe Guns Disposal Event** in which Messiah is participating on **March 21 (9:00 AM–noon)** at St. Paul AME church.
- **February 15** – *Pastor Renee – The Parables of Jesus* (Social Hall) This begins a 6-week study of Jesus' parables, starting with an introduction: What are parables? Why did Jesus use them? Are they allegories?
- **February 22** – *Pastor Renee – The Parables of Jesus* (Social Hall) Focus on the "Kingdom of God" parables.



Messiah's Family Ministry team invites you to our Mardi Gras Celebration on Sunday, February 15, 2026 after the late service at approximately 11:30 AM.

We will enjoy a pizza lunch, crafts, and a concert with Ken Lonnquist, the same performer who brought us Old Befana last year.

Please sign up so we can make a good estimate of how much pizza to order. The signup is on the Kiosk, or you can email Elizabeth at volunteer@messiahchurch.com



Even if you don't sign up, please come, we always have extra!

Online Church Directory Photos - February 7 and 8



We are trying to get every member of Messiah to have a picture in the online directory in Realm and we need your help!

On Saturday, February 7th from 4:30 to 6:30 PM, and Sunday, February 8th from 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM we will have members of Messiah taking individual pictures for our photo directory.

These are not professional family photos like prior years, they are just quick individual photos to be used in our online directory. The photos are only accessible to staff and members of Messiah and they very much help everyone get to know other members of the congregation.

If you are not able to come to have your picture taken you can send a photo to the church office at ourchurch@messiahchurch.com or add a photo to your profile page yourself.

Messiah Blood Drives - February 20th and May 6th

The Red Cross has invited us to host a winter blood drive on Friday, February 20th.

Contact Elizabeth at volunteer@messiahchurch.com to sign up, click the link in the weekly news, or visit <https://www.redcrossblood.org/> and search by zip code.

Save the Date for the Annual May Blood Drive on Wednesday, May 6th.



All potlucks are held in Social Hall, located beneath the Sanctuary. We start at 12:00 noon and finish by 1:30 PM. Registration for the potlucks is NOT required. All you need to do is bring non-perishable food items and your favorite dish to share with serving utensil. Lunch is from 12:00 to 12:30 PM. The program begins at 12:30 PM and is finished by 1:30PM.



Wednesday, February 25th - "Email and Phone Scam Presentation" by **Laura Deloach**, Neighborhood Resource Officer, Madison Police Department.

Wednesday, March 25th

"Vets on Frets" is an acoustic guitar group made up of military veterans and led by **Rick Larson**. They play folk, country, and oldies. A free will CASH donation will be collected at the conclusion of the concert. They will use 100% of your donations to help other vets.

SAM Tours Are Taking Shape

It will not be long now, and the SAM tour season will be here! SAM will offer two tours this year. We will have the traditional kick-off to summer tour in mid-June. Can't say anything yet about the actual tour as there is a federal inspection underway at the tour site. Once the inspection is passed, it will be full steam ahead!

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, December 2nd, for our trip to Coloma, Wisconsin to see the **Clauson Family Christmas Show**. Both tours will sell out so it is very important to check your SAM email often.

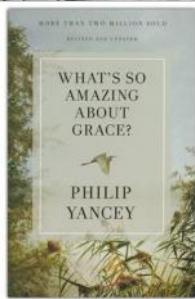
Dignity Project

We held our first workshop of the new year on Saturday, January 10th. In the last few months, we have had a number of new people join our group. Most of them have decided to give sewing the pads a try. This is great! We can always keep sewers busy but we can use help in other non-sewing areas also. We always need people to cut pads for us.

Another way you can help is to buy underwear (pre packaged or singles) for us to send along with the pads (girl sizes 14 or 16 or women sizes small or medium). Any color, any style. They prefer 100% cotton, but love all styles. You could also purchase dark colored flannel fabric at any store that might carry it. The panties and material may also be dropped off in the bins for the Dignity Project in the donation area. Monetary donations are also welcome. You can go online to the website under "Giving", click the fund tab and choose "Local Ministries" from the drop down and type "Dignity Project" on the memo line. If you would like to give cash/check, put it in an envelope and put dignity project on the memo line and/or on the outside of the envelope. Place it in the offering plate, mail it to the church or turn it in at the church office.

Thank you in advance for your part in providing these girls with Dignity. Contact June Nyhus at 608-516-4364 or jnyhus1@yahoo.com





We meet every Thursday (except for Feb 5th – no meeting that day!) at 10:00 AM in a downstairs classroom to discuss *What's So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey.

Copies of the book are available for those who still need one. You may pick up a book in the church office during business hours or from Pr. Renee on Sunday mornings.

This book offers a thoughtful and engaging exploration of God's radical, life-changing grace. Yancey contrasts grace with the judgmentalism and "un-grace" often present in modern church life, inviting us to rediscover grace as the heartbeat of Jesus' ministry—a grace that welcomes prodigals, forgives enemies, and heals broken lives.

We meet for approximately 90 minutes, allowing time for fellowship, prayer, and even a song or two. With 18–20 women attending each week, our conversations are lively, meaningful, and enriching.

All are welcome!

Wednesday Morning Bible Study - the Book of Daniel

Now through February 25th the Wednesday Morning Bible Study Group is currently studying the Book of Daniel using a guide that explores the stories of Daniel and his friends. This study invites participants to reflect on our calling as faithful disciples in challenging times.

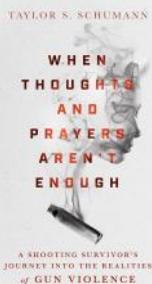
Each session begins and ends with a devotional, encouraging reflection on both the text and what it means for our daily lives and discipleship.

This six-session course, led by **Ray Robinson**, includes:

1. *Daunting Dream: What Does It Mean?* (Daniel 2:25–49)
2. *Feet in the Fire: Taking the Heat for Our Faith* (Daniel 3)
3. *Reading the Signs: Writing on the Wall and in Our Hearts* (Daniel 5)
4. *Nightmarish Dream: What Does It Mean?* (Daniel 7)
5. *Neck in the Noose: Paying the Ultimate Cost of Faith*
(Daniel 10:1, 18–21; 11:1–35)
6. *Reading the Signs: Written in the Book and on Our Hearts* (Daniel 12)

All are welcome (men and women)!

We meet Wednesdays from **7:00–8:00 AM** in the downstairs Meeting Room.



Twenty- eight (28) people attended the When Thoughts and Prayers Aren't Enough book study in January.

This is a lead-in to our Guns to Gardens Safe Disposal event at St. Paul AME on March 21st. From 9:00 AM -12:00 NOON, people are invited to bring unwanted firearms which will be dismantled and turned into garden tools during a forging demonstration from 12:00 NOON-1:00 PM.

Social Justice Ministry - Community Outreach Collections

Our First Collection for 2026 is the Fund Drive for Goodman Center Thanksgiving Baskets

Lent is a time of giving to the poor (alms) and following Christ's teachings more faithfully. In following these teachings, we moved the monetary collection for Thanksgiving baskets to the season of Lent.

The Goodman Center has sponsored Thanksgiving Baskets for many years, last year giving away over 4,000 meals! A complete meal, including a turkey and all the trimmings, is provided to those in need who have registered. Goodman historically had to buy foil roasting pans as donations were low. It was decided to step in to purchase as many as we could. Our goal for 2024 and 2025 was to provide ALL 4,000 pans and Messiah met that goal and more!

Please consider donating to this cause during Lent so we can reach our goal and be ready to purchase the pans at the best price we can find (roughly \$5,500). If using a check, please put Thanksgiving basket in the memo line so it is put in the correct account. Online, please use the Thanksgiving basket under "fund". This collection will end at Easter. Your donations are greatly appreciated!

Our Second Collection will be for the annual Easter project.

Help us provide Easter cheer to children, the residents of the Triangle Community and those visited by Messiah's visitation team by contributing items to our Easter collection. The signup will be posted on an easel in the Gathering Space soon. You can also contact Elizabeth at volunteer@messiahchurch.com.

Racial Justice Team led by Tracy Frank and Tara Von Dollen



The Next Community Outreach Meeting
will be **Thursday, February 12th, 2026**
at 2:00 PM in the Meeting Room.

All are welcome!

Community Outreach 2026 Collection Schedule

Community Outreach Team Collections for 2026-Subject to additions and changes after our team meeting on Thursday, February 12th, at 2:00 PM. All are invited to attend the meeting.

February/March - Goodman Thanksgiving Baskets (foil pans) & Easter Baskets

April - Give Kids a Lift Special Collection 2026

May - Mountain of Food

June -

July - Backpacks for Schools

August -

September -

October/November - Virtual Pies for "Share Your Holidays" (Second Harvest Food Bank)

November - Craft/Bake Sale

November/December - Christmas Collections for:
The Road Home, YWCA, Triangle Ministry, East Side Community/Truax, Madison Area Jail Ministry

Pull Tabs for Ronald McDonald House

June Nyhus delivered our pull tabs to help support the Ronald McDonald House. They receive 60 cents for every pound we collect. Our May 8th delivery equaled \$28.20. Our December 22nd delivery yielded \$22.80.

In total, we collected 85 lbs. of pull tabs for which the Ronald McDonald House received \$51.00.

On a side note there are between 1,000 to 1275 pull tabs in a pound. This means we collected about 193,375 pull tabs. Keep turning them in. It doesn't seem like much money, but every little bit helps. Thank you.

Boomerang Bag Workshop

Tuesday, February 17th
10:00 AM - 12:00 NOON

In the
Social Hall



The Prayer Shawl Ministry

will meet

Monday, February 23rd
1:00 PM



**LOWER LEVEL
MEETING
ROOM**

Dignity Project Workshop

Saturday, February 7th
9:30-11:30 AM

In the last Sunday
School classroom
on the right.



Dignity Project Yearly Total

4,284 pads - 1,058 panties

5 Year Total

14,580 pads - 2,928 panties

Community Outreach Ministry Message

**WE ONLY COLLECT CLOTHING FOR
KENNEDY SCHOOL**

**WE DO NOT ACCEPT CLOTHING FOR
The Road Home and Circles of Support**

Kennedy School Needs ►

This is an ongoing collection.



- Boots.
- Winter coats, snow pants (especially for PK-2nd graders),
- Waterproof mittens/gloves
- New, unopened packages of socks and underwear for boys and girls

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

For sanitary and safety reasons, please note that we can only accept unopened items.

We also prefer full-sized (instead of travel-sized) items when possible.

St. Stephen's Food Pantry Wish List ►

Clear Soda Bottles Only

(no water, green or Gatorade bottles)

We continue to collect clear 16.9 oz. soda bottles for the St. Stephen's Food Pantry to be filled with laundry soap.

Please place them in the separate plastic bin in the collection area.

Please be sure they are rinsed and dry.

We are no longer collecting egg cartons.

Circles of Support Needs List►

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



PLEASE NO CLOTHING

ITEMS LISTED BELOW SHOULD BE NEW AND FULL SIZE

Laundry detergent, laundry basket, shampoo/conditioner, soap, toilet paper, towels, hand towels, washcloths, toothpaste, deodorant, razors, shaving cream, facial tissue, dish soap, kitchen towels, dish cloths and scrubbers, paper towels, garbage bags, multi-surface spray cleaners, blankets (full or queen). Please place items in the bin marked Circles of Support. **Thank you!**

Save Your Pull Tabs - See our totals collected on the bottom of Page 10

Aluminum pull tab collection to benefit The Ronald McDonald House. This includes soup, beverage, canned veggies, fruit, pet food and any other can with a ring pull tab. You can drop your tabs off at the church office or in the container on the ledge, by the window, to the Hospitality Room.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this collection.



Messiah

LUTHERAN CHURCH - ELC
5202 Cottage Grove Rd.
Madison WI 53716

Nonprofit Organization
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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

Community Meals

COMMUNITY MEALS



Healing House

Thank you to those
who are preparing
meals February 1-7.

We have another
opportunity from
March 1-7.

Triangle Ministry

Thank you to the 13 people who prepared
food and served at the special Martin
Luther King, Jr. Day meal on Monday
January 19th. We will serve again on Easter
Monday, April 6th.

You can sign up for both of these
ministries on the Kiosk or contact Elizabeth
at volunteer@messiahchurch.com.

Ladies Lunch Bunch

Valentine Luncheon at Messiah



**Wednesday, February 11th
at 11:30 AM**

Sign up on the Kiosk in the Gathering Space.

Women of any age are invited.

Menu

**Hot beef sandwich, 2 sides
punch, wine, coffee, dessert**

\$15.00

Pay online or cash or check placed in an
envelope in the box in the office

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