

January
2026

Volume 33
Issue 1

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The Column

Happy New Year



"It is time to return to the right way of thinking. The Creator's Good Road from above is close. It is time to begin walking it."
Matthew 3:2 (First Nations Version)

These past few weeks, I have been sitting with this passage from Matthew and find it so fitting for the moment we are in together. Our journey together through the cycles of life never ceases. It seems each winter we are faced with new challenges and new opportunities. As we move into this new year, continue through this Christmas season, and into the season of Epiphany, I am eager to see what God calls us into next.

We have been through a lot this past year, and I am excited for the many new things God is doing in our life together. We have supported each other through the heartache of so many deaths in our community, the loss of both physical, social, and personal realities as people transitioned from houses to assisted living centers – moving their home from one place to another – and we have supported each other through the ongoing social and political division that continues to cause harm to our neighborhoods, city, and the world.

But we have also seen so many new things spring up as well! We welcomed new friends who found their way to Messiah. We have grown our staff and our program opportunities. We have seen more people join our serving ministries – including our SAM and visitation ministry. We got to know the people behind the organizations we serve and support by inviting nine people to speak at our liturgies. We dedicated our solar panel array, we returned to glass communion cups, we planted a Wisconsin-native prairie. We watched as our Sunday School and our youth programs grew, including reimagining our high school ministries (Waffle Wednesdays!). We have done so much together, and Pastor Jeff and I could not be more proud of all you have accomplished!

As we look to this new year, I am eager to discover what God has for us next. So often the new year comes with a desire to 'reset' or 'begin anew.' People set goals or resolutions, noticing the places in their lives that need attention, growth, or challenge. As I am hearing from some of their

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JANITORIAL SERVICES Larry Kaltenberg

goals, I am reminded of the words of John the Baptist we heard just a few weeks ago during Advent. I shared about this in my homily, how the First Nation's Version of the New Testament translates John's words: "It is time to return to the right way of thinking. The Creator's Good Road from above is close. It is time to begin walking it."

This is a time where we have the opportunity to reflect, reconsider, and reimagine how we want to live in the world around us. What in your life needs attention? What in your life needs growth? What needs challenge? This will look different for each of us. The answer to these questions will be different for each of us. But the beautiful thing about it all is that even though we have different needs, we are all journeying the same road, and we get to support one another in that shared journey. Something I have seen you all do so well already.

And I know I've said this in the past, but it is important to remind each other of it. These goals we set, the resolutions we make, do not define us. Whether we feel we accomplish them by the end of the year does not determine our worth. You are constantly becoming who God made you to be. Your journey does not end with the calendar year, and neither does our mission as Messiah.

It is my hope, in these next couple of weeks, that we can wonder and discover together where and what God is inviting us into, for this new year. What in our life together needs our attention? What or who in our neighborhood, city, and world, needs growth that we could be a part of? What has been a challenge for us as Messiah that we need to address? I'm not sure what the answer to those questions are just yet, I need your help with that. So let us walk the Creator's Good Road from above that has come close, boldly and courageously – together. And who knows? We may be surprised where it takes us.

With gratitude,
Pastor Dan

2025 Year End - Both December and all of 2025 are ending with our church finances in good shape. Your thoughtful giving to the General Fund exceeded our expectations, thank you! The Pledged Offering received through 50 weeks (Dec. 17th) was \$864,347, while the budget for the full year was \$803,336, so we are \$61,011 ahead of the budget with two Sundays remaining. This generous giving, combined with our spending within our budget, means that at the end of the year, our revenues will exceed our expenses.

2025 Excess Revenue Distribution Plan - At our most recent Council meeting, we discussed what should be done with the excess revenues over expenses, currently \$81,000. Similar to what we have done in the past eleven years, we formulated a plan for these funds. This year, council approved a plan to recognize the work of the church staff and to use 10 percent of the excess for staff bonuses. In addition, the council would like to add \$21,000 to the Reserve Fund to cover two months of operating expenses. The remaining funds would be used for our mission partners: Campus Ministries, Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, Jail Ministry, Just Dane, Porchlight, The Road Home, Project Home-Serving Those Who Served, NAMI Dane County, Pierre Outreach Services Safe Home and South Central Synod Lutheran Camps. The final amount available distribution will be determined after the close of the calendar year.

2026 Pledge Results - The Pledge Fund drive results through December 15th: 333 families have pledged \$630,174 to the General Fund for 2026.

2026 Budget - Pledged Offering in the budget is based on the following factors: Current Year collections, 2026 Pledges, and past giving history. Based on these three factors, we have set the amount at \$854,653, which we believe is a realistic amount based on the information provided. There are a few areas that have increased budget amounts from 2025.

One of those areas is salaries. We increased the Pastor's salary, staff salaries and Mission Support by 4 percent. You will see that Pastor Dan's increases were higher than Pastor Jeff, this was necessary to keep both pastors within the Synod guidelines. In addition, you will see that the council raised the salary of the Coordinator of Youth and Families by 11 percent. This is to acknowledge the extraordinary work Teresa has done to build community with our youth and to bring her salary closer to what other churches are compensating for similar, and sometimes less, programming than she offers. The budget now includes the position approved at the June Congregational Meeting, Coordinator of Adult Ministry.

The 2026 budget also increased the number of Ministry Groups. Historically, several groups would fall under the catch-all "Evangelism" line. But we decided to split them out to now have: Adult Formation, Family Ministry, Outdoor Ministry, along with the continued Senior Adult Ministry, and Evangelism lines. Collectively this group of expenses increased the budget by 28 percent (\$20,450 to \$26,300). Maintenance increased 16 percent (\$18,000 to \$21,000), Coffee/Donuts increased 25 percent (\$4,000 to \$5,000). One item that we may look at from Capital Projects is to redo the sound system in the Sanctuary in 2026 or 2027.

Annual Meeting - The excess revenue distribution plan and the 2026 budget will be discussed and voted on at the Annual Meeting on January 25th. If you have any questions, feel free give me a call at (608-222-0503) or send me an email at timc@messiahchurch.com.

Offering envelopes are available for pick up in the Gathering Space.

If you do not see your envelopes there, please contact the church office.

*Letters swallow themselves in seconds.
Notes friends tied to the doorknob,
transparent scarlet paper,
sizzle like moth wings, marry the air.
So much of any year is flammable,
lists of vegetables, partial poems.
Orange swirling flame of days, so little is a stone.
Where there was something and suddenly isn't,
an absence shouts, celebrates, leaves a space.
I begin again with the smallest numbers.
Quick dance, shuffle of losses and leaves,
only the things I didn't do
crackle after the blazing dies.*



Happy new year dear friends, As we journey into this new year, I am grateful to all of our visitors who go to our many community members who are unable to attend in-person worship any longer. As I was reading poems for the new year, I chuckled at this one. "Only the things I didn't do crackle after the blazing dies." I hear from folks time and time again of all the places they forgot to go, the items they forgot to purchase, the lists they left incomplete. But our visitors never seem to forget to go and be with their people.

As this year enters, it comes with it an absence that shouts, celebrates, and leaves space for something new. I encourage you to join me in wondering what might we fill that space with? And how can we support each other through that? Keep an eye out for one another, and as our visitation visitors teach us, never let the people in your life be forgotten.

With Christ's love, Pastor Dan

Please Welcome New Members

Sharon Carlsson

**Robert & Irene
Rauwald**

Jan Hermanson

*We're Glad You Have Chosen
Messiah as Your
New Church Home!*

Holy Baptism

Bear Steven Farrey

Child of Karina & David Farrey

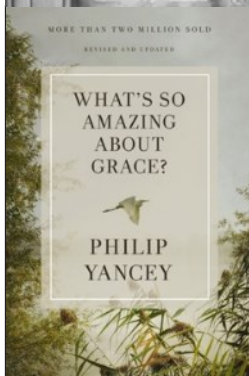
Everly Marie Wykle

Child of Morgan Counts & Ryan Wykle

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

What's So Amazing About Grace

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Women's Book Study - Thursday, January 8, 2026, we will begin 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.

Our first session of this 8-week study will begin on Thursday, **January 8th at 10:00.** We will meet for about an hour and a half to allow time for fellowship, prayer, and perhaps even a group song :)

Messiah typically purchases the books for the women's study, with participants contributing a portion of the cost. If you plan to join this study, please let Pastor Renee Kiel know or sign up on the Kiosk so we can order a book for you. You may email Pr. Renee using the email **adulteducation@messiahchurch.com**

Women's Winter Retreat at Fort Wilderness Resort

The women of Messiah are invited to join the women of St. Luke's Lutheran (Middleton) for a **Women's Winter Retreat!**

When: Friday, January 30 – Sunday, February 1
Where: Fort Wilderness Resort, Rhinelander, WI
Why: To praise God, grow in faith, renew friendships, make new friends, and enjoy time together



Cost: \$183 per person, which includes lodging; all meals on Saturday; Sunday breakfast; and access to all camp activities. No cooking required! Women often bring snacks or beverages to share in the evenings.

St. Luke's has been holding this retreat for many years and return again and again—it's clearly a joyful time of connection and renewal. They have asked Pr. Renee to lead the retreat program this year, and she told them she would be glad to if the women of Messiah could participate as well. Their response was an enthusiastic **"Yes!"**

Visit the **[Women's Ministry webpage](#)** on Messiah's website for more detailed information and a link for registration.

Mardi Gras Celebration - February 15th

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Sunday, February 15th at 11:30 AM

Messiah's Family Ministry team invites you to our Mardi Gras Celebration.

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

Please sign up so we know how much pizza to order. The signup will be 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!



Ushers Needed



The 8:15 and 10:30 usher schedules are available on the Kiosk.

The teams will continue to serve once every 5 weeks.

We are always looking for new volunteers at all 3 weekend services. We are especially looking for help at the early service.

Contact Elizabeth at volunteer@messiahchurch.com.

Your schedule is completely within your control and you can get a sub if something comes up.

Messiah's Lending Libraries

Please visit our book collections in the Meeting Room on the Lower Level in the Education Space and in the Prayer Room in the Community Room Balcony.

We have a **Social Justice Ministry Library** in which you may find a few copies of books from studies we have done, as well as books people have donated related to Racial Justice and Reconciling in Christ.

The other book case in the Meeting Room is the **Messiah's Lending Library** and contains a mix of books from the Women's Ministry, books for teens and study Bibles.

The **Prayer Room Library** has devotionals and books related to prayer.

Virtual Apple Pie Sale Benefits Many

To everyone who purchased one or more virtual apple pies in November, I say "thank you" from the bottom of my heart. Your purchase led to a record-setting sale. SAM raised \$25,530.36 in virtual pie sales in 2025. The previous record was \$14,752.00 set in 2024.

A very special "thank you" goes to the Gundlach Family Fund for matching the virtual pie donations. SAM did reserve \$2,500.00 for the food pantry at Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church-ELCA in Altadena, California, which suffered through the Los Angeles fires. The Gundlach Family Fund graciously matched this amount so Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Church-ELCA will receive \$5,000 for their food pantry.

The remaining balance of \$46,060.72 was presented to Second Harvest Food Bank during a live WMTV15 broadcast on December 10th during the Share Your Holidays 30th Grand Finale. A special "thank you" to WMTV15 sponsors for doubling this amount to become \$92,121.44. This equates to more than 200,000 meals for over 300 pantries in 16 south central Wisconsin counties.

How did this all happen? It started with YOU! One Person. One Pie. Working Together.

See you in November.



The Boomerang Bag Group will next gather on Tuesday, January 20 from 10:00 AM - 12:00 noon in the Social Hall.

Since our Boomerang Bag group started a few years ago they have made over 2,000 Boomerang Bags. That is a lot of material saved from ending up in the landfill.



Here is a breakdown of where all those bags have gone:

600 Craft & Bake Sales (last year and this year) 300 at each Craft & Bake Sale.
12 - Activity Bags for children to use in the Sanctuary
10 - Given to St. Paul's AME Church
500 - Given out at Messiah in Fall 2023, Earth Day 2024 and Spirit Day 2025
36 - Given out at the Ladies Lunch Bunch
50 - Given out to individuals
50 - Given to camp participants
24 - Given to St. Stephen's Food Pantry

They are now preparing 400 bags to be given out at Synod Assembly in May

As of December 11th, Messiah's Solar has produced 40.7 MWh, which equates to 63,141 pounds of CO2 emissions saved!

Human Trafficking Awareness Speaker

The team works for long-range change in the intersection of racial justice and homelessness, and responds to immediate needs through our community outreach team.

Jevon Diming co-preached and hosted a conversation about Pierre Outreach Services Safe Home. Her work centers on healing generational trauma with mothers and teen girls. Jevon received \$10,000 from our 2024 funds and over \$10,000 through donations and a GFF match.

Pastor Jeff was a featured speaker at a Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center fundraiser. They reduce trauma and promote healing for children and adults with intellectual disabilities who are victims of or witnesses to crime. We invited director Jennifer Ginsburg to speak at the services who told us staggering statistics about child abuse. Child abuse, domestic violence, trafficking— it's all part of the same problem.

Briarpatch received \$3,738 from the Craft and Bake Sale funds. Briarpatch assists youth and young adults experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.



Triangle Community Ministry Monday Meals

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



Healing House Meals



Thank you to those who provided meals the week of December 14-20. Our next weeks to provide meals are February 1-7 and March 1-7. Sign up on the Kiosk or contact Elizabeth at volunteer@messiahchurch.com

Our volunteers prepare a full meal for 10-12 people.

Reconciling In Christ Team

If you missed the chance to attend our RIC book studies in 2025, consider reading the titles on your own:

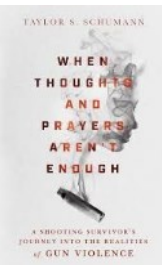


RECONCILING IN CHRIST

One Coin Found by Emmy Kegler, ELCA pastor
Transforming by Austen Hartke, ELCA pastor.

You might find a copy to borrow on our Social Justice Ministry Bookshelf in the Meeting Room on the Lower Level in the Education Space.

Racial Justice Book Study - January 11, 18 & 25



Please join us on Sunday Mornings at 9:20-10:20 AM on January 11, 18 and 25 for a book study to help us prepare for our "Safe Disposal of Guns" event planned for March 21st.

When Thoughts and Prayers Aren't Enough: A Shooting Survivor's Journey into the Realities of Gun Violence by Taylor S. Schumann.

Please sign up on the Kiosk soon so we can get your book to you, giving you time to begin reading. Books will be provided by Messiah with the opportunity to make a free-will donation of \$10 toward the cost.

For a summary of the book from Goodreads go to the [**Racial Justice Webpage**](#). We look forward to having holy conversation around this important topic!

Thank you to all who donated to the Christmas Collections:

\$1,950 was given to The Road Home for their Christmas gift card sponsorships (we sponsored 26 gift cards to individuals)

200 large pudding boxes were collected for the East Side Community Center at Truax Christmas baskets and all additional boxes were donated to the St. Stephens Food Pantry.

Many sets of towels were collected for The Triangle Ministry

Many pairs of waterproof mittens and gloves were donated for local elementary schools.

Once again, Messiah did an amazing job of seeing to the needs of those in our community and we extend our sincerest thanks to all of you!

Thanks to everyone who gave to the 56 permanent residents at the YWCA.

Your generosity is amazing! They were thrilled.

Marlene Green and Sharon Ryan helped with the wrapping, and Chip and Nancy Plummer helped deliver the gifts.



The Dignity Project

This was a a good year for the Dignity Project. Our last shipment of pads and panties was made on the last day of November when we sent 411 pads and 84 panties. This brought our yearly total to exactly 4,000 pads and 946 panties.

There was only one other month that we sent more pads and one other month that we sent more panties. Thank you to everyone how helped us make the pads or made a donation of any kind.



Our next workshop will be on January 10th from 9:30 to 11:30AM. Being able to sew is not a requirement of helping to make the pads. It helps, but there are steps that non-sewers can do. Attending the workshops or staying for the full two hours is not a requirement either. Stop by at any workshop to see what we are doing and if this is something you would like to be a part of. Contact June Nyhus at 608-516-4364 or jnyhus1@yahoo.com.

Community Outreach Team Collections

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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, January 26th
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
PAID
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 Almost Full!

The chart is on an easel
in the Gathering Space
and there are only a few
spots left.

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

Please put only your name on the chart.

The office will email/call those signed up
the month prior to find out the message
for the bulletin.

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
January 14th
11:15 AM - 1:15 PM
at Tully's II**

6401 Monona Drive, Monona, WI 53716

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