



### Our Mission Statement

Saved by the redeeming grace of God, we proclaim Christ crucified through worship, service and love of neighbor

### Our Vision Statement

We have been saved by the grace of God, redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and moved by the Holy Spirit to respond to God's love. We will proclaim to all God's saving Gospel of Christ crucified. We will worship God through Word and Sacrament, serve all in need in our communities and nurture fellow members in Christ.

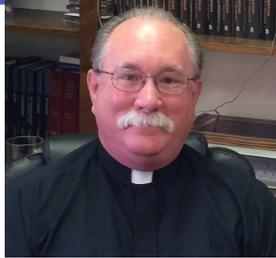
### Our Guiding Principles

Everything we do should incorporate at least three of the following Guiding Principles in support of the Mission and Vision of this Church:

- Pray
- Study
- Worship
- Invite
- Encourage
- Serve
- Give

### Inside this Issue:

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- Thank You
- Upcoming Dates



*Pastor Randy Jones*

To all the Saints at Messiah:

Happy New Year to you all. I pray that this year will be a good year for all of us as we continue to be faithful to the proclamation of the Good News here in Montgomery.

Fr. Henri Nouwen of blessed memory was once asked by a dear friend, who had many secular friends, to write a book about living a life of faith or a spiritual life to folks who live in a secular culture. As a result Fr. Nouwen wrote "Life of the Beloved" a book in which he tries to speak to secular folks about the spiritual life. The book failed in its purpose.

Fr. Nouwen's friend went to visit with him after he had sent a copy of the book to him. In their conversations his friend said this: "Although it is clear that you try to write for me and my friends from your own center and although you express to us what is most precious to you, you do not realize how far we are from where you are. You speak from a context and tradition that is alien to us, and your words are based on many presuppositions that we don't share with you. You are not aware of how truly secular we are. Many, many questions need to be answered before we are able to be fully open to what you say about the life of the Beloved." (Life of the Beloved, pg. 115)

Sadly, we Christians assume that the whole world knows something about Jesus and the story of God's lavish gift to the creation. We use a vocabulary that we know well. We use concepts that are second nature to us but are completely foreign and meaningless to the secular world. Fr. Nouwen's book was written in 1992 before the decline of the mainline churches began in earnest. You can imagine how much wider the gap between the Christian culture of the Church and the secular culture of the world is today.

When I was on internship in Charlotte, NC, a particularly Christian city, I saw a church sign that said "Jesus saves." I remember asking myself, "From what?" because that's the question that a secular person is going to immediately ask. We in the church assume too much. Our country is not a Christian country. Despite what some Christians claim, this country was not founded on Christian principles; it was founded on the principles of the Enlightenment. And so long as we make the assumption that everyone knows our story, we will fail to connect with the people with whom we come into contact.

In Jesus' day and for a long while after that, the question asked was, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Which also means, "What must I do to be saved?" That is no longer the question being asked by the average person you meet on the sidewalk; in fact there is no one question being asked. Our society has become so individualized that it is hard to find any common big question about life.

This all leaves us wondering how it is that we should proclaim the Gospel. In our culture of individuality that doesn't trust institutions we find our culture to be truly alien. We believe in the Communion of Saints which implies responsibility to and for one another as followers of Jesus. This is a foreign concept in today's secular culture. There is much more to this issue that will leave you scratching your head, but I have limited space. Suffice it to say even the missiologists (folks who are experts in mission) are still trying to figure out a strategy for the spread of the Gospel today.

In my humble opinion our Lord's strategy for ministry is a good one to follow. Jesus always took care of people's physical needs before he ever spoke to them about God. He proved to them that he cared about them and then and only then did he sit down to teach them about his Father in heaven. What that means in today's world is that we have to befriend

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the individual and show we care about them personally. Once we've done that, we can have conversations of depth with them and find out their spiritual needs. Then we can mold the message to help them see the depths of God's love for them. All of this has to be done out of our own personal story of our relationship with Jesus in a way that is not judgmental or imposing. It has to be done in an invitational way. Invite them into your life in so doing you will invite them into the life of the Beloved.

Fr. Nouwen's book missed the mark with the secular folks, but it hits the bullseye for us as followers of Jesus. I encourage you to read it. Fr. Nouwen used the eucharistic image of taken, blessed, broken, and given as the pattern for our lives. It resonates with me and I hope it will with you as well.

May God bless you and your proclamation this year.

Shalom  
Pr. Randy

### **YOU! Are Congregational Care!!**

Believe it or not, we are all involved with Congregational Care! Every Sunday we say prayers for those we memorialize, the sick, the poor, national and international leaders, our members, and military members at home and abroad. WE are Congregational Care. Here's how you can be even more involved in our care for each other and our community.

First, you can pray. For those of us with email, we receive prayer requests from Elizabeth Strickland, our Church secretary. She's our prayer field general keeping us informed of all prayer requests that come to the Church office. Do you want to do more? Then let Elizabeth or Steve Wright know that you'd be willing to call those in our congregation that do not have email, but would like to pray with us. This critical effort is job #1 for our collective care team.

Second, you can help the ill or the bereaved when we need physical support in addition to the spiritual support of the congregational prayer group. Your help might be 30 minutes on a Saturday to set up tables and chairs for a reception, visit to someone sick at home or in the hospi-

tal, or prepare a meal. If you are interested in supporting this element of our care ministry, then let Kathryn Willoughby or Steve Wright know and we will ensure you are offered opportunities to shine.

Next, we have need for help with one of the most wonderful of care acts – delivering Holy Communion for those who cannot attend Church, be they ill or home bound. Few things are so meaningful for both provider and recipient as this simple, but important service. If you could spare an hour even once a month to serve communion to our congregates, then please let Pastor Randy or Steve Wright know and we will ensure you have the training to feel completely at ease when delivering this precious service to our members.

Finally, do you like to have fun? The success of our potluck dinners indicates we like to eat! But would someone like to help with the Chili Cook-off? How about helping with the Children's Christmas Program, reception help for events like celebrating new confirmands, or the monthly birthday cake celebrating the life of our members. If you'd like to find a way to have more fun at Messiah, then talk to Keri Broughton, Kathryn Willoughby, Ricky Craig, or Steve Wright and we will help you find a way to have fun and serve our congregation.

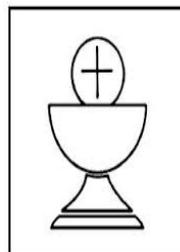
Believe it or not, these four things encompass the tasks required by our Church Constitution for our Congregational Care Ministry Team. You are already involved, but wouldn't you like to share more of your talents in one of the four areas above. I know that all the people mentioned in this note would love to involve you in our care team. I suggest to you that as we care for each other, we signal to all who learn about us just how dedicated we are to each other and our community. As we grow our care for each other, I think we will find that we will grow our Church congregation.

Yours in Christ,  
Steve Wright  
Interim Council Member for Congregational  
Care Ministry

### **Messiah Lutheran Worship & Contact Information**

**SUNDAYS**  
Worship - 8:00 & 10:45 am  
Sunday School  
Adults - 9:15 am  
Children - 9:15 am  
**WONDERFUL WEDNESDAYS**  
(resume on February 21st)

**Office Hours:** Mon-Fri 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM  
**Pastor:** Rev. Randy Jones  
**Pastor's Email:** messiahlutheran@aol.com  
**Office Staff:** Elizabeth Strickland  
**Office Email:** mlcoffice@messiahlutheranmngm.org  
**Website:** www.messiahlutheranmngm.org



**EUCHARIST EVERY  
SUNDAY  
&  
WEDNESDAY WORSHIP**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 <b>CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</b>	2 9:00 am Quilters  11:30 am Loose Ladies Lunch at Blue Moon	3 7:00 pm Choir Practice	4 9:30 am Mary's & Marthas	5	6 9:00 am Yarnovers  1:00 pm Girl Scouts  8:30 am Take Down Christmas Decorations
7  <b>Worship 8:00 &amp; 10:45 am</b>  <b>January Birthdays Celebration 9:00 am</b>	8 6:00 pm Pinks & Pearls	9 9:00 am Quilters  6:30 pm Council Meeting	10 7:00 pm Choir Practice	11 7:00 pm Bell Choir Practice	12 6:30 pm Pinks & Pearls	13 9:00 am Art Club  3:30 pm Women of Refined Gold
14  <b>Worship 8:00 &amp; 10:45 am</b>  3:30 pm Women of Refined Gold	15 <b>CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED</b>  	16 9:00 am Quilters	17 7:00 pm Choir Practice	18 7:00 pm Bell Choir Practice	19	20 9:00am Yarnovers  1:00 pm Girl Scouts  3:30 pm Women of Refined Gold
21  <b>Worship 8:00 &amp; 10:45 am</b>	22	23 9:00 am Quilters  6:30 pm Sisters of Mary Magdalene  <b>Messiah Messenger Submission Deadline</b>	24 7:00 pm Choir Practice	25 7:00 pm Bell Choir Practice	26 9:00 am Art Club Drop In	27 9:00 am Yarnovers
28  <b>Worship 8:00 &amp; 10:45 am</b>	29	30 9:00 am Quilters	31 7:00 pm Choir Practice			

## January BIRTHDAYS

3	Willie Tutt, II	18	David Causey	29	Mark O'Connor
5	Van Sievers	22	Joyce Coluburn		
8	Tina Ruffa	22	Leesa Petrey		
9	David Marz	23	Debbie Stevenson		
15	Debbie Wagstaff	25	Michael Escaravage		
15	Ethan Hataway	26	Sandra Bivins-Tutt		



## THANKS! THANKS! THANKS!



A big thank you to everyone who contributed to the E.D. Nixon Christmas Store. It was a big success again this year. A special thank you to Jim Willoughby for transporting everything over to the school on Monday. Also thank you to this year's volunteer gift wrappers: Kathryn Willoughby, Karen Brow, Peg Walker, Pat Riggins, Barb Garretson, Robin Robinson, Kathy Bartley, Lu Ann Marz, and Tara Severance. Linda Jones and Dawn Taylor greeted each class, answered questions and kept the tables stocked. You all made Christmas a little brighter for the schoolchildren!

## Thank You

The staff of Messiah Lutheran Church would like to thank all of you for your support throughout the year and your gracious and generous staff gifts presented at Christmas.

We appreciate the opportunity we have to serve you and greatly appreciate your recognition of our efforts. We look forward to working together for a great 2018!

Pastor Randy & MLC Staff

### Upcoming Planning Dates

As the New Year gets under way, it is time to look ahead to spring cleanup at Messiah. The first item is to trim the rose bushes back to a beginning height of 18 inches. The event is planned for Thursday, February 15 with a trash haul away on Saturday, February 17. May do all on Saturday, February 17. The next big day of spring clean up will be on March 17. That day will involve spreading pine straw, mulch in the rose bed and shaping up bushes and shrubs for summer growth. Need to have the place looking good for Palm Sunday on March 26 and Easter on April 1. See you then to help. Jim Willoughby, 334-300-2326, jmsnwo@gmail.com.

Mark your  
calendars for  
the  
Annual  
MLC



Saturday  
February  
10th

### Don't Forget the "Other Stuff"

Various groups/individuals at Messiah collect the following items that benefit the local community. Drop-off stations for these items are located by the church office.

- Magazines - taken to area hospitals (please make sure all addresses are removed)
- Catalogs - also taken to area hospitals (please make sure all addresses are removed)
- Soup labels - taken to Morningview Elementary School
- Greeting card fronts
- Old and new calendars - taken to Morningview Elementary School
- Box Tops for Education - collected by Jeannie Graetz for E.D. Nixon Elementary School
- Soda pop tabs—donated to the Ronald McDonald House charities
- Old and unused reading and prescription glasses—donated to the Lions Club.