

## Pastor's Page

“And a man wrestled with Jacob until day break.” It’s a great story in Genesis 32. Jacob is on a threshold. He is either going to reconcile with his brother or be killed by his brother. The family assets hang in the balance. He had an awful night camping out on the Jabbok River. Some sort of angelic being interrupted his fitful sleep. He wrestled with the being. He struggled with the being. He would not let the being go at day break until the being gave him a blessing.



As it turns out, the wrestling match was with God. God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. Israel means one who wrestles with God. In the struggle Jacob grew. Because of the struggle, Jacob emerged. Thru the struggle Jacob became what he was supposed to become. He became who he was because he embraced the struggle.

No one of us invites struggle. It’s tiring and preoccupying. Our struggles seem to put life on hold as we deal with them. We’ve all spoken or heard similar phrases about struggle: I struggle to lose weight. I struggle to stay in shape. I struggle with my diet. It’s still a struggle for me to save money. I did not think raising children would be so much of a struggle. Etc.

Luther appreciated the value of struggle. His Latin word for it was *tentatio*. He said struggle is what makes the theologian. I think he reacted against the religious system of his day which had, to a certain extent, removed struggle from faith. The church had become this all encompassing 7 sacramental system. All you had to do was participate in the events of that system in order to be a religious person. If you were concerned about a moral lapse you did not have to really face the truth about yourself. A purchase of indulgences could release you from any reckoning with self, others and God. Faith was not so much about relationship with God (and any relationship involves struggle) as much as faith was a rote participation in the system. For Luther faith was dynamic; it involved surrender and response. He struggled with the balance between liberty and responsibility. Luther viewed struggle as an essential element of the faith.

There are two things to say about our struggles. First, we don’t wrestle alone. There are all sorts helpers nearby for us. Angels are there. Community surrounds us. Family embraces us. People love us. As soon as we share our burden it automatically becomes lighter. Strength for the struggle comes to us in so far as we welcome the help that is nearby. Second, struggle makes us stronger. We never welcome struggle. It’s much more fun to just go cheer for the Browns & Buckeyes. But we only grow in so far as we struggle. Our personalities become more substantial. Our lives become more useful. Our attitudes become more helpful.

If ever we wonder why we have to deal with this or manage that, know we are in good company. Jacob wrested. He engaged what was important. He addressed what needed to be addressed. He embraced what really mattered. That is what God created us to be, wrestlers.. That is how we grow into ourselves. That is how we grow more deeply into God.

Welcome home to Messiah  
Pastor Michael Meranda

## Crayons & Glue Sticks

Thanks to all those who donated crayons, glue sticks, and money for Huron and Ontario elementary schools. If you missed out, there is one more week to donate. We have over 500 boxes of crayons and more than 300 glue sticks so far. Thanks to Kathy Nordquest for organizing this year’s effort.

## HOT NEWS IN THE CHURCH KITCHEN!

Thanks to the Congregation and the Property Committee for the new stoves in the church kitchen.

Kudos to Beckey and Homer Young, Rick Ranta, Mark Anderson, Frank Maenpa, and Ed Spencer for all their hard work in getting this job done.



## LEND-A-HAND FOOD PANTRY

Those of us that work in our food pantry would like to thank our fellow congregation members for the tremendous support given to the pantry and thrift shop. Whether you have donated items, worked the garden, made financial donations or given your time, all is appreciated. From the start of the year until the end of June we have served a total of 451 households which are made up of 1499 individuals, a good many of these are monthly repeats but some only need our services the one or two times. Of the individuals served 412 are over the age of 60 and 332 are under 18. many of our clients voice their appreciation for the service we provide and many appreciate the fresh produce we provide from our garden. Your commitment to supporting this needed ministry is much appreciated by our clients and volunteers.

Thank you for your tremendous support!

Rick Ranta and Manette Nelson



*Church Mouse Says...*

*“Fee your Faith and your fears will starve to death”*



## MEN OF MESSIAH

I would like to thank not only the Men Of Messiah but also the congregation for the tremendous work, support and donations given to the two projects we were involved in this summer. The first was VBS where we served a dinner to the participants and staff. The meals were great and the workers were greatly appreciated. The second event was the Fuller bike group that were housed at Messiah. We provided both a dinner and breakfast for the group, which was not typical of their journey. They were very thankful for the variety of foods provided as well as the quantity. I want to personally thank all of you that worked at the meals and provided the food for these meals. Your support makes all of this work very easy.

Thank you! Rick Ranta

## WORSHIP TIME CHANGE



On September 9<sup>th</sup> we change morning worship to 11:00 a.m.

On September 16<sup>th</sup> the Adult Forum begins again at 9:45 a.m.

## DAYTIMERS TO MEET

The first **Daytimers** will be Wednesday, September 19, 2018, 10:30 am. We play Minnesota Canasta. Bring a dish to share for lunch. Coffee and tea will be provided. **Everyone** is welcome.

Beckey Young



Thank you to Pastor Meranda, the Liturgical ministers, Accompanist Ed Schroeder, Jim, Pam, Emelia, and Shyanna Lindberg, Ruth Hlinovsky, the Hospitality Committee and everyone who helped with the Messiah Church Picnic, August 19, 2018.

## THEOLOGY ON TAP MEETS ➡

Pastor Meranda leads a discussion on the topic of Angels during a recent meeting of Theology on Tap. We gathered at Halcyon on Bridge Street in the Harbor. A very lively discussion was held.

**Messiah Lutheran Church**  
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**Ashtabula, OH 44004**

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*An ELCA Congregation  
in mission to Ashtabula*

# Messiah Messenger September 2018

**"We're Open Sundays"**  
**9:30 A.M. – Worship**  
**\*Time Change on Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> to 11:00 A.M.**

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