

## Pastor's Column

Living is transitioning. We make transition from diaper stage to toddler state, grade school to middle school, late adolescence into early adulthood, middle age to senior citizen. Basketball season morphs into spring training, baseball ends, football begins. Northeast Ohio squeezes remaining beauty from one season before unleashing the next. So as we love fall foliage we tune up the snow blower. Late winter we put away the snow shovel and get out the rake. Summer's intensity fades and we wonder when the last mowing will be. We marvel at the fall grape harvest munching Brandt apple cider donuts as we pull the heavy coat out of the closet to steel ourselves against winter's icy blast.

This "Messenger" arrives at the transition from 40-Days of Lent into 50-Days of Easter. Thru the years I've come to appreciate Lent, not as a dirge-season of deprivation, but as a season of depth and beauty. The purple parament set at Messiah brings its own stillness. It calmly invites prayer and reflection. The texts we hear during Lent are stories of profound human transformation; they range from Nicodemus coming out of his own inner darkness to Lazarus following the voice of Christ to come out of his tomb. Lent slides us into Easter. In Easter we meet the resurrected Christ who is responsible for all that transformation and beauty.



It is a special privilege to transition from season to season at the beauty of Messiah Lutheran Church. A participant at our recent Appreciative Inquiry event observed, "when you walk into Messiah, there's no doubt that God is here." That is so true. Messiah's uncluttered chancel enables visual focus on Baptism, Communion, and Word. That focus is sustained by stained glass beauty in the background. The interior wood ceiling (1929) seems to be saturated with all the prayers and praise of the people thru the decades. Messiah is a unique place in that on the one hand you do feel God (the altar shelf does say Holy, Holy, Holy) yet you also feel laughter, joy, spontaneity, and caring of all the people who gather here.

In a church building like Messiah we experience two dynamics. They seem to be polar opposite. Yet it is the quality of a good church that holds them together. On the one hand, to be in a church like Messiah is to be utterly alone. The quiet here isclusion from busy world. The silence here insulates us from noisy life. There is paradox in this. When we seem to be "away" in a church like Messiah we are never more connected to the world. Our prayers take us out to people and places. Our hymns remind us of heroic acts of faith. Our texts call us to action and transformation of the world. In church we are away from the world and at the same time we are never more closely connected to the world God so loves.

Be blessed these remaining days of beautiful Lent. They are taking you into the extroverted and overt days of Easter. Be glad you have opportunity to observe this transition in a building as God-full as Messiah's. Be grateful for your fellow pilgrims along the way who share this transition with you.

Faithfully your pastor  
Michael Meranda

## Audit Report

By: Candace Rodgers

The audit committee met on March 11, 2017 and conducted the annual audit of the church books and found no discrepancies or issues.

This committee is comprised of three church members that serve a three year term. The committee members are Keith Reinker, Bill Johnson and Mark Anderson. As this is Keith's last year I would like to thank him for his service.

## Church Mouse Says:

The task ahead of us is never as great as the power behind us.



## Holy Week Schedule

Event	Date	Time
Palm Sunday	April 9	11:00 am
Maundy Thursday	April 13	7:00 pm
Good Friday	April 14	7:00 pm
Easter Garden	April 15	10 to 12:00 noon
Easter Breakfast	April 16	9:30 am
Easter Service	April 16	11:00 am

## Appreciative Inquiry



About 35 people gathered to participate in the Appreciative Inquiry exercise the end of March. This exercise is a planning tool used to assist the Church Council in long range planning based on our Church's strengths and current successes.



The process was facilitated by Pastor David Anderson, a retired ELCA Pastor and Ashtabula County resident. He is pictured at the left writing on a flip chart.

This was just step one in a four step process that will help us get to a long range plan.

Church Council must now take the information shared by this group and begin formulating a plan.

## Christmas Offering

By: Lanny Anderson, for Finance Committee

Our special Christmas offering through the Advent Challenge envelopes brought in \$2,311. This was a sizeable Christmas offering and was much appreciated by the Finance Committee. Many thanks to all of the members for their contributions.

Your Finance Committee keeps track of our finances using a software package called "Powerchurch". This package tracks our cash flow and lets the committee know where we stand at any given point in time.

It also keeps our individual giving records and will tally that giving monthly, quarterly or annually. It is a powerful package and has served the Church well.

## Easter Garden

Plants for the Easter Garden are to be brought to the Church between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm on Saturday, April 15. Altar Guild members will be on hand to receive your plants and to do the arranging.

All donors are asked to put their name on a piece of paper and place it in the plant container.

Plants may be picked up after the Easter Service on Sunday, April 16.

## First Communion

Several young people have received their First Communion at Messiah. We welcomed Summer Sand, Macy Seymour and Luke Saxton to the Lord's Table recently.

All three met with Pastor to assure that they knew the details of Holy Communion prior to their first kneeling at the Lord's Table.



## Regulator Clock

Pastor has in his office an old regulator clock pictured above. This clock resided in his grandfathers bus garage for years. His grandfather owned several school buses and motor coaches that he hauled people to all kinds of outings in Wisconsin.

The clock then was in his parents attic for about 50 years. Pastor recently retrieved it and Gary Capitena's Floral Shoppe delivery man restored it and got it working and it is now tick tocking away in Pastor's office. Pastor winds it about every eight days and it keeps perfect time.

The clock was manufactured in 1906. So it is 112 years old. In addition to keeping time, it also tells you what day of the month it is.

**Lend-A-Hand Statistics**  
**February 2017**  
**87 Households Served**  
**269 People**

## 1972 Confirmation Class



In the picture above, the 1972 Confirmation Class is shown. First row, L to R, Sharon Anderson, Elizabeth Anderson, Melvin Musser, Randy Lewis, Terry Miggo, Kevin Hunt, Cheryle Peterson and Kathy Wallace. Middle row Pastor Howard Pettersen. Back row, L to R, Leslie Harris, Larry Johnson, Jack Johnson, Rusty Miggo, David Koschik, Todd Anderson, Steve Salo and Lisa Jones.

Our thanks to Cathy Carle for unearthing this classic photo and making it available to us.

### Insurance Change Saves Dollars

Your Property and Finance Committees worked together to effect a change in our insurance that covers our Church building and it's contents. For years we had been with Lutheran Trust. At the time our policy was due to be renewed we decided to seek bids from other insurance companies just to see what else was out there.

A company called Church Mutual bid and won our business. The coverage is very similar to what we had with Lutheran Trust. The switch saved us \$4,500 per year!

Pastor and Beckey Young were the drivers for this project. They got bids from three different firms including one local company. Next time you see Pastor or Beckey tell them "nice work"!

Church Mutual is headquartered in Merrill, Wisconsin. They have several other Churches in Ashtabula County that they insure.

### Letters & Emails

Dear Neighbors,

We really appreciate how you partner with us in so many ways! By filling bears, checks, donations of supplies and prayer!

God is using all of you greatly to reach out to scared, confused women and their unborn babies.

Blessings,  
Judy Christen, Mya Women's Center

Dear Pastor Meranda,

It is so kind of you to allow us to use this room in your beautiful Church. Thanks so much.

Donna

The Wednesday Naranon meeting "Gateway to Serenity".

(We received seven thank you's from the Naranon members. We just printed one that represented the group.)

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615 Prospect Road  
Ashtabula, OH 44004

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## Messiah Messenger

April 2017

**Worship:**

11:00 am - Sunday

**Sunday School:**

Adult Forum - 9:45 am Sunday



An ELCA  
Congregation  
In Mission to  
Ashtabula



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**Easter Sunday**  
**April 16—11:00 am**