

Pastor's Page

What about New Year Resolutions? It all depends, really.

A colleague spoke against the idea of making resolutions for the New Year. She said resolutions are based on the premise of one's inadequacy. A person feels she does not measure up to an arbitrary standard from society, so she resolves to meet that standard. A person is not happy with himself, so he makes a resolution. I am too fat, I'll lose weight. I am unkempt, I'll be better coiffed. I'm not self assertive, I'll be more forceful. Etc. Resolutions emerge to rectify one's inadequacy. This flies in the face of a theology of grace, she said. The fact is, God loves, accepts, and forgives us. We should not have to add the burden of a resolution. Rather, just freely step into the New Year with gratitude for grace.

It is not that Lutheranism opposes getting better. Our theology is filled with references to sanctification, becoming a more holy person. Regeneration is a big word. So is illumination. Lutheranism assumes becoming a better person is part of the dynamic of justification. The Holy Spirit calls us into relationship with God thru Christ. Holy Spirit brings us to the sacraments that engender and strengthen faith. Holy Spirit joins us to body of Christ where our rough edges are worn down and we learn to put faith into practice. We do grow in goodness for our neighbor. But it is not to enhance the self.

Culture emphasizes self improvement. In the very phrase "self improvement" the emphasis is on SELF. Luther separates from this thinking. He calls for diminishment of isolated self. Where self is autonomous and competes with God, it is harmful. When self is isolated and disregards community, it is deformed. Slay that self, he wrote. It is just Old Adam that needs to be replaced with New Adam—Christ.

Suffering is the way of being Luther suggests. He identified suffering as one of the seven marks of the church. Suffering is one of those nuanced words in Luther's Latin. It does not mean we go out and purposely invite misery on ourselves. That would be a waste of lifetime and we would become burden to others. But suffering in Luther's sense has the notion of enduring with others. It's being patient alongside of others. It's helping another to tolerate. It's strengthening another to sustain. Suffering is the direction we take toward another who is hurting. To suffer is not to avoid another in pain. To suffer is to embrace another in pain. To suffer is to be with and for other as God is here and for us. With this definition in mind, it is our life long resolution to be people who suffer. This is how the world knows we are people of God.

Blessed 2017 to all,
Michael Meranda



My phone call with Ron Philabaum

On December 1st, I had a very nice phone conversation with Ron Philabaum. Ron said it was 66 degrees with azure blue skies in Alamance that day. I can tell he is very, very happy at Alamance Lutheran Church in Alamance, North Carolina.

He exuberantly talked of the wonderful things happening there. He said Messiah and Alamance are both "Welcoming Communities" and referenced his experience (what he mentioned in his sermon here at Messiah July 1st) at Messiah of the visitor to Messiah that sat by Marcel Fleming one Sunday. Christ was definitely among us that day.

The parsonage is being completely redone, so Ron is enjoying his stay at a very nice Lutheran Retirement Home in Alamance. Ron sends his greetings to all!
—Cathy Carle



Ron and Esther Philabaum at his ordination.

THANK YOU FOR THE STAFF CHRISTMAS GIFT.

It was much appreciated.

Pastor Meranda, Cathy Carle,
Julie Hunt, Homer Young, Ed
Spencer, Randy Lewis, Debbie
Fleming, Ed Schroeder.

*Thank you Connie Cooper for your
labor of love.*

Connie decorates the women's powder room with seasonal and holiday décor.



We received a Thank You card from the Nar-Anon Group that holds regular meetings in church basement. They are most appreciative and clearly benefit from the service we provide.

Dear Messiah,

Thanks Pastor Meranda for the use of the church. We couldn't do this without your kindness. Please give thanks to the church also. Dave & Gayle

Thank you so much for your kindness. It means so much to be able to have a place to go to for our meetings. God Bless. Pat

Thank you for having a place to have our meetings. Your kindness is appreciated. Karl & Sara

Thank you for your kindness. Debbie

Thank you for the use of your room. It helps us so much. Joe

Thank you so much for the use of your church for our meetings. Sue

Thanks for the use of your room in your church. It is very kind to offer this to us. We really need these meetings. Thanks again. Donna

Thank you. Zana

Thank you for the use of the Hall for our meetings. The meetings are so very helpful. Cheryl.

Thank you for your support and the use of your church room. Lee & Natalie

Thank you for allowing us to use your church. Mark



Lend-A-Hand Food Pantry

Thanks to the support and generosity of the Members of Messiah, as well as others in the community, the food pantry has been able to continue with our commitment to serve the underserved.

Recently we received over a half of a ton of food donations from Braden Junior High. We were also able to help our clients with gift cards to help with Thanksgiving meals.

We are still getting new clients and increases in family sizes. We thank you for all of your support and great generosity.

The Pantry Staff

Meeting Reminder



Annual Reports Due
January 9, 2017
Submit to Church Office

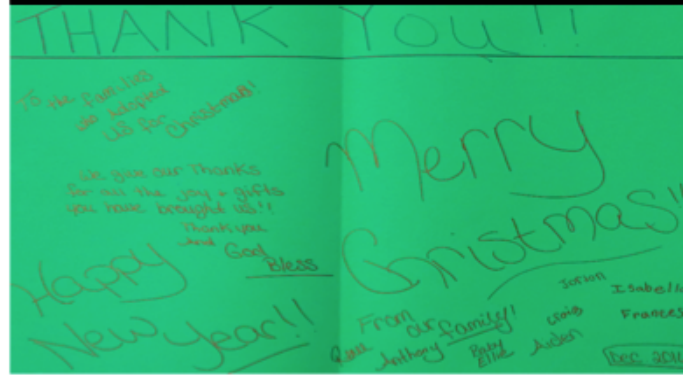
Hospitality Committee
January 9, 2017
6:00 P.M.
In the Luther Room

Annual Congregational Meeting
January 22, 2017
After the 11:00 worship service

THANKS • THANKS • THANKS

Thank you to all who gave so lovingly and generously to the Messiah Giving Tree. Over hundred ornaments were picked off the tree and additional gifts were also put under the tree for the family the congregation adopted this year. Also deserving of a thank you are those who helped deliver the gifts: Jill, Jennifer, and Cathy Carle, Sharon Knudsen, and Kurt Nordquest.

Kathy Nordquest
Cathy Carle



Manette Nelson, Jerry and Mariel Kujala share a laugh.



Food and fellowship bring members together at our monthly coffee hours.

CHURCH CANDIDS



Messiah in all its Christmas finery.

UNDECORATE THE CHURCH DAY IS JANUARY 7TH
Time TBA: Helpers needed.



Ray and Gail Burlingham and Sue Lietert enjoy a recent coffee hour after the worship service.



Sue Lietert, Becky Ollikainen, Fred Lietert, Jim Brown, and Nancy Krajec relax at the coffee hour.

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615 Prospect Road
Ashtabula, OH 44004



An ELCA Congregation
in mission to Ashtabula

Messiah Messenger January 2017

“We’re Open Sundays”
11:00 A.M.—Worship
9:45—Adult Forum

Produced for the members and friends of Messiah Lutheran Church,
615 Prospect Road, Ashtabula, Ohio 44004.

Phone 440-992-9392

Fax 440-992-1348

E-mail: messiahlutheranbulao6@windstream.net

web page: www.messiahashtabula.com

The Rev. Michael Meranda, Pastor

Phone: 440-998-7321