



St. Michael Messenger

St. Michael Lutheran Church

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December 1, 2020

Greetings Dear People of God!

As we continue to sit in anticipation awaiting the coming of the Christ Child it is hard not to get caught up in the season of Christmas before its time. Retailers seem to be working especially hard this year to get us into the Christmas spirit by decking their stores with all the decor and music of the season two months in advance. October has become the new November when it comes to Christmas sales. Needless to say, retailers don't understand the church's tradition of Christmas. Maybe this year amidst the pandemic we can stop and ask ourselves - what's the hurry? After all Christmas should last twelve days.

Christmas Day is the first of the Twelve Days of Christmas. The period is viewed as the amount of time it took the three magi, or wise men, to travel to Bethlehem for the Epiphany, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Savior and the Son of God ("epiphany" is from the Greek word for "revelation"). In my house baby Jesus is never placed in the manger before Christmas Eve and the magi make a long twelve day journey from one end of my living room to the nativity at the other end of the living room on Epiphany. These mostly quiet and contemplative twelve days have become sacred in my house, reminding me of the hush of the landscape after freshly fallen snow. It is a deeply intimate time with Christ while the rest of the world is done with Christmas. After it is over and long forgotten, John and I still sit in awe of this Child who comes to save the world.

So, what if we gave ourselves over wholeheartedly to the Twelve Days of Christmas this year? What if, like the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks, we too were surprised and rejoiced in the angel's words: "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11)?

How would our understanding of Christmas be changed if we, with great joy like the shepherds, left the tradition of Christmas being a one day event in order to keep moving towards Bethlehem, the place where the promised Christ is revealed to those that sought him. If we placed our faith in the promises of God and enter into the shepherds' excitement and eagerness this Christmas, perhaps we can regain the wonder of Christmas joy and the peace that is offered to us. As a church that belongs to Christ, I invite you to journey into these Twelve Days of Christmas. After the retailers are done and most people are sighing a sigh of relief for another Christmas past, our Saviour invites you to revel in the excitement and joy of salvation that saves us from sin.

Wait for it, and then may the calm of the Christmas season refresh you and give you hope.

Holding you in prayer, Pastor Michelle

Sharing Our Gifts: Time, Talents and Treasure

We offer with joy and thanksgiving what He has first given us--ourselves, our time, and our possessions, signs of His gracious love.

Thank you to some “quiet” servants

To Keith Gay for helping fold the November newsletter; to John Kell for researching and hiring the duct cleaning company and for staying at the church for the long day of duct cleaning; to the Community Thanksgiving Meal Coordinator, Dianne Krallman, and everyone who contributed in any way to make the Thanksgiving meal **drive through pick up only** a great success; to Dianne Krallman and her assistant Lynda Kinzey for organizing the To Our House Meals and everyone who provided food, cooked and served those attending the meal; to John Stramiello, Daniel Ferrell, Dickie Shepherd, Matt James, Jake Dennis, Doug Smiley, Dave Surface, Gary Steck, Jeff Crowder, Jay Nagle, and George Hahn for keeping the grass at the church mowed during the year and to Jim Clemens for coordinating the mowing team; to the Men in Mission (Jake Dennis, Matt James, Jeff Birch, and James Pascoe who were assisted by Wanda Pascoe and Sandy Birch) who moved one of our member's belongings; to all the members of our church council who work so hard to keep us moving in the right direction; to Gary Worley and Philip Isenhour for organizing and providing technical support for the Online Advent Calendar and to all the contributing artists for their beautiful work; and to all the Micah's Backpack and Micah's Soup for Seniors food packers.

Because of your gifts

Your generous gifts in November provided funds for the community Thanksgiving meal hand out bags, meals for To Our House, the *Taking Faith Home* subscription renewal, air purifiers for Pastor Michelle's office and the Micah's Backpack room, our annual fire extinguishers inspection, Sunday School curriculum, a canopy for the outdoor church services, greeting cards, music supplies, duct cleaning for the entire building, our benevolence to the Virginia Synod and mission partners, donations to MCEAP, Lutheran Campus Ministry, salaries for our ministerial staff, and the monthly utilities.

The **Justice and Mercy Fund** continues to assist our neighbors in the community and the world. In November, we assisted **8** families: **7** with electric bills and one with medication assistance. We encourage the congregation to continue their contributions to Justice and Mercy and to refer friends and family to use the fund as you see need.

Advent Calendar

Due to the pandemic, this year's Advent Calendar reuses the theme from the first calendar and reflects artwork prepared by our artists from years past, with some images appearing as they were first drawn, and others reworked to create new expressions for the days they represent. Type **advent.stmlc.us** in your web browser.

Chrismon Tree

The Chrismon tree has been put up and decorated. Members often make Christmas pictures in front of the tree. Without services in the sanctuary this becomes difficult. We will have the sanctuary open on for an hour each week before the midweek Advent service and again on Christmas Eve beginning at 4:00. Please enter through the front doors, one family at a time to make a family photo in front of the Chrismon tree. If these

times don't work, you can email Pastor Michelle at pastormichelle@stmcl.us to set up a time.

Congregational Meeting and Council Elections

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, December 13 at 10:00 A.M. on Zoom. The 2021 Investments in Ministry Plan will be approved and Council election results will be announced. The format for elections this year is by mail. Five members have agreed to have their names placed in nomination. They are



Lorin Crowder, Keith Gay, Cindy Lang, Jenny Kellinger and Mickey McGuigan. Three members will be elected. The 2021 Investments in Ministry Plan and ballot have been mailed to voting members and ballots will need to be received by Friday, December 11. The ballots may be mailed or put in the box by the Fellowship Hall door.

For security reasons, the Zoom meeting ID and passcode have been omitted from the online version of the newsletter. Please see the mailed version of the newsletter (or email hope@stmcl.us) for the Zoom meeting details.

End-of-Year Giving and IRA Required Minimum Distribution Information

If you are planning to make a gift at the end of the year to support the ministry of St. Michael, remember that the IRS requires all gifts for 2020 to be received by the church or post-marked by December 31, 2020. You can make gifts to support the core ministry and to other ministries of St. Michael. You can find more information about these funds or donate online at: <http://www.st-michael-lutheran-church.org/donations/>. If you need assistance with tax advantageous gifts like gifts of stock or donations of minimum distributions from an IRA, contact Doug Smiley.

If you are 70 ½ years old and need to take a Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA, you have an opportunity to support St. Michael Lutheran Church and save money on your taxes. Under the current tax law, a gift made directly from an IRA to a qualifying charitable organization counts toward your required IRA minimum distribution requirement. Making a gift directly from your IRA to St. Michael Lutheran Church allows you to support a ministry you love and to lower both your adjusted gross income and your taxable income, resulting in a lower overall tax liability. Talk to your tax advisor to find out if this strategy will work for you.

New Book by Church Member

Ben Crawford has published a new book titled *Volunteer Development and Leadership* (2020). It is a good read for church leaders and persons interested in or involved in community based nonprofit groups. The book is locally published at a cost of \$24.75 including postage. To purchase, send an email to Ben.Crawford@vt.edu or call him at 540-961-5733.

Offering Envelopes for 2021

Offering Envelopes for your 2021 offerings will be available beginning December 13th. They can be picked up at the church and will be in a plastic container outside the Bell

Tower entrance door. Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of St. Michael.

Micah's Caring Initiative Sharing the Story

Micah's Backpack



Micah's Backpack is overjoyed to announce we have **Izzy** the bus back in action. Due to generous donations and grants we have been able to fix all the mechanical issues. Izzy has been detailed inside and out. New banners and stickers from Signspot complete the makeover. Thank you to Signspot for their creativity and awesome work. Please check out MBP's Facebook page and our website: www.micahsbackpack.org.

From August 2020 until today we have had 6 different organizations hosting food drives. 38 individuals and 11 different organizations dropped off food donations for a total of more than 7,000 items. We still have 3 more groups hosting food drives for us.

We have met the Cummings/Ivers challenge for the first \$1,000 match and Connie and Joe have put up another \$1,000 to be matched. We can do this for the kids! Thank you, Connie and Joe, for your caring hearts.

On Saturday, November 14th, Izzy made its debut at the Rising Silo Brewery for the First Annual Food Cycle Event. This food drive benefits Micah's Backpack Program and The Roanoke Rescue Mission. On November 11th, the Women's Lacrosse Team from Virginia Tech brought us food they collected. The total number of donated items was 2,217. Way to go ladies!!!

Last but not least Pastor Monica from Luther Memorial has informed MBP that the Social Ministry Committee has agreed to donate \$1,500 to MBP for infrastructure needs. We are looking forward to having LMLC alongside us in this community driven ministry.

Micah's Soup for Seniors

We are continuing to pack and distribute 100 food bags to seniors at Warm Hearth. We pack the bags at the church with 4 volunteers. Four or five days later staff from Warm Hearth pick up the bags to hand out to the seniors. At this time we are packing generic bags and not offering our normal menu options as in the past. This seems to be working well and the bags contain quite a few basic items – tuna, peanut butter, soup, spaghetti, cereal, fruit cups and crackers.

We are pleased we have found a way to still help out the low income seniors at Warm Hearth and look forward to continuing our program in this manner. We appreciate everyone's support as we feed those in need. We will be collecting 16 oz. jars of **peanut butter** in December. You may drop off those donations at the church.



For the December food bags, we would like to add a small Christmas gift bag. We are collecting **slipper type socks** and **lotions** to give out. If you wish to donate either or both these items, please drop them off at the church **before** December 18th, packing day.

Thanks for all you do to help out Micah's Soup for Seniors.

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Advent Holden Evening Prayer at 7:00 P.M.

Dec 2, 2020	7:00 P.M.
Dec 9, 2020	7:00 P.M.
Dec 16, 2020	7:00 P.M.
Dec 23, 2020	7:00 P.M.

For security reasons, the Zoom meeting ID and passcode have been omitted from the online version of the newsletter. Please see the mailed version of the newsletter (or email hope@stmlc.us) for the Zoom meeting details. An invitation email, with links to the Zoom conference, will also be sent out the day of each service.

Drive-in Christmas Eve Service

Join St. Michael, Shiloh, New Mount Zion, Luther Memorial and Christ Lutheran for a **Christmas Eve Service at 5 P.M.** at the St. Michael parking lot. If you aren't able to print the bulletin from the website (lmlc.org), we will have a limited number available the afternoon of the service. You can listen to the service on channel FM 88.9 on the radio.

Women of the ELCA

Lunch and Learn via Zoom! All ladies are invited to attend



Lunch and Learn on Monday, December 14, at noon. We'll have a bit of fellowship time followed by a Christmas themed program led by Jody Smiley. The Zoom invitation will be emailed soon. If you have any questions, please contact Jody at jdsmiley29@comcast.net.



Secret Santas – We again offer the opportunity to support the Secret Santa program at Price's Fork Elementary. With many families needing some extra assistance during this pandemic it would be wonderful to spread some Christmas cheer from a Secret Santa. This year's gifts will be toys. We received the children's lists from the school in mid-November. You may shop for a child, or share shopping for a child with a friend, spending approximately \$30.00. The gifts need to be returned to church by Sunday, December 13 and will be delivered to school the next day. The gifts should be in a Christmas gift bag with child's wish list included - please do not wrap. Contact Alice Schneider 540-818-6995 or aa_schneid@yahoo.com for a list if you would like to shop for one of the kids or if you have any questions. (It's underscore between aa _ schneid)

Fall Gathering – We will have the annual Fall Gathering a bit later this year! It will be on Zoom, December 13th from 2 – 3:30 P.M. This year is the 50th Anniversary of the ordination of women in the Lutheran Church. Our Advent season **Celebration of Women in Ministry** will have a brief Advent lesson, music and will feature nine of the women in ministry from the New River Valley. Each will share with us a bit about their backgrounds, stories, and calls. We will also share a bit of what our groups have been doing recently. All women are invited to join us to visit with each other and meet or reacquaint us with these dedicated women who lead our congregations. Don't forget to send Jody Smiley (jdsmiley29@comcast.net) an email to register for the Zoom meeting.

A blessed Christmas to all. As always, thank you for your support!

Greeters, Ushers and Readers

With plans to begin in-person church services in the new year I will be scheduling greeters, ushers and readers for those Sundays. Following the guidelines recommended by the CDC for physical distancing, one greeter/usher will be stationed at the Bell Tower entrance to open the door and manage the flow of members entering the church. Two greeters/ushers will be stationed at the sanctuary entrance to hand out bulletins and the prepared sacraments and to escort the member/members to the end of the pew. One or two folks may be seated at the other end of the pew. Families in the same household can sit together. Only half the pews will be available. At the conclusion of the service members will be asked to remain in the pews. Ushers will then direct church members to the Bell Tower exit following physical distancing guidelines. Readers will be required to wear a mask. No other changes. If you would like to serve as a greeter, usher or reader

please contact Butch Akers as soon as possible at artistib@thenrv.com or call/text him at 540-267-5873.



During this time of social distancing, Micah's Caring Initiative has continued to help meet the basic human needs of children, families and elders in our area. We want to thank all the community volunteers who have kept this ministry thriving even during a pandemic.

John Stramiello, the new director of Micah's

Backpack, has done an amazing job of coordination and finding creative ways to keep the community involved. We have heard him on the radio bringing attention to the program and he has found some new fun ways to receive donations. Thank you, Thank you.

Dianne Krallman has worked closely with Warm Hearth to continue our monthly delivery of food through Soup for Seniors to identified residents. This has required some changes to our normal system but Dianne coordinated and made the changes seamlessly. Also, thanks to Sandy and Jeff Birch for helping with the monthly filling of bags.

Mickey McGuigan and Doug Smiley make several trips a month to Feeding America in Salem, VA to pick up food orders for both Micah's Backpack and Soup for Seniors. Doug also picks up food from Kroger and Food Lion to supplement donations from the community for these programs.

Fran Shepherd, Jody Smiley and Kris Wertz continue to coordinate Micah's Closet. Many thanks to all that shopped for our Fall delivery of clothes to children at Price's Fork Elementary. We were very excited to have some new shoppers. We could not do it without you. A **BIG** thank you to Cindy Dowdy. She coordinates with teachers and counselors at Price's Fork to provide us with the needed information for our shoppers.

John Kell and Mary Nickle, Director of Micah's Garden, have put in many, many hours during the growing season and the cleanup that follows. You can imagine the need for picking, weeding, watering, and cleanup that goes into a community garden. Thanks for all your hard work.

We appreciate all that those that contribute their time, talents, and funds to Micah's Caring Initiative.

Thank you from the St. Michael congregation.

Recycling Continues

Used batteries, ink cartridges, and pop tabs (for the Ronald McDonald House) are always welcome and can be dropped off at the church fellowship hall doorway. All the small bottles of shampoo, conditioner, lotion, toothbrushes and other personal hygiene items that have been donated over the past year were recently packaged into over 100 little gift bags for senior shoppers at the Montgomery County Christmas Store. Thank you for those wonderful



donations....we can always use every item!

Congratulations to...



convertible a few years ago.

Joyce Coupey who celebrated her 90th birthday on November 9. We have been blessed by Joyce's artistic talents which she has shared with us in creating the beautiful banners in the church sanctuary and our lovely church bulletin covers. Photo of Joyce at left riding in Jeff's



Sandie Worley who retired from Virginia Tech Alumni Relations on November 1. She is looking forward to future fun with family and friends and fellowship with the St. Michael folks.

Reflecting and Looking Ahead

Thank you to all those individuals who have kept the work of St. Michael going forward during this year. When the coronavirus closed down regular services, there was a pause. After realizing church work couldn't stop, members got back to work. The Church Council missed the April meeting but resumed monthly meetings in May. Since God's work had to continue, we just had to adapt.

Micah's Caring Initiative adjusted its programs to remain active. Micah's Backpack found ways to deliver to students. Micah's Closet was able to supply students with clothing in the spring and fall. Micah's Soup for Seniors adjusted the handling of packing and delivery of food and resumed the program in May. Micah's Garden had a healthy garden producing much needed fresh food for Micah's Backpack and local food banks.

Vacation Bible School was held online in July. Families of Faith began meeting online in August and adult Sunday School started up online in September. Twice monthly mid-week gatherings with Pastor Michelle provide a time to keep up with members. Happy Go Lucky folks were treated with a personally delivered packet for the September meeting.

Worship services are different with weekly online services and monthly drive-in services. Council has prepared for opening in person services and will let you know when that will begin with online services still available for those that prefer to stay home.

Many of our special projects have continued in one form or another including Easter baskets, Love offering, breakfast for Price's Fork teachers, school supplies for Price's Fork students, supplies for the Women's Resource Center, Linus blankets, Community Thanksgiving Dinner and To Our House.

There have been many challenges and new ways of doing things, but we have met the challenges and continue to look for ways to adapt to the changing times. Thank you for

staying loyal to the mission of St. Michael by faithfully sending in your offerings and attending online and drive-in services when possible. We will be back together, it will be different, but we are God's people and He will help us through this difficult time.

St. Michael Lutheran Church

December 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
29 First Sunday of Advent Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org 6:00 PM Sunday School - Zoom with Pastor Michelle	30 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	1 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	2 3:00 PM Music Lesson 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00 PM Mid-Week Advent Service via Zoom	3 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food 4:30 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	4 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	5
6 **No In-person Service** Second Sunday of Advent Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org	7 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	8 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	9 3:00 PM Music Lesson 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00 PM Mid-Week Advent Service via Zoom	10 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food 4:30 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	11 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	12
13 Third Sunday of Advent Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org 10:00 AM Congregational Meeting via Zoom to Approve the 2021 Investment in Ministry Plan 2:00 PM Women of the ELCA Fall Gathering via Zoom	14 12:00 PM WELCA Lunch and Learn via Zoom 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	15 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	16 3:00 PM Music Lesson 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00 PM Mid-Week Advent Service via Zoom	17 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food 4:30 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	18 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	19
20 Fourth Sunday of Advent Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org	21 7:00 PM Longest Night (a gathering for bereaved persons to feel God's presence) via Zoom	22 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	23 7:00 PM Mid-Week Advent Service via Zoom	24 12:00 PM Pre- recorded Christmas Lessons & Carols available at www.lmlc.org 5:00 PM Drive-In Worship Service with Communion	25 Pre-recorded Christmas Lessons & Carols available at www.lmlc.org	26
27 Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org	28 3:00 PM Steck-Tam Wedding Rehearsal	29 10:00 AM Steck-Tam Wedding	30	31	1	2