



St. Michael Messenger

St. Michael Lutheran Church

2308 Merrimac Road

Blacksburg, VA 24060

540.951.8951

hope@stmlc.us

www.st-michael-lutheran-church.org

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Happy New Year!

The feast of Epiphany (“manifestation”) concludes the Christmas season on January 6th every year. It is the celebration of God’s glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians that glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. This is extraordinary news not only for us but for the entire world.

We often think about salvation in personal terms. When I counsel people the theme I hear most often is that of works righteousness: What I have done or how I have lived in hopes of securing my own salvation? Works righteousness is a form of self-righteousness that believes that our salvation can be earned and/or sustained by doing good works. It says we can make ourselves righteous before God by our obedience.

Yet when thinking about salvation as a gift for all people we still might be thinking way too small. My husband John will tell you that one of my favorite questions to ask the congregation is, “Who always acts first?” and the answer is God/Jesus/Holy Spirit - the Trinity - or any combination as long as one is included. He will also tell you my favorite saying is, “God acts on behalf of the whole of creation not just the individual person, but for the sake of all that God has created.”

We read that the magi were led by a star to Bethlehem so they could bring their gifts to Jesus and proclaim him King. This means God uses more than human actions because even the stars of God’s creation work to help fulfill God’s purposes, thus telling us redemption is not just for some people, or all people, but for all creation. Understand that God loves what God has created and therefore all creation celebrates, and all creation works, to bring God’s truth into existence, including bringing the magi to Jesus and the reconciliation of all creation, including us.

Perhaps, not unlike us, while the magi traveled their journey of faith they sometimes found the weather unusually favorable, and at other times not so favorable. Yet a gentle wind kept pushing them toward their destinations just as the Holy Spirit keeps nudging us toward ours. These are just some of the ways that creation celebrates the birth of the one who restores all that is broken in humanity, and in the earth and seas.

The new year is a good time to take pause, examine your life and commit it anew to God and to all God has created. Beloved, you are sent out by the Holy Spirit to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God’s love with all that God has created.

I have completed my first year with you here at St Michael. John and I have been blessed beyond measure to be on this holy journey with you. Thank you!

In the abiding hope of the empty tomb, 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 everyone who donated and helped in any way with the Thanksgiving meal and with To Our House; to all who helped with the Christmas Eve drive-in service; to the Chrismon tree decorators; to Butch Akers, and Gary and Sandie Worley for decorating for the Christmas Eve Service; to Keith Gay for helping fold the December newsletter; to Judy and Jim Clemens for counting the weekly offerings; to Michelle Berg for writing the *Weekly News and Notes* emails; to Marty Gordon for keeping our space clean.

Because of your gifts

Your generous gifts in December provided support for Thanksgiving Meal supplies, To Our House supplies, the *Taking Faith Home* weekly devotional renewal, office supplies, stamps, Advent envelope supplies, Sunday School supplies, *Christ in Our Home* and *Hope-Full Living* devotional subscription renewals, handbell repair, our benevolence to the Virginia Synod and mission partner, donations to MCEAP, Lutheran Campus Ministry and salaries for our ministerial staff.

The **Justice and Mercy Fund** continues to assist our neighbors in the community and the world. In December, we provided assistance to **9 families**: **4** with electric bills, **3** with rent, **1** with heating bill assistance and **1** with a water bill. 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.

COVID-19 Community Resources

Stay at Home Virginia: <https://www.stayhomevirginia.com/>

Looking Out for Each Other NRV: <https://sites.google.com/view/lofeonrv>

Food Access Network Resources: <https://cfnr.org/partnerships-initiatives/fund-for-the-nrv/thrive/resources/>

New River Health District Hotline for COVID-19 Information:
540-267-8240

Be Well Stay Safe

2021 Offering Envelopes Available

Offering envelopes for your 2021 offerings are available and can be picked up at the church. They are in a plastic container outside the Bell Tower entrance door. Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of St. Michael.

Congregational Meeting

The Congregational meeting on December 13 elected three Council members. Lorin Crowder and Keith Gay were elected to a first three-year term. Mickey McGuigan was elected to a second three-year term. Thank you to all those who participated in the voting. The turn-out was great. The election was different from previous years because of the coronavirus. We have since learned that the process we used of voting by mail-in ballot does not follow the Church Constitution. We will work with the Synod Office to learn the proper way to do virtual voting in the future. We are learning as we adapt to new ways of taking care of business. Thank you for your patience and support.

Thank you to Elizabeth Graves and John Kell as they have completed their three-year terms on Council. They have each given many hours and shared their talents with the congregation. When John was asked if he would go for a second term he said no, he would like to give others a chance to learn about the workings of the church. If you haven't served on Council think about the possibility in a future year.

The Investment in Ministry Plan for 2021 was approved at the meeting. Thanks to everyone who took time to study the plan and ask questions. We are continuing to support Bedford Lutheran. They are doing drive-in worship and their attendance is going up. They have some exciting ideas for what comes next. The Synod was going to welcome them into the Synod as an organized congregation at the 2020 Assembly which we didn't have, but Bedford is on its way to being a self-supporting congregation. This will be our final year of support for this congregation and the Synod will suggest another church to support in 2022. Thank you for supporting Bedford Lutheran as they have grown the congregation. It was through the generous support of other congregations that allowed St. Michael to grow as a new congregation 52 years ago.

<p>Directory Update: We will be updating the church directory in January. If your address, phone number or email has changed, or if you'd like a new picture for the directory, please notify Suzanne at suzanneg@stmlc.us or call the church office.</p>

Committee Reports Due

Begin thinking about the annual committee reports for the 2020 Annual Report. They are due February 15 to the VP/Secretary who will be selected at the next Council meeting.

Micah's Backpack Sharing the Story

Needless to say, 2020 has presented some challenging obstacles for all of us. This includes Micah's Backpack Program. Through it all, the people of St. Michael, the many volunteers and donors and our community have all stepped up in these trying times and assisted MBP in continuing to provide food for our students and their families. There are not enough words or phrases to express my sincerest gratitude for each of you. There are new and exciting things ahead of us for MBP coming in 2021. I pray each of you and your families have a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and the most joyous Holidays. Blessings!



Micah's Soup for Seniors



We are continuing to pack and distribute 100 bags to the seniors at Warm Hearth. We are still packing the bags at the church with 4 volunteers after which the staff at Warm Hearth picks up the bags about 4-5 days later to distribute to the seniors. At this time we are packing generic bags and are not following our normal “menu” option as in the past; however, this seems to be working well and the bags contain quite a few of the basic items - tuna, peanut butter, soup, spaghetti, cereal, fruit cups and crackers.

We are excited 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 **tuna** (small cans) in January and February. You may drop off donations at the church.

For the January food bags, we would like to add a small gift bag. We were not able to get the bags together in time for the December bags so we have moved the gift bags to January. We would still like to collect “slipper” type socks and lotions to give out in those bags. Food Lion donated over 100 boxes of tissues that we will add to the bags. We will not pack these items until January 12th, so if you wish to help by donating either or both of these items, you can drop them off at the church before the 12th. We will use a Thrivent grant to buy some of those items also.

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

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Drive-in Service

Join St. Michael, Shiloh, New Mount Zion, Luther Memorial and Christ Lutheran for drive-in services this winter at the St. Michael parking lot. Services will include communion. Join us on Sunday, **January 24th at 10 A.M.** for the next service. If you aren't able to print the bulletin from the website (lmlc.org), we will have a limited number available the morning 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, January 18, at noon. We'll have some fellowship time followed by an always interesting program led by Jody Smiley. The zoom invitation will be emailed soon. If you have any questions about how to connect, please contact Jody at jdsmiley29@comcast.net.



Secret Santas –We had a great response to the Secret Santa program for Price’s Fork Elementary School. Twenty gift bags were filled for children delighted to have an extra toy or two or books under their tree. We really appreciate the generosity of all of you who so willingly volunteer to participate in these projects that offer assistance to our community. Big thanks to Jody Smiley and Fran Shepherd who organized the bags, added some extra treats and to Fran who delivered them to the school.

Fall Gathering – The Women of the ELCA (WELCA) had a great turnout for our zoom Advent Season Gathering – *A Celebration of Women in Ministry*. Over thirty women enjoyed hearing from six area women pastors of their many varied and amazingly different, yet also similar, stories of their faith journeys. We also had a surprise visit – via zoom – from former St. Michael Pastor Linda Mitchell Motley who is now retired in Panama! Thanks to Jody Smiley, also our zoom organizer, and Sandy Birch, for their meaningful lesson about Elizabeth and Mary, women of the Bible. We also heard from some of the women who described the many varied projects their groups have accomplished, albeit a bit differently during this pandemic. It was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon celebrating many tales of faith!

Remember: send Jody Smiley (jdsmiley29@comcast.net) an email to register for the zoom Lunch and Learn meeting.

A Very Happy, especially Healthy, New Year to all. Thank you for your ongoing support!

Souper Bowl Sunday, February 7

The Annual Souper Bowl of Caring will take place on Sunday, February 7. St. Michael will join thousands of churches across the country by raising money to help fight hunger. Instead of bringing \$\$ to place in the Soup Pot at church the congregation is asked to contribute by mail or online via the church website. Food for Micah’s Backpack and Micah's Soup for Seniors can be dropped off at the church. Suggested items are: canned vegetables, fruit cups, Easy Mac, tomato soup, vegetable soup, chicken noodle soup and ravioli. The money and canned goods will help relieve hunger in our community. Thank You!



Online Winter Celebration 2021 Registration Open! January 22-24, 2021

Winter Celebration is our annual weekend faith-formation retreat for youth in 9th through 12th grades and adult leaders. This year we will gather ONLINE for Large Group experiences with lots of singing and skits and fun and Small Group experiences with lots of new friends, games, conversation, more games, and faith sharing! **Deadline to register is January 5, 2020.** To register after this date, please contact Rev. Dave Delaney at delaney@vasynod.org, or 540-529-6893.



For more information, and to register online for Winter Celebration, visit www.vasynod.org/event/winter-celebration

Congratulations to...

Jody Smiley, who will retire from Virginia Tech on December 31. Jody has worked for over 40 years as an analytical chemist, with 22 of those years in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department at Tech. She and Doug hope to travel, play golf and enjoy the next phase of their life together.



**“Celebrate endings—for they precede new beginnings.”
—Jonathan Lockwood Huie**



We Are Church Together



Your Mission Support Makes Ministry Happen



MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!

From the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop

All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice ever sets us free.

All Earth is Hopeful by Alberto Taule', ELW 266

As we approach the end of 2020, all the earth is hopeful as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth and look ahead to a day when the pandemics we have faced in the last year will be no more.

2020 has brought unexpected sorrows and yielded remarkable creativity and ministry. Together as a Synod, we launched digital ministries, created parking lot worship, navigated health and safety concerns, fed the hungry, and supported God's people in times of great need.

Thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for your generous mission support to the Virginia Synod. Thank you for being the church together for the sake of the world.

May God's presence be with you and your congregation as we celebrate the joy of Christmas and undertake God's creative task in 2021.

Peace and hope,

Pastor John Wertz, Jr.
Assistant to the Bishop
Director for Evangelical Mission
Virginia Synod, ELCA

St. Michael Lutheran Church

January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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
3 Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org	4 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	5 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	6 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	7 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 4:30 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	8 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	9
10 Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org 12:15 PM Congregational Church Council Meeting 6:00 PM Sunday School - Zoom with Pastor Michelle	11 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	12 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	13 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	14 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 4:30 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	15 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	16
17 Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org 6:00 PM Sunday School - Zoom with Pastor Michelle	18 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 12:00 PM WELCA Lunch and Learn via Zoom 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	19 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	20 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	21 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 4:30 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00 PM Women's Bible Study via Zoom	22 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	23
24 Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org 10:00 AM Drive-In Service at St. Michael 6:00 PM Sunday School - Zoom with Pastor Michelle	25 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	26 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	27 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	28 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 4:30 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00 PM Women's Bible Study via Zoom	29 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	30
31 Watch the Sunday Service using Link found on LMLC.org 6:00 PM Sunday School - Zoom with Pastor Michelle	1 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	2 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	3 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 3:00 PM Music Lesson 6:00 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack	4 8:45 AM Mother's Morning Out 4:30 PM Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00 PM Women's Bible Study via Zoom	5 10:00 AM Delivering Micah's Backpack Gifts of Food	6

Updated Calendar Information is available online at: www.st-michael-lutheran-church.org