



Messiah Lutheran Church

Red Lodge, Montana

MESSIAH LUTHERAN **CHURCH**

Light in the Beartooths ~ Red Lodge, MT

Pastor Ben Cherland





Light in the Beartooths

MESSIAH LUTHERAN NEWS

Greetings Messiah, and welcome to the new year!

Even as Thanksgiving approaches and November lingers a little while longer, we have ended one year and begun another. As quietly as this new year has begun, anticipation is in the air, for this year holds a great deal in store for us, as new years always do.

Advent is the season that begins the Church year, and it always comes as a bit of a jolt for me: From the euphoria of Reign of Christ Sunday, the culmination of the liturgical calendar, to Advent, a stark and quiet season of anticipation. With the natural world reflecting the spirit of Advent in the growing dark, the bleakness of bare trees and brown landscapes, the Church puts before us this season of expectant hope. What better way to begin a new year.?

Our anticipation this year is focused on the long-awaited start to the construction of our new building. The excitement we might be feeling for that work to begin might, at times, threaten to overtake the focus of this season - anticipation of God's great gift to the world, the coming of our Savior. Christmas offers a similar temptation every year - "Jump to the eggnog already!" But in the quiet and dark of Advent the Church offers us pause, stillness, and growing contact with our deep need (as individuals, as a congregation, as a global community).

I encourage you this year to settle into the opportunity Advent affords for reflection, discernment, stillness, sabbath and brave contemplation of the need you know. What God is up to in the still and the dark this season is born of such need. Resisting the rush toward the holidays and the start of building season will be difficult. But slowing down and attending generously to the questions around your own need will open you all the more to the wonder of where and in whom all our need is finally fully met.

It's my hope that our midweek gatherings during Advent this year will help you to do this. These services will be different from our Sunday morning liturgy. In a simple meal together with a simple service to follow we will walk together through Advent, keeping near both our need and the expectant hope of God coming to meet it.

Pastor Ben

Deeper understandings: Christmas—God “deep in the flesh”

Thus, it is rightly and truly said: God is born, was nursed or suckled, lay in the crib, felt cold, walked, stood, fell, wandered, ate, drank, suffered, died, etc. (Martin Luther's Table Talk).

Such “talk” around Martin Luther's table that day is not heard as much around our tables. Perhaps this is because it's about the body, which comes uncomfortably close to topics we are taught to avoid in polite conversation: religion, sex, politics and even money.

As we prepare once again to celebrate the joyous festival of the incarnation, our rich heritage can draw us deeply into a sometimes avoided meaning of Christmas. Luther's theology has often been characterized as a bold proclamation of God “deep in the flesh.” This clear and consistent emphasis on the bodily dimension of our faith continues to be one of the hallmarks of our Lutheran tradition.

In her book *Enfleshing Freedom* (Fortress, 2009), author and theologian M. Shawn Copeland reminds us: “In theology the body is a contested site—ambiguous and sacred, wounded and creative, malleable and resistant—disclosing and mediating ‘more.’ ” This seems to be true not only in theology but in anthropology, in our lives. That we struggle with, for example, female bodies, black bodies, older bodies, disabled bodies, transgender bodies, deteriorating bodies, covered bodies, naked bodies, dead bodies suggests these are all “contested sites.”

The challenges we have in addressing the complexity of our bodies (as individuals and as communities, even as the body of Christ), make it difficult for us to address the complexity and mystery of God's body, conceived by the Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, “made man.”

Made man? Yes. What divine being is also willing to be human (Philippians 2)? Our God, our incarnate God.

There is no denying that Christianity is the religion of the incarnation. Christians' core belief is that God entered the human world of bodies and senses in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, whose historical life is normative in its claim about the nature of God and possibilities for human existence (Margaret Miles, ; Wiley-Blackwell, 2004).

It matters for our theology, yes, but also for our faith and for our lives that we have an incarnate God, an enfleshed God, who became human—not just a human, in general, but a human with particularities that make a difference. The Word was made flesh in what some have called “dubious circumstances” and what another, a hymn writer, has called a “mean estate” (you'll likely be singing the latter this Christmas season). It's important and helpful to name a few of the particularities:

- Our God had an unwed mom.
- Our God was born “without the agency of a man.”
- Our God had a human dad who had to be convinced to adopt one that was not his own.
- Our God was a homeless refugee born in a makeshift delivery room.

We name the fleshy particulars to help us avoid the temptation to prioritize the “soul” as our true selves. God is the prototype for our life together, which makes the body central.

- We believe the Word became flesh.
- We believe God was “nursed or suckled, lay in the crib, felt cold, walked, stood, fell, wandered, ate, drank, suffered, died.”
- We believe we are made in the image of an incarnate—an enfleshed—God.
- We believe in the resurrection of the body.

The incarnation is as edgy and scandalous as the crucifixion and resurrection. The incarnation is as edgy and scandalous today as it has been for 2,000 years. To counter our tendency to render Emanuel's body-ness a taboo subject around the dinner table, we boldly declare in our weekly meal: “The body of Christ given for you.” God with you. Emmanuel. God for you. Jesus.

Ultimately, the Word becoming flesh is not just table talk—it's a way of being. God's willingness to “empty himself by being born in human likeness” by “being found in human form” (Philippians 2) changes how we encounter and interact with other bodies. We are changed by one whose ministry focused on the care of actual bodies, as Jesus proclaimed release to captives, gave sight to the blind and let the oppressed go free (Luke 4).

As people of the incarnation, we take our lead from God as we embrace the fleshiness of the world and of our own experiences. We are freed for being grateful for our bodies. We are freed from denying our body's aches and pains. We are freed from having to prioritize one type of body over another. We are freed for being the body of Christ.

GOD HAS GIVEN US A MISSION

Remember the Beatles? John, Paul, George, Ringo! I was into it. I had Beatle boots, love beads and granny glasses. My big brother gave me a model of Paul (the cute Beatle) for Christmas one year. It was one of those paint-it-yourself kits. I knew the lyrics to the Beatles' hits better than I knew Martin Luther's Small Catechism. The early hits were pop and upbeat: "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "A Hard Day's Night." Even later "Yellow Submarine" was still whimsical.

But then the Beatles got older, and the world changed. Vietnam, the Kennedy and King assassinations, the urban riots, the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention. Innocence—for those of us who had that luxury—was gone. Skepticism, even cynicism, was the lens through which the world was seen. A lot was broken, including trust in institutions and the church.

In 1971, John Lennon's hit "Imagine" came out. It was evocative and, I'm sure, was meant to point us to the possibility of a better future. I found it disturbing. A world without religion. No heaven. No hell. No countries. No possessions. As if excising these things would cure humanity and the world would be as one.

There was and is enough brokenness in the world to go 'round. But the brokenness is not outside of us—in institutions, politics, religion—it is within us. The only way to construct utopia is to get rid of people. Imagine.

Except God has a different way. It is the way of Jesus. It is the way of love. It is the way of life. You see, God so loves the world and all of creation and all of us. God is right down with us in all of our messiness. In Jesus, God has reconciled the world to God's self, redeeming it and us in spite of our rebellion. We can stake our lives on the relentless, faithful, powerful, tender love of God.

God has a different way. It is the way of love. It is the way of life.

During the pandemic we dreamed great things and imagined an ELCA that could envision a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation. We prayed and still pray that the Spirit will activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. And we set a goal—engage a million new, young and diverse people by the end of this decade. Why? Because the world deserves to hear the gospel. The world needs to look beyond itself. There is a heaven.

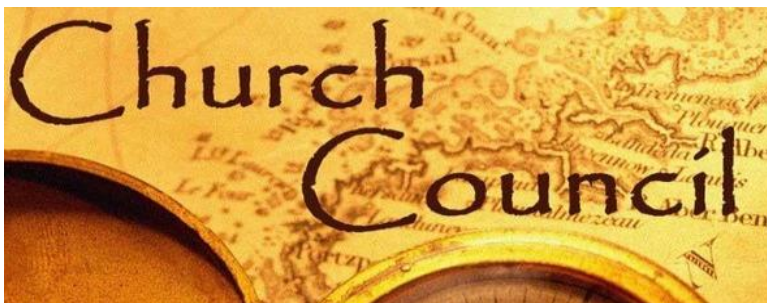
Clearly this is not the work of the churchwide organization alone, nor of any one congregation. It is a mission for all of us. There are so many people who do not know that they need to know Jesus. There are so many people who think that God's grace is too good to be true. There are so many people searching for meaning. All are beloved by God. God longs to draw all people to Godself, to clean us up and wash our faces so that God's image shines clearly from all of us, so that we can see God's image shining from each other.

New, young and diverse? What about those of us who are already here, have always been here, who have been doing the work and paying the bills? We are the 99 sheep that didn't go astray. We are the older brother who stayed home and worked hard. Of course we are!

We have lived in the love of Jesus and walked in Jesus' way. We know the freedom of the Christian. We don't live in an unforgiving world, but in a redeemed world with a future. Why wouldn't we want to share that with as many people as we can?

Even a million new, young and diverse people—why stop there? The flock was not whole until the one lost was found. The older brother did not realize that all his father had was already his as a gift. This is true for us. God has given this mission to invite more people into the way of Jesus. Imagine.





Church Council met on November 9th. Highlights are below. Full meeting minutes and financials can be found on the bulletin board.

- Heard final results of the stewardship drive
- Approved 2022 budget to present to the congregation
- Approved letter from the building oversight committee (via email) to send to the congregation
- Mid-week Advent services will be held on Wednesdays beginning Dec. 1. A soup supper will start at 5:45; service will start at 6:30.
- Adult Forum based on Jim Johnson's book "Crossing the Bar" will be in Jan/Feb
- Set date for Annual Meeting for February 6th.
- There will be 2 openings on Council next year.
- Our next Council meeting will be held on Dec 14th to avoid Christmas week.

We meet again December 14th at 4:30 PM



Fragrance Free Zone

Please help us to accommodate those who are chemically sensitive to fragrances and other scented products.

**In an effort to make Messiah comfortable and welcoming for everyone we ask that you refrain from using strong personal scents or perfumes.
Thank you.**

If you have something you'd like to be included in our monthly newsletter, please send an email to redlodgemessiah@gmail.com with the blurb you want included, no later than the 25th of the month.





Let's Get Ready to Build!

On Sunday, November 21, the congregation approved the cost to build and to take a loan IF needed. Thank you for all of your support and we hope you are as excited as we are. Next steps for the Building Oversight Committee are to finalize building plans, look for ways to close the financial gap and explore alternative energy sources.

Do you have a passion for solar, wind or water power? Are you a party planner? Like to help with fundraising events? Maybe you are skilled in writing press releases or applying for grants. Many hands make light work, and we want ALL OF YOU to somehow be involved in all that needs doing to make this move.

Another very important step in the build process is saying farewell to our current church building. What do we take with us and to what do we say farewell? We are looking for a few people interested in going through the church belongings and making such a list.

Over the upcoming holidays, please consider how you can help with all of the various parts of our move. Contact the church office and let Melinda know what interests you. Your engagement with this process is important: We won't do this work nearly as well as we want to without it. And just think, your involvement will make it all the more meaningful when you walk through those double doors for the first time. Teams will be formed after the first of the year and we're saving a spot for you.

**"I will build my church"
~Matthew 16:18~**

Women's Safari Book Club

Date: December 16th

Time: 3:00 PM (Ongoing until Spring)

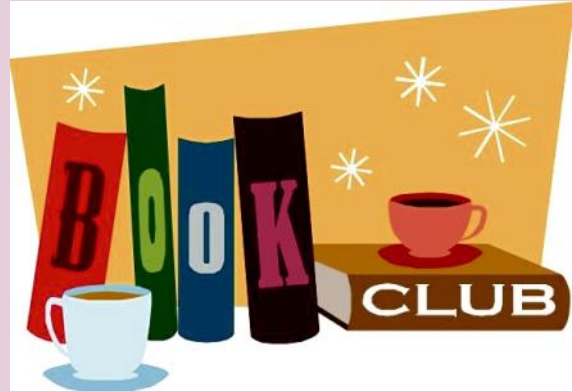
Book: Trading Christmas

Author: Debby MaComber

Facilitator: Donna Downing

Location: TBD

Contact host, Marla Ebel, at 426-8277 if you need more info



How We Worship Together Safely

These are the guidelines under which we will remain open.

- . Masks will continue to be required**
- . The vaccine and the booster are highly recommended**
- . Washing hands regularly and often, even and especially at church, is strongly encouraged**
- . If you feel unwell in any way, please stay home (Zoom will continue to be available)**
- . If you feel uncomfortable at all gathering in person, please stay home**

We truly all share the responsibility for the health of our community.

Peace be with you,

Pastor Ben

DECEMBER 2021

Fall Cleanup

Thanks to everyone who helped rake leaves and pine needles at the church!

Thanks to Lavonne and Jack Ervin for cleaning out the gutters. We are in good shape for winter.



A **HUGE THANK YOU** to Jim and Jeri Kyner for responding so quickly and working so hard to cut up the fallen tree that was blocking the road.

We appreciate you both!





December's Special Offering:



Freedom in Christ Prison Ministry
at Montana State Prison

Freedom in Christ Prison Ministries is an ecumenical worshipping community inside the walls of Montana State Prison (MSP) at Deer Lodge, Montana. We welcome ALL Christians to join us in worship, Bible studies and pastoral visits.

Our Freedom in Christ Mission

"Transforming lives at Montana State Prison through the power and presence of Jesus Christ."

How can we be a part of FIC Prison Ministry? Many ways!

- We can **visit the prison** during an event such as worship or Bible Study. **"I was in prison and you visited me."** Matthew 25:36. We will arrange a visit to Montana State Prison this summer, COVID protocols permitting. ***"Attending a worship service or a Bible study is a very special event for both the guys and you. We guarantee you will be blessed beyond measure!"***

Pastor Rob Nedbalek

- We can **pray for the inmates** – for their openness to receive God's and our love; for their safety; for their families; for their relationships with God, their families, prison staff, and fellow inmates; for their future; and that they be strong.
- We can **attend worship** at Messiah the Sunday after Christmas to experience and share the Christmas service held annually at MSP. Bring friends!
- We can **attend the Sunday Forum** following worship on Sunday, December 19th. Pastor Rob Nedbalek will provide a brief description of FIC Prison Ministry including details of the services he provides and a question and answer period.
- We can qualify to **become volunteers** at MSP. As volunteers, we can visit whenever there is an event. Otherwise, we are allowed a visit once every six months.
 - We can **provide financial support**. FIC is wholly supported financially by the congregations and individuals within the Montana Synod. Pastor Rob is uniquely called as the full-time pastor for the FIC congregation. While the facility has been locked down due to COVID he has been the 'go to' person to comfort dying inmates, provide grief counselling, perform funerals, and was the only pastor continuing chapel services even to small (one and two person) groups.

Prison ministry has proven to reduce inmate violence and lower recidivism rates. By better understanding FIC we can help Pastor Rob in this mission even more broadly than in the past.

~Thank you for your donations~

Allen Hansen

Bible Study



Every Tuesday

Women's Group

at Messiah

**10:00 a.m. In person and
online via Zoom**

**Contact Andrea Holmen if
interested**

Ongoing Prayer Concerns

Lowell Anderson
Marphel Ballentine
Manuel Cabanas
Amy Crane
Lenny Erickson
Brooke Feister
Larry Fry
Nancy Gasparro
Nathan Green

Ruth Hilderman
Andrea Holmen
Jim Johnson
Rick Koski
Neil Laird
Ray Loyning
Edythe Miller
Shirley Overton

Tallu Quinn
Kenneth Rich
James "Bud" Ridenour
Dick Rosekelly
DJ Rosekelly
Marianne Schapendonk
Julie Schweitzer
Josh Wilker
Jim Zenz



PRAYER REQUESTS

**For prayer requests, contact the church office at
446-2430 or messiahprayers@gmail.com**

with specific information and permission from the person you are adding.

DECEMBER 2021



12/8 Alex Elsberry

12/16 Laurie Grygiel

12/14 Michael Mullaney

12/18 Megan Gildehaus

12/14 Allen Hansen

12/30 Dan Elsberry

12/15 Suzi Hansen



12/16

Jeff & Renee Gildehaus

12/22

Joe & Marietta Johnson

**Join us for a going away party for
Herb and Myrna Hunt
after worship on December 12th.**



**Join us for the Epiphany Tree burning
party on January 6th at 6:00 PM on
the corner lot of our Hwy 78 land.**

DECEMBER 2021

On Wednesday December 1st, we had our first Midweek Advent soup dinner and worship service. Join us for the three remaining Wednesdays before Christmas Eve (the 8th, 15th, and 22nd) at 5:15 for dinner and worship at 6:00 pm.

For all the Sundays during Advent
the color is blue.

For Christmas Eve Service on the 24th and
Christmas Service on the 26th, the color is
white.



Join us for Christmas Eve Services on December 24th at 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm



Poinsettias are for sale! These inexpensive, red-leafed plants are a lovely way to adorn our sanctuary during Advent and your own home for Christmas. Ordering one in memory of a loved one is a lovely way to adorn both the beauty of both our own sanctuary and your own home during Advent and Christmas.

**To order one or more, contact Jeri Kyner at (406) 446-3323
or email: jerikyner@icloud.com**

Christikon Clips

December 2021



Advent and Christmas Blessings

In the season of Advent, we join together to receive Jesus into our lives. In the traditional Advent wreath we light the first Candle of Hope – hearing the prophecy and filled with expectation of Jesus birth; the second Candle of Peace – prepare the way for peace on earth and goodwill to all; the third Candle of Joy – rejoicing with the shepherds as they heard the message; the fourth Candle of Love – the angels proclaim His coming; the fifth Candle – Christ Candle – receiving Christ as the center of our lives.

May you be filled with expectation, rejoicing, peace, and love in Jesus Christ.

It is the mission of Christikon to awaken and nurture faith in Christ— exploring God's creation and the adventure of life together.

CHRISTIKON • 1108 24th Street West • Billings, MT 59102
406 656-1969 • secretary@christikon.org •
www.christikon.org



Messiah Calendar—December

<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>
			1 Midweek Advent Service Soup at 5:45 pm Worship at 6:30pm	2	3	4
5 9:30 AM Worship Advent II	6	7 10:00 AM Women's Bible Study	8 Midweek Advent Service Soup at 5:15 pm Worship at 6:00pm 	9	10	11
12 9:30 AM Worship Advent III	13	14 10:00 AM Women's Bible Study Council Meeting 4:30	15 Midweek Advent Service Soup at 5:15pm Worship at 6:00 pm 	16 Safari Book Club 3:00 pm	17	18
19 9:30 AM Worship Adult Forum - Freedom in Christ Prison Ministries Advent IV	20	21 10:00 AM Women's Bible Study	22 Midweek Advent Service Soup at 5:15 pm Worship at 6:00 pm 	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE Services at 5:00 pm AND 9:00 pm	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS 
26 9:30 AM Worship Christmas Service 	27	28 10:00 AM Women's Bible Study	29	30	31 New Year's Eve 	WELCOME 2022!

DECEMBER 2021

Messiah's Mission:

"Live by Faith, Share Christ's Love, and be a Voice of Hope"



HOW TO CONTACT US AND STAY IN TOUCH:

Church Office: 406-446-2430

Office Hours: Administrative: Mon-Thurs. 9-1

Pastor's Office Hours:

Monday: 9:00-4:00

Tuesday : 9:00-4:00

Wednesday: 9:00-3:00 (Text Study 10:00-11:30)

Thursday: OFF

Friday: 9:00-4:00

Saturday: 12:00-4:00

Sunday: 8:00-12:00

Pastor's Cell Phone: (646) 708-1389

Church Address: 723 S. Adams

P.O. Box 1330

Red Lodge, MT 59068

Website: www.redlodgemessiah.com

Facebook: Messiah Lutheran

Email: General: redlodgemessiah@gmail.com

Prayer Requests: messiahprayers@gmail.com

Pastor Ben: pastorbencherland@gmail.com

Sunday Worship Service:
9:30 AM



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