

Messiah Messenger

Issue #34

February 2026

PASTOR'S CORNER

Guidance, Encouragement, & Reflection

DON'T STAY DEAD:

CROSS MY HEART, LENT'S NOT THE END!

Hello Messiah Family! Turns out y'all do get a little bit of winter here, because it has been cold! Not that I mind (I rather enjoy the cooler weather), but I hope everyone has been staying warm out there. Lent is almost here, though, and with it, some warmer weather, I imagine. Starting with our Ash Wednesday services on Wednesday, February 18th, we'll have services every Wednesday at Noon and 7:00 pm, with a dinner at 6:00 pm, all the way up until Holy Week.

Now Lent is a special time of the year for the Christian church. Forty days, 6 weeks, spent following Jesus through his ministry, leading up to the conclusion we all know is coming: Good Friday, when Jesus was crucified and died. It's a somber season, focused on all that Christ went through so that we could be forgiven, redeemed, and ultimately saved by his sacrifice, and it's why at the beginning of the season we sing the "Farewell to Hallelujah," and don't say it again until Easter Sunday. But Lent isn't just a somber season; it's also a season of anticipation, something that can feel wrong with Lent's focus on the cross.

The key to Lent's place as a season of anticipation, though, lies right there in our "Farewell to Hallelujah". We forego using this phrase, which means "Praise the Lord", not because we don't praise God during Lent, but because of the greatness of what happens AFTER Lent. Listen to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in Chapter 15, verse 13-14:

"But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain."

Christ's resurrection is the completion of God's plan for His people! Without it, Jesus' death

means nothing. The two events are inseparable, meaningless without each other; Christ had to die for our punishment to be suffered, and he had to rise back to life for his victory over sin, death, and the devil to be complete! The return of "Hallelujah" to the liturgy on Easter Sunday isn't a nominal inclusion; it's a celebration of everything Jesus accomplished in his life, his death, and his resurrection! A victory we will have waited for, anticipated, all throughout Lent, and finally get to celebrate together with all our Christian family in its fullness on Easter, when God's plan for redemption truly is complete.

My Dad gave me one of the best pieces of advice I've ever gotten about preaching, simple and straight to the point: "Don't leave Jesus dead." What he was talking about is our habit as Christians to sometimes focus more on Jesus' death than on his life. But the two are inseparable, meaning nothing without the other. And so, this Lent season, I encourage you to not leave Jesus dead. To join all of us here at Messiah in meditating on all that Jesus Christ has given us, and to also anticipate and celebrate all that Jesus has accomplished for us. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Amen. I look forward to seeing you all out there in ministry!

P.S. I know this is coming a bit late, but I wanted to extend my very heartfelt thank you to everyone, for both your extremely generous Christmas gift and for all of your love and support these first six months that I have been your pastor! Y'all have been truly fantastic, blessing me with a welcoming church family that has made my time here very enjoyable. I look forward to serving and worshipping with you all throughout this next year.

**My love and the love of Christ Jesus our Lord
be with you all, Pastor Stephen Wareham**

💰 THE TREASURER CHEST 🏛️

Your Monthly Map to Messiah's Treasure

Ken Eldridge – Treasurer

The New Year is starting off with a bang! I have been busy getting quotes from insurers as our property insurance expires on March 1, 2026.

Unfortunately, our current carrier, GuideOne, has proposed a 20.3% increase to our premiums, along with an increase in our deductible to \$5,000/occurrence, and they will no longer insure us for wind damage.

This change is in line with the new ratings for Lowndes County. Lowndes, and all Georgia counties bordering Florida, have now been moved into the same wind category as our neighboring north Florida counties. This changed due to the recent influx of storms in our area over the past several years.

We also are getting quotes from a carrier new to us, Church Mutual, that has been insuring churches for many years. On Friday, January 25th, a Church Mutual representative will be onsite to look over and photograph the property. After that we should receive a competitive quote.

We started out the new year strong financially, but like you at home, we have had significant increases in costs of services, most notably from Georgia Power and the City of Valdosta who both had very large rate increases. Thank you for your continued support so we can keep the lights on!

If you would like to receive weekly financial snapshots each Saturday morning, send your email to me at MessiahVLDtreasurer@gmail.com and I will gladly add you to the distribution list. This is your money, and you deserve to know how it is spent!

I am a Georgia Notary Public. I do not charge for this service. If you need something notarized, I will be happy to do so for you.

If you prefer giving through Zelle, our account is listed under MessiahVLDtreasurer@gmail.com.

You can also give easily through our [Thrivent Choice page](#):

<https://service.thrivent.com/apps/ThriventChoiceMemberWeb/public/orgDetails/100244343209>.



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✝️ THE ALTAR ANGLE 🎵

Sanctuary Spotlight on Worship & Faith

Carol Walters – Worship Chair

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LENT?

Yes, many of us “give something up” during Lent, such as social media, no-screen Sundays, unhealthy habits, or even a little less impulse spending. Those choices can be meaningful, but Lent is more than self-improvement or willpower. Lent is a turning back to Christ, returning to His Word and promises with repentant hearts, and receiving again the grace He freely gives.

Lent is a 40-day season of repentance, self-examination, and spiritual preparation. It begins on Ash Wednesday and leads us through Holy Week to Easter. This season draws our attention to Jesus’ forty days in the wilderness, and to His temptation, suffering, and victory over sin, death, and Satan. Key aspects of the Lutheran meaning of Lent include:

- **A focus on Christ’s Passion:** Time is set apart to meditate on Christ’s suffering and death on the cross, remembering that salvation is entirely God’s gift of grace.
- **Penitence and reflection:** Space is made for repentance, honesty about sin, and renewed trust in the Savior. Many congregations also observe the imposition of ashes as a reminder of mortality and our need for mercy.
- **Spiritual discipline:** Fasting, prayer, generosity, and self-denial may be practiced, not as a requirement, but as tools that re-center the heart on God rather than comforts and distractions.
- **A reverent liturgical tone:** The season is marked by a more solemn spirit, often including purple paraments and the setting aside of “Alleluia” and the Hymn of Praise (Gloria).
- **Preparation for Easter:** The purpose of Lent is spiritual readiness, so the joy of the resurrection is received with deeper gratitude and stronger faith.

Lent is not a way to earn salvation. Lent is a season to grow in faith and gratitude for what Jesus has already done.

Psalm 51:10-12: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.*

With gratitude and hope, **Worship Committee**

THE PANTRY PULSE



The Heartbeat of Our Loaves & Fishes Outreach

Kathy Lane – Evangelism Chair

Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry is moving large amounts of food into our coffers! This month St. Francis Catholic Thrift Shop along with our Messiah Family donated 219 pounds of mainly canned goods! We also purchased another 1,656 pounds from 2nd Harvest for a whopping sum of \$400. And because we have many that support us by handing us money, we were able to go to Walmart and purchase a \$100 of spaghetti sauce and spaghetti pasta to include in the bags last time we were open.

Our volunteers (Donna, Kelly & Kari Berg, Pastor Wareham, Pam Withers, Trena Dove, and MaryBeth Francis) have worked behind the scenes and with our clients when we're open.

As of January 21st they have logged a total of 58 hours for the month and we still have another week to be open plus the prep before welcoming in our clients.

Good news! The government program that enables us to purchase some staples came back on board in the first part of January. This is where we need further help, as these staples are case lots that we have to load into a vehicle, bring to Messiah, and unload. If you can help us, please let us know...we not only need your muscle but your truck would come in handy, too!  

Thank you for your continued support. We appreciate you, and we're sure our clients do as well.

In His Name,

Kay Vincent, Cathy Deyo, & Kathy Lane

THE SHEPHERD'S WATCH POST

Watching Over Our Flock with Prayer

Charlie Francis – Head Elder

If you know someone in our Messiah family who is ill, homebound, or living in a care facility, please reach out to Pastor or one of our elders. By letting us know, we can extend timely prayer, encouragement, and support to those in need.

It truly takes our entire church family to help watch over our flock and to share Christ's care!

A warm and sincere thank you from Pastor Wareham and Your Elders!

✦ MITE BOX MATTERS ✦

What's in YOUR Mite Box? – Faith in Action

Kay Vincent – LWML Chair



LWML YARD & BAKE SALE

Saturday, March 21 | 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Shop for treasures, enjoy homemade baked goods, and support a wonderful cause —proceeds go to charity! Bakers Needed! Homemade treats make our sale a hit.

Donation Drop-Offs:

- Thurs, March 19 | 9 AM – 1 PM
- Fri, March 20 | 9 AM – 6 PM

Please no mattresses, large appliances, dirty/broken items, and clothing must be clean & appropriate. **Thank you for helping make this event a blessing to others!**

? Questions? Call Nan Boyd: 229-834-4881

JOIN THE FUN! RALLY PREP MEETING

The next LWML meeting will be held on February 3, 2026, as we begin planning for the Tallahassee Zone LWML Rally coming to Messiah on April 18, 2026, and will include women from all of the churches in our zone. Come and join us at our next meeting for fellowship, Bible study, food, & fun. **Thank you for making fellowship, fun, and faithful giving such a blessing!**



☀️ STEWARDSHIP SPOTLIGHT ☀️

Sharing, Serving, and Supporting Messiah
Marcia Lorden – Stewardship Chair



FROM MILD TO WILD: 1st ANNUAL CHILI COOK-OFF

Hello Messiah Family,

I hope everyone is doing well so far in 2026!

The Stewardship Committee has scheduled our 1st Annual Chili Cook-off Fundraiser for Saturday, February 21.

Competitors: Sign up by Sunday, February 1 (sheet in the Narthex).

Starting at 4:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall

🍴 **Tasting: 4:30 p.m. | Dinner: 5:00 p.m.**

🌶️ **YOU BE THE JUDGE!** 🌶️

🏆 **Prizes for the top winners!**

💰 **\$5 per person – includes a great meal + 5 judging tickets**

Bring a friend for great food, fun, and fellowship!

All donations go to support our Stewardship Ministry.

Hope to see you there! 😊



🍇 JOYFUL BITES & HARMONY 🎵

Food, Fun, & Fellowship EVERY month!

Joyful Noise will be gathering for food, fun, and fellowship! If you'd like to join, please notify Kathy Andrew by February 5th, so that enough seats can be reserved.

📅 **Wednesday, February 17th**

🕒 **11:45 AM**

📍 **Longhorn Steakhouse (1110 St. Augustine)**

😊 **We HOPE to see you there!** 😊



✍️ LUTHERAN LOOKOUT ✍️

Faith, Grace, and Christ-Centered Wisdom

Did you know you can receive daily sermons and writings of Dr. Martin Luther delivered right to your inbox?

These reflections bring historic Lutheran teaching into everyday life, always pointing us back to Christ and His living, active Word.

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12

Luther's writings help us understand how God's grace shapes our faith, worship, and daily walk with Christ. It's like sitting at the feet of church history — one day at a time.

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Episodes like Concord Matters and The Coffee Hour make Lutheran teaching accessible, practical, and inspiring for daily life! ✚

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship		PASTOR OOO NO "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 3: LWML Mtg 6: Ladies Potluck Bible Studies NO MEN'S B.S.	PASTOR OOO	PASTOR OOO 9:00 Quilter's Group	PASTOR OOO	PASTOR OOO
9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	6:00 Church Council Meeting	10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 6: Mens & Ladies Potluck Bible Studies	11-3 Food Pantry	9:00 Quilter's Group		
9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship		10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 11:45 Joyful Noise (Longhorn Steakhouse) 5:30 Elders Meeting 6:00 Potluck Bible Studies		9:00 Quilter's Group 5:30 Long-Range Planning Comm. Meeting		4: 1st Annual Chili Cookoff
9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship		10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 6: Mens & Ladies Potluck Bible Studies	11-3 Food Pantry	9:00 Quilter's Group		