

❄️ *Messiah Messenger* ❄️

Issue #33

January 2026

STOP, BREATHE, GIVE THANKS:
FEATHERS, FAITH, AND FINDING PEACE
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all of you in the Messiah Lutheran Church family!

I pray that you and your families have all had a truly blessed and peaceful Christmas, taking the chance to celebrate together the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior and the salvation of the world.

My kids, Lily and Caleb, have been with me this week of Christmas, and it's been a special time. For the first time since the Marine Corps, 12 years ago, Christmas is at my home, with my kids and even my parents here to celebrate, something that I've been looking forward to and working towards for a long time. It's been a reminder of just how blessed and cared for by God that I, and all of us, truly are. As some of you know, this month has been a stressful one for me, with a million things going on that need to be done, and I'm sure it's been much the same for many of you. In the midst of all that stress and busyness, it can be so easy to focus on our problems and our worries and forget our blessings. But I have a family member that always reminds me to stop, take a breath, and thank God for all his great gifts: Kratos, my bird (he's a conure!).

It might seem odd that my bird is the family member that brings me back to scripture in times of stress and worry, but it's because of the Scripture verses that come to mind when I see him:

Matthew 6:25-27, 33-34

²⁵“Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ... ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not be anxious about

tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Kratos is such a beautiful bird, with incredibly vibrant greens and blues, and even reds and yellows, spread throughout his feathers; he's dressed better than I ever will be, that's for sure. But he certainly doesn't work or clean up after himself, doesn't buy or grow or hunt his own food, doesn't pay for rent or have really do anything to earn his way. Yet, Kratos lives worry free, like any of our pets! Why? Because they have us to take care of them, and because they trust that we will. Kratos believes that I'm going to feed him, water him, put him to bed at night and wake him up in the morning, even give him toys and spend time hanging out with him so that he doesn't get bored. Everything is taken care of, nothing left to chance! And the same is true for us in our relationship with God.

We are God's greatest treasure, His most valuable possession, more valued than any pet, animal, or flower! So treasured that God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to save us, whose birth we just celebrated at Christmas and whose life, death, and resurrection we celebrate and anticipate in our upcoming Lenten and Easter season. This life will always be full of things to worry about, changes and conflicts and difficulties, but because of Jesus Christ we will never have to worry about where our home and our family is and is going: To Heaven where we will spend eternity with God our Father and all believers as one family in Christ, where all our worries, all our stresses, our difficulties and our tears will finally, truly be gone.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

**Amen, Merry Christmas, and
Happy New Year!**

Pastor Stephen Wareham



HAPPY NEW YEAR & NOTES FROM THE TREASURER

Ken Eldridge – Treasurer

2026 will be filled with new possibilities for growth, new friendships, and enjoying those members who have been around for many years!

As the new year begins, we will be updating the Member Directory as it is now a year old! 5” x 8” index cards will be available in the narthex so you can grab one and update your information as you would like it to appear in the directory! Look for these cards right after the first of January!

Over the next few weeks, we will close out the calendar year by filing the appropriate tax documents and providing required tax information to Pastor, Raquel, and others who receive compensation for services provided. This is a bit time-consuming, but the IRS expects us to do it! Calendar year-end financials will be posted on the financial bulletin board near the nursery as I do each month. If you would like to receive weekly financial snapshots each Saturday morning, please 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!

January begins my final twelve months as your treasurer. I am hopeful someone will step forward and work with me over the next few months so that a smooth transition for the next treasurer will occur. If you are interested, please let me know.

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](https://service.thrivent.com/apps/ThriventChoice) page:
<https://service.thrivent.com/apps/ThriventChoice>
[MemberWeb/public/orgDetails/100244343209](https://service.thrivent.com/apps/ThriventChoice).



Give Online to Messiah!
 Scan code with your
 phone & follow
 directions.



zelle

MessiahVLDtreasurer@gmail.com

COUNCIL ELECTION UPDATE

With gratitude and joy, we celebrate the election of our newly confirmed Church Council members! Please join us in thanking and praying for those who have stepped forward to serve:

- **President:** Connie DeMarco
- **Property:** James Edmonson
- **Financial Secretary:** Beth Bush

We are thankful for their willingness to lead and serve our church family. Let us continue to move forward together in faith and fellowship!



PREPARING OUR HEARTS AND HANDS FOR THE SEASON AHEAD

Carol Walters – Worship Chair

As we step into a new year and begin to look toward the season of Lent, we are invited to return to some very simple but powerful truths of our faith. Lent calls us to repentance and renewal and points us again to Jesus' sacrifice and God's abundant grace. Through baptism, prayer, fasting from self-indulgence, and serving others, the Holy Spirit keeps turning our hearts toward God. Even in our "desert seasons," we can trust His immense love and allow Him to shape us into instruments of that love, following Jesus' path of selfless service, hope, and joy as we prepare for Easter.

This life of faith is not meant to be lived alone. Our congregation does not run on autopilot. It moves and breathes because many people quietly show up, week after week, to serve. As Paul encourages us, "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9). The more hands we have, the lighter the load becomes for everyone, and the more joy we find in serving together.

As you pray about the year ahead, I invite you to consider volunteering in worship. We are especially in need of help with altar care, greeters, and ushers. We can always use an acolyte or two as well. If you are interested in serving in any of these roles, please let **Marcia Lorden** or me know. Training and support will be provided.

I will continue to lift you up in prayer and give thanks to our Lord for the generosity, faithfulness, and love that you share so freely. May God guide our hearts and hands as we walk together toward the hope and joy of Easter.

With gratitude and hope,
Worship Committee



GRATEFUL HEARTS AND FULL BAGS: A SEASON OF ABUNDANT SERVICE

Loaves and Fishes food pantry has stayed busy throughout November and December! We are averaging 60-plus families served each time we're open.

Kay and I have completed the annual training, and the new forms will be in place when we open on January 14th. And the training for those that volunteer when we're open will be conducted in January.

During the months of November and December, Kay and I shopped four times to bring over a 1,000 pounds of food from 2nd Harvest to be bagged. Cathy along with the Berg Family have put together over 200 bags (large brown paper bags) of groceries! These bags are estimated have a retail value of over \$100...this was especially helpful to our community during the time that the government was not issuing food stamps.

We are extremely grateful to all in Messiah that have supported the food pantry both with food donations as well as monetary support. We pay an average of 19 cents a pound for the food we shop for from 2nd Harvest, so your donations go far.

In saying the above we do appreciate gifts of food...we are always in need of cereal, peanut butter, dry pasta...these items are the least likely to be available when we shop. (The past couple of months there was a plethora of flavored seltzer water available...LOL!)

Thank you one and all from Cathy Deyo, Kay Vincent and Kathy Lane...And Happy 2026!

A NOTE FROM THE ELDERS

If you learn that someone in our church family is ill, homebound, or residing in a nursing home, please let Pastor or one of the elders know.

This allows us to reach out with prayer, care, and support, and to respond to their needs in a timely way.



**FAITHFUL SERVICE AND
A FRESH START**

Long-Range Planning Committee

Thank you to everyone on the committee for your continued willingness to give your time and energy each month to help grow and strengthen our congregation. Your dedication and faithful leadership are truly appreciated.

As we begin a new year, we look ahead with gratitude and renewed focus as Long Range Planning resumes.

I look forward to gathering with all of you when we meet again on January 15, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

May God's blessings and peace be with you in the year ahead.

**NEW YEAR, FRESH HANDS:
KEEP THE CHURCH GLEAMING!**

The church is shining, bright, and sweet,
Thanks to volunteers who keep it neat!

A fresh new year means a chance to share,
To help our church stay clean with care.

Check the bathrooms, sweep the floors,
Empty the trash, and open doors.

It's small work, but oh so grand,
Many hands make light the plan!

The signup sheet waits beneath the mail,
Come lend a hand—you'll never fail!

✂️ QUILTERS GROUP CELEBRATES 🧵

Joyful stitches and loving hearts were hard at work! Our amazing Quilters Group donated 11 beautiful handmade quilts to the Georgia Sheriff's Boys Ranch. Each quilt is a gift of warmth, comfort, and God's love.

Thank you, quilters, for sharing your talents so generously and making a meaningful difference!

💡 LWML JOYFUL NEWS ☀️

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—how exciting!


We also celebrate the wonderful impact of our Christmas Bazaar. Thanks to the generosity of our congregation and community, funds were joyfully shared with many local and district ministries, spreading Christ's love far and wide.


Thank you for making fellowship, fun, and faithful giving such a blessing!

KICK OFF THE NEW YEAR TOGETHER

Joyful Noise will be coming together after the new year for food, fun, and fellowship! 😊

 **Wednesday, January 20**

 **11:45 AM**

 **Woodstack (4038 N Valdosta Rd)**

If you'd like to join, please notify Kathy Andrew by January 5th, so that enough seats can be reserved. **We cannot wait to see you there!**



Rae Hubbard	2
Janice Witmer	8
Paul Hill	23
Robin Walsh	26
David Foutz	28
Larry Lorden	28

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
<div>4</div> 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	<div>5</div>	<div>6</div> 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 6: Ladies Potluck Bible Studies NO MEN'S B.S. - Pastor OOO to Circuit Mtg	<div>7</div>	<div>8</div> 9:00 LWML Quilter's Group	<div>9</div>	<div>10</div>
<div>11</div> 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	<div>12</div> 6:00 Church Council Meeting	<div>13</div> 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 6: Mens & Ladies Potluck Bible Studies	<div>14</div> 11-3 Food Pantry	<div>15</div> 9:00 LWML Quilter's Group 5:30 Long-Range Planning Comm. Meeting	<div>16</div>	<div>17</div>
<div>18</div> 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	<div>19</div>	<div>20</div> 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 11:45 Joyful Noise (Woodstack - 4038 N. Valdsota Rd.) 5:30 Elders Meeting 6:00 Potluck Bible Studies	<div>21</div>	<div>22</div> 9:00 LWML Quilter's Group	<div>23</div>	<div>24</div>
<div>25</div> 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	<div>26</div>	<div>27</div> 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 6: Mens & Ladies Potluck Bible Studies	<div>28</div> 11-3 Food Pantry	<div>29</div> 9:00 LWML Quilter's Group	<div>30</div>	<div>31</div>