

Messiah Messenger

Issue #35

March 2026

THE PASTOR'S PEN

Guidance, Encouragement, & Reflection

MORE THAN A CHURCH: GROWING TOGETHER AS GOD'S FAMILY

Hello Messiah Family! After a colder than expected January and February, it's finally starting to feel like Spring! I'm looking forward to some nice 70-degree days before we hit Summer and go back to 100% humidity and 90+ degree days, and I imagine y'all are as well. If you didn't know, just recently on February 21st, Messiah had its first Annual Chili Cookoff, and it was a great time! 40 attendees and 9 competitors, so we had chili for days (shoutout to the Bergs for taking home our first-place prize!). Don't worry if you weren't able to make it, because we'll have more fun events coming up.

In March we'll have the church's annual yard sale on Saturday, March 21st, and then in May we're hoping to host a game night here! And of course, over the summer we'll have our Grilling with the Pastor events (and maybe even something special to celebrate the 250th birthday of America!), which are always a good time. If you've got any ideas for a fun activity or event you'd like to see happen here at Messiah, just let us know and we'll see if we can make something happen.

All the opportunities for fellowship are one my favorite parts of Spring and Summer. After a cold winter spent inside, I love it when it's finally nice enough to get back outside and together with friends and family. That time spent together is just so important to growing our relationships and starting new ones, and that's part of the reason I love getting together with all of y'all here at Messiah to have fun and spend time together. We are a family here. We might not always agree, but we love and care for each other, something I'm always glad to see y'all do for each other every week. But it all begins with time spent together,

building relationships and getting to know each other! Whether that's at bible study, volunteering with the food bank, quilting with the ladies, enjoying a meal and worship at our midweek services, or volunteering and participating in our events, we've got lots of ways for you to connect with and get to know your Messiah family, and we're working on adding more!

This building of relationships with each other through the work of the church is more than just making friends. In Matthew 12:46-50, when Jesus is told that his mother and brothers are waiting to speak to him, he points to his disciples and replies, "Here are my mother and my brothers.

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." When we call Messiah Lutheran Church a family, we mean it! The Christian church is much more than just a gathering of friends; being a part of it, sharing that faith in Christ, is truly becoming a member of God's family. Our faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior, whose death and resurrection we look forward to this Lenten season, makes us all brothers and sisters in Christ! Nothing can change that or take away our place in this family, this home that God has made for us. And so, I encourage you to reach out your brothers and sisters here at Messiah! Talk to somebody you don't know that well or haven't talked to in a while; join us at our events and bible studies and in volunteering; or just simply make plans to spend time with those people here that you love. But build relationships, friendships, and the family that is the church of Jesus Christ. We're all going to be spending a lot of time together when it's time to finally go to our heavenly home, where innumerable brothers and sisters wait for us. Have a great March, enjoy the Spring weather, and I'll see you out there in Ministry, Messiah Family!

**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

Ah! The Ides of March are upon us! “Et tu, Brutus?” Misfortune fell upon Caesar and changes are in the air!

Change is coming to our insurance coverage. Our present insurer, GuideOne has informed us of a 20.3% premium increase effective March 1st! This would bring our annual premium to \$13,685 per year. Additionally, due to changes in the insurance classification for Georgia counties that border Florida, wind and hail coverage are no longer a standard part of our policy.

After considerable research we have found coverage from Church Mutual that is comparable to the coverage with the changes GuideOne will make on March 1st, for \$7,700 per year, which is a considerable savings.

The downside to both policies is that we must either buy a separate wind/hail insurance policy, which costs about \$6,000/year, or self-insure for wind and hail.

After much discussion at council, I suggested we take the savings from changing to Church Mutual and invest those savings at the rate of \$500/month into our investment account and self-insure. Council agreed and voted unanimously to do so and to self-insure.

Of course, this is a risk, and it is important for all members to understand that. However, a 20.3% increase in our premium put it out of reach with our current cash flow.

We can mitigate this risk by building a fund to cover wind & hail should the need arise. I ask for your support in this endeavor.

These same types of increases are being pushed out to individual homeowners as well, so be aware of a possibly large increase in your homeowners insurance. Mine just jumped about 13%.

As a congregation, we continue to remain debt free and have a small investment portfolio as backup should we need it for emergencies. We must grow it.

Weekly, I provide a snapshot of our financial positions to all who are interested.

If you would like to receive that Saturday morning email, please let me know at MessiahVLDtreasurer@gmail.com and I will add you to the mailing list.

Knowledge is power!



✚ **THE ALTAR ANGLE** ✚

Sanctuary Spotlight on Worship & Faith

Carol Walters – Worship Chair

IT TAKES A CONGREGATION!

Spring is just around the corner, and as we move through this season of Lent and preparation, we are reminded that the life of the Church is not carried by one or two people. It takes a meeting.

Messiah is blessed with faithful servants, and we are always grateful for those who quietly step in and serve. At the same time, we have opportunities for more hands and willing hearts.

We are currently in need of:

- **Ushers**
- **Greeters**
- **Acolytes**
- **Altar Care volunteers**

These roles help create a welcoming and reverent worship experience for everyone who walks through our doors.

We could also use support from those who enjoy cooking, baking, or preparing sides for special seasons like Advent and **Lent**. If being in the kitchen is your happy place, we would love to plug you in. Please reach out to **Nan, Janie, Kay**, or me to learn more.

No role is too small. Every act of service matters. When each of us offers our time and gifts, the whole body is strengthened.

If you have been wondering where you might fit in, this may be your invitation.

In His Service,
Messiah Lutheran Worship Committee

🌟 COUNCIL COMPASS 🌟

Guiding the Direction of Messiah

Connie DiMarco – Church Council President

I'm announcing the formation of a Financial Review Committee for Messiah Lutheran. It's purpose is to review the financial transactions and management of the Church's monetary resources.

The committee has three members, Rebekah Rothas, Wendy Aichle (please check this spelling) and Laura Pellicone.

The goal is to determine Messiah's practices in managing her resources. A review determines if the processes and practices used by Messiah Lutheran, are consistent with other churches and religious organizations. The committee will be using review forms created and utilized by the Florida-Georgia District.

This review is not triggered by any event. The review is designed to update and/or affirm our current financial management practices. Importantly, having a financial review is required by our church Constitution.

A report of findings and recommendations will be provided to the Council's President and the Treasurer. The committee's report will be presented to the congregation at a TBD date.

Please keep Rebekah, Wendy and Laura in your prayers as they take on this important project.

God's grace and blessings to you all,
Connie DiMarco

🐑 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



☀️ STEWARDSHIP SPOTLIGHT ☀️

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

🌶️ 1st ANNUAL CHILI COOK-OFF:

A SIZZLING SUCCESS! 🌶️

Our first annual Chili Cook-Off was a huge hit! About 45 friends and neighbors joined us to taste, savor, and celebrate some seriously spicy creations. We had a blast awarding 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes to the chilis that stole the show.

A HUGE thank you goes out to everyone who helped make this event possible: Cindy Hodge, Mary Beth Francis, Connie DiMarco, Heather Miller, and Marcia Lorden. Your hard work turned up the heat and made it all happen!

And of course, a big thank you to all who attended and purchased tickets! All proceeds will go toward our Stewardship Ministry and help create even more successful events in the future.

Each winner received a Chili Cook-Off apron, necklace, keychain, and a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place spoon trophy. But that's not all—our First Place winner, Donna Berg, also received a personalized “First Place Winner Chili Master” Messiah Lutheran Church 1st Annual (2026) Chili Cook-Off charcuterie board!

And now... drumroll, please... the winners:

- 🥇 **First Place: Donna Berg** – Your chili was “nacho” average chili and truly reigned supreme! Congrats, Donna!
- 🥈 **Second Place: Susan Walter** – We're so glad you joined us and shared your wonderful chili! Your flavor had us “simmering with delight.”
- 🥉 **Third Place: Barb Fluder & John Obermann** – Your chili really “spiced up the competition!” What a flavor-packed duo!

For those who weren't able to attend, we hope this gives you a taste of the fun, flavor, and fellowship we shared—and we can't wait to see you (and your chili!) next year!

Keep your eyes 📺 open on Facebook for all of our pictures—coming soon! 📷



🍇 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 March 5th, so that enough seats can be reserved.

📅 **Tuesday, March 17th**

🕒 **11:45 AM**

📍 **Smokin' Pig (4228 N. Valdosta Rd.)**

😊 **We HOPE to see you there!** 😊



📖 LUTHERAN LOOKOUT 🔍

Faith, Grace, and Christ-Centered Wisdom

Did you know one of the longest-running Lutheran broadcasts in the world is **The Lutheran Hour**? 🎙️

For decades, these messages have shared Christ-centered teaching across the globe — simple, clear, and rooted in grace.

📖 “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17

Listening to The Lutheran Hour is like taking a sermon with you wherever you go, strengthening faith and pointing us back to Christ in daily life. Tune in here:

🔗 <https://www.lhm.org/the-lutheran-hour/> 🔗

March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	2	3 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 3: LWML Meeting	4	5 9:00 Quilter's Group	6	7
8 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	9 6:00 Church Council Meeting	10 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study	11 11 - 3: Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry	12 9:00 Quilter's Group	13	14
15 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	16	17 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study 11:45 Joyful Noise Lunch (Smokin' Pig - N. Valdosta Rd.)	18	19 9:00 Quilter's Group 9 am - 1 pm: Open for Yard Sale Donations 5:30: Long-Range Planning Committee Meeting	20 9 am - 6 pm: Open for Yard Sale Donations	21 8 am - 1 pm: LWML Yard & Bake Sale
22 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	23	24 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study	25 11 - 3: Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry	26 9:00 Quilter's Group	27	28
29 9:00 Bible Study 9:15 Sun. School 10:30 Worship	30	31 10:00 "Tuesdays with the Pastor" Bible Study				