# "THE WITNESS" NEWSLETTER

of

MESSIAH (FISHERVILLE) & ST. PETER (FETTERHOFF'S)

(ELCA) LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF HALIFAX, PA

## JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026

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*Dear Church Family and Friends,*

A few weeks ahead, I tried to anticipate what a health screening might entail as a requirement for hospital chaplaincy. My first thought, "I'd like to lose a few pounds before then."

The morning of, expecting examination of several orifices, I made extra sure ears, teeth and tongue were clean. Having been forewarned to dress in business attire for a new id badge photo, I arrived early, sat in the waiting room prepared and began to read a book entitled, *Final Gifts,* a thoughtful compilation of experiences between hospice nurses, patients and families.

Done, the nurse escorted me down a hall toward the exit and asked, "Do you have any questions?" (Of course, I did.) Remembering past experiences, I asked, "What about a TB test? Don't you do those anymore? I'm used to getting my skin pricked then returning days later to have the site read." "No, we draw blood for that."

"Well, don't you require a urine sample? I had to do that before." (I recall feeling like I'd been arrested: closely monitored, pockets emptied, purse put in a locker, told to enter a bathroom whose toilet held dyed water and water at the sink turned off lest accuracy be compromised while testing for illegal substances.)

No," she said as she shook her head and walked beside me. "If we suspect you're under the influence, we'll do a random test. Security will escort you during your shift to determine if you are or not. Right now, we have what we need," well assured that everything they wished to assess would be revealed by the blood draw.

But even that seemed different/better than expected. She didn't warn me, and I didn't "feel a pinch". In fact, the morning's overall experience caused me to wonder whether we Christians get it wrong as far as understanding God's examination of us: those times we imagine having an appointment of accountability, a time during which we're prescreened to determine spiritual health or worthiness. At home wearing a new set of clothes, the morning deserved reflection. "Wow. That was nothing like expected. I shook my head in disbelief, so surprised was I that they didn't measure, observe, examine or test for things of which I'd prepared.

Instead, the tasks followed a unique agenda.

Suddenly, it seemed reasonable and quite possible for me to think that God will do likewise. Perhaps God won't measure, observe, examine or test the things we prepare for all our lives. After all, many hospice patients seem to die in peace without fear. I wonder if instead of what we envision as terrible or frightening, every major life transition follows God's unique agenda.

Might every one of God's tests be accomplished by sampling Jesus' blood? Then the results are his but come back in our name. He makes us pass; we obtain clearance because of what he did, not what we accomplish. Our good report has nothing to do with making wise decisions or worrying for there is nothing we *can* do to make ourselves better, more tolerable or presentable to God. Even if effort appears remarkable by our own estimation, no amount of self-discipline or sacrifice matters. Things recommended are for our benefit, not part of a test.

As God escorts each of us toward the next exit, may we find that the door swings in a different direction. May we find ourselves upon a new path, cleared to proceed, empowered by God's will for us. We may not understand how things that used to matter don't anymore or how God figures out different ways to assess spiritual health, but hopefully, we'll realize these things:

Is it possible that we misunderstand what's important? Might our fears be unfounded? Could those things we anticipate with discomfort, i.e., the critical scrutiny we dread, be experienced as hospitality and compassion?

While governments, institutions and other societal systems continue to impact lives, have negative effects, appear cold and calculated as they protect their own interests, God isn't like that. God welcomes everyone's presence. God identifies who belongs. The chosen are included as members of God's workforce, accepted representatives of God's established kingdom.

Our willingness to be tested and submit Jesus' blood as our own ensures that his results stand as ours which changes our status. We are granted intimate access, insider benefits and all that entails. There's no need to anticipate God's screening as a harsh examination of those things which usually remain hidden or unclean. Assessment is a welcome determination of being accepted as is without a pinch, feeling personally proud or dreading the result.

Be at peace and anticipate God's love toward you during your next anticipated and/or unexpected time of trial or testing. When you appear before God, discover as so many others have, that the experience is neither scary nor unfriendly.

*Your loving pastor,*
*Pastor (Nancy) Brody*

**LET US PRAY**

*Prayer knits the waiting, expectant community together. It isn't just for those being prayed for. It's an act of faith whereby others are lifted up and entrusted to God.*

## UPCOMING SCRIPTURES

**January**

1/11 – Baptism of our Lord
- 1st Reading – Isaiah 42:1-9
- Psalmody – Psalm 29
- 2nd Reading – Acts 10:34-43
- Gospel – Matthew 3:13-17

1/18 – 2nd Sunday after Epiphany
- 1st Reading – Isaiah 49:1-7
- Psalmody – Psalm 40:1-11
- 2nd Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:1-9
- Gospel – John 1:29-42

1/25 – 3rd Sunday after Epiphany
- 1st Reading – Isaiah 9:1-4
- Psalmody – Psalm 27:1, 4-9
- 2nd Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:10-18
- Gospel – Matthew 4:12-23

**February**

2/01 4th Sunday after Epiphany
- 1st Reading – Micah 6:1-8
- Psalmody – Psalm 15
- 2nd Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12

2/08 –5th Sunday after Epiphany
- 1st Reading – Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]
- Psalmody – Psalm 112:1-9 [10]
- 2nd Reading –1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16]
- Gospel –Matthew 5:13-20

2/15 – Transfiguration of our Lord
- 1st Reading – Exodus 24:12-18
- Psalmody – Psalm 2
- 2nd Reading – 2 Peter 1:16-21
- Gospel – Matthew 17:1-9

2/18 – Ash Wednesday
- Joel 2:1-2, 12-17
- Psalm 51:1-17
- 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10
- Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

2/22 –1st Sunday in Lent
- 1st Reading – Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7
- Psalmody – Psalm 32
- 2nd Reading – Romans 5:12-19
- Gospel – Matthew 4:1-11

## THANK YOU ONE & ALL!

Messiah's Ways and Means Committee would like to thank Brad Crum and Shelby Nestler and the Make Mine Country Band for donating their time and talents for the Holiday concert held at the Halifax Ambulance Building on November 23. This event was enjoyed by more than 95 attendees and $1,313.00 was raised to continue the ministry of the church.

Special thanks to everyone who donated food items for the event and volunteers who helped on the day of the concert. The generosity and kindness of Messiah's members and friends is very much appreciated. Thank you for making the concert a success!

## THANKS FOR THE VEGGIES!

Thanks to everyone who donated corn, peas and green beans for the Holiday Food Bags being assembled by the Upper Dauphin Human Services in Lykens. Messiah and St. Peter met our goal of collecting 100 cans of each vegetable, plus 3 jars of gravy! The cans were delivered, and the Upper Dauphin Human Services was very appreciative.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE @ MESSIAH

Messiah Sunday School will be on the **2nd and 4th Sundays of each month**. Teens and Adults will have Sunday School from 9 to 9:45. The Children's Dept will meet during

the Worship hour (10 to 11) for their lesson.

**WOMEN of the ELCA WOMEN'S RETREAT**

**January 24, 2026** at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Hanover, PA. **Snow date is January 31**, 2026. Entertaining Angels. Deacon Jan Davis will be the presenter show the history of angels using art, movies, legends and the Bible.
9 AM - 4 PM. Cost is $15.00. For registration form & more info, contact Sandy Dreibelbis.

**NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS**

Instead of a health article, I found this prayer and thought it was appropriate as we go into a New Year. Short and sweet.

May the longest night and shortest day bring rest to your mind and soul, I pray.

May you find guidance and may you find peace as the cycle of light will slowly increase.

Embrace the magic that the darkness bears; breathe deep in the chill and shift in the air.

May you always be blessed with the light from within and may well-being be yours as the new cycle begins.

Happy New Year, may you all be blessed with prosperity and good health.

## JANUARY NEWS

**FEBRUARY "SOUP AND SUCH"**

In February, "Soup and Such" has a menu which includes Chicken Noodle Soup – $8/quart, crescent rolls – 4/$2.00, and pumpkin bars w/cream cheese icing – $2.00/slice. Orders **are due by Sunday, January 25 and pick-up is from 4 to 6 PM on Thursday, February 5 at Messiah.** For more information, please contact Dianna Reed at 717-692-5317. Order forms and upcoming menus are available at Messiah.

**CPR/FIRST AID/AED TRAINING**

Messiah's Health Ministry Committee is hosting the American Heart Association's CPR/First Aid/AED training on Saturday, **January 31, 2026.** The class will be held in the church basement from 8:30 AM until approximately 1 PM. The cost is $93.00 payable to Denise Yohn, the instructor. If you would like to attend the class, please contact Dianna Reed at 717-692-5317.

## FEBRUARY NEWS

**MARCH "SOUP AND SUCH"**

In March, "Soup and Such" has a menu which includes Ham and Bean Soup – $8/quart, mini-loaf French bread – 1/$2.00, and pineapple upside down cake – $2.00/slice. **Orders are due by Sunday, February 22 and pick-up is from 4 to 6 PM on Thursday, March 5 at Messiah.**
For more information, please contact Dianna Reed at 717-692-5317. Order forms and upcoming menus are available at Messiah.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR JANUARY

**4 – Second Sunday of Christmas**
Worship including Holy Communion

- 8:30 AM Worship Service @ St. Peter
- 10 AM Worship Service @ Messiah
- 11 St. Peter Council Meeting @ St. Peter

**11 – Baptism of Our Lord**

Install new council members at both services.

- 8:30 AM Worship Service @ St. Peter
- 10 AM Worship Service @ Messiah
- Messiah Sunday School
- 11 AM Messiah Council Meeting

**12 – NO Dart Ball (Messiah – Bye)**

**18 – 2nd Sunday after Epiphany**

Please Welcome The Rev. Larry Hawkins

- 8:30 AM Worship Service @ St. Peter
- 10 AM Worship Service @ Messiah

**19 – 7 PM Dart Ball @ Faith United Methodist**

**21 – 6:30 PM Ladies Aid @ Messiah**

**25 – 3rd Sunday after Epiphany**

- 8:30 AM Worship @ St. Peter
- 10 AM Worship Service @ Messiah
- Children Sunday School
- Orders due for Soup & Such

**26 – 7 PM Dart Ball @ Lykens United Methodist**

**31 8:30 AM – 1 PM CPR CLASS @ MESSIAH**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY

**1 –4th Sunday after Epiphany**

Worship including Holy Communion

- 8:30 AM @ St. Peter
- 10 AM @ Messiah

**2 – 7 PM Dart Ball Valley's UCC @ Messiah**

**5 – 4 PM– 6PM Pick Up Soup & Such @ Messiah**

**8 – 5th Sunday after Epiphany**

- 8:30 AM @ St. Peter
- 10 AM @ Messiah
- Messiah Sunday School

**9 – 7 PM Dart Ball @ St. John's**

**11 – 6:30 PM Ladies Aid @ Messiah**

**15 – Transfiguration of our Lord**

- 8:30 AM @ St. Peter
- 10 AM @ Messiah

**16 – NO Dart Ball (Messiah – Bye)**

**18 Ash Wednesday**

**22 – 1st Sunday in Lent**

- 8:30 AM Worship @ St. Peter
- 10 AM Worship and @ Messiah
- Children Sunday School
- Orders due for Soup & Such
- DEADLINE FOR MAR/APRIL NEWSLETTER