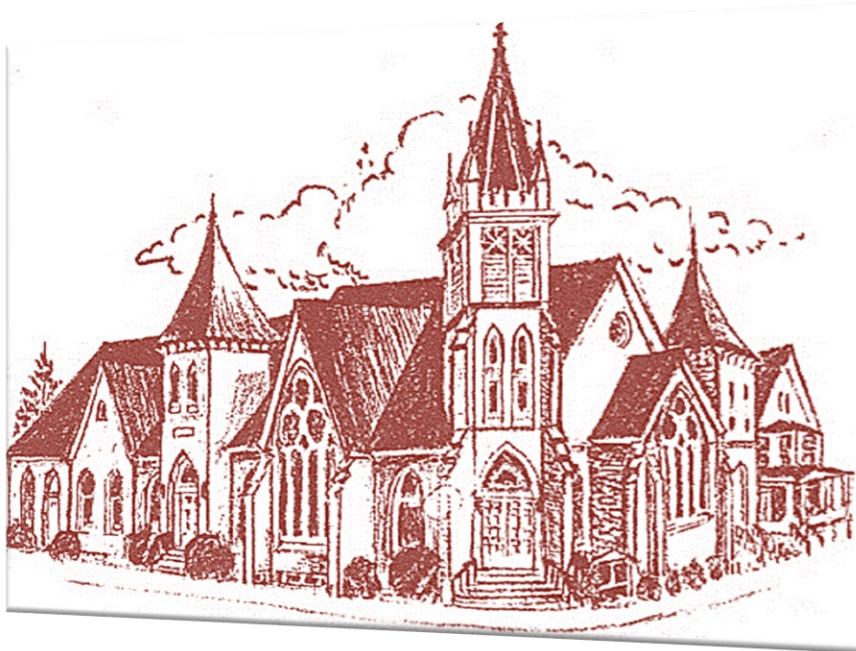


THE MESSIAH HERALD



SEPTEMBER 2025

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

3 SOUTH THIRD STREET, MIFFLINTOWN, PA 17059

(717)-436-6213

PASTOR – REV. SAMUEL J. LEISTER – mlcsleister@gmail.com

WEBSITE: mlcmifflintown.org

OFFICE EMAIL: mlchurchoffice@gmail.com

TREASURER EMAIL: mlchurchtreasurer@gmail.com

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday – 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Thursday – 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Friday – 12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

WORSHIP & COMMUNION – 10:00 AM

CHILDREN'S SERMONS AND FACEBOOK LIVE EVERY SUNDAY!

[USS-ARK NEWSLETTER](#) [THE LUTHERAN MAGAZINE](#)

"Growing God's Love"

The Messiah Herald



THE PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

Dear Messiah Family,

Announcements, *announcements*, **announcements!!!!** Bible Study will resume on Tuesday, September 9 at 10:30 in the library. We will begin a study of the four Gospels. If you have not been a part of our studies before, please feel free to join us. Bring your thoughts, ideas, and questions regarding Good News?

Isaiah 58:9-11 ⁹If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, ¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. ¹¹The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

This reading comes from a time when the people of Israel have returned from exile and are trying to rebuild the temple. The people followed their rules by fasting and offering sacrifices, but they feel God has abandoned them. They complain to God that he is not doing anything.

The people think that ritual and "religiosity" are enough to follow God. Isaiah makes it clear that God wishes for the people to live a life that reflects God's concern for the well-being of all people. Every person needs to be fed, have a home, clothes, and feel secure. Jesus spent his life among those that the religious leaders left out and ignored. Jesus healed, forgave, welcomed, and blessed the outsider. God is calling us to do the same. As the prophet Micah wrote, God desires us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.

Finally, mark your calendars for "God's Work, Our Hands" this Sunday, September 7th following worship service at Messiah. For one of the activities, we will work at knotting the comforters which have been prepared by the many hands of our Needlers as well as friends of Needlers throughout the community. These comforters may find their way via Lutheran World Relief to those in need of warmth and compassion anywhere throughout the world. Additionally, some attention and use of our hands are needed for the assembling of school kits. I have been told there will be food and snacks to fuel your labors or just come and have fun and enjoy your handy work for God.

May the blessings of God the Creator, Jesus Christ our Lord, and The Holy Spirit be with you all!

Pastor Sam Leister

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING...

The Family of Glenn	Renee Dzikowski	Guy Kerstetter	Arlene Shearer
Compton	Kevin Fetterhoof	George King	Lowell Shearer
Joedy Arnold	Neil Fisher	Jesse Kint	Wyatt Shellenberger
Linda Bahorik	Bentley Fulkroad	Paul Lingenfelter	Gail Sherman
Melissa Bargo	Kristen Gaisior	Cecilia Miller	Althea Smith
Jeremy Barnes	Terri Gayer	Curt Miller	Dave Smith
Ryan Barr	Deb Geedey	Larry Miller	Jennifer Smith
Bill Book	Josslyn Geedey	Shirley Miller	Barry Strawser
Andrea Cameron	Marilyn Gilbert	Marlin Milliken	Kenton Stuck
Evitt Campbell	Sheree Goss	Claire Mummah	Vicki Suoja
Deb G. Chambers	Amanda Gregg	Linda (Kerchner) Parks	Amy Swartz
Nathan Clark	Fred Gross	Fred Parnell	Molly Ulsh
Kenton Cohenour	Mark Harvey	Kari Ann (Reagen) Petrine	George Varner
Jean Compton	Bill Heck	Cheryl Pinkerton	Roscoe Warner
Scott & Heather Compton	John (Pat) & Karen Henry	Betty Ranck	Sandy Wert
William (Bill) Conn	Sawyer Henry	Keith Ranck	Todd Wert
Stacy Couture	Nox Hepburn	Dave Reed	Kathy Whitesel
Kim Dumais	Nancy Howell	Diane Rowles	Jim & Heidi Woltman
Freda Durio	Annie Ingle	Greysley Rowles	George Zimmerman
Cathy Dysinger	Doc Johnston	Kelley Rusenko	Linda Zimmerman

AND FOR OUR SHUT INS

BROOKLINE RETIREMENT VILLAGE

(92 VILLAGE DRIVE, MIFFLINTOWN, PA 17059)

Jane Marhefka

HONNEMAN HOUSE

(58 HONNEMAN HOUSE DR, THOMPSONTOWN, PA 17094)

Ruth Cisney

Ray Bamm

(Apt. #112)

(Apt. #108)

WILLIAM PENN HEALTHCARE AND REHAB CENTER

(163 SUMMIT DRIVE, LEWISTOWN, PA 17044)

Oona Stoner

PRAYERS & CONCERNS

If you wish to be included on the email recipient list for the Messiah Prayer Chain, please send an email to Pastor Leister at mlcsleister@gmail.com. Also, if anyone has any needs or concerns, please contact Pastor Sam Leister. If you or someone you know is ill or hospitalized, please let Pastor Leister know as well. He can be reached at 717-436-8589 (home), or 717-348-1020 (cell), or email at mlcsleister@gmail.com.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

During our October 5th morning worship service, we will recognize both Blanket Sunday and World Communion Sunday. Be sure to mark this special date on your calendars now and plan to attend worship on October 5th!

CHRIST IN OUR HOME

A reminder to anyone who would like a daily devotional to jump start their day. There are plenty of devotionals in "Christ in our Home," which can be picked up in the church office or in the Adult Sunday School Room and are FREE!

UPCOMING SERVANTS

ALTAR GUILD

Aug. 18 to Sept. 7 Christie Yorks & Sabrina Shipp
Sept. 8 to Sept. 28 .. Linda Leister & Bethanie Beward

MANNA MAKERS

September 7 Barb Geedey
September 21 Jen Hutchinson

LECTORS

September 7 Hannah Ehrisman
September 14 Cynthia Smith
September 21 Bob St. Clair
September 28 Kate Swailes

ACOLYTES

September 7 Hope & Evan Miller
September 14 Sofia & Stella Reed
September 21 .. Carter Ehrisman & Thea Beward
September 28 Ella Harris & Paige Martin

COMMUNION/OFFERING PRESENTERS

September 7
..Hannah Ehrisman, Olivia Mummah & Grace Miller
September 14
..... Nick & Gabby Reed and Silas Smith
September 21
..... Zeb Berry, Paige Martin, & Ella Harris
September 28
..... Thea Beward, Carter Ehrisman, & Silas Smith

FLOWERS

September 7 Sandy Pines, Dan & Michelle
Stoner, and Braedon Walton
September 14 Bob St. Clair
September 21 Judy Armstrong
September 28 OPEN

OFFERING COUNTERS

September 7 Marylou Hazard & Jean Berry
September 14 ...Tammy Brackbill & Mary Grimm
September 21 Don & Barb Geedey
September 28 Cynthia Smith & Larry Goss

MISSION OF THE MONTH

September's "Mission of the Month" at Messiah will be for Central Juniata EMS. The monies will be sent from Messiah directly to CJEMS to continue assisting in the effort to serve the needs of our community. In addition to your generosity, the PPC allocated funds to match congregational donations up to \$1,000.00. This is just one way in which we can continue to extend our mission in Christ's love beyond the walls of our church building.

STORE GIFT CARDS

Weis and Giant gift cards are available to purchase from the Disciples Class. This is a particularly important outreach ministry that helps neighbors in need in our own community. We thank each and every one for continued support of this very worthwhile project.

OUR SYMPATHIES...

We extend our sympathy to Jean Compton, Jennifer Black, and Kate Swailes on the passing of their husband and father, Glenn Compton on August 8, 2025. Please keep the family in your thoughts and prayers.

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS

On Sunday, August 24th, during the morning worship service, Pastor Sam provided a "Blessing of the Backpacks" for those students, young and older, who are returning to school, college, or even those who are returning to further their education or those who are beginning their education in pre-school. Those students were welcomed forward with their backpacks (or even if they didn't have one) to be blessed for the new and upcoming school year.

JUNIATA COUNTY FOOD PANTRY SEPTEMBER UPDATE

September is National Hunger Action Month



What a blessing is all the healthy fresh produce pouring into the Food Pantry! Thank you for sharing the Lord's bounty with your neighbors in need! We also appreciate your support for our summer backpack program as we helped over 145 children spend their summer having fun instead of going hungry.

In July 2025, the Food Pantry served 296 families in need – 775 individuals. A special thank you to Aldersgate United Methodist Church for providing volunteers for the month.

We are seeing an increase in need from the community and new volunteers are always being sought. If you feel called, openings are available on Tuesday afternoons or on Saturday mornings, consider becoming a volunteer. The experience alone is so rewarding.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS FOR SEPTEMBER:

Canned beets, canned potatoes, canned pineapple, spam, Shampoo, OTC cold and Pain Medicines, Dishwashing Soaps, Laundry Soap, and School supplies and backpacks while they are on sale 😊.

Monetary donations are also appreciated.

PO Box 44, 114 N. Main St, Mifflintown, PA 17059

Phone: 717-436-9718

Hours: Tue 9-12 and 1-5, and Sat 9-12

*PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO THE **JUNIATA COUNTY FOOD PANTRY.**

(CONTACT PERSON: GLENDA FULTZ). Email: jcfp122017@gmail.com

WEBSITE: www.jcfoodpantry.com

Our vestibule is open 24 hours a day to receive donations. Cash, checks, or gift cards may be deposited in the vestibule's mail slot. *Non-perishable foods and non-food items may be dropped off at any time in our vestibule. Please deliver perishable foods only when someone is here to receive them. Thank you!

GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH

"God's Work, Our Hands" Sunday will be September 7th following the morning worship service. We will once again be knotting quilts and filling school backpacks, so please plan on staying to help!

JUNIATA COUNTY CLEARINGHOUSE ANNUAL MEETING

The Juniata County Clearinghouse Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, September 22nd at 7:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall at Cedar Grove Brethren in Christ Church. We will share stories and stats from the past 12 months. Please plan to attend and learn about how this ministry works in our community.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS AND PRAYER FOCUS

SEPTEMBER 1 ----- 2 CHRONICLES 12:1-12

MENTORS AND MENTEES

SEPTEMBER 2 ----- PSALM 119:65-72

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

SEPTEMBER 3 ----- ISAIAH 57:14-21

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

SEPTEMBER 4 ----- DEUTERONOMY 30:15-20

PEOPLE MAKING DIFFICULT CHOICES

SEPTEMBER 5 ----- PSALM 1

FORESTRY WORKERS

SEPTEMBER 6 ----- PHILEMON 1-21

PEDIATRICIANS AND PEDIATRIC NURSES

SEPTEMBER 7 ----- LUKE 14:25-33

YOUTH DIRECTORS

SEPTEMBER 8 ----- 1 TIMOTHY 3:14 – 4:5

PEOPLE WHO HAVE FELT UNWELCOME

SEPTEMBER 9 ----- 2 KINGS 18:9-18

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS

SEPTEMBER 10 ----- PSALM 101

PEOPLE WITH VOCAL CORD DAMAGE

SEPTEMBER 11 ----- NUMBERS 21:4B - 9

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

SEPTEMBER 12 ----- PSALM 98:1-4

ELEMENTARY MUSIC TEACHERS

SEPTEMBER 13 ----- 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-24

PEOPLE WHO KEEP COMMUNITIES INFORMED

SEPTEMBER 14 ----- JOHN 3:3-17

PEOPLE SEEKING A SPIRITUAL PATH

SEPTEMBER 15 ----- PSALM 73

COAST GUARD MEMBERS AND LIFEGUARDS

SEPTEMBER 16 ----- 1 PETER 3:8-13

PLANTS AND ANIMALS FACING EXTINCTION

SEPTEMBER 17 ----- JOB 40:6-14; 42:1-6

ALL WHO BRING QUESTIONS TO GOD

SEPTEMBER 18 ----- AMOS 8:4-7

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

SEPTEMBER 19 ----- PSALM 113

PEOPLE WHO WORK IN EARLY AND LATE HOURS

SEPTEMBER 20 ----- 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7

LEADERS WHO HAVE AGENCY AND AUTHORITY

SEPTEMBER 21 ----- LUKE 16:1-13

FINANCIAL ADVISORS

SEPTEMBER 22 ----- MATTHEW 9:9-13

WRITERS AND EDITORS OF TEACHING MATERIALS

SEPTEMBER 23 ----- PROVERBS 17:1-5

FAMILY REUNIONS

SEPTEMBER 24 ----- LUKE 20:45 – 21:4

FINANCIAL NEEDS OF CONGREGATIONS AND SYNODS

SEPTEMBER 25 ----- AMOS 6:1A, 4-7

PEOPLE WHO BUILD ROADWAYS

SEPTEMBER 26 ----- PSALM 146

WORSHIP LEADERS

SEPTEMBER 27 ----- 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-19

PEOPLE TROUBLED BY ANXIOUS THOUGHTS

SEPTEMBER 28 ----- LUKE 16:19-31

PEOPLE WHO WORK IN CEMETERIES

SEPTEMBER 29 ----- LUKE 10:17-20

CHOIR MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 30 ----- JAMES 5:1-6

PASTORS AND TEACHERS OF SCRIPTURE

NEW ALTAR GUILD & OFFERING COUNTER SCHEDULES BEING CREATED

New Altar Guild and Offering Counter schedules are being drawn up for “Year A,” which runs from Sunday, November 30th, 2025 (First Sunday of Advent) through Sunday, November 22nd, 2026 (Christ the King Sunday). If you would like to join the Altar Guild or help in the baking of Manna Bread for communion or would like to volunteer a few Sundays a year to help count the morning’s offerings, please let Slone Smith or Bob St. Clair know ASAP. Thanks to all who serve!

MESSIAH ATTENDANCE & OFFERINGS FOR AUGUST 2025

DATE	ATTENDANCE	TOTAL OFFERING	GENERAL FUND OFFERING	OTHER FUNDS OFFERING
Sunday, August 3	Worship – 43	\$3,790.00	\$3,470.00	Benevolence -- \$100.00 Building Fund -- \$60.00 Mission of the Month -- \$60.00 Summer Camp -- \$100.00
Sunday, August 10	Worship – 43	\$3,874.00	\$1,734.00	Benevolence -- \$20.00 Building Fund -- \$60.00 Mission of the Month -- \$10.00 Flowers -- \$50.00 Memorial Fund -- \$2,000.00
Sunday, August 17	Worship – 47	1,697.00	\$1,553.00	Building Fund -- \$60.00 Mission of the Month -- \$10.00 Flowers -- \$24.00 Memorial Fund -- \$50.00
Sunday, August 24	Worship – 37	\$2,555.00	\$2,285.00	Benevolence -- \$20.00 Building Fund -- \$80.00 Mission of the Month -- \$70.00 Piano -- \$100.00
Sunday, August 31	Worship – 47	\$3,534.00	\$2,707.00	Benevolence -- \$20.00 Building Fund -- \$360.00 Mission of the Month -- \$410.00 Flowers -- \$30.00

AUGUST INCOME (GENERAL FUND) -- \$11,749.00

AUGUST EXPENSES -- \$17,776.15 (\$5,000 WAS FOR PAINTING)

TOTAL LOSS – (\$6,027.15)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

SEPTEMBER 17 – Eliza Arentz
SEPTEMBER 28 – Jonathan White

**Happy
BirthDay**

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!!

SEPTEMBER 4 – Warren & Claire Mummah
SEPTEMBER 13 – Jonathan & Dani White
SEPTEMBER 20 – Brian & Eliza Arentz

**Happy
Anniversary**

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1:	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY -7:00 PM -- AA IN DISCIPLES CLASS AREA
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3:	-9:00 AM – “THE NEEDLERS” IN FELLOWSHIP HALL -7:00 PM – CHOIR REHEARSAL IN SANCTUARY
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7:	“GOD’S WORK, OUR HANDS” SUNDAY -10:00 AM – WORSHIP AND COMMUNION
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8:	-6:30 PM – THE KNITTERS IN JUNIOR CHURCH ROOM -7:00 PM -- AA IN DISCIPLES CLASS AREA
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9:	-10:30 AM – BIBLE STUDY IN LIBRARY
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10:	-9:00 AM – “THE NEEDLERS” IN FELLOWSHIP HALL -7:00 PM – CHOIR REHEARSAL IN SANCTUARY
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11:	-1:00 PM – WELCA IN YOUTH AREA
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14:	-10:00 AM – WORSHIP AND COMMUNION
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15:	-6:30 PM – THE KNITTERS IN JUNIOR CHURCH ROOM -7:00 PM -- AA IN DISCIPLES CLASS AREA
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16:	-10:30 AM – BIBLE STUDY IN LIBRARY
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17:	-5 TO 9 AM -- LION'S CLUB/UNITED WAY BREAKFAST IN FELLOWSHIP HALL -9:00 AM – “THE NEEDLERS” IN FELLOWSHIP HALL -7:00 PM – CHOIR REHEARSAL IN SANCTUARY
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21:	-10:00 AM – WORSHIP AND COMMUNION -1:00 TO 4:00 PM -- DELTA KAPPA GAMMA IN FELLOWSHIP HALL.
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22:	-6:30 PM – THE KNITTERS IN JUNIOR CHURCH ROOM -7:00 PM -- AA IN DISCIPLES CLASS AREA -7:00 PM – JUNIATA COUNTY CLEARINGHOUSE ANNUAL MEETING AT CEDAR GROVE BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH FELLOWSHIP HALL
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23:	-10:30 AM – BIBLE STUDY IN LIBRARY
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24:	-9:00 AM – “THE NEEDLERS” IN FELLOWSHIP HALL -5:00 TO 8:00 PM -- LION'S CLUB ZONE MEETING IN FELLOWSHIP HALL -7:00 PM – CHOIR REHEARSAL IN SANCTUARY
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26:	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28:	-10:00 AM – WORSHIP AND COMMUNION -AFTER WORSHIP – VOTER’S ASSEMBLY FOR REPORTS OF MINUTES OF THE BOARDS -AFTER WORSHIP – WORSHIP & MUSIC COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29:	-6:30 PM – THE KNITTERS IN JUNIOR CHURCH ROOM -7:00 PM -- AA IN DISCIPLES CLASS AREA
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30:	-10:30 AM – BIBLE STUDY IN LIBRARY

Women of the ELCA

No meeting was held in August. **Our next meeting will be September 11th at 1:00 P.M.**

BIBLE STUDY RESUMES

Bible Study will resume on **Tuesday, September 9th at 10:30 AM** in the church library. We will begin a study of the Gospels. Materials and books will be available by then. **EVERYONE WELCOME!!**

IMPORTANT REMINDER!

Please have all information to be placed in the newsletter to Bob St. Clair at stclairbjr@gmail.com or the church office at mlcmiffintown@gmail.com by the deadlines listed in the monthly calendar in each newsletter. Thank you!

GOD'S WORK, OUR HANDS

God's work, our hands; working together,
building a future, repairing the world,
raising up homes, planting new gardens,
feeding the hungry and sheltering the cold.
Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name,
sharing the good news of your gospel.

God is at work in and around us,
seedlings are sprouting and bread's on the rise!
Washed and set free, humbled and honored,
gifted by grace, we respond in God's love.
Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name,
sharing the good news of your gospel.

God's work. Our hands.



September 7, 2025

Mark your calendar for Sunday, Sept. 7, when congregations of the ELCA will join together for our annual day of service, **"God's work. Our hands."**

Participating in service projects is one way to celebrate who we are as the ELCA — one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.

We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in faith and life. As we continue our tradition of service, we remember the words of Martin Luther, "Our faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing." With our hands, we do God's work of restoring and reconciling communities in Jesus Christ's name.

CHOIR REHEARSALS CONTINUE FOR THE FALL

Messiah's choir needs you! Our choir sings **most** every week for the weekly Sunday morning service from September through May. There are no auditions for our choir and the only requirements to be involved are a love for singing, energy, and an aspiration to unite our voices as one community in faith and song.

Our choir rehearses on Wednesday evenings from 7:00-8:00 PM, so if you are in junior high school or beyond, male or female, and you can "make a joyful noise," you are certainly welcome to join us! Our first rehearsal for the fall will be **Wednesday evening, September 3rd at 7:00 PM** in the church sanctuary!

Word Search for Jesus Taught About Prayer

Find the words on the list that are hidden in the puzzle. The words can be left to right, up and down, or diagonally.

L	I	P	I	T	N	U	L	P	R	I	V	A	T	E
U	F	O	R	G	I	V	E	A	T	U	E	R	I	T
L	O	W	E	R	S	E	C	T	E	A	R	T	H	O
N	U	E	L	A	M	C	O	N	S	E	Q	U	E	S
N	O	R	S	E	Q	U	D	S	C	I	L	L	A	N
D	K	E	V	E	L	E	X	E	R	I	R	I	V	R
L	I	O	R	E	M	O	L	O	B	S	I	T	E	R
S	N	M	I	T	E	M	P	T	A	T	I	O	N	E
I	G	N	I	A	T	B	H	E	N	I	S	M	O	D
T	D	O	N	H	E	D	E	U	G	I	A	M	V	E
L	O	I	G	L	O	R	Y	O	N	S	E	C	T	E
T	M	E	D	O	L	N	R	E	D	E	A	I	Q	U
Z	R	I	T	E	U	F	O	U	G	A	M	T	V	U
L	A	O	B	R	E	A	D	R	R	S	E	T	E	R
S	U	M	I	N	E	N	D	R	E	T	N	T	V	E

AMEN
BREAD
DEBTS

EARTH
FORGIVE
GLORY

HEAVEN
HONOR
KINGDOM

POWER
PRIVATE
TEMPTATION

A LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION OF MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

As the executive director of PPC and on behalf of all of the board members, we would like to discuss a very delicate topic.

It was decided at our last PPC meeting that we would decrease our benevolence from \$12,000 per year to \$6,000 per year. We did this with heavy hearts. This decision was made because in the past several months up to and including the present time, we are running in the red. It is hard to ask our congregation to try to dig deeper into their pockets. We ask that you please pray about your giving and pray about the future of Messiah. We, as a congregation, have always moved forward on behalf of our church. So, I am asking each and every one of our members to please do their best to help our church continue and grow and be able to support everyone of our members and missions into the future.

Prayerfully yours,

Marylou Hazard, Messiah PPC Executive Director

CASTING A VISION FOR THE CHURCH

YEHIEL CURRY TO SERVE AS FIFTH PRESIDING BISHOP OF THE ELCA

By [John Potter](https://www.livinglutheran.org/2025/07/casting-a-vision-for-the-church/) July 31, 2025 -- <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2025/07/casting-a-vision-for-the-church/>

When Yehiel Curry considers his vision for the future of the church, he sees an important distinction. “Part of the work is naming it,” he said, “but that next phase is embodying it.

“When we’re talking about casting a vision, I think people want to be part of a vision because they want to share in the process. But they typically will also share in the burdens as well. So part of my vision is [about] those things we’ve lifted up as a church that we said we need to do, we’re going to do, and find a way to bring more people to the table so that we might embody that work instead of it just being a written document.”

Curry, who was elected July 30 to serve a six-year term as ELCA presiding bishop, knows something about embodying a vision and discerning a call.

Before he became a pastor, then a bishop, then the chair of the Conference of Bishops, and now presiding bishop-elect, he was a social worker, then a teacher, then in sales. “I went from being a social worker to a teacher in the same community where I was helping those families, and in both cases, what I learned is passion is very important. And if you can align a person’s passion with a need, then it doesn’t feel like work sometimes.

“It wasn’t until I was in the church that I said, ‘I could do this for the rest of my life.’”

Curry wrestled with the passion he feels for his current ministry as he discerned his new call in the days leading up to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. “I take my role [as bishop of] the Metropolitan Chicago Synod very seriously,” he said. “And I started the process of thinking about what the next six months would look like, even the next year. And some people discern differently. I didn’t have some voice saying to me,

‘Here’s what you ought to do.’ But last Friday, what started to happen was the calls of family, friends and mentors—the nudging, the text messages, the emails—served as a form of discernment for me.”



“I only arrived at this place Friday or Saturday where I felt like maybe this is something I should do,” he said of being considered for presiding bishop.

Now that Curry has been elected the fifth presiding bishop of the ELCA—and the first of African descent—how does he feel? “That reality hasn’t really set in,” he said. “Even at this moment, I’m feeling a certain kind of way in understanding the weight and the impact.

“I’m hopeful that, if presence matters, me being here does something for allowing others to consider,

‘Someone who looks like me, or is from my community, or speaks with an accent, or their mother tongue isn’t English [could take on a similar role].’ Hopefully that’s what that means.”

A return on investment

An immediate answer comes to mind for Curry when asked about what he believes should be among the ELCA’s top priorities. “I think there’s this unique opportunity around lay equipping and lay education,” he said. “The ethos and the structures of many of our congregations are changing. In some cases, they’ve gone from full-time pastors to part-time pastors; we have leaders who are serving two- and three-point congregations.

“Our lay leaders are being asked to do more. And in many cases, they’re saying, ‘Yes, I want the education—as long as you’re not trying to steer me and tell me I need to be a pastor or a deacon. Tell me how to be a better leader in my community, in my context.’”

Curry’s passion for, and awareness of, equipping lay leaders stems from his own ministry beginnings.

He was a Chicago Public Schools teacher when he first visited Shekinah Chapel, then a synod-authorized worshipping community. “I didn’t even realize it was Lutheran,” he said. “I was invited by a friend.” What drew him to Shekinah was Safe in My Brother’s Arms (SIMBA), a mentoring program there sponsored by the ELCA. “I had these unique students,” he said. “And I was interested in services for them. ... There was a worship service I stayed for. And I loved it.”

Curry went home and told his wife, LaShonda, about the great experience he had had there, and they returned together the following weekend. “We came back and joined,” he said. “And we didn’t understand the organizations of the Lutheran church. We just saw a home, we saw a community.”

Eventually, the community, and the synod staff, asked Curry to consider being a lay mission developer. He was unsure. “I knew I had this thing in my heart, but I didn’t have the right vocabulary for it,” he said. “I didn’t know that I was actively discerning and that I was being called into this ministry.”

After becoming mission developer, Curry enrolled in the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries program at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and received his ordination certification in 2009. In 2012, when Shekinah became an official ELCA congregation, it called Curry to be its pastor. He served in that role until he was elected bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod in 2019.

“This was a process I was honored to be involved in, because I didn’t think many people knew who I was,” he said. “I was working in poverty ministry in the outskirts of Chicago. So it was an honor to have my name lifted up and to ultimately be elected bishop.” In 2024, he was elected chair of the ELCA Conference of Bishops.

Curry recalled his ministry trajectory, and the initial hesitation he felt in accepting that first role, when he addressed the 2025 Churchwide Assembly following his election.

“I’m what a return on your investment looks like,” he told the assembly. “Perhaps I’m out there in one of you. I never saw myself as good enough, so for two years, I said no. I finally said yes. When I said yes, your support, this church’s support, of that ministry meant everything. So if you want to know what your benevolence dollars look like, it looks like me. And I want to say thank you. Thank you for your investment.”

Curry will be installed Oct. 4 at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

PRAYER VENTURES FOR SEPTEMBER 2025

1 - Labor Day Praise the work people do to sustain their families and benefit their communities and society. Pray that all will receive fair wages, work in safe environments, receive encouragement, be renewed through times of sabbath, and experience joy and fulfillment in their labor. Pray for those who seek employment and for the care, support and well-being of people unable to work.

2 - “Let mutual affection continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:1-2). Pray that our fears, prejudices and ideologies will not prevent us from showing love, respect and hospitality to one another — friends, family and strangers alike.

3 - Suicide Prevention Month Pray for our neighbors and siblings in Christ who feel lonely, depressed and hopeless, that they will find compassion, support and spiritual renewal in times of darkness and suffering. Ask the Spirit to inspire and guide our care, support and counsel for those who are contemplating suicide, and for those who grieve the loss of someone to suicide.

4 - Give thanks for the faithful service and leadership of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. Pray that her faith, gifts and commitment will continue to inspire us to work for justice and peace, to love and serve our neighbors, and to share the good news of Jesus Christ in a world yearning for hope and renewal.

5 - “Praise the Lord! Happy are those who fear the Lord, who greatly delight in his commandments” (Psalm 112:1). Pray that we will find joy and guidance in the ways and commandments of God and be inspired by God’s wisdom, love for humanity and concern for those who suffer.

6 - The 2025 Churchwide Assembly has elected the Rev. Yehiel Curry to serve as the next presiding bishop of the ELCA. Pray that the Spirit will strengthen his faith, gifts and wisdom as he leads our church in its mission to share the good news of Jesus Christ, reflect God’s abundant love and mercy for the world, and serve our neighbors in need.

7 - “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday ELCA congregations join together today for our annual day of service, celebrating that we are freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. Pray for service activities around the country that unite people, ecumenical partners and community agencies as we serve our neighbors in need, strengthen our communities and demonstrate God’s love.