

THE MESSENGER

EPIPHANY AND LENT UNTIL
THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST TO THE VIRGIN MARY

THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH
114 NORTH THIRD STREET AT MADISON
PULASKI, TENNESSEE 38478
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF TENNESSEE
JOHN C. BAUERSCHMIDT, BISHOP

*THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH IS TO BE A GROWING WITNESS OF
OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE COMMUNITY
THROUGH WORSHIP AND SACRAMENT IN THE EPISCOPAL TRADITION.*

Our leadership:

- ✘ The Rev. Jess Reeves, Priest-in-Charge
- ✘ Pat Woolard, Music Director
- ✘ Senior Warden, Dr. Grace Meier ('20)
- ✘ Junior Warden, Crystal Woolard ('22)
- ✘ Secretary to the Parish, Marquenda Forrester
- ✘ Clerk of the Vestry, Dr. Cathy Roberts
- ✘ Treasurer, Kristi Watson
- ✘ Vestry members: Solon Holt ('20), Andy Hoover ('21), Daniel Lavacot ('21), Ann Hays ('22), Donny Muth ('22)

Morality and politics, in that order, or Christian formation in political issues

God is. God preceding and transcendent chose to create everything, God Himself being uncreated. God deemed His creation “good.” By this is meant not only beautiful, functional, and satisfactory, much less pleasant. It means above all His verdict on it as morally good – created by THE good to be good: be fruitful and multiply. Being perfectly good and true, that which He creates must be similarly good in the same ways, morally generated good generating moral good. Therefore, there is a moral imperative in Creation which is its design and purpose. We are designed divine morality.

However, man being the image of God, we choose to reflect His character by using our good endowments morally. That means being endowed with a particular freedom which is for obedience to cooperate with and effect good. This capacity to reflect God’s image is obligatory but not compelled; we are free to choose what is not of God, what does not conform to His Word or runs counter to His creational design. That such capacity for choice can prove a moral result is inevitable of the integrity of God. So we are morally responsible because we are morally capable. If nothing is excepted from accountability within this matrix, and from day one, nothing is, then all relations and usages are morally accountable.

Enter rebellion and degeneration: We learn that the love and goodness of God cannot now be perfectly apprehended by a fallen world, i.e., one in which every single thing is tainted, stained by wrong, as God’s Word written affirms. That Holy Writ is a control on our unreliable “reading” our own experience (beware the lived

experience argument used today to shut down all other voices). That control or security is the office and promise of the Holy Spirit; Christians are willingly guided and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, beginning with the Holy Scriptures. Consider Jesus careful instruction before He was to bodily remove from His disciples:

⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ^{John 16}

The foregoing is formative of the Tradition of the Church and Anglicanism’s creedal statement, the 39 Articles, both of which are themselves, being explicitly derived from the Holy Scriptures, fundamental to an Apostolic Faith.

So, we are given the ability to judge [there is a super-abundance of Biblical commendation for us to make godly judgments] ourselves and all things; we are even commanded to exercise this judgement. Ourselves, our families, our society, all impartially as does God. We make such judgments to do something: seek justice, apply mercy, walk humbly in glad submission to our Author. Therefore, every political issue is legitimately subject to this god-ordained delegation: Questions of fair trading, bearing truthful witness, resisting theft and the taking of innocent

life, honoring the nuclear family, and the form of the created design evident in it, as that understanding is set forth by God's Word. The Ten Commandments are a good starting application, which in fact formed the backbone of all Western civil law for millennia. The commandments end saying that envy is the final note to eschew in order to avoid corruption. That explains a lot of what we see in the public square today.

All political issues which show direct and substantial relation to the commandments of God are subject to testing for truth by the Holy Spirit. Christians cannot rightly and godly affirm destruction, whether of innocent life, denial of individual liberties (which is the liberty to do good, not whatsoever you define as "good"), or the physical design of God-given creation, of what God's word reveals to be God's will. Those are moral issues before they are part of any other category; there is no exception claiming *secular* or *politics*. All are accountable. We cannot avoid that responsibility – God did not ask us about delegation and will not absolve us because we justify special exceptions. Without God's standard forming our own, hell ensues. Just like the newest member of the Supreme Court faithfully said, we endeavor in our vocations to righteously serve God.

Many see the conclusively verified degeneration of families and public morality as the fulfillment of Romans 1: God gives over those who insist on going their own way to the horrific, escalating consequences. We are all of us charged to resist diminishment of societal and familial welfare, but who shows interest in biblical literacy necessary to correct the course? Fewer and fewer have any depth of familiarity with God's Word. One weekly dose will not do, any more than taking your heart medicine once a week or eating once a week would keep you healthy. Of course,

any nutrition is of no use unless used, put to work. The comprehensive canon is submission to godly wisdom to change and refine our behaviors, as the result of reforming our hearts and minds. Genuine Christian wisdom is transformation of mind and manners on every level, social as well as individual.

All of which is to say that many so-called political issues are first moral issues, that there are rights & wrongs according to the standard of the Bible, and that is not a matter of individual interpretation. As C. K. Chesterton said, tolerance is the virtue of one with no convictions. We do have convictions graciously allowed to us for our own good. Augustine said, if you believe what you like in the Bible and reject what you do not like, it is not God you believe but yourself. Therefore, Saint Peter:

¹⁹And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.

²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. ^{2 Peter 1}

Important words for the dark days of this present generation. Godspeed us, and deliver us as our trust is in Him. And do not forget, every thought and behavior is known to God and accountable to God, without exception. Politics included. As Saint Peter taught and lived, when there's a conflict between the two, better go with God!

JLR

Serving our Worship, ---- The Church of the Messiah:

PLEASE CONTACT ME IF THIS ORDER IS INCONVENIENT OR MIGHT BENEFIT FROM YOUR ADVICE. JLR

January 3: Acolyte: Calum Lavacot/Bella Muth; Lay reader: Rich Woolard; Altar Guild: Catherine Dunnivant; Flowers: Lewis Foster in thanksgiving for his niece's birthday.

January 10: Acolyte: Logan Muth; Lay reader: Mary Dubberley; Altar Guild: Samantha & Donny Muth; Flowers: Catherine & Pat Dunnivant in memory of Martha Derryberry.

January 17: Acolyte: Calum Lavacot/Bella Muth; Lay reader: Cathy Roberts; Altar Guild: John Davis.

January 24: Acolyte: Calum Lavacot/ Bella Muth; Lay reader: Teresa Hughes; Altar Guild: Tabitha & Dan Lavacot.

January 31: Acolyte: Logan Muth; Lay reader: Andy Hoover; Altar Guild: Connie Baker.

February 7: Acolyte: Calum Lavacot; Lay reader: Crystal Woolard; Altar Guild: Marqueda Forrester.

February 14: Acolyte: Bella Muth; Lay reader: Lewis Foster; Altar Guild: Catherine Dunnivant.

February 21: Acolyte: Logan Muth; Lay reader: Rich Woolard; Altar Guild: Samantha & Donny Muth.

February 28: Acolyte: Bella Muth; Lay reader: Mary Dubberley; Altar Guild: John Davis.

March 7: Acolyte: Calum Lavacot; Lay reader: Teresa Hughes; Altar Guild: Tabitha & Dan Lavacot.

March 14: Acolyte: Logan Muth; Lay reader: Andy Hoover; Altar Guild: Connie Baker.

March 21: Acolyte: Bella Muth; Lay reader: Lewis Foster; Altar Guild: Marqueda Forrester.

March 28, Palm Sunday: Acolyte: Calum Lavacot; Lay reader: Cathy Roberts; Altar Guild: Catherine Dunnivant.

<p>Holy Week: Palm Sunday, 10 a.m.; Wednesday, 7 p.m. Holy Communion; Maundy Thursday, 7 p.m. communion, stripping of chancel after service; Vigil; Good Friday, noon & 7 pm; Easter Day: 10:00 festal Eucharist.</p>

A SEASON TO BASK IN THE LIGHT AND SHARE IT WITH ALL MEN

Our denominational calendar recognizes the **Epiphany** on January 6, the same date on which the Byzantine and Roman churches celebrated Christ's nativity and baptism. The change occurred in the fourth century, when church officials moved the Feast of the Nativity to December 25 for more reasons than we can safely comprehend or reduce for convenience. There began the twelve days of Christmas.

Epiphany as season of the liturgical year focuses us on the demonstrations of Jesus as the Messiah. Although the primary emphasis of the festival is still on Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles, i.e., all non-Jews, in the persons of the magi (*we three kings of Orient are....*), readings for the season include various narratives about his first miracle at the wedding banquet at Cana, his baptism, as well as other passages that show His divine nature shining through.

Why Celebrate Epiphany? It reminds of the responsibility of God's Chosen People, to fulfill their God-assigned role as ambassadors to represent the one true God. It reminds us that God in Christ did something quite remarkable: he extended his grace to those who were originally outside the old covenant. As Paul reminds the Ephesians, we were aliens and strangers, but God has henceforth made all who will receive him part of the new Israel, heirs along with Jesus in His Eternal Kingdom.

Since the church has been distinguished from Judaism for centuries, we tend to forget that at first the notion of conversion rather shocked the early Christians. Peter, for example, needed a vision from God to convince him that

the Jewish Messiah was for all races, peoples, and ethnic groups, not just for Israel. And the church had to convene a major council to decide just what to do about the flood of converts who did not come out of a Jewish background. It took many efforts over time for the true Church to accept that God wants all men to be saved.

Celebrating Epiphany, then, should help us understand the gracious intention of God, who has seen fit to include those who have no stake or claim to be God's children and yet God's love is fully extended to them. Love so amazing, so divine, demands our life, our love, our all.

Epiphany also focuses our attention on the magi's response to Christ's revelation. They worshiped him and presented him with rich gifts. They recognized that they were in the presence of the King of the Jews, and they responded appropriately. On Epiphany we are reminded that we must do the same. We need to worship Christ as King by presenting ourselves as gifts to him. Such an action seems particularly appropriate for Anglicans who in worship acknowledge that WE are the sacrifice God desires, His own Son's being complete and perfect, once for all. As stewards of God's gifts, we return to God what is rightfully his, ourselves, our souls and bodies, as our liturgy expresses it.

The celebration of Christmas reminds us of God's gift to us in the Incarnation. Within the cycle of the church year, Epiphany, the festival that follows, reminds us of the appropriate response: we give back to God. We recognize who Jesus Christ is and His superlative

worth; so, we respond with worship that includes an offering of our entire being. He is Lord of all or Lord of nothing, a strictly either/or proposition as Jesus and the entire Bible defines.

When we consider Epiphany IS a natural counterpart of Christmas, we should be struck by the contrast between the ways in which the shepherds and the magi learned of Christ's birth. In the Christmas narrative, God broadcasts the news supernaturally as angels suddenly appear in the night sky, telling the shepherds that the Savior of the world has been born. Informing the magi is quite different, involving the natural universe rather than the supernatural. The magi see a star or planet they cannot account for, and they infer that some significant figure has been born. Their discovery of this infant King seems in certain ways a natural outgrowth of their vocation, while the revelation to the shepherds definitely is not. When viewed in this light, Epiphany reminds us to look for the work of God both in His Holy Word of self-revelation and in our natural everyday lives. It keeps us from dividing our lives into spiritual and natural realms, a tendency anyone can fall into. For a better explanation, read Romans 1.

How Can We Celebrate Epiphany? If we agree that Epiphany is worth celebrating, that it helps us better understand God's redemptive acts and respond to his grace, we will be eager to do something! Two suggestions: First, since Epiphany stresses the manifestation of the Messiah to and for the Gentiles, i.e., all those who are not born into the privilege of being part of His forever family, this is an excellent time to emphasize evangelism. Prioritize inviting people to meet King Jesus over giving them anything less that is of temporary value. We respond to God's

gift and revelation by offering the Gospel to others as yet "aliens" and "strangers."

Second, as alluded to already, we can take our clue from the magi and emphasize the giving of gifts to God. Perhaps you can think and pray about what peculiar gift of yourself, your time, or your ... anything that is yours to offer, you can give to your King and the service of His Kingdom. There are few more striking ways to remind ourselves that the best fruits of our efforts in every area of life belong to God.

The idea of these suggestions is that God's Grace is given to apply in the service of the King and the advancement of His Kingdom, not to rust unused or be taken for granted. Think of some way to share the ultimate gift in your own, normal life and expect the Holy Spirit to be right at work through you...yes, even you!

No matter what a group calls the season or understands as the variety of means of God's showing Himself and His purposes to us, however, the central focus of the Messiah's manifestation to the world through his life and ministry is to be common to all. Don't hide this glorious light underneath a bushel!

JLR

Messiah Ministries

- *Morning Prayer, Monday-Saturday, 7 a.m.*
- *Sunday, Holy Eucharist, 10 a.m.*
- *Wednesday, 7 p.m., Holy Communion*
- *Vestry meeting, Second Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m.*



Annual Meeting....

Church of the Messiah's Annual Meeting will be, Sunday, January 17, immediately following the church service. Reports due in the office typed and ready to be reproduced by Wednesday, January 13.



Diocesan Annual Convention...

will be January 23. Due to COVID-19 it will be held virtually. Fr. Reeves, Ken Vickers, and Rich Woolard are Church of the Messiah's delegates.

RFD Schedule: January 21, Thursday, 5:30 pm, sorting/packing food, Sharp Annex; January 23. Saturday, 8:30 am, distribution, **AG Park, Elkton Hwy**; February 18, Thursday, 5:30 pm, sorting/packing food, Sharp Annex; February 20, 8:30 am, distribution, **AG Park, Elkton Hwy**; March 18, Thursday, 5:30 pm, sorting/packing food, Sharp Annex; March 20, Saturday, 8:30 am, distribution, **AG Park, Elkton Hwy**.

Should Christians Hate Anything?

It is important that as Christians we have a proper understanding of who God is and what the Bible actually teaches instead of merely accepting spiritual-sounding platitudes from the culture around us. The question is, “Should Christians hate anything?” and the answer is, “Yes.”

There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.

- Proverbs 6:16-19

For I, the Lord, love justice, I hate robbery in the burnt offering.

- Isaiah 61:8

Find Holy Passion in Following Jesus

If you love something, you will hate what threatens or destroys it. Passionless tolerance is a Buddhist doctrine – not a biblical one. Christianity is passionate and fierce.

Part of being created in the image of God is that we are emotional beings. No emotion is inherently bad, not even hate. It becomes bad when it is misdirected toward self-serving or unjust aims. If you have a personal fury against someone, do not allow that to go unrepented or unreformed. However, there is more than personal, emotional anger.

Is God love? Yes, He is. It is important to remember, however, that God is bigger than we can possibly imagine, and we must accept what He says about Himself if we want to understand Him. Making up a conception of God based upon our own rationales is a recipe for disaster, and it is so arrogant to place our opinion above revealed wisdom. God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into it. Jesus sat and ate with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. He died for us, the relatively worst or best, offering all forgiveness of sins and life eternal if one will only repent and come to Him, following Him. He also will ultimately judge the world.

Every wrong will be righted. His wrath is against all that threatens to undo us (sin) **because He so loves us**, and it is stored up for the Day of Judgment when all that diminishes life will be condemned.

So where does that leave us? How are we to learn from His example? A lot of criticism has been lobbed at the phrase “*Love the sinner, hate the sin,*” but isn’t that what we usually see in the Bible? It is terribly hard to distinguish on a personal level, but it must be done. And that is not arrogant because we all come from the same place:

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. – Titus 3:3-7

Christians Are Supposed to Hate What Destroys God's Creation

We are called to be imitators of God (1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:6), and as we have already seen, there are things that God hates. We are also commanded to hate certain things:

Hate evil, you who love the Lord.
- Psalm 97:10

Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the gate!
- Amos 5:15

Some activities are not just alternative lifestyles or “different strokes,” they are evil. And while we can and are commanded to have compassion on those lost in these activities which the Bible says ruin their lives, we are supposed to hate the evil and not approve it and call that “love.”

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. - Luke 16:13

After all, even if you say you love everyone and everything, it is not true. You are going to abhor something, so should not it be what God hates? Who would argue that you should hate injustice? Who would argue that you should hate murder, taking innocent life? The difficulty is personally praying for the reform and salvation of the evildoer, as we are bidden, while hating their current behavior and adopted identity, e.g., ones hatefully disparaging those who are white or black or any race solely based on their God-assigned race. John Stott made this clarification: *So there is such a thing as perfect hatred, just as there is such a thing as righteous anger. But it is a hatred for God's enemies, not our own enemies. It is entirely free of all spite, rancor, and vindictiveness, and is fired only by love for God's honor and glory.*

Love and pray to God, love and pray for people, and hate what God hates. Indifference is not a Christian virtue, and it is in no wise loving.

Largely from a post by Pastor Deyline, Foothills Church, El Cajon, CA, extensively edited by permission and complemented by a quotation by the Anglican theologian John Stott who treats this subject at length in his book on the Sermon on the Mount.

ADDENDUM: “HATE” AS WEAPONIZED IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

There is a whole different usage of “hate” in the secular realm. If you believe the mainstream news outlets, today's America is inundated by an epidemic of violent hate crimes, “hate” not of injustice and ungodliness but hate purely determined by identity groupings. But is that really true? Does the data validate that ubiquitous narrative?

In *Hate Crime Hoax*, Professor Wilfred Reilly, a brilliant black scholar in the social sciences, examines over one hundred widely publicized incidents of so-called hate crimes that never actually happened. With a critical eye and attention to statistical detail, Reilly disproves these incidents which have been formally debunked, many alleged to have occurred on college campuses. We're not experiencing an epidemic of hate crimes, Reilly concludes—but we might be experiencing an unprecedented epidemic of hate crime *hoaxes*.

ALTAR FLOWERS

2021

January	3	Lewis Foster
	10	Catherine & Pat Dunnivant
	17	
	24	
	31	
February	7	
	14	
	21	No Flowers during Lent
	28	No Flowers during Lent
March	7	No Flowers during Lent
	14	No Flowers during Lent
	21	No Flowers during Lent
	28	Palm Arrangement

Flowers for the altar on Sunday mornings are a very important part of the worship service. The chart is in the back of the church for you to choose the Sunday you would like to donate flowers in thanksgiving or memory of a loved one. Please feel free to let Catherine Dunnivant or Marquenda Forrester know if you would like either one to sign up for you.

VERBUM SAP

Reflecting on the turning of the calendar leaf for a new year is a matter of course and usually pretty bland stuff. I wish by God's mercy this year would ease gently into the next, but not so. We have seen a shake down, not of the heavens, as Scripture predicts ultimately, but of our society to its core. The forecast is for even more stormy weather in 2021.

The economy is hanging by a thread over a safety net of flimsy tissue (in 2021 the national debt will exceed the size of the total economy). The utter desecration of law and order by not only hooligans but by the judiciary has rendered our streets and elections a danger and disgrace. Those who defend themselves are prosecuted by the authorities while those who burn and pillage are either protected or taken in briefly and released without punishment or accountability.

Our denomination has seen the last bishop resisting the violation of the unmistakable warrant of Scripture and Tradition back down and backed out after ironically being judged guilty of violating *his* ordinations vows. Verified data (TEC's own metric) show our denomination has lost 40% of its membership in this generation with the same proportional loss in average attendance, baptisms are down more than one third, marriages are down by 85%.

And now COVID-19 spawns alarm and fears fanning public anxiety with civil liberties being stripped in many quarters in the name of necessity. Only a precious few are asserting that religious gatherings are as "essential" as open liquor stores, pawn shops, adult entertainment venues, tattoo parlors, etc. The fabulously rich tech giants get richer as small business are failing at an unprecedented rate, with the threat of more enforced closures certain to add to the demise of small businesses.

All in all, this shakedown has shown what people value most, and as Americans en masse continue to patronize increasingly massive corporations which thereby fund riot and lawlessness in our streets and polling centers, society becomes soft clay in the hands of an unaccountable elite. When the Constitution of the United States was born, someone asked Benjamin Franklin what type of government was adopted; he retorted, "*A republic, if you can keep it.*"

This drear forecast is iterated to point out a state of affairs hardly new in human history. There have been coups and oppressions by the few over the many more times than one could count in history. That is very bad news, **but** we have even better GOOD NEWS which transcends it. We are citizens of a kingdom of perfect justice, truth, and charity that cannot ultimately fail. Our God reigns and will eventually make all things right. That means the absolute best thing you can do is be loyal to Him, fight tooth and nail to preserve your God-given dignity and fundamental rights, knowing He will honor those who do so relying on His faithfulness. We are also to PRAY in repentance not only our own behalf but for our denomination and nation. Those who are complacent or compromise, making excuses for backing down or buying into "just the way things are," will find the residue now and hereafter a sorry trade.

*"For whoever is **ashamed** of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be **ashamed** when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."* ^{Mark 8:38} In midst of death, disruption, and fears all-too-well justified, there is powerful hope to be had. When people are knocked out of their security, they are forced to choose between heaven and hell, faith and fear. As Joshua said to God's people on the edge of the arduous campaign to claim their Promised Land, *choose whom you will serve*. Though this is a harrowing time, followers of Jesus the Messiah have the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing. Fear not, therefore, as your trust is in Him no matter the forecast. It is in such a time as this that faith is proved and martyrs & saints rise to the occasion. You want to be in that number. The Rev. Jess L. Reeves