

The Messenger

ADVENT, CHRISTMASTIDE, & EPIPHANY 2022

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
- ✠ Secretary to the Parish, Marqueda Forrester
- ✠ Junior Warden, Daniel Lavacot ('21)
- ✠ Clerk of the Vestry, Dr. Cathy Roberts ('23)
- ✠ Treasurer, Kristi Watson ('23)
- ✠ Vestry members: Catherine Dunnivant ('22), Andrew Hoover ('21), Donny Muth ('22)

HOPE & ADVENT

Grant, Almighty God, that as your blessed Son Jesus at His first advent came to seek and save a lost Creation, so at His Second Coming in glorious majesty He may find in us the fruits of the Redemption which He wrought; who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever, Amen.

“*Comfort, O comfort My people,*” says your God. So begins the 40th chapter of Isaiah, the prophet most recalled in Advent and the season of the Incarnation. He soon foretells the ministry of Jesus herald, Cousin John the Baptist:

A voice cries:

*“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.*

*⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

This section of Isaiah closes with the reason that we should be comforted in the present, from what we should draw strength:

*He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.*

What is it that will be the comforting word to the people of the Lord’s coming, judging, and saving? Isaiah makes the imperative clear:

*A voice says, “Cry!”
And I said, “What shall I cry?”
All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the Lord blows on it;
surely the people are grass.
⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.*

How is it that lodged in a promise of comfort when the Lord comes to coddle His beloved people is this declaration of the brutal truth of the shortness and uncertainty of life, the implacable reality of death, the passing away of all that is cherished as withered grass and desiccated flowers?

The meaning is what the Bible, the God whose word it is, and Jesus the Son understand as hope. It is, of the theological foremost virtues of faith, hope, & charity, the least, or most superficially understood. How strange, in a world where people are pitifully ready to believe anything, despite history and reason, and where people are ready to doubt everything disagreeable, and faith is reduced to a dreadful amalgam of cynicism and credulity! In a world where charity is diminished to the most fatuous sentimental affection which is as bloodless as it is finally vain; in a world where compassion is degraded to emotional identification, and finally as Ayn Rand, our identity must enslave all others. That is, in a world where spiritual degeneration debases all genuine truth and character, our world, it is hope for which we must pray. It is hope we need most. Hope is the supreme message of Advent. It is the strength and proper quality of the will rightly ordered, for it is hope in God.

Hope is holding in firm anticipation, adamantly, our eternal destiny. That is full of real nourishment for our souls – not pabulum or insipid, but diamond hard. This is more than mere optimism, based in the unwarranted confidence in ourselves. Real hope is courage, fearing only the one thing to be rightly feared, God; despising that which would cow us, death, loss, despair. No one can fully live without internalizing the Prayer Book teaching, *in the midst of life we are in death*.

Make no mistake about it: above all else which we might fear as death, this means the peril of eternal death, the moral corruption and rotting away of individuals, communities, civilizations. In our time God is allowing us to witness what happens when we turn our hope from Him to anything less. The great Christian poet of the 20th century prophesies of hollow men living in their own wasteland. This year Jeremy Adams has written of the peril of generations reared as hollowed out creatures, who, frightened, fill their void with that which withers and decays. Against this, hope holds on and stirs up its will with courage. Its confidence is absolute, as when we say in the Creed, *I look forward to the Resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come*. The sure and certain hope in our God who will prevail and glorify those who abide in Him.

It is not untoward to be dismayed at what we see happening in the church and in the world, and all of this will be with us for a long time. But we know one thing supplanting all that; as Luther puts it, *we will not fear for God hath willed, His Truth to triumph through us*. We know that our King, Jesus the Christ, is THE King, and the gates of hell, be they ever so fearsome, cannot prevail against Him and His Church.

A compendium by Jess Reeves from the letters of the late Rev. William Ralston

MESSIAH MINISTRIES

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



Stewardship Drive....

Messiah's Stewardship Drive letters and pledge cards have been mailed out to the parish. Please prayerful consider your pledge for 2022. They may be given to John Davis or mailed to the Church of the Messiah, 114 North Third Street, Pulaski, TN 38478, ATTN: Stewardship Drive. We ask they be returned as soon as possible.



Annual Meeting....

Church of the Messiah's annual meeting will be Sunday, January 30, immediately following the church service. All reports are due in the office typed and ready to be reproduced by Wednesday, January 26.



Diocesan Annual Convention.....

The Diocesan's Annual Convention will be January 22 - 23, at St George's Church, Nashville.



Parish Birthdays:

December:

9 Ann T. Hays

January:

2 Judy Hines
13 Rich Woolard
14 Ema Wilbanks
18 Logan Dubberley
21 Teresa Hughes
23 Margaret Steever

February:

2 Liz Holt
3 Pat Woolard
23 Samantha Muth

**DECEMBER 24, CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
CAROLING 10:30 PM
HOLY EUCHARIST 11:00 PM.**

RECURRING MONTHLY:

RURAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION is prepared monthly in the **third** week of each month, Thursday nights at the Sharp Annex. The distribution is the following Saturday, at the AG Park, 2014 Elkton Highway, and assistance from volunteers is needed for both.

IMPORTANT “CHURCHY” WORDS BECAUSE THEY COMMUNICATE INDISPENSABLE TRUTHS

When we talk about the vicarious aspect of the atonement, two rather technical words come up again and again: expiation and propitiation (or they did in the larger vocabulary of the 1928 BCP). These words spark all kinds of arguments about which one should be used to translate a particular Greek word, and some versions of the Bible will use one of these words and some will use the other one. I’m often asked to explain the difference between propitiation and expiation. The difficulty is that even though these words are in the Bible, we do not use them as part of our day-to-day vocabulary, so we are unsure what they are communicating in Scripture. We lack reference points in relation to these words.

Expiation and Propitiation

Let us think about what these words mean, then, beginning with the word *expiation*. The prefix *ex* means “out of” or “from,” so expiation has to do with removing something or taking something away. In biblical terms, it has to do with taking away guilt through the payment of a penalty or the offering of an atonement. By contrast, propitiation has to do with the object of the expiation. The prefix *pro* means “for,” so propitiation brings about a change in God’s attitude, so that He moves from being at enmity with us to being for us. Through the process of propitiation, we are restored into fellowship and favor with Him.

In a certain sense, propitiation has to do with God's being appeased. We know how the word appeasement functions in military and political conflicts. We think of the so-called politics of appeasement, the philosophy that if you have a rambunctious world conqueror on the loose and rattling the sword, rather than risk the wrath of his blitzkrieg you give him the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia or some such chunk of territory. You try to assuage his wrath by giving him something that will satisfy him so that he won’t come into your country and mow you down. That’s an ungodly manifestation of appeasement. But if you are angry or you are violated, and I satisfy your anger, or appease you, then I am restored to your favor and the problem is removed.

The same Greek word is translated by both the words expiation and propitiation from time to time. But there is a slight difference in the terms. Expiation is the act that results in God’s changed disposition toward us. It is what Christ did on the cross, and the result of that work of expiation is propitiation —God’s anger is turned away. The distinction is the same as that between the ransom that is paid and the attitude of the one who receives the ransom.

Christ's Work Was an Act of Placation

Together, expiation and propitiation constitute an act of placation. Christ did His work on the cross to placate the wrath of God. This idea of placating the wrath of God has done little to placate the wrath of modern theologians. In fact, they become very wrathful about the whole idea of placating God's wrath. They think it is beneath the dignity of God to have to be placated, that we should have to do something to soothe Him or appease Him. We need to be very careful in how we understand the wrath of God, but let me remind you that the concept of placating the

wrath of God has to do here not with a peripheral, tangential point of theology, but with the essence of salvation.

What Is Salvation?

Let me ask a very basic question: what does the term salvation mean? Trying to explain it quickly can give you a headache, because the word salvation is used in about seventy different ways in the Bible. If somebody is rescued from certain defeat in battle, he experiences salvation. If somebody survives a life-threatening illness, that person experiences salvation. If someone's plants are brought back from withering to robust health, they are saved. That is biblical language, and it's really no different than our own language. We save money. A boxer is saved by the bell, meaning he's saved from losing the fight by knockout, not that he is transported into the eternal kingdom of God. In short, any experience of deliverance from a clear and present danger can be spoken of as a form of salvation.

When we talk about salvation biblically, we have to be careful to state that from which we ultimately are saved. The Apostle Paul does just that for us in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, where he says Jesus "delivers us from the wrath to come." Ultimately, Jesus died to save us from the wrath of God. We simply cannot understand the teaching and the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth apart from this, for He constantly warned people that the whole world someday would come under divine judgment. Here are a few of His warnings concerning the judgment: "I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. 5:22); "I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36); and "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (Matt. 12:41). Jesus theology was a crisis theology. The Greek word crisis means "judgment." And the crisis of which Jesus preached was the crisis of an impending judgment of the world, at which point God is going to pour out His wrath against the unredeemed, the ungodly, and the impenitent. The only hope of escape from that outpouring of wrath is to be covered by the atonement of Christ.

Therefore, Jesus supreme achievement on the cross is that He placated the wrath of God, which would burn against us were we not covered by the sacrifice of Christ. So if somebody argues against placcation or the idea of Christ satisfying the wrath of God, be alert, because the Gospel is at stake. This is about the essence of salvation—that as people who are covered by the atonement, we are redeemed from the supreme danger to which any person is exposed by inherent sin and shortcomings. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of a holy God who is wrathful. But there is no wrath for those whose sins have been paid. That is what salvation is all about.

This excerpt is adapted from The Truth of the Cross by R.C. Sproul, R.I.P.

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

NOTE: WE WOULD PREFER TO FIND SUBSTITUTES. PLEASE DO NOT MANAGE YOUR OWN REPLACEMENT.

December 5: Advent II: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: Logan Dubberley; Chalice bearer/reader: Mary Dubberley; Altar Guild: Catherine Dunnivant

December 12: Advent III: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: Calum Lavacot; Chalice bearer/reader: Cathy Roberts; Altar Guild: Tabitha/Dan Lavacot.

December 19: Advent IV: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: Calum Lavacot; Chalice bearer/reader: Teresa Hughes; Altar Guild: John Davis.

December 24: Christmas Eve: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: All Acolytes; Chalice bearer/reader: Cynthia Low; Altar Guild: All members of altar guild.

December 26: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: TBA; Chalice bearer/reader: Lewis Foster; Altar Guild: Marqueda Forrester.



January 2: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: TBA; Chalice bearer/reader: John Hughes; Altar Guild: Catherine Dunnivant.

January 9: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: TBA; Chalice bearer/reader: Rich Woolard; Altar Guild: John Davis.

January 16: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: TBA; Chalice bearer/reader: Mary Dubberley; Altar Guild: Connie Baker.

January 23: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: Calum Lavacot; Chalice bearer/reader: Andy Hoover; Altar Guild: Tabitha/Dan Lavacot.

January 30: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: TBA; Chalice bearer/reader: Lewis Foster; Altar Guild: Marqueda Forrester.



February 6: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: TBA; Chalice bearer/reader: Teresa Hughes; Altar Guild: Catherine Dunnivant.

February 13: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: TBA; Chalice bearer/reader: Cynthia Low; Altar Guild: John Davis.

February 20: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: TBA; Chalice bearer/reader: Cathy Roberts; Altar Guild: Connie Baker.

February 27: Organist: Pat Woolard; Acolyte: Calum Lavacot; Chalice bearer/reader: Rich Woolard; Altar Guild: Tabitha/Dan Lavacot.

Worship is our rehearsal for how to live today and how to glorify God in heaven. It is not merely a Sunday morning exercise meant to make us feel good... Rosaria Butterfield

GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER

We come to the end of another liturgical year followed soon by the turn of the calendar year. Times of endings and beginnings are times to pause and reassess where we have been, what we can learn from that history, and where we determine to head toward in the new year.

Therefore, 'tis the season for gifting and financial attention. The end of the calendar year is a good time to get in donations for 2021 credit, which is secondary as a motivation to simply being stimulated to give, in imitation of God. God was willing to give – are you?

Are you thoughtfully prepared to give? Are you honoring the Lord by practicing generosity? Do you have a thoughtful, faithful plan that is ambitious about who and where and when you plan to share what you have been given which will give glory to God?

If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has. This lesson Saint Paul tried to teach the Corinthians, and a tough lot of learners they were! Here is the gold standard for Christian giving: *...for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will.* ²⁰ *We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us,* ²¹ *for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.* ^{2 Cor. 8} Paul is teaching the good of giving and responsible stewardship, and in doing so gives us 5 practical words of wisdom for anyone who would practice godly generosity.

1. **Rejoice and give where you see love for God's people genuinely expressed.** Paul uses his younger assistant Titus as an example of this as he is known for his heartfelt love for God's children, which issues in his fundraising for the needy among them. Titus example demonstrates a critical question for our employment: *Does the person, ministry, or church requesting donations so do from real care about souls, not just their pocketbooks?*
2. **Rejoice and give where you see the greatest gift being offered, i.e., the proclamation of God's love in Christ.** The point is not whether you like the style or sermons or whatever of the one asking you to give. The point is that preaching the Gospel of God's love should generate a desire to aid that message, to allow our hearts to be stirred to bless others with the saving knowledge of Jesus.
3. **Rejoice and give where you see donations carefully, well administered.** Paul takes great pains in his letters to explain how donations have been well tended. Responsible stewardship is a key criterion. Is your monetary gift going to be put to good use, or just frittered away, or worse, left to gather dust in the bank? **KNOW** how your money will be put to work, as God is your witness!

4. Sounding a parallel theme, **rejoice and give to sources that meet the test of having been tested and receiving high marks for trustworthiness.**

Confidence grows when we give to ministries which have a record for efficiency and careful management. For example, read your church's budget; take stock of what you see a charity doing. Not only does this build on the theme of trust, but it gives satisfaction and confidence, and should inspire an effort to more liberally give.

5. **Rejoice and give where you see the glory of Christ.** Saint Paul's campaign to collect funds for the indigent in famine-racked Judea he describes as a visitation demonstrating the glory of Christ. Remember how Jesus glory was to come down and serve, giving up all in humility. Therein we need to appreciate real glory – not in the flashy, gilded, ostentatiousness of the mega-rich, who do not lose one spoon of caviar over their celebrated gifts.

Remember that the glory of God Almighty is manifest in Jesus who speaks of His Church as of Himself. Despite flaws and foibles and frustrations, the church is His Body and exhibits, when faithful, His Glory. That glory should draw us to Him and His Church like a magnet, and its natural impulse is to give, love, and forgive as we have been loved and forgiven and richly endowed. We give not to get but simply because that is what true love and gratitude so. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through your generosity will result thanksgiving to God.

Love for God's faithful people, for the proclamation of His Words which give life, along with well-administered finances and tested service, all this testifies to the goodness and glory of God. Here one can find a simple and sure paradigm that impels us to worship, prayer, and the heart of sacrifice. So, diligently, reverently submit to God and seek how He would have you offer yourself to Him, in body, mind, means, and spirit. The righteous give without sparing; Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Those words of truth you can take right to the bank, that is, where they are banked up as heavenly treasure whose coin is love.

AND GOD IS ABLE TO
BLESS YOU
ABUNDANTLY, SO THAT
IN ALL THINGS AT ALL
TIMES, HAVING ALL THAT
YOU NEED, YOU WILL
ABOUND IN EVERY GOOD
WORK. 2 Corinthians 9:8

