

THE MESSENGER

The newsletter of Leesburg United Methodist Church

January 2021

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HAPPY NEW YEAR

Message from Pastor Jim: 2021



**Rev. Jim
Wishmyer,
Pastor**

For decades churches have asked the question, prayed for help, proffered answers, made detailed plans, and we measured our success by numerical growth. The question we all asked: “How do we get our community into our church?”

2020 forced churches to lay that question aside. Instead, we’re now asking the question: “How can we get our church into our community?” When we take this seriously, prayerfully, and intentionally, COVID-19 may well prove to be the catalyst for spiritual renewal and revival in the Church (i.e., the people of God, not the buildings where we used to gather) and in our communities. Why? Stay with me....

Even a cursory examination of Church history since the time of Christ demonstrates that the Church has often grown the most in faithfulness, focus, and impact during times of challenge, trial, and even persecution. Interestingly, in comparison to overall population at the time, the Church actually grew the most during the first 300 years after Christ’s

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January Worship

God is Holding Your Life: January 3 – 24

Many can't wait to put 2020 behind them. But will 2021 be better? Who knows? God knows. And the One who knows the beginning from the end, and all points in between, is the one who holds your life and mine – if we allow it.

As we turn the page in our calendar to the new year, we begin by turning to the Psalms, where the writers knew ups and downs, from exile to homecoming, from destruction to rebuilding, from depths of despair to the heights of gratitude. The Psalms give words and meaning to the full depth and breadth of human experience, ever pointing us to the One who holds us even when we do not know we are being held. We begin 2021 reminding ourselves that no matter what comes, we are not alone. We are held by the everlasting arms of our loving, faithful God.

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|--------|--|
| Jan 3 | “God is Holding Your Life: In God Alone”
Psalm 62; Holy Communion |
| Jan 10 | “God is Holding Your Life: Knowing and Known”
Psalm 139 |
| Jan 17 | “God is Holding Your Life: Cheer, Shout, ‘Hallelujah!’”
Psalm 111; Leadership Recognition |
| Jan 24 | “God is Holding Your Life: A Journey of Assurance”
Psalm 147 |

How have you felt the love of God; of family, friends, even strangers, holding you up and seeing you through 2020? [Share your story with Pastor Jim](#), because your story might well be the story that gives hope and strength to someone else! Each of these first four weeks in January, we hope to hear from you: how you have been held, loved, supported, helped during this past year.

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...” (1 Peter 3:15b).



New Member Orientation: January 24 - 3 pm

Contact the [church office](#) or [Pastor Jim](#) if you are interested in learning more about becoming a member of Leesburg United Methodist Church

I M M E R S E: The Bible Reading Experience

Jan 31 - Immerse: the Messiah – Luke’s “Orderly Account” Begins...

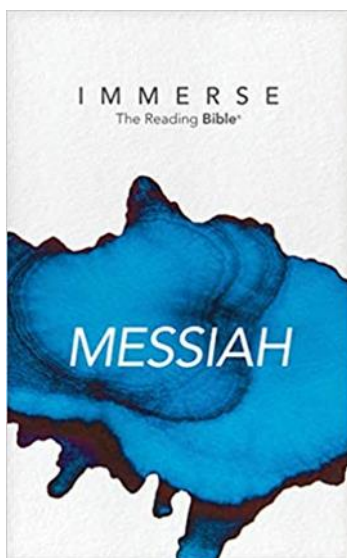
Connect and Grow - Twice each year, for the next three years, we’re going to “immerse” ourselves in the story of the Bible for 8 weeks at a time. We begin with reading the New Testament. The “Immerse” approach presents the scriptures in a story-book format for youth and adults to read and appreciate. Daily readings will take us through the entire Bible in three years.

Connect with others for the 8 weeks by forming or joining a “book club” to read through “Immerse: Messiah” together. Then meet virtually or in-person each week to simply discuss what you’ve read. Invite family and friends, near and far, to read with you! I’m inviting family in other states to connect!

Connect also in worship each Sunday as the message will highlight and illuminate portions of each week’s readings. You – we will grow as disciples through these 8 weeks!

You can [sign up](#) to be in a book club and/or form your own book club as a host. We’ll show you how and provide support along the way.

“Immerse: Messiah” is available on Amazon in Kindle format for \$9.29; from Tyndale House Publishing in eBook for \$16.99. Paperback is available at Amazon or Tyndale. Leesburg UMC has a limited supply of paperbacks available for \$11 (limited supply). Or, you can read along in your own bible with the daily “Immerse” reading schedule.



Cover

LUKE

Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.

+++

When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God’s eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord’s commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old. One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week.

Sample layout of text

**Sanctuary
Worship:**

**[Click Here
to Register](#)**



**The
Worship
Connection**



**Sunday
Livestream:**

**[Click Here
for Webpage](#)**

CLT Corner: Highlights from your Church Leadership Team

This Month: Trustees, Leaders

Trustees

During this month, ADT will be upgrading the fire alarm system in the main building (Sanctuary, Education wing and offices). As noted in the November newsletter, the existing system does not comply with the current building codes, isn't audible in all parts of the building and has had connection issues with wireless components. A large portion of the costs will be covered by a generous donation and also through use of a small portion of the Kitty Boyd memorial fund for work in the original 1852 building.

Help is needed clearing our many sidewalks after each snow fall. Though limited in accumulation, it still took a number of hours to make the walkways safe after the snow and ice event in mid-December. Even with few church activities occurring, the public walks need to be maintained to comply with Town guidelines. Help is especially needed on week days. Please contact the church office for more info - office@leesburgumc.org or 703-777-2056 or Dwight Stonerook at drsarch@verizon.net or 571-239-0794

~ Dwight Stonerook, Trustee Chair (retiring)

Our Leaders for 2021

Following are our leaders for 2021. Thank you for those willing to begin, or continue, serving. Our new leaders will be commissioned on January 17.

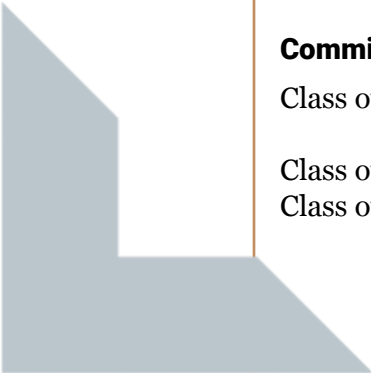
Church Leadership Team (CLT)

Chair of the CLT:	Dave Reith
Vice Chair of CLT:	Greg Crouse
Recording Secretary:	Nate Rathjen
Lay Leaders:	Kim Kadesch and Kim Feist
Chair/Rep of Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee:	Bobbi Cunningham
Chair/Rep of Finance Committee:	Dennis Wise
Chair/Rep of Trustees (Chair elected by Trustees in Jan.):	TBD
Church Treasurer:	Melanie Studebaker (Belay Associates)
Lay Members to Annual Conference:	Kim Feist and Kim Kadesch
Chair of Ministry Leadership Team (MLT):	TBD
President/Rep of United Methodist Men:	Steve Miller
President/Rep of United Methodist Women:	Betsy Creamer
Representative of Young Adults (19-35):	Nate Rathjen
Representative of Youth (12-18):	Sarah Klein

Committee On Nominations and Leadership Development:

Class of 2021	Sarah Klein, Dennis Wise , Nate Rathjen, Betsy Creamer, Steve Miller Bobbi Cunningham
Class of 2022	Dave Reith, Kim Kadesch, Greg Crouse
Class of 2023	Rev. Jim Wishmyer, Kim Feist

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Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

S/PPRC Chair : Bobbi Cunningham
 Class of 2021 Dave Kirsten, Brian Whritenour, Norma Gates
 Class of 2022 Celesta Miller, Susan Ruggles, Tripp Robbins
 Class of 2023 Heather Klein, Janice Webb, Bobbi Cunningham
 Lay Leaders: Kim Feist; Kim Kadesch

Board Of Trustees

Chair of Trustees: TBD (elected by Trustees in January)
 Class of 2021 Sommer Everson, Robert Andrews, Karl Higgins
 Class of 2022 Bill Tripp, Chris Becek, TBD
 Class of 2023 Phil Feeney, Becky Costello, Kathy Blaine

Committee On Finance

Chair of Finance : Dennis Wise
 Pastor: Rev. Jim Wishmyer
 CLT Chair/Rep: Dave Reith
 S/PPRC Chair/Rep : TBD
 Board of Trustees Rep: TBD
 Stewardship Chair: Steve Chapin
 Lay Leaders: Kim Kadesch, Kim Fiest
 Financial Secretary: Linda Stoutenburgh
 Treasurer : Melanie Studebaker (Belay Associates)
 Class of 2021: Dennis Wise , Cap Smith
 Class of 2022: Jessie Goyne, Joe DeFranco
 Class of 2023: Darius Cunningham

Ministry Leadership Team (MLT)

Chairperson: TBD
 Vice Chair: Jim Person
 REACH – Missions Natalie Hartmann, Vicky Weaver
 REACH – Outreach Rev. Jim Wishmyer
 REACH – UM Men Steve Miller
 REACH – UM Women Betsy Creamer
 CONNECT – Neighborhood Groups Rev. Heather Wray
 CONNECT – Worship Rebekah Daugherty
 GROW – Children, Youth, Adult Discipleship Angela Becek

Retiring Leaders – Class of 2020

We offer our heartfelt thanks to the following leaders who are retiring from their positions:

Finance Committee – Tom Payne (Chair), Jack King;
 SPRC – Ken James (Chair), Sue Ritz, Stephanie DiSabello;
 Trustees – Dwight Stonerook (Chair), John Creamer, Terry Ritz;
 Lay Leader – Walter Tennyson;
 MLT Chair – Polly Downey;
 Missions Team – Margrit Snyder



Angela Becek,
*Director of
Discipleship
Ministries*



Are you ready to escape to a desert oasis?

Bible Adventure: Walking with Jesus

Come and stroll by the Sea of Galilee in January—February and discover the stories of Jesus that have caused people to proclaim him Messiah for two thousand years.

Our next Bible Adventure to take over the AG is Walking with Jesus. The space will be transformed into a desert paradise where you can sit and relax or enjoy some of the activities designed to help reinforce the stories.

A new escape room (optional) will challenge you as you build community with others who pass through.

**[Reserve your time slot
by clicking here.](#)**



Health and Safety Precautions

- Each family (household/bubble) will schedule a timed entry.
- One group at a time, with a minimum of one hour between groups to clear the air.
- All frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned between groups.
- Hand sanitizing stations are placed within, and sinks are available for hand washing.
- Head of Household will affirm adherence with the [Health Acknowledgment](#) poster on behalf of all household members upon entry.

Journey to Bethlehem

In December, more than 35 families/households of all sorts came and experienced the Journey to Bethlehem Bible Adventure in the AG.

It included seeing many familiar faces as “The 2020est Christmas Pageant Ever” unfolded with favorite Christmas songs on the screens, and groups moved from one space to the next.

All four Sundays of Advent were observed with the lighting of the Christ Candle and a unique candle lighting with Silent and Night as more members joined virtually.



David Reith as Zechariah (left)



Victoria Becek as the Star of Bethlehem (right)

Message from Pastor Jim

(Continued from page 1)

resurrection. During that time, followers of Christ were persecuted, ridiculed, distrusted, and otherwise marginalized. Christianity was illegal throughout the Roman Empire. There were no church buildings. Instead, congregations met mostly in homes. Their question was not “How do we get our community into our church building?” Rather, it was “How do we get our message (the Gospel) into our community?”

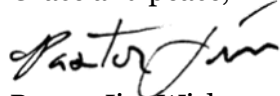
How did they do it? By caring for one another. By caring for the poor, the sick, the dying. During the Antonine Plague in the mid to late second century CE, and the Cyprian plague of the mid third century CE, it was the Christians who cared for the sick and dying. While many, especially the wealthy, fled the cities for the countryside, believing that the diseases were somehow linked to the city, Christians stayed and ministered. A history of hospitals shows that it was Christians who established what came to be known as the first public hospitals for the treating of any and all the sick. Not the government. Not business. That’s taking our message into our community.

Even before COVID-19, LUMC was taking “our message into our community” in many individual instances, and also our communal missions. Our efforts became more focused in 2020 on food as we have continued to support Loudoun Hunger Relief, the Ampersand Pantry Project, and Backpack Buddies. In 2021, we need to continue to ask and answer the question: “How do we get our church into the community?” as we continue to develop our Neighborhood Groups and strengthen other groups: discipleship groups, UMW, UMM, book clubs.

We also need to examine what other needs in our community COVID-19 has exposed. Where might be additional opportunities to get our church into our community? Your neighborhood? School? Place of employment? Home? When we ask this question, we remind ourselves of the three-fold ministry of Christ who came “teaching... proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease...” (Matthew 4:23; 9:35); and who later proclaimed, “greater works than these will they do” (John 14:12).

I am thankful that Christ has been with us through 2020 – the losses, the pain, the disappointments, the struggles, the disorientation, and at times despair. God walked with us, even carried us. We begin 2021 affirming that while COVID-19 still threatens us, we are not alone. God is holding your life and mine. God will see us through. And along the way, God is using you and me to help see our community through.

Grace and peace,



Pastor Jim Wishmyer



Christmas Thank You from the Staff

Many thanks to everyone who made donations to the staff Christmas Love Gift. It is so encouraging to be the recipients of your generosity.

With Blessings and Thanks from the staff:

Rev. Jim Wishmyer, Rev. Heather Wray, Angela Becek, Linda Stoutenburgh, Katrina Broglio, Chris Shelton, Michelle Pinkney, Kim Hardman, Heather Gonzalez



Covid-19 Update: January 2021

We continue to take necessary precautions and to follow the guidelines developed by Bishop Lewis' task force to keep everyone as safe as possible.

- Masks must be worn when on church property.
- Practice social distancing of at least 6 feet with non-family members on site and in worship services.
- No singing in worship services.
- Prepackaged communion only.
- Frequent use of hand-sanitizer and regular hand washing. Sanitizer stations provided throughout our buildings.
- No physical contact.
- Pre-registering for church activities, including use of the health acknowledgment.
- HVAC fans set to "On" during worship services.
- Our committees, ministry teams, and discipleship groups continue to meet via Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc.

We are grateful that these and other precautions have helped keep us all safe. No one has contracted COVID-19 while participating in worship or other church-related activities, even though we have had in-person, in-sanctuary worship since mid-September to the present. We plan to keep it this way.

Thank you, all, for following our guidelines and for taking seriously doing your part to keep others and yourself safe! And, thank you, for your prayers, encouragement, commitment, and caring for one another throughout these unprecedented times!

Also, in case you missed it...

Since our COVID-19 response began last March, we have continued to take steps to creatively adjust to "doing church" in a new way:

- purchased a high resolution camera for our sanctuary to enhance our livestream experience;
- upgraded our internet to be able to stream worship without interrupting the signal;
- created an interactive, hands-on "Bible Adventure" experience for all ages;
- established new "neighborhood groups" that are helping to keep our members connected with one another;
- updated and improved our website and Facebook page for improved communication;
- brought some of the best in worship planning to enhance and enrich our worship experience via Worship Design Studio;
- and more!

We continue to pray, envision, and plan creative ways to live out our calling and mission as United Methodists here in Leesburg as we begin living into 2021.

Backpack Buddies

Many, many thanks to everyone who donated to the LUMC Backpack Buddies program. Because of your generous gifts, the program received over \$3,000 in donations in December. These donations will allow us to continue our program into the new year providing meals to the children in need at Catoctin Elementary. Also, a huge thank you to all the families who signed up to pack the food bags for the program this school year – we have could not have done it without you! A new packing schedule will be posted later for January 2021.



BACKPACK BUDDIES

The Backpack Buddies program greatly appreciates all your donations (your time, monetary gifts, and food items), and hope you will continue to support it throughout the coming year.

Food items to donate:

milk (shelf stable), juice boxes, fruit cups, applesauce cups, Cheese crackers (not peanut butter), granola bars (without nuts), instant oatmeal, cereal (individual size), Chef Boyardee single serving cups or cans, Mac n' Cheese single serving cups, and Ramen Cup-O-Noodles.

2020 Giving Statements

THANK YOU to everyone for faithfully supporting our operations through the difficulties and changes of 2020.

2020 giving statements for your tax purposes will be prepared no later than January 31, 2021 and sent to you via email that we have on file for you. We'll include an announcement in the Head Start and the Weekly Info when they have been sent so you can look for the email. Please include noreply@e360chms.com and noreply@leesburgumc.e360chms.com in your address book to avoid your statement winding up in your spam/junk folder. We will, of course, send statements by postal mail for folks without email, or if you request a mailed statement.



A Note from the Henrys

Dear LUMC friends: In mid November we moved from our former home near Leesburg to our new home in Mechanicsville, VA. For several years we have considered moving and thought the Richmond area would be a good choice for us. So for most of the year of 2020, we sifted through our belongings and got our house ready for sale.

We like our smaller home and quarter acre lot in an established neighborhood. We have met some neighbors. We have enjoyed learning how to get around, not quite as busy as the Northern Virginia roads. However, we sometimes have to use I-95 and try to avoid it on Friday and Sunday afternoons.

We haven't church hunted as COVID 19 prevents that. Bill and I spent a lot of time at LUMC with participating in many kinds of activities. We have missed seeing our church friends early this year. Church life will be different for us in our new community. We have noticed that our neighborhood really decorates for Christmas which is welcoming.

Merry Christmas to all and may God bless everyone in 2021! *Boonie and Bill Henry*

Gratitude for Advent and Christmas

What a very different Advent Season! And yet, we made it through in a meaningful and memorable (positive memories) way, with a lot of help. We held our first outdoor “Blue Christmas” on the courthouse lawn and almost half of our participants were either walk-ins or folks responding to our Loudoun Now ads! Our Christmas Eve worship was definitely different – including two fully pre-recorded services and two in-person services – but by all accounts, quite meaningful. And then, last Sunday, we had our first fully pre-recorded Sunday worship service and first virtual Christmas Pageant from our Journey to Bethlehem!

This certainly was “A December to Remember”!

Somehow, we believed back in October that pre-recording many of the elements in our Advent worship would make our worship preparation simpler and less stressful. Well... we learned that trying to coordinate all of the “moving parts” proved to be more complicated than first thought. And there were a lot of moving parts!

Fortunately, many of you stepped in to help prepare:

- careful planning and preparation by our Worship Team;
- prerecorded scripture readings & benedictions by members and staff;
- a marvelous Chancel Choir compilation of an Advent anthem;
- several songs and carols pre-recorded by Raising Praise;
- singing by signing (!);
- preparing our weekly livestream and then monitoring it’s transmission;
- inserting text and videos to Easy Worship for each of our in-person worship services;
- office help to prepare programs, keep up with timely communication, scheduling, etc.;
- greeters and ushers to check-in worshipers for each in-person worship;
- Michelle Pinkney’s incredible accompaniment and flexibility throughout the season;
- and so much more.

Whew! Yes, Sunday worship and all of the rest of our worship truly has become a “production”! Yet all who have helped make worship happen have not allowed the medium to get in the way of the message and purpose of worship. While Rev. Heather and I receive words of appreciation for what we are doing, I cannot overstate the case that so many in our church family have contributed their time and talent to bring worship to you.

And, to all who have helped make our worship come alive, THANK YOU, all, for your hard work, preparation, planning, and especially your love for Christ and for worship that made this an Ad-Christmas to remember - in a very positive way!

In a demonstration of God’s amazing grace, all of the changes we made to worship worked, and as far as I can tell were well received and meaningful for those who participated. Despite the last minute changes to our outdoor Christmas Eve worship, our indoor experience brought both church members and visitors together who had not worshiped in our sanctuary since early March - and there was a wonderfully unique sense of God’s presence and peace as we hummed Silent Night together while holding aloft our candles. Yes, the peace of Christ was, and is, with us.

As Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians, “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you...” (Philippians 1:3)!

Grace and peace to all, and a blessed New Year, knowing that God is holding us through it all!

Rev. Jim Wishmyer

**Leesburg United Methodist
Church**

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Leesburg, VA 20176

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www.leesburgumc.org



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.
The people of The United Methodist Church®

District Leadership Training and Workshops

Bi-District Training Day 2021, January 16th, 9 am

This is an all-virtual event but you must sign up to watch and participate in the workshops and keynote presentations.

Click this link for details and to register: <https://bdttd2021.heysummit.com>

Note: this is open to all regardless of whether or not you are in a leadership position. Highly informative! The Rev. Tom Berlin will speak about our upcoming General Conference in September, 2021.

