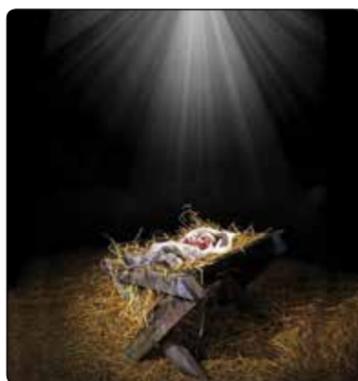


Pr. Kathy's Book Club
 first Wednesdays of the month
 childcare always available
 Hazel Dell campus 10:00-11:30am

December 6
Gift From the Sea
 by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

January 3
Astoria
 by Peter Stark



Begin your Christmas season in celebration!

Of the Father's Love Begotten

5:00pm Saturday, December 2
 8:30 and 9:45am Sunday, December 3

Messiah's annual Christmas concert
 presented by Messiah's music groups

Godly Play Training

Messiah is hosting a Godly Play Training 8:00am–3:00pm, December 9. Cost is free to Messiah Congregation/Preschool. Training is available to those that wish just to see what Godly Play is all about! Refreshments and a light lunch will be provided or you are welcome to bring your own lunch if you prefer. Join us in learning from the best about the enriching program that is Godly Play! Please RSVP or address questions to Grace Middelstadt at gracem@messiahvancouver.org.

twitter.com/MessiahVanWA/
twitter.com/MessiahVanWaYth

facebook.com/messiahvancouver
facebook.com/pages/Messiah-Lutheran-Youth

Messiah Lutheran Church
 and Preschool
 905 NW 94th Street
 Vancouver, WA 98665-6842
 North County Campus
 Tri-Mountain Golf Course
 1701 NW 299th Street
 Ridgefield, WA 98642
 Church: 574-7081
 Fax: 571-7779
 Preschool: 574-2686
 Messiah office hours
 8:00am–3:00pm Mon–Thursday
 8:00am–Noon on Friday
 messiahvancouver.org
 messiahnorthcounty.org
 messiahc@messiahvancouver.org
 Preschool E-mail:
 preschool@messiahvancouver.org

905 NW 94th Street, Vancouver 98665

the Sounds of Messiah

WINTER SCHEDULE

Christmas Concert
Of the Father's Love Begotten
 5:00pm December 2
 8:30 & 9:45am December 3

Preschool Christmas Programs
 7:00pm December 5 & 7

Godly Play Training
 8:00-3:00, December 9

Martha Circle
 10:00am December 14

Preschool Winter Break
 December 18–January 1

Comfort & Hope Service
 6:00pm Wednesday, December 20

Christmas Eve Worship (HD)
 10:00am, 5:00, 7:00, & 9:00pm
 Sunday, December 24

Christmas Eve Worship (NCC)
 10:00am Sunday, December 24

FLIP Resumes
 Wednesday, January 3

Meeting of the Congregation
 January 28

Ash Wednesday
 February 14

Easter
 April 1

are you afraid after dark?

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. Isaiah 9:2



Pr. Kathleen Braafladt

“Esther, are you afraid of the dark?” I asked my mother-in-law a few months ago. “No,” she said confidently. “Really?” I responded. I thought everyone was.

Growing up on a farm in northwest rural Minnesota, Esther had a much different experience of darkness than my own. Routinely she walked in the dark to call pigs and do other chores out on the prairie.

As soon as the sun set over my suburban house in Minneapolis, I remember hearing my mother call to my brothers and me in the backyard, “It’s time to come inside.” Immediately the lights would flip on in the house and the curtains would be drawn. I quickly learned to associate darkness with danger.

Decades later, it still haunts me. Whether it is walking to my mailbox or my car late at night, my body tenses, my heartbeat and pace quicken until I’m safely back in my artificially lit home.

Barbara Brown Taylor in her book *Learning to Walk in the Dark** suggests that “eliminating darkness is pretty high on the human agenda,” which is too bad she concludes, “because we need darkness as much as the light.” “I have learned things in the dark” she writes, “that I could never have learned in the light, things that have saved my life over and over again. I need darkness as much as I need light.”

As we enter these shorter days of winter and as we struggle to find our way in the darkness of our personal experiences, the darkness that is the division and conflict in our nation and world, the darkness of the unknown of being and doing church in a dramatic time of change, I am reminded that everything, all of life actually, begins in the dark. Darkness need not contain only dread, but also expectation. “Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb... all new life, starts in the dark.”

* Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015)

this issue

- P1** Pr. Kathy are you afraid of the dark?
- P2** Alison growing through darkness
- P3** Ryan go where God is leading
- P4** Joyce a deep rooted friendship
- P5** Greg do justice love mercy walk humbly
- P7** Jessica a light unto my path

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Alison Treichel
Administrative Assistant

growing through darkness

I'm a self-proclaimed worrier, and I have had many bouts of anxiety in my life time. Though, none as bad as during my senior year of undergraduate college. Even now, years later I have trouble properly describing and pinpointing what exactly was wrong or what caused it. All I really know is that everything, and I do mean everything, seemed worrisome and that my anxiety consumed me.

This was different than any anxiety I had experienced before, I couldn't focus on anything other than a constant loop of angst and worry. It was endless. For months, my days and nights were filled with anxiety over far-fetched scenarios, the future, the past, religion, salvation—you name it, and I probably obsessed over it. Everything was just too hard, too overwhelming, too scary, and I didn't know how to manage it all. I was a broken mess and I did not cope well.

One night, in between sobs over the phone, I asked my mom what would happen if this was what my life was now. She assured me things would get better. However, at the time I honestly couldn't fathom the idea of ever feeling like myself again. This darkness, my fears and anxiety, this was me now. I wanted nothing more than just to feel normal again, but I couldn't even begin to think of constructing a path back to "normal." Everything felt, and looked, and seemed impossible.

This went on for months, almost an entire year. I can't even remember how it ended exactly; I remember a lot of prayers, a lot of tears, a lot of arms wrapped around me, and I remember a lot of conversations mostly with myself and with God. But my point isn't how I overcame anxiety, but rather how, looking back I recognize that time in my life as hard, trying, and overwhelming, but also as trans-formative.

When you are in the midst of darkness, it's hard and sometimes even impossible to look out and see the other side. Sometimes we don't even believe that there is another side. I had to face what, at the time, I thought I couldn't overcome. And truthfully, I didn't. I had my family and friends, and most importantly my God that helped carry me through. I was transformed, not by beating or defeating the situation I was put in, but by the experience itself.

Now, I'm not volunteering myself again or suggesting that everyone go through this type of personal and existential crisis, but I see that time in my life now as very important. What I thought was just a dark period in my life, turned out to be much more. I came out of it with a better understanding of my beliefs, better knowledge of myself and greater compassion. What I thought was a horrifying new reality was actually a growth process, a necessary, albeit terrible, experience that has brought out more of who I am and has helped to shape me. It was a process that forced me to grow, question and become. And I am grateful for that.

“When you are in the midst of darkness, it's hard and sometimes even impossible to look out and see the other side. Sometimes we don't even believe that there is another side.”

go where God is leading

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The last few months have been a whirlwind of a season for Breann and me. The month of August brought with it more change than one person should go through in a year let alone one month.

Yet, we each found ourselves going through a season of change that included a significant amount of loss. Breann was leaving a company she had worked at for the last three-plus years. I was leaving a congregation that I served at for the last five years... a congregation that took a deep interest in me not only as a youth director, but also as a future pastor.

We not only found ourselves leaving our jobs, we were also preparing to leave our families. For the most part, both of our families live in Texas and are a core part of our identity and something we highly value. Knowing we were leaving them for a year became increasingly difficult as the days drew closer.

Not only were we leaving our jobs and leaving our families, we were also getting ready to be married. We were preparing to join our lives together as one. If you have ever planned a wedding, you know the insane amount of time and energy that goes into it.

With all the change and all the loss, I started to truly dread the future. I did not want to leave. I did not want to go. Yet, in my final sermon at my previous congregation, I found myself preaching on the great commission.

In preparing what I would say, I found myself drawn to the very first verb of verse nineteen. Go! It was this sort of affirmation that the Holy Spirit was up to something. That God was calling Breann and me to go. To go someplace new to start our marriage, to grow as a future pastor, and to be a witness for God.

Somehow, in the midst of the darkness and loss, God birthed new life and light into Breann and me that has been our motivation and affirmation to follow and GO where God is leading us.



Ryan Dockery
Seminary Pastoral Intern

“I did not want to leave. I did not want to go. Yet, in my final sermon at my previous congregation, I found myself preaching on the great commission.”



Joyce Handran
Preschool Administrator

Preschool Dates

Christmas Program

7:00pm December 5

A.M. Beginner & Pre-K Classes
(Except Extended Pre-K)

7:00pm December 7

Extended Pre-K &
all P.M. Beginner & Pre-K Classes

Winter Break

December 18-January 1

School Resumes

January 2

No School—MLK Jr. Day

January 15

No School—VPS Semester Break

January 29

Registration Dates for 2018-2019 School Year

Currently-enrolled families
and all church members
February 7

Past Preschool Families
February 12

Open Enrollment
February 14

No School—Presidents Day

February 19

a deep-rooted friendship resurrected

Have you ever found yourself so saddened by the circumstances in your life that you feel as though you are surrounded by darkness? We all experience dark places: being laid off work, the ending of a relationship, the loss of a loved one, illness, the betrayal of a friend, financial debt, etc. It is easy to get discouraged, give up and just settle there. But if we allow ourselves to stay in the dark place, continuing to think of ourselves as a victim rather than choosing to persevere, re-evaluate our priorities and move through the darkness, we won't grow into the person we are capable of becoming.

It is not unlike a seed. As long as it stays on the shelf, it cannot become what it was intended to be. Seeds cannot germinate in the light. They have to be planted in the soil, a dark place, so what is inside will come to life.

In the words of Pastor Joel Osteen, "God has beauty for your ashes, joy for the mourning. The brokenness is only temporary. Don't settle in the valley. Don't get comfortable there; the valley is not your home. The Shepherd is leading you through the valley. On the other side, there are new beginnings. There are some things you can only learn in the dark places. Quit complaining about what you're going through, who hurt you, how bad it was. It may be uncomfortable, you may not like it, but it's working for you. You're getting stronger. It's developing something that you can only get in the dark."

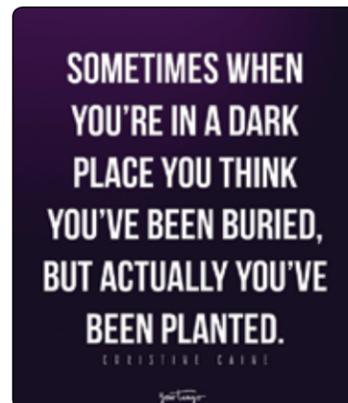
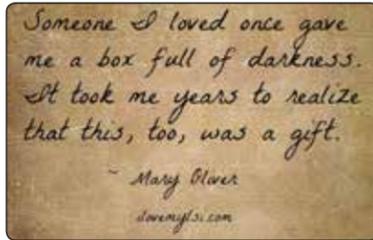


Many Biblical figures who did something significant went through one of these dark places. Moses, a murderer, who after spending 40 years in the desert developing patience, humility, and confidence, later raised his rod and parted the Red Sea. Then there was Esther, an orphan who, despite feeling alone and forgotten, was used by God to help save the people of Israel. David had an affair with a married woman and then had her husband killed. After a year of feeling broken, sick and guilty, he came to be called a man after God's own heart.

The same David says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." David encountered dark valleys, but, with the Lord leading him, he was able to walk through them and come out stronger because of them.

One can liken our growth process to that of a seed. Only after it is planted in the dark soil does it go through the process of germination. The outer shell breaks off and new growth begins; that is when it will blossom and produce fruit.

I encourage you to choose to make your period of darkness a birthing place, producing a new, stronger you rather than letting it be a tomb where you are stuck and your dreams and potential die. I encourage you to breathe and push through the dark valley and rejoice in the blessings that come out of enduring the darkness.



do justice. love mercy. walk humbly

As I write this the deaths of 26 churchgoers in Sutherland, TX are fresh. The loss of 58 people in Las Vegas almost feels like old news. A succession of horrific events have become locked up inside our culture wars; we're unable to process them in community, to examine source and response together in ways that heal and transform. Our anger and confusion, our inability to speak with others who differ, these have become walls of darkness that grow ever thicker and higher, separating us. We feel attacked so we attack.

God have mercy.

But division and darkness don't get the last word. We are people who follow the Light that broke through darkness. We are the Church, God's people in community, called to reflect God's light to each other and the world.

My favorite Bible verse comes from Micah:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good and what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (6:8)

I find this a challenging and compelling rule of life. I try to ask myself this series of questions, or wish I had asked them in hindsight:

- Am I walking humbly with my God? Do I recognize my own brokenness, and that in God's eyes I am no more or less loved than the person with whom I disagree?
- Do I respond with mercy, kindness, and compassion to others, especially to people with whom I find it difficult, with whom I disagree?
- And here's the balancing act: Am I working for justice and speaking clearly to Gospel values as I understand them, while loving those who disagree with me?

Humility, mercy and justice: we need more of these. We live in a world crying out for them. God has a church for moments like these. Are we willing to enter this uncomfortable space with each other, to wrestle with hard questions of policy like we do with those of faith, and to seek mutual transformation? The world needs us to model it. Our neighbors need Messiah to model it.

Mother Teresa once said, "Words which do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness." Will we give that light? Will we be God's agents to dispel the darkness? I pray we will, with God's help.



Greg Rhodes
NCC Project Manager

for more information about all events, adult ministries, and small group opportunities, go to messiahvancouver.org

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Dave Moore
Interim Facility Coordinator

Christina Hawley
Lead Nursery Attendant

Marsh White, Custodian

Comfort and Hope Worship Service,

6:00pm Wednesday, December 20

Christmas is a time of good cheer and generous giving, a time of glad tidings and wishful thinking for most of us. Yet for others, Christmas is a time of loneliness and bewilderment. Peace, good will, and the expectation of joyfulness and contentment seem remote because of the loss, or memory of the loss, of a loved one.

If you find yourself burdened this holiday season, please consider joining us in the Messiah sanctuary at the Christmas Comfort and Hope worship service sponsored by Messiah's Stephen Ministers. All are welcome!



Ash Wednesday Services

10:00am and 7:00pm February 14
Dinner 5:00-6:15

The first of 40 days of Lent begins with a service of ashes as we remember that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. (Gen.3:19)

who...can you help?

Our congregation will be participating in providing staffing for the Winter Hospitality Overflow shelter at St. Paul Lutheran Church. This ministry provides overnight housing for 24-30 homeless men during the winter months. It is a truly ecumenical ministry. The volunteer staffing comes from congregations of many different denominations, including the local Jewish congregation who provide volunteers for the week of Christmas.

We all know homelessness is a HUGE problem at this time in the United States. It is easy to think of the homeless as chronic vagrants, but the majority of homeless people are temporarily homeless because of a job loss or other stroke of bad luck. With the high cost of housing in our area, there are many people who are just a paycheck away from homelessness.

We believe it is our Christian duty to help the less fortunate. Our congregation does that in many ways. However, this particular cause is very personal to me and my family. We have a son who is homeless. There have been years we could not volunteer at St. Paul because our own son may have been a guest there, and we have a No-Contact Order. Sadly, this son has a serious mental illness. For this reason, and because of the time I have spent volunteering at St. Paul over the years, I am especially aware of the need for shelter in the winter.

As you will find out when you volunteer, there are many great guys staying at the shelter. Actually, they do all the work/chores. We just have to be there as chaperons, but you are desperately needed. For the 24-30 men staying at the shelter, your gift of time means they don't have to sleep outside in the cold. I believe it is very important that we, as a congregation do our part. There are many other churches, smaller in size than Messiah, that provide volunteers for seven evenings. That is our commitment as well.

We need at least two people to chaperon at St. Paul from: 6:00-11:00pm, 11:00pm-3:00am, or 3:00-7:00am beginning the evening of Sunday, January 21 until the morning of Sunday, January 28. Please sign up for a time slot by visiting the website SignupGenius at: <http://bit.ly/mlcwho2018>.

For those who would like to help in additional ways, there are items needed by the shelter that you can volunteer to provide. Something hot in a crock pot each night as well as store bought or homemade treats, fruit and/or veggies are always welcome. The facility also has an ongoing need for items like disinfectant wipes, paper towels, toilet paper, towels, clothing, shoes, socks, and toiletries.

You are also welcome to call Brenda Gardner at 360-601-9258 or Hope Quinn at 360-314-2737 to volunteer. THANK YOU! ~Brenda Gardner

Monday Morning Group

9:30-11:00am Mondays

Where Moms Connect

9:30-11:30am Mondays

Yoga

4:30-5:45 & 6:00-7:15pm Mondays

Material Girls

12:00-2:00pm Tuesdays

Godly Play®

9:30am Sundays

4:00-4:40pm Wednesdays 3yrs-1st grade

6:00-7:00pm Wednesdays 2nd-5th grade

NewSong

4:00-4:30pm Wednesdays

Moms' Time Out

4:00-5:15pm Wednesdays

Praise Patrol & Pax Christi

4:45-5:15pm Wednesdays

Adult Bible Study

10:00-11:30am & 6:00-7:00pm Wednesdays

Choir Rehearsal

7:00pm Wednesdays

a light unto my path

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

When my sister and I were hiking on the Camino in northern Spain, many mornings we would leave right as the sun was coming up. This helped us get a head start on other hikers and insured us some of the better places to sleep in the next town. Most of the times we were aided by street lamps and our headlamps and it was not a problem to see what was in front of us.

On our last day of hiking, we had a little over 13 miles to go to get to Santiago de Compostela and we wanted to get there in time for the noon Pilgrim's mass, so we left a little earlier than usual. I do not recommend this! The path, which was taking us through little towns, turned into a trail deep in the forest. Not knowing how long it would be in the forest we debated to keep going or turn around and wait for the sun to come up. With only the aid of our headlamps, we could barely see in the path in front of us. I do not remember a time when I felt so closed in by the darkness.



For some reason the song "Thy Word" by Amy Grant popped into my head:

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.
When I feel afraid,
Think I've lost my way,
Still you're there right beside me.
And nothing will I fear
As long as you are near.
Please be near me to the end.*

My sister and I continued on the trail for a short distance, which felt like an eternity, before coming to a small town where we could safely wait for sunlight.

Darkness and not knowing where the path may lead is uncomfortable and sometimes really scary. At

Messiah, we are looking for new ways to reach out into the community, not at all sure what that will look like. I have seen more than glimmers of light in the ways the local schools have opened their doors to collaborate with Messiah's One Mile Mission. It is comforting to know God is always there before us, guiding the path.



2017 Confirmands

High School Service Opportunity: Santa's Posse

4:30-7:15pm Thursday, December 14

The group will travel to the Clark County Event Center to wrap and pack gifts for Santa's Posse (a partnership with the Clark County Sheriff's Office and Rotary Club). Dinner will be served. Contact Jessica Potts at jessicap@messiahvancouver.org. Please sign up by December 10.



Jessica Potts
Director of Youth
and Young Adult Ministries

Middle School Christmas Party

5:00-7:30pm Saturday, December 2

High School Santa's Posse

4:30-7:15pm Thursday, December 14

Last High School Breakfast before Christmas break

Tuesday, December 12

FLIP Resumes

Wednesday, January 3

Middle School Mission Trip

July 22-27, 2018

Middle School Christmas Party and White Elephant Gift Exchange

5:00-7:30pm Saturday, December 2
(beginning with worship)

Cost: \$5 for pizza plus a wrapped white elephant gift (new or used, \$5 or less). Guys and girls will be participating in the exchange together. To sign up by November 29 or for any questions, please contact Jessica Potts at jessicap@messiahvancouver.org.