



Church of the Messiah **NEWS**



Appreciating the Anticipation of the Empty Manger

As a child, the nativity scene was always placed on top of the record player in our family room. My parents received it as a wedding gift, and it was a central part of my gathering close to the story of Jesus' birth from an early age. Each year, it was my job to pull the figures out of their styrofoam molded storage spots and place them in the scene. Mary and Joseph waited there for a few weeks with the shepherds, sheep, donkeys, and even an angel (sometimes precariously) perched on the roof. The manger was empty, and the magi (aka wise men... aka three kings) were placed on the furthest windowsill. Once a day, someone took a turn moving the magi just

a little closer to "Bethlehem." After all, the journey from the East was really far, right?

I would beg for Jesus to be taken out of the drawer so I could use the complete scene like they were action figures on an epic journey. My parents would decline the request because "it wasn't time yet."

The kid in me didn't like to see the empty hole in the story. The whole thing felt wrong without Jesus there "asleep in the hay." The adult in me feels differently. I have learned to appreciate the anticipation of the empty manger. In a world where back to school, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas are one continuous shopping season, I like waiting just a minute for Jesus to show up.

Chances are, if your nativity scene is set up already, Jesus is snuggled in, and the magi are standing at attention with their gifts. My invitation to you is to take Jesus out until Christmas Eve. Allow yourself to feel the longing of his arrival for the last few days of Advent. Place the magi at a distance and accompany them on their daily journey until Epiphany (January 6), when we celebrate their arrival. As you move the figures, consider what gifts you could offer Jesus this year. Could you get involved in a new ministry? Could you find ways to be generous? Could you commit to spending time in prayer and conversation with him?

It is possible to make space for Jesus in your heart and schedule in countless ways. Hold Jesus' figure in your hands as you consider how you might "meet him anew" this year, or simply close your eyes and imagine Jesus with you in that space of prayer. I trust he will meet you there.

Love and Light,

Emily +

The Rev. Emily E. Given

P.S. If you don't have a nativity scene in your home, after-Christmas sales are the perfect time to find a good deal on something that can serve as a spiritual inspiration for years to come.

P.P.S The picture above is the actual nativity scene from my childhood home.



Christmas Eve
December 24

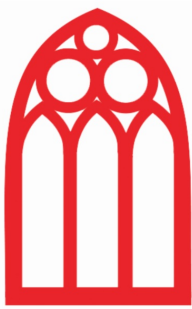
4:30 PM
Candlelight Service for All Ages
with Communion

7:00 PM
Candlelight Service
with Communion and Choir

Christmas Day
December 25

10:00 AM
Communion Service

★



Church of the Messiah
The Episcopal Church in Gwynedd, PA
messiahgwynedd.org

Sunday Services

8:00 AM
Traditional Language

9:30 AM
Modern, Family Worship
with Music

To worship with us online,
please visit the website homepage:
<https://www.messiahgwynedd.org>

/

Click [here](#) to view the 9:30 AM bulletin
for this Sunday.

WORSHIP ONLINE HERE

THIS SUNDAY

Dec 22

Our Sunday School will host its annual Christmas Pageant following the 9:30 AM service on Sunday, December 22. Join us in the Parish Hall for a meal and to celebrate with our youngest members.

After the pageant and fellowship, please join us in the church to decorate for Christmas. Many hands make light work!

All skill levels encouraged.



About this Sunday's Music

It is a treat to prepare this Lessons and Carols service, with a musical response to every word spoken. Selections will include two special pieces by the Bell Choir, containing folk tunes from Sweden, Scotland, and a very familiar one from medieval France. There will be an organ solo, and of course quite a few Advent and Christmas carols (hopefully including favorites of yours)!

The organ music this week celebrated the German Baroque. Heinrich Scheidemann (1595-1663) was the top organist of his time in north Germany, and his work inspired the following generations of composers, including J.S. Bach (1685-1750).

I love the joy and excitement that Scheidemann captures in his music, especially in these pieces based on Gregorian chants of the Magnificat (Song of Mary). Little melodic themes are extracted from the chant, repeating and layering in complex ways. The music changes suddenly to a dance-like triple meter, and then turns to a flurry of 16th notes that span most of the keyboard. In the postlude, the chant tune anchors the piece with long trumpet notes in the pedals.

- Hannah

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA & ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU
THE 8 PILLARS OF JOY

Perspective *Forgiveness* *And a few words from*
Humility *Gratitude* *Zephaniah...*
Humor *Compassion* *Rejoice. Remove. Restore.*
Acceptance *Generosity*

Here is the handout from Emily's sermon last Sunday.



Holiday office hours

The office will be closed Tuesday, December 24 through Wednesday, January 1, 2025. Should you need anything, please call the office and leave a message or email office@messiahgwynedd.org. In the event of a pastoral care need, please contact Emily Given (214) 929-7772. Thank you.

End of the Year Giving



In order to fulfill your 2024 pledge before the end of the year, **please be sure it is postmarked on or before Tuesday, December 31**. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah at Sarah@messiahgwynedd.org or call the office at 215 699-9204. Thank you for your continued support.



- Flexible schedule
- Opportunity to meet new people
- An amazing way to give back

Contact us today to learn more about this exciting volunteer opportunity.

Volunteer Opportunities

Are you looking for fun and fulfillment? A joyful way to give back to the community? The opportunity to meet people and make new friends? Belfry Bargains has it all!

We are looking for volunteers to join our crew to assist with sorting and tagging incoming donations of clothing and housewares. The shop is open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. We have men and women who volunteer one day a month, others who volunteer on the same day each week and others who give one day every other week. We're flexible and happy to work your schedule into our schedule.

If you would like to learn more about the shop and volunteer opportunities, please contact Ginny Oldt (267-664-1863) or Jennifer Christman (610-304-4388).

"One day at a time, one donation at a time, one person at a time...in God's love."



Messiah Meals, 01/08/25

The next Messiah Meals “kitchen cook together” is scheduled for Wednesday, January 8th at 5pm. **If that doesn't fit your schedule, bags containing 10 meal kits will be available in the Narthex.** We will deliver all the meals to Caring for Friends (in Philadelphia) sometime in late January which gives plenty of time to place home prepared meals in the church freezer. Thanks for your help in feeding the hungry.



Making a 2025 Pledge Online

Thank you to all who have sent in your pledge for 2025. If you haven't had a chance to respond yet, there's still time. Please call the office (215 699-9204) or email Sarah (Sarah@messiahgwynedd.org) with any questions or for a pledge card. You can also make your pledge at our website (messiahgwynedd.org) by clicking on the post "Fill out your 2025 pledge."

2025 Calendars Available

William R. May Funeral Home has once again provided us with calendars for the new year. Feel free to take one – they will be in the narthex or you can stop in the office during the week to pick one up.

IN CASE OF A PASTORAL EMERGENCY

(or if you just want to connect)

Please contact Emily Given: 214.929.7772



BIRTHDAYS IN THE WEEK AHEAD

O God, our times are in your hands: Look with favor, we pray, on these your servants as they begin another year. Grant that they may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen their trust in your goodness all the days of their life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

- Carol Huston
- Tabb Champlin
- Chris Clayton
- Hugh Sargent
- Robert Ryan



Jazz Cafe - 01/24/25

Hold the date, Friday January 24, 2025, for the return of the Jazz Cafe with live music performed by The Jazz Sanctuary! Please plan to join from around 5:30-7:30pm. More details to follow.

Give

Visit Our Website

Church Calendar



Church of the Messiah | 1001 Dekalb Pike | Lower Gwynedd, PA 19002-1941 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!