



## Amen??

by Rev. Thomas Chryst



Recently, the U.S. made some waves on the national stage with a prayer. Rep. Cleaver said while serving as guest House chaplain, a prayer that ended, *"And dare I ask, oh Lord, peace even in this chamber now and evermore... We ask it in the name of the monotheistic god, Brahma, and god known by many names by many different faiths. Amen and Awoman."*

Much has been said, especially by Christians, this week, about how outrageous (and frankly ignorant) it is to end a prayer, "Amen and Awoman". One of my pastor friends writes about it as follows:

The word 'Amen' from the Koine Greek is indeclinable because it is a transliteration from the ancient Hebrew word, 'Aman.' And in the Hebrew language, 'Aman' is not gendered. The Hebrew 'Aman' is related to the verb 'to believe' and the noun 'faith.' Thus to say, both "Amen" and "Awoman" at the end of a prayer is not only grammatically foolish (since no gender is implied in the word 'amen') but it is also academically dumb, politically divisive, and destroys the blessing of the word 'Amen.' The word 'Amen' is a unifying word of assurance, not a tool to be used for political correct virtue signaling. - Pastor Matt Richard

But Rep. Cleaver offends just as much by equating the "monotheistic god" with "Brahma" (the Hindu god) and "god known by many names by many different faiths". Where to even begin addressing such nonsense? Syncretism? Universalism? Or just plain confusion?

And yet, as Ecclesiastes says, there is "nothing new under the sun". Humans have twisted God's word, and dragged His name through the mud since the very beginning. We have reinvented a god of our own making, in our own image, rather than recognizing Him as He is, and honoring Him as we should. It's easy for us to decry this sort of thing, and we should. But let's not forget our own misuse of God's name and God's word. Let's not act like we follow his commands as we ought, or pray as we should. It's one thing to correct what is wrong, and oppose those who speak falsely. But let us also do so in a humility that recognizes our own sins and failures. The First and Second Commandments cut us to pieces, too.

But there's some good news here. "Amen" was actually one of Jesus' favorite words, and his expression, "Truly, Truly, I say to you" sounds like this in the Greek: "Amen, Amen, lego eh-meen". It's a beautifully poetic way in which Jesus emphasizes to us some of his more important points. Like John 6:47, for instance, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life."

*Continued.....*

### Inside this Issue:

Stewards Under the Cross	3
Church Council & Ministry Updates	5
MLCA Event Pictures	6
Young Adult and College Age	8

*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,  
the Son of God, and that by believing  
you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

“Amen” is also a word of the angels – as they confirm with us the praises of God. This is picture in Revelation 5, from the great “throne room scene” of heaven:

*<sup>13</sup> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,*

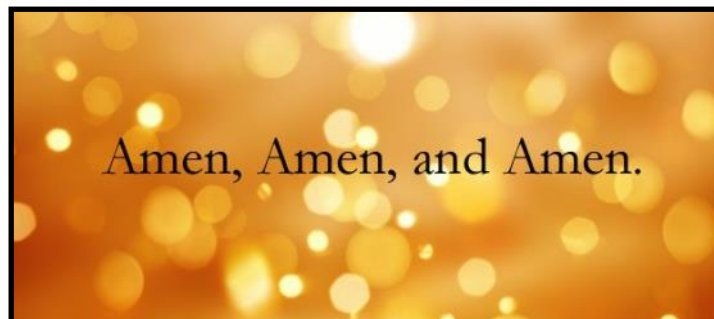
*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*

*<sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, “**Amen!**” and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

But the word “Amen” is also, really, the church’s word. When we say amen, we are saying “yes, it’s true!” to God’s word. We’re confirming with our words what he has said to us. And whether that is a word of law that condemns us, or a word of gospel that gives us hope and comfort, God’s word is always worth our “amen”.

When Lutherans say, “This is most certainly true!” it’s an extended form of “Amen!” And when we, with the church of the ages, pray the “conclusion” of the Lord’s Prayer, it’s much the same – “For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever, Amen!” It’s a more verbose and fully expressed “Amen” to everything we have just prayed in the words of Jesus himself.

Satan attacks God’s word. And he will attack even this, one of the seemingly insignificant of God’s words, “amen”. But let the church not give in inch. Rather, let this little scandal which will certainly be forgotten in a month, remind us again of the blessing of each and every and all of God’s word. We are blessed to receive the words of Jesus which are most certainly true. And we are blessed with mouths and faiths that boldly speak our own AMEN with the faithful of all times and places. AMEN!



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***Bible Studies this Spring***

Board of Education

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**Men’s Breakfast Bible Study** ~Join us for the **1st and 3rd Saturdays at 7am**, at **Sunny Street Café** in Keller.

**JOY group** ~**Tuesday at 9:30am** in the Fellowship Hall.

**Confirmation 1:** **Sundays at 9:30am**, second floor MCLA.

**Confirmation 2** ~**Tuesday at 7pm** in the Fellowship Hall.

**Pastor’s Class** ~ **Begins January 14, 2021** and will meet weekly on **Thursdays from 6-8pm** in the Fellowship Hall. This course covers the basic teachings of Christianity from Luther’s Small Catechism.



## STEWARDS UNDER THE CROSS January 2021

It's a new year. It's a time when we take stock of the year past in order to improve the year to come. It's a time when we sit down to plan and implement what we want to accomplish and even change. Part of that is planning our stewardship for the coming year. Often, we find this difficult and daunting and even joyless, but it doesn't have to be. In fact, it is really quite simple and full of joy. So, here are some tips to make that planning less stressful. You begin by answering these three questions:

***Who are you? To whom do I give? And how much?***

So, who are you? The Table of Duties in the *Luther's Small Catechism* informs us. Are you a hearer of God's Word? Are you a citizen of society? Are you a member of a family? Stewardship covers these three estates: church, society, and family. We don't particularly struggle to give to society or family. Our struggles, our difficulties, and our questions arise in giving to the Church. So, what is our duty as members of the Church with regard to giving? Again, the Table of Duties, gives us a guide. If you are a hearer – a member of the Church who receives instruction – St. Paul taught: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). This means the local congregation is primary. Your pastor is the one called to preach the Gospel to you and administer the Lord's blessed sacraments to you. Your congregation is the place where those things happen. Thus, when God calls us to give to the Church, He has the local congregation in mind. For "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). How much do we give to the local congregation? Our only instructions are to give:

- ~ Regularly (1 Cor. 6:1–2);
- ~ Proportionally (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:12);
- ~ Generously (2 Cor. 8:20);
- ~ Of our first fruits (Gen. 4:4; Prov. 3:9; Lev. 27:30); and
- ~ With a spirit of eagerness (2 Cor. 9:2), earnestness (2 Cor. 8:7), cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9:7), and love (2 Cor. 8:23).

In other words, giving to the Church is not to be an afterthought, given after everything else is spent. In this way, it is deliberate. We give regularly – weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly – keeping in mind our own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. We set it aside beforehand – before anything else is spent. From those first fruits, we set aside a proportionate and generous amount. Ten percent was the standard for the Israelites. This was a command for the ancient Israelites. We can give as much as we want, but ask yourself: Do we really want to be less generous than was commanded of the Israelites? Is the job of the New Testament Church bigger or smaller than the job given to Israel? And how are we to give it? We give it with eagerness and earnestness. We give it cheerfully and with love, not out of compulsion. For through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God has made us His children, forgiven us all our sins, given us grace upon grace, promised us life everlasting with Him in His kingdom, and filled us with His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. This makes giving a joy, as Jesus said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

It's that easy. And it is joyful. For in stewardship, our gracious and giving Lord invites us to take part in the work that He accomplishes here on earth, providing for the ongoing preaching of the Gospel as well as those who are in need. Taking part in that makes all our work holy – work that is done in service to the Lord as priestly members of His kingdom.

## ***Out of the mouth of infants...***



Everyone has those days when their vocation can seem particularly challenging. Sometimes we have an entire year like that. As we carry out the labors Christ has called us to, often these challenges can overwhelm us or lead to discouragement and exhaustion. At its worst, it can even make us wonder, when Christ says “my yoke is easy and my burden is light,” if we’re missing something important. Yet when we are wearied from fighting the battles we find ourselves in, the voice of Christ calls out to us with words of encouragement, reminding us that He has won the war, that his presence is ever with us, and that his grace is sufficient. Faith finds rest in this comfort, and that faith only comes as we listen to the voice of our Savior calling us to

His rest, which He does by the Spirit through His Gospel. This voice of divine reassurance and strengthening calls to us whenever the scriptures are read, wherever the sacraments are rightly administered, and whenever the Gospel is proclaimed. And sometimes, this voice calls to us through the mouths of children – children who are singing.

It is not entirely uncommon for me to find myself walking into chapel services at MLCA feeling weary or burdened. But there is something that happens there that I have never seen elsewhere. As the music begins to sound and the opening hymn is sung, I am often struck that these students are *really* singing! Not just any singing, and not just any song. They are not singing dumbed-down age-appropriate simplistic music for children that they will gladly and quickly abandon as they age. They are not singing “high-accessibility” popular hymnody embraced by the widest variety of Christians due to a sentimental tune and a generic Jesus who only ever smiles. These children sing the same music that adults regularly use in Lutheran worship, and they sing them all. Lengthy, wordy, doctrinally complex manifestos set to music. Militant anthems and dour dirges receive the same zeal as Christmas carols and lighthearted favorites. They do not shrink back from music many adults whither from because of minor key, difficult topics, or blunt truths. They have not developed the sorts of prejudice many finicky adult religious consumers suffer from, but rather, are being taught to embrace the songs of the church which root their identity in the person and work of Christ, and which look directly at the harsh realities of sin, death, and the devil, and expose them to the light of God’s mercy and grace. They sing with a resolve that bespeaks enjoyment, conviction, and a spirit that is willing to learn. In doing so, they have much to teach us.

You should come and experience this for yourself. Not every day is equal in enthusiasm, not all the hymns are as familiarly known, and singing is often a cappella on the Kantor’s day off. But as they do this, they are being trained in the Christian spiritual practice of rejoicing in the hope that Jesus brings us, no matter what the circumstances of life allow. What an encouragement to see young people connecting with our faith in such a personal and expressive manner! In the tumultuous times in which we now find ourselves, how can one not be moved to hear it sung with youthful vigor:

Though around us death is seething,  
God, His two-edged sword unsheathing,  
By His Spirit life is breathing  
Through the living, active Word.  
(LSB 597:4)

Or when the rising tide of evil threatens to undo the fabric of society, how refreshing to hear it declared with pure voices:

Oh, happy, holy portion, Relief for all distressed,  
True vision of true beauty, Refreshment for the blest!  
Strive now to win that glory, Toil now to gain that light;  
Sent hope ahead to grasp it Till hope be lost in sight.  
(LSB 513:4)

The sound of it captures the essence of the joy that faith provides, even in the midst of trials. It can be easy, with all the cares of modern life, to lose hold of this. Take the medicine – come and join us for chapel sometime, Monday through Friday at 8:30. Let the voices of the children remind your spirit just how wonderful it is that Christ is ours, and His kingdom is forever.



### Important information to keep you up to date from the Church Council Secretary....

- Voter's Assembly will be January 24th immediately following the late service.
- Voter's Assembly will consider two constitutional amendments. These are posted on the Church Bulletin Board.
- The Council Meeting minutes are available on the Member portion of the Church Website.
- The Voter's Assembly minutes are available on the Member portion of the church website

**January Voters ~** Annual elections will occur at the January Voters Assembly on January 24, 2021. Offices up for election are:

- ◇ Vice-President
- ◇ Treasurer
- ◇ Board of Trustees (2)
- ◇ School Board (1)
- ◇ Board of Education (1)
- ◇ Board of Evangelism (1)
- ◇ Board of Stewardship (2)
- ◇ Board of Elders (5)

## Ministry Updates



**PRISON MINISTRY ~** When Christmas is over, you still have opportunities to minister to our Angel Tree families. You can write to the incarcerated parent all year long. Discover the joy of writing to a prisoner or serving a prisoner's family. Ask Deaconess Buhler how you can help. Love starts with a gift in the name of Jesus, and can help lead to families restored and lives transformed. Optional: Volunteer to write Words of Hope to the inmates we have adopted; addressed Christmas cards are available by our Angel Tree. Envelopes are labeled with Messiah's return address for when they reply. Contact Pamela Buhler for more information on how you can volunteer for this great need. Deaconess.buhler@gmail.com.



**PICTORIAL DIRECTORY ~** Messiah has begun the process of updating our outdated pictorial directory. It's been over ten years and our members have changed considerably! In your Messiah mailbox, you will find an order form for updating your information. If your family photo or directory information needs updating, please fill out the form and return it to Deaconess Buhler by Christmas. Send pictures to deaconess.buhler@gmail.com. We'd like to have an up-to-date pictorial directory printed and ready to hand out to our members by the end of January.



**ANGEL TREE 2020 ~** was a success! Thank you to all our awesome members who cared for your incarcerated brothers and sisters by purchasing gifts for their precious children. We had several families join us for church and pick up their gifts. They were very, very grateful. Thank you also to our drivers who had the opportunity to serve God by delivering gifts and being messengers of His love. Christ died for all these souls and He reminds us that as we serve those in need –we serve Christ Himself.



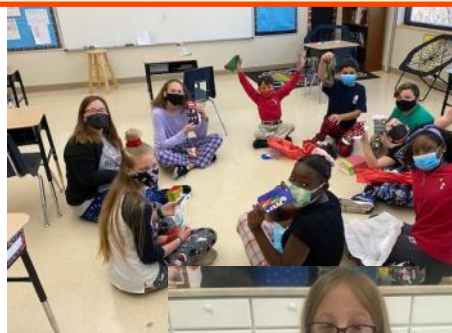
**Brewer Meal Train:** Please continue to support your sister-in-Christ, Barbara Brewer, by signing up for a meal/gift card for a Monday or Wednesday dinner. Sign-ups are needed for Jan20th - Feb10th. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0a4eabad28a4ff2-brewer>

## MLCA Students celebrating Christmas !!

### CHESS TOURNEY WINNERS!!

Evan Munoz  
Sam Rivera  
2nd Place Team K-6

MLCA students enjoyed celebrating Christmas together on Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup>. Gift exchanges, pajama day, blanket forts and cookie decorating were enjoyed by all! And please congratulate our 2021 Chess Tournament Winners!



## MLCA Announcements~

# MESSIAH



### WE ARE HIRING!!

#### Positions Available!

Messiah Lutheran Classical Academy is now accepting applications for Headmaster and Early Childhood Center (ECC) Director. Position descriptions are available at [MessiahKeller.org](http://MessiahKeller.org)

**MLCA Priority Reenrollment** is now open until Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>. Benefits of reenrolling in January are a reduced enrollment fee and a 3% discount off total tuition. Open enrollment for new and existing families starts on February 1<sup>st</sup>. Remember... church members get **20% off tuition!**



As many of you know, we have embarked on the process of learning a new setting of the music for the liturgy in our hymnal. Our congregation knows and sings well Settings 1, 3, 4, and 5, but we never learned setting 2, until now. The *Kyrie* was introduced in Advent, and the congregation took to it rather easily and sung it well. It is time for a greater challenge.

Throughout the season of Epiphany, we will be learning the new setting for the *Gloria in Excelsis*, found on p.170 of the hymnal. This will not be quite as easy as the last. The *Kyrie* is the shortest and easiest to learn of the liturgical canticles. The *Gloria*, on the other hand, is the longest song in the communion liturgy. There is much more music and material to learn, and in that sense, this can be the most difficult portion to master. However, the setting we will be learning is very melodious, with simple rhythms and a flowing melody that takes no unexpected leaps. Many of the melodic arcs repeat themselves, so once you have learned half of the song, the rest will come rather quickly.

In order that nobody is asked to sing new music they have never heard before, in the next service or two, the song will be presented by a soloist. Perhaps it will also be played instrumentally at other parts of the service. We discussed it last Sunday in Sunday school, and perhaps we can look at it briefly again between services. As the choir and handbells return from Christmas break, they may also add to the celebration and learning of this song. (The choir already performed it as part of our Lessons & Carols service on Christmas Eve.)

If we, as a congregation, can learn this setting of the *Gloria* by the time we put it away in Lent, the rest of the service will be significantly easier and faster to learn. So hang in there, and enjoy discovering a new way of singing these old, familiar words.

Speaking of Bells and Choir – if you have not sung or rung with us before, now is a great time to consider it! Due to situations affected by the virus, our musical volunteers are being divided up into smaller groups. We'd love to have you be a part of one! Signups are on the door to the music office (where Vicki worked). Add your name today, or send me an email at [miguel.ruiz@messiahkeller.org](mailto:miguel.ruiz@messiahkeller.org).

## Messiah Youth: Upcoming Events

by Erin McComack



### **Bake Sale Lock-in:**

February 12-13<sup>th</sup>  
Chaperones needed!

**Camping Trip:** TBD (Need adults/parents to help plan and coordinate)

**Pool Party:** TBD (Need adults/parents to help plan and coordinate)

### **Higher Things Conference:**

***"FORGIVEN"***

***When:*** July 27th-30th, 2021

***Where:*** Concordia University Austin, TX

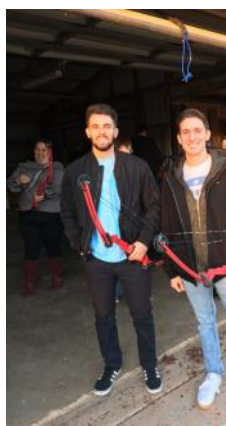
***Info:*** In your church mailbox

***Theme:*** John 20:23- "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven"

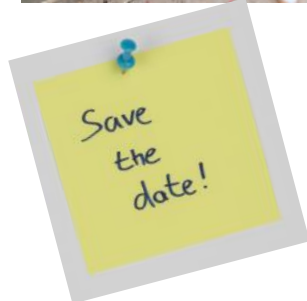
Contact Erin McComack for further questions or registration costs and all other information above at [emccomack@gmail.com](mailto:emccomack@gmail.com) / 318-372-6820







The young adults had a great time here at Messiah on December 19th. Young adults from Messiah, Holy Shepherd and Immanuel Fairview gathered for Fran, Christmas caroling. Evening prayer service was conducted by Pastor Bramich and Pastor Chryst.. We thank the three moms who helped us make the food.



## Upcoming Event!!

### THE NORTH TEXAS FREE CONFERENCE

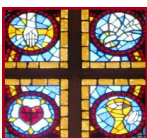
When: January 30th, 8am—2:30 with Lunch in the Gym

Where: Faith Lutheran Church, 1701 East Park Blvd,  
Plano, TX 75074

For more information and to RSVP—[churchfaithplano.org](http://churchfaithplano.org)

**WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!!!**

## Messiah Servants ..... busy at work!!



**Messiah Lutheran Church & School**

*The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Pastor

[www.messiahkeller.org](http://www.messiahkeller.org)

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