

DIFFERENT FRUITS

I teased a couple attending our Wednesday evening Advent services to think of the fruit that Jesus is looking for on us, His tree. That would be my theme for Sunday, December 15th, as we looked at John - the way God uses the metaphor through John the Baptist. I told them it is only one fruit and it

is not easy to see. There was a quick mention of the fruits of the Spirit from Paul and I hinted that it was not one of those.

After the sermon that Sunday, we had another long discussion. It became clear to us both that it is easy to mix metaphors on fruit. Paul and John the Baptist were talking about very different things. It is not helpful to us to think of every mention of "fruit" in the Bible through the lens of that easily illustrated Sunday school lesson on the fruits Paul describes in Galatians 5.

What other metaphors can be used in different ways? Just a month before the mixed metaphor was that of a lion. Paul used a prowling lion as a metaphor for the Devil, the psalmist and just about every other use of lion (Genesis 49:9) are depictions of God. Sure enough, the song after the message at 11:00 referred to the Lion of Judah.

The word, "fruit," occurs 270 times in the Bible. Often it is a reference to actual fruit for an offering or provided by God in each season. But the overwhelming use of this metaphor in the Bible is a vineyard owner, or an olive tree, that was planted and created to bear one fruit.

The fruit Jesus planted you to produce is faith. Faith like that of John the Baptist. Faith that expects a Messiah. Faith that points to God. Faith that trusts the Messiah when He takes over your life and fills you with His spirit. Faith that welcomes the end of self. The death of your human nature and its rebellion. Faith that replaces your faith in self with faith in the spiritual presence of Christ. Faith that makes you a vessel for God's will. Faith that not only anticipates the main character of the story, but knows He is already here!

This faith is indeed very different than that which Paul describes. Paul is mixing the metaphor. And to be fair, of all people, Paul should have known better. He is describing what the fruit of faith produces in us. He is not describing the source of life to begin with. Our dedication to worship is a good habit to form. The sacrifice of tithe or time can hint at God's work in us. But there is only one fruit that gives life. That is and always will be simply our trust in God – faith.

In anticipation of what God does next,





Greetings and a reflection on this season of giving. We are busy picking out that perfect gift for Christmas. Much like the gifts the Three Wise Men brought to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

This holiday season is also a time for charitable giving. We appreciate all the donations we received in 2024. They went to feed the homeless through Daybreak Shelter, and help for people who need a second chance at Morning Star Mission. You helped provide counseling and an ultrasound to a woman facing a pregnancy through Living Alternatives Pregnancy Resource Center. You helped feed families and children through Feed My Starving Children, and helped educate and share the word of God with young men and woman through Foundation for His Ministry in Mexico. You helped touch the lives of college students through Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. You helped support our larger church congregation, LCMC, and Lutheran World Disaster Assistance touched the lives of people in North Carolina and Florida. You have touched the lives of people in Myanmar through Pastor Paul and his teaching and preaching. You helped work through Cup of Cold Water Ministries to send missionaries to many parts of the world.

Through your gifts - big and small - money and time, together we are sharing the word of God through the world and not just at Messiah Lutheran.

Peace be to you and your family and have a blessed new year!

Pat Burke, Director

Messiah Gives Back!

Gerry Boe, Donna Stier and Gary Phillips

Stewardship Team



BAPTISM SUNDAY - JANUARY 19th

This will be an opportunity to be baptized, or to reaffirm the promise made to you in your own baptism... an opportunity to invite family and friends to place that promise upon their children, as well. Please see Pastor Kurt if you or a family member would like to be baptized.

PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Just a friendly reminder that **Sunday bulletin** material must be received in the front office by noon on each Wednesday. Material for the **newsletter** is due by noon on the 20th of each month.

Material for our **2024 Annual Meeting** is needed by <u>January 6th</u> for inclusion in the Annual Report booklet. (If additional time is needed, you may prepare a separate handout to be available at the meeting.)





CALL COMMITTEE SURVEY

50

We are asking all Messiah members and friends to complete the following survey, to tell us what you feel is important in the roles of our pastoral staff. Instructions:

Choose five (5) items that you consider <u>high</u> priority; Choose seven (7) items that you consider <u>medium</u> priority; Choose five (5) items that you consider <u>lower</u> priority.

Completed surveys are due by February 1, 2025, and may be left in the drop box in the Narthex.

C	ONGREGATIONAL EXPECTATIONS / PASTORAL PRIORITIES	Low	Medium	High
1.	LEADERSHIP/ADMINISTRATION Pastor facilitates the development and implementation of vision, mission and goals for the congregation and accepts appropriate administrative, and supervisory responsibilities in a climate of shared leadership with members/ministry team.			
2.	CHRISTIAN FORMATION Pastor provides leadership in identifying formation needs of persons of all ages and backgrounds and in developing opportunities for growth and transformation.			
3.	MINISTRY IN THE COMMUNITY Pastor is actively engaged in identifying the missional context of the local community, and working with both church and community groups. Encourages members to become informed and involved. Works with local ecumenical and interfaith efforts.			
4.	COUNSELING Pastor initiates counseling and pastoral care for those within and outside the church and makes appropriate referrals.			
5.	EVANGELISM The pastor leads the congregation in a way that communicates the Good News of Jesus Christ to all and understands that the local church is God's agent in the world.			
6.	DEDICATIONS, BAPTISMS, MARRIAGES, FUNERALS Pastor gives priority to important rituals of commitment, transition and healing in the lives of individuals and families so that these occasions become opportunities for spiritual growth.			
7.	WORSHIP/MUSIC PLANNING Pastor actively participates in planning, designing and leading in meaningful worship which invites a deepening relationship with God and transformation of the worshiper.			
8.	PREACHING Pastor places high priority on sermon preparation, content, style and delivery that invites people to a growing maturity in faith, discipleship and mission. Pastor seeks feedback from congregation.			
9.	STEWARDSHIP/FINANCES The Pastor works with the congregation to develop a planned stewardship program that grows out of God's generosity and translates into church finances that support the mission to which God has called the local congregation and the wider church.			
10.	TEACHING Pastor is actively involved in the teaching of Scripture, theology, and the history of the church; providing instruction for church leaders, new members and for new believers.			

CALL COMMITTEE SURVEY, page 2

С	ONGREGATIONAL EXPECTATIONS / PASTORAL PRIORITIES	Low	Medium	High
11.	CONGREGATIONAL CARE Pastor gives priority to developing and carrying out a plan for congregational care that nurtures growing discipleship and invites and equips others to share in Christ's ministry.			
12.	CRISIS CARE Pastor visits those in hospitals or emergency situations regularly; network is developed to keep pastor and others informed of crisis situations; needs of ill or bereaved are met.			
13.	WORK WITH SMALL GROUPS Pastor places emphasis on developing structures which help members to know one another, to grow in faith and maturity, to love and support one another and to reach out to others.			
14.	CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY Pastor models and teaches personal and communal Christian spiritual practices, encouraging members to grow in authentic personal and congregational spiritual life			
15.	DISCIPLESHIP Pastor helps inspire a shared vision for the church so that the church will grow in its understanding and be willing to be changed as a people called, redeemed and sent into the world God loves.			
16.	HEALTHY COMMUNICATION Pastor leads in developing effective and transparent communication and healthy ways of living with congregational differences, working at problem solving and decision- making while recognizing that our unity is grounded in Jesus.			
17.	ACTIVELY CALLS OUT AND DEVELOPS SPIRITUAL GIFTS Pastor sees effective leadership of a congregation is a shared leadership and works actively to develop, support, and encourage lay leadership. Seeks to equip members to release their spiritual gifts in ministries within and beyond the congregation. Encourages mentoring and promotes a culture of calling and equipping new leaders.			

WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNERS WILL RESUME SOON! BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR OUR START-UP DATE!

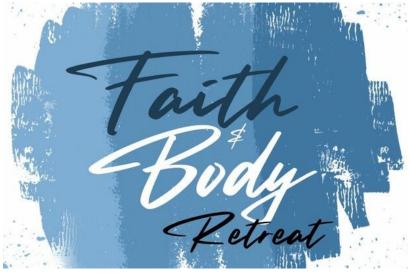




Interested in hosting a future Wednesday Family Dinner? Please reach out to Terry Anzalone or Pastor Kurt.

In the meantime, please join us Wednesdays at 6:30 for: MKW (K-5th grades) Head2Heart (6th-8th) F.A.M. (high schoolers) Women's Bible Study

Please note these events will not take place on New Year's Day.



Thrive 2025 is a half-day online retreat! We will go over top tips on exercise and eating so you can feel your best, lose weight and have more energy!

We'll also share practical ways to set yourself up for lasting success. Invite friends! This is a **FREE** retreat, and can add so much value to your health success in 2025.

Please see Sherri Unyi with any questions. Hope to see you there! Saturday, January 11th, 9 am-1:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. Please register here: <u>https://bit.ly/3P2Fwpp</u>

Dear friends,

Thank you so much for your well-wishes, cards and especially for your prayers for my recent knee surgery and recovery. The prayers were felt before, during and after the procedure. I will never forget your outpouring of love for me and my family.

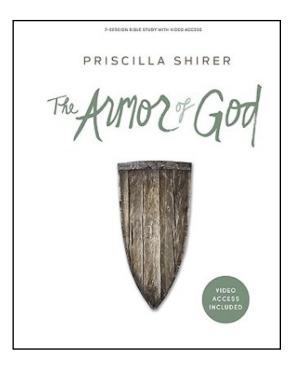
> May God continue to bless you, Pat Boe

FOR THE LADIES OF MESSIAH

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

We will resume Wednesday, January 8th, 2025.





THE ARMOR OF GOD - WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

All day, every day, an invisible war rages around you unseen, unheard, yet felt throughout every aspect of your life. A devoted, devilish enemy seeks to wreak havoc on everything that matters to you: your heart, your mind, your marriage, your children, your relationships, your resilience, your dreams, your destiny. But his battle plan depends on catching you unaware and unarmed. If you're tired of being pushed around and caught with your guard down, this study is for you!

This is a 7-week Bible study starts on **January 8th**, and will be led by Laurel Ling in the Fireside Room on Wednesday nights from 6:30-8. We will place an order for books after the first night for those who would like to dive deeper.

JOLET AREA CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S CONNECTION

You and your friends are invited to Joliet Christian Women's **Joy Through the Journey** luncheon in Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, **January 15th**, 11:30am-1:30pm, \$20.00 inclusive. It will feature, "Let's find out what you know about snow!"

RSVP by January 7th by contacting Barb at 815-439-2076 or <u>mrs.brutus56@gmail.com</u>, or call Sonya at 815-727-1626. Like them on Facebook at "Joliet IL Christian Women's Connection". Next luncheon Wednesday, February 19th. <u>https://www.stonecroft.org/</u>

<u>MESSIAH KIDZ CLUB HAPPENINGS!</u>



Kindergarten – 5th grade:

Join us on Wednesday nights, 6:30-8 pm. See page 5 for important Wednesday Family Dinner info.

Questions? Contact Beth Hohisel at <u>bhohisel@hotmail.com</u> or 815-735-7897.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday school for pre-K through 5th grades is upstairs at 9:30 am.

MESSIAH KIDS REMIND GROUP

Parents of Sunday school aged children (K-5th grade) can join the Messiah Kids Remind group by texting the code mlcmk to 81010, or by going to:

https://www.remind.com/join/mlcmk

It will be used to send reminders and notifications about Sunday school and any events we have planned.



<u>J-CHURCH</u>

J-CHURCH, a ministry for kids and youth of all ages, takes place during the 11:00 am service the <u>third Sunday</u> of every month in the FLC! (This ministry replaced MK11 in October 2024.) Please sign up in the Narthex. We meet next on **January 19th**. Volunteers are needed!

For more info on ministries for kids pre-K through 5th grade, email Leslie McFarland, Children's Min. Director, at <u>childrensmin@mlcjoliet.org</u> or Kimber Drummond, Christian Ed. Director, at <u>christianed@mlcjoliet.org</u>. MESSIAH'S YOUTH CHOIR

The Children's Choir will rehearse on January 12th & 19th, and will perform on **January 26th** at the 9:30 service. Reach out to Season Lawler for more info.

<u>MESSIAH STUDENT MINISTRIES</u>

For more info on ministries for students 6th through 12th grade, email Kersten Stier, Youth Director, at <u>stumin@mlcjoliet.org</u>.

Be sure to sign up for <u>Messiah Student Ministries</u> on the Remind app to keep up to date on this and other upcoming events. Use this link: <u>https://www.remind.com/join/messiahst</u> or use class code @messiahst within the app.

remind

FRIENDS AND MENTORS (F.A.M.)

A ministry for high school students and recent graduates. F.A.M. is a chance to connect with peers and those who have navigated the path ahead of you, to learn life skills and other lessons learned along the way.

We play games, learn practical life skills, pray for each other, sing praise and more! YOU belong here!



HEAD 2 HEART

H2H (otherwise known as Confirmation) meets on Wednesday evenings at 6:30. All 6-8th graders are welcome!

HEY 6th-12th GRADERS!

Sunday morning Bible study meets at 9:30 am. 6-8th graders meet in the youth room and high schoolers are currently joining in with the Insight group, with a breakout session in classroom 101.

MAFIA NIGHTS



See page 5 for an important Wednesday Family Dinner update.

<u>OPPORTUNITIES – GET INVOLVED!</u>

ADULT "INSIGHT" BIBLE STUDY

Join us for adult Bible study on Sunday mornings at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall.

ALTAR FLOWERS - SIGN UP IN THE NARTHEX

Our Altar flowers sign up chart is on the Connect Wall in the Narthex (outside the Fireside Room). If you'd like to help beautify our Sanctuary and sponsor Altar flowers in honor of a special occasion or to memorialize someone important in your life, please sign up. Arrangements are \$25 each.



DAYBREAK SHELTER



Volunteers are needed to serve dinner to needy people at Daybreak Homeless Shelter in Joliet. The commitment is from 5:30-7 pm on the second Monday of each month. Food donations are also needed. Sign up in the Narthex or online at: mlcjoliet.org/life-groups Messiah members will be serving at Daybreak on Monday, January 13th.

FAITH & BODY THURSDAYS

Faith & Body will resume our walking group on Thursday, **January 9th** from 9-10 am, and we'll meet weekly thereafter. All are welcome! This is a great way to start a healthy routine for 2025! Please register here:

https://messiahlutheranchurch.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2426227

See <u>PAGE 5</u> for an exciting announcement about our FREE **Faith & Body Retreat** coming up on January 11th!

FIRESIDE CHATS



Want to know more about the people behind the scenes at Messiah? Well, here it is! We've created a series of podcasts interviewing staff members, and a new episode will be released every few weeks. These may be found on our website at: https://www.mlcjoliet.org/fireside-chats. Next season, we will be interviewing some of our board members and having their voices heard as to what they hope to accomplish in their time as leaders at Messiah!

MESSIAH'S NEWLY REDESIGNED WEBSITE! Drumroll, please! Our newly redesigned website has launched! Same name, different look & feel. Please check it out at: https://www.mlcjoliet.org/



LIL LOVES MINISTRY



Lil Loves at Messiah aims to come alongside underserved parents and babies in the area by providing **FREE** assistance with diapers and much needed baby supplies. Lil Loves is available on a by-appointment basis, and those interested can sign up on our website.

Lil Loves thanks you for your donations of:

*Diapers and Pull-ups *Wipes *Baby Wash/Shampoo *Baby Lotion *Toiletry items for the moms such as deodorant, toothpaste, feminine hygiene, etc.

Trial-sized toiletry items are especially appreciated, rather than full-sized. If you'd like to donate, please place your items in the black bin in the Narthex. Call the church office for more information. Our Lil Loves ministry helped with <u>well over 100</u> care packages in 2024, thanks to your loving generosity!

Please note Lil Loves is

Messiah Gives Back!

NO LONGER ABLE TO ACCEPT BABY FORMULA OR USED CLOTHING.

These items are happily accepted at the Living Alternatives Pregnancy Resource Center. You may deliver them to: 903 Infantry Dr., Suite 600, in Joliet.

MEMORY BEARS

Messiah's Memory Bears Group meets here at the church from 9 am-noon once a month (sometimes twice!) to make stuffed teddy bears out of the clothing of people who have passed away, to comfort the grieving. We would love to have you join us! We have jobs that do not require sewing. Text Cindi Souza at 815-931-8478 or email <u>regency118@comcast.net</u> for more info.

MESSIAH MEN'S MINISTRY (3M)

The 3M group wishes everyone a great holiday season! We are currently on break. Men, mark your calendars... We will resume our studies on **January 14th** in the book of Exodus. Email Mike Brown at <u>gonzopal2017@cheerful.com</u> for more info.

MICRO PANTRY

Did you know that Messiah has a food pantry? This ministry is 100% donationdriven, and is maintained by the Evangelism Board. You can support this ministry through prayer, and through monetary and/or non-perishable food donations. Please leave your donations in the bin in the Narthex. EXPIRED ITEMS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED.



MLC OFFICE HOURS

The office is staffed Monday-Friday from 9 am - 3 pm. Saturdays and evenings are by appointment.

OWLS (Older, Wiser Loving Seniors)



On January 14th at noon, we will enjoy <u>Soup & Bingo</u>! Be sure to sign up in the Narthex to let us know what appetizer, desert, salad, etc. you will bring to share. Soup will be provided. We hope to see you on January 14th!

PRAYER CHAIN

Messiah uses an email-based (not in-person) Prayer Chain made up of people willing to pray for our members, community and nation in times of crisis. Prayers are shared amongst the group via email, and are confidential and anonymous as much as possible.

Text Cindi Souza at 815-931-8478 or email <u>regency118@comcast.net</u> for more info.



PRAYER TEAM

Our in-person Prayer Team meets Thursday mornings at 10:15 in the Fireside Room for approximately one hour, to pray together over our prayer request list. For more info text Cindi Souza at 815-931-8478 or by email to <u>regency118@comcast.net</u>, or Beth Hohisel at <u>bhohisel@hotmail.com</u>.

QUILTERS

The Messiah Quilters meets the third Thursday of every month from 9 am -2 pm. We have a lot of quilts ready to complete and if you can tie a knot, you can help us out... we even have jobs you can do sitting down! Think about stopping in to see what we do! You do not have to stay the entire time - whatever time you can give is appreciated.

If you are unable to join us and would like to sew at home, we have kits available with instructions that show how easy it is to put a quilt top together. Contact Kathy Mueller 815-953-6601 or at scpbklane@aol.com for more information. Hope to see you on January 21st!



SANCTUARY CHOIR

Our Sanctuary Choir sings on Sunday mornings at the 9:30 service, September through May. When the Children's Choir is performing, we sing at the 8:00 service. Rehearsals take place on Thursday evenings from 7:15-8:45. We are always looking for new members! For more information please contact our Sanctuary Choir Director, Herb Alexander, at halex12240@gmail.com.

STAY-N-PLAY

Stay-N-Play is every Tuesday morning from 9:30-11, when we open our Family Life Center to the community for FREE open gym time for children five and under. It's a great place for caregivers and children to make connections with other caregivers, and to have a safe place for children to play. Please like our Facebook page (MLC Stay-n-Play Playgroup) for additional information and share with your friends and neighbors!

STROLLER FIT MOM'S CLUB

Attention moms with stroller-aged children! Bring your littles with you in the stroller for an opportunity to socialize & GET EXERCISE with other like-minded moms! We generally meet every-other Friday morning at the church from 9:30-10:30. We will walk outdoors, weather permitting. In the event of inclement weather, we will move into the Family Life Center. We meet next on January 17th and 31st. Please reach out to Season Lawler at seasonsummer4@aol.com for more information.

WAYS TO GIVE

We will have an offering time during the services, but you can give any time during the week using one of the following ways:

- 1) Go to: bit.ly/MLCGiving
- 2) Download the Church Center app on your phone or tablet and follow the instructions given.
- 3) Text your dollar amount (with a dollar sign in front of it) to 84321.
- 4) Mail your check to the church at: 40 Houbolt Rd., Joliet, IL 60431

WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNERS

See page 5 for more info!

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

See page 6 for upcoming events for the ladies of Messiah!





Soup Supper 5:30 - 6:30 pm Followed by Worship 7:00 - 8:00pm Ash Wednesday, March 5th March 12th, 19th, 26th April 2nd, 9th, 16th

Easter Sunday April 20th, Worship at 8am, 9:30am, 11am Breakfast starting at 7:30 am!

Messiah Quilters

Messiah Quilters meet the third Tuesday of every month at 9 am.

Anyone can help – no sewing skills required!



JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES & BIRTHDAYS



- 18 Darryl & Cindi Souza
- 27 Roger & Linda Liberty



- 2 Marcie Conner Joyce Pawlowski
 Phil Pribnow
- Cathy Allen
 Mike Wegemer
 Jordan Weller
- 5 Juliette Burnetti Cindy Moauro
- 6 Beatrice Winterstein
- 7 Suzanne Prybell
- 8 Haylie Bernhard David Kerber Wayne Lauffer Roger Liberty Peggy Stone
- 9 Terry Anderson
- 10 Jamie Enix Edelgard Hoffmann
- 11 Andrew Kittler
- 12 Andy Anderson
- 13 Sarah Prybell
- 14 Eric Bowman
- 15 Terry Anzalone Kathryn Boe

- **16** Alexis Bowman Chuck Bugnits
- 18 Gail Crisp
- 22 Logan Gipes Davey Stier
- 24 Debby Gruber
- 25 Kristi Boe
- 26 Olivia Boe Rayna Boe Jamie Bowman
- 28 Gayle Arko Debbie Puckett
- 30 Laurel Alexander Judy Fowler



Giving Statements

Please help Messiah be greener and consider switching your statement delivery method from US Mail to <u>EMAIL</u>. Call the church office if you'd like to do this!



JANUARY SERVERS

Counters

- 01/05/25 Gayle Arko, Wayne Lauffer 01/12/25 Stan Buhr, Joy McClintock
- 01/19/25 Judy Fowler, Deb Dole
- 01/26/25 Ken Skinner, Dan Stukel

Ushers 8:00

- 01/05/25 Jerry Buchenau, Dan Stukel
- 01/12/25 Paul Allen, Don Cyborski
- 01/19/25 Wayne Lauffer, Bob Miller
- 01/26/25 Craig Stone, Don Cyborski

Ushers 9:30

- 01/05/25 Bill Unyi, one needed
- 01/12/25 Jeff Holmes, Alan Costello
- 01/19/25 Roger Gordon, Josh Johnke
- 01/26/25 Alan Costello, one needed

Ushers 11:00

- 01/05/25 Gary Phillips, one needed
- 01/12/25 Tom & Tammie Eigenbauer
- 01/19/25 Gary Phillips, one needed
- 01/26/25 Darryl Hoelscher, one needed

Communion Assistants 8:00

- 01/05/25 Bev Korby, Paul & Marvina Allen 01/12/25 Julie Bajt, Pat Anderson, Randy Ling 01/19/25 Pat Anderson, Nancy Bertnik, Randy Ling
- 01/26/25 Bev Korby, Paul & Marvina Allen

Communion Assistants 9:30

01/05/25	three needed
01/10/25	three needed

01/19/25 three needed

Communion Assistants 11:00

- 01/05/25 three needed
- 01/19/25 three needed

Readers 8:00

 01/05/25
 Greg Dole

 01/12/25
 Randy Ling

 01/19/25
 Paul Allen

 01/26/25
 Deb Dole

Readers 9:30

01/05/25	needed
01/12/25	Angie Mitchka
01/19/25	Jane Costello
01/26/25	needed

Readers 11:00

01/05/25	needed
01/12/25	needed
01/19/25	needed
01/26/25	needed

Greeters 8:00

Nancy Bertnik, one needed
Bev Korby, one needed
two needed
Bev Korby, one needed

Greeters 9:30

01/05/25	two needed
01/12/25	two needed
01/19/25	two needed
01/26/25	two needed

Greeters 11:00

01/05/25	Roger & Carol Gordon
01/12/25	two needed
01/19/25	two needed
01/26/25	two needed





40 Houbolt Rd. Joliet, IL 60431 40 Houbolt Rd.

In this issue: CALL COMMITTEE SURVEY, BAPTISM SUNDAY and a lot more!



Organist Rose Ann Sochan Sanctuary Choir Director Herb Alexander Tech Coordinator Nikolai Stier Youth Director Kersten Stier Worship Coordinator Justin Brown Worship Intern Fay Werner

815-741-4488

Senior Pastor Kurt Hoover Associate Pastor: vacant Building Administrator Kate Richmond Children's Ministry Director Leslie McFarland Office Coordinator Vicki Dallmann

info@mlcjoliet.org