MESSIAH MESSENGER

December 2026

From the Pastor

And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." (Genesis 26:22)

Rehoboth is the Hebrew word for wide open spaces. May this Christmas be for you and yours a season where God widens the space in your heart and in your daily plans for His presence and His love for others.

This is the point of Advent. God is *making room* for himself in your life. He has been doing this in various ways and through changing seasons throughout your life.

How is it that you might observe God *making room* for himself
in your busy life this season?

Perhaps it will be in morning devotion. Five minutes to start the day cuddled in front of the twinkling Christmas tree lights. Maybe a little more set up is in store for you. Hot cocoa and that favorite Christmas candle for a longer immersion into His love and goodness. Christmas jazz or the *Word Play* podcast in the background.



Maybe, for your home, it will be just one more family meal each week. Maybe the lighting of an Advent wreath each week and sharing of memories. My mother read to us each evening from Kathryn Jackson's now vintage "Story of Christmas," with the matching Advent calendar.

Maybe it will be *making room* for others in your Christmas traditions. Sacrificing gifts for one of the church's many benevolence partners. I have a fond memory of four couples gathered for Christmas dinner and then shopping for treats at Target to drop off at Lightways Hospice for the nurses and families.

And then there is the classic God move... Sunday morning worship. Maybe for you it will be getting back into the regular Sunday routine. For others, it may be giving more Sunday to time with God by joining Insight and Sunday school. God may be *making room* for you to volunteer in the Sanctuary Choir, help Altar Guild with the Sacristy, or read Scripture on Sunday mornings.

And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was <u>no room</u> for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

God has gone to great lengths to make sure there is room for Himself in your life. Thanks be to God.

Enjoying the freedom of the King,

Pr. [signature]

pastor.hoover@mlcjoliet.org



ALTAR GUILD - Help needed!

We are looking for someone to lead the Altar Guild. This includes scheduling, ordering supplies, and training new members. We also need volunteers to sign up to prepare and set up Communion.

Please prayerfully consider stepping up as an Altar Guild leader or co-leader. I can be reached at 815-931-1427.

-Pat Burke, Lay Ministry Director, layministry@mlcjoliet.org



CARING FOR PASTORS MINISTRY

and their family members

When I accepted your call to serve as your deployed pastor to care for pastors and their family members across the USA, I knew there was a great need. Since beginning this ministry, God has continually opened doors of opportunity to serve pastors in need. I am grateful to share that this ministry has now reached far and wide across the United States, having served pastors in every state except Vermont and New Hampshire. (Give me time.)

Will you join me in praying for Pastor Kurt and the rest of the Messiah staff, and all the pastors across the country? May God give them continued vision to serve Jesus, extra strength as ministry expands once you celebrate Thanksgiving through January, and that they too have an excellent Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas as they work hard to help others have the same.

If you have any questions, please contact me at pastorjpn@gmail.com. Thank you for your continued support in this ministry.

Blessings,

- Pastor John Nelson



STEWARDSHIP

Christmas Blessings

Christmas reminds us of the greatest gift—God's love given to us in Jesus Christ. Stewardship at this joyful time calls us to respond with gratitude, offering our time, talents, and treasures in celebration and service. As we share with others and support the work of our church, we reflect the generous heart of Christ and bring the light of His love to the world.

-Gerry Boe, Stewardship Director, stewardship@mlcjoliet.org

WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF!



We are pleased to share that Angela Sahagun has accepted the position of Communication & Community Engagement Coordinator at Messiah. Angela is a recent graduate of Lewis University and is very excited to be able to help further develop our social media presence and also our outreach to the community. Join us is giving Angela a warm welcome! Here is a little more about her:

Angela graduated from Lewis University with a degree in Public Relations & Advertising and minors in Digital Marketing & Marketing. During her time at Lewis, she developed a passion for creative content, storytelling, and building meaningful connections. Through her experience working with nonprofit organizations, she discovered the importance of using communication and creativity to make a positive impact within the community.

Outside of her professional interests, Angela enjoys exploring new restaurants and coffee shops, discovering new cities, and spending time with her family. One of her favorite destinations is Jamay, Jalisco, Mexico, where her grandparents are from and a place that holds a special meaning to her. She also loves spending time outdoors, whether it's enjoying a picnic, swimming, going for a walk, or simply taking in the fresh air!



125th Anniversary Commemorative Ornaments will be available for purchase in the Narthex between Sunday Services November 29 through December 20. They are $5.00 each or 2/$8.00 and make great gifts for those who did not receive one, or for your children/grandchildren to have for their own homes! A beautiful keepsake of Messiah Lutheran Church, it's history and your church family.



Prayer Vigil

December 2
2-5 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Drop in to pray at your own convenience throughout the afternoon. Come early for the 1 p.m. Advent Service or stick around and join us for Family Dinner at 5 pm.

New time for 2026!







Christmas Gifts to Messiah



This year, Christmas gifts to Messiah will be allocated 75% to the church bell and 25% to updating exterior signage.

Please direct questions to Congregation President Brian Wielbik at president@mlcjoliet.org.





GIFTS FOR BABY JESUS

A Messiah tradition for children on Christmas Eve!

We invite children to bring gifts for baby Jesus to our 5:00 or 7:00 p.m. services. These gifts are items needed by newborn children and new mothers: diapers, clothing, blankets, etc. Please identify on the wrapped package what each item is, the sizes and who it is for. These gifts will reach the community through our Lil Loves Ministry and Living Alternatives Pregnancy Resource Center. Thank you for your willingness to give!



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 & friends to place that promise upon their children. Please see Pastor Kurt if you or a family member would like to be baptized.



Year end giving for 2026 must be received in the front office by Thursday, **December 31st**. Online contributions by midnight, all others by noon.

Know to Grow Scholarship Program

Announcement for Our Graduating Seniors



We are delighted to announce the **Know to Grow Scholarship Program**, created to support and celebrate the next steps of our church family's graduating seniors. As you prepare for this exciting new chapter, we want to help you continue to learn, grow, and pursue the path God has placed before you.

- Scholarship Window: Applications will be accepted from January 15 through March 15, 2027.
- Who Can Apply: All graduating seniors who will be attending a college, university, or vocational school are invited to apply.
- Application Availability: Scholarship applications will be available soon. Details on where to find and submit the application is forthcoming.

We encourage every eligible senior to prayerfully consider applying, and we ask our congregation to keep our graduates in prayer as they take their next steps.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart… and He will make your paths straight.
(Proverbs 3:5-6)



SANCTUARY CHOIR

Rehearsals are on Thursdays from 7:15-8:45 p.m.,
with performances every Sunday during the 8:30 service.
If you'd like to join in, reach out to Herb Alexander.
or call the church office.



Attention MEN of Messiah!

Some **new Men's Ministries** are coming in the new year.
Watch for more information in January!

Social Events **Bowling**

Service Projects

VIRTUAL WORSHIP AND SUNDAY BULLETINS

Can't make it to church this week? The 8:30 a.m. service is live-streamed online on our Facebook and YouTube pages. Links to both are at mlcjoliet.org/worship (please scroll to the bottom of the page). You can also view or print the bulletin, if you'd like to follow along!

Opportunities to Get Involved!

ADULT "INSIGHT" BIBLE STUDY

Our Sunday morning Bible Study for adults is at 9:40 in Fellowship Hall.



ALTAR FLOWERS - 2027 List is Posted

If you would like to sponsor Altar flowers, please sign up in the Narthex or call the office at 815-741-4488. Arrangements are $25 each and may be taken home after the late service. The 2027 list is now available - Reserve your dates!

COFFEE & FELLOWSHIP TIME



Be sure to join us for coffee & good company on Sunday mornings in Fellowship Hall! Coffee will be available beginning at 8:30 a.m. and will continue until Insight is finished. If you are an 8:30 attender - stay late! If Family Praise & Worship is your service - come early! Make new friends! If you'd like to help with Sunday morning coffee, please reach out to Joyce Pawlowski at 630-890-1203.

CONNECT WITH MESSIAH

You can use this QR code to let us know you're new, tell us that you're interested in next steps at MLC, submit prayer requests, fill out a Connect Card, and give online.

Scan here to connect with MLC:

Online Giving - There are two convenient ways to do it:

1) On our website at https://www.mlcjoliet.org/give.
2) Through the Church Center app on your phone or tablet, or scan the QR code.

FAITH & BODY



Lace up your shoes and enjoy a walk in the Family Life Center, weekly on Thursdays (Sept-May) from 9-10 a.m. Everyone walks at their own pace and it's a great time for fellowship!

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Please join Messiah's Grief Support Group on the **first Thursday every month** (Sept-May) at 1 p.m. in Room 101. This group offers caring and confidential space for those currently walking through loss or those who have suffered loss in the past. You are not alone - We are here to support one another. Questions may be directed to Pat Burke or Judy Fowler.

Grief Support Group

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 requesting assistance may 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. Our Lil Loves Ministry has helped many, many families in need with care packages thanks to your loving generosity!



WE ARE NOT ABLE TO ACCEPT FORMULA OR USED ITEMS.
Formula and used baby clothes are happily accepted at
Living Alternatives Pregnancy Resource Center
at 903 Infantry Dr., Ste. 600, in Joliet.

MEMORY BEARS



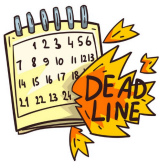
Messiah's Memory Bears Group normally meets the 4th Tuesday of every month (except December) from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Machine sewists are needed! Reach out to Cindi Souza at regency118@icloud.com or 815-931-8478 for more info.

MICRO PANTRY



Did you know that Messiah has **TWO** food pantries? Our indoor micro pantry is in the hallway across from the offices, and our outdoor "Blessing Box" is on the sidewalk right outside the office! This ministry is 100% donation-driven, and you can help to support it through prayer, monetary and/or nonperishable food donations. Please leave your nonperishable food donations in the bin in the Narthex. **NO EXPIRED ITEMS.**

OFFICE HOURS & PUBLICATION DEADLINES



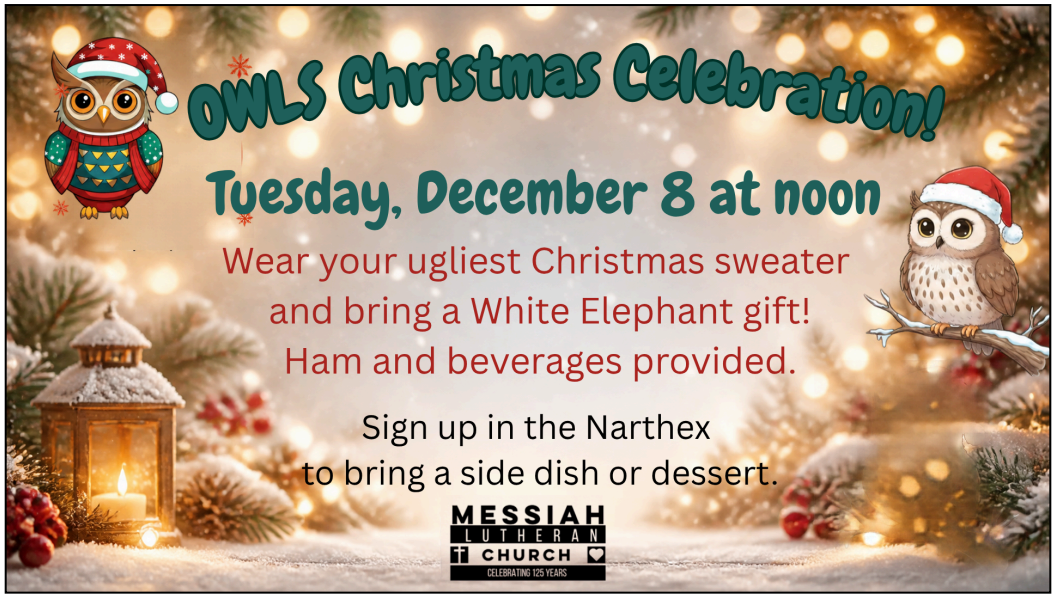
The office is staffed Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays and evenings are by appointment. **Sunday bulletin** material must be received in the front office by 2 p.m. each Tuesday. Material for the **newsletter** is due the 20th of each month.

OWLS (Older, Wiser, Loving Seniors)

OWLS meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month at noon, September-May. We enjoy a light lunch together, play trivia, and usually feature a guest speaker or entertainment!



In December we'll feature Christmas carols with Jeanette Wegemer and a white elephant gift exchange! Ham and beverages will be provided. We ask that everyone **sign up in the Narthex** so we have a headcount, and to let us know what you will bring to share (salad, side dish, dessert, rolls).





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. Reach out to Cindi Souza at 815-931-8478 or regency118@icloud.com 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 reach out to Cindi Souza at 815-931-8478 or regency118@icloud.com, or Beth Hohisel at bhohisel@hotmail.com.

QUILTERS



Messiah Quilters meet the 3rd Tuesday each month from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The next quilting day is December 15. 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. If you are unable to join us and would like to sew at home, we have kits available and can show you how easy it is to sew a quilt top together.

We are in need of clean sheets of, any size, flat or fitted (no stains or holes) to be used as backs for our quilts. There is a collection basket in the Narthex.

Contact Kathy Mueller at 815-953-6601 or scpbklane@aol.com for more information or any questions you may have. Hope to see you on **December 15**!

STAY-N-PLAY Our FREE weekly open gym play group for kids five and under (along with their caretaker) meets in the Family Life Center every Tuesday morning (Sept-May) from 10-11:30. Bring the littles for play time! Adults enjoy coffee on us! Please see our Facebook page for additional information, and share with your friends and neighbors!

SUNDAY MORNINGS AT MESSIAH



WORD PLAY! PODCAST - ***God Has a Word for You***



Hosted by Pastor Kurt Hoover and Nikolai Stier, you'll find a new podcast each weekday morning that delves into the Scripture readings for the coming Sunday, focusing on one word in each passage. We'll also feature occasional guest pastors from our area and other LCMC members.

Tune in as they exchange insights into the Word of God…
Along with some nerdy banter!



Each 7–8-minute podcast is available on Spotify here:

Jesus' words of grace are enough for you (2 Cor. 12:9).
Jesus says, "You have all you need. You are not missing anything."

YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY is back!

Those post-high school and up are invited to join us in Classroom #101 on Sunday mornings during Education Hour for Bible study, lively discussion, coffee and occasional breakfast treats. Led by Mike Brown.

Giving Statements

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

For the Ladies of Messiah

BIBLE STUDY WEDNESDAYS
Women's Bible Study is on break for the holidays and will resume on Wednesday, January 6 at 1 p.m. in the Fireside Room. More info to follow!

BUNCO - Saturday, January 16 at 1 p.m
Ladies, roll the dice, catch up with friends, and win prizes at our next Bunco meetup - no experience needed, takes just two minutes to learn!



Messiah Kidz Club (K-5th grade)

Parents of children (K-5th grade) can join the Messiah Kids group on the Remind app by texting the code mlcmk to 81010, or by going to: https://www.remind.com/join/mlcmk

We'll send reminders/notifications about Sunday School and events!

CHILDREN'S CHOIR
Our Children's Choir will perform during the 10:45 service on select Sundays. For more info please reach out to Season Lawler.

MESSIAH KIDS WEDNESDAYS (MKW)
MKW meets on Wednesday evenings from 6-8 p.m. in the upper level Kidz Club! Join us for family dinner beforehand, starting at 5!

MKW
MESSIAH KIDS WEDNESDAYS
Connect with the Bible and Friends

SUNDAY SCHOOL
We meet upstairs in the Kidz Club during Education Hour at 9:40 a.m.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2027 - June 14-28
SPY U: UNCOVERING COUNTERFEITS, DISCOVERING THE ONE TRUE GOD



Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to train special agents to detect false intel and to know, love, and live for the one and only God. When cadets arrive at Spy University, they'll uncover counterfeit views of God and recognize the one true God of the Bible, find that God is a trinity, collect clues to reveal how to become a child of God, crack codes to discover attributes of God, and discover that God created them and wants to be their first love.

For more info on ministries for kids pre-K through 5th grade, email Leslie McFarland, Children's Min. Director, at childrensmin@mlcjoliet.org or Megan Kuhn, Christian Ed. Director, at christianed@mlcjoliet.org.

MESSIAH STUDENT MINISTRIES (6TH TO 12TH)

BIBLE STUDY (SUNDAY MORNINGS)
Bible Study for high schoolers is in the Fireside Room continues year-round.

FRIENDS & MENTORS (FAM) FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS
Join us for mid-week Bible Study, connect with peers, play games, sing praise and more! FAM meets on Tuesday evenings (Sept-April) from 6-8.

HEAD 2 HEART (H2H)
Our H2H Confirmation Program for 6th-8th graders runs on Wednesdays evenings (Sept-April) from 6-8. Join us for family dinner beforehand, starting at 5!



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

Community Events



JOLET AREA CHRISTIAN WOMEN

You and your friends are invited to Joliet Christian Women's upcoming luncheon in Messiah's Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, **December 8** at 11:30 a.m. $22.00 includes a catered lunch, a special guest speaker/presentation and good fellowship. December will feature their **annual Cookie Sale**, and a guest speaker.

RSVP by December 2 by contacting Barb at 815-439-2076
or mrs.brutus56@gmail.com, or call Sonya at 815-727-1626.
Check out their website at https://www.stonecroft.org/.
Next luncheon will be January 20.

living|alternatives
pregnancy resource center

In addition to offering pregnancy services at no cost to those in need, did you know that the Living Alternatives Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC) offers a once per month drive-up event called "Will County Curbside Care" that provides two dozen diapers and a package of wipes per vehicle? This event is offered the 2nd Monday of every month from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., while supplies last, and no appointment is necessary! PRC is located at 903 N. 129th Infantry Dr., #600, in Joliet. PRC is one of the ministry partners that Messiah regularly tithes to.

Dear friends at Messiah Lutheran Church,

The Grundy and Will County PRC team is so thankful for your continued generosity and supports of our annual fundraising banquet! So far, you have helped us raise nearly $170,000, and we are daring to believe we will reach our 2026 goal of $200,000! Thank you for being part of the impact the PRC ministry provides.

-Aimee Merritt and the team at PRC

Samaritan's Purse
OPERATION Christmas Child

Thank You

Heartfelt thanks to all those who sponsored shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child! Messiah filled 87 boxes this year!



Thank You

Dear Messiah Family,

Thank you so much for thinking of my Mom, Dad and our family during this difficult year. When I would go to Iowa this summer and fall, there were always comments about how many notes and cards they got from people at Messiah. There was also a beautiful arrangement at the funeral that is now at our house, reminding us of what a caring and supportive church family we have! Thank you for your love for all of us!

-Molly, Kurt, Myka and Eli Hoover

Dear Messiah Family,

Thank you so much for the overwhelming kindness, love, and generosity you showed to me during Pastor Appreciation Month. Your thoughtful cards, encouraging words, and generous gifts truly touched my heart.

Serving as your pastor is one of the greatest blessings of my life. While I am deeply grateful for every gift and kind gesture, I treasure your ongoing prayers and faithful partnership in ministry most of all. It is an honor to walk alongside you, worship together, and watch God work in our church community.

Thank you again for making me feel so loved, supported, and appreciated.

-Pastor Kurt

Dear Messiah Family,

Thank you for your gifts, cards and comments that I received as part of Pastor Appreciation Month. You were very kind and generous as individuals and as a congregation. I enjoy being your Pastor Emeritus, giving sermons, singing in the choir, and visiting the sick. I appreciate the recognition that you showed to Karen for her love and witness. God bless you.

-Pastor Dave Nygard

My Dearest Messiah Family,

I can't thank you enough for your thoughtfulness on my beautiful day. Sharing 50 years with each of you brought joy to my heart and overflowed my cup of gratitude. There truly aren't enough words to express how grateful I am for your outpouring love. Each of you made my perfect day more memorable and the warmth I felt will last forever. Much thanks and many blessings!

-Rose Ann

December Birthdays



3- Nikki Burke
7 - Mark Burnetti
8 - Herb Alexander
10 - Lynn Bond
William Calderon
Lauren Enix
14 - Brian Wielbik
15 - Monica Beavis
19 - Mia Jurich
23 - Paul Capps
26 - Diane Zuehl
27 - Coby Dykstra
28 - Mel Mitchka
29 - Deb Dole
30 - Bev May
31 - Tessa Michalski

December Anniversaries



15 - Terry & Pat Anderson

December Servers

Communion Assistants 8:30

12/06/26	Nancy Bertnik, Bev Korby, Angie Mitchka
12/13/26	Tom & Lynn Bond, Lynn Tapella
12/27/26	Nancy Bertnik, Joy McClintock, Lynn Tapella

Communion Assistants 10:45

12/06/26	Terry Anzalone, Darryl Hoelscher
12/13/26	Terry Anzalone, Linda Hallberg, Darryl Hoelscher
12/27/26	Terry Anzalone

Counters

12/06/26	Ken Skinner, Dan Stukel
12/13/26	Gayle Arko, Wayne Lauffer
12/27/26	Judy Fowler, Zach Hoelscher

Greeters 8:30

12/06/26	Jean Cleary, Pat Boe
12/13/26	Bev Korby, Wayne Lauffer
12/27/26	two needed

Greeters 10:45

12/06/26	Beth Hohisel, one needed
12/13/26	Lynn Tapella, one needed
12/27/26	two needed

Readers 8:30

12/06/26	Angie Mitchka
12/13/26	Brian Wielbik
12/27/26	Sherri Unyi

Readers 10:45

12/06/26	needed
12/13/26	needed
12/27/26	needed

Ushers 8:30

12/06/26	Jerry Buchenau, Dan Stukel
12/13/26	Alan Costello, Bill Unyi
12/27/26	Paul Allen, Craig Stone

Ushers 10:45

12/06/26	Gary Phillips, Darryl Hoelscher
12/13/26	Tom & Tammie Eigenbauer
12/27/26	Gary Phillips, Darryl Hoelscher

December 20
Celebration Service, 10 a.m.
Communion Assistants: Terry Anzalone, Joy McClintock, Doug Potts
Counters: Stan Buhr, Joy McClintock
Greeters: Marty Hohisel, Lynn Tapella
Reader: Jane Costello
Ushers: Wayne Lauffer, Bob Miller

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH
CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

40 Houbolt Rd.
Joliet, IL 60431
(815) 741-4488



Senior Pastor Kurt Hoover
Bookkeeper Sherri Unyi
Building Liaison Kate Richmond
Children's Choir Director Season Lawler
Children's Ministry Director Leslie McFarland
Communications Coordinator Angela Sahagun
Office Coordinator Vicki Dallmann
Organist Rose Ann Sochan
Sanctuary Choir Director Herb Alexander
Tech Coordinator Nikolai Stier
Youth Director Kersten Stier
Worship Coordinator Justin Brown

info@mlcjoliet.org 815-741-4488