



# Mount Calvary Connected December 23, 2020

*Mount Calvary Connected is a weekly newsletter that will be sent out each Wednesday while the church is pressing "pause" on in-person gatherings. Our goal is to keep you connected to your faith and your church with messages from our pastors, health information, and ways to share Christ's love during our current national crisis.*

**Pastor Scott Klimke**

Cell-Phone: 570-367-3421

Email: [sklimke6@gmail.com](mailto:sklimke6@gmail.com)**Pastor Jonathan Adams**

Cell-Phone: 412-817-6704

Email: [revjonoadams@gmail.com](mailto:revjonoadams@gmail.com)**A Message from Pastor Scott,**

Merry Christmas! Tomorrow we will officially celebrate the nativity of our Lord. As you may know, Scripture only has two narratives related to the specifics of Christ's birth and they each put a different spin on things. Luke devotes two whole chapters to the conception, birth, and early childhood of both Jesus and John the Baptist. It's in Luke where we meet the heavenly chorus, the shepherds, and lesser-known figures like Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, and Anna. As to the holy family, Mary receives most of the attention in Luke.

In Matthew, much less is said about Christ's conception and birth and Joseph looms larger than Mary. As to Jesus' childhood, the details are also thinner than they are in Luke. But what's relayed has definitely become a rich part of the Christian tradition. With Jesus a toddler, it's in Matthew where we learn of the star-led visit of wise men from the East, King Herod's attempt to kill Jesus, and the holy family's flight to Egypt. Even with his more economic writing style, Matthew also manages to forward an important name for Jesus.

Taking his language from a prophecy related to the birth of an important child-king in Isaiah, Matthew calls Jesus Emmanuel, which as he explains, means "God with us," (Matthew 1:22-23). This is Jesus for Matthew. Jesus is God with us. Beginning his gospel with the news that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, Matthew also ends his gospel with the same Good News about Jesus; promising that even after his resurrection and ascension Jesus shall be with us always, even unto the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). Jesus, Matthew loudly proclaims, is never going to abandon his identity as Emmanuel—God with us.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, I recognize it may not feel as God has been with us. As of this writing, COVID-19 has now claimed 215 lives in Cambria County, with close to 200 of those deaths occurring in just the last month or so. This is nothing to minimize and it should inspire some lamenting on our part. But two vaccines are now available, with others on the way. It will take time for these vaccines to reach everyone, but they are a sign of God being with us. Christians don't regard scientific and medical advancements as accidents. We regard them as signs of God's continuing presence among us; signs of how God is still creating long after getting started way back in the beginning.

This week's news of a bipartisan, stimulus agreement in Washington, DC might also be interpreted as another sign of God continuing to be with us. To be sure, the heated and passionate political debates of recent months and years have been tiring, aggravating, and maybe even a bit depressing. When those who are supposed to be role models are constantly yelling at one another, thinking the worst of one another, and refusing to work together, it's only natural to wonder if God has somehow disappeared from the scene. But as natural and legitimate as such feelings are, Christians regard institutions of government as gifts of God given for our safety and wellbeing. There can be no doubt that those who hold governmental office do not always rise to this divine calling, but when they do, we regard it as a manifestation of God's grace—a sign of God still being with us.

Throughout 2020, we've also been blessed with Christ's ongoing presence in the word, water, wine, and bread of worship. During the first shutdown for COVID-19, our worship videos brought me to tears more than once. Even as we were separated, I realized how much praying and giving voice to our faith through the creeds made me feel closer to God. And let's not forget that we Lutherans also regard members of the local congregation as means of God's here and now grace. This certainly proved to be true more than once in 2020. On several occasions brothers and sisters in Christ cared for me this year; somehow sensing that the pandemic and its related demands were wearing me down. What's more is that together we more than once adapted to challenging circumstances and did some notable and creative things. Just this morning there was another front-page article in the local paper about Mount Calvary thinking and acting outside of the box so it might serve its community. It's been exhilarating to be a part of all we've managed to do together this year; another sign of how God is still with us. And so, again, Merry Christmas! May we welcome tomorrow's news that with and through the birth of Christ God has come to be with us. Even in the midst of what has been a strange and difficult year, it's still Good News and it's still true.

Pastor Scott

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### Christmas Eve Worship Service

Christmas will certainly be different this year, but that doesn't mean it can't be special as we gather around the good news of the birth of Jesus Christ...

This Christmas Eve, Mount Calvary Lutheran Church will be offering two drive-in services at **2:30pm & 4:30pm in the parking lot of the former "Skateland" at 423 Walters Avenue (next to the driver's license center.)** Hear the story of Christmas in a worship service that blends traditional and modern worship elements, all from the safety of your car. Bulletins will be made available electronically and Holy Communion will be celebrated in a "bring your own bread" style for a contact-free experience, even while joining together with so many other faithful worshippers. Check back in the middle of week of Christmas Eve for all of what you'll need to fully participate.



Later in the evening, at **7:15pm, a third service will be made available via live internet radio on our website and via our FM transmitter** which can be heard through a large portion of Richland Township and the surrounding community.

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### LIVE STREAMING WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION

Mt. Calvary hosts live broadcasts of the liturgy at 8:45 AM Sunday mornings. The broadcast can be heard by tuning your radio to 88.3 FM if you are near the church. We can also stream the service live over the internet. By clicking the following link, you can gain access to the live stream audio. <https://streams.radiomast.io/96172026-6cba-407b-9090-e150b471ae0e>

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### Friday, December 11, 2020

Effective immediately, indoor, in-person gatherings will cease at Mount Calvary until the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's new strictures on such gatherings are lifted. In the meantime, Mount Calvary will continue to broadcast a service on Sunday mornings at 8:45 AM every week. This service can be accessed at 88.3 FM or through an internet link provided by our webpage found at [www.mt-calvarylutheran.org](http://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org). A non-musical version of the service will also be made available on our Facebook page each week.

**WORLD HUNGER IN MEMORY OF:**

Kenneth, Stella and Bella Stull by Sharon Stull  
In loving memory of Rev. Ron Reed by Gloria, Shannon, Justin & Kate  
In loving memory of Kathryn Zeger, Rev. Henry & Violet Reed by Gloria, Shannon & Justin  
Loved Ones by Jayne Dunbar  
John Bunnell by Joan Bunnell  
Bill McMullen by Linda & Family  
Loved Ones by Natalie Zerby  
Loved Ones by Susan & Rachael Brandau  
Luther & Kathleen Horner by Cindy & Albert Buday  
Jenneal F. Crowley by Cindy & Albert Buday  
Grandparents, Jim & Dorothy Pozun & Clara Solarczyk by Kymm,  
Kadence, Wymm & Colton Georg, & Sara Solarczyk  
Loved Ones by Lenora Streilein  
Robert A. Culp by Norma Culp & Family  
Helen & William Lauf by Carmen Schellhammer  
George & Ann Sotak by Deb Wicks  
Nellie & Paul Henry, Phyllis Ferguson, Jean Jordan, Thomas Haupt, Clarence Cramer by Gladys Haupt  
Parents, Paul & Nellie Henry, Sisters, Jean & Phyllis, Husband Joe,  
Sister-in-law Barbara by Audrey Rubis  
Loved Ones by Becky Lilja



**WORLD HUNGER IN HONOR OF**

Shannon, Justin, & Kate by Gloria Reed  
Family by Wilma Hiltz  
Children, Grandchildren, & Great Grandchildren by Audrey Rubis  
Our Parents & Our Grandparents by Jamie & Katie McMullen  
Children by Rick & Lois Gallus

**POINTSETTIA IN MEMORY OF**

Betty Mattern by Walt Mattern  
Glenn & LaVerne Trent by Joyce & Brittany Spangler  
Zakary McQuaide Lonsinger our Son & Brother by Bill, Cara, Kyle &  
Jordan Lonsinger  
Linda McQuaide, always in our hearts by Bill, Cara, Kyle, & Jordan Lonsinger  
Bill McMullen by Linda & Family  
Linda McQuaide by Mark, Shari, Kelsie, & Jared  
Zakary Lonsinger by Mark, Shari, Kelsie, & Jared  
Linda McQuaide, Zak Lonsinger, & Dale Middleton by  
Stan & Debbie McQuaide  
Dan Warman by Susan & Rachael Brandau  
Luther & Kathleen Horner by Cindy & Albert Buday  
Jenneal F. Crowley by Cindy & Albert Buday  
Ray Hite, Jr. by Joyce, Jason, Suzanne & Sophia Hite  
Benny & Phyllis Petrarca by Joyce, Jason, Suzanne & Sophia Hite  
Mary & Otto Kendzora by Joyce, Jason, Suzanne & Sophia Hite  
Dorothy & Ray Hite, Sr. by Joyce, Jason, Suzanne & Sophia Hite  
Paul, Betty & David Gindlesperger by Joyce Gindlesperger  
Mary Pauline Read by Nancie M. Read  
A. M. Read by Nancie M. ReadLloyd & Wilma Gindlesperger by Beverly Tallyen  
Stan & Kayleigh Tallyen by Beverly Tallyen  
Beverly Ann Kocis by her loving husband, Joe.  
Joseph & Mildred Kocis by Joe Kocis

Charles & Louise Ling by Joe Kocis  
Patricia Johnson by husband, Albert & Children

**POINTSETTIA IN HONOR OF**  
The McQuaide & Middleton Children by Stan & Debbie McQuaide  
**Thanks to your kindness, \$2860.00 was given to World Hunger.**

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## **Christmas Message from the Allegheny Synod**

“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)  
700 years before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus, the prophet Isaiah spoke these words to comfort God’s people. Isaiah spoke to a people who were under the shadow of invasion from Babylon and who would see Jerusalem destroyed. It was a dark time for the children of Israel.

In those dark days, God’s Word proclaimed that hope and salvation are coming. Isaiah is saying that the darkness cannot stop the light of our God. No matter how dark the day, God is bringing light and his salvation into the world. There have been some days that seemed pretty dark in 2020. We have lived in the shadow of the pandemic. We have seen natural disasters, civil unrest, and political strife. It has left us feeling out of control and that the ground is shifting under our feet.

The Word of God that offered hope to God’s people thousands of years ago, has the same message for us today. No matter what darkness or shadow we find ourselves in, God is with us. God will never leave us alone. Our Lord Jesus promises us that he will be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20) and that when he comes again, he will take us to himself (John 14:3). Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39). Life can be hard. But we know that the brokenness, the sin, and the darkness of this world does not have the last word. The end of all things is the victory of God in Christ Jesus. The end of all things is the God who is going to cast out the darkness and heal our hearts and mend our souls.

That God is with us now. We celebrate at Christmas that our Lord loved us so much that God would not sit by and watch us suffering. But the Creator of all things became flesh and lived among us. The God who brought all things into being, would not leave us to our struggles. God became flesh and to walk with us so that we might know we are never alone. As we contemplate the baby in the manger, we see the one who is Emmanuel. God with us. God is with us and that makes all the difference. Christmas celebrates that God stepped into our existence and our lives to show us a better way. In Jesus we see the way of love. We see the God who stops at nothing to save us from sin, death and the devil. Our Lord not only saves us but goes to any and all lengths to make us his own. We matter to the God who made heaven and earth.

As we look at the brokenness and darkness of this world, let us hear the Word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” The light of God, Jesus Christ has come into this world. As we look to the manger, and later look to the cross, we remember that Christ Jesus is the light of the world and there is no darkness that can overcome him.

May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bless you and yours this Christmas,

The Allegheny Synod Office Staff  
Bishop Michael Rhyne  
Pastor Becca Ehrlich  
Mrs. Michelle Bossler

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### **Harvest Home Food Collection**

Thanks to our generous congregation, we collected 577 food items to be delivered to local food pantries. They were split between The Salvation Army's Emergency Food Bank and St. Clement's Food Pantry. They were both very appreciative, thank you!

### Family Kitchen

If you haven't already, there is another opportunity to volunteer at the Family Kitchen. We will be there again on Sunday, January 10 from 11-1. If you would like to help out, or want more information, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

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### 2021 Offering Envelopes can be picked up in the narthex.

Envelopes are renumbered so they are in alphabetical order. Your number may have changed from last year. So, beginning Jan. 1, throw away your 2020 and start using your 2021 envelopes. If you have received envelopes and choose not to have them, OR if you did not receive envelopes and would like to have them please call the church office. Also, please help deliver envelopes to your friends and neighbors. Thank you!

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### Year Round Giving Tree

Beginning in January, there will be a new Giving Tree in the narthex that will be up for all of 2021. Each month a different group/organization will be selected to receive the donations from the tree. For January, all proceeds will go to Pro Papa Missions to help the country of Honduras which has been hit hard by hurricanes and COVID-19. On the tree you will find an envelope attached to a handmade face mask. The suggested price on the envelope is \$3, however, any amount will be accepted. Envelopes can be returned to the collection plate or dropped off at the church office. Thank you! -

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**There will be no email or newsletter sent out next week.  
We will resume the email and mailing on January 7, 2021.**

#### About Our Members:

Lee & Dot McQuaide's son Tim McQuaide passed away on December 14.

Reminder to please pray for our members and their families that are affected by COVID 19.

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### *Kid's Corner* with Pastor Jonathan

Each week, Mt. Calvary will be publishing "Kid's Corner" as an offering for our children and families. Kid's Corner is part Sunday school lesson, part children's sermon, and all about sharing God's love. Join us each week for this and other

online offerings from Mt. Calvary on our church Facebook page: Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of Johnstown, PA.

#### Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week Dec. 27 - Jan. 2.

**Dec. 28** – Ethan Gawlas, Elizabeth Wyant

**Dec. 29** – Noelle Berkey, Leland McQuaide, Matthew Osborn,  
Nicholas Popovnak, Joseph, Leonard Strihan

**Dec. 30** – Christie Philibin, Sandy Schreyer, Reese Williams

**Dec. 31** – Shane Boyle, Kaitlin Hessler, Brett Reitnaue, Chuck Schenkemeyer, Jeffrey Wingard

**Jan. 1** – Curtis Colvin, Susan McNiesh, Melissa Raho, Micah Wallace

**Jan. 2** - Ed Brandau, Stephen Rouser, Natalie Williams

**Dec. 29** - Ruth & Kim Marley (42 years)

**Remember those that prayer has been requested:**

Linda & Dick, Kim, Jamie, Dr. Larry Mastrine, Don, Joanne, Shirley, Chris, Tracy, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Brooke, Bob Zahorak, Jerry, Brian, Rick, Harold and family, McQuaide family, Cindy Solarczyk, and Patti Sliko.

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**Support of Mount Calvary**

Through the end of November, Mount Calvary's monthly expenses have been averaging about \$17,685. This is in the neighborhood of \$4,225 a month less than budgeted. Thanks to your generosity and the faithfulness of your leadership team, Mount Calvary has not yet had to dip into reserves in spite of all the disruption introduced by the pandemic. We're a team and the entire team deserves a thank you! Now all that's left to do this year is to top things off with another strong and robust December as we have done for many years running.

**CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20TH.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us to be channels of mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **A: Amen.**

**FIRST READING: 2 SAMUEL 7:1-11, 16**

*Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.*

<sup>1</sup>Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup>Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" <sup>8</sup>Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup>and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

## **SECOND READING: ROMANS 16:25-27**

*Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.*

<sup>25</sup>Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup>but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—<sup>27</sup>to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

## **GOSPEL: JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28**

*John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.*

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup>He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

## **SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT**

"The Lord is with you." This is said to flesh and blood people like you in me in two of today's appointed readings from Scripture. First the prophet Nathan says to King David, "The Lord is with you." Then, the angel Gabriel says the same to Mary, the mother of our Lord. But as it turns out these words are truer for Mary than they are for King David. Without question, the Lord is an ongoing presence in the lives of both individuals, but the Lord is only with or for what Mary intends to do. This is how goes sometimes. God is with us, in the sense that God is our constant companion and guide. But God is not always with or for what we say or do. When taken together, baptism and worship are reflective of this dynamic.

As to baptism, when St. Paul discusses the sacrament in the sixth chapter of Romans, his basic message is that through baptism "the Lord is with us." The apostle says baptism joins us to Christ forever and ever. We'll die and rise with him until rising is all there's left to do. St. Paul says much the same thing in the 8th chapter of Romans when he with great eloquence and impact writes that absolutely nothing can separate the baptized from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Again, the basic message is that thanks to baptism, the Lord is with us through thick and thin and this continues even after death. Through baptism, a relationship begins to which the Lord will always be faithful. But will we reciprocate? Will we honor our relationship with Lord as much the Lord honors it? These are open questions which bring us to another set of words very closely related to the words "the Lord is with you."

The words I have in mind are "the Lord be with you." This second set of words is familiar to us thanks to traditional Lutheran worship. When things are done traditionally, the words "the Lord be with you" are sometimes used to introduce and invite prayer and they're almost always used to begin celebrations of The

Lord's Supper. Think: The Lord be with you. And also with you. Let us pray. Think: The Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise. We know this stuff, but our readings from 2nd Samuel and Luke give us the opportunity to understand it even better.

Let's start here. The words "the Lord be with you" are worship words and this is definitely a part of what our readings from 2nd Samuel and Luke are ultimately about. A good bit of these readings is about worship; about when worship does and does not happen. This is particularly obvious when it comes to our reading from 2nd Samuel. Initially encouraged by the prophet Nathan, King David intends to build a temple for God. In his view, it isn't right or salutary for God's house to be a dusty tent that moves from place to place. Worship, King David reckons, requires something more marvelous and majestic and magisterial. But God doesn't allow this grandiose understanding of worship to stand for every long. Through the prophet Nathan, God quickly lets it be known that a dusty tent will suffice just fine for now. Worship isn't about the grand gesture, God says, any more than it's about pious pomp. Worship is about living our lives God's way rather than our way. It's a revelation that brings us right back to how the words "the Lord is with you" and "the Lord be with you" are similar, but not the same. When we use the words "the Lord be with you," we communicate that there's a conditionality to worship that the words "the Lord is with you" simply don't capture.

Whether it be at church or in our day-to-day lives, worship is not about doing whatever we want, whenever we want, however we want. Worship is about bowing down before the Lord as wise men from the east once did. Worship is about submitting to the Lord as Mary does in our reading from Luke when she says, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word." Worship, and worship does include all of our lives, is about being people whose words and deeds proclaim, "Thy will be done on earth too!" But of course, this doesn't always happen. Again, there's a conditionality to worship that the words "the Lord is with you" just don't capture. To give voice to this conditionality, you need the hopeful hesitancy of the words "the Lord be with you." Maybe this prayer we're about to lift up will prove to be pleasing to the Lord. But then again, maybe not. Maybe this celebration of the Lord's Supper will find us experiencing the crucified and risen Lord who's always there to be experienced. But then again, maybe not. The Lord be with you. We hope it happens, and it certainly can, but there's no guarantee it will. This is "the Lord be with you," as opposed to "the Lord is with you."

This helps to explain why the words "the Lord be with you" also appear during traditional celebrations of baptism. Just before water is poured into the font, just before that water is blessed, just before someone is baptized, the officiant says, "the Lord be with you." Someone is about to be adopted by God the Father; the most faithful of all fathers. Someone is about to be joined to the death and resurrection of God the Son. Someone is about to be blessed with the indwelling of God the Spirit. All of this is going to happen. There's no conditionality about it whatsoever. But will the Holy Trinity's baptismal grace produce the desired effect? Will it lead to a life of true and genuine worship? Will the Lord be with or for all, or at least most, of what this new member of the Church goes on to say and to do? Maybe. Maybe not. The person baptized may more often than not prove to be a King David who puts their will before the will of the Lord. Then again, the person baptized may more often than not prove to be a Mary whose words and deeds proclaim, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word" There's an uncertainty here that the hopeful hesitancy of "the Lord be with you" captures a whole lot better than the certainty of "the Lord is with you."

And one final time, when is it that our worship actually is true and genuine? Mary gets at this when in our reading from Luke when she describes herself as a servant of the Lord. True and genuine worship is a ministry of service. True and genuine worship is a ministry of subordination; a ministry of submission where the will of the Lord wins out every time. We worship aright when we do it God's way, not the world's way. We worship aright when we serve the aims and ends of God rather than our own aims and ends or the aims and ends of some group that tries to steal away the worship that belongs to God alone. As St. Paul put it so succinctly in the reading from Romans we heard earlier today, we worship aright when our aim and end is to glorify God by being Jesus people; people who serve him and not some other lord. And so, all throughout our

lives, let's be asking ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" Asking that question and implementing what we hear back in prayer, study, and fellowship with other Christians is the best way to ensure that our worship both in and out of church trades in the hopeful hesitancy of the words "the Lord be with you" for the certainty of the words "the Lord is with you." Amen!

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: God of power and might, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

P: Gracious God, all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations and faiths (Nearby churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues may be named). Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Creator God, you scatter the proud. Everything we have belongs first to you. Bless and protect the seas, mountains, plains, forests, skies, and soils that surround us. Give us humility as we tend them. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Compassionate God, you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Encourage others to provide for their neighbors in need. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Healing God, you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence (especially). Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Eternal God, you are faithful to your promises. We give thanks for the ministry of Katharina von Bora Luther and other ancestors who served you. We give thanks for bold, female leaders in our own time. Inspire others with their steadfast witness. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**A: Amen.**