



**MOUNT CALVARY**  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

# Mount Calvary Connected March 11, 2021

*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.*

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### A Message from Dr. Harold Ashcraft

Here we are, a year into the COVID pandemic. While we are making progress, we are not completely out of the woods yet. The number of new cases per day is now down to what we considered a surge last summer. Of the new cases, up to 40% of them consist of new, highly contagious variants such as the British variant. We have lost over half a million Americans to COVID; more than we lost in WWI and WWII combined.

Sadly, throughout the pandemic, many Americans have questioned the number of deaths, thinking that the whole pandemic is exaggerated. Those of us in health care know that the numbers are not exaggerated, but two additional statistics confirm the grim numbers. The first is excess mortality—the deaths over the statistically expected number in a specific area over a specific length of time. In the USA, the excess mortality has remained very close to the counted COVID deaths. The second is life expectancy. The USA has had a sharp decrease in life expectancy over the past year. The fall in life expectancy can't happen if very sick and terminally ill people are dying a few weeks early. It can only fall if many people are dying years ahead of when they would have normally died. The excess mortality measurement also shows how the USA did much worse than other developed countries. Countries that handled mask wearing and social distancing well did much better than the USA. In fact, countries like Denmark, Norway and Finland had a negative excess mortality. Their death rate dropped! How did that happen? Measures to stop COVID significantly reduced influenza deaths and working from home cut back on motor vehicle fatalities so countries that handled COVID well actually supported their economies better than we did and reduced their death rates.

Even so, things are improving now, but this is still a very dangerous pandemic and the USA could easily have two or more very bad surges. What can we do? Masking in public remains very important. Social distancing and maintaining at least six feet of distance in public also remains very important. Not only do these measures help keep us safe, but they also reduce the ability of the virus to mutate into dangerous new variants. The virus cannot mutate if it is not infecting people.

Vaccinations are also an extremely important part of defeating COVID. The vaccines that are currently available all do very well at stopping serious illness while producing very few significant side effects. We have seen a few serious allergic reactions so all current vaccines are given in a setting where people can be safely monitored. Most of these reactions occurred in people with known serious allergic reactions in the past. Diseases of the immune system such as Guillain-Barre Syndrome (causes sudden weakness) have simply not occurred. This makes the vaccines in use quite different from the Swine Flu vaccine of 1976. As we continue to monitor the situation, I am convinced by the data that all three current vaccines are safe and would not hesitate to get any of the three and in fact have already received the vaccine offered by Pfizer.

What about singing? Unfortunately, singing, chanting, and shouting continue to be high risk activities. The state of Massachusetts recently started permitting live music performances, but without singing, woodwinds, or brass instruments. Only pianos, string instruments, and drums are presently permitted.

What can fully vaccinated people do differently? Two weeks from their last injection, they can now meet in small groups with other fully vaccinated people without masks and they can be with low-risk

unvaccinated people such as healthy children without masks. However, the general guidelines for masking in public and social distancing remain in effect for everyone, including the fully vaccinated.

What about church services? The church services at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church have been carefully thought out to keep everyone safe. We will continue to monitor state and national guidelines and incorporate new standards as quickly as possible. However, we are months away from full herd immunity, so we need to remain patient. I did not like seeing Cambria County as one of the most dangerous areas in the country and I don't want to see that happen again. We know what we need to do and we need to keep reminding ourselves that these precautions are mostly to keep those around us safe. A human life is worth a little discomfort.

Your Brother in Christ, Dr. Harold Ashcraft

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### **A Message from Pastor Jonathan**

We've had some beautiful weather lately, including a few afternoons that I'm sure made many of you want to get outside, even if only for a few extra minutes of soaking up the sun. In my household, we never really put away our propane grill and I've been known to do burgers or steaks outside even during a snowstorm. But there's something different about grilling outdoors when it's actually nice enough to want to *stay* outdoors, and on Tuesday evening we did just that: cooking outside and enjoying the weather as a family.

And this beautiful weather, even just the slightest taste of it that we've had, has me thinking about "outdoor ministry."

COVID has certainly changed what we think of as "outdoor ministry." In the past year, we celebrated Easter and Mother's Day together at the Silver Drive-In, and several months of drive-in services on the church property throughout last summer and early fall. All of that has reminded us that God is just as surely presented outside the walls of the church whenever and wherever people gather in Christ's name. And in the coming weeks, we'll start ramping up our outdoor ministry at Mount Calvary once more, with plans in place to resume drive-in services beginning to be formulated, and the possibility of other ministries and activities moving outside as well.

Outdoor ministry is something that the Lutheran church has historically invested in pretty significantly, and we are blessed to have our Allegheny Synod's formal outdoor ministry at Camp Sequanota less than half an hour away from Mount Calvary.

Last year, Sequanota's operations were significantly limited during those early months of the pandemic, but plans are in place for a modified, yet much fuller, slate of offerings this summer, and not just for kids!

Sequanota's summer season will last six weeks this year, with three weeks being devoted to the more traditional youth cabin camp programs, but also a full three weeks available as "family camp" programming. Beyond that, they're continuing with last year's success of opening their huge zero-entry pool to the public during certain hours each week, and will be offering swim lessons for children of all abilities. The staff and board of directors are still finalizing their COVID safety plans for the summer, but have already begun to plan for the modifications and procedures necessary to welcome children and families safely. More information about ALL of these offerings can be found at their website: [www.sequanota.com](http://www.sequanota.com)

I'm looking forward to our upcoming outdoor worship opportunities, and had a great visit to Sequanota just this past weekend for a hike. After a winter of being a little more "cooped up" than normal, outdoor ministry in all of its forms might be exactly what many of us need to reconnect with our faith in new and vibrant ways!

Yours in Christ, Pastor Jono

## 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>

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: [www.rebrand.ly/MtCalvaryWorship](http://www.rebrand.ly/MtCalvaryWorship)

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**The Passion of Christ,**  
First Four Wednesdays in March at 7 PM  
Sequential Viewing and Discussion of the movie "The Passion of the Christ"



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### Council and Committee Night Meetings

**March 16, 2021**

Property Committee, Social Ministry Committee, and Stewardship and Administration Committee All Meet at 6:30. All are welcome and encouraged to come!  
Congregational Council meets at 7:30.

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### Give Now for Texas Storm Relief

Beginning Feb. 14, a polar vortex descended over the United States. Subfreezing temperatures and heavy snow swept across the country, impacting millions of people. The harsh conditions severely impacted Southern states, such as Texas, which lack the infrastructure to handle the freezing temperatures and record-setting snow and ice. This has led to power, food and water shortages throughout the region. At its peak, 4.5 million homes and businesses in Texas were without power. With bursting pipes and broken water systems, around 10 million Texans are facing water disruptions. As temperatures rise, melting ice and snow is expected to cause more water damage.

**If you would like to donate, please put offering in envelope and mark it Texas relief fund. Drop it off in the offering plate or in the church office.**

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### Lilies/Tulips – World Hunger

You are invited to contribute toward a Lily/Tulip or World Hunger as a "Memorial" or in "Honor" of someone. All contributors will be listed in the Easter Bulletins and the Lilies/Tulips will decorate the Sanctuary. Please make checks payable to Mt. Calvary and mark either "Lily", "Tulip", or "World Hunger" on the memo line.

**Cost is \$9.50 . for either type of flowers.**

**The deadline for orders is March 22.** You can find a form in the email or the letters that are mailed out each week. There are some envelopes in narthex.

In Memory Of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor Of: \_\_\_\_\_

Given By: \_\_\_\_\_

Offering Envelope Number: \_\_\_\_\_

World Hunger Offering Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Number \_\_\_\_\_ of Lilies \_\_\_\_\_ Tulips \_\_\_\_\_ Either Ordered X \$9.50 Each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Devotionals

Christ in the Home and the Portal of Prayer devotional are available in the narthex.

### Easter Egg Hunt

Mount Calvary will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 27 at 4:30pm before the evening worship service. All children and youth are invited to participate. Weather permitting, the event will be held outside around the church; or socially-distanced and spread throughout the inside of the building if necessary.

We're currently looking for additional volunteers to help with setup (confirmation students will receive bonus points for volunteering), as well as donations of candy. Contact Pastor Jonathan in the church office on Mondays or Wednesdays or at [RevJonoAdams@gmail.com](mailto:RevJonoAdams@gmail.com) for more information.

### Backyard cookie collection will be Thursday, March 18, 2021.

Cookies can be placed in the bin outside the church, or the labeled one inside. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you for your continued support!



As we close in upon Holy Week and Easter, we are again planning to provide our congregation's younger families a special devotional activity kit for Holy Week called "Holy Week in a Box." This kit will have different scripture, prayer, and hands-on activities for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, to help you commemorate and celebrate these important and holy days with your children.

If you received the 2020 "Advent in a Box" in the mail, you're already on the list and don't need to do anything else if you'd like it mailed to you again. BUT, if you'd like to opt out of receiving a Holy Week box, or make arrangements to pick it up in person, OR if you didn't get the Advent Box but would like a Holy Week box for someone you know, contact Pastor Jono or use the form at the link below: <https://rebrand.ly/HolyWeekBox>

### Giving Tree

Are those plastic bags tearing on you? Try a cloth bag! Save the planet!

**Suggested cloth bag donation \$5.00**

There still are masks and a few of the plastic tote bags!

**Suggested donation for them are \$3.00**

March and April donations will be sent to Backyard Ministries.

### Flea Market

Mt. Calvary will again this Spring have a Flea Market. The Flea Market is scheduled for May 8, 2021 from 8:00 to 12:00. When you are cleaning out closets this Spring, please keep us in mind and donate all those items that you want to part with, so that someone else can enjoy them. If you haven't used an item in the last 12 months or so, and want to donate it to the Flea Market, you can bring it to the church sometime after the end of March and deposit it in the old lounge next to Sander Hall. **PLEASE NO TV'S OR CLOTHES.** If you have any questions, please contact either Janis Daily or Joan Bunnell.

### Flea Market Items marked for sale

The following items are being marked for sale at this year's flea market:

bolt of fabric (found in storage room)

Magnus toy organ (storage room)

Sheppard robes and accessories (third floor closet)  
Empty shoe boxes and easter baskets (third floor closet)  
Bible school supplies (third floor room)  
Many boxes of wicker plate holders. (third floor closet)  
Quilting frame and accessories  
Old flowers and old xmas decorations (crawl space steps by old lounge)  
If these items are still in use at the church or if they belong to you,  
please let someone from property committee know.

### **Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week Mar 14 - Mar. 20.**

**Mar. 14** - Lauren Ashcraft, Nancy Peretin  
**Mar. 15** - Tina Alexander, Amy Cannonie, Tess Lally  
**Mar. 16** - Cindy Buday, Autumn Goehres Don Osborn, Jr.  
**Mar. 17** - Drew Berkebile, Elizabeth Boyce, Gary Morningstar, Kelley Perk  
**Mar. 18** - Andrea Burkett, Lindsey Cassidy, Makenzie Kunkle, Caroline Palm, Kimberly Patterson, Melissa Pringle  
**Mar. 20** - Vicki Hersberger  
**Mar. 17** - Michael & Christine Philibin (20 years)

### **About Our Members:**

Mark and I wanted to thank our church family for their thoughts and prayers, food, cards and inquiries during our illness. We feel humbled by all of the people that reached out to us.

Mark and Deb Rychak

### **Welcome to our new member of Mount Calvary!**

Katie and Malia Decker

Doris Thomas

Robert and Barbara Miltenberger

Robert and Levi Allison

Jason Kylor

I would like to give a special thank you to Pastor Scott and Mark and Debbie Rychak for thier visit during Joe Grosholz viewing. And another special thank you to my brothers and sisters in Christ for all the loving thoughts, prayers and cards during this difficult time.

I truly am blessed to be part of Mount Calvary's family.

Thank you,

Claudia Plows

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

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

Catherine Kinzey, Heidi and Florence George, Linda & Dick, Lauren, Mark & Deb Rychak, Jim & Dot Karl, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Patti Sliko, Mark & Kayleigh Lucia, Palmer, Maxine Hale, Sandy, Alex, Dave, Joyce Morgenstern, Kadence, and Jack.

### **NEW Support of Mount Calvary**

Mount Calvary ended the first month of a new year in the black. A substantial return on our investment account proved to be quite helpful. Spending about \$820 less than budgeted was also helpful. Contributions, particularly those made to the current fund, were a good deal lower than those anticipated by the budget. While concerning, much of the issue appears to be one of timing. As opposed to this January, last January featured a significant, one-time donation that is being spread out over a longer period of time this year. Additionally, during every budget year, increased donations around the major holidays offset lower donations received at other points throughout the year. As of now, the financial message delivered at this year's annual meeting continues to seem appropriate. With the congregation currently worshipping in a variety of ways, we all just need to monitor our giving patterns and make every effort to maintain last year's level of giving, or better yet, the level of giving in place before the pandemic disrupted our normal offering practices.

### **CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, March 7, 2021.**

#### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### **FIRST READING: EXODUS 20:1-17**

*After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how to live in community. The Ten Commandments proclaim that God alone is worthy of worship. Flowing from God, the life of the community flourishes when based on honesty, trust, fidelity, and respect for life, family, and property.*

<sup>1</sup>God spoke all these words:

<sup>2</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup>you shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup>You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, <sup>6</sup>but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

<sup>7</sup>You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

<sup>8</sup>Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work. <sup>10</sup>But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

<sup>12</sup>Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup>You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup>You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup>You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup>You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup>You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

#### **SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25**

*The word of the cross is pure foolishness and nonsense to the world because it claims that God is mostly revealed in weakness, humiliation, and death. But through such divine foolishness and weakness, God is working to save us. The center of Paul's preaching is Christ crucified.*

<sup>18</sup>The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

<sup>20</sup>Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

### **GOSPEL: JOHN 2:13-22**

*Jesus attacks the commercialization of religion by driving merchants out of the temple. When challenged, he responds mysteriously, with the first prediction of his own death and resurrection. In the midst of a seemingly stable religious center, Jesus suggests that the center itself has changed.*

<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup>Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup>He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

### **SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT**

Faith is essential. It's a significant matter; a matter of ultimate consequence. In a variety of ways, this is what our appointed biblical texts have to say today.

Start with our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. It tells us that Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God for the people of God and that this power and wisdom beyond compare become ours through faith. If this weren't so, St. Paul wouldn't say today that those who believe the Church's proclamation about the crucified and risen Christ shall be saved. How's that for a witness to faith's significance! Faith in Christ shall be the difference between salvation and damnation; between eternal life and eternal torment. Our reading from John can be heard to say very similar things about faith.

In this reading, Christ executes judgment upon those who have turned Jerusalem's Temple into a marketplace. Might this give us a sneak preview of how Christ shall execute judgment when he returns to judge the living and the dead once and for all? Whether this was initially intended, I cannot say. But I certainly don't think it's a stretch to say that our reading from John provides us with a sense of how Christ shall administer judgment in the end. And what's the key or decisive variable going to be? It's going to be faith or the absence thereof.

Those who turn Jerusalem's Temple into a marketplace fail to believe that the Lord shall provide. Their faith is not in the Lord giving us our daily bread, but in their own ability to exploit religious pilgrims for

personal gain. And this isn't the faith we're going to want in the end. As St. John says so famously in the verses that follow today's reading, it is those who have faith not in themselves, but in the Son who God gave for the sake of the world who shall not perish, but have eternal life. Could it be any clearer that faith is what I've called a matter of ultimate consequence? I don't think so. But even as the moneychangers practice the wrong kind of faith, they're still practicing faith. This reveals something important. Long before we get to the end when judgment shall be administered and salvation awarded to some, we're going to have faith of some kind. It may not be Christian faith, but it's going to be faith nonetheless. As life is presently constituted, there's no getting through it without faith of one kind or another.

This is because at present we live in a topsy-turvy world which comes with all kinds of uncertainty. As life is presently constituted, there's a lot that's up in the air, a lot that can fall in more than one way, and we understand it's in our interests to do all that we can to see that things do eventually land in the right place. The problem is there's no foolproof manual, no scientifically validated manual, on how to control or manipulate all the balls we have in the air. Often caught at a fork in the road, we have to turn and travel one way or another. We have to place a bet on whether right or left is best. And when you're placing bets in a game where the winner has yet to be declared you're practicing faith. Well before any winnings have been delivered, you've come to believe your bet is the best bet and this is faith through and through. Living in a conditional world and not having all the answers and abilities we need, we have to place bets and make educated guesses. And again, this is to have faith; even when it's not the faith we're going to want to have when Christ administers judgment in the end.

This brings us to our reading from Exodus. In a world where you can't get by without faith or some sort or another, God makes it very clear that the faith we have will have much to say not just about our ultimate future, but also about our here and now. Place the wrong bets, practice the wrong faith, bow down before the wrong god, this reading says, and you may very well screw things up so bad that it will take generations to undo the damage you've done. But practice the right faith, worship the right god, place the right bets, and you'll one day be able to say that goodness and mercy have in fact followed after you all the days of your life. Though the emphasis is more upon our here and now than it is upon our ultimate future, this too reveals faith to be a matter of considerable consequence. It's all over the place in our readings today. You can't escape it. Faith is no laughing matter. Faith counts for much. Faith is a matter of present and future consequence. But with more than one faith presently available to us how do we place the right bet? Whether it be for salvation or for the best possible life until then how do we come to believe that the crucified and risen Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God for the people of God both now and later?

Well, if it's going to be up to us to make it happen ourselves, I'm afraid it's not going to happen at all. Any sermon that talks about choosing Jesus or claiming Jesus or deciding for Christ is a biblically uninformed sermon. We don't, and in fact, cannot choose faith in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ Jesus chooses us through the Holy Spirit. It's why later in his first letter to the Corinthians St. Paul is going to write that no one can say Jesus is Lord apart from the Holy Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit who reveals to us that the crucified and risen Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God for the people of God. It's the Holy Spirit who convinces us that the Church and its proclamation are to be heard and heeded. Understood in this important and essential way Christian faith is not a choice, a bet, or an educated guess. It's a gift of the Holy Spirit. To practice the right faith, we need the Holy Spirit as much as we need air to breath. To be washed white in the blood of Lamb we need faith. This is sure. But it's just as sure that there shall be no Christian faith for us now or later apart from the Holy Spirit. And all that the Holy Spirit needs to get its faith-making and faith-sustaining work done is a little light. Thankfully, the other members of the Holy Trinity have seen to it that this needed light is not in short supply.

In today's reading from Exodus, we hear of how God once delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage; an experience that can remind us of how through Christ Jesus we have now ourselves been delivered from bondage to sin, death, and devil. This is a little light; the very thing the Holy Spirit needs to create and sustain faith. And what about our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians' many references to how Christ went to the cross for you and me? This too is a little light; the very thing the Holy Spirit needs to create and sustain faith. Or what about our reading from John's references to Christ's resurrection from the dead after three days? With God's power and

love able to defy death, with all things so clearly possible for God, why in the world wouldn't we want to be people of Christian faith? When the light of Christ's resurrection from the dead is on hand, it's an argument the Holy Spirit can and will make so we might enjoy the profound benefits of Christian faith both now and later. As was also the case with the light that shines forth from the cross and out of Israel's liberation from Egypt, we've got yet another example of how important it shall be for us to gather together so that a little light might shine forth from the word of God read, heard, seen, sung, swallowed, prayed, and preached in this place and others like it. Now as in the past, it's these gathering around the word of God in all of its varied forms which shall provide the light the Holy Spirit shall need to make and sustain Christian faith. And so, remembering just how consequential the gift of Christian faith is, where should we be as often as possible? In church, gathered with one another, and around the word of God in all of its visible and audible forms. May this ancient wisdom outlive all the ways in which the past year has interrupted and complicated our former life as people of Christian faith. Amen!

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

P: Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation's well-being. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine. (Here specific places of need may be named.) Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit. Restore all who are sick or grieving. Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression (especially). Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: We await the day of Christ's coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Heavenly Father we turn to you as the Allegheny Synod is preparing for our Assembly in June. Lead us to pray. Open our hearts to hear your voice. Let us know that your will shall be done. Give us the faith to trust in you. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**A: Amen.**