



# Mount Calvary Connected

May 27, 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 Pastor Scott

As I write to you, the Church is still celebrating the festival of Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit came fifty days after the first Easter, a revolution in communications was born. The Bible tells us, "All of them (the first disciples) were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages," (Acts 2:4). This would not be the last communications revolution born of the Spirit. In the mid-1400's, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press. This would enable Martin Luther's writings to be distributed widely, giving his recovery of the Good News of Jesus Christ greater opportunity to take root. In the years to come, the printing press would be supplemented by radio and television. Most recently, there's been the advent of email and social media. Are these more recent revolutions in communication also born of the Spirit?

To be fair, it's not the means of communication, but the communicator and the content that can fall short of the glory of God. This is as true of the printing press, television, and radio as it is of email and social media. But there also is likely something to the perception that the newest revolution in communications presently comes with a greater downside than prior revolutions in communication. When the first disciples saw their capacity for communication increased by the Holy Spirit, the arena for communication was still in-person, whether it was person-to-person or person-to-group. Though not always, face-to face, person-to-person encounters generally encourage a civility and cordiality that are often missing from cyber-communications. It's easy to talk behind someone's back or off at a distance. It's isn't so easy to throw rocks and tomatoes when you're able to see the damage those rocks and stones will do to a real, in-the-flesh, living and breathing person who is also created in the image of God. When we communicate in-person rather than from behind a distant phone or computer, I'd suggest we're more likely to clothe ourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit would all have us do (Colossians 3:12).

In addition to increasing the odds of unhelpful rock and tomato throwing, more recent revolutions in communication also are more apt to spread disinformation at a pace and to a degree here before unknown. As I'm reading hopefully an hour a day, I often make note of facts and sentiments that I suspect may be of use in my work as a writer and speaker. With respect to social media, here are two quotes I've taken the time to preserve. Quote number one: The rise of social networks was like the advent of air travel; a virus can now conquer the world in a day. Quote number two: Social media have helped bring on a new era, enabling individual encounters with the news that confirm biases and sieve out contravening facts.

Though both troubling, it's perhaps the second quotation which best reveals how more modern revolutions in communication depart from what we know about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't encourage people to sow division and discord. Social media can. Many times a day, social media encourages us to "like" a side rather than to have an informed and respectful conversation. Just as unhelpfully, social media draws very little distinction between the expert and the amateur. Increasingly, this perpetuates the myth that we're all experts; that we don't need one another; that community is overrated. This too is an out and out

departure from the values and the perspectives the Holy Spirit instills. When the Holy Spirit has our heart and our head, we know that life is best when all hands are on deck and when everybody's attending to their own small, but essential piece of the puzzle. To quote the sermon of St. Peter we hear every year when the festival of Pentecost is celebrated, when the Holy Spirit is our guide, we know we need everybody—all flesh; not just sons, but also daughters; not just the old, but also the young; not just already free, but also soon to be free (Acts 2:17-18). For the Christian community born of the Holy Spirit's gift of faith, it's just a fact that "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good," (1 Corinthians 12:7).

And so, will I write and send email today? Yes, I will; just as I will also check in with Facebook today. As you do or don't do the same, I hope you'll join me in not throwing rocks and tomatoes from afar, in not sowing division and discord, in processing information with caution and suspicion, and in acknowledging that expertise is something none of us can claim in all arenas of life. Doing these things will make us more clearly born of the Spirit. They will also honor the service and the sacrifice of those who have fought, bled, and sweat to keep us one nation under God.

Pastor Scott

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### **The Transition Begins!**

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has now endorsed the new, mask-wearing counsel released by the CDC last week. This means effective immediately mask-wearing will become optional for immunized people at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church. As this new policy is implemented, we will continue to practice social distancing and encourage everyone to respond to the verbal and nonverbal cues of those who remain wary of getting too close to others. For those curious about changes with regard to in-person singing and the method of in-person communion distribution, please note it's possible that changes may begin to appear as soon as the first weekend in June.

As we follow the government's counsel on mask-wearing for immunized people, we would encourage everyone to remember that just because a person of faith can do something doesn't necessarily mean they will. Martin Luther once expressed this in memorable language when he wrote, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." In practical terms, this means at least two things for us presently. Number one, even if we are immunized, we may wish to continue to wear masks to enter into supportive solidarity with the unimmunized and those who are reluctant to abandon masks just yet. Number two, even though proof of immunization will not be required at Mount Calvary, if we aren't immunized, we should continue to wear masks or face shields until we are so we might not unintentionally harm another unimmunized person. In both cases, we may now be free from a mask mandate, but we are not free from the Christian obligation to make personal sacrifices which would benefit others.

For those who are not yet ready to return to in-person worship or are uncomfortable with a more lenient policy with respect to masks, please remember our drive-in service on Wednesdays at 6:30 PM in the rear of church. Also, please remember our radio offerings (8:45 AM on Sundays and 6:30 PM on Wednesdays) and the Facebook videos we release on Wednesday evenings.

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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>

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

### Weekly Wednesday, Drive in Services

Wednesday evening drive-in services have resumed at 6:30 pm. Download a bulletin from: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/>, bring your own bread for communion, and tune your radio to 88.3FM and you are set! See you there!

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### Card Shower

Mary Kay Mostoller will turn 96 on June 18th. Let's shower her with as many cards as possible. She can also receive visitor again. Her address is:

Mary Kay Mostoller  
Siemon's Lakeview Manor  
228 Siemon Drive  
Somerset PA 15501

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### Sunday School

This Sunday, May 30, is the last Sunday for Pastor Jono's Sunday School class. Parents will be receiving more information about the summer and fall via email and snail mail.

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### Mount Calvary's Summer VBS is "God's Secret Agents of Change!"

Join us on Saturdays June 12, July 17, and August 21st for a special program for kids entering Pre-K through 5th grade. The program will run each night from 4-5pm with a picnic meal served at 5pm and an invitation to join us for evening worship afterwards. For more information, contact Pastor Jono at [RevJonoAdams@gmail.com](mailto:RevJonoAdams@gmail.com) or 412-817-6704.

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### May/June Giving Tree

During the months of May and June, coupons for Stivers Nursery will be for sale after the weekend services and available in the church office. **Baskets are \$16.00 and flats are \$12.50.** Mt. Calvary will receive \$5 for every basket and \$3 for every flat purchased. The money raised will be used for the Giving Tree and donated to The Cambria City Mission at the end of June. Thank you for your continued support!

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### Backyard Cookie Collection will be Thursday, June 3, 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!

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### Stimulus Challenge

A member of our congregation has challenged others to put their economic stimulus money to good use!

One morning in March, a member of the congregation presented Pastor Scott with a check for \$140. She shared that she had received her "economic impact payment" (stimulus check) and since she had not been adversely impacted by the pandemic, she was giving a portion of it as a tithe and wanted to challenge others to do the same.

Since sharing this news, other families in the congregation have come forward and over a thousand dollars has been collected. Soon, we'll poll those who contributed to this challenge and mutually decide on a worthy cause in the community to direct the money toward. But, in the meantime, there is still opportunity to make YOUR tithe!

If you'd like to make a gift, simply write a check to Mount Calvary, with "Stimulus Challenge" in the memo line. Checks can be included in the offering plate during worship, dropped off at the church office during business hours, or mailed to the church at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, 1000 Scalp Ave, Johnstown, PA 15904.

## Congratulations Class of 2021!



**Kadiya Hope Lingenfelter**

*Conemaugh Township Area*

Future plans are to major in biology with a concentration in marine biology at Saint Francis University.

**Laiken Costlow**

*Richland High School*

Future plans are to study biological science at University of Pittsburgh Main Campus.



**Shane Katrancha**

*Forest Hills High School*

He will attend University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown as an Environmental Studies major.



**Austin Foor**

*Richland High School*

Austin will be continuing his education in the bridge program with the IU8. Austin then plans to join the workforce.



**Corey Katrancha**

*University of Pittsburgh – Johnstown. Chemical Engineering with a math minor. Summa Cum Laude.*

He has accepted employment with Plymouth Technology, Inc., Rochester Hills, Michigan as a Chemical Sales Engineer.



**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: May 30 - June 5, 2021.**

**May 30** - Jamie Hudson, Emily Sterner

**May 31** - Kyler Long, Isaac Marsh, Lois Sholtis

**June 1** - Jayne Dunbar, Maxine Hale, Philip Popp, Jacob Zerby

**June 2** - Adam Marsh, Frances Truscello

**June 3** - Mikayla Evans

**June 4** - Ed Greene, Tressa McQuaide

**June 5** - Amanda Cononie, Brianna Hinkledire, Michael McNiesh

**June 1** - Les & Joyce Morgenstern (36 years)

**June 3** - Dennis & Jacqueline Ritko (26 years)

**About Our Members:**

DJ Shaffer passed away on May 11, 2021

Joseph Adamy passed away on May 13, 2021

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Pastor Scott and Congregation,

Thank you for your visits and for always keeping us in your prayers. It is very much appreciated.

With Love and Faith,

Pat & Jim Custer

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

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

Linda Sell, Patti Finnegan, Richard Isaac Pentz, Michelle Roberts, Jill McEntee, Cissy, Cadence, Maxine Hale, Linda & Dick, Midge, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Colley Family, Miller Family, Shaffer Family, Patti Sliko, Steve, Sara Solarczyk, Mary Ann, Adamy/Kunkle Family, and Debbie Finnegan.

**NEW FINANCIAL UPDATE**

As anticipated, Mount Calvary's year-to-date finances turned for the better in the month of April. Financial gifts for the month were higher than during any other month over the last five years. 2020's Payroll Protection Program loan from the federal government was forgiven. There were also no unexpected expenses. We are now on course to meet the budget adopted at this year's congregational meeting. Unless an unexpected expenditure were to become necessary, it's time for all of us to maintain our present course; at least equaling last year's giving or increasing a bit when and where it's possible.

**CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, MAY 23, 2021.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**A: Amen.**

## **FIRST READING: ACTS 2:1-21**

*Originally Pentecost was a Jewish thanksgiving-type festival celebrated seven weeks after Passover. On this particular Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the entire community of believers just as Jesus had promised and the scriptures had prophesied. Empowered by the Spirit, the entire community bears witness to God's activity in multiple languages.*

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." <sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

<sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup>"In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup>Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

<sup>19</sup>And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

<sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. <sup>21</sup>Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' "

## **SECOND READING: ROMANS 8:22-27**

*By pouring the Holy Spirit into our hearts, God gives us the promised first fruit of eternal life so that we await God's future in hope. In the meantime, the Spirit also intercedes for us by carrying the prayers of our weak human hearts to God.*

<sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

## **GOSPEL: JOHN 15:26-27; 16:4B-15**

*While speaking to his disciples before his death, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Helper" and describes the difference the Spirit will make in their lives and in the world.*

Jesus said, <sup>26</sup>"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. <sup>27</sup>You also are to testify because you have been with me

from the beginning.

<sup>16:4b</sup>“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup>But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ <sup>6</sup>But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. <sup>7</sup>Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup>And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup>about sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup>about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup>about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

<sup>12</sup>“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup>All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

### **SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT**

It turns out my initial assumptions about this service were misguided. I have for years assumed today’s accusation that the disciples are drunk on new wine is meant to reference what Jesus says about new wine in the gospels. In several of the gospels, Jesus says old wineskins can’t hold new wine. This statement positions him as a change agent. What Jesus teaches and preaches, what Jesus lives and encourages, comes into unavoidable conflict with the status quo. The status quo has to go and the Kingdom of God Jesus brings near is clearly superior. Given this prior precedent, I’ve always assumed Pentecost’s talk of new wine hearkens back to what Jesus had already said; with the thought being that the Holy Spirit continues to build up God’s alternative to the status quo by being an agent that brings out the old and brings in the new. But it turns out this characterization of the Holy Spirit cannot be sustained on the basis of our reading from Acts’ mention of new wine.

As I only learned recently, different Greek words are used to describe the new wine that Jesus talks about and the new wine our reading from Acts supposedly references. It turns out that today’s reading from Acts doesn’t refer to freshly fermented wine at all. Rather than talking about new wine, it talks about sweet wine. In the ancient world, sweet wine was evidently akin to the caught blood that begins the butchering of a pig. Sweet wine comes from the first drippings of processed grapes and it was often consumed in the morning during the days of Jesus and his first disciples. Thank goodness I did a little research before proceeding with my initial preaching plan. Without that research, I might have said things about our reading from Acts that its original language does not sustain. But just because I can’t position the Holy Spirit as a change agent on the basis of our first reading’s reference to what should be sweet wine rather than new wine doesn’t mean that I have to abandon the claim that when the Holy Spirit shows up it’s out with the old and in with the new. There’s a lot in our reading from Acts which travels in this direction.

As an initial example, let’s key in on how our reading from Acts associates the Holy Spirit with wind. This is a very old association. In Old Testament Hebrew, the same word can be translated as wind or spirit or breath. It’s something to remember when reading through the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. By way of example, in the first chapter of the Bible, we often hear of the wind that hovered over the primordial waters as the creative process began. The word translated as wind can just as easily be translated as spirit, as in the Holy Spirit. On the day of creation, God uses the wind of the Holy Spirit to blow the primordial waters into what we now call heaven and earth. On the day of creation, the Holy Spirit is at work bringing out the old and bringing in the new. It’s the same story when Israel is delivered from Egypt at the Red Sea.

In the latter part of Exodus chapter fourteen, we again get the word that can be translated as spirit as easily as it can be translated as wind. What happens in the latter half of Exodus chapter fourteen is that God

uses the wind of the Holy Spirit to blow open the Red Sea so that Israel might pass through to the other side before the waters fall back upon Pharaoh and his army. Here too the Spirit is bringing out the old and bringing in the new. At the Red Sea and through the wind of the Holy Spirit, Israel says goodbye to slavery and hello to freedom. Even if it can't be done on the basis of a supposed reference to new wine, it's pretty easy to translate the Holy Spirit's continuing association with wind on the day of Pentecost into the message that the Holy Spirit a change agent; a wind that blows out the old and blows in the new.

The same message can also be derived from the cross-culture communication the Holy Spirit enables on the day of Pentecost. This ability to communicate beyond one's culture of origin is a reversal of what happened at Babel in Genesis chapter eleven. As Genesis chapter eleven tells it, all the peoples of the earth once spoke the same language. Showing themselves to be sinners in the process, the people sharing this common language used their ability to communicate to conspire against God, just as a snake and the first humans had earlier used their ability to communicate to conspire against God. In an effort to end these kinds of revolts and conspiracies, at Babel, God separates the peoples of the earth into cultures or groups with different languages. Suddenly, the ability to cooperate through a shared language is gone. In the place of conspiracies and revolts, you've now got Babel and all the nothingness that Babel can produce. But on Pentecost, God realizes this fix to one problem leads to another. Though the absence of a shared language limits the degree to which creation can conspire against God, it also places unhealthy and unhelpful limits on the degree to which people can cooperate for the purpose of furthering God's plan and completing God's work. And so, on the day of Pentecost, through the coming of the Holy Spirit, God eliminates the language barriers that have previously gotten in the way of cooperative ventures which would have helped to replace a broken status quo with the far superior Kingdom of God. Again, when the Holy Spirit comes, it's out with the old and in with the new. And guess what! Just as the Holy Spirit came when the first disciples were gathered together in one place, so also does the Holy Spirit come today when we're gathered together for worship. What can we expect to change? How will the Holy Spirit pressure and equip us to bring in the new and carry out the old?

The answer is that we should expect the Spirit to bring in that which includes and bring out that which excludes. Prior to the act of creation in which the Spirit was a full and active participant, we weren't a part of the picture at all. But through the act of creation, we were brought in to God's unfolding plan for the future. Prior to the parting of the Red Sea by the Holy Spirit, freedom was the possession of the Egyptians alone. After the parting of the Red Sea, freedom became Israel's as well. Prior to the multilingualism enabled by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, many of those gathered in Jerusalem and the regions of the world they represented had no way to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. But once the Spirit enabled this language barrier to be crossed, these same people and their respective cultures and regions were brought into Jesus' fold; increasing the number of waves bringing the far superior Kingdom of God to the shore of our day-to-day lives. It's how it always goes with the Spirit. Down go the walls of exclusion and up go the houses, the churches, the communities, the countries, the planets that have a good and healthy place for all. When the Spirit gets a hold of us, it's always out with the hoarding and in with the sharing. And this isn't an effort that stops at the doors of the church. It's an effort the Spirit equips and empowers us to carry out into the world God loves.

Think about it! Whether it's here at church or somewhere outside of this church's doors, I suspect the order of the day is pretty similar and that's in one way or another rebuilding. How do we rebuild our church now that the worst of the pandemic is hopefully gone? How do we rebuild our economy now that it can be reopened at a more aggressive pace? How do we rebuild our medical system now that the pandemic has revealed some of its gaping holes in terms of both access and preparation? How do we rebuild our nation after the storming of the capitol and after two consecutive presidential elections in which one party or the other has cried foul? How do we rebuild our world so that we're better equipped to work on shared problems than we were during the pandemic? Unless I'm totally mistaken, the order of the day all over the place these days

is rebuilding. It's a time of great opportunity; a time to move the ball forward for all on a whole lot of different fronts. In, by, and through the Holy Spirit, may we be led to rebuild in ways that increase access and inclusion; that increase harmony and unity; that increase sharing and sacrifice for the sake of the common good. It will be then that the Kingdom of God will have come quite a few waves closer to replacing the broken systems of the status quo with the love, the life, and the joy that God desires for all of us. Amen!

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

P: Gracious God, you give the Holy Spirit to your church, filling it with many and varied gifts. In the church throughout the world, strengthen us in our visioning and dreaming, that it may discover anew the Spirit's creative work. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God of life, your mighty works are too numerous to count. The earth is full of your creatures, living things both great and small. Open your hand and give them the necessities of this life. Send your fresh Spirit over the face of the earth. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God of the nations, at the sound of the rushing wind, people speaking different languages proclaimed and heard together your deeds of power. Fill the leaders of nations with your Holy Spirit, so that they exercise your gracious will in the lives of people. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God of faithfulness, you tend to the needs of your people, even the sighs of our hearts. Hear those who cry out to you in distress. Restore to wholeness all who are in any need this day (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God of love, fill this congregation (*name*) with gratitude for the gifts we have received from you. Renew our ministries, heal our divisions, and open us to the needs of our neighbors. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God of hope, those who have died in you raise their eternal song of praise. We give you thanks for the many gifts of your people and rejoice in the witness of your saints (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**A: Amen.**