



# Mount Calvary Connected

November 18, 2021

*Mount Calvary Connected is a weekly newsletter sent out at the end of each week. Our goal is to keep you connected to your church and your faith with messages from our pastors, information about upcoming activities at Mt. Calvary and more!*

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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 also stream these services live over the internet. Simply visit [www.mt-calvarylutheran.org](http://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org) and click "Live Radio Broadcast" from the home page on Sunday mornings.

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: [www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/](http://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/)

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## God Has Given Us A Mission

Article written by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, the chief pastor of our denomination

November 5, 2021

Remember the Beatles? John, Paul, George, Ringo! I was into it. I had Beatle boots, love beads and granny glasses. My big brother gave me a model of Paul (the cute Beatle) for Christmas one year. It was one of those paint-it-yourself kits. I knew the lyrics to the Beatles' hits better than I knew Martin Luther's Small Catechism. The early hits were pop and upbeat: "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "A Hard Day's Night." Even later "Yellow Submarine" was still whimsical.

But then the Beatles got older, and the world changed. Vietnam, the Kennedy and King assassinations, the urban riots, the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention. Innocence—for those of us who had that luxury—was gone. Skepticism, even cynicism, was the lens through which the world was seen. A lot was broken, including trust in institutions and the church.

In 1971, John Lennon's hit "Imagine" came out. It was evocative and, I'm sure, was meant to point us to the possibility of a better future. I found it disturbing. A world without religion. No heaven. No hell. No countries. No possessions. As if excising these things would cure humanity and the world would be as one.

There was and is enough brokenness in the world to go 'round. But the brokenness is not outside of us—in institutions, politics, religion—it is within us. The only way to construct utopia is to get rid of people. Imagine.

Except God has a different way. It is the way of Jesus. It is the way of love. It is the way of life. You see, God so loves the world and all of creation and all of us. God is right down with us in all of our messiness. In Jesus, God has reconciled the world to God's self, redeeming it and us in spite of our rebellion. We can stake our lives on the relentless, faithful, powerful, tender love of God.

**God has a different way. It is the way of love. It is the way of life.**

During the pandemic we dreamed great things and imagined an ELCA that could envision a world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ makes for all people and creation. We prayed and still pray that the Spirit will activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. And we set a goal—engage a million new, young and diverse people by the end of this decade. Why? Because the world deserves to hear the gospel. The world needs to look beyond itself. There is a heaven.

Clearly this is not the work of the churchwide organization alone, nor of any one congregation. It is a mission for all of us. There are so many people who do not know that they need to know Jesus. There are so many people who think that God's grace is too good to be true. There are so many people searching for meaning. All are beloved by God. God longs to draw all people to Godself, to clean us up and wash our faces so that God's image shines clearly from all of us, so that we can see God's image shining from each other.

New, young and diverse? What about those of us who are already here, have always been here, who have been doing the work and paying the bills? We are the 99 sheep that didn't go astray. We are the older brother who stayed home and worked hard. Of course we are!

We have lived in the love of Jesus and walked in Jesus' way. We know the freedom of the Christian. We don't live in an unforgiving world, but in a redeemed world with a future. Why wouldn't we want to share that with as many people as we can?

Even a million new, young and diverse people—why stop there? The flock was not whole until the one lost was found. The older brother did not realize that all his father had was already his as a gift. This is true for us. God has given this mission to invite more people into the way of Jesus. Imagine.

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**Adult Sunday School**

Adult Sunday School is ongoing! We were happy to see some new faces and hope that even more join us! We meet in the conference room/library each Sunday after worship.

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**Upcoming Meetings**

Evangelism Committee: December 9th at 6:30 p.m.

Property Committee: December 9th at 6:30 p.m.

Social Ministry Committee: December 9th at 6:30 p.m.

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## Help Wanted

The Property Committee is looking to recruit a number of small job volunteers. Tasks might include replacing light bulbs, changing hardware on a commode, getting a lawnmower or snowblower ready for use, etc. The Committee believes we have a lot of talent in the congregation and wants to make greater use of it. Every small job handled by a member equals one less call that needs to be made to a vendor who may have a minimum visit charge or an hourly rate of \$50 or more.

Interested parties should contact Mark Rychak or one of the pastors. A message could also be left with the church office at 814-266-4859. Thank you!

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### Scheduled Worship Help

#### Saturday, November 20:

**Greeters/Ushers:** Dick & Anita Brodt - **Communion Assistants:** Noelle Berkey & Deb Rychak

#### Sunday, November 21:

**Greeters/Ushers:** Volunteers needed! - **Communion Assistants:** Cindy Solarczyk

#### Saturday, November 27:

**Greeters/Ushers:** Todd Moss & Deb Rychak - **Communion Assistants:** Cindy Buday & Debbie Ferrin

#### Sunday, November 28:

**Greeters/Ushers:** Volunteers needed! - **Communion Assistants:** Ray Leverknight

There are sign up sheets in the Narthex for Greeters/Ushers and Communion Assistants. Please sign up for the dates that would suit you best. We appreciate you volunteering. If you have questions about these roles, please contact Christine Koshute at [814-421-4921](tel:814-421-4921) or Chris Oleksa at [814-244-9851](tel:814-244-9851).

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## Youth News

**Sunday School has begun for Pre-K through 8th grade:** "Mount Calvary Kid's Crew" is our program for Pre-K and up that gathers at 8:30am in Sander Hall with Pastor Jonathan. Students focus on a bible story and have an activity or craft before rejoining their parents during the worship service.

**Childcare is now available during Sunday morning worship:** Hannah Salamon is a Richland Learning Center staff member who will be joining us each Sunday along with Pastor Jonathan and other volunteers to provide childcare for infants through age 5. For the time being, drop-off for this service will take place in Sander Hall. Speak with Pastor Jonathan for more information.

**Parent's Night Out – December 17th:** Need to finish your Christmas shopping? Or maybe you're ahead of the game and just need a bit of time to wrap gifts! OR, maybe you just need a night away from the kids. Friday, December 17th, Mount Calvary will be holding a "parent's night out." Drop your preschool, elementary, and middle-school-aged kids off at the church beginning at 5:30 p.m., adult chaperones and senior high youth will take care of the rest! We'll treat them to pizza, a movie, and snacks while you take care of whatever needs done. Contact Pastor Jonathan to sign up!

**Christmas Pageant – December 19th:** Mount Calvary's Youth Christmas Pageant will take place Sunday, December 19th during the regular 8:45 a.m. worship service. Preschool and elementary-aged youth will learn their parts the preceding two weeks (December 5th & 12th) during the Mount Calvary Kid's Crew Sunday School time. If you would like your child to participate, please make sure to bring them to Sander Hall by 8:30 a.m. on the 5th, 12th, & 19th!

**Pastor Jonathan LOVES to get out and see our Mount Calvary youth in action doing the things they enjoy!** Be sure to share your schedules for sports, concerts, recitals, etc. You never know where he might show up!

Pastor Jonathan's office hours at Mount Calvary are Mondays & Wednesdays, 10am-3pm. He is available outside of those hours via email ([RevJonoAdams@gmail.com](mailto:RevJonoAdams@gmail.com)), cellphone (412-817-6704), or Facebook.

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### **WELCA Hymn Sing & Pie Social**

WELCA will be hosting a hymn sing and pie social on Wednesday, November 24th at 6:30 p.m.

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### **Giving Tree**

The November collection will be donated to the Nardecchia Spay and Neuter Fund.

The December donations will be given to The Helping Hands Mission in Portage.

Thank you for your continued support!

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### **Family Kitchen**

Mt. Calvary will be volunteering at the Family Kitchen on Sunday, December 5th from 11-1. It will be take-out only, so the responsibilities only include packaging food, distributing the food out the door, and assisting with cleaning the dishes. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

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### **Salvation Army Red Kettle Collection**

Mt. Calvary will be assisting The Salvation Army with their Red Kettle Collection again this year. We are scheduled to be at Market Basket on Saturday, December 11th from 10-6. If you would like to sign up for an hour block of time, a sign-up sheet will be in the narthex. Thank you!

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### **Backyard Ministries' Socks and Toy Collection**

We will be collecting socks and toys again this Christmas for the children of Coopersdale. There are more bags than we had for the hat and glove collection because one of their providers was not able to assist this year. Mt. Calvary, along with another congregation, offered to take the extra bags. Please take a labeled bag or bags in the narthex and return it filled with a pack of socks and a \$1 toy to the bin before December 22nd. All items will be picked up on Thursday, December 23rd.

Thank you for your continued support!

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### **Christmas Poinsettias**

We are taking orders for Christmas Poinsettias. Each medium-sized plant is \$17.00. Envelopes will be available in the church or call Terrie at the church office at 814-266-4859. Orders must be in by the week of December 6th. Please call Terrie if you have any questions.

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### **Clothing Sale**

Our annual clothing sale collected \$450 which will be donated to the family who lost two children in a house fire in Moxham last month. The remaining clothes were donated to the following places: Johnstown Elementary School, St. Vincent De Paul, Free Store 15901, and The St. Francis Sharing and Caring Thrift Shop. Thank you for all of your generosity to make this event a success each year!

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### **ELCA Good Gifts**

ELCA Good Gifts is a great opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs of the ELCA in nearly 80 countries around the world.

#### **How it works:**

- Choose a gift (food, medical care costs, school supplies, etc.)
- Receive a card to share the news of your gift
- Make a difference in someone's life!

Visit [goodgifts.elca.org](http://goodgifts.elca.org) for more information on how to donate!

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### **2021 Operation Christmas Child Project**

Belmont United Methodist Church will operate as a Collection Center for the 2021 Operation Christmas Child project. Drop off completed boxes at Belmont United Methodist located at 107 Coldren Street in Johnstown. The drop-off schedule is as follows:

Saturday, November 20th 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Sunday, November 21st 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Monday, November 22nd 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

If you have any questions, please contact Mel Hofecker at 814-266-1660 or by email at [Mevnbel@aol.com](mailto:Mevnbel@aol.com). You may also call the Belmont United Methodist Church at 814-266-3964.

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### **Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: November 21 – November 27, 2021**

**Nov. 21** - Alex Hockensmith, Joyce Kunkle, Noah Shew, & Ida Williams

**Nov. 23** - Linda McMullen

**Nov. 24** - Marley Stroz

**Nov. 25** - Joshua Noble

**Nov. 26** - Brendan Gorham

**Nov. 27** - Brittany Hiltz, Jonathan Perry, Gerald Pozun, & Deborah Roth

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

Joe Miller & Family, Jennifer & Ryan, Linda & Dick, Dolly & Chiz Palm, Claudia Plows, Maddie Pierce, Gladys Haupt, Joe & Judith Lopez, Maria, Dave, Tom, Lt. Hunter Bergman, and Lt. Dylan Merchant, Harold, Rick, Midge, Shirley, Jennifer, Debbie, Jill McEntee, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Barb, Jamie, Sara Solarczyk, Jackie Janak, Jack, Corinne, Joan, Dan, Natalie Zerby, Pastor Scott Custead, Stephanie Kriss, Luella Koontz, Al Lindner and Family, Bob, Dawn, Stacy & Josh, Florence Barker, Bob Trotter, Jean

Pellon, Bill Layton, Deb Zilch, Bennett, Cassy Sojak, Paul Swartz, Paul Miller, Keith Mayket, Ruth, and Pete.

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### **Financial Update**

Through the end of September, Mount Calvary remains in the black for the year. Income is within 2% of what was expected at the beginning of the year. An indication of the continuing impact of the pandemic, the entire shortfall can be attributed to lower-than-expected proceeds from building use. Thanks to the membership of Mount Calvary for keeping up with prior levels of generosity and/or increasing generosity when possible.

On the expense side, we are running under budget by about 4% at this time. Many thanks are due to the Stewardship and Administration Committee for pulling together such an accurate budget and to all the congregational leaders who strived to be both faithful and frugal!

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### **Condensed Worship for Sunday, November 14, 2021**

#### **Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, your sovereign purpose brings salvation to birth. Give us faith to be steadfast amid the tumults of this world, trusting that your kingdom comes and your will is done through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

#### **First Reading: 1 Samuel 1:4-20**

<sup>4</sup>On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; <sup>5</sup>but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb. <sup>6</sup>Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. <sup>7</sup>So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. <sup>8</sup>Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?"

<sup>9</sup>After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. <sup>10</sup>She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup>She made this vow: "O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head."

<sup>12</sup>As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup>Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. <sup>14</sup>So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." <sup>15</sup>But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord. <sup>16</sup>Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." <sup>17</sup>Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." <sup>18</sup>And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

<sup>19</sup>They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. <sup>20</sup>In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the Lord."

### **Psalm: 1 Samuel 2:1-10**

<sup>1</sup>My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in my God.

My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory.

<sup>2</sup>There is no Holy One like the Lord, no one besides you;  
there is no Rock like our God.

<sup>3</sup>Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth;  
for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by the Lord actions are weighed.

<sup>4</sup>The bows of the mighty are broken,  
but the feeble gird on strength.

<sup>5</sup>Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil.  
The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.

<sup>6</sup>The Lord kills and brings to life;  
the Lord brings down to Sheol and raises up.

<sup>7</sup>The Lord makes poor and makes rich;  
brings low, and also exalts.

<sup>8</sup>The Lord raises up the poor from the dust; lifting the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit  
with princes and inherit a seat of honor.

For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them God has set the world.

<sup>9</sup>You, Lord, will guard the feet of your faithful ones,  
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail.

<sup>10</sup>The Lord's adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven.

O Lord, you will judge the ends of the earth; you will give strength to your king, and exalt the  
power of your anointed.

### **Second Reading: Hebrews 10:11-25**

<sup>11</sup>Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," <sup>13</sup>and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." <sup>14</sup>For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

<sup>15</sup>And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,

<sup>16</sup>"This is the covenant that I will make with them  
after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws in their hearts,  
and I will write them on their minds,"

<sup>17</sup>he also adds,

"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

<sup>18</sup>Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), <sup>21</sup>and

since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

### **Gospel: Mark 13:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>As [Jesus] came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” <sup>2</sup>Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”

<sup>3</sup>When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup>“Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” <sup>5</sup>Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. <sup>6</sup>Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. <sup>7</sup>When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.”

### **Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke**

We hopefully all know this already, but our appointed readings remind us that worship is important—even essential. In our reading from 1st Samuel, it’s after she visits a place of worship, prays, and interacts with a priest that the tide turns for Hannah. In our reading from Hebrews, we are exhorted to meet regularly, which is just another way of saying we should gather together for worship regularly. And in our gospel lesson, readers of Mark’s gospel know by this point that the Temple in Jerusalem is bound for destruction because it has all too often failed to be the place of worship God intended. Quite clearly, all of our appointed readings tell us that worship is important—even essential. But why?

The traditional Lutheran answer has been that it’s in worship where the Holy Spirit customarily gifts us with faith. When we gather together and around God’s word and God’s sacraments, we have long held that the Holy Spirit is reliably and relentlessly present; creating, growing, and grooming faith in our lives. And this is important, essential, I dare say, because it’s faith that lays claim to the benefits of Jesus’ Easter victory—the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. But as the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith blesses us with the credentials required to pass through the pearly gates, the same gift recalibrates how we go about our business in the here and now as well.

To have faith now is to trust that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; that his way is the best way. When we’re people of faith thanks to the Holy Spirit, we spend our here and now days marching off towards Zion in word and deed; the promised city or civilization where everything will one day be done Jesus’ way forever and ever. But we aren’t there yet and it can be hard to stay in formation as we

do our best to march to Zion in word and deed. I would suggest to you our reading from Hebrews was written to address this difficulty.

For me, what precedes and follows the exhortation to meet or worship regularly gives this away. Just prior to this exhortation, we're called to provoke one another to love and good deeds. Worship is one of the places where this provoking is to take place. Then immediately after the worship exhortation I've referenced several times now, we're told that we also ought to encourage one another as the Day of the Lord approaches. It sounds like our letter writer knows that we can fall out of step or rhythm as we're marching to Zion. It sounds like the writer knows that when we fall out of step or rhythm it will often take the encouragement we give and receive in worship to get us back into the formation marching off to Zion in word and deed. Evidently, marching to Zion with anything resembling consistency is going to require pluck and persistence and worship most definitely has a role to play in making us resolute in our faith commitments.

To demonstrate some of the challenges faith can encounter on the way to Zion, I'd now like to make the first of several references to a song entitled "For a Dancer." Jackson Browne is its writer and performer. His composition begins like this: Keep a fire burning in your eyes. Pay attention to the open sky. You never know what will be coming down. I don't remember losing track of you. You were always dancing in and out of view. I must have thought you'd always be around; always keeping things real by playing the clown. Now you're nowhere to be found.

What you hear there? I hear the pain of opportunity missed or lost. I hear someone lamenting the state of a relationship. What else can you do with the words, "I must have thought you'd always be around, but now you're nowhere to be found?" It's all so human. It's all so current. I can't tell you the number of times I've seen lives of faith brought to naught by an undesired change in a relationship. Sometimes, we can come to associate church with the people who were once there with us so much that we stop coming when they aren't around anymore. This is to forget that people come and go, but the Holy Spirit is always present. Sometimes we can enjoy the people in one of life's scenes or acts so much, that when they're no longer a part of our lives we forget that life is an unfolding drama in which God still has more people, more scenes and acts, to introduce. It's why we need to keep meeting; need to keep provoking one another to love and good deeds; need to gather for worship to encourage one another as the day of the Lord approaches.

In his song, Jackson Browne can be heard to liken what we do in worship to learning how to dance on our own in a variety of circumstances. Come what may at church or in our personal lives, we've got to keep dancing so that we know how to do it on our own when circumstances in our lives shift. Or as Jackson Browne himself puts it, "No matter what fate chooses to play. (There's nothing you can do about it anyway.) Just do the steps that you've been shown by everyone you've ever known until the dance becomes your very own; no matter how close to yours another's steps have grown. In the end, there is one dance you'll do alone."

Wise words! Unfortunately, we're not always in a place to hear them. We humans can live for today to the point where we utterly ignore tomorrow; the day when we or our children will have to know how to dance on a different floor or with a different partner. In his Parable of the Sower, Jesus calls this being undone by the cares of the world. Here is another reason why it is important for us to meet regularly. When we worship with one another regularly, our mutual encouragement, our

provoking of love and good deeds, our time with God's word and God's sacraments, can cut off the cares of the world before they drag us too far off the path to Zion. But even if we do somehow keep the cares of the world in proper perspective, life's big questions can also throw us out of step or off rhythm.

Death has a way of bringing these questions to the surface. In his song, Jackson Browne comes right out with this and says, "I don't know what happens when people die. I can't seem to grasp it as hard as I try. It's like a song I can hear playing right in my ear that I can't sing." Maybe death affects you in this way too. If not, there's also the big question of why it's taking us so long to get to Zion. Two thousand years after Easter, there's still suffering all around. Why? These are some of the big questions I don't understand and can't grasp as hard as I try. But then again, faith wouldn't be as necessary as Scripture repeatedly says it is if we were to have all the answers on this side of Zion. Faith itself presumes the existence of big questions which we can't seem to wrestle to the ground. We learn to live with these big questions, we're renewed in our faith by the Holy Spirit, when we keep meeting; keep gathering around the word and sacraments of God; keep dancing if that activity can indeed be compared to what we do in worship.

And what shall the end result of all this meeting, all this worshipping, all this dancing be? You can call it faith. You can call it pluck and persistence. Or you can turn to the more extended description that ends Jackson Browne's song. It's what I'm going to do. To close his song out, Jackson Browne writes, "Keep a fire for the human race. Let your prayers go drifting into space. You never know what will be coming down. Perhaps a better world is drawing near. Just as easily, it could all disappear along with whatever meaning you might have found. Don't let the uncertainty turn you around. (The world keeps turning around and around.) Go, and make a joyful sound. Into a dancer you have grown." Amen!

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Eternal God, you hold firm amid the changes of this world. Hear us now as we pray for the church, the world, and everyone in need.

God our creator, you show us the path of life. Bless faithful people everywhere with humility as they extend compassion to those who have experienced harm in religious spaces. Cultivate healthy congregations that tell of and enact your reconciling love. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God our constant, you love our universe from beginning to end. As the seasons change, protect animals that migrate and hibernate. Bring them safely to a sheltered place and a more abundant season. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God our ruler, you write your law on human minds and hearts. Give wisdom to all elected leaders and officials to govern with insight and compassion. Make them mindful of the well-being of all people so that your world will flourish. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God our stronghold, you are present amid disaster. We pray for those affected by natural disasters (recent natural disasters may be named). Come to the aid of all survivors of earthquakes, famines, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires, and the first responders who support them. Calm their fear, supply their need, and be the solid ground beneath their feet. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God our guide, you are greater than we can imagine. Surround congregations with your expansive inclusion. Be present in the midst of disagreements, differences, and questions. Unite people of diverse viewpoints in the love of Christ. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God our beginning and our end, your beloved people shine like the brightness of the sky. We thank you for the lives of all who rest in your eternal mercy, from famous saints to the people we have loved (especially). Assure us of your resurrection promise. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

God our hope and strength, we entrust to you all for whom we pray. Remain with us always, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

### **Blessing**

May Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path. Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**