



# Mount Calvary Connected

December 30, 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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## A Message from our Presiding Bishop, Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton "Christmas 2021"

This is our second pandemic Christmas. We thought this would be over so long ago. And still, we wear masks; we're physically distant; we can't be with friends and family as we used to do. And also, there's so much that's broken in this world, so much that tells us, "Why have hope? Just give up."

But we have a hope that's stronger than any of this, stronger even than death. The hope of God comes in the form of a tiny baby, a helpless child; nevertheless, who grew to a man and in his fragile strength was willing to die on the cross and was raised again.

I don't know what next Christmas will bring. I don't know what New Year's will bring. But I do know we have hope.

St. Paul put it this way: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Merry Christmas, dear church.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### **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: Thursday, January 6th at 6:30 p.m.

Social Ministry Committee: Thursday, January 13th at 6:30 p.m.

WELCA: Monday, January 17th at 6:00 p.m.

Council: Tuesday, January 18th at 6:30 p.m.

Property Committee: Tuesday, February 1st at 6:30 p.m.

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### **2022 Offering Envelopes**

Offering envelopes for 2022 are now available in the narthex. Thank you in advance for what will hopefully be a generous December. December is traditionally our highest offering month.

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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, January 1:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Mark & Debbie Rychak  
**Communion Assistants:** Volunteers needed!

#### **Sunday, January 2:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Volunteers needed!  
**Communion Assistants:** Volunteers needed!

#### **Saturday, January 8:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Mark & Debbie Rychak  
**Communion Assistants:** Volunteers needed!

#### **Sunday, January 9:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Volunteers needed!  
**Communion Assistants:** Volunteers needed!

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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**Sunday School is ongoing 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.

**Snow Camp 2022:** Snow camp is BACK at Sequanota! Plans are in the works for the annual "snow camp" to return to Camp Sequanota on February 25th & 26th. This is an overnight event for youth in 6th through 12th grade. Registration opens January 15th, and we'd love to have a group. Contact Pastor Jonathan for details!

**Junior/Senior High Lock-In:** We're beginning to plan an overnight "lock-in" sleepover event for junior and senior high youth in January or February of 2022. If you have students in this age group, watch for information from Pastor Jonathan as we try to identify the best possible weekend for this event!

**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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### **Painting Party Hosted by the Property Committee**

On Monday, January 10th at 8:00 a.m., come help us paint the main hallway of the church. The church will provide the paint. Please bring your own brush or two.

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### **Giving Tree**

The December donations will be given to The Helping Hands Mission in Portage.  
Thank you for your continued support!

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### **Poinsettias and World Hunger Gifts 2021**

Given in Honor of:

Children and Grandchildren, by Stan and Debbie McQuaide

Parents and Grandparents, by Jamie and Katie McMullen

Chris, Tiffany, Zachary, Meghan, Lily, and Eli Swartz, by Paul and Gayle Swartz

Keith, Wendy, Nathaniel, and Olivia Mayket, by Paul and Gayle Swartz  
Petkosh Families, by Rodger and Debbie Thomas  
Thomas Families, by Rodger and Debbie Thomas

Given in Memory of:

David J. Brehm, Jr., by David J. Brehm III and Family  
Tammy (Michaels) Conaghan, by loving mother Claudia Plows  
Patricia Custer, by Custer Family  
Jenneal (Horner) Crawley, by Cindy and Albert Buday  
Oscar and Eva Eschrich, by William Eschrich  
Paul, Betty, and David Gindlesperger, by Joyce Gindlesperger  
Joseph Grosholz, Sr., by loving fiancée Claudia Plows  
Ray and Dorothy Hite, by Joyce, Jason, Suzanne, and Sophia Hite  
Luther and Kathleen Horner, by Cindy and Albert Buday  
Otto and Mary Kendzora, by Joyce, Jason, Suzanne, and Sophia Hite  
Beverly Ann Kocis, by loving husband Joe Kocis  
Paul and Ann Kormanik, by Jeff and Phyllis Nider and Family  
Joseph and Mildred Kocis, by Joe Kocis  
Charles and Louise Ling, by Joe Kocis  
Zak Lonsinger, by Stan and Debbie McQuaide  
Zakary Lonsinger, by Mark, Shari, Kelsie, and Jared McQuaide  
Loved Ones, by Susan and Rachel Brandau  
Loved Ones, by Paul and Gayle Swartz  
Dorothy McQuaide, by Lee McQuaide  
Linda McQuaide, by Bill, Cara, Kyle, and Jordan Lonsinger  
Linda McQuaide, by Mark, Shari, Kelsie, and Jared McQuaide  
Linda McQuaide, by Stan and Debbie McQuaide  
Tim and Beaver McQuaide, by Lee McQuaide  
Zakary McQuaide Lonsinger, by Bill, Cara, Kyle, and Jordan Lonsinger  
Dale Middleton, by Stan and Debbie McQuaide  
Mike and Pauline Nider, by Jeff and Phyllis Nider and Family  
Catherine Oleksa, by Kevin and Chris Oleksa  
Benny and Phyllis Petrarca, by Joyce, Jason, Suzanne, and Sophia Hite  
Jim and Dorothy Pozun, by the Solarczyk and George Families  
Albert Sojak, by Kevin and Chris Oleksa  
Bob and Clara Solarczyk, by the Solarczyk and George Families  
Glenn and LaVerne Trent Way, by Joyce and Brittany Spangler  
Dan Warman, by Susan and Rachel Brandau

Given to the Glory of God:  
Becky Lilja

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### **Tornado Relief**

On the night of Dec. 10th and early morning of Dec. 11th, an outbreak of at least 30 tornadoes swept through six states. So far, 90 people are reported dead across five states, more than 80 of those in Kentucky, and even more are unaccounted for. Homes and businesses were destroyed and over 24,000 people remain without electricity.

Lutheran Disaster Response is collaborating with the Indiana-Kentucky Synod to assess the damage and develop a long-term response plan. Given the extent of the damage, recovery will take years as thousands of homes will need to be rebuilt or repaired.

If you would like to donate to help the survivors, please make a check payable to Mount Calvary and mark in the memo line "U.S. Tornadoes". Because the overhead expenses of Lutheran Disaster Response are covered by ELCA mission support, 100% of donations will be used to assist those affected by the tornadoes.

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### **Committee News**

The Nominating Committee appointed by council in August has completed its nominating ballot for council. The committee's nominees are Kevin Oleksa (1st three-year term), Mark Rychak, (2nd three-year term), Judi Stinebiser (1st three-year term after completing remainder of somebody else's term), and Jack Weisbrodt, (1st three-year term after completing remainder of somebody else's term).

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### **Annual Report**

In anticipation of our annual meeting on February 5th, Erin Powell will be compiling and editing this year's annual report. If you are a council officer, committee chair, or ministry leader, please email your written report to Erin no later than Friday, January 14th. Erin's email address is [epowell@mt-calvarylutheran.org](mailto:epowell@mt-calvarylutheran.org).

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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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## Updates from Our Members & Community

Dear Pastor Scott and members of Mt. Calvary,

My family and I extend our deepest thanks for all the support, encouragement and prayers during my recent heart attack. Without your support our holidays would have been much harder. We are so grateful.

Thank you!

David Brehm III and family

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Pastor Scott and my Brothers and Sisters in Christ at Mt. Calvary;

Thank you all for the prayers, texts, calls, support and encouragement during this difficult time for our family with my son DJ's recent heart attack. He has to be off work at least another 6 - 8 weeks so I ask you continue to keep him and his family in your prayers. And I am so grateful to all of you.

Thank you and God Bless,

Claudia Plows

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### Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: January 2 – January 8, 2022

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

**Jan. 3** - Wendi Culp, Jeffrey McKool, & Matthew Sarlouis

**Jan. 4** - Timothy Hinkledire & Jacob Shaffer

**Jan. 5** - Susan Kimmell, Pastor Scott Klimke, Donald Sauter, & Dolores Schneider

**Jan. 6** - Alexander Mattern

**Jan. 7** - David Brehm, IV

**Jan. 8** - Lindsey Pullin, David Raho, Kevin Rizzo, & Ruth Wagner

**Jan. 6** - Gale & Sally Schofield

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

Jennifer & Ryan, Linda & Dick, Dolly & Chiz Palm, Claudia Plows, Maddie Pierce, Gladys Haupt, Maria, Bill & Linda, Jose & Family, Dave, Tom, Lt. Hunter Bergman, and Lt. Dylan Merchant, Harold, Rick, Midge, Shirley, Jennifer, Debbie, Jill McEntee, David, Lauren, Billy, Barb, Sara Solarczyk, Jackie Janak, Jack, Corinne, Joan, Dan, Natalie Zerby, Pastor Scott Custead, Luella Koontz, Al Lindner and Family, Bob, Dawn, Stacy & Josh, Florence Barker, Bob Trotter, Jean Pellon, Bill Layton, Deb Zilch, Bennett, Cassy Sojak, Paul Miller, Keith Mayket, Ruth, Pete, Annabelle, the Teplitza Family, Ethel Warshel, Melanie, Ken, John Nerone, Dane Wisner, Jeff, Don, Bill, Linda, Landon, Dorothy, Irene, Karen, Susan Dyers, Bob McMullen, Dwayne Dietrich, Wyatt George, Larry Hockensmith, the Family of Paul Swartz, and Jean Pellon.

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### Financial Update

Mount Calvary continues to do well financially. After nearly two years of a worldwide pandemic, we have been incredibly fortunate. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! What remains for 2021 is to finish with a strong December which has traditionally been our strongest month of the year. As for 2022, maintaining current levels of support and increasing support where and when it's possible will continue to be important. Though we still have many, many blessings to count, we are not as well-endowed as

other congregations and the age and population decline of our community continue to present ongoing stewardship challenges. But thanks to you, we've overcome all of this thus far. Thank you!  
Thank you! Thank you!

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### Condensed Worship for Friday, December 24, 2021 (Christmas Eve)

#### Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. <sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. <sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup>For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

#### Psalm 96

P: Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

**A: Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD; proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**

P: Declare God's glory among the nations and God's wonders among all peoples.

**A: For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised, more to be feared than all gods.**

P: As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.

**A: Majesty and magnificence are in your presence; power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**

P: Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD honor and power.

**A: Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name; bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.**

P: Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

**A: Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is king! The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity."**

P: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

**A: Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD, for you come to judge the earth.**

P: You will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with your truth.

**Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14**

11The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, 12training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, 13while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. 14He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

**Gospel: Luke: 2:1-20**

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” <sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke**

Whenever we gather together for worship, there are connections which can be made. Hymn lyrics actively seek to connect with lives of faith and the language of Scripture. New faces give us the opportunity to connect with unknown siblings in Christ, as the sounds and sights of the assembly may also open up connections with prior celebrations here or elsewhere. Mention of God the Father, God

the Son, and God the Spirit may connect us to the blessed reality that we have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity; forever made sons and daughters of God. The list of connections which can be made is quite vast and the scriptures we hear are no exception. They court connections which can help to pull together the Bible for us.

By way of example, up until this year, I don't remember noticing that our readings from Isaiah and Titus are connected through their use of the word "zeal." In our reading from Isaiah, God's zeal, God's passion, God's burning, heartfelt commitment to peace gives rise to the Prince of Peace. Then, in our reading from Titus, our zeal, our passion, our burning, heartfelt commitment produces scores of good deeds. God is zealous. We're zealous. There's a connection here which suggests a zealous God and a zealous people are in on something together; motivated by a mutual concern; connected by a shared endeavor.

The baby born in tonight's reading from Luke suggests the same. I mean: All babies are extraordinary and miraculous, but Jesus is extra-extraordinary and mucho-miraculous. "Conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary," Jesus is son of God and son of man. He's one hundred percent human and one hundred percent God as the Church has long confessed. Through his unique combination of humanity and divinity, Jesus himself suggests what our readings from Isaiah and Titus have already suggested. God and humankind are in on something together; motivated by a mutual concern; connected by a shared endeavor. The question becomes: What's the nature of this connection between God and humankind?

A good place to start as we seek an answer is with our first reading's contention that God has multiplied the nation in the birth of the Prince of Peace. This talk of multiplication connects with what's said in the very first chapter of the Bible; a chapter which surely says something about what is to connect God and humankind throughout all which is to follow. What we learn first as the Bible gets going is that God is a relational, people person who wants us around. And so, God creates us and begins what is to be a mutual adventure with us. And it's here where we get the language of multiplication that connects back to our reading from Isaiah.

As God and us set off on our mutual adventure, we're told our role is to multiply what God has begun. God's given us a very good beginning, but we can make more of it, as we also make it better. We're to multiply, to expand, to enhance and refine what God has begun. Think of it this way. Until recently, every new American generation earned more than the prior one. This is how it's supposed to go. Working with God and one another, the years are to multiply to our benefit and the benefit of the world God loves. There's to be perpetual improvement until no further improvements can be made. But you know what they say about the best laid plans. Sometimes they can go awry. It's why our reading from Isaiah speaks not of us multiplying the nation, but of God multiplying the nation through the birth of the Prince of Peace.

Evidently, we can get stuck in our efforts to multiply God's very good beginning. Sometimes, things reach the point where God has to step in and do the multiplying for us. Know anything about getting stuck? I do. It took me twenty years to quit smoking and for thirteen years now I've been battling to shed the considerable weight I gained after putting down the cigarettes. I know the extra weight threatens to cut short the number of contributions I can make to improving upon God's very good beginning, but the discipline and will power to limit my daily calories has thus far evaded me. Case in

point: Earlier this week Julia and I agreed there would be no O'Shea's chocolates for us this year, but on Thursday I came home with a box of those chocolates weighing several pounds. I'm stuck and so are many others.

Their issue may not be weight loss, but there's no shortage of issues which can take its place. In fact, there are so many things which can gum us up and leave us stuck, that the shared endeavor which now connects God and us is to get unstuck. Some days, many days, this is simply going to mean getting back to something more like God's very good beginning. Ultimately, it's going to mean multiplying God's very good beginning to the point where one day death shall be no more and the only tears we'll ever cry will be tears of joy. And as Christmas announces every year, God is going to do God's part. God's going to do God's part.

We've already talked this evening about how Isaiah speaks of God stepping in and doing the multiplying for us when we couldn't do it ourselves. Our reading from Titus says much the same when it announces that in the person of Jesus Christ God has redeemed us from iniquity; which is just a ten-dollar word for all the times we gum things up and get stuck. This is Christmas. The Christ child, the one conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, is the guarantee, the eternal pledge and promise, that God's not going to vacate the project we're in on together.

If God has to leave the glories of heaven to be born in a barn, God's going to do it. If God has to abandon the comforts of heaven to live the life of a first century, Middle Eastern peasant, God's going to do it. If God has to come down from heaven to fight by our side, God's going to do it. In the Christ child, we are assured that God's not going to vacate the mutual adventure which began so long ago when God brought us into existence and called us and our surroundings very good. God's going to stick with it until one day God can look at everything God has made and call it not just very good, but perfect. And let's be very clear about this. God's going to shoulder the heavier burden. God's going to remain the senior partner God has always been. But just because God's the senior partner doesn't mean we junior partners can hide in an office, coast to retirement, or call out sick every day. With Christmas demonstrating that God is more than prepared to keep up with the heavy lifting until no more lifting is required, the hope is that we'll now be more apt to do our part; more apt to become and remain a people zealous for good deeds.

And what are good deeds? They're not as big or consequential as God's deeds. But they still count. It's why our reading from Luke documents the deeds of the shepherds. After connecting with an angel of the Lord, the heavenly host, and the holy family, the shepherds make sure to connect what they have learned with other people. This is what good deeds do. They make positive and helpful connections. They reconnect that which has become disconnected. Good deeds connect our deeds with God's loving plan for all people. God deeds connect hearts and lives separated by distance, whether it be emotional distance, economic distance, cultural distance, technological distance, scientific distance, medical distance, or geographic distance. Good deeds do what all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't do. They put Humpty-Dumpty back together again. They put back into place some piece of the puzzle that we leave in the box or knock to the floor when we get stuck. And maybe this is why worship gives us so many connections which can be made. Maybe if we're used to making connections in worship, we'll be more apt to make connections when worship is done. For in the end, the zeal for good deeds our reading from Titus desires is the zeal to make positive and helpful connections with others whenever and wherever we can. And so, with Christmas again assuring us that God's going to

do God's much larger part, let's now do our part; however and wherever we can reconnecting the people, the places, and the planet we disconnect when we get stuck. Amen!

### **Prayers of Intercession**

P: Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

P: Love proclaims that a Savior has been born to us! Inspire your church throughout the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth to all who seek salvation, hope, and new life. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: Love whispers to a weary world that the time for rest and restoration has come. Maintain healthy cycles of wake and sleep for all creatures. Where light pollution disrupts natural rhythms, encourage new practices. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: Love cries to a warring world that the time for peace is at hand. Direct those in power who make decisions on behalf of others, that they nurture and sustain all that is healthy, good, and holy. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: Love sings through the wails of a newborn baby. Respond to all who cry out in pain, despair, or need this night (especially). Bring comfort to those for whom separation, grief, or loss makes the Christmas season especially difficult. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: Love murmurs words of comfort to a newborn child and exhausted parents. Bless new and expectant parents or caregivers, especially those who are alone or afraid this night. Pour out your love upon families of every kind. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: God's ever-present love is proclaimed through the faithful who came before us. We give you thanks for Mary, John the baptizer, Elizabeth his mother, Joseph the dreamer, and all who point toward your love. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**A: Amen.**

### **Blessing**

Grace from God's own heart, peace from the ✝ Child in the manger, and strength from the Spirit of life be blessings for you today and forever. **Amen.**