



# Mount Calvary Connected

March 3, 2022

*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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## "Again Asking and Finding Steadfast Love in the Gloom of War"

By the Rev. Amy E. Reumann, ELCA Senior Director for Witness in Society

"Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:17)

The prophet Joel doesn't hold back when sounding the alarm about the coming Day of the Lord in today's Ash Wednesday reading. It will be "a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come." Joel goes on to remind the faithful that despite the terror they see, God's true nature is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." He calls on the priests to assemble the people, to repent, and to testify to all who may ask, "Where is their God?" that God is still with them.

## BIBLICAL CRY IN PRESENT CRISIS

This year Joel's alert sounds above the horror of the Putin regime's invasion of Ukraine, a great and powerful army conducting an unprovoked attack against a neighboring state. The valiant resistance of Ukrainian leaders, the courage of civilians fighting back and resilience of so many inhabitants are inspiring. But they do not ease my deep dismay as Russian air strikes and ground fighting continue, and civilian casualties mount. Over three quarters of a million people (as of this writing), primarily women and children, have streamed across borders seeking safety. Many, many more are still to come in a growing humanitarian crisis.

Just like the grinding conflict and famine in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia or endless suffering in Syria and Yemen, the invasion of Ukraine and first days of war there can lead us to question: “Where is our God?” I ask it again when I hear about the plight of the Roma, a marginalized and undocumented people in Europe, facing bigotry as they try to flee. I ask again when reports of discrimination against non-Europeans trying to reach safety surface. I ask it again as I see Russian citizens bravely protesting the actions of their government for which they may expect harsh punishments. I ask it again as the questions about the potential for use of nuclear weapons in this war takes me back to childhood Cold War fears of annihilation.

#### WHERE HELPERS ARE

Fred Rogers, host of the long-running show “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” told the famous story of how his mother told him that in a tragedy he should “look for the helpers” to keep despair at bay. Today, the solidarity of so many around the world with Ukraine who step up to help reflects a glimmer of God’s steadfast love even in the gloom of war.

In our Lutheran family, I can glimpse God’s action and can testify that in the gloom and horror of war, God is here.

- ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has called the church prayer and communicated our concern to Lutheran churches in Ukraine and Russia
- ELCA staff have long and strong relationships with European partners preparing to receive people fleeing Ukraine. These relationships will guide our accompanying actions and support these churches as they address the trauma that comes with violence, dislocation and family separation.
- Lutheran Disaster Response has created an Eastern Europe Crisis Center for donations to support the long-term response. The ELCA is working through the Lutheran World Federation and the Action by Churches Together Alliance to bring humanitarian aid to Ukraine and at the borders.
- At the United Nations, ELCA staff are monitoring Security Council deliberation and the global humanitarian response.
- Through ELCA advocacy we are urging the Biden Administration to offer deportation relief to Ukrainians in the U.S. through a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation or a Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) order.

We don’t know when this military action will end. Much misery lies ahead and it may be unbearable. In addition to actions we take now as advocates and in relief work, Lutherans are called to confess the ways we have fallen short in our responsibility for peace, and dedicate ourselves anew to be students of peace and act for God’s shalom in our world. The ELCA social statement “For Peace in God’s World” teaches that peace is deeply rooted in God’s identity, that God suffers with and for our world of violence and the church is called to be a faithful presence, testifying to the God of peace in specific ways, as:

- a disturbing presence that denounces warful actions and advocates publicly and boldly for peace;
- a reconciling presence that creates bonds between people, imagines solutions to conflict and counters hate speech, especially among Christians;
- a serving presence that stands with the poor and vulnerable and compassionately meets human needs and stands for human rights; and
- a deliberating presence where we discuss and debate responses to human evil.

#### GUIDANCE OF GOD OF PEACE

As the war in Ukraine continues, the God of peace is here and calls us to maintain compassion and concern for all human suffering that results from conflict and war. The God of peace calls us to be active peacemakers who disturb, reconcile, serve and deliberate. The God of peace also calls us to hope, even when hope is shrouded by the pall of war, and to “give God no rest” until that day when the nations “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4).

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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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#### **Bible Basics Course**

Pastor Scott will be leading a Bible basics course for six weeks, starting on Wednesday, March 9th. Each week we'll gather at 6:30 p.m. and discuss how the most recent readings in worship can be connected to the larger themes of the Bible. Should there be an interest, we may continue this practice after Lent concludes. Bring a friend!

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#### **Upcoming Meetings**

Property Committee: Tuesday, March 8th at 6:00 p.m.

Bible for Beginners: Wednesday, March 9th at 6:30 p.m.

Stewardship and Administration Committee: Thursday, March 10th at 6:30 p.m.

Council: Tuesday, March 15th at 6:30 p.m.

Bible for Beginners: Wednesday, March 16th at 6:30 p.m.

Social Ministry: Thursday, March 17th at 6:30 p.m.

Craft Club: Saturday, March 19th at 9:00 a.m. RSVP by March 10th

WELCA: Monday, March 21st at 6:00 p.m.

Bible for Beginners: Wednesday, March 23rd at 6:30 p.m.

Bible for Beginners: Wednesday, March 30th at 6:30 p.m.

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### **Easter Flowers**

The Easter flower order envelopes are now available on the table in the Narthex.

Three choices for flowers: 5-bloom lilies, 6-bloom tulips, or 3-bloom hyacinths.

The deadline to place an order is March 28th.

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### **2022 Offering Envelopes**

Offering envelopes for 2022 are available in the narthex. Thank you in advance for your contribution!

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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.

Volunteers who can be available on short notice are needed to help with set-up, serving, and tear-down after funeral luncheons.

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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### **Annual Flea Market**

May 7, 2022

Items can be donated after April 1st.

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### **Scheduled Worship Help**

#### **Saturday, March 5:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Todd & Jill Moss

**Communion Assistants:** Missy Brodt & Noelle Berkey

#### **Sunday, March 6:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Volunteers needed!

**Communion Assistants:** Joan Hunter

#### **Saturday, March 12:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Dick & Anita Brodt

**Communion Assistants:** Debbie Ferrin & Pam Bittner

#### **Sunday, March 13:**

**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 or Chris Oleksa at 814-244-9851.

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# Youth News

**Easter Pageant - Palm Sunday:** Our Easter pageant for young people will be held on Palm Sunday, April 10th. Children, and parents who can help, are invited to participate in this meaningful event!

**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.

**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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 Looking for a fun way to be involved during church services? 

 Looking for a way to meet other church members with similar interests? 

 Looking for a way to be creative and use your long forgotten, hidden away secret talents?? 

 When you're sitting in the pew each week, do you wish you could do more than listen to the contemporary music, traditional hymns, or both? 

 Look and wish no more! Don't just sit there! Come join the Music Ministry as we revitalize and reorganize our singers, musicians, bell ringers, and more... 

 Don't think you're not good enough. Even if you're learning an instrument in school, or you haven't dusted off that flute, clarinet, violin, trumpet or guitar in quite awhile...join us. 

 We'd love to know if you like to sing, or play an instrument with others. Even If you can count a beat and read one or two notes at a time, you can join us in the bell choir! 

 Please reach out and let us know you'd like to join us. Text or call Joan Hunter at 814-955-2737 or [joan20457@gmail.com](mailto:joan20457@gmail.com), or Dan Gresh. Stop and talk to either of us after services by the organ/piano. We would love to talk to you about your musical interests. 

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## **Craft Club – Spring has sprung!**

Saturday, March 19th @ 9:00 a.m.

More info about what you'll need for the craft is available on the table in the narthex. Please RSVP by March 10th to [jslayton@atlanticbb.net](mailto:jslayton@atlanticbb.net).

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### **ELCA Good Gifts Collection**

During Lent this year, Mt. Calvary will be donating to the ELCA Good Gifts Program. Each week we will focus on a different area of need that can be used throughout the global community. The Giving Tree will also coincide with the weekly themes. The following is a schedule of the themes and what the donations could possibly be used for:

March 5-11: Healthcare: (Hygiene kit \$25, personal protective equipment \$25, food for orphans \$25/1 month, mosquito net \$10, clinic visit for a child \$10, vaccination for a child \$30, stock a health clinic for a week \$75)

March 12-18: Education: (Send a girl to school \$40, computer for a community center \$800, one month of internet connectivity \$100, school supplies \$10/child, \$300/classroom)

March 19-25: Water: (Water well \$2500, water filter \$30, irrigation project \$100, latrine \$150)

March 26-April 1: Agriculture: (Community vegetable garden \$200, fruit tree seedling \$10, fruit tree farm \$150, seeds and gardening tools \$50)

April 2-April 8: Biblical: (Bible \$12, motorbike for a pastor \$375, Sunday School start-up kit \$65)

Any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you for your continued support!

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### **Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: March 6 – March 12, 2022**

**March 6** - Malia Decker

**March 11** - Alexander Brehm & Samantha Nash

**March 12** - James & Mary Huerth (24 years)

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

Jennifer & Ryan, Linda & Dick, Dolly & Chiz Palm Family, Claudia Plows, Maddie Pierce, Gladys Haupt, Bill & Linda, Jose & Family, Dave, Tom, Lt. Hunter Bergman, and Lt. Dylan Merchant, Harold, Rick, Midge, Shirley, Debbie, 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, the Teplitz Family, Ethel Warshel, Melanie, Ken, John Nerone, Dane Wisner, Jeff, Don, Dorothy, Irene, Karen, Erin, Susan Dyers, Bob McMullen, Wyatt George, Larry Hockensmith, Jean Pellon, Mike, Corey, John Rychak, Pastor Jonathan & Family, Roxanee Horner, Lynn Palm and son, Alex, and Alex's wife, Becky Lilja, Kathy P., Al Johnson, Chris, Donna & Danny, Cheryl, Jennifer & Family, Jaime, Dorothy, Matt & Ashley, Landon, the Family of Attorney Gary Costlow, Max

Lawn, Linda Haberkorn, Lorraine, Joe, Donna, Danny & Family, Becky Jo, Bill, Linda & Family, Mary, Cheryl, Mary Jane, Janice, Dennis, Rick, Don, and the Chavis Family.

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### **Financial Update**

If you haven't picked them up yet, please remember an annual report and a 2021 giving statement are available for every household with voting members in it.

As for 2022, January featured the need for a new water heater (\$1,413,72). With such a large facility to maintain, we are always subject to these kinds of unanticipated and undesired expenses. Thankfully, giving to the current fund exceeded giving to the same fund a year earlier and most other expenses were in line with what had been planned. When special gifts and movement in our financial portfolio are excluded, this led to a breakeven January. Thank you! When we all do our part, maintaining prior patterns of giving and increasing where possible, things have a way of working out on paper and in actual fact.

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### **Condensed Worship for Sunday, February 27, 2022**

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

P: Holy God, mighty and immortal, you are beyond our knowing, yet we see your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Transform us into the likeness of your Son, who renewed our humanity so that we may share in his divinity, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### **First Reading: Exodus 34:29-35**

Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

#### **Psalm 99**

P: The Lord is king; let the people tremble. The Lord is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth shake.

**A: Lord, great in Zion, is high above all peoples.**

P: Let them confess God's name, which is great and awesome; God is the Holy One.

**A: O mighty king, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.**

P: Proclaim the greatness of the Lord and fall down before God's footstool; God is the Holy One.

**A: Moses and Aaron among your priests, and Samuel among those who call upon your name, O Lord, they called upon you, and you answered them,**

P: you spoke to them out of the pillar of cloud; they kept your testimonies and the decree that you gave them.

**A: O Lord our God, you answered them indeed; you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their evil deeds.**

P: Proclaim the greatness of the Lord and worship upon God's holy hill; for the Lord our God is the Holy One.

### **Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:12--4:2**

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

### **Gospel: Luke 9:28-43a**

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they

kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

**A: Praise to you, O Christ!**

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

As is fitting today, the season of Epiphany ends with another epiphany. With the season of Epiphany having already brought many other epiphanies to the fore, today Jesus is revealed as God in the flesh. This is what epiphanies do. They take the lid off things. They bring things out into the light of day. They lift veils of ignorance up and away to borrow some language from today's reading from 2nd Corinthians. And speaking of veils, there's a big one that God has yet to lift. The 25th chapter of Isaiah calls it the veil of death.

If you read the 25th chapter of Isaiah, the veil of death is a kind of cipher or metaphor for our fear of limitation. Once God lifts this veil, Isaiah says, we'll know that death isn't the immovable wall or hard and fast end we think it is. Freed from the fear of death, from the fear of limitation, we'll be free to share the plenty God shall always supply rather than bound to the fear that leads us to claim more and more for ourselves. Wouldn't it be nice if this epiphany had already taken place? Wouldn't it be nice if Vladimir Putin and other greedy, hawkish politicians had already learned that with God there are no limits; only the freedom to share more and more rather than the fear that leads us to take more and more? On both counts, it certainly would be nice. But we're not there yet. We still live in a dog-eat-dog world because the fear of death, the fear of irrelevance, the fear of limits and shortages veils the hearts and souls of too many people. But as we wait for the big epiphany promised by Isaiah chapter 25, there shall be other epiphanies and a good number of them will hopefully involve us.

To understand this, we need to realize that epiphanies don't always involve direct exposure to God. Rather than appearing or acting directly, God often uses intermediaries. The use of these intermediaries explains why we have a word like "divine" in our vocabulary. "To be divine" is to be "of God" or "related to God." This is us. We're "divine" because we've been adopted as children of God, of God, by way of the water and word of baptism and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. We're also divine because we're members of the Church which has been sent out by God to do things related to God like making disciples of all nations and loving one another like God first loved us in Christ. If you've been counting, this makes us divine on at least two counts and this is all well and good because I'm here to tell you that epiphanies may always begin with God, but often they travel through us and other dimensions of the divine. I wonder: Through your connection to God, did you know you're an epiphany waiting to happen? Did you know you're as divine as any other dimension of the divine?

If you didn't, our reading from Exodus is present today to enlarge your self-understanding. Moses has an encounter with God that leaves him markedly different. Moses is so different that the Israelites don't know what to do with him at first. This is what epiphanies do. Whether they involve God directly, as they did for Moses, or come through some other divine agent or intermediary, epiphanies change things up. Epiphanies rock worlds and turns things upside down. When you interact with God or the divine, you don't walk away the same. And when we gather for worship in places such as this one, we interact with the divine all the time.

Here in this place, God speaks to us through the divine word read, preached, sung, prayed, and confessed. Here in this place, God washes us clean through the word and water of baptism and the gift of faith that claims the benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection. Here in this place, God dines with us through the word, grain, and grape of holy communion. All of this can and should leave us different like Moses was different when he came down from communing with God up on Mount Sinai. Sometimes, the difference will come in bursts. Sometimes, the difference will come gradually and progressively. Sometimes, it might involve a little bit of both. But one way or another, we can and should be different after interacting with all of worship's divine people and things. And if we're different thanks to all the divine means of grace God has quite purposely assembled here in this place, we're all epiphanies waiting to happen. Again, an epiphany is the revelation of the new and the different. Did you know this about yourself? You're a light ready to shine in the darkness. You're a city ready to sit on a hill where you can raise the ideals and aspirations of others. You're salt ready to season a bland and broken world with faith, hope, and love. Did you know this about yourself? You may not be God, but you're more than capable of lifting one or more veil blinding others.

Now once this begins to sink in, you're going to want to be careful. Being an epiphany waiting to happen comes with risks. In our reading from Exodus, an epiphany waiting to happen named Moses is so different than he was before that he scares others. This isn't good because fear works against the change and transformation that epiphanies seek to bring. More than that, it's not good because the change that fear brings is often short-lived; with mice returning to the play of the past when the cat is away. It's also true that when they aren't frightening others away, epiphanies can fall short or be resisted as St. Paul says in our reading from 2nd Corinthians. Being an epiphany waiting to happen doesn't mean an epiphany is going to happen. It's a matter of timing. It's a coming together of the right circumstances and conditions. Being an epiphany waiting to happen is far from a mindless, effort-free enterprise. It takes staying power. It takes trial and error. It takes patience, grace, mercy, a cool head and heart, and plenty of steadfast love. Jesus learned this both up on the Mount of Transfiguration and down below as well.

Once down below again, Jesus was to learn that all his prior epiphanies had not yet readied his disciples to send the forces of evil and dehumanization packing. Earlier, up on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus' identity as God in the flesh was made clearer than ever, the epiphany did nothing to motivate Peter, James, and John in the direction of mission and ministry. Instead of this desired reaction, Peter and presumably James and John as well wanted to separate themselves from the world below; a real problem if you're an epiphany waiting to happen since epiphanies close the distance between heaven and earth rather than leave that distance intact. And so, epiphanies waiting to happen, don't get too big for your britches. Don't grow complacent. Don't become overly bound to any one way of doing things. Instead take your lead from God.

Speaking of God, in the opening verses of the book of Hebrews, it said that God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways and has now spoken to us through his Son Jesus the Christ. If as epiphanies waiting to happen we are to take our lead from God, we had best not miss “the many and various” part of this statement. For if God had to change it up on many an occasion and in various ways, it stands to reason we will as well. As epiphanies waiting to happen who take their lead from God, change shouldn’t frighten or dishearten us. But as God was constantly changing things up, our reading from Hebrews makes it clear that God really hit paydirt when God became flesh in and through his Son Jesus Christ. I’d suggest this speaks to how as epiphanies waiting to happen we always need to seek to be relatable, as we also let our light shine. Let’s face it. God up in heaven and out of our zip code brought limited success. God up in heaven and out of our zip code proved to be as scary as Moses was when he came down from Mount Sinai lit up like the sky on the Fourth of July. But God down here below, God in the flesh, God in our zip code, this God was relatable, just as the familiar voice of Moses that accompanied his shiny face was relatable. And so, epiphanies waiting to happen, don’t be afraid to change things up, but also don’t be afraid to package your many and various calls for change in your own personal wrapping. For I think this is simply and profoundly true. People are more apt to listen to those who come across as authentic than they are to people pretending to be somebody else entirely. Amen!

### **Prayers of Intercession**

P: The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

P: Transform us by your greatness, O God. Send us down the mountain to share joy with all people. Make us agents of change, confident that your hope will vanquish despair and your goodness will conquer evil. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: The mountains and valleys sing your praise. Dazzle us with your presence in every landscape: bluffs built by ancient glaciers, canyons carved by flowing rivers, flat horizons with uninterrupted views, and sands shaped by ocean tides. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: You love justice and establish equity. Strengthen leaders of local governments, community nonprofits, and grassroots campaigns. Bless them with gifts of integrity, creativity, and sound conscience. Build up safe and joyful communities where all people may thrive. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Heal those who are in distress (especially). Give patience to those waiting for answers. Grant hope to those who have reached the limits of treatment. Give compassionate hearts to those who accompany loved ones through illness and uncertainty. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Today we shout alleluia from the mountaintop; this week we enter the wilderness of Lent. Bless all who prepare and lead us in worship during this change of season: pastors, deacons, musicians, and all who contribute to our worship life (especially). God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Blessed are they who listened to Christ's voice in this life and now rest with him (especially). Transform us from glory into glory, and give us your peace, that we do not lose heart. God of grace,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**A: Amen.**

### **Blessing**

P: Signed and sealed by the Holy Spirit, you are Christ's message of love for this troubled world, written by the same Sender. May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, ☩ comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word. **Amen.**