



# Mount Calvary Connected

March 17, 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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## A Message from Pastor Scott & Article by Tish Harrison Warren

Like Advent, Lent is a time of reconnection and renewal. Our Lord has given us one another and various spiritual practices designed to strengthen us so that we might carry on in faith, hope, and love until we and the rest of the Church reach the finish line we await. Like Advent before it, Lent encourages us to make the fullest use possible of all these gifts our Lord has given us for the good of self, congregation, community, and world.

With the above in mind, the following article allows us to connect with other Christians throughout the world (always a good thing!) as we all seek to make fuller use of the gift of prayer both as congregations and as individuals. As you read the article, you may be struck by the specificity of some of the prayers that people are praying for the citizens of Ukraine. I know I was. When we're specific in prayer, we tend to empty ourselves of all that we've held back from God and this is always a positive practice. You may also be struck by how one sibling in Christ is not exempting our own nation from prayers for world peace. Though being self-critical is never easy, and when may push back when the time for self-criticism comes, it's a part of what lifelong sinners like you and me do throughout our lives, including in our prayers. We don't let ourselves off the hook and we never assume we are beyond reproach. As St. Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves," (Philippians 2:3). Enjoy the article and keep praying!

Your Sibling in Christ and Partner in Mission,  
Pastor Scott

“How readers around the world are praying for Ukraine”

by Tish Harrison Warren

Each morning over the past few weeks, I have woken up to the chirpy voices of my children. I’ve gotten them off to school and their daily activities, poured a cup of green tea and sat down to pray for Ukraine.

As I pray, images fill my mind: photos I’ve seen of tanks rolling into cities, of a Ukrainian man weeping over his dying son, of mothers and babies crammed into subway stations, of a Ukrainian soldier’s funeral. The contrast between my safe home and the war raging 6,000 miles away feels overwhelming. I feel helpless. There is little that most ordinary people here can do, besides donate money and pray.

But I believe that prayer is indeed powerful, often in ways we can’t account for. War, whatever else it is, is spiritually dark, even demonic. From the first days of the Russian invasion, religious people and institutions around the world have responded by praying. Written prayers and Psalms can be a lifeline, helping us pray when our own words — and even our own faith — fail.

Last week I asked you to share prayers that you have offered for Ukraine. We received hundreds of beautiful responses. It was a profound experience to read so many prayers from people all over the world and of various faiths. It often felt intimate and tender, as if you were allowing me to read your journal or private mail. Thank you for that privilege. I wish I could share all of the responses, though I trust that God has heard each one.

Here are some of the ways that readers are praying.

Dustin Valero in California wrote that he uses his tradition’s prayer book. He prays “for the Ukrainians, including the church in Ukraine,” that they would have “a deep resolve and a deep sense of togetherness in the midst of trauma.”

He explained, “When I pray specifically for the church in Ukraine, while praying through this communal prayer book, I feel connected to the global body of believers. Their suffering is my suffering. Their cares are my cares. I consider them to be the peacemakers who can leverage love and faith in the midst of this darkness. I know my safe place on the couch is much different from their lived reality. I fight apathy and distraction in my day to day, and this prayer keeps suffering and hope closer to the front.”

Sam Rood in Brooklyn wrote, “My co-workers in Odessa have been praying that ‘a holy fear’ would fall upon the Russian soldiers so that they have an overpowering desire to go home. I’ve adopted that prayer.”

He continued, “My Ukrainian brothers and sisters understand that the Russian soldiers are not their true enemy. Their desire isn’t that they suffer or die but that they return home and they can all live in peace. Though fighting and even killing may be necessary, we remember our common humanity and shared need for peace.”

The Rev. Canon Patrick Genereux from Iowa wrote: “When reflecting on Ukraine, I begin by being mindful of the murder and mayhem that we, the U.S., inflicted on Vietnam, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan

and any other places in the world, just as the Russians are doing in Ukraine. I pray for the forgiveness of these people for what we have done to them. I pray for the church in its blessing of war out of fear of reprisals. I pray to be forgiven for my part in these sins as both a priest and at one time a member of the military.”

He also wrote, “My prayers focus on all those whose lives will be forever changed — Ukrainians, Russians, Europeans, and in the end, us all. I pray for the most innocent victims of all wars, the children.”

Many readers said that they are praying for Putin to repent of his actions and turn away from pursuing war. Here is an excerpt from a prayer from Pamela Thacher in New York: “God, please allow Putin to reject his thirst for war and punishment and greed, and whatever goal he had for his war, let him pursue it through other means. I pray for their leaders, of course, and especially the extraordinary President Zelensky.”

She continued, with gorgeous specificity, “I pray for the humans, the pets, the horses, the cows, the farms, the fields, the rivers, the very earth of Ukraine.”

The biggest response from readers was that they are turning to the Psalms to pray. I find myself doing so as well. Each day, I’ve prayed Psalm 7: 14-16 with the invasion of Ukraine in mind: “Whoever is pregnant with evil conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment. Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit they have made. The trouble they cause recoils on them; their violence comes down on their own heads.”

Brendan Payne from South Carolina wrote, “Just reading through the Psalms in the Anglican lectionary order, every Psalm seems relevant to Ukraine. Praying for God to vindicate the innocent and punish the wicked must resonate with Ukrainian civilians and soldiers each day. Times of crisis bring those ancient songs to life.”

He continued, “The real enemy here is not Russia, not even Putin, but spiritual evil, which to some degree infects every human heart, including mine. That moves me to lament every loss of life in this vicious war. And, while I cannot directly do much for Ukraine, I consider more how I might seek the good of my neighbors around me each day. And that is hard work, much harder than self-righteous indignation at obvious evils at work in the world.”

Readers said they are praying many different Psalms, and the most common ones mentioned were Psalm 23, 91 and 46. Many readers told me that they are praying Psalm 31, which has become a global rallying cry for Ukraine.

Sherri Ellington in Zambia said that she is praying “Psalm 31 because I have heard that it is currently important to Ukrainians. My family has read it at the beginning of our dinner prayer as a prayer of solidarity.”

The Bible Society has released a moving video of Ukrainians praying Psalm 31, some from basements and bomb shelters. It begins: In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a

strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me. Keep me free from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.

I'll close with a prayer that was offered by a woman after evacuating from Ukraine. She has asked that her name be withheld. Her husband is a Ukrainian pastor, and she noted that his family is currently in occupied territory and she is unable to have contact with them. She wrote: Father-God, may the attackers' fingers freeze; may they drop things; may they not see clearly; may their equipment malfunction; may they experience overwhelming hopelessness, enormous fatigue and a complete loss of any desire to fight; may their communication be broken; may there be confusion. Lead them to surrender. Stretch the kilometers before them into endless kilometers of nonadvancement. Remove their leadership and replace them with people who make decisions that reflect a fear of you.

Oh, God, infuse defenders with incredible surges of renewed alertness, strength, hope, courage. Inspire those who want to help. Show them specific, effective ideas. Move them swiftly and safely. The worst is yet to come, Lord, if you do not stop it. But please, no peace where there is no peace. We ask for peace united with righteousness and truth.

God of all comfort, be physically present with all the mothers, fathers, grandparents and children who are hiding, hearing, smelling, enduring. Warm them; fill them with food; give them water, toilets, communication with their loved ones, the Gospel, hope in you.

We repent of making idols of political leaders and news outlets. Forgive us for wanting them to be our gods and saviors. Forgive us for being unreasonable, for not wanting to admit both the good and bad in all of our leaders. It is this spirit that leads us to dictators because we abandon responsibility and reason. We confess the seeds of war that live in our own hearts.

We humble our hearts, our bodies. We ask you for mercy. Thank you that you love mercy and have all power.

Thank you for these prayers. I am praying them with you.

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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. Every Wednesday, 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**

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

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.

Property Committee: April 12th at 6:00 p.m.

WELCA: April 18th at 6:00 p.m.

Council: April 19th at 6:30 p.m.

The Property Committee will meet on the second Tuesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. in the old lounge.

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### **Holy Week Schedule**

Weekend of the Passion (April 9th and 10th):  
Saturday at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday at 8:45 a.m.

Maundy Thursday (April 14th) at 7:00 p.m.

Good Friday (April 15th) at 7:00 p.m.

Easter Weekend (April 16th and 17th):  
Saturday at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday at 7:00 a.m., 8:45 a.m., and 10:30 a.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. Please no clothing or shoes at this time.

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### Yarn Collection

While everyone is cleaning out and getting ready for the flea market, if you find leftover yarn of any size, the Prayer Shawl group would appreciate it if you would bring it in and donate it to our cause. There will be a bin in the narthex where you can place it. Our supplies are getting low and we could use your help. Thank you so much!

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### Scheduled Worship Help

#### Saturday, March 19:

**Greeters/Ushers:** Tom & Kathy Rohrbaugh  
**Communion Assistants:** Cindy Buday & Pat Bittner

#### Sunday, March 20:

**Greeters/Ushers:** Dick & Lois Sholtis  
**Communion Assistants:** Ray Leverknight

#### Saturday, March 26:

**Greeters/Ushers:** Jerry & Ruth Pozun  
**Communion Assistants:** Cindy Solarczyk & Deb Rychak

#### Sunday, March 27:

**Greeters/Ushers:** Jim & Chris Koshute  
**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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**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! And AFTER worship, we'll hold an Easter Egg hunt for all pre-school and elementary school aged children! Candy donations are greatly appreciated. See Pastor Jonathan for more information about either!

**Holy Communion:** Is your child ready to learn about Holy Communion and receive the sacrament for the first time? Information was sent out this week about a series of First Communion "retreats" with the hope of helping children to join us at the table during Holy Week and the Easter season. If you're interested in having your child participate but haven't already been in touch with Pastor Jonathan, let him know!

**Youth Committee:** Volunteers are needed to help plan and coordinate events for children of all ages, especially this summer as Pastor Jonathan will be unavailable for a period due to major surgery. If you're willing to help out (even just for one event) please let Pastor Jonathan, Pastor Scott, or any member of church council know!

**Summer Camp at Sequanota:** We are blessed to have a GREAT Lutheran church camp practically in our backyard just twenty-five minutes away at Camp Sequanota near Jennerstown. Registration is now

open, with programs for all school-aged kids. Talk with Pastor Jonathan to brochure, or visit [www.sequanota.com](http://www.sequanota.com) for more information.

**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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### **Palm Sunday**

Palm Sunday will be a BIG DAY for the youngest members of our congregation! We're inviting all children to participate in a mini-pageant at the beginning of worship to help us celebrate this important start to Holy Week. Any child who can hold and wave a palm is welcome to participate! Plan to have your children in Sander Hall by 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, April 3rd, and again on Palm Sunday, April 10th, so that they can learn what to do!

And AFTER worship, we'll hold an Easter Egg hunt for all pre-school and elementary school aged children! Candy donations are greatly appreciated. See Pastor Jonathan for more information about either!

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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.

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### **Family Cookout**

Save the date! Saturday, May 14th, the youth and family ministry team will be sponsoring a cookout picnic for all families with school-aged children after the 5:30 p.m. worship service. There will be food, friends, and games. We hear that Pastor Jonathan may even make some of his famous smoked pulled pork.

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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 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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### **Giving Tree**

The Giving Tree collected a total of \$1,060 for the months of December-February. It will be donated to Helping Hand Rescue Mission in Portage. Thank you for your continued support!

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### **Give now for Eastern Europe Crisis Response**

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).*

Friends, I write to you again about our neighbors in Eastern Europe. First, I thank you for your outpouring of prayers and generosity — you are making a difference in the lives of people impacted by the war in Ukraine.

Your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response during this crisis are already at work. Because of your generosity, \$1 million will support the Lutheran World Federation and these member churches:

German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine  
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland  
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia  
Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania

They are distributing hygiene supplies, food, medicine, bedding and psychosocial and pastoral care to refugees and internally displaced people, most of whom are women and children.

Your support has made this possible, but more work remains. Your gifts to “Eastern Europe Crisis Response” will be used to in full (100%) to address the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and neighboring countries.

Additional responses through partners in these countries and others in the region are expected in the coming weeks and months, and Lutheran Disaster Response is committed to accompanying those partners as the situation evolves. We pray for the Roma communities and foreign nationals who are facing racial and ethnic discrimination at the borders as they flee Ukraine. Our companions are ensuring that people in these marginalized groups will be treated with respect and dignity as they seek safety.

We know there are many organizations that you can choose to support, but it is only by giving to Lutheran Disaster Response that guarantees your gift will fund ELCA-supported work through faith partners in the region.

I invite you to watch this video from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton about the situation in Eastern Europe and the ELCA’s response. To share this information with your congregations, download this bulletin insert.

Together we pray for our siblings in Ukraine and Eastern Europe. May God be with them in their time of need.

In Christ's service,



The Rev. Daniel Rift  
Director, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response Fund  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the  
Week: March 20 – March 26, 2022**

**March 21** - Ethan Zukus

**March 23** - Draven Herring & Brenda Kuyat

**March 25** - Terry Kennedy

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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 Teplitza 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**

Through the end of February, income is slightly over budget and expenses are slightly under budget.

We have had a good start to 2022. Thank you! Now we all just need to continue to do our part; maintaining prior patterns of giving from year to year as a baseline and increasing our giving whenever possible, as we also invite and welcome new people into the life of the congregation.

In our area, doing ministry requires being ever mindful of how an aging community where relocation to another area is common reduces our active membership by 8-10% per year. To just hold even, much less grow, the time, talent, and treasure of all these siblings in the Lord will need to be replaced from year to year. It's something we have managed to do for six years in a row now, but if it is to continue it will require us to be both resolute and intentional when it comes to our evangelism and stewardship practices.

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## Condensed Worship for Sunday, March 13, 2022

### Prayer of the Day

P: God of the covenant, in the mystery of the cross you promise everlasting life to the world. Gather all peoples into your arms, and shelter us with your mercy, that we may rejoice in the life we share in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### First Reading: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed the Lord; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness. Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

### Psalm 27

P: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

**A: When evildoers close in against me to devour my flesh, they, my foes and my enemies, will stumble and fall.**

P: Though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear. Though war rise up against me, my trust will not be shaken.

**A: One thing I ask of the Lord; one thing I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek God in the temple.**

P: For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter, hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary, and raise me high upon a rock.

**A: Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies who surround me. Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary, sacrifices of rejoicing; I will sing and make music to the Lord.**

P: Hear my voice, O Lord, when I call; have mercy on me and answer me.

**A: My heart speaks your message— “Seek my face.” Your face, O Lord, I will seek.**

P: Hide not your face from me, turn not away from your servant in anger. Cast me not away— you have been my helper; forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

**A: Though my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me in.**

P: Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me on a level path, because of my oppressors.

**A: Subject me not to the will of my foes, for they rise up against me, false witnesses breathing violence.**

P: This I believe—that I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!

**A: Wait for the Lord and be strong. Take heart and wait for the Lord!**

### **Second Reading: Philippians 3:17--4:1**

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

### **Gospel: Luke 13:31-35**

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to [Jesus,] “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

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

## Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

We had a nice turnout on Wednesday night as we started getting some important handles on how to use the Bible. If you had to miss session one or might have to miss some other session, don't worry. There are always typewritten notes you can use to catch up. One of the things we talked about on Wednesday was the long line of events that separates us from the first Bible. Though this wasn't mentioned on Wednesday night, our earliest record of the New Testament as it now stands dates to 367 AD. This is more than three hundred years after the first book of the New Testament was likely written. A lot can happen in three hundred years, as evidenced by all that's happened in our nation's shorter history of just two hundred and forty-eight years.

One of things we're pretty certain happened is that some of the many letters that St. Paul sent to congregations such as our own didn't survive, with others only surviving in fragments. There are those who think some of these fragments were sewn together to create letters which didn't originally exist. 2nd Corinthians is very commonly thought to be one such letter. No one disputes its spliced pieces were originally written by St. Paul. It's just that they didn't originally go together. And it just so happens that there are also those who would contend today's reading from Philippians is drawn from letter fragments the Church only later stitched together.

What's more is that the part of Philippians that leads some scholars to believe it's a spliced or composite letter is before us today. Prior to today's reading, and particularly prior to chapter three, the tone of Philippians isn't aggressive or combative. Though he'd rather not be in jail because of his Christian faith, St. Paul does his best to find the silver lining in his cloud. Jail hasn't kept his Christian friends like those at Philippi away and prison has also enabled him to bring some members of the Roman establishment to faith. As the apostle mentions more than once, there's also the fact that trial and sacrifice are what we sign up for when we follow after our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified before he was resurrected. This is chapter one and two of the letter in a nutshell. But when chapter three rolls around, our reading included, things get considerably more chippy. Seemingly out of nowhere, St. Paul starts to write about dogs and workers of evil and this before he writes of those whose god is their belly and those whose present glory is their shame and destruction in today's selection from the letter. This sudden shift in tone leads some to think that in the letter to Philippians we have a composite letter that splices together a nice letter of Paul with a nasty letter of Paul. But this hasn't gained the traction that similar theories about 2nd Corinthians have generated.

The reason for this is because the suddenly aggressive and combative language fits with the overall themes of the letter. Start with St. Paul's references to dogs and those who worship and serve their belly. Dogs may be our best friend, but they're also mighty selfish. If there's a scrap around or some food left unattended, a dog won't leave it around for someone else to eat. Scavengers by nature, dogs roam around looking for things to eat and they'll never pass up a free meal. Those who worship and serve their belly do the same. By invoking thoughts about dogs and those whose god is their belly, St. Paul calls to mind people who are selfish and self-serving. For him, those who give in to selfishness and self-serving behavior are workers of evil. Rather than encouraging this kind of evil, what the letter to the Philippians encourages us to do is to make sacrifices and concessions for one another and the Church of Jesus Christ and its work in the world God loves.

The Paul who was inspired to write the letter to the Philippians would have very much liked the good gifts program our Social Ministry Committee has been emphasizing this Lent. Through the program, we

share our plenty so that fewer of the world's people might have to go without the basics. For St. Paul and his letter to the Philippians, this is how it is to go for Christians like you and me. When responsive to the Holy Spirit's gift of faith, we don't hoard our marbles. We share our marbles. And when the going gets tough or not to our liking, we certainly don't pick up our marbles and go home. This is evil as far as St. Paul and much of the Bible are concerned. And yet, it goes on all the time.

Don't like the new organ, the new hymnal, the new carpeting, the new wall color, pick up your marbles and go home. Don't like how the Church's, Christ-centered ethics challenge your own, pick up your marbles and go home. Don't like this or that kind of Christian music or worship, pick up your marbles and go home. Don't like being called to repentance either directly or indirectly, pick up your marbles and go home. Don't like the bishop, the pastor, the council or committee member, pick up your marbles and go home. It's all so common and all such a departure from what the letter to the Philippians and so many other parts of the Bible encourage. Worse yet, it's not just selfish, it's also short-sighted and people who can't see beyond their own nose or fence also don't fare too well in the letter to the Philippians.

As individuals and as a congregation, St. Paul and his letter to the Philippians expect us to know that it's now the cross and then the crown. "I do not consider the sufferings of the present worthy of comparison with the glory soon to be revealed," St. Paul writes elsewhere. This is now the cross and then the crown. It's the same story when today St. Paul writes of how we wait, sacrificing and straining all the while, for that time when our Savior from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall transform the body of our humiliation into the body of his post-Easter, post-resurrection glory. This too is now the cross, then the crown type stuff. It's why in today's reading from Philippians St. Paul writes of those who have found their destruction in their present glory. If now's your crown, there will be no even better corona later. If now's your glory, there won't be a body of post-Easter, post-resurrection glory for you later. All there will be for you later is a body of humiliation far worse than the body of humiliation the faithful wear now as they make sacrifices and concessions for one another and the rest of Christ's Church. But, my, oh my, can it be difficult to play the long game the apostle encourages. My, oh my, can it be difficult to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow after Jesus down our own Via Dolorosa, down our own way of sorrow and sacrifice, before we enter into that glory which shall make all of our present sorrows and sacrifices seem like a lot less than we once thought they were.

This difficulty explains one of the reasons Jesus didn't run from the cross. On Good Friday, Jesus, God in the flesh, could have abandoned all promises related to our glorious future. With the cross in plain view, and even more when the cross was underway, Jesus could have said, "This is too difficult; too costly; too sacrificial. I'm picking up my marbles and going home." But instead, in seeing the cross through to completion, Jesus, God in the flesh, actually said, "I'd rather die than lie to you." And die Jesus did; only to rise up forever three days later; making it clear that all promises related to our glorious future are still on. And so, when your crosses tempt you to turn away from Christian devotion and sacrifice and concession, turn to the cross of Christ for reassurance and the baptism that joins you to that cross forever. In turning to the cross, in tracing the sign of baptism's cross upon your forehead or breast, you'll hear God say to you, "Keep at it! Don't lose heart! Carry on! I'd rather die than lie about your future." And after you've spent some time in conversation with the cross, survey the concessions and the sacrifices made by your most devoted siblings in Christ. At least some of your brothers and sisters in Christ will be there to inspire and reassure you; making it clear that they too would rather die than lie their way through the promises we make to one another through baptism

and its affirmation. Come what may, these siblings in the Lord, won't be picking up their marbles and going home. Instead, with you, they're going to wear the crosses of their present until they are one day traded in for a crown beyond our wildest imagination. Amen!

### **Prayers of Intercession**

P: Drawn close to the heart of God, we offer these prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

P: You gather the church into a community of mercy and grace. Unify Christians around the globe in efforts to proclaim good news even in the face of opposition and to protect those whose lives are imperiled by the gospel. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: You create the entire universe and call it good. Hinder those who would cause further destruction to our planet's fragile ecosystems, and augment the calls of those who advocate for thoughtful stewardship of the earth's resources. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: You raise up leaders committed to love and justice. Nurture in those who govern patience to receive criticism, openness to new ideas, and courage to change course when needed for the sake of the common good. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: You hear us when we cry to you. Attend to those expecting a child, and console those who have experienced miscarriage. Comfort veterans enduring post-traumatic stress. Shield those endangered by domestic violence. Uphold those who are ill or grieving (especially). Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: You kindle faith that moves us into action. Guide children and adults preparing for baptism or confirmation. Empower Sunday school teachers, confirmation leaders, and parents who share their faith with younger generations. Give us all a renewed sense of vocation. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: You welcome us into your heavenly realm. We give thanks for those whose labors on earth are ended and who now rest with you. On the final day, gather all of us, with them, in your loving arms. Merciful God,

**A: receive our prayer.**

P: Accept the prayers we bring, O God, on behalf of a world in need, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

**A: Amen.**

**Blessing**

P: May God who has called us forth from the dust of the earth and claimed us as children of the light, strengthen you on your journey into life renewed. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you ☩ peace. **Amen.**