



Mount Calvary Connected

April 7, 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 and click "Live Radio Broadcast" from the home page on Sunday mornings.

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/

An Article by Stephanie Perdeu in the *Christian Century*

Jesus wants to give us his kingdom. He is going to entrust it to his disciples, as he tells them the last time he reclines with them at the table. He has eagerly awaited the meal. He has taken a cup and blessed it, a loaf and broken it, another cup concluding the supper. He praises those who have stood by him in his trials; he confers on them the kingdom that he has received from the one he calls Father. They now have the power of spiritual discernment and judgment.

When we hear this narrative, do we think, these people? You're conferring a kingdom on them? Do they really have the powers of spiritual discernment? Are they fit to judge our faith? As the story unfolds, we will find their faith wanting.

At the table, they argue about who is the greatest. Out on the Mount of Olives, they sleep while Jesus prays. Judas betrays him with a kiss, one of them draws a sword, and Jesus must say, "No more of this!" By the fire in the courtyard, Peter carries out the predicted denial—once, twice, three times—that he denied he would ever commit. We didn't believe Peter's proclamation of bravery earlier, and we don't believe his bitter tears now.

Surely, we would do better than these disciples. We would be more faithful. Put our egos aside. Not fight about who was the greatest. Sheathe our swords. We wouldn't betray Jesus. We would be brave enough to say we knew him and to stay by him. Once, twice, three times.

The lectionary brings us these stories year after year because even though we have heard them once or twice or three times, we still don't want to believe that we are just like these disciples. We would

not have been more faithful. Our egos do get the best of us. We fume and fight about who is the greatest, the holiest, the most merciful, the most just. We betray Jesus for far less than was offered to Judas. Like Peter, we too say we don't know Jesus at all.

What we fail to remember is that even as the disciples fight about who is the greatest, Jesus tells them that they have stood by him in his trials. Jesus knows they will betray him, and he tells them he knows, even before he confers the kingdom. He knows them through and through and entrusts it to them anyway. There are no better or more faithful disciples to choose from. When they fail, he forgives. Forgiven sinners seeded the faith of the church that formed from the tree on Golgotha.

Forgiven sinners seeded our faith, baptized us, served us our first communion, catechized us, taught Sunday school to us, walked in witness and protest with us, preached to us. Those who officiate our marriages are forgiven sinners, and those who will bury us will be too. As Augustine knew many years ago, it's not the work of the worker but the work worked by God's grace. Those who enter into marriage will need to forgive their partners not once, but twice and three times and more for betrayals ordinary or great. Those who walk in witness or serve in the soup kitchens will need forgiveness for the times their own needs get confused with the needs of those they seek to serve and center.

But none of our unfaithfulness will ever negate God's grace. Jesus confers his kingdom on us not because of our perfection but despite our imperfections. Forgiven sinners comprise his church. There are no other disciples to choose from. As we hear these stories and admit we are just like those disciples, we know this as good news. There is a reason these stories and liturgies of confession and renewal intertwine as we walk the path of Holy Week. As we hear them, we know we need to be forgiven, and as we lament and confess, we can be assured that we are.

Years ago I served a church that did a dramatic reading of the Passion narrative. The choir members were supposed to play the role of the crowd and shout, "Crucify, crucify him!"

"I don't want to say that!" said one of the altos. "I don't want to do this!"

"That's the whole point," replied a soprano.

It is. We deny we would have been in the crowd without confessing how easy it would be to spiral into it. We don't want to say "crucify," but these stories and the liturgies shaped around them help us to confess that we could have joined that chant that day, and we could be tempted to join it tomorrow.

Which is why we hear these stories. They unsettle us and tempt us to think we would have known and done better. But we don't know what we're doing, as Jesus says from the cross. And he forgives us anyway. Once, twice, as many times as we need.

Stephanie Perdew (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma), is an associate conference minister of the Illinois Conference United Church of Christ and affiliate professor of Christian history at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

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.

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!

Good Friday Crosswalk

April 15th – Rain or shine

The event begins at Beulah United Methodist at noon and then moves up Bedford Street and Scalp Avenue to arrive at Mt. Calvary around 3 p.m. There will be 5 other worship stops along the way.

Upcoming Meetings

Evangelism Committee: April 7th at 6:30 p.m.

Easter Egg Hunt: April 10th after Sunday worship service

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

All Parish Committee: April 12th at 6:30 p.m.

Bible for Beginners: April 13th at 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday Cross Walk: April 15th at noon

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

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

Social Ministry Committee: April 21st at 6:30 p.m.

Youth Committee: April 21st 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.

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.

2022 Offering Envelopes

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

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!

Annual Flea Market

May 7, 2022

Please no clothing or shoes at this time. Items must be dropped off at the church during office hours, Monday through Thursday between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Thank you!

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!

Scheduled Worship Help

Saturday, April 9:

Greeters/Ushers: Pat Bittner & Linda Barnhart
Communion Assistants: Deb Rychak & Joan Bunnell

Sunday, April 10:

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

Thursday, April 14 (Maundy Thursday):

Greeters/Ushers: Kevin & Chris Oleksa
Communion Assistants: Missy Brodt

Friday, April 15 (Good Friday):

Greeters/Ushers: Kevin & Chris Oleksa

Saturday, April 16:

Greeters/Ushers: Todd & Jill Moss
Communion Assistants: Cindy Solarczyk & Missy Brodt

Sunday, April 17 (Easter):

7:00 AM:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!
Communion Assistants: Cindy Solarczyk (need 1 more)

8:45 AM

Greeters/Ushers: Jim & Chris Koshute
Communion Assistants: Volunteer needed!

10:30 AM

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!
Communion Assistants: Volunteer 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.



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! 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 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), cellphone (412-817-6704), or Facebook.

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 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!

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.

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:

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!

Afghan Blanket Drawing

Anita Brodt donated a beautiful afghan for our Good Gifts campaign. Chances are \$1.00. Since Anita is an educator, it would be wonderful if we could raise at least \$40 to send a girl to school in honor of Anita. The drawing will be held at the end of April.

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

**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the
Week: April 10 – April 16, 2022**

April 11 – Jason Berkebile

April 12 – John Belinda & Wendy Truscello

April 14 – Katie Decker

April 14 - William & Paula Nihoff (15 years)

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, Bob Trotter, 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, 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, Max Lawn, Linda Haberkorn, Lorraine, Joe, Donna, Danny & Family, Becky Jo, Bill, Linda & Family, Mary, Cheryl, Mary Jane, Janice, Dennis, Rick, Don, the Chavis Family, Mabel Ann, Betty, Cathy, Cindy, Jill, Theresa & Family, Family of Ruth Wagner, and Dean.

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.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, April 3, 2022**Prayer of the Day**

P: Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness, and your grace waters our desert. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love given to all through 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: Isaiah 43:16-21

Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 126

P: When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.

A: Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

P: The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.

A: Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses of the Negeb.

P: Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

A: Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

[Paul writes:] If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus

said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

I've been finding it difficult to maintain a routine or a schedule I desire and enjoy from week to week. I've got a stack of magazines that keeps getting higher. So much so that even though I enjoy the magazine tremendously, I decided to let one of my subscriptions lapse last month. I also know that eating healthy is about cooking regularly and with enough variety to keep you interested throughout the week. But this week nothing new was cooked until Friday. I also know that if I don't work out in the morning, it's probably not going to happen. Last week, I worked out six times, but not this week. An early meeting in Altoona, a need to catch up on some sleep, and some bookwork that couldn't wait until later got in the way. And these are just a few examples of how I've been living week to week in terms of what I can actually get done.

If you can relate, some of today's appointed readings from Scripture say to you, "Get used to it. It's the way it's supposed to be and the way it has to be." Whereas if your life is too patterned and predictable, the same readings will say to you, "Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. Get on board with the new thing God is about to do. Forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead." Evidently, we Christians shouldn't be expecting a routine or a schedule that's going to remain in place for very long. God's going to keep changing things up and expecting us to respond in kind. Our faith, our hope, our love, it would seem, are to be mobile rather than settled or sedentary. I guess we shouldn't be surprised that after telling us all authority in heaven and earth belongs to him, Jesus' first word to us on Easter Sunday is "go." But then again, if we're students of the Bible, long before we get to Jesus our schedules and our routines should already be in disarray; our ruts things of the past..

A couple of weeks ago, during the first weekend of Lent, we heard Israel's creed as articulated by the book of the Deuteronomy. This creed starts with the words "a wandering, a wandering, yes, a wandering Aramean was my ancestor." Within Israel's self-understanding is the reality that to be a child of God is to be someone who wanders, someone who's on the move, someone who's never settled. Just think Abraham, the father of faith, according to St. Paul's letter to the Romans.

Abraham starts out in Ur of the Chaldeans. Then he moves to Haran with his father and other family members. Then, in the 12th chapter of Genesis, God shows up and Abraham is constantly on the go thereafter. First, there's Shechem. Then, there's Egypt. Then, there's Hebron and this is just a few chapters of Abraham's much longer story. A wandering Aramean was my ancestor indeed. And this goes not just for Abraham, but for Isaac, Jacob, and all of Israel too. Life is never settled and sedentary; instead, life is almost always transitory and nomadic. Israel travels from place to place, sometimes just as God wants and sometimes not. It's out of the Promised Land and down to Egypt. It's out of Egypt and back up into the Promised Land by way of the wilderness. And as our reading from Isaiah reminds us, this happens more than once. First, it's to Egypt and back. Then, it's off into Babylonian captivity and back. Along the way, the Egypt varies, but not the basic pattern. For Israel, it's movement,

movement, movement; transition, transition, transition; change, change, change; new thing, new thing, new thing. This is the Church too, or at least, it's supposed to be the Church.

When we get to the New Testament, we read on as St. Paul writes things like: If anyone is in Christ, there's a new creation. Everything old has passed away. See, everything has become new. So much for ruts, routines, and schedules. Jesus puts them out of business. It's why elsewhere St. Paul writes: In Christ there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. In Christ, the Church is to travel away from old creation and off towards the new creation where death, suffering, and all their causes will be gone forever. But try telling this to someone who has to sit in the same pew, worship the same way every week, or meet and work at the exact same time. If we can't even get this small stuff handled, how in the world are we ever going to get to anything remotely close to new and better creation for all? Maybe it might help for us to be reminded that our mission is people-centered and that people change; calling us to carry the Holy Spirit's gift of faith active in love and hope to wherever they might be found.

When we hear about Jesus doing the mission and the ministry that we ourselves are to emulate, people are almost always involved. Today in our reading from John we hear about Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. St. Luke also remembers people with this name. In Luke, as in John, Mary and Martha are sisters and they host a meal at which Jesus is present. The rest of the details differ. In the end, the people are more important than the details. As for Lazarus, Jesus raises him from the dead in John and God does something very similar for a Lazarus who appears in a parable found in Luke. Might the same person be involved? We don't know. But if the same person is involved, when the dust settles, the person matters more than the details again. This is mission and ministry done in the style of Jesus and of the Bible he knew backwards and forwards. It's people-centered and people-responsive. And people change and evolve. People cycle through all sorts of different territory and terrain. People are all over the map. Some days their dead, others alive. Some days their lost, others found. It's how it goes. If you're going to be there for people when they need it and with the Holy Spirit's gift of faith active in love and hope, you might as well kiss your schedules, your routines, and your ruts goodbye. And this has more than a little to do with the crosses Jesus calls us to pick up and carry.

Every cross is a schedule change. Every cross is a routine on the way to ruin. Every cross is a rut-interrupting enterprise. And again, we carry these crosses for one another and those who aren't here yet. If there's something I've tried to teach you as your pastor, it's that the community of those present and yet to come has to come first. This goes all the way back to Jesus. In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul speaks of how Jesus had it made. Enjoying heaven's unlimited expense account and accommodations beyond compare, Jesus was in the form of God and shared equality with God. But for a time, Jesus gave it all up for you and for me and became our servant even to the point of death on a cross. This is putting the needs of community first. This is people-centered, people-responsive mission and ministry. This is kiss goodbye your schedules, your routines, and ruts mission and ministry. This is new creation mission and ministry, not old creation, broken record mission and ministry. It's the very kind of mission and ministry St. Paul encourages all throughout his letter to the Philippians.

It's true that in today's reading from Philippians, St. Paul has an awful to say about Jesus. This is to be expected. Who doesn't want to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection? There's also the fact that Jesus is St. Paul's role model, as well as the Lord who gives Paul and us our marching orders. Jesus gave up everything for us so we give up everything for Jesus in return. But Jesus can't be separated

from the Church born of his cross and empty tomb. Jesus can't be separated from any of the sheep in his flock, whether they've been in that flock forever or just come. In the end, we give up everything for the Jesus who gave up everything for us by giving up everything for one another and those who aren't here yet. Let's face it. There's not a thing we can give up for Jesus. Thanks to his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation Jesus has already got everything. But there is an awful lot we can give up for one another and the rest of the Church. We call it our time, our talent, and our treasure. We call it the inhibitions that get in the way of inviting, welcoming, and including. We call it the ruts, the routines, and the schedules that need to give way to what people and our shared mission and ministry need from us now. 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: Do a new thing in the church. Free us from paradigms that no longer serve the gospel and bring forward leaders who imagine fresh ways of doing ministry. Give us courage in the face of change. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Do a new thing for creation. Reverse the trajectory of climate change and environmental catastrophe. Revive habitats already impaired by human disregard. Amplify the voices of climate scientists and researchers working to chart a new course. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Do a new thing in our world. Break barriers that prevent political enemies from working together for the well-being of all. Make a way for peace and collaboration among the nations. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Do a new thing for those who suffer. Reveal a path for any who are unemployed or underemployed, for those experiencing homelessness, and for all who struggle with money. Comfort those who grieve and restore those who are sick (especially). Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Do a new thing within us. Direct us into encounters that broaden our understanding of the human experience. Amplify voices that are ignored or devalued (especially). Deliver us especially from the scourge of racism. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Do a new thing in our death. Fill us with the knowledge of Christ and the power of his resurrection as we give thanks for (names and) all the saints who have attained the prize of their heavenly call. 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.**