



Mount Calvary Connected

April 14, 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/

"I Know that my Redeemer Lives"

A message from Presiding Bishop, Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

This Easter, many of us will be able to gather in person for glorious celebrations of our Lord's resurrection. But the first Easter was in a cemetery, surrounded by tombstones. The women and then the men disciples came to see what had happened to their Lord. They expected to find a dead body, but instead they found God's defiant answer to death.

As St. Paul writes in Corinthians, "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Oh, death, where is your victory? Oh, death, where is your sting?"

I know now that we're entering the third year of this pandemic, and we see the signs of stress and incivility, even the signs of war and disease in Ethiopia and Sudan, in Europe. It might seem like death still has sway, but we can declare confidently on this Easter and all times what Job said, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh, I shall see God."

Centuries ago, the Russian Orthodox developed this beautiful poem, the Kontakion of the Departed. It's often used at gravesites. "Give rest, O Christ, to your servants with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting. You only are immortal, the creator and maker of humankind, and we are mortal, formed of the earth and to the earth shall we return. For so you did ordain when you created a thing. You are dust and to dust you shall return. All of us go down to the dust. Yet even at the grave we make our song. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."

Blessed Easter, dear church.

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

Adult Sunday School

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

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

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

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.

The 7:00 p.m. Good Friday service and the 8:45 a.m. Sunday Easter service will also be broadcast live on 88.3 FM and via mt-calvarylutheran.org.

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.

We would like to have volunteers to set up the Flea Market on Friday, May 6 at 6:00 p.m. Thank you!

Bake Sale

Attention bakers! Start pulling your favorite cookie and baked good recipes because WELCA is hosting a bake sale on May 7, 2022. Sure hits are anything chocolate, peanut butter, snack or trail mix baggies. Donations can be dropped off at the church on Friday, May 6th. If you need ideas, call Joan Hunter at 814-955-2737.

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!

Annual Weed and Feed

We will be having our annual weed and feed on Tuesday, May 10th at 5:30 p.m. Please bring your favorite gardening tool and mark your name on it so that we can get it back to its proper owners. There will be vittles served afterwards. This will be in place of our normal property meeting, so there will not be a property meeting in May.

Scheduled Worship Help

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!

Saturday, April 23:

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

Sunday, April 24:

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

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



Youth News

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.

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.

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.

Easter Flower Dedications

In Memory of Zakary Lonsinger and Linda McQuaide, from Mark, Shari, Kelsie and Jared McQuaide

In Memory of Loved Ones From Susan & Rachael Brandau

In Memory of Luther and Kathleen Horner and Jenneal F. Crowley

In Memory of Jim and Dorothy Pozun by Bob & Cindy Solarczyk

In Memory of Bob & Clara Solarczyk by Bob & Cindy Solarczyk

In Memory of Loved Ones by Hadley, Harper, Hudson & Penelope Pozun

In Memory of Jim & Dorothy Pozun by children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren

In Memory of Paul Swartz by Gayle Swartz & family

In Memory of Our Parents by Brent & Ida Mary Williams

In Memory of Eva Eschrich by Bill Eschrich

In Memory of all Departed Loved Ones

In Memory of Loved Ones by Karen Giunta & Kathy Ling

In Memory of Jake Moore by Nancy Moore

In Memory of Loved Ones from Noelle Berkey

In Memory of Loved Ones by Dan & Sue Osborn

In Memory of Lloyd & Wilma Gindlesperger

In Memory of Robert Culp by Michael & Ashley Kozak and Family

In Memory of Our Parents by Jerry & Ruth Pozun

In Memory of Pete, Janette, Komet, Kiersten, Grandma, Grandpa & Sashi by Gary, Dawn & Hailea Morningstar

In Memory of Catherine Oleksa and Albert Sojak

In Memory of Zakary Lonsinger & Linda McQuaide

In Memory of Glenn & LaVerne Trent by Joyce & Brittany Spangler

In Memory of Parents, William and Helen Lauf

In Memory of Stan & Kayleigh Tallyen

In Memory of Patricia Custer by Brian & Linda Custer Family

In Honor of Children & Grandchildren by Bob & Cindy Solarczyk

In Honor of Our Grandchildren by Jerry & Ruth Pozun

In Honor of Family by Bill & Jan Layton

In Honor of Grandparents Jim & Ruth Pozun by Hadley, Harper, Hudson & Penelope Pozun

In Honor of Lt. Hunter Bergman

In Honor of Jean Pellon by Nancy Moore

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 17 – April 23, 2022**

April 18 – Bryce Bachota

April 19 – William Coble & Scott Rickley

April 23 – Sally Hessler

April 20 - Timothy & Becky Boyce (37 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 Teplitza 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, Dean, Madi & Family, and Family of Zetta Powell.

Financial Update

Due to teamwork and consistent effort, the finances of Mount Calvary remain in good shape. Since last March, our overall financial position has improved by over 12%. Through the end of this March, actual gifts and receipts are ahead of budget in three categories and behind budget in three other categories. Thankfully, the three categories which are lagging behind account for less than 8% of our total revenues and receipts. If there's a place to be behind, it's in these categories.

As for expenses, we are running 5% ahead of budgeted expectation, with almost all the difference related to some one-time, computer expenses paid in March.

The big picture thing to keep in mind is that our positive financial position finds us making do with less than we have had to use in the past. Moves out of the area have removed significant resources from our budget in recent years; as in over \$40,000 a year. As council and stewardship and administration continue to work hard to make the most of our resources, we will eventually have to start to make up some of the resources we've lost due to moves through bringing in new disciples and increasing our own giving when possible.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, April 10, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens—wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 31:9-16

P: Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly.

A: For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed.

P: I am the scorn of all my enemies, a disgrace to my neighbors, a dismay to my acquaintances; when they see me in the street they avoid me.

A: Like the dead I am forgotten, out of mind; I am as useless as a broken pot.

P: For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is all around; they put their heads together against me; they plot to take my life.

A: But as for me, I have trusted in you, O Lord. I have said, "You are my God.

P: My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.

A: Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love."

Second Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 23:1-49

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe

on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And

when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

When the early Church tried to understand what happened to the Lord Jesus on Good Friday, they often turned to the psalms for language and inspiration. For instance, when a few moments ago we heard Jesus say, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit," it was pretty much a direct quotation of Psalm 31, verse 5. If we kept track of all the psalm allusions and quotations found in the description of Jesus' Passion, we'd end up with quite a list. We won't work up that list today, but one of the psalms that's often working behind the scenes is Psalm 2.

Psalm 2 involves a tussle for earthly power and control, with God declaring the winner. Victory is declared when towards the middle of Psalm 2 God says to his Christ, his anointed, his chosen, "You are my son." As you might recall, God says the same thing when Jesus is baptized; suggesting a tussle for earthly power and control lies ahead, with God eventually declaring Jesus the winner. Matthew and Mark make this quite explicit in their versions of Good Friday. When Jesus dies on the cross, a Roman centurion declares, "Truly this was God's Son." Employing the language of Psalm 2, this is, in effect, God saying through the Roman centurion, "Here he is—the winner, my anointed, my chosen, my Christ." This is likely said because godly kings and godly citizens put the needs of the community first, with Jesus doing so on and from the cross. But as you might have noticed earlier, Luke changes this up a bit when it comes to his own version of Good Friday. He's got a Roman centurion at the foot of the cross, but this Roman centurion doesn't say, "Truly this was God's Son." He says, "Truly this man was innocent;" which is actually a pretty terrible translation. In Luke's original Greek, what the Roman centurion actually says is: Truly this man was just or righteous. Why this change? Why does Luke decide to alter the script read by the Roman centurion on Good Friday?

It's not because Luke wants to undercut Matthew and Mark's contention that godly kings and godly citizens put the needs of the community first; being willing to bleed for the community if necessary. As is the case with other accounts of Good Friday, Luke's Jesus is given the chance to save himself on Good Friday; which would amount to putting himself first rather than last. Community leaders, soldiers, and one of the others being crucified all say to Jesus, "Save yourself." And readers of Luke's gospel by this point certainly know that Jesus can save himself. He's raised widow's sons from the dead. He's stilled storms and seas. He's chased off demons and devils. Having done this and more, Jesus can surely save himself, but he does not. Putting his godly credentials on full display, Jesus puts the needs of the community first; going so far as to die for the community. And yet, Luke's Roman centurion doesn't say, "Truly this was God's Son." He says, "Truly this man was just or righteous." Again, why the change?

If we were to think it's because Luke is less inspired by Psalm 2 than Matthew and Mark, it would be a reasonable, but incorrect guess. If anything, Psalm 2 looms larger in Luke than it does elsewhere. In Luke alone, we have Jesus judged before not just Pontius Pilate, but also Herod Antipas; with the two, former enemies becoming friends in the process according to St. Luke. Herod Antipas was the Jewish,

but still Roman-appointed governor of Galilee; the region where Jesus had done most of his ministry. Earlier this Lent, we heard of Herod Antipas, that fox of a man, when Pharisees warned Jesus that Herod Antipas was looking to kill him. On Good Friday, Herod Antipas gets his chance. Conveniently in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, Herod Antipas is given the opportunity to judge Jesus with Pontius Pilate, the non-Jewish, Roman-appointed governor of Jerusalem and the surrounding region. What's this unique detail of St. Luke's Passion account all about?

Well, it's straight out of Psalm 2. In this psalm's second verse we read that the kings of the earth have risen up in revolt against God's chosen king and that the princes plot against the same king. It's exactly what happens in Luke's unique telling of Good Friday. Herod Antipas, representing the Jewish world, and Pontius Pilate, representing the non-Jewish world, rise up against Jesus. On the level of metaphor and in complete keeping with what Psalm 2 has predicted, these two representative figures find the whole world rising up against God's Christ; God's anointed; God's chosen; God's son. And let's be clear. It's not the rabble-rousing itself which is the problem.

Leaders rabble-rouse. Leaders advance a cause. Leaders shake things up. Leaders stir the pot. Leaders attempt to redraw the map in the favor of their priorities. In Luke's gospel, even Jesus is a rabble-rouser. First, he's accused of perverting the nation. Then he's accused of stirring up the people. Jesus doesn't contest either charge one or charge two. Through his silence Jesus confesses to being a rabble-rouser. In this, he's just like Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate who rose up against God's anointed and Barabbas the insurrectionist who's released instead of our Lord. Again, being a rabble-rouser is part of being a leader. But not all rabble-rousing is just or righteous. It's what sets Jesus apart as far as Luke's Roman centurion is concerned. Unlike the rabble-rousing of Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate, and Barabbas, Jesus' rabble-rousing is righteous and just. What sets his rabble-rousing apart?

The biggest difference emerges when we dig deeper into what is being said when Jesus is accused of perverting the nation and stirring up the people. In Luke's original Greek, both the word for pervert and the word for stir up are variations of the verb "to return;" as in, return to the Lord your God, return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. This is what Jesus has been doing through all his rabble-rousing. He's been stirring things up so that people might return to the Lord their God. He's been perverting the status quo because it needs to be perverted; having traveled so far away from the love of God and neighbor. Jesus, the rabble-rouser, has been trying to bring sinners and the world they've helped to fracture and break back to God and God's way of doing things. This kind of rabble-rousing is always just and righteous. But it doesn't resort to violence like Barabbas, Pontius Pilate, and the rioters and raiders of our own time and place. Just or righteous rabble-rousing also doesn't rewrite the Bible to serve its own ends like Herod Antipas and other Jewish leaders did on Good Friday and like so many supposedly fundamentalist churches do today. Righteous rabble-rousing, just rabble-rousing, the kind of rabble-rousing to which the Holy Spirit calls all of us, is non-violent and seeks to make churches, communities, countries, and the world more like the God who is gracious and merciful, who is slow to anger, who is abounding in steadfast love.

And how is this done? The words themselves make this pretty clear. When we're righteous and just, we rabble-rouse for grace, not judgmentalism. When we're righteous and just, we rabble-rouse for mercy, not greed and exclusion. When we're righteous and just, we rabble-rouse for restraint and self-control, not for impulsive, knee-jerk, overly emotive responses. And perhaps most of all, when we're

righteous and just, we rabble-rouse not for hate or scorn, but for love and lots of it; so much love, in fact, that our love too can be called abounding and steadfast. Wouldn't our church, our community, our country, and our world be a whole lot better if we all did this? It surely would be. May the Holy Spirit who calls each of us to just and righteous rabble-rousing for the sake of God and God's Kingdom make it happen as often as possible and as long as it's needed. 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: We pray for the church, called to follow Jesus in the way of the cross. Make us unflinching servants of the gospel. Deliver us from hardship as we confront the forces of injustice and practice radical compassion. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: For the earth and all its inhabitants, created in love: Train us to recognize your divine goodness in the world around us. Rouse in us a reverence for creation, that we take greater care of its resources. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: For those in positions of authority called to lead with integrity and compassion: Supply them with courage and vulnerability when challenged with new ideas. Deliver them from fear that limits imagination and impedes justice. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: For those who suffer, waiting expectantly for mercy and consolation: Accompany those who feel abandoned or betrayed, defend those who are wrongly accused, and embrace those who are incarcerated or detained. Heal those who are ill (especially). Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: For Christians around the world, preparing this week to journey with Jesus to the cross: Reveal to us once again the earthshaking power of humble service, unmerited forgiveness, and sacrificial love. Lead us all from death to life. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: We remember those who have died (especially Mikael Agricola and . . .), who were commended into your hands. Remember us when you come into your kingdom, and prepare a place for each of us with you in paradise. 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: God, who fills the creation with abundance, Christ, who spreads his arms in forgiveness, Holy Spirit, who draws ever near to us, ✠ bless you and bring you to life everlasting. **Amen.**