



# Mount Calvary Connected

May 19, 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 Klimke

*There's something happening here. What it is, ain't exactly clear. It's time we stop. Hey, what's that sound? Everybody look, what's going down?*

Very early on in the pandemic, when our worship life was limited to weekly videos sent out through email, I used the above lyrics in a sermon. In more than one way, they remain appropriate today. Over two years into the pandemic, experts concede we're still at a loss when it comes to certain workings of the virus. Despite valiant efforts to make it otherwise, the virus remains an evolving creature and has not yet relinquished every dimension of its independence. But in spite of what we do not yet know about the virus, much progress has been made and people have noticed.

Over the past couple of months, I have perceived what seems like a turn for the good at church. People who have stayed away from in-person worship for a long, long time due to the virus have begun to return and not just for holiday celebrations. Fellowship events are once again drawing a crowd. With there being seventeen of them this past weekend, visitors are beginning to appear at something like former levels of frequency. Maybe it's again time to sing or say, "There's something happening here! What it is, ain't exactly clear. Hey, what's that sound? Everybody look, what's going down?"

If we are returning to something more like "normal" at 1000 Scalp Avenue, it's important that we be reminded that building and maintaining momentum at church isn't easy, even in the best of times. No more the time or season, it's important that we not get in the way and make things harder than they already are. When we get in the way, it's often because we lose focus and turn away from the big picture. Now, as in every past we can remember, the Church and every one of its congregations are like that glass which is half-empty, but also half-full. This isn't going to change until we get the new heaven and the new earth we've been promised will emerge at the end of time. But we can forget this and

dwell on what's not yet in the glass. Frankly, sometimes what's not in the glass doesn't belong there. This is why we all need to be checking our desires against Scripture and the self-emptying, community-building, and community-broadening example of Christ. It's not you and me, but Jesus who determines what's to be in the glass which is his Church. But as there shall be times when we want to fill the glass with what doesn't belong there, there shall also be times when what we find missing from the glass is in fact missing.

When our longings and desires for a fuller glass are in fact faithful, it shall be important for us to remember that the working of miracles is generally beyond our paygrade. Way more often than not, we can't snap our fingers or pray once or twice and fill the half-full, half-empty glass which is the Church and all of its local congregation with everything we and our Lord Jesus would want in it. This can be too easily forgotten. If you want more of something, you've generally got to be intentional about acquiring it. Again, focus and keeping track of the big picture are indispensable.

In the Church and all of its local congregations, what's missing often won't appear unless we're inviting, welcoming, and including. Maybe what's missing is already present, just waiting to be discovered as we're intentional about including as many of the already present as possible. Or, it may be that what's missing is still out in the community, waiting to be discovered there. When this is the case, invitation and welcome become essential. No matter what's still missing from the glass, this is how the Church and all of its local congregations make progress. We avoid rabbit holes, sideways energy, and pet projects in favor of inviting, welcoming, and including without interruption. As things hopefully continue to turn for the better at 1000 Scalp Avenue, may this be our focus and our big picture. It may be nothing new, but it's been true as long as the Church and all of its local congregations have been around.

Your Partner in Mission and Ministry,  
Pastor Scott

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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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### **Upcoming Meetings**

Stewardship/Administration Committee: May 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. \*No meeting in May.

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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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### **Backyard Ministries Summer Club Volunteer Opportunity**

For the past 5 years, members of Mt. Calvary have been volunteering their time one day a week, for one hour to spend with the children of Coopersdale during the summer months. We have a core of about 5 people, but when one or more can't show up on a certain week, it makes things more difficult.

If you want to make a difference in underprivileged children's lives and share the word of God with them, then please consider this opportunity! All you need to do is show up. We already have games and activities, as well as the Bible lesson to share each week. If you are interested, or would like more information on this rewarding experience, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

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### **Backyard Ministries Snack Collection**

If you would like to continue to donate prepackaged snacks please continue to drop them off at the church. We have decided that we will also start accepting monetary donations. If you would like to contribute, and this is an easier way for you to do so, please drop off any donations at the church office. Thank you for your continued support!

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### **Scheduled Worship Help**

#### **Saturday, May 21:**

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

**Communion Assistants:** Cindy Solarczyk & Missy Brodt

#### **Sunday, May 22:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Noelle Berkey (Need 1)

**Communion Assistants:** Ray Leverknight

#### **Saturday, May 28:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Pat Bittner & Linda Barnhart

**Communion Assistants:** Todd Moss

#### **Sunday, May 29:**

**Greeters/Ushers:** Jim & Cathy Prisk

**Communion Assistants:** Volunteers needed!

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

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# Youth News

**Mt. Calvary's Adventures of "Flat Jesus":** This summer, Pastor Jono Adams invites you to adopt "Flat Jesus" and take him on your summer adventures! Please see the additional information below or visit Mt. Calvary's website.

**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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## Mt. Calvary's Adventures of "Flat Jesus"

This summer, Pastor Jono Adams invites you to adopt "Flat Jesus" and take him on your summer adventures!

"Flat Jesus" was inspired by a children's book by Jeff Brown called, "Flat Stanley." In the book, a boy named Stanley becomes flattened and is able to be mailed to different places, having all kinds of exciting adventures.

"Flat Jesus" is a way to keep our church family connected as we enter into the summer traveling season. Bring home a "Flat Jesus" and take him with you as you travel...or to whatever you do this summer. Take a picture of him doing lots of different things: going out to dinner, having fun at the beach or the mountains, hanging out with friends or cousins, or whatever you are doing! It will be an amazing adventure! It is a great way to remember that Jesus is always with us, wherever we go. And it just might start up a conversation with someone about what you are doing...and why!

AND THEN... SHARE HOW JESUS IS ON THE MOVE!

When you have taken photos of "Flat Jesus," you can share your "Flat Jesus" pictures:

1. By emailing photos to [RevJonoAdams@gmail.com](mailto:RevJonoAdams@gmail.com) or texting them to 412-817-6704.
2. By uploading your picture directly to Facebook. Tag Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of Johnstown, PA. Add the hashtag #flatJesus and/or #jesusisontheflat

It will be so exciting to see where Jesus is on the move this summer as you share your adventures! And remember, Jesus is with you ALWAYS!

We'd LOVE to see at least one "Flat Jesus" photo from every family in church. And if we get enough, we'll combine them into a video at the end of the summer!

If you won't make it to church to pick up a printed "Flat Jesus," but still want to participate, you can download and print your own by visiting Mt. Calvary's website: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/mt-calvarys-adventures-of-flat-jesus/>

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**Class of 2022!**

Meghan Swartz  
Richland High School

Meghan will be attending Penn Highlands Community College, majoring in Social Work...and working at Camp Sequanota this summer.

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**Giving Tree**

The Giving Tree for May and June will go to The Precious Life Baby Bottle Campaign that runs through Birthright from Mother's Day to Father's Day. There will also be a basket in front of the tree to collect clothes for toddlers. Thank you for your continued support!

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**1st Annual Cruise-In**

Sunday, July 24th from 1-4 p.m.

Mt. Calvary parking lot

Open to all cars, trucks, and bikes. A gift bag will be given to the first 25 vehicles. There will be food, dessert, and a DJ. Any questions, please contact the church office at 814-266-4859.

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**Ascension of Our Lord @ Zion Lutheran Church**

Thursday, May 26, 2022

Zion Lutheran Church

613 Locust Street

Downtown Johnstown

Holy Communion at 2:00 p.m. (Chapel) and 7:30 p.m.

Roast Beef Dinner at 6:00 p.m.

A free-will offering will be received.

Sign up by Sunday, May 22, 2022 by calling the church office at (814) 535-2050

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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.

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: May 22 – May 28, 2022**

**May 23** - Krista Bassett

**May 24** - Anthony Lorenzo

**May 26** - Benjamin Dallman & Sonya Herring

**May 27** - Carrie Eash

**May 28** - Matthew Goehres

**May 22** - Ralph & Rosemary Manotti, Sr.

**May 27** - Keith & Wendy Mayket

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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, 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, Matt & Ashley, Landon, Max Lawn, Linda Haberkorn, Lorraine, Joe, Donna, Danny & Family, Becky Jo, Bill, Linda & Family, Mary, Mary Jane, Janice, Dennis, Rick, Don, the Chavis Family, Mabel Ann, Betty, Cathy, Cindy, Jill, Theresa & Family, Dean, Madi & Family, Patty & Family, Williams Family, Sydney & Family, Paulette, Andrea, Mary Ann, & Midge.

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**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.

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**Condensed Worship for Sunday, May 15, 2022**

**Prayer of the Day**

P: O Lord God, you teach us that without love, our actions gain nothing. Pour into our hearts your most excellent gift of love, that, made alive by your Spirit, we may know goodness and peace, 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: Acts 11:1-18**

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

### **Psalm 148**

P: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise God in the heights.

**A: Praise the Lord, all you angels; sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**

P: Praise the Lord, sun and moon; sing praise, all you shining stars.

**A: Praise the Lord, heaven of heavens, and you waters above the heavens.**

P: Let them praise the name of the Lord, who commanded, and they were created,

**A: who made them stand fast forever and ever, giving them a law that shall not pass away.**

P: Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps;

**A: fire and hail, snow and fog, tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**

P: mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars;

**A: wild beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds;**

P: sovereigns of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the world;

**A: young men and maidens, old and young together.**

P: Let them praise the name of the Lord, whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.

**A: The Lord has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful servants, the children of Israel, a people who are near the Lord. Hallelujah!**



**Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-6**

I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

**Gospel: John 13:31-35**

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

P: The gospel of the Lord.

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

**Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke**

Nature pivots. Nature reacts and responds to its environment. As the Church, should we be similarly responsive? Like nature, should we pivot as things change?

Some of this will depend on the degree to which nature is sinless and reflective of God's will. It might be that nature is as fallen or broken as humanity. Or, it could be that nature has held closer to God's creative intent than we humans. Which is it? Is nature a trustworthy guide in matters spiritual or as flawed, fallible, and broken as humankind? This is ultimately a question for a Bible study, but for now I will say the Bible has more than one thing to say about nature.

In places like Romans chapter eight, nature is painted as a victim of human sin rather than as a sinful and rebellious force itself. With the Church, in Romans chapter eight, nature now groans in birth pangs for the final victory of God; longing to be freed from the impact of human overreach and sin. Even so, in places like the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, the violence of nature, the dog-eat-dog character of life in the wild, is represented as being out of step with God's original intent. But whether this break from God's nature is owing to human overreach and sin or to nature itself is not said; though it's more likely that human overreach and sin is once again the culprit. Yet as Scripture does not isolate nature from sin, it does more often present nature as the proof that God's in charge and going to win in the end.

Psalm 95, often sung, read, or chanted during morning prayer, is reflective of this. We are to sing to the Lord; make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Because the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. Why? Because in the Lord's hand are the depths of the earth, as the heights of the mountains are also his; just as the sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land which his hands have formed. This is nature as proof that God is in charge and bound for eternal victory. You can find this kind of thing all throughout Scripture. As long as we don't mistake nature for God, worshipping it or making nature as eternal and unchangeable as God, I'd suggest we can draw useful wisdom and direction from nature as we try to be the most faithful church we can be. And nature does pivot; does react; does respond to its environment.

This is hard to miss right now. Birds we couldn't hear that long ago are now singing. After a period of dormancy, the grass is growing and greening. Trees are in flower, bud, or full leaf. Fields are doing their best to dry off and become ready for planting after a long winter. This is nature. Nature pivots, responds, reacts to what it's going on in its environment.

Recently, when our younger dog happened upon a few mud puddles on a dirt road in a wooded area, she decided it was time to splash, play, and get her paws and legs all dirty. Prior to our arrival, robins had determined those mud puddles were the perfect place to bathe and drink. They flew away when we got near, but were back again later. Those robins were like the fox which ran away and dropped its prey as Julia and I appeared in our car on Friday night. But once we were past, the fox was back for its prey. This is nature. Nature pivots. Nature has seasons and different garments depending on local conditions. During our recent trip out to Arizona, Utah, and California, nature changed its clothing so often in the same state, and even during the same drive or walk, that my wife Julia kept saying, "Take it easy, God. Let me catch my breath before you show me more." This is nature. Nature pivots; reacts; responds to the slightest change in its environment. And with nature a generally reliable guide as to how we should go about our business as the Church, the implication is that we too should pivot; should react; should respond to what lies around the corner in real time and space.

In our reading from Acts, Peter pivoted in this way, welcoming non-Jewish people into the Church, only to draw criticism and fire for it. Some of the usual suspects were in play. With the word resurrection meaning "against the status quo," we should be open to new game plans and new rules, but we often aren't. Often, we want religion to be unlike nature and the world in that it's always the same. And then there are our taboos. For who knows how long, we've gotten all hot and bothered about what goes on with what happens below the sternum. Jesus said we should be more concerned about the heart and the tongue, but we have often resisted. Our reading from Acts is a case in point. But let's not exempt ourselves from the taboos that led some to criticize Peter long ago. Sticking with diets and dietary practices, below the sternum issues, think of all the arguments related to the celebration of holy communion.

Does communion have to be preceded by some sort ritual purification practice? If so, what practice? Confession and penance, the washing of feet, abstinence, prayer, singing in the barn like my grandma used to make my dad do on Saturday nights before a communion Sunday? Who's welcome at the table? Everybody, just one subset of Christians, just the baptized, just people over a particular age, just members of the congregation? Does communion become less than communion if it's celebrated too often? If wine is allowed in the first place, does it have to be red and the bread unleavened? Can grape juice be used and does it have to be deep red or purple? To receive the sacrament's full benefit, does

one element suffice or does it have to be both grape and grain? Is music okay? If so, what kind of music? Is communion at the rail and around the altar the real deal and every other method of distribution lacking in some way? Does an ordained minister need to confection the sacrament and distribute it? And speaking of ministers, what requirements must they fulfill with respect to gender, marital status, academic preparation, congregational call, and ordination? Oh, do we still have our hackles and our taboos! It's no wonder that in one of the last songs he ever recorded the late, great, spiritual Beatle George Harrison sang of how we can be brainwashed to the bone as the result of all kinds of past and present influences. But the singer also repeatedly insists that God will come to un-wash our brains. Will we be ready? Like nature, when God comes, will we be ready to pivot, to react and respond, to sing to the Lord a new song?

Hopefully. But as our reading from Acts encourages us to be ready to sing new songs, it must be said that it also encourages us to be cautious and careful about it. We're not as accustomed to singing new and faithful songs as nature. We need practice and guidance. In our reading from Acts, first Peter and then those who criticize him aren't initially so certain about welcoming non-Jewish people into the Church before they become Jews below the sternum. On the one hand, this certainly reveals the presence of hackles and taboos which aren't helpful and that stand in God's way. But on the other hand, it also suggests not every pivot, reaction and response, or new song is good. Much less practiced at new and faithful songs than nature itself, we need a standard when it comes to separating the wheat from the chaff. In both our reading from Acts and John, Jesus is this standard. We are to love as he first loved us. We are to remember his word and apply it when things take a turn we aren't certain is for the good or bad. As I've said before, more so than the Bible itself, Jesus is THE word of God, with the t, the h, and the e all capitalized. As he himself said, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. If we pivot and sing new songs that accord with Jesus it's pretty safe to say we're singing a good new song and pivoting faithfully. But this might still be too vague for you. If so, let me leave you with this.

Our reading from Revelation says God and the good are out to eliminate death, mourning, crying, and pain forever. When the new and the different helps to do this more than the old, it's to be preferred. But when it doesn't, the old will continue to do be just fine until a better alternative does or does not emerge. Look! We Lutherans like tradition a lot. There are good reasons for this. But as we give tradition its due, our primary motivation should be to contribute more life, more joy, more laughter, more health and happiness to the world God loves. Whether it's new or old, we're doing what Jesus would have us do whenever, wherever, and however we take a bite out of death, mourning, crying, or pain and in a fashion that doesn't replace one form of these things with another. It's as simple as that! Amen!

### **Prayers of Intercession**

P: Set free from captivity to sin and death, we pray to the God of resurrection for the church, people in need, and all of creation.

P: Loving God, lead us to follow your Spirit, rather than our own prejudices or desires, as the church cares for one another. Open us to perceive your gifts in those we least expect. God, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Inspire us to praise you through the beauty and majesty of the natural world around us (local natural areas may be named). Urge us toward more deliberate care of the world you have made. God, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Humble the rulers of nations before your splendor. Direct them to the people who need their attention most, and turn them from the temptation to hoard wealth or power. God, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Hasten to dwell among those who are in pain or distress (especially). As Christ enters our deepest suffering, remain with those experiencing despair and great need. God, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Place holy love at the center of all our relationships and communities. By your love heal us, convict us, and renew us. Bring an end to racism in our churches and communities. Let everyone know your goodness by the love we show one another. God, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: Give us a place in the diverse company of your beloved saints. Teach us the value of each person's identity, and bless us with a shared identity as your children, kindred of Christ. God, in your mercy,

**A: hear our prayer.**

P: In your mercy, O God, respond to these prayers, and renew us by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**A: Amen.**

### **Blessing**

P: Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, ✠ Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**