



Mount Calvary Connected

May 26, 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/

A Message from Pastor Jonathan Adams

As I'm finishing writing this, today is Thursday, May 26, exactly 40 days after Easter, the day that the church celebrates as "Ascension Day." After his resurrection, Jesus walked among his disciples for forty days, during which times we hear stories of things like his appearance on the road to Emmaus, or a fish breakfast on the beach. He spent time performing more miracles, teaching more lessons, ensuring that people truly believed and understood that death would no longer have power over them, that eternal life and the resurrection was real and powerful.

And then, with a final farewell, he ascended into heaven, "and is seated at the right hand of the father and will come again to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom shall have no end," as the Apostles' Creed reminds us regularly.

But it wasn't really goodbye. We know that God is always with us. That Christ is always with us, no matter where we go.

That's one of the big reasons why I wanted to share "Flat Jesus" with the people of Mount Calvary this year. We're coming into a time of separations; this Sunday will be my final Sunday with you before my heart surgery and recovery. But, at the same time, it's also the unofficial beginning of summer, a time when many people will be traveling and may not be in church quite as regularly. We simply will not be together in quite the same way as we may have been in these past few months. But, no matter where we go, we carry our faith with us, and we bring Jesus along for the ride.

I'm hoping we might get some neat photos before the end of the summer of places folks took their "Flat Jesus" card, but more than that, I'm hoping it serves as a reminder that Jesus can fit anywhere.

I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to speak to the tragic elementary school shooting that took place earlier this week in Texas. I still remember the day I came home from elementary school to find my grandmother glued to the television, watching reports from the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado. I remember that the idea of a mass shooting at a school was at least somewhat of a new thing back then; something that unfortunately has become all too common now.

I know that there are a variety of "theories" as to why this sort of thing happens, some of which can be particularly politically charged. But, I hope we can all agree that this sort of thing should NOT happen. A world with this kind of evil and devastation is most certainly not what God imagined.

But even so, God was there at that school in Texas on Tuesday, just like Jesus was at Columbine High School in Colorado all those years ago. God has been there amid every act of violence in the history of humanity, watching, and crying, probably shaking his head saying, "this is not how it's supposed to be."

But still, God is with us. Jesus is with us.

And that's what's so great about "Flat Jesus." You can literally bring a piece of paper with you anywhere, as a constant reminder of Christ's presence in your life. And as you go through the good and bad of life, you can look for Jesus in the face of the helpers, whether they be first responders at a major act of violence, healthcare workers in a hospital room, or the smiling face of someone at a local store or business.

Christ has risen from the dead. Christ has ascended into heaven. But Christ is with us.

Remember that.

And so, as I conclude my final message to you for a while, I hope you remember Christ's presence in your lives, but I also want to thank you for showing me Christ's presence in my own. The support and well-wishes I have received in the time leading up to this surgery has been overwhelming. I truly feel like I am buoyed by the prayers that I know so many are offering on my behalf at Mount Calvary, Benscreek, and beyond.

Because of you, I'll be bringing Christ with me to the hospital. And I hope you bring Christ along wherever life takes you this summer.

See you on the other side,
Pastor Jonathan

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.

Upcoming Meetings

Evangelism Committee: June 2nd at 6:30 p.m.

Property Committee: June 14th at 6:00 p.m.

WELCA: June 20th at 6:00 p.m.

Church Council: June 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.

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!

Blessing of the Bikes

The event will take place on June 26th at 10:30 a.m. at Mt. Calvary. Free lanyards will be given to the first 100 bikers. Refreshments will be provided. All bikers are welcome to attend our 8:45 a.m. service prior to the blessing.

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!

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!

Scheduled Worship Help

Saturday, May 28:

Greeters/Ushers: Pat Bittner & Linda Barnhart

Communion Assistants: Todd Moss

Sunday, May 29:

Greeters/Ushers: Mary Ann Mapes & Bill Eschrich

Communion Assistants: Volunteers needed!

Saturday, June 4:

Greeters/Ushers: Joan Bunnell & Janis Daily

Communion Assistants: Pat Bittner

Sunday, June 5:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!

Communion Assistants: Volunteers needed!

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



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 Jono's Sunday school class, and the nursery/childcare has concluded for the summer. We look forward to seeing you all later this year!

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.

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 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 #jesusisonthemove

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/>

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.

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!

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.

Basket Party

Plans for a September Basket Party are underway. Stay tuned for more details.

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

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

**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the
Week: May 29 – June 4, 2022**

May 31 - Kyler Long

June 1 - Dr. John Berk

June 2 - Bob Kamler, Frances Truscello, & Beth Pruchnic

June 3 - Mikayla Evans

June 4 - Hudson Pozun

Remember those that prayer has been requested for:

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 & Family, Bob, Dawn, Stacy & Josh, Bob Trotter, Bill Layton, Deb Zilch, Bennett, Cassy Sojak, Paul Miller, Keith Mayket, Ruth, Pete, 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 & son, Alex, & 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, Rayford, Lois A., Dwane, Nicole, Trent, Kim, & Uvalde, Texas.

Financial Update

The April financial statements reviewed by the Congregational Council and Stewardship and Administration Committee last week continue to report positive net income for the year. Member gifts and other income are ahead of last year and in excess of this year's budget. Mission and ministry costs are 2% ahead of budget, with the vast majority of the overage attributable to seasonal spikes in electricity and gas.

As in the past, we all just need to continue to do our part which means maintaining prior levels of giving as a baseline and increasing where possible. As we do this, we also need to do our best to stay ahead of the game. This happens when together we offset normal losses, inflation, and the pandemic's tremendous disruption by being generous people who invite, welcome, and include without interruption.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, May 22, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: Bountiful God, you gather your people into your realm, and you promise us food from your tree of life. Nourish us with your word, that empowered by your Spirit we may love one another and the world you have made, through 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 16:9-15

During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 67

P: May God be merciful to us and bless us; may the light of God's face shine upon us.

A: Let your way be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations.

P: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

A: Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations on earth.

P: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

A: The earth has brought forth its increase; God, our own God, has blessed us.

P: May God give us blessing, and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5

And in the spirit [one of the angels] carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of

the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: John 14:23-29

Jesus answered [Judas (not Iscariot),] "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe."

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

Last weekend I learned one of our members has some friends traveling in Alaska this summer. I wondered if their trip would coincide with the period when there's daylong light up in Alaska, and if it did, how this would impact sleep and general levels of functioning. I don't know how this goes. Maybe you do, but our reading from Revelation announces that the Church Triumphant shall one day discover what it's like to deal with constant, never-ending light. In the verses we just got done hearing, the book of Revelation twice tells us there shall be no night in the Kingdom of God. Evidently, the light of God's holy glory shall shine so brightly and intensely that nothing shall darken it. When this happens, we're told we won't need lamps, the sun, or the moon anymore. As I've said, one day the Church Triumphant is going to learn what it's like to live in Alaska when there's light all day. Except in the case of the Church Triumphant, there's going to be nothing but light not just for a season, but forever and ever.

Now depending upon who we are, we may not be so certain about this. Some of us, myself included, might like our sleep and angrily repel anything that interferes with it. Before we get all hot and bothered about the potential for no night in the Kingdom of God, we might wish to remember that the

book of Revelation traffics in metaphor and symbol. Metaphor and symbol are the stuff of suggestion; the stuff of art. This means we don't want get overly bound to any one metaphor or symbol. For instance, earlier in the book of Revelation, we're told the Church Triumphant shall worship God both day and night. Today we're told there shall be no night. Which is it? It's probably best not to choose; instead sticking with what each metaphor or symbol suggests in its context. The bottom line is we don't want to get too stiff or too literal with Revelation's metaphors and symbols. Maybe there will continue to be day and night in the new Jerusalem. Maybe not. What matters isn't so much the individual pieces of the vision we get today, but the overall impression it leaves and it is a glorious one.

At a recent meeting of our congregational council, one of your elected leaders lamented our current need to lock doors and windows. They longingly remembered a time when those in Johnstown and other places like it didn't need to worry about locking up their homes like Fort Knox. To the best of my memory, I think my family would lock the doors at night, but they were certainly left open during the day. When I transferred to the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee in the fall of 1988, I quickly learned I was no longer in the Mayberry otherwise known as North Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Able to move most of my belongings in just a car, I brought a TV with me. It wasn't anything fancy, but it was the TV I inherited from my dad's mom when she died in 1977. It was my only tangible connection to the life led by Edna Florence Klimke; a woman I loved very, very much. Sadly, one day I failed to lock the door of the house I was sharing in Milwaukee with several others. While everyone was away, the TV was stolen. We knew who had likely taken it. He lived right next door. But what are you going to do? The cops surely weren't going to come over such a small theft. But the point is: this kind of thing will be gone forever when the era our reading from Revelation comes to pass.

If you missed it earlier, our reading from Revelation says the gates into the new city of God shall always remain open. It also says nothing accursed, nothing unclean, no one practicing falsehood or abomination, shall enter God's new and eternal city. In the new Jerusalem, there won't be those who keep killing more and more people with the drugs they cook up in a laboratory. In the new Jerusalem, people won't be gunned down for no reason other than the color of their skin. Ultimately, this is the point of the endless days our reading from Revelation references. In the new Jerusalem, opposition to the light, to God and the good, shall end, never to resurface or rise up again. In the new Jerusalem, the Lamb otherwise known as Jesus Christ shall reign forever and ever; meaning that love, the love of God, the love of God's children, self-giving, self-sacrificing, community-first love, shall emerge victorious; winning even the politicians over to its side. Yes, in the new Jerusalem, humanity, as in all the nations, shall espouse and practice the same values; the values which in their most truncated form we call the love of God and the love of neighbor. Whether by day alone or by night as well, this is how it's going to be when the new heaven and the new earth we await arrive. It's going to be total, unquestioned, uncompromised, undiluted, unending victory for the God who was, is, and shall remain love and for the saints who have done their best to love as their God first loved them. This most certainly is a vision capable of captivating all of us. It's why the Holy Spirit inspired the writer of Revelation to write it down. But as images of the new Jerusalem bowl us over, we need to remember you just can't walk into the new city of God and live there forever. Entry into the new Jerusalem is to be by something like invitation alone.

Our reading from Revelation makes this plain when it says only those written down in the book of life possessed and administered by the Lamb otherwise known as Jesus Christ shall dwell in the new Jerusalem. To be forever done with darkness and death, Jesus has got to write your name on the guest

list. To be free of thieves, crooks, and robbers, Jesus has got to stamp your passport or naturalization papers. Eternity shall be by something like invitation alone. Not crashing the party, not punching their own ticket, the saints shall ride Jesus' coattails into the Kingdom of God.

This is why our reading from Acts emphasizes that Lydia does not come to life-changing and live-saving faith alone. She's maybe predisposed to faith, being what St. Luke somewhat cryptically calls a worshipper of God, but her worship and her faith don't become Christian until the Lord Jesus first opens her heart to the word shared by Paul. This too is salvation by something like invitation alone. St. Luke makes the Lord Jesus' agency in matters of faith quite explicit. And where does Jesus write Lydia's name in the book of life? In a place of prayer where water, the word of God, and people of Christian faith are present. The only thing that's missing is holy communion and that sacrament certainly shows up elsewhere in the book of Acts. Say what you will about us Lutherans, but we're right and quite biblically informed when it comes to faith's origin. Faith is a gift of God; a grace like an invitation to somebody else's party. And more often than not, this grace, this gift is given in places of prayer where the word of God is preached and the sacraments of God are celebrated. But as much as we Lutherans get that faith comes from God and most often through the word and sacrament around which we gather for worship, there's a part of this life-changing and life-saving progression we too often miss.

Simply put, where would Jesus or Lydia be without Paul or the man of Macedonia the Holy Spirit used to invite Paul to Philippi in the first place? The answer is nowhere. Like us, Paul is a vital and indispensable link in the chain of events that brings Lydia to Christian faith. Through his witness, Paul speaks the word that Jesus uses to open Lydia's heart. This is how it goes and the witness that Jesus uses to faith's advantage doesn't have to be a sermon. It can be a song, a prayer, a kind gesture, a passing comment. The point is that we're a vital and indispensable link in the process by which Jesus brings people to faith. It's something we too often overlook, ignore, or minimize. Through others we can probably name in gratitude, Jesus once brought us to faith. Now it's time for us to be those people of faith that others will name in gratitude later. It won't happen without Jesus' most necessary blessing, but that blessing came for Lydia and it will come for others in our own time and place too. When it does, names shall be written in the book of life; names which shall bring a whole person along with them when it's time to enter that new heaven and that new earth where doors will need to be locked no more because all resistance to God and the good shall have ceased forever. 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: God of new life, open your church to the unexpected ways your Spirit is at work. Guide bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders in their visioning, partnership, and planning. Surround us with your peace. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Give a vision of increase and abundant harvest for farmers, laborers, and gardeners who are beginning their growing season. Join their efforts with the goodness of creation to feed all living things. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Shine your light of wisdom and peace among nations. When those in power seek to assert dominance over others, confound their ways and make them yield to your humble authority. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Give safe haven to those who seek healing, liberation, or peace (especially). Create places filled with hospitality where hurting people find your loving presence and wholeness. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Uphold the work of ministries and organizations in our communities who assist people experiencing homelessness, citizens returning from prison, and all marginalized people (especially). Accomplish your will through their efforts. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Assemble your people at rivers, streams, and fonts, where we remember our baptism and welcome others into the communion of saints. Gather us with those who have died (especially) when we meet together at your river of life. 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: May God who has brought us from death to life fill you with great joy. Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**