



Mount Calvary Connected

June 2, 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 Bishop Paula Schmitt

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:9-10, 21

Friends,

Last week was a terribly difficult one in the life of our nation. We watched news reports of 17 children and 2 adults who were killed in their classrooms by an armed gunman in Uvalde, Texas. Conversations about gun violence, mental health and other issues in our deeply divided communities often deteriorate into the demonizing of anyone who disagrees with us.

Our gospel reading last Sunday from John 17 had us listening in to Jesus praying that his followers would be one. I've been pondering that lesson in light of all that has happened and realized there have been very few times in our history we could say we were one. And yet, that is what Jesus prayed for. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, pleaded with the Christians there to love each other and to overcome evil with good.

You might be wondering how we can overcome the evil we saw last week with good. The answer comes in a simple, yet often difficult command from Jesus: love one another. The kind of love Christ calls us to is a love that is willing to have hard conversations, a love that is willing to sacrifice our own need to be right and hear the other side, a love that is open to the other, a love that is persistent in its pursuit of what Jesus prayed for: unity. And, friends, unity does not mean uniformity; it means practicing the kind of love Jesus has for us; it means asking tough questions like: What conversations do I need to have to address this division? What might get in the way and how will I overcome that? Or, what do I need to do differently in order to foster unity in my community, congregation or home?

I don't have an easy answer or quick fix to any of this, but I do know that because we are followers of Jesus, striving for the kind of unity he prayed for is something worthy of my time and effort. Know that you are in my prayers as we work together to rebuild a sense of unity and peace.

+Bishop Paula

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.

Stewardship and Administration: June 9th at 6:30 p.m.

Synod Assembly: June 11th (all day for our voting delegates)

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

Social Ministry: June 16th at 6:30 p.m.

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

Church Council: June 21st at 6:30 p.m.

Psalms Bible Study: June 22nd at 6:30 p.m.

Youth: June 29th at 5:30 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, June 4:

Greeters/Ushers: Joan Bunnell & Janis Daily

Communion Assistants: Pat Bittner

Sunday, June 5:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!

Communion Assistants: Volunteers needed!

Saturday, June 11:

Greeters/Ushers: Dick & Anita Brodt

Communion Assistants: Missy Brodt

Sunday, June 12:

Greeters/Ushers: Jim & Cathy Prisk

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

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/>

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.

14-Day Biblical Pilgrimage Adventure to Israel

Jerusalem Seminary in Conjunction with Redstone Presbytery and Friends

October 15 to 28, 2022

Please see email sent May 31st for trip information, including the itinerary, or visit:

<http://redstonepresbytery.org/>

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

**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the
Week: June 1 – June 11, 2022**

- June 1** - Jayne Dunbar & Jacob Zerby
- June 2** - Elizabeth Pruchnic
- June 4** - Edward Greene & Tressa McQuaide
- June 5** - Michael McNiesh
- June 7** - Devlin Herring & Ralph Manotti, Sr.
- June 9** - Diane Green
- June 10** - Christopher Swartz
- June 11** - Sharon Ashcraft

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, 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, 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, Ron, Toby, 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 29, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: Almighty God, your blessed Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things. Mercifully give us faith to trust that, as he promised, he abides with us on earth to the end of time, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Acts 1:1-11

[Luke writes:] In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 47

P: Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with a joyful sound.

A: For the Lord Most High is to be feared: a great king over all the earth,

P: who subdues the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet;

A: who chooses our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom God loves.

P: God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of the ram's horn.

A: Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our king, sing praises.

P: For God is king of all the earth; sing praises with a song.

A: God reigns over the nations; God is enthroned on high.

P: The nobles of the peoples have gathered as the people of the God of Abraham. The rulers of the earth belong to God, who is highly exalted.

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 24:44-53

[Jesus said to the eleven and those with them,] "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

It was another one of those days for the first disciples. Jesus defied their assumptions and expectations on the day he ascended into heaven. It had also happened forty days earlier on Easter. Back then, Jesus had defied the assumption and expectation that death was final and that the power of the devil and the devilish was ironclad. This proved to be such a revelation that on Easter Sunday two disciples on the way to Emmaus didn't even recognize Jesus when he joined their journey. At the end of their journey, Jesus defied these disciples' expectations and assumptions about death and the supposedly ironclad power of the devil and the devilish. During their journey, he also managed to inform those headed for Emmaus that they didn't know the Bible as well as they thought they did. As would happen later the same day for Peter and others in today's reading from Luke, Jesus had to open the minds of those who traveled to Emmaus when it came to the Bible's true and essential meaning. This is what you call defying or exploding people's expectations. And as today's reading from Acts reports, Jesus did the same thing on the day of his ascension into heaven.

If we take our lead from the first, eleven verses of Acts, it would appear the first disciples thought Easter had brought an end to all the drama and intrigue they had experienced prior to the empty tomb. Speaking of longstanding drama and intrigue, they thought the time of Israel's final and triumphant redemption was only a matter of time. They were wrong. The Father's sense of timing wasn't their own. The first disciples were also wrong to assume Jesus would remain right by their side after emerging from the grave victorious. First, the grave had taken Jesus away. Now heaven was taking him back for who knows how long. Was this really how it was supposed to go? Was there to be more drama, more uncertainty, more intrigue even after all the drama and the uncertainty and the intrigue that had already interrupted a lot of sleep? The first disciples had hoped not, expected not, assumed not, we don't know which, but they were wrong. First, on Easter Sunday, then again forty days later at the time of his ascension, Jesus defied their assumptions and expectations. All they could do was gawk at the sky as Jesus withdrew from their sight into heaven. Have you ever been there? Has Jesus ever perplexed you? Has Jesus ever defied or exploded your assumptions and expectations?

For some of us, it may have happened this past week. When innocent, helpless school children keep getting shot and killed in this country, it's hard not to be perplexed. How could Jesus let this happen? Isn't he the Prince of Peace? Wasn't his resurrection from the dead supposed to make things better? This is how all of life's ongoing tragedies and dramas can leave us and there is no shortage of such stuff. Pick one. There are all too many tragedies and dramas to go around. When they show up in a way that can't be denied or avoided, these tragedies and dramas can leave us perplexed; dumfounded; dazed and confused. Like the first disciples, we can find ourselves gawking at the skies in wonder and disbelief. We can also find ourselves looking down at the ground in grim and helpless resignation. Or, it may be that we'll find ourselves more inspired than ever to get back to the business of being the Church; looking all around us, not up, not down, but all around us for opportunities to advance the Kingdom of God on earth until it's the Father's plan to install it forever and ever.

Now with respect to looking up, it has to be said that part of being the Church does involve looking up towards heaven. Though he knew it was coming, Jesus himself was still perplexed and bewildered on the day of his crucifixion. As both the gospels of Matthew and Mark tell it, on Good Friday, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why you have forsaken me?" This is to be perplexed and bewildered. It's language we ourselves may be using right now in the face of all sorts of tragedies and dramas from which to pick. These tragedies and dramas may leave us looking up and saying, "My God, my God, why

have you forsaken me and/or us?" Sometimes it's more than appropriate for us to look up and get after heaven in this way. It's what you call prayer. And by my count, Jesus prayed at least three times as he hung from the cross. Prayer is and should be a part of being the Church. But being the Church also involves a lot more than looking to heaven for comfort, clarification, and help.

That said, one of the things being the Church does not involve is looking down at the ground in grim and helpless resignation. This can happen when we make too much or too little of the Bible. When we make too little of the Bible, we forget that Jesus is THE Word of God, with the "t," "h," and "e" all in capital letters. As today's reading from Luke attests, it's Jesus who opens the scriptures for us, who is the meaning and message of Scripture, and nowhere does Jesus do or say anything which suggests God guns down children. There's also this. When we make too little of the Bible, we forget that we the Church have not been orphaned or underequipped. Today our reading from Ephesians assures us that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father; exalted high above all adversaries and therefore able to shepherd his Church through thick and thin. Next week, the festival of Pentecost will celebrate how the Holy Spirit, the power from on high for which Jesus more than once instructed the first disciples to wait, has in fact been sent. We don't want to make too little of the Bible. It's there to inspire us. But we also don't want to make too much of the Bible.

This happens, when responding to the latest tragedy or drama, we say, "Well, Jesus did indicate things were going to get worse before they got better." It would also happen were we to comment, "Well, Jesus did say his kingdom was not of this world and that the poor and the unfortunate would remain with us." This is, without a doubt, making too much of the Bible. The bottom line is that the Bible says a lot of individual things. When it's convenient or comfortable, we can use any one of these individual things to promote the inaction that rises up out of grim and hopeless resignation. My goodness, select verses of Scripture were once used to defend slavery. They've also been used to justify racism and inequality. By now, I'd hope we realize that appealing to just one verse or one paragraph or one chapter of the Bible is quite often an unhealthy and unproductive exercise. What we want to do is isolate the overall message and meaning of Scripture, which is Jesus, and then proceed accordingly. And Jesus has never been a proponent of responding to the world's brokenness by looking down in grim and helpless resignation. His message to us has been: Go! Baptize! Teach! Love! Hope! Forgive! Heal!

After prayer has refreshed and reoriented us, this means we Christians never say or think that Evil can't be fought. Tell this to all the brave men and women we remember this weekend. If we can't mobilize against Evil, if we can't take a bite out of Evil, if we can't just say no to Evil, then why celebrate Memorial Day? Why keep sending brave men and women off to fight for those rights we regard as self-evident for all—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Staring down at the ground in grim and helpless resignation is an insult to all who have put their life on the line for this country and the world God loves. More than that, it's also an insult to the Jesus who has commanded us to go, to baptize, to teach, to love, to hope, to forgive, to heal, and a whole lot more. Remember! They will know we are Christians by our love; a very active quality that does its best to fend off anything that threatens the beloved. And so, as we look upward and pray, as we avoid looking down with grim and helpless resignation, let's remember that Jesus, the message and meaning of the Bible, has said the entirety of God's will for our here and now lives always gets back to loving neighbor as self. When this happen, the methods may vary, but the goal will always be the same. Leaving both the individual and the community, not one or the other, but both, in a healthier and happier place. 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: Holy One, ruler of heaven and earth, wash us in your Holy Spirit and make us witnesses to your resurrected life in this community. Let our fellowship be a sign to others of the presence of Christ. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Through thundering, mighty waters reveal your creative power at work in creation. Cleanse the air, land, and waters with the movement of your Spirit and the participation of your people. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: In faithful and diverse worship, turn all people toward you and your loving will for humankind. Bridge differences among traditions and across faiths. Unite us in mission for the sake of a world in need. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: In the suffering and death of Jesus, draw near to those who suffer and for whom death approaches (especially). Hold them in the palm of your loving hand and give them rest. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Inspire us through the music, dance, and other arts ministries of this congregation (artists and ministries may be named). With clapping, shouting, singing, playing, and moving, let our bodies bear witness to the joy you alone can give. God, in your mercy,

A: hear our prayer.

P: Rouse us to remember the faithful witness of the saints who have gone before us. By their lives and the life and death of Jesus, enlighten our hearts, give us hope, and lead us in wisdom. 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 the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead raise you to new life, fill you with hope, and turn your mourning into dancing. Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**