



Mount Calvary Connected

June 30, 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 Scott Klimke

On this coming Wednesday, we'll gather for the second session of our new study on the psalms. As I've announced in worship, we will be starting with the psalms most used in worship. For those who are curious, the second most-used psalm in our worship life is Psalm 8. This is the psalm we'll be working with next. As we discovered during our first study session, the most used psalm in our worship life is Psalm 98; the psalm responsible for "Joy to the World." It's a psalm that raises important questions about the character of our mission as the Church.

In verse after verse, Psalm 98 speaks of a victory of God that is so obvious and widespread that the disbelieving and even nature itself can't help but sing a new song to the Lord. In verse one, we're told the right hand of God has won this "can't miss victory." Talk of the right hand of God can bring to mind Jesus, who now sits at the right hand of God. It's a connection our reading calendar encourages. Whenever Psalm 98 is featured in worship, the other readings are related to the birth of our Savior, our Savior dying for our sins on Good Friday, or our Savior rising again to prove that our sins have in fact been forgiven through his sacrifice. But as Psalm 98 uses language that brings to mind Jesus, it also puts together words that can bring to mind the ministry of the Church.

In verse three, Psalm 98 contends all the ends of the earth have seen the victory God has won through the cross, empty tomb, and all that follows. The reference to the ends of the earth recalls what we people of faith are to be doing. Flesh and blood proof of his victory, we are to be Jesus' witnesses not just locally, but also to the ends of the earth, (Acts 1:8). This means it's through us, again, through us, that God's victory in Jesus is to become so obvious and so widespread that even the disbelieving shall sing to the Lord with trumpets and horns, as nature itself claps its hands and roars in joy. How might this be done? What would it take for us to shock and stun the disbelieving so much that all they could

do was sing, "O Lord, my God, how great thou art?" When you get down to it, how is it that we might get even the trees around us to start singing with the birds who nest in them?

I'd be most interested in hearing your answer to these questions. As I continue to arrive at my own, I will share I was touched by something I read yesterday. In an article, someone was led to comment that very few are both courageous and successful. I took this to mean that it's easier to sell out yourself and your principles than it is to live in integrity. I suspect we all know this to be true, but there's nothing amazing or astounding or inspiring about those who betray Jesus and his Church because they're too afraid to do it Jesus' way. It's when we do it Jesus' way without apology or concession that I suspect the ends of the earth and even our non-human neighbors will start singing with us to the point where it can be said that a new song is in fact being sung to the Lord. And what is Jesus' way? As we heard in worship this past weekend, Jesus' way is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, (Galatians 5:22). What would happen if we and others produced these fruits of the Spirit again and again and never, ever, ever justified or explained away a single departure from them? It might not be the ends of the earth or the trees around us, but I'm pretty confident we'd find the voices involved with our praise of God would grow considerably.

Your Partner in Mission and Ministry,

Pastor Scott

Upcoming Meetings

Psalms Bible Study: July 6th at 6:30 p.m.

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

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

Church Council: July 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.

Shine a Light on Us

The Tribune-Democrat is accepting nominations for the "Simply the Best" contest. Vote online at www.tribdem.com/simplythebest and nominate Mt. Calvary Lutheran as the "best place to worship" and our own Richland Learning Center as "best preschool/daycare." Deadline to vote is July 8th. Paper ballots are in the June 25th and 29th editions of the paper, too.

Pond Cleaning Event is Canceled!

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!

Get Well Cards for Pastor Jonathan

Cards can be mailed to:

Pastor Jonathan Adams
219 Ohio Street
Boswell, PA 15531

If you'd like to send a meal to Pastor Jonathan & his family to help during his recovery, visit the Meal Train website: <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/n15v0q> Thank you!

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!

Computer & Internet Connection Now Available

Members may use the computer in the library during office hours: Monday – Thursday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Scheduled Worship Help

Saturday, July 2:

Greeters/Ushers: Jerry & Ruth Pozun

Communion Assistants: Pat Bittner & Cindy Solarczyk

Sunday, July 3:

Greeters/Ushers: Mary Ann Mapes & Bill Eschrich

Communion Assistants: Volunteers needed!

Saturday, July 9:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!

Communion Assistants: Volunteers needed!

Sunday, July 10:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!

Communion Assistants: Todd Moss

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!

Allegheny Synod Youth Day @ Kennywood: Friday, July 1st

Synod Day @ DelGrosso's Amusement Park: Monday, August 1st

Lutheran Day @ the Curve: Sunday, August 21st @ the Curve Baseball Field in Altoona

IGNITE - Elementary Youth Retreat (Grades 2 - 6): September 24-25 @ Camp Sequanota

PLUNGE - Jr. High Retreat (Grades 6 -9): October 1-2 @ Camp Sequanota

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 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.

Walk Thru Basket Party

We are having a Walk Thru Basket Party on September 24th and September 25th. Tickets will be on sale in July. We are asking for your support of the event with the following: purchase tickets, filled baskets, gift certificates, or cash. More information to follow in the coming weeks.

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,

Daniel Rift

The Rev. Daniel Rift
Director, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response Fund
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the
Week: July 3 – July 9, 2022**

July 3 - Kimberly McMullen

July 4 - Kaitlyn McMullen & Laura Stayrook

July 5 - Charles Palm

July 6 - Christopher Moss & Calvin Pringle

July 7 - William Bunnell & Zachary Wolfhope

July 8 - Carter Bower, Logan Punako, & Austin Urban

July 4 - William & Deborah Pozun

July 8 - Jason & Robyn Berkebile

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, 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, Roxanne Horner, Miriam 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, Mabel Ann, Betty, Cathy, Cindy, Jill, Theresa & Family, Dean, Madi & Family, Patty & Family, Sydney & Family, Paulette, Ron, Andrea, Mary Ann, Midge, Rayford, Lois A., Dwane, Nicole, Trent, Kim, Kyle, Anna, Beverly, Sondra, E. Warshel, & Audrey Rubis.

Financial Update

When the congregational council recently reviewed financial reports for May, very little had changed. By way of example, last year's property expenses and this year's property expenses were separated by just \$250.14 and last year's wages and this year's wages were separated by just \$74.89. This stability in Mount Calvary's largest areas of expense speaks to the great job being done by your elected leaders. Have you said, "Thank you" to one of those leaders lately? Are they regularly a part of your prayer life?

There's also stability when it comes to the income side of the equation. We continue to feel the impact of the pandemic slowdown and even more so the impact of members moving out of our area, but May

income was still slightly higher than it was a year ago. This too speaks to the effective job being done by your elected leaders. Please pray for them. Please be encouraging and grateful. They're doing a great job. Along with those effective leaders, may we all just continue doing our part; maintaining our previous giving as a baseline and increasing when and where possible.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, June 26, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: Sovereign God, ruler of all hearts, you call us to obey you, and you favor us with true freedom. Keep us faithful to the ways of your Son, that, leaving behind all that hinders us, we may steadfastly follow your paths, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: 1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21

Then the Lord said to [Elijah,] "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place.

So he set out from there, and found Elisha son of Shaphat, who was plowing. There were twelve yoke of oxen ahead of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him. He left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." Then Elijah said to him, "Go back again; for what have I done to you?" He returned from following him, took the yoke of oxen, and slaughtered them; using the equipment from the oxen, he boiled their flesh, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 16

P: Protect me, O God, for take refuge in you; I have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord, my good above all other."

A: All my delight is in the godly that are in the land, upon those who are noble among the people.

P: But those who run after other gods shall have their troubles multiplied.

A: I will not pour out drink offerings to such gods, never take their names upon my lips.

P: O Lord, you are my portion and my cup; it is you who uphold my lot.

A: My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; indeed, I have a rich inheritance.

P: I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel; my heart teaches me night after night.

A: I have set the Lord always before me; because God is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

P: My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; my body also shall rest in hope.

A: For you will not abandon me to the grave, nor let your holy one see the pit.

P: You will show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Second Reading: Galatians 5:1, 13-25

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 9:51-62

When the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But he turned and rebuked them. Then they went on to another village.

As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

In our reading from Luke, the word "first" is used more than once. This is a loaded word for people of faith and Jesus responds as if it is. Prospective disciples want to put something other than a life of faith and devotion first and Jesus won't have it. With the word "first" so loaded, his response is not unexpected. The First Commandment isn't just first in order. It's also first in importance. First, and foremost, in a life of faith and devotion is having no other gods; is loving the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength, and all our mind. This simply isn't done when we put Jesus, the

Spirit, or God the Father on hold. But as our reading from Luke accentuates the all-important principle of putting the Holy Trinity first in all things and at all times, some of our other readings indicate this requires finesse and adaptability on our part; different things at different time. But before I say more about this, let's first dwell a bit with how putting God first in anything is impossible without the Holy Spirit.

In our reading from Galatians, St. Paul draws a contrast between flesh and Spirit; with flesh bad and Spirit good. Let's make sure we give this contrast its due, without taking things too far as some have. With regard to going too far, the Church throughout its history has more than once had to fend off those who have taught fleshly bodies are bad. Proponents of this philosophy have taught the whole point of religion is to escape the body; is to free the soul from the prison of flesh. But as the Church has taught, this isn't Jesus or the Bible. When God became flesh in Jesus Christ, the message was that fleshly bodies are good. When God calls creation "very good" in the Bible, our bodies are included, as is a command to use our bodies to be fruitful and to multiply. As we interact with Paul's talk of the flesh, we need to recognize it's not a cipher for how bodies and bodily functions and desires are bad. Properly understood, Paul uses the flesh as shorthand for our native state; shorthand for something like original sin.

If it is unfamiliar, original sin is the notion that the disobedience of the first humans, as well as the deathly penalty for that disobedience, has been passed on to us. If sin and death were open questions for the first humans, original sin says they're now certainties for each and every one of us. An early Church figure named Augustine tried to explain how this could be. Separated by who knows how many years from Adam and Eve, how could we be just like them in that we all sin and are all destined for death? Augustine's answer was that parents pass a sin gene on to their children. I'm not a great fan of this explanation. Bringing children into the world has been commanded by God and God doesn't command us to sin or to add anything to its nefarious program. But as wanting as we might find St. Augustine on this point, somehow, some way, we all do become as sinful and disobedient as the first humans. For Paul and our reading from Galatians, this is to be in the flesh. To be in the flesh is to be dead in your sins. To be in the flesh is to be someone who puts anything and everything but the fear, love, and trust of God first. All of which is to say we're not going to put the Holy Trinity first in anything without the Holy Spirit. A life of faith and devotion like that desired by today's readings from Scripture is impossible without the Spirit in our lives first. As St. Paul reemphasizes in our reading from Galatians, faith and all of its fruits are given and grown by the Holy Spirit. And it certainly is worth remembering that for a long, long time now the Holy Spirit's planting and pruning has most often been done when we gather together as we are now around the word of God and the sacraments of God. But when the Spirit is there, when the gift of faith has been given, what shall follow after isn't going to be a straight and predictable line. Once enabled by the Spirit, putting the Holy Trinity first shall require finesse and adaptability; different things at different times.

Take family as one example of this. Family features prominently in the commands of God. We are to honor our father and mother. We are to honor our wedding vows. As a whole, we are to be fruitful and multiply. But in our reading from Luke, family, as in flesh and blood family, doesn't come first, even as Elisha is given some time for flesh and blood family in our reading from 1st Kings. When we put the Holy Trinity first, there shall be times when flesh and blood family is the order of the day or moment, but not always.

The old adage that “blood is thicker than water” gets at this. Though it often happens, the blood of biology is not to come before the water and word of baptism, when and if there’s a conflict between the two. Through the water and word of baptism, heaven has joined us together as a family that’s going to outlive the grave and any other family known up to now. If and when there’s a conflict between blood and water, we don’t want to forget this. When by instinct or in the heat of the moment we validate the prediction that blood is thicker than water, we leave God and God’s family in second place. With the first and most important commandment being the commandment to put the Holy Trinity first, this won’t do. Like all sins, it can and will be forgiven the second we recognize the error of our ways. But if the Holy Trinity is to come first, the family the Holy Trinity has created by way of baptism also has to come first when and where conflict with this or that family of the flesh is involved. Thankfully these conflicts don’t come up all the time and hopefully they’re quite rare for all of us. But sometimes we may have to tell our flesh and blood families or our flesh and blood friends “no” because their desires are inconsistent with the way of Christ that becomes ours through baptism. Or it just may be that we have to tell our flesh and blood families or our flesh and blood friends “not now” because in real time and space their needs aren’t at the moment quite as important as the needs of our church family. It all depends upon the circumstances involved. Once it’s made possible by the Holy Spirit, a life of faith and devotion shall require finesse and adaptability; different things at different times.

Our reading from Galatians also bears witness to this. Paul’s list of the fruits of the Spirit isn’t short. It’s nine dispositions long. Some would say this bears witness to how we are the sum of our parts; with each of us producing different fruits so that together we can have all the fruits of the Spirit we need. I wouldn’t disagree with this characterization, but I’d also say Paul’s long list may serve to tell us that over nine weeks, nine months, or nine years, a life of faith and devotion is going to require more than just one spiritual disposition or attribute. Sometimes, it will be love. Sometimes, it will be joy. Sometimes, it will be peace. And so on and so forth. This too would be another way of saying that once it’s made possible by the Spirit, a life of faith and devotion shall require finesse and adaptability; different things at different times. But as this finesse and adaptability are practiced in real time and space, this much is certain. Other people shall benefit, as we ourselves benefit from their betterment.

Listen to me please. We never put the Holy Trinity first by withdrawing from human community for any length of time. Time outs are okay, but not retirement. Once our time outs are done, there’s never going to be a moment when putting the Holy Trinity first doesn’t simultaneously involve building and strengthening community with others. As Jesus himself sometimes does, in our reading from Galatians St. Paul says the entirety of God’s will for us comes down to loving our neighbors as an extension of self. This is not to say neighbor love comes before the love of God. But it is to say that neighbor love in all of its diversity and complexity is how you love God in real time and real space. And so, let’s continue to gather with one another around the word of God and the sacraments of God so that the Spirit might continue to plant and prune faith in our lives. And then, let’s never lose sight of how important this eternal community and other less eternal communities are; being fully prepared to serve and sacrificially love this community and others not woodenly, but with the finesse and adaptability that putting the Holy Spirit first shall undoubtedly require over time. Amen!

Prayers of Intercession

P: United in Christ and guided by the Spirit, we pray for the church, the creation, and all in need.

P: God of faithfulness, set the face of your church firmly on you. Rooted in your self-giving love, may the church find freedom in loving our neighbors. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: God of gentleness, strengthen the earth's ability to heal. Where there are dangerous storms, bring calm. Where there are destructive fires, bring rain. Protect homes, habitats, and livelihoods threatened by climate disasters. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: God of peace, guide all who govern, that they place the good of their citizens above self-promotion. Anoint leaders of nations with your Spirit of neighborly love. Protect refugees and all who live under tyranny or conflict (especially). God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: God of kindness, reveal your healing presence to all who are sick or dying (especially). Uphold those who grieve. Support the needs of any who are unemployed, hungry, or have nowhere to lay their heads. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: God of love, attend to those struggling with addiction, depression, or uncontrolled anger. Provide support systems and loving companions as they work toward health, that they may rest in hope and know the fullness of joy in your presence. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: God of joy, we give thanks for all who have died and now celebrate the inheritance of life in you. Keep their examples of faithfulness always before us, that we trust your promises in life and in death. God of grace,

A: hear our prayer.

P: God of every time and place, in Jesus' name and filled with your Holy Spirit, we entrust these spoken prayers and those in our hearts into your holy keeping.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

P: The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

P: The God of all grace ✠ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**