



Mount Calvary Connected

August 25, 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 Friday, Julia and I visited the Enterprise Rent-a-Car office at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. We were given a Toyota RAV-4. Having test driven one of these SUV's with my mother a number of years ago, I can report the ride of the vehicle has improved considerably. I can also report the seats were typically Toyota plush and comfortable. The cruise control was another story.

As we drove off in our RAV-4, I knew I'd be handling the first leg of the drive. Julia does not like big city driving at all. I don't mind it. I eventually figured out how to turn on cruise control, set it for seven miles over the speed limit, and drove on assuming the speed of the vehicle would remain constant unless I tapped the brake. How wrong I was! Equipped with radar cruise control, the vehicle would slow down any time it felt we were drawing too close to another vehicle or another vehicle was drawing too close to us. Once the perceived threat had abated, the vehicle would start making its way back to the preset speed. If it saves lives, I might be persuaded to like this feature. But for now, I'm not a fan. Having been driving for close to forty years now, I don't need a tutorial from a computer. I guess it goes to show that not all new things are everything they're made out to be.

Once we made it to my mother's, we rested for what remained of Friday, went to a family reunion the next day, and made our way to my mother's church on Sunday morning. As for worship, here was an old-fashioned, even ancient thing which was as useful and uplifting as ever. Though I very much feel called to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, one downside of this calling is that I don't get to sit in the pews a whole lot. I think most worship leaders will tell you that leading worship and actually worshipping are often two, very different things.

When I do get to sit in the pews, I am consistently reminded of how wonderful it is to gather with other people of faith around what we Lutherans call the means of grace—the word of God and the

sacraments of God. This is an experience that speaks to parts of my person the rest of life ignores. I don't know exactly what a soul is, but worship speaks to it like nothing else. As my eyes grew misty with tears as they tend to do when I'm able to sit in the pews, I was reminded of just how right we Lutherans are to claim on the basis of Scripture that the Holy Spirit most often plants, nurtures, and grows faith when we gather together for in-person worship featuring not just other Christians, but also the word of God and the sacraments of God. As new-fangled things like radar cruise control arrive, sometimes sticking, sometime not, I do hope we never diminish or abandon the importance of the weekly gathering with one another and around word and sacrament. But it can happen.

In a few weeks, our appointed reading from Luke will find Jesus wondering if there will be faith on earth when he returns to usher in the full and forever Kingdom of God. The possibility that people might lose heart and stop praying is the immediate concern which gives rise to Jesus' uncertainty, (Luke 18:1-8). But the possibility that people might stop treasuring the weekly, in-person gatherings in which faith is customarily planted, nurtured, and grown could easily be substituted as another cause for concern. With signs that it might, I hope it never happens.

On-line worship resources are better than nothing for those who cannot attend worship because they are homebound, immunocompromised, unvaccinated, or working. I am glad the pandemic forced us to make online resources available for those we have previously been excluding from our worship services unnecessarily. But if one isn't homebound, immunocompromised, unvaccinated, or working, there is no substitute for gathering with sblings in Christ around the word of God and the sacraments of God. May we never forget this and be present for in-person worship as often as possible. We'll be better for it. Mount Calvary will be better for it. Johnstown, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the United States, North America, the Northern Hemisphere, all of creation will be better for it. If there is to be faith on earth when Jesus returns for all eternity, we simply can't do without one another, the word of God, and the sacraments of God. They're ancient, old-fashioned things, gifts of God, which never grow old and are unsurpassed when it comes to enabling faith on earth.

Pastor Scott

Upcoming Meetings

Bible Study on Psalms: August 31st at 6:30 p.m.

Property Committee: September 13th at 6:00 p.m.

WELCA: September 19th at 6:00 p.m.

Church Council: September 20th 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 "Simply the Best" Contest

Voting is now open for the 2022 "Simply the Best" contest!

Mt. Calvary has been nominated once again for "Best Place of Worship" and our partners at the Richland Learning Center have been nominated for "Best Preschool/Daycare."

Please cast your votes by September 2nd at 5 p.m. by visiting the website:
https://www.tribdem.com/site/simply_the_best.html

OR sending in the paper ballot included in the Tribune-Democrat newspaper.

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!

Giving Tree

The Giving Tree collected \$330 for the months of May and June and was donated to The Precious Life Baby Bottle Campaign. The donations for September and October will be going toward the Hozanna House Project. This is a mission who works on local projects, such as cleaning up areas of town, painting or repairing houses, etc. Monetary donations, as well as volunteer opportunities will be available. 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.

Usher Teams

We are looking to recruit teams of ushers staffed with at least four people. Each group will be assigned to Saturdays or Sundays and a month which works for them. Once the day and month have been arranged, it will be up to the people on the team to determine who will be taking the various weeks in the assigned month. Please be in contact with Pastor Scott should you wish to become a part of a team or have already recruited a time of four.

Scheduled Worship Help

Saturday, August 27:

Greeters/Ushers: Pat Bittner & Linda Barnhart

Communion Assistants: Missy Brodt

Sunday, August 28:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!

Communion Assistants: Todd Moss & Noelle Berkey

Saturday, September 3:

Greeters/Ushers: Volunteers needed!

Communion Assistants: Volunteers needed!

Sunday, September 4:

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!

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/>

Flat Jesus has been to a LOT of different places this summer with a LOT of different people! But there's still time to take your faith (and Flat Jesus) with you on those last-minute end-of-summer trips!

Make sure to send your pictures to Pastor Jono via email at RevJonoAdams@gmail.com or cellphone at 412-817-6704. All pictures received will be printed to go on a bulletin board at church and shown in a video!

God's Work, Our Hands

Mt. Calvary will be participating in God's Work, Our Hands Sunday this year by packing bags for the Jared Box Project. Instead of Sunday, we will be packing the bags on Saturday, September 10th after the 5:30 p.m. service. This will allow for both Pastor Scott and Pastor Jonathan to be able to attend. A light dinner will be served, and all are welcome. We hope to see you there!

Touch a Truck!

Saturday, September 10th from 10-2 p.m.

There will be all types of vehicles to explore, including fire, police, rescue, and commercial trucks. Snacks and drinks will be provided. There will be a special appearance by Po Poore!

Pond Cleaning/Weeding Event

The Property Committee will be hosting a pond clean out/weeding on Thursday, September 15th at 6:00 p.m. Bring your favorite tools!

Walk Thru Basket Party

We are having a Walk Thru Basket Party on September 24th (10-2pm) and September 25th (9-2pm). Tickets are \$5 for 26 chances. Winners will be drawn on Facebook Live at 2:30pm on September 25th and contacted via phone/email.

We are asking for your support of the event with the following: purchase tickets, filled baskets, gift certificates, or cash. Tickets will be on sale before and after church services.

Annual Clothing Sale

The Social Ministry Team will be having their annual clothing sale on Saturday, October 8th from 9-1 p.m. We now have a storage area downstairs at the church that allows us to start collecting items earlier. If you have any clothes you would like to donate, please bag them by size and gender. This makes it easier during the sorting process. You can drop the clothes off at any time. If the church is locked, and no one is available in the office, please leave them by the blue bin outside. It will be checked daily. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

Bosco's "Friends Helping Friends" Shopping Passes

WELCA is selling Bosco's "Friends Helping Friends" discount shopping passes again this year. Your \$5.00 donation entitles you to a shopping pass to Bosco's on October 19th, giving you a 25% discount on most purchases. Proceeds benefit WELCA's many activities throughout the year. Let any WELCA member know you'd like to purchase a pass or watch for someone selling them in the Narthex after services.

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/>

Lutheran Disaster Response: U.S. Flooding

Beginning on July 27th, a line of severe storms dumped record amounts of rain on eastern Kentucky, overflowing rivers and creeks onto streets and neighborhoods. The death toll in Kentucky is expected to rise as search and rescue efforts continue. The number of people missing is still unknown. Rising

waters are damaging infrastructure, including roads, bridges and power lines, which hinders rescue efforts.

The flooding has destroyed hundreds of homes and other buildings and left families with nothing. These severe floods are not limited to Kentucky; there has been flooding in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, West Virginia and other states in the region.

As the waters recede and the full scope of the damage is assessed, Lutheran Disaster Response will work with the Indiana-Kentucky Synod and local communities to focus on long-term needs. We anticipate that the response will include rebuilding homes, replacing lost household items, and providing emotional and spiritual care to survivors.

Please consider donating to this cause. Gifts to "U.S. flooding" will be used in full (100%) to assist those affected by floods.

Give now for Eastern Europe Crisis Response

On February 24th, Russian forces invaded Ukraine, launching land, sea, and air attacks. Airports are now shut, and few railway lines are operational. Civilians fleeing the violence are heading toward Ukraine's western districts and such neighboring countries as Poland, Moldova, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary. Millions of people are seeking refuge in neighboring countries. There are major humanitarian concerns for both internally displaced people and refugees. Many of these Ukrainians fleeing their homes need shelter, basic necessities, and pastoral care.

Lutheran Disaster Response is accompanying our companions in Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, and Moldova, as well as such ecumenical partners as Lutheran World Federation and Church World Service, in their humanitarian responses to the crisis. These partners provide refugees with immediate support and supplies such as food, blankets, water, and hygiene kits.

Your gifts designated for "Eastern Europe Crisis Response" will be used entirely (100%) to provide support for people impacted by conflict in the region.

Birthdays and Anniversaries for the Week: August 28 – September 3, 2022

Aug. 29 - Frank Robison

Aug. 30 - Gladys Haupt & Mary Ann Mapes

Aug. 31 - James Colvin, Hayden Lingenfelter, & Alan Sterner

Sept. 1 - Cody Berkebile & Jan Layton

Remember those that prayer has been requested for:

Linda & Dick, 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, Ken, John Nerone, Dane Wisner, Jeff, Irene, Karen, Erin, Susan Dyers, Bob McMullen, Wyatt George, Larry Hockensmith, Jean Pellon, Mike, Corey, Pastor Jonathan & Family, Roxanne Horner, Miriam Horner, 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., Nicole, Trent, Kyle, Anna, Beverly, Sondra, E. Warshel, Audrey Rubis, Carol, Katey, Janice, Trina & Family, Jake Wissinger, Candi Walker, Dave Brehm, Chrissy-Baby Emma, Wyatt, Gerald Barrick, the Shreffler Family, Louise, Kim, Devin, Laura & family, Dorothy, Jo Ann, John Alt, Jan Mertz, Denny, & Jill Lisson.

Financial Update

When your elected leaders reviewed financial reports through the end of July at this week's council meeting, there was once again stability. Even with great decline in the markets, the overall holdings of the congregation are up from where they were a year ago. Receipts are ahead of last year and ahead of budget. Just as positively, expenses are down from where they were a year ago and running under budget. This is all incredibly positive. We just need to avoid complacency. People come and go and it happens more often than usual in Johnstown. We need to be inviting and welcoming to overcome their absence. We also need to be increasing our giving when possible to offset the losses not covered by the addition of new faces and families. Thanks a bundle for your support!

Condensed Worship for Sunday, August 21, 2022

Prayer of the Day

P: O God, mighty and immortal, you know that as fragile creatures surrounded by great dangers, we cannot by ourselves stand upright. Give us strength of mind and body, so that even when we suffer because of human sin, we may rise victorious through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 58:9b-14

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in. If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 103:1-8

P: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.

A: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all God's benefits—

P: who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases;

A: who redeems your life from the grave and crowns you with steadfast love and mercy;

P: who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like an eagle's.

A: O Lord, you provide vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.

P: You made known your ways to Moses and your works to the children of Israel.

A: Lord, you are full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Second Reading: Hebrews 12:18-29

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death." Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." This phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of what is shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Jonathan Adams

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus our Lord who sets us free. Amen.

I have a friend about my age who is probably one of the most generous people I know. It's not that she has tons of money, it's just how she uses her time. She helps take care of her nieces and nephews and neighbors. She volunteers. She fundraises for organizations she cares about.

This friend has come to church with me once or twice but admitted she doesn't really feel comfortable. She feels like a hypocrite.

She has a dirty sense of humor. She likes crude jokes. She appreciates cheap beer from time to time. She says she feels guilty sitting in church on Sunday morning after being at the bar on Saturday night.

Frankly, she's probably not alone. I'm absolutely certain there are plenty of people who are hesitant or downright resistant to go to church because they're afraid of being judged for what they do with the rest of their lives. And frankly, many of those folks are the ones that might make benefit from all that a church has to offer.

If nothing else, shouldn't church be a place where we feel set free from all of our other burdens in life? Liberated from the things that weigh us down?

But all too often... For way too many people... It's not.

All too often, for way too many people, church is a place filled with rules, expectations, and judgment.

That would've been the life experienced by the woman in today's Gospel. For eighteen years, she had literally been weighed down by the burdens of life, hunched over and judged by people who surely thought she must have done something to deserve such a punishment from God.

For her to even show her face in the temple must have taken great courage, she knew that people would look at her, that they'd stare, that they'd judge

But maybe she had heard the stories about this new rabbi who taught with authority. Who performed miracles. Who healed people like her. So maybe she thought it might be worth it this one time. Because isn't that what the church, or rather the temple, is supposed to be?

If nothing else, shouldn't it be a place of compassion? A place where people like her could be released from their struggles?

And that's exactly what Jesus does. He sees her. He has compassion. He heals her.

He frees her from this thing that has caused her so much pain and struggle.

If nothing else, that's what Christianity should be. Freedom from sin. Freedom from fear. Freedom to live life the way that God intended it.

But it didn't take long for Jesus himself to become the victim of the same criticism and judgement that the woman herself probably feared, as a rabbi calls him out, accusing him of breaking the sabbath laws... How dare he *heal* someone on the sabbath? How dare he set someone free on this day that should be dedicated to God and to rest?

But if nothing else, shouldn't the church be a place that gives us the power to rest? A place that frees us?

Over the centuries, the idea of church and Christianity has evolved. No longer is it a simple gathering among friends, but often an elaborate choreographed ritual in beautifully designed and decorated sanctuaries.

And it's not just the places and ways we gather for worship, but everything else about the life of the church, too. For a church to be considered "successful" it needs to have programs for every age, Christian education, faith formation, volunteering, music, and more. It needs to be everything to everybody.

But all of that is extra.

The Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, Elizabeth Eaton has a quote that I've heard her use a handful of times that I think really speaks to this.

"The church is not a social service agency with sacraments. We are the Body of Christ and together, we are church for the sake of the world."

If nothing else, we are the body of Christ, we are the church for the sake of the world. We are called to share the same compassion Jesus did for that woman, for so many others.

And we can. If nothing else we can do that, we can share compassion and love. If nothing else, that is what our faith calls us to do. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

P: Trusting in God's extraordinary love, let us come near to the Holy One in prayer.

P: You crown your church with steadfast love and mercy. Guide us continually in our baptismal covenant to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. Use our diverse gifts in service to the whole people of God. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: You satisfy the needs of all creatures. Protect the habitats of fish and birds (local bodies of water or wildlife refuges may be named). Repair ecosystems damaged by misuse, neglect, or natural disaster, that all creation may thrive. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: You make your ways known to all people. Inspire the rulers and leaders of nations with your compassion and mercy. Raise up activists and community organizers to restore places affected by violence, poverty, and inequality. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: You provide justice for all who are oppressed and relief to all who are afflicted. Heal those who are bent over by addiction, depression, and anxiety. Set free all who cry out under the weight of mental, emotional, or physical distress (especially). Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: You call us to delight in the sabbath. Renew our bodies, minds, and spirits in this worshiping assembly. Give rest to all who lead our congregation in worship, study, and service (congregational leaders may be named). Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Generations bless your holy name. We give you thanks for the communion of saints who have gathered in prayer and praise in this place. Support us in your love until we rest forever in you. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Receive the prayers of your children, merciful God, and hold us forever in your steadfast love; through Jesus Christ, our holy Wisdom.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: The blessing of the living God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, surround and sustain you, keep you from harm, and fill you with courage. **Amen.**