



# Mount Calvary Connected

November 3, 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!*

**Pastor Scott Klimke**

Cell-Phone: 570-367-3421

Email: [sklimke6@gmail.com](mailto:sklimke6@gmail.com)

**Pastor Jonathan Adams**

Cell-Phone: 412-817-6704

Email: [revjonoadams@gmail.com](mailto:revjonoadams@gmail.com)

---

## LIVE STREAMING WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION

Mt. Calvary hosts live broadcasts of the liturgy at 8:45 AM Sunday mornings. The broadcast can be heard by tuning your radio to 88.3 FM if you are near the church. We also stream these services live over the internet. Simply visit [www.mt-calvarylutheran.org](http://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org) and click "Live Radio Broadcast" from the home page on Sunday mornings.

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: [www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/](http://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/bulletins/)

---

### A Message from Pastor Jonathan

Take a moment or so and read through Luke 10:38-42, or, just know that it's the story of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha. Mary sits at Jesus' feet listening intently while Martha cannot tear herself away from the tasks of providing hospitality for their guests. Martha finally complains to Jesus that Mary isn't helping her, and Jesus chastises her that in fact her sister has chosen to do the right thing: the greatest teacher in the history of the world is there in their home, maybe listening to what he has to say may be more important than making sure dinner is ready on time.

To me, this story presents a question that is a little intimidating: How often do we direct our focus on the thing that we think God wants us to do, without actually listening to God? How often do we behave like Martha? Focusing on the "busy work" of faith, while ignoring that God might be calling us to do a new thing?

I've shared this reflection in several circles across our congregations recently, but I think it's one that's worth repeating...

One of the most important ways in which we can listen to God is through prayer, but this is also one of the ways in which we can fail to listen to God. Think about it this way: prayer can be seen as a conversation with God, and any good conversation goes both ways; one person says something while the other is listening, and then the second person responds while the first person listens. Conversations go back and forth. But oftentimes, our prayers are focused on asking God for things, of saying the things we expect God wants to hear. We do the talking because we're not sure how God responds. Meanwhile, we have access to the greatest creator and teacher of the universe, so why aren't we spending more time listening?

One of the ways to approach this is to spend more time looking for answered prayers. Look at the things we've said to God and the ways that we see God acting in our lives. It's more of a delayed conversation, like waiting on the postal service to bring letters back and forth between distant relatives, but, it's certainly a way to listen to God, and think about what God is calling us toward.

The other way to approach this is through creating the space for God's answers to come to us, which is most easily done by allowing for silence, for reflection and peace. For me, this means going for a long drive with the radio off, or a hike into the woods to find a nice place to sit. It's amazing the clarity that can come when I allow God's peace to come over me by pushing out all those other distracting thoughts. In our worship together, I've started to try and include more meaningful pauses during prayer and other parts of the service, trying to create that same sort of peaceful space for God to speak to me, and to all of us.

I think we all might be surprised at the things that God seems to be saying to us once we try to take more time to actually listen for those things. After all, why wouldn't we want to listen to the creator who gave life to every living thing?

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jonathan

---

#### **Upcoming Meetings/Events**

Evangelism/All Parish Meeting: November 3rd at 6:30 p.m.

Property Committee: November 7th at 6:00 p.m.

Psalms Bible Study: November 9th at 6:30 p.m.

Church Council Meeting: November 15th at 6:30 p.m.

WELCA: November 21st at 6:00 p.m.

Deadline for WELCA Spirit Sale Orders: November 30th

---

#### **Mobile Phone Found!**

A mobile phone was found outside the church, please call Terrie at the church office at 814-266-4859 to make plans to pick it up Mon – Thurs from 9am – 1pm.

---

#### **Prayer Ventures**

Ask the Spirit to ground our faith and service in humility so that we regard others as equal in humanity, children of God receiving the same grace, mercy and promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ that we have.

“Happy are those whose strength is in you” (Psalm 84:5). Give thanks that we find true strength and comfort through faith in God, who enables us to endure every difficulty and crisis in life, no matter how complex or consuming.

Pray that the Spirit will stir our determination to challenge ideologies that set us against one another through fear, hatred, untruths and mistrust. Ask God to help us hold to what is true, exercise love and mercy, seek justice and equity, care for one another and strive for unity.

Ask God to strengthen our relationships with the Lutheran World Federation, National Council of Churches of Christ and World Council of Churches for the work we do together to share the good news of Jesus Christ, grow the church, share resources for ministry and leadership development, and promote ecumenical and interreligious understanding.

---

### **Visits to Shut-Ins, Hospital, or Nursing Home Patients**

Never hesitate to contact the church office if you, or a loved one, desires a visit from one of our pastors, or a lay visitor. If you, or someone you know is homebound, hospitalized, or in a nursing/care home, and wants or needs a visit or more frequent visits, we are happy to do so. We never want anyone to be missed. We try to get information on those hospitalized or placed in nursing homes, but please don't assume that info is given to us automatically. Call us!

---

### **Choir Reorganization**

Several people have been asking about starting up a new choir!

Between time lost over COVID and losing a couple of longtime choir members, we will be needing to start fresh!

Over the years at Mount Calvary, we have sometimes worked with small numbers and sometimes included large groups of over twenty singers.

Some have been strong musicians and others of modest ability. We have sung in unison and in parts. We have occasionally included ambitious music such as that of Mozart and Handel, and even sung significant portions of the Messiah!

The one constant is that we have worked with people who are available and are willing to give freely of their time. This is an opportunity where anyone can participate.

By singing in the choir, you yourself become a stronger musician. Singing is a form of prayer. Singing touches our souls. Singing in a group connects us in a spiritual way.

For this September, it might be nice to tiptoe gently into a new season. I am thinking of beginning with some rounds and two-part singing. If this takes off, we certainly can be more ambitious!

Peoples' schedules are busy. In recent years, we have done Wednesday evening rehearsals for those who can make it. Sometimes I meet people individually. Sometimes people join in last minute at the choir warmup before the service.

I often record parts and, these days, can send an audio text to help people be better prepared.

Since I do not know everyone in the congregation and may not have invited you to sing, let me know if you would like to give it a try! Thanks so much!

Talk to Dan Gresh after any church service or text or call at 814-659-5109

## Scheduled Worship Help

### Ushers:

**Saturday, November 5:** Missy Brodt and Jeff Wingard  
**Sunday, November 6:** Bill Eschrich and Mary Ann Mapes

**Saturday, November 12:** Dick and Anita Brodt  
**Sunday, November 13:** Bill Eschrich and Mary Ann Mapes

**Saturday, November 19:** Missy Brodt and Jeff Wingard  
**Sunday, November 20:** Gary and Betty Schofield

**Saturday, November 26:** Dick and Anita Brodt  
**Sunday, November 27:** Gary and Betty Schofield

### Readers/Communion Assistants:

**Saturday, November 5:** Courtney Kylor and Cindy Solarczyk  
**Sunday, November 6:** Noelle Berkey

**Saturday, November 12:** Bill Layton and Claudia Plows  
**Sunday, November 13:** Jim Prisk

**Saturday, November 19:** Mark and Paige Williams  
**Sunday, November 20:** Carter Bower and Marybeth Heinze

**Saturday, November 26:** Cindy Buday and Kevin Oleksa  
**Sunday, November 27:** Ray Leverknight

There are sign up sheets in the Narthex for Greeters/Ushers and Readers/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.

---

### **“An unfettered life”**

by Debie Thomas

When I was growing up, I spent summers in my parents’ native South India. In the mornings, I’d sit on the veranda of my grandparents’ house as clusters of little girls in blue jumpers, starched blouses, and stiff pigtailed walked past me on their way to the village elementary school. They’d stare (Who’s that girl in the foreign clothes?) and I’d stare right back (Who are those girls with the bright ribbons in their hair and the shiny tiffin boxes swinging on their arms?).

The experience was disorienting. Watching those girls was like gazing into a mirror that should have been. The mirror that would have been if my parents hadn’t moved to America.

Now, decades later, I still experience this disorientation. My world feels too thin—or I feel too thin in it—and I think: I could have been a village housewife, raising chickens, milking cows, and drawing

water from a well. I could have been a woman who doesn't write, speak, or think in English. How is it that I wear jeans, not saris? Sport highlights, not headscarves? Why did I become this me, this American me? I could so easily have become another.

In some ways, the world my immigrant parents created for me was the world of those beribboned schoolgirls. America was alien territory in our early years here, and in their dislocation and homesickness, my parents tried to reproduce the village they missed in the child they loved. It was a project destined to fail, but that didn't stop them from trying.

There's a line from Walter Brueggemann—I first encountered it in Barbara Brown Taylor's *Leaving Church*—that stops me in my tracks every time I read it: "The world for which you have been so carefully prepared is being taken away from you by the grace of God." Perhaps it's my upbringing that makes this quote hit me so hard. I know incoherence well—the incoherence of being groomed for a world I don't actually inhabit.

I was groomed for a particular religious world, too. Like many Christians, I was carefully prepared for a specific expression of faith, a specific relationship to the church, a specific experience of God. I was prepared to live in a world where the Bible is straightforwardly sufficient for my hardest questions. I was groomed for a world in which God's activity is self-evident; discernible answers to prayer are my spiritual birthright; and perpetual hope, fervor, certainty, and joy constitute the norms of the life of faith.

But in the world I actually inhabit these days, the God I perceive—when I perceive God at all—is mysterious and elusive. While I've definitely known hope, fervor, certainty, and joy in my life, I've also known despair, apathy, doubt, and grief. In recent years, I've known the latter more often.

"By the grace of God," writes Brueggemann. It's by the grace of God that my world has been stretched, upended, and remade. I don't disagree with that, but I wrestle with it—because it's the long view. It's the wisdom that comes in retrospect. The problem is, I only have the now, the raw experience itself.

For me, the raw experience is hard. It's a stripping away, a breaking down, a hollowing. Sometimes it feels like death—a slow, stubborn death with a timetable aggravatingly its own. No matter how much my heart clamors for a quick resurrection, this death says, "No, not yet. There's more." More hollowing, more stripping, more fire.

Who knew that God would fight for something wholly other than an easy piety? Who knew that God would insist on bare bones before asking if these bones will live?

In *God in Pain*, Taylor argues that disillusionment is essential to the Christian life: "It is almost always a painful thing," she writes, but "it is never a bad thing, to lose the lies we have mistaken for the truth." I agree, but I have questions: To what end? For what purpose? Where will this grace of God lead?

Like many bicultural kids, I grew up wishing for a world spacious enough to accommodate all of me: the American me, the Indian me, the conflicted me. As a child, I didn't have the language to express it, but what I hungered for was coherence. I wanted my inner and outer lives to align.

Nowadays, I wonder if God wants coherence, too. What if the religious world I was so carefully prepared for limits God as much as it limits me, and God longs for freedom as passionately as I do?

What if God has personal stakes in asking me to honor what is rather than what piety, tradition, and dogma keep insisting should be? Maybe God is asking for room—room to exist in my life in God’s full complexity.

The irony is, this is the very thing I’ve wanted since I was a child. To live an unfettered life. To be transparent, authentic, seen and known for who I truly, wholly am. Is it possible that God shares this hunger? I wonder if my core desire has been a magnet all these years, pulling me closer and closer to God’s own heart.

If so, then Brueggemann is right, and I am surrounded by grace. If so, then this painful dismantling of my world is God’s gift to both of us. Because when it’s over, I will finally be free to give God the desire of God’s heart. I will finally inhabit a world spacious enough to welcome the fullness of who God is.

*Debie Thomas is minister of lifelong formation at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Palo Alto, California, and author of Into the Mess and Other Jesus Stories.*

---

### **All Saints’ Day**

Saturday, November 5, 2022

Sunday, November 6, 2022

---

### **Updates from Our Members & Community**

#### **WELCA Spirit T-shirt and Sweatshirt Sale**

It's not too early to Christmas shop, or treat yourself to new, colorful Mt. Calvary T-Shirts, Sweatshirts, Hoodies, etc. WELCA's Spirit Sale is being held online. Visit <https://mtcalvarylutheranchurch.itemorder.com> to see the selection of items, colors, sizes and prices. Place your order, pay and get a receipt all on-line with F/X Screen Printing.

All purchases will be delivered to the church and a WELCA member will contact you to arrange pick-up at the church. Any questions, contact any WELCA member, or F/X at the number on the website. Prices were rounded up slightly, and proceeds will benefit WELCA's many activities. Deadline to order is November 30th.

---

#### **Help Us Fill in the Blanks!**

Our birthdate, wedding anniversary, and church membership records are incomplete. We have been working on moving records from paper to electronic and it's a huge undertaking. Please help Terri or one of our volunteers if they contact you for missing information. You can be a bigger help by calling the church office to verify birth and anniversary dates with Terri. Thanks for your cooperation!

-----

#### **Backyard Ministries Hat/Glove Collection**

Once again, Mt. Calvary will be collecting hats and gloves for the children of Coopersdale. Please take a labeled bag, fill it, and return it to the bin in the narthex. This year, there will also be the opportunity to provide a monetary donation, instead of purchasing the items. A basket will be in the narthex for this option as well. Thank you for your continued support!

---

**Birthdays and Anniversaries for the  
Week: November 6 – November 12, 2022**

**Nov. 6** - Layna Beglin & Matthew Hockensmith

**Nov. 9** - Joshua Brehm & Ruth Pozun

**Nov. 10** - Laura Bower

**Nov. 11** - Kevin Barrick

**Nov. 12** - Wilma Hiltz & Grant Lumley

**Nov. 6** - Jon & Melissa White Adamy

**Nov. 6** - Harold & Sharon Ashcraft

---

**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, Linda Haberkorn, Lorraine, Joe, Donna, Danny & Family, Becky Jo, Bill, Linda & Family, Mary, Mary Jane, Janice, 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, El 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, Jaci, Dominic Megia, Jackie Hauger, Sharon, Barbara, Louise & Family, Dennis, Mary M., Joel Penrod, & Tim Miller.

---

**Condensed Worship for Sunday, October 30, 2022**

**Prayer of the Day**

P: Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after

those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

#### **Psalm 46**

P: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

**A: Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;**

P: though its waters rage and foam, and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

**A: There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.**

P: God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken; God shall help it at the break of day.

**A: The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake; God speaks, and the earth melts away.**

P: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

**A: Come now, regard the works of the Lord, what desolations God has brought upon the earth;**

P: behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world; who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.

**A: "Be still, then, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth."**

P: The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

#### **Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28**

Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

P: The word of the Lord,

**A: Thanks be to God!**

**Gospel: John 8:31-36**

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

P: The gospel of the Lord.

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

**Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke**

Life comes with chapters. Life is a series of acts in an unfolding drama. Life is an album that moves from song to song. It's what our opening hymn and appointed scriptures have already told us today. In our opening hymn, there was birth and death. We sang of baptisms and weddings. There was the faith of a child and the deeper explorations of later years. And this witness to life's chapters and life's acts, to life's album of songs, continued when we heard our four appointed scriptures. To cite but one example, our reading from Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant and an old, broken covenant. This is change. This is life as a compendium of chapters, acts, and songs. As so much changes, does anything stay the same?

Before we explore this question further, let's speak of a rite of passage not mentioned in our opening hymn. As together we sang "Borning Cry," there was talk of baptisms and weddings and an allusion to funerals, but no mention of confirmation. This weekend we celebrate confirmation here at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church as Savannah Foor, Ian Selepack, and Lili Swartz become full-fledged members of our congregation. In the Roman Catholic tradition, confirmation is a sacrament usually administered by the local bishop. In Roman Catholic circles, confirmation confers a divine grace the unconfirmed don't have. The Lutheran tradition doesn't go quite this far in its estimation of confirmation. In the Lutheran tradition, there are only two sacraments; baptism and communion. But confirmation is still a big deal. Rather than conveying a new grace, Lutherans hold confirmation is about celebrating an old and continuing grace.

In the Lutheran tradition, when someone is confirmed, they take hold of their baptism in a more personal way than they have in the past. No longer relying on their parents or sponsors to speak for them, confirmands like Savannah, Ian, and Lili publicly say, "Yes, I have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb Jesus Christ! Yes, by way of baptism's water and word, I have been forever adopted as a child of God whose future shall include the very best that God has to give. And yes, when it comes to the Church God makes through baptism and faith, I'm going to be a lifer. I'm going to continue to gather for worship where the Holy Spirit gives me faith and I'm going to express this faith throughout the various chapters, acts, and songs of life." This is confirmation. It's a return to baptism, as it's also the promise to carry baptism forward. Getting back to the question I asked earlier, I wonder if baptism is the uniting thread that weaves its way through a life of change?

This is certainly one way to summarize what I was taught during my years at the school formerly known as the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. All roads led back to baptism, as all roads carried baptism forward too. When applied to the typical movements in the life of a Christian, this meant that communion found me celebrating a family meal with those who had become my siblings by way of baptism. It meant confirmation and marriage found me rising up to claim more and more of my individual space and role in the family of God just as my parents promised I would when I was baptized on January 28th of 1968. It meant that rites of healing would return the oil of baptism to my brow; reminding me of how on the day of my baptism an oily cross was traced on my forehead as I was told that I had been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. And ultimately, this lifeway in and out of baptism would mean that my funeral would begin with the promise that if baptism had united me with Christ's death, baptism would also unite me with Christ's resurrection.

And without a doubt, all of this borrowed a page from Luther's Small Catechism where he encourages us to begin and to end each day by marking ourselves with the sign of the cross so that we might never forget how baptism has forever marked us off as those joined to our Lord's cross and the Easter victory it presaged. And so, if you're going to approach things from a Lutheran perspective, it certainly might be said that baptism is the constant as life moves from chapter to chapter, act to act, and song to song. But what do you do when you encounter a collection of scriptures which make no mention of baptism, as is the case today?

One option would be to search for any metaphor which could be raised up as an allusion to baptism. We have such a metaphor in today's psalm. Psalm 46 speaks of a river that makes glad the city of God. If we were so inclined, I suppose we could say, "See! There it is! The river of which our psalm speaks is baptism. It's baptism that keeps the Church grounded and glad as so much else in life changes." Though I can't verify it, I bet this has been said throughout the long history of the Church. But today I'm going to change it up a bit. Today, I'm going to say the river that makes glad the city of God isn't so much baptism, but God's gracious, ongoing presence in our lives through things like baptism.

In our psalm, just after we hear about the river that makes glad the city of God, it's important to recognize we're told God is in the midst of the city. The earth may move, the mountains may shake, the sea may rage and foam, but God is there. God is in the city. As Psalm 46 says more than once, the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. And by the way, Psalm 46 tells us this is true and certain even when the nations rage and the kingdoms shake. Then too, God is present. Then too, God is in the city. Then too, God is with us and for us. More so than baptism, might this be the river that keeps us glad even as our lives travel on from chapter to chapter, act to act, and song to song? With baptism being one highly concrete and important reminder of it, might the Good News we celebrate come winter, spring, summer, or fall be that absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus; that Jesus shall be with us until the end of the age?

Taking nothing away from baptism, I'd say this is more in keeping with what our readings from Scripture have to say today. It's also quite consistent with what baptism does. Baptism joins us to Christ with the super glue of all super glues. And let's not forget. Christ is eternal. He'll never die again. To be joined to Christ through baptism is to have with us always, even unto the end of the age. And so, God's grace in Christ, God's work in Christ, God's loving investment and presence in Christ, may in fact be the river that courses through every city, county, or country we might inhabit throughout the various chapters, acts, and songs of our lives. And yet, even this gives me pause. When stacked up

against what our appointed readings from Scripture have to say, there's still too much me, too much we, too much us in it. In the end, me, we, and us aren't going to matter. In the end, there shall be only one who matters and that one is life's constant.

If you want to grasp fully and completely what our appointed scriptures have to say, you might want to recall that in his first letter to the Corinthians St. Paul says that in the end God shall be all in all. This is very much like at the beginning and before the beginning when God was all in all too. Might this be why our reading from Romans forbids boasting and says every mouth should be silent before God? Might it be why our psalm exhorts us to be still and to know that God is God? The answer is yes. When you get down to it, only God is the Alpha and the Omega. When speaking of constants, God and only God is the beginning, the end, and everything in between. And if you want to understand grace and why it's so amazing, here it is. By God's good pleasure alone, we've been included in the past, present, and future of the One who never ends. May this lead us say in word and deed, "Thanks be to God" until there no longer is any doubt that God has been all in all, is all in all, and shall be all and all. Amen!

### **Prayers of Intercession**

P: In gratitude and humility, let us join together in prayer on behalf of all of God's creation.

P: God our fortress, we pray for the church. Write your law of love on the hearts of your people, that we remain steadfast in our witness to your grace. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God our liberator, we pray for your earth. Bring new life to overused land and contaminated rivers. Reform and reorient our relationship with the environment, that we faithfully care for all of your creation. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God, our refuge and strength, we pray for the nations. Where they are in an uproar, bring wise leadership and comfort for those in distress. Make wars to cease and peace to enter every land. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God, our very present help in trouble, we pray for those in need. Show mercy to refugees and all fleeing from danger. Shelter any without homes. Calm all who are facing illness, surgery, or a new diagnosis (especially). Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God our redeemer, we pray for our congregation. Bless all who are preparing for baptism or affirmation of baptism. Open their hearts to your Holy Spirit, teach them your word, and give them courage to proclaim their faith. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: God our stronghold, we give thanks for those who have gone before us in faith, especially Martin Luther and all reformers. Renew and reform us as we strive to continue in your word. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: With grateful hearts, we commend our spoken and silent prayers to you, O God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**A: Amen.**

**Blessing**

P: May Christ, the Sun of righteousness, shine upon you and scatter the darkness from before your path. Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**