



Mount Calvary Connected

November 17, 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/

Readings & Sermon from the Past Sunday

Listen here: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/messages/readings-sermon-november-13-2022/>

A Message from Pastor Scott

There are sets of scriptures assigned for the observance and celebration of Thanksgiving Day. Featured in our worship life earlier this year, one of the assigned readings is Luke 17:11-19. This reading features Jesus healing ten lepers. After the healing is over, only one person returns to give thanks to Jesus. Adding extra pluck and pique to the narrative, the one person who returns to give thanks is a Samaritan—a religious heretic of the worst kind for ancient Israel. Like the Samaritan in one of Jesus' most famous parables, in Luke 17:11-19, a religious outsider comes out the hero.

More so than any of the other evangelists, St. Luke narrates the Church's efforts to include former outsiders in the gospel bearing his name and also in his other contribution to the New Testament known most formally as The Acts of the Apostles. The two accounts I've mentioned which find St. Luke celebrating what formerly despised Samaritans can bring to the Church bear witness to this. Luke is an evangelist who knows an awful lot about the tensions and difficulties that accompany the creation of the new and alternative community the Church is called to be over and over again. In this regard, he's like St. Paul who once felt compelled to write, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus," (Galatians 3:28). What a sentiment! There's an equally important place for all of us in Christ's Church! In the Church, it's not in with the new and out with the old, but old and new and new and old coming together to be something fresh and better! But living up to this Good News can be quite the challenge. As always on this side of

the hereafter, there's Good News and Bad News. But even so, this Thanksgiving I hope we give thanks for the awesome privilege of having the opportunity to do and to be Church together.

In the reading from Luke appointed for the celebration of Thanksgiving Day, Jesus gives a home to the formerly homeless. This is what it meant to be a leper in the ancient world. You were persona non grata. You were banished from human society. You had to live at a distance from "healthy" human beings and could only interact with other lepers. To be a leper was to be homeless. It's who we all are before God's grace claims us in Jesus and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. Without exception, we're all homeless. We come. We go. We return to the dust from which we came. And if dust is your home, you are homeless. But once God's grace claims us in Jesus and the Holy Spirit's gift of faith, this all changes. Suddenly we have a home where neither rust, nor moth consume and where no thief breaks in and steals. Suddenly we have a home where Jesus shall be our shepherd and lead us to springs of the water of life, as God the Father wipes away every tear from our eyes. All formerly homeless, have we given thanks for this home! If not, I hope we do so this Thanksgiving.

As we give thanks for the gift of a home in word, I also hope we give thanks in deed. We give thanks in deed for the home we have all acquired by way of God's grace by keeping it the home for all it's supposed to be. This will require honest, personally accountable, ready to listen, ready to trust, ready to change, ready to repent commitment from all of us. It's how new and alternative community is built. We don't borrow our playbook from a polarized, bitterly divided society where too few can see beyond their own nose. We borrow our playbook from the scriptures our forebears in the faith were inspired to write by the Holy Spirit. And here's one small snippet of what those scriptures have to say about honest, personally accountable, ready to listen, ready to trust, ready to change, ready to repent commitment from all of us. "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 2:3-5).

Pastor Scott

Upcoming Meetings/Events

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

Christmas Pageant Rehearsal Starts: November 27th

WELCA Spirit Sale Deadline: November 30th

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.

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!

Cookies for Shut-Ins & First Responders

The evangelism committee will be coordinating cookies for shut-ins and first responders. We are hoping for 30 dozen cookies to be delivered to the church by December 19th for distribution on Sunday, December 20th. Please put the cookies either in the kitchen on the counter or in the blue bin. We are also asking for help from our youth and their parents to help distribute the cookies after church on November 20th. If you can help with delivery, please call the office 814 266-4859. Thank you!

Scheduled Worship Help

Ushers:

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 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.

Christmas Pageant

Christmas pageant rehearsal will begin during Sunday School on November 27th.

The Christmas pageant will be on December 18th.

“Life-changing generosity”

by Cindy Uken

In the predawn hours of May 30 in Valley Springs, S.D., tornado sirens pierced the air, rain poured and windows clattered as they blew off hinges.

Beaver Valley Lutheran, a steadily growing congregation of around 420 active members, was directly in the path of the tornado. The church, more than a century old, suffered significant damage. Its offices, kitchen, fellowship hall and education wing were mangled into unrecognizable piles of debris, said Greg Johnson, pastor of Beaver Valley.

As morning broke, parishioners assessed the damage across the church’s 11-acre campus. They wept among their prayers and then got to work. The cleanup group quickly swelled to scores of people, including passersby.

Johnson said the crowd continued to grow throughout the day, even as rain intermittently kept coming down. There were offers of immediate aid from other Lutheran and many non-Lutheran congregations. Johnson said nearly a dozen area congregations also invited Beaver Valley’s members to set up shop in their buildings “for as long as it takes you to rebuild.”

“The experience of receiving hospitality is humbling,” he said. “In the past, we have chipped in with prayers and sometimes with direct assistance when other congregations have had trouble. To be charitable is one thing, but to receive charity—the love of folks close and literally, in this case, from across the nation—is life-changing.”

Beaver Valley’s sister ELCA congregation, Brandon (S.D.) Lutheran, less than 2 miles away, became its Sunday worship location this past summer. “They insisted on not only providing space and technical support for Sunday worship but will also be the temporary office for our time away from our campus,” Johnson said. “The love we have received and continue to enjoy has awakened us to the power of the large, communion-of-saints church.”

Monetary donations started to pour in soon after the disaster, too, from organizations, churches, individuals and businesses. Some money came from far away—and from young members. Johnson said one donation came from a vacation Bible school offering from children in Wisconsin. This gift inspired Beaver Valley members to encourage their youth to consider where they could send their VBS offerings this year.

A children’s Sunday school class also sent a donation. “What a wonderful lesson for all of us,” said Susan Johannsen, vice president of the congregation’s council. “Community matters. Our children learn life lessons this way.”

Johannsen said it’s difficult to put into words the emotional effect that the tornado and the generosity experienced in the aftermath has had on the congregation. “To experience the destruction and then to watch our neighbors, friends and community members pour into our parking lot that morning was overwhelming,” she said. “You cannot believe the willingness to dig in and do what was needed.

“We watched longtime members, families with young children, sister congregation members and just some who saw a need [show up]. They brought themselves, food, water and supplies without asking. This was a nondenominational response. It still brings tears.”

Constanze Hagmaier, bishop of the South Dakota Synod, said more than 100 people were already on-site beginning cleanup when she and Alan Blankenfeld, the synod’s rural ministry liaison, showed up only hours after the tornado hit.

“Through the tears and shocked faces, there was also resilience and the desire to build back their church better than before,” she said. “The congregation was grateful that the synod was there to walk with them, and as we cleaned up, we began the process of working with Lutheran Disaster Response.

“We are so grateful for the quick response of LDR to help Beaver Valley, and I give thanks for the spirit of resiliency and togetherness in the congregation. I am confident that the future is bright for Beaver Valley, and they will continue to proclaim God’s word for many years to come.”

With so much construction going on in the area in the aftermath of the tornado, the congregation has yet to find a company that can begin removing the debris from within the layers of the building, Johnson said. The outside of the building has been beautifully restored, the cemetery is cleaned up, and everything is in order and comfortable in the outdoor campus pavilion where the congregation worshiped on Wednesdays when weather permitted.

“But the rebuild of our building will simply take a good measure of patience,” he said. “We are told we may well be living with our temporary arrangements into 2024.”

Cindy Uken is a veteran and award-winning reporter based in Palm Springs, Calif.

Giving Tree

November and December contributions will go towards the Helping Hands ministry.

Backyard Ministries Socks/Toys Collection

The Social Ministry Team would like to thank the congregation for filling all of the hat/glove bags for Backyard Ministries! It is greatly appreciated! Our next collection is for socks and toys. Please take a labeled bag, fill it with a pack of socks and a small toy, and return it to the bin in the narthex. All bags must be returned by Monday, December 19th to have them delivered in time for Christmas. Thank you for your continued support!

Christmas Poinsettias

If you would like to purchase a Christmas poinsettia in memory of or in honor of someone, please fill out an envelope on the table in the Narthex. Colors to choose from are red, pink and white and the price of each is \$8.75. Orders must be handed in by November 28th.

You can also give a gift to World Hunger in memory of or in honor of someone. Those envelopes are also in the Narthex. Donations are due by December 11th, 2022.

Updates from Our Members & Community

Johnstown Campus Lutheran Home - Christmas gifts for residents

Name Angel tags are available if you want to buy a gift for a resident of the Johnstown Campus. Please call Lois Galus at 814-242-3470 to request a name for gift buying if you do not see her. Help make someone's Christmas special this year by giving a gift to a Johnstown Campus resident. If you have any questions, please call Lois at the above #.

Lutheran Disaster Response: Hurricane Ian Relief

Hurricane Ian made landfall in Florida on Sept. 28 with near Category 5-strength winds, dumping record amounts of rain and causing catastrophic, life-threatening flooding. The western coast of Florida was hit particularly hard. Wind gusts of over 130 mph have downed power lines, leaving millions of residents without power.

In response to Hurricane Ian, Lutheran Disaster Response is partnering with the Florida-Bahamas, Southeastern, North Carolina and South Carolina synods, as well as Lutheran Services Carolinas, to provide both immediate and long-term support. We anticipate relief will include water, food supplies, tarps, cleaning materials and other needs for those who have lost or damaged homes.

Your gifts will support survivors of Hurricane Ian. Gifts to "Hurricane Response" will be used in full (100%) to assist those affected by hurricanes until the response is complete.

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: November 20 – November 26, 2022

Nov. 21 - Ida Williams

Nov. 23 - Linda McMullen

Nov. 24 - Marley Stroz

Nov. 24 - John & Sandy Plunkard

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, & Cathy T.

Financial Update

When the council gathered to review financial reports through the end of October, there was once again much good news to celebrate. Due to fluctuations in the financial marketplace, our overall financial holdings are down for the moment. But eventually, we'll find ourselves ahead of where we were a year ago. As for income, it's tracking slightly ahead of budget, with expenses under budget by an even greater degree. Thanks to the fine work of Mark Rychak and members of our Property Team we recently received an insurance reimbursement for much of the damage done by inconsistencies in our electrical supply.

With the holiday season soon upon us, please remember that December is the month that makes or breaks the year. If you have fallen behind in your customary giving, or have not yet made your donation for the year, please do your best to catch up by the end of the year. Thus far, things have been coming along just fine. Let's make sure to keep it that way as the year closes and as large, year end expenses start to appear. Thanks in advance for your faithfulness and your generosity.

Condensed Worship for Sunday, November 13, 2022**Prayer of the Day**

P: O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without you nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Embrace us with your mercy, that with you as our ruler and guide, we may live through what is temporary without losing what is eternal, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Malachi 4:1-2a

See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 98

P: Sing a new song to the Lord, who has done marvelous things, whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory.

A: O Lord, you have made known your victory, you have revealed your righteousness in the sight of the nations.

P: You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

A: Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.

P: Sing to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the voice of song.

A: With trumpets and the sound of the horn shout with joy before the king, the Lord.

P: Let the sea roar, and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell therein.

A: Let the rivers clap their hands, and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord, who comes to judge the earth.

P: The Lord will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Luke 21:5-19

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, [Jesus] said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one

stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.” They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them. When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott Klimke

Today, our second reading and our reading from one of the gospels end quite similarly. At the end of our reading from 2nd Thessalonians, we’re encouraged not to weary of doing what is right. At the close of our reading from Luke, Jesus assures us it shall be through our endurance that we shall gain our souls. It sure sounds as if the Christian life is not going to be for the faint of heart; that as often as we can we ought to pray, “Our Father, lead us not into temptation.” It sure sounds as if it would be good for us Christians to remember that we are elected for life.

In this regard, we’re quite different from those elected this past week. Exercising the franchise I served in our military to preserve, I voted for a governor, a federal senator, a federal representative, and a state representative. Perhaps there were even more offices up for election on your ballot. But in the end, the exact number of ballots each of us cast matters not. No one elected this past week was elected for life. But we Christians are elected for life.

If you don’t know already, the Bible was talking about election long before modern elections were held. For instance, in both Matthew and Mark, we hear that as God’s plan is coming to a close Jesus shall send his angels out to gather the elect from the four corners of the earth. The elect come into play another twenty-five times before the New Testament comes to a close. In short, election is not a fringe topic. And here’s who the elect are! The elect bound for eternal salvation are those with the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith. And in this case, the emphasis really has to fall on the word “gift.” We do not will or grind our way into the family of God. We are not born with, nor can we purchase, a passport good for the Kingdom of God. The only way into God’s family and kingdom is if the Holy Spirit elects to give you, elects to give you, the gift of faith in Jesus. And if you’ve been elected through the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith, your election comes with lifelong responsibilities. As the New Testament letter

attributed to James says, faith without works is dead. Which is to say, if you have been elected through the Holy Spirit's gift of faith, your faith is going to work and work and work before you praise God both day and night in the sweet by and by. Again, unlike all of those elected to various political offices in recent days, we Christians are elected for life.

And yet, sometimes we forget of our lifelong election to the love of God through the love of neighbor. When we fall prey to this kind of forgetfulness, we end up resisting the winds the Holy Spirit blows into our lives. In matters of election, this is how it goes. We can't elect ourselves; only the Spirit can elect us through the gift of faith. But my, oh my, can we resist the Spirit and make the Spirit's faith-creating work more difficult. One way to do it is to stay away from the times of togetherness when Christians gather to receive the word of God and the sacraments of God. These times of togetherness around word and sacrament have always been when the Holy Spirit makes the most hay; with the hay being faith and its neighbor-loving work all throughout our lives. But it's not just skipping church too often, or zoning out when we do come, which can find us resisting the Holy Spirit's efforts to elect us for a lifetime of faith active in love. A turn inward can also pose real problems for the Holy Spirit.

Lately, Julia and I have been watching a lot of visual adaptations of the work of J.R.R. Tolkien. The English author by that name wrote novels which strove to bring the Christian story to life through dramas and adventures like "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings." One of the recurring figures in both works is a pathetic and pitiable creature named Gollum. Gollum has been turned inward for a long, long time. All Gollum cares about is holding onto a ring of power which has fallen into his possession and which he calls "my precious." Over time, Gollum's greed, Gollum's lust for power, turn him into a monster who lives as far away from others and their needs as possible; spending as much time as he can in the dark, deep, and desolate bowels of a mountain. It's a what turn inward does. Turned inward, turned away from the love of God by way of the love of neighbor, there's way more sinner than there is saint; if there's any saint in sight at all. And in case you don't know, unrepentant sinners are as ugly and grotesque as Gollum in the novels of J.R.R. Tolkien. And we've got some Gollum clones in our reading from Luke.

The reason Jerusalem's beautiful Temple is going to fall to the ground is because the priesthood serving that Temple has turned inward; to the point where both Luke and Mark immediately precede their predictions of the Temple's downfall by telling us of how a greedy, inwardly-turned priesthood has deprived a poor widow of the last two pennies she has to her name. And if we're not careful, economic concerns can also lead us to turn overly inward. At the end of the day, inflation and the cost of groceries and gas are important, but they don't nullify our lifelong election to the love of God through the love of neighbor as our individual circumstances make it possible. But as with skipping church or zoning out when we are present, it's not just a turn inward which can hamper the Spirit's progress in our lives.

One other faith-hindering temptation gets the best of us when we make too much or too little of the impact our lifelong election to faith active in love is making in the world or here at church. Maybe we like the direction of our country and state. Maybe we don't. Regardless of where we presently find ourselves, our reading from Luke informs us to that to be happy or unhappy about political affairs is no

reason to stop working our lifelong program of loving God by way of the love of neighbor. Again, it's by our endurance that we shall gain our souls. We're not to weary of doing what is right, whether there are or are not wars and insurrections or famines and plagues. And the same goes for the condition and state of our denomination, our local bishop's office, and our local place of worship.

Maybe we like how the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is leaning forward towards a new heaven and a new earth. Maybe we don't. Maybe we think there's nothing more that our local bishop's office can do or a lot more that it can and should do. Maybe we think things are terrible, great, or non-descript at Mount Calvary. None of it matters. There's no valid excuse for failing to live out our lifelong election by the Holy Spirit's gift of faith to the love of God through the love of neighbor. For verification on this point, we need look no further than our reading from 2nd Thessalonians. Here's a letter written to a congregation where some members have gone on permanent holiday and expect other members to finance their early retirement because someone is teaching or claiming that they know Jesus is due any minute. It's not quite as bad as when some of the congregation at Corinth holds private communion services which purposefully exclude those who they think are beneath them. But it's still pretty bad. And how are the folks at Thessalonica to respond? They're not to be deterred or distracted. They're not to weary of doing what is right. What they're to do is continue to live out their lifelong election by the Holy Spirit's gift of faith to the love of God practiced through the love of neighbor. And this goes as much for us as it did for the Thessalonians close to two thousand years ago.

And so, like it or not, we are elected for life as others are only elected for more limited periods of time. May regular worship featuring both word and sacrament, the regular presence of others and their needs in our lives, and doing our best to maintain an even keel through the ups and downs of life keep us ever mindful of this. We've been elected for life to keep the emphasis on building strong and healthy community for as many as possible in a world where the importance of strong and healthy community for as many as possible is too often overlooked or minimized. Amen!

Prayers of Intercession

P: United with your saints across time and place, we pray for our shared world.

P: Reviving God, keep your church active in its mission and ministry. Encourage bishops, deacons, pastors, and lay leaders to risk boldly in their proclamation and fill them with wisdom and endurance for challenging times. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: Renewing God, as the northern hemisphere prepares for winter, make us mindful of the ordered beauty of your creation. Teach us to treasure cycles of rest and new life. Help us care for what you have made. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: Loving God, accompany all who make sacrifices for the sake of others. Safeguard first responders and active duty military personnel. Grant peace to veterans and heal any wounds in body, mind, or spirit. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: Healing God, your people cry out to you. Sustain doctors, nurses, and hospital personnel in their tireless work. Uphold mental health professionals and those in their care. May the sun of righteousness rise on all who are sick (especially). Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: Uniting God, unite this assembly in its shared mission and ministry for the sake of the gospel. Highlight ways we can better work together and give us patience to work through disagreement. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: Consoling God, abide with all who grieve for loved ones who have died. Comfort us with the promise of resurrection and new life with you. Lord, in your mercy,

A: Receive our prayer.

P: Accept these prayers, gracious God, and those known only to you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: God, creator of all things, speaking reformation into being; Jesus Christ, savior of the world, raising the dead; Holy Spirit, living voice, calling and enlightening the church: Almighty God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**