



Mount Calvary Connected

January 19, 2023

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 to the readings and the sermon from this past Sunday on our website: <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org/sermons/>

A Message from Pastor Scott

On the heels of Sunday's focused and positive annual meeting, your congregational council met on Tuesday to begin another year of mission and ministry. The first item on the docket was to elect officers for 2023. Joan Hunter was elected president, Mark Rychak vice-president, and Kevin Oleksa treasurer. Rounding out this year's group of council officers is Bev Coughenour who was reappointed treasurer. If you don't know all of these individuals, you should make a point of meeting them. They will serve you and our Lord well.

Once new account signers and safe openers had also been selected for the year, with the combination to the safe having been changed in advance, the meeting moved on to the setting of goals and priorities for 2023. As 2023 began, Mount Calvary had collected about two-thirds of what it will take to install a digital sign along Scalp Avenue. Completing this project will be one of the major goals for 2023. In addition to the digital sign, the council will begin the process of looking for my replacement. On Tuesday evening, I resigned as your pastor. My last day will be Sunday, January 29th. Julia and I have purchased a home in Surprise, Arizona which is a suburb on the northwestern rim of Phoenix. Julia will be retiring from full-time congregational ministry and from full-time work in general. Her first social security check will arrive in September of this year and she will look for some sort of part-time job to keep herself occupied as she also

enjoys more free time in a gorgeous part of the country. As for me, I have been called as the next senior pastor of American Lutheran Church in Sun City, Arizona.

While this decision was being made, Julia and I found ourselves at a fork in the road. With Julia taking “early retirement” and my age now fifty-five, we were going to be in Johnstown for good or it was time to move. I was never interested in moving just to move and was increasingly content and comfortable at Mount Calvary. But after close to twenty years of ordained ministry, there are challenges and opportunities I have yet to face and which Mount Calvary could not make available. The ministry at my new congregation comes with these challenges and opportunities and I am ready to tackle them before I retire. Additionally, Julia and I fell in love with the southwestern part of our country when we traveled there for an anniversary trip in late April and early May of last year. When a colleague representing both the Grand Canyon and Rocky Mountain synods called out of the blue with multiple call opportunities, it felt like more than a coincidence. Julia agreed and so our journey towards a new chapter and adventure in our marriage began.

As time moves along, Joan Hunter, Pastor Jonathan, or some other member of your leadership team will be in contact about what comes next at Mount Calvary. From the outset, I just want to assure you that confirmations and marriages will proceed according to plan. I just won't be a part of them in person, although I will certainly be present in spirit. I have formed relationships at Mount Calvary that will go with me wherever I go. As they travel with me always, these relationships will remain the treasures they have become.

I also leave Mount Calvary knowing that our partnership has significantly strengthened the congregation in a number of areas and that there's no need for any of you to panic. Jesus is still risen! The Holy Spirit is still on the loose! And Mount Calvary's store of time, talent, and treasure has grown well beyond where it was seven years ago. Should you desire a more detailed assessment of where things stand after seven years, I'd invite you to read my annual report. I wrote it knowing I would not be your pastor for much longer and reflected at length about roads traveled, roads in progress, and roads remaining. For now, I'll just encourage you, as I did over the weekend in my sermon, to be steadfast in your commitment to Christ and one another.

While residing in Johnstown, Julia and I had the opportunity to see John McEuen of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band at UPJ. After “Mr. Bojangles,” one of the songs associated with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band is the country and western standard “Will the Circle Be Unbroken.” In good times and bad, I've sung the chorus to this song during our time together. The answer to my ongoing question has been that the circle was not broken during our partnership. Through thick and thin, and even when crosses and difficult conversations were involved, we hung together and did our best to remain true to the way of Jesus Christ as we also sought to make disciples and serve our community. Should you do the same without me, I can promise without hesitation that you will be unstoppable and your future quite bright. I'll be praying that it happens; knowing that you are the reason it can happen!

With Much Love and Gratitude,

Pastor Scott

President's Letter to Congregation January 2023

Four years ago, Dave and I were welcomed here and made to feel a part of Mt. Calvary's church family. It has been an honor to serve on Church Council, as a member, as its secretary, and now as its president. It is a responsibility I take very seriously.

We joined Mt. Calvary as you kicked off your 75th anniversary. I listened every week as Jack Weisbrodt, Mrs. Reed and others narrated the history of the church. I walk the hall, noticing pictures of every pastor, and like to pause in the quiet stillness of Sander Hall, looking at what was once the altar, the choir loft, and the entrance, and imagine the tiny church on the hill it once was. I love old pictures people occasionally share of relatives and friends, long gone, who built and loved that tiny church. They live on here, through us. I can only imagine what they might think of what we have become. I touch the wood and the windows and try to imagine the hands that touched the same spots long ago. Would they be proud? Would they think we have been good stewards with what they left us?

I also sit in church and watch our future. Claire, Regan, Gabriel, Bridgette, Carter, Olivia, Harper, Hudson and many other infants and high schoolers. What kind of legacy are we passing on to them? What examples are we setting while we have them here and they watch us? Everything we do builds on the foundation the people in that little church left for us. They believed they were leaving it in good hands. Did they? Are we building something to pass on that we will be proud of? Are we making the foundation stronger, or are we chipping away at it? Because passing it on, leaving our mark, good or bad, is something we will all do....some sooner, rather than later.

I write this not to be morbid or depressing. Words spoken by a priest in the mid-70's linger in me still. Like most college kids, I went to church, but tuned out the sermon. (I admit I was there because of a few cute guys, unsuccessfully sitting close to them in hopes they'd notice me.)

One day, the priest opened his sermon by dropping a giant, very old book on the altar. Successful attention getter. Dead silence. He explained that every church has a book just like it. In it, he explained, a church somewhere has recorded our existence. Our birth, our baptism, our first communion, our confirmation, some day our wedding, the birth of our children, and yes, one day, the date of our death. Definite buzz-kill, making me quit looking at the cute guy one row over!

As council president, I promise to do my very best. Not just for individual people, or certain groups. It is OUR church, and includes all of us. I serve with respect for those who were here before me, everyone here now, and those who make up our future. With every decision council makes, we will ask, "is this the best thing for ALL of Mt. Calvary?"

If you read this newsletter from top to bottom, you are aware that Pastor Scott is leaving us. Your church council has already started the process of finding his replacement. Be assured all of council understands the seriousness of the task at hand. I have always been impressed with the talents and diverse backgrounds that make up Mt. Calvary. I believe I can count on any of you to help me if I reach out. Mt. Calvary will be here long after Pastor Scott has perfected his tan and golf game in Arizona. We all need to look at everything we do or say and ask ourselves, "will my actions and words build up my church family, or will it erode our church and hurt its members?" I don't know about you, but on the day my death is recorded in Mt. Calvary's "giant book," I will already be face to face with God. I want to be able to look Him in the eye

(without too much embarrassment), and hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant...Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:23) I look forward to working with any of you who share my commitment to Mt. Calvary, and each other. as we go about God’s work with our hands.

Written with respect and excitement for Mt. Calvary's future,

Joan Hunter
Church Council President

Upcoming Meetings/Events in January

Social Ministry Meeting: January 19th at 6:30 p.m.

Snow Camp at Camp Sequanota: January 27-29

Snow Camp!

The snow camp is for Grades 6-12 and is at Camp Sequanota. Registration is online at the camp's webpage or see Pastor Jonathan for more info.

Registration closes January 20th!

Got Questions? Try Alpha!

Alpha is an 11 week course that’s been developed to help you build a closer relationship with our savior. Each session focuses on a different question centered around faith. There’s no studying and no homework, it’s even okay if you miss a week, it’s as simple as dinner and a movie!

Registration is open and classes begin on Tuesday, February 21st at 6:00pm. Register today!

Was your New Year's Resolution to try something new?

Join Lori from La Bella Embrace as she guides us through creating our own charcuterie board. This is a wonderful opportunity to make your “covered dish” for the Super Bowl the next day.

Registration closes on January 20th! [Click here to learn more and invite your friends today.](#)

Who wants pancakes?!

Join us for fun and fellowship on Saturday, February 18th from 7 a.m. – 11 a.m. at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church. For only \$7, you will receive 2 sausage patties or bacon, pancakes, and your choice of beverages. If you are bringing guests under the age of 12, breakfast is only \$5!

Scheduled Worship Help

Ushers:

Saturday, January 21st: Jackie Carpenter & Jack Weisbrodt
Sunday, January 22nd: Mayket Family

Saturday, January 28th: Jackie Carpenter & Jack Weisbrodt
Sunday, January 29th: Mayket Family

Readers/Communion Assistants:

Saturday, January 21st: Mark & Paige Williams
Sunday, January 22nd: Laura Bower & Marybeth Heinze

Saturday, January 28th: Kevin Oleksa & Cindy Solarczyk
Sunday, January 29th: Ray Leverknight

Those interested in volunteering may contact Pastor Scott to sign up.

Help Wanted!

The Property Committee is recruiting volunteers to assist with occasional maintenance issues at the church. Volunteers who can be available on short notice are also 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 may also be left with the church office at 814-266-4859.

Choir Reorganization

Several people have been asking about starting up a new choir! Over the years at Mount Calvary, we have sometimes worked with small numbers and sometimes included large groups of over twenty singers of varying abilities. No matter your ability, everyone is invited to participate!

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. Let me know if you would like to give it a try!

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

2023 Offering Envelopes Available in the Narthex

The envelope numbers changed from the prior year. Those who donate apart from an envelope should make note of their new number. Those who presently don't have envelopes, but desire them, should contact the church office.

Lacey Fetcko is our new Communications and Social Media Coordinator!

While we are sad to say goodbye to Erin Powell, we are also excited to welcome our newest staff member to our team. In case you hadn't heard, Lacey Fetcko is joining us and brings several years of non-profit work experience that will make her a valuable addition to our church family. Please feel free to email her about website updates, announcements, prayer requests, or just to say hello!

She can be contacted by emailing lacey@mt-calvarylutheran.org.

Birthdays and Anniversaries January 22 – January 28, 2023

Anniversaries

Jan. 28 - Dustin & Melissa Pringle

Birthdays

Jan. 22 - Preston Lamoreux, Johnny Nerone, Jeffrey Nider, & April Selepack

Jan. 23 - Kayla Hasse & Emily Horn

Jan. 25 - Jacob Urban

Jan. 26 - Larry Hockensmith, Kadya Kobal, & Hailea Morningstar

Jan. 27 - Beverly Coughenour & Ronald Punako Jr.

Jan. 28 - Doris Loftis

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., Paul Brodt, Kim Stayrook, Alan, Pastor David Louder, Frank Robison, Sandy, Louise, Brooke and Bill, Chuck, Dawn, Cherie, Sandy, Lorrie, & Bill, Jamie Bloom.

Saturday, January 14, 2023 & Sunday, January 15, 2023

Epiphany 2, Year A

Prayer of the Day

P: Holy God, our strength and our redeemer, by your Spirit hold us forever, that through your grace we may worship you and faithfully serve you, follow you and joyfully find you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 49:1-7

Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and my reward with my God."

And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength—he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalm 40:1-11

P: I waited patiently upon the Lord, who stooped to me and heard my cry.

A: The Lord lifted me out of the desolate pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a high cliff, making my footing sure.

P: The Lord put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many shall see, and stand in awe, and put their trust in the Lord.

A: Happy are they who trust in the Lord! They do not turn to enemies or to those who follow lies.

P: Great are the wonders you have done, O Lord my God! In your plans for us, none can be compared with you! Oh, that I could make them known and tell them! But they are more than I can count.

A: Sacrifice and offering you do not desire; you have opened my ears: burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required.

P: And so I said, “Here I am; I come. In the scroll of the book it is written of me:

A: ‘I love to do your will, O my God; your law is deep within me.’”

P: I proclaimed righteousness in the great assembly; I have not restrained my lips, O Lord, you know.

A: I have not hidden your righteousness in my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your deliverance; I have not concealed your steadfast love and truth from the great assembly.

P: You are the Lord; do not withhold your compassion from me; may your steadfast love and your truth continually keep me safe.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

P: The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: John 1:29-42

[John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

P: The gospel of the Lord.

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon by Pastor Scott

The Bible is quite invested in announcing that God is steadfast. The investment is so substantial the Good News that God is steadfast becomes an anthem in the Old Testament. In more than one of the Old Testament's thirty-nine books, we hear or read that the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. And right on cue, more than one of today's appointed readings from the Bible join this wider chorus of Scripture and announce that God is steadfast.

If we start with our appointed psalm, it twice draws attention to God's steadfast love. There are also references to the righteousness of God, the faithfulness of God, the truth of God, and the compassion of God. With a bevy of related words, the psalmist announces that God is steadfast. And then, in our reading from 1st Corinthians, we get it again.

In its final verses, this reading, like our reading from Isaiah as well, announces that God is faithful. It asserts that God will complete what God has begun in us. It insists that God will strengthen us so we might be found blameless on the day of Jesus Christ. Here too God is steadfast. But in real time and space, what does it mean? How can we expect God to be steadfast and how might we respond to this Good News once we understand it?

Well, in its very first verse today's psalm suggests that God is steadfast because God is there for good when no one else is. In his opening salvo, today's psalmist says the Lord on high stooped down to him, a mere, lowly mortal, and heard his cry. This is God being there for good when no one else is; when the psalmist had no choice but turn to the Lord and to cry out for aid. In its very first verse, our psalm announces that God is steadfast because God is there for good when one else is. But are there any limitations to this Good News? Is it always true?

The answer is yes and only yes. In describing love that's love, in God's describing God's perfect love for us, St. Paul will later write in his first letter to the Corinthians that "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." It doesn't get much clearer than that. God is steadfast because God's love for us never wanes. And yet, St. Paul will state it even more plainly elsewhere. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul ends the eighth chapter with an exhilarating flourish; boasting and reveling in the Good News that absolutely nothing, not a single, solitary person or thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, And though we don't hear from it today, this Church year's featured gospel, the gospel of Matthew, ends with an exhilarating flourish of its own; announcing that Jesus, God in the flesh, shall be with us until the end of the age. Put it altogether and you clearly get the Good News that God is steadfast because God is there when no one else is; not some of the time, but all of the time. But just because God is present for good all the time, doesn't mean it will always seem like it or feel like it.

If we go back to the first verse of our psalm, it's important to recognize that before the psalmist speaks of how God answered prayer, the psalmist also has this to say. In Psalm 40, the very first words out of the psalmist's mouth are: I waited patiently upon the Lord. When combined with the psalmist's subsequent testimony to answered prayer, what you get is this. God was always there. God was always listening. God was always working for good. But it took some time for this to become apparent. The psalmist had to practice patient faith. Before we got to answered prayer, the psalmist was steadfast in his faith as God's steadfast love eventually made itself clear again. It's what the Good News that God is steadfast is meant to call forth from us. We remain steadfast in the basics of faith until God shows up big and small; again proving that God is steadfast. But getting back to the third word we encounter in Psalm 40, this does require patience.

Like the psalmist, we keep praying even when it seems like a pointless practice. Like St. Paul who wrote more than one of his letters as he was imprisoned for his faith and our faith, we keep up with the way of Jesus Christ even when it hurts; even when it comes with discomfort and sacrifice; even when it seems like a losing proposition. For when we Christians are on our game, when we're filled with the Holy Spirit's gift of faith, we remember quite vividly that the now resurrected and exalted Christ once himself used the words of the psalms to cry out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." But then again, we're not always on our game. Sometimes we ignore Scripture's call not to snuff out the fire of faith that the Spirit is always fanning within us. In real time and space, I'm afraid patience, steadfast faith, steadfast anything, often prove to be elusive for us. It's why letters like 1st Corinthians get written.

As evidenced by our second reading, in its opening verses 1st Corinthians telegraphs the reason St. Paul's felt compelled to pick up his pen. Some of the Corinthians have grown impatient with the basics of faith and the way of Jesus Christ. They don't want the tried and the true. They want to run a new and different race. Growing uneasy with how Christian faith, hope, and love often cut against the grain and travel upstream, there's a restless recklessness afoot in Corinth. Swinging at strikes and running the football have been abandoned. Instead of the tried and true, you have big swings up or down in the zone and one Hail Mary pass after another. If the ancient congregation at Corinth isn't careful, haste is soon going to make waste. And so, as he will all throughout his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul in our second reading says to the Corinthians and to us, "No. No. No. You didn't need a different gospel or a different faith. You don't need different gifts or a different God. You only need God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit who are so steadfast, so steadfast, in their love that they shall deliver in ways big and small as you keep up with what they and the Scriptures call you to do." It's a message for the ages. It's a message for the entire Church now that a worldwide pandemic has changed so much. It's a message for Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Johnstown today and always.

Look! In mission and ministry, there are no shortcuts or gimmicks that stand the test of time. You trust that God is steadfast or you don't. You remain steadfast in what God and the Scriptures call you to do or you don't. Even when our haste ready to make waste wants it to change, this isn't going to change. Come what may, we come to worship looking for and needing another infusion of the Spirit's faith active in hope and love so that we might hold fast until God comes up big and small again. No matter the time or the circumstance, we invite, welcome, feed, and include here at Mount Calvary through the dry spells and through the periods of growth too. Day after day and year after year, we turn no one away as we also turn away behaviors and proposals not consistent with the oh so often against the grain, upriver way of Jesus Christ. It's how it's always been. It's how it will always will be until Christ comes again to make all people and things new. St. Paul wrote of it in his first letter to those at Corinth. I now proclaim it again nearly two thousand years later. God is steadfast. God will be there for good when no one else is, not some of the time, but until the end of the age. It won't always feel like it. It won't always seem like it. But it's true; true enough that we remain steadfast in the basics of faith and in the way of Jesus Christ until in ways big and small God proves all over again that God is steadfast. Amen!

Prayers of Intercession

P: Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

P: Put a new song in the mouth of your church. Inspire the baptized to tell of your faithfulness, sharing the good news of your salvation throughout the earth. Bless the witness of missionaries. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: The waters of baptism call us into life in the Spirit. Preserve the world's waters: protect them from pollution, support plants and animals who depend on them, and bring rain in places of drought. Guide us in protecting local waterways and in responding to devastating floods. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: In Jesus, you are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Show your mercy to all nations. Direct leaders to do your will; fill governing bodies with righteousness; equip judges with discernment and compassion. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: You incline your ear to all who cry to you. Draw near to individuals and communities suffering violence, injustice, illness, or poverty. Hide them in the shadow of your hand and make us signs of your faithfulness to all in need. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: You are glorified in the servants you have called. With Martin Luther King Jr., give us bold trust in you. Even when it feels like a sharp sword or polished arrow, give us courage to receive your call to repentance and racial justice. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: In every place and time, you have sanctified your people. We praise you for the testimony of those who have died in the faith. Strengthen us as we wait for the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: God the Creator who delights in you, Jesus the Savior who is born for you, and the lifegiving Spirit who shines on you, ✠ bless you and keep you in hope and peace. **Amen.**