



Mount Calvary Connected

January 26, 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!

Pastor Scott Klimke	Pastor Jonathan Adams
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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 Jonathan Adams

This past Tuesday, your congregational council held a special meeting to follow up on their regularly scheduled meeting the previous week, and specifically addressed the process of pastoral transition.

Being given the opportunity to be with them for part of that meeting, and having been asked to provide some sort of devotion for the beginning, I shared a prayer that has been meaningful for me throughout my life. To my knowledge, this particular prayer first started circulating in Lutheran circles with the 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, otherwise known as the "green hymnal." In that hymnal it appeared as an option for a closing prayer in the evening prayer service known as vespers; it holds the same spot in our current hymnal, the red "Evangelical Lutheran Worship" published in 2006.

Even though it is part of evening prayer, I've found it particularly appropriate for a variety of life circumstances, especially in times of transition, and so I share it with you as I shared it with your elected leaders:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

While the days ahead may seem uncertain, we must trust in our faith, and trust that God is with us every step of the way. Your congregational leaders have their work cut out for them, as does the congregation as a whole. There are many of us who in the time of transition will have to exercise new gifts, and even new ways of thinking. But even though it may seem an unfamiliar path, we will have the support of God and the support of each other.

This weekend, we will wish farewell to Pastor Scott, and thank him for his time in ministry here at Mount Calvary, and as I often do when I write these articles, I'd like to give you a bit of a homework assignment...

Before I was ordained as a pastor, one of my mentors encouraged me to establish my own version of what he called, "The Blue File." It's a folder that is tucked away in a hidden part of my desk that I refer to when I'm feeling blue, or otherwise discouraged in my work as a pastor. In that folder, I've stored all of the encouraging cards and notes that I've received over the years; not necessarily the basic cards where people just sign their name, but ones where people have taken the time to thank me or compliment me for a particular thing; notes that make me smile and remember why I enjoy being a pastor.

And so, if you're looking for a way to celebrate Pastor Scott's time here in Johnstown, why not send him to Arizona with a few new additions to his "blue file." Bring a note or a card to worship this weekend sharing how he's impacted you during his time here. And if you're not able to make it in time, we'll make sure they make it to his new home in Arizona.

And in the meantime, just remember the words of that prayer. We may feel like we're in uncharted territory, but remember that God is with us, leading us, and supporting us.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jonathan

Upcoming Meetings/Events

Snow Camp at Camp Sequanota: January 27-29

Reception & Cake for Pastor Scott - Sat.& Sun. January 28th and 29th

Evangelism Committee – Thursday, Feb. 2nd at 6:30 pm

Coffee Social - Sunday, Feb. 5th 8-8:45 am

Property Committee - Tuesday, Feb. 7th at 6:00 pm

Charcuterie Event - Saturday, Feb. 11 at 1:00 pm

Social Ministry - Thursday, Feb. 16th at 6:30 pm

Pancake Breakfast - Sunday, Feb. 18th from 7-11 am

Liturgical Jazz at First Lutheran Church, Johnstown - Sunday, Feb. 19th at 3:00 pm

WELCA - Monday, Feb. 20th at 6:00 pm

Alpha begins! - Tuesday, Feb. 21st at 6:00 pm

Church Council - Tuesday, Feb. 21st at 6:30 pm

Alpha - Week 2 - Tuesday, Feb. 28th at 6:00 pm

Join Us to Celebrate Pastor Scott's Final Weekend at Mount Calvary

Join us on Saturday and Sunday after the services to celebrate Pastor Scott's final weekend at Mount Calvary with refreshments and cake. While it will be difficult to say goodbye, we wish him well in all of his future endeavors.

But this weekend isn't the last time that Pastor Scott would like to hear from us... he would love to keep in touch! Please feel free to contact him anytime at:

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May God bless his new journey!

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!

Jazz Program

First Lutheran Church, Johnstown, is pleased to present Deanna Witkowski, jazz liturgical pianist in a program of sacred jazz music, original compositions, and hymns on Sunday, February 19, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. in the First Lutheran Church sanctuary.

Deanna Witkowski's program promises to be inspirational as her original compositions and hymn arrangements are contemporary and spiritual. Her music reflects her connection with her faith.

Please contact First Lutheran Church at 814-536-7521 with any questions about the performance.

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!

Scheduled Worship Help

Ushers:

Saturday, January 28th: Jackie Carpenter & Jack Weisbrodt

Sunday, January 29th: Mayket Family

Readers/Communion Assistants:

Saturday, January 28th: Kevin Oleksa & Cindy Solarczyk

Sunday, January 29th: Ray Leverknight

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

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.

Giving disappointment its due

by Jonathan Tran

I once applied for a job I was told was mine to lose. The closer I got to getting it, the more I dreamed—looking at homes to buy and schools for kids to attend, even planning good-bye parties. I imagined a new life. When I didn't get the job, I was crushed.

The disappointment went on for years. I found myself reliving it over and over, telling anyone who would listen. Bitterness set in, and a list of enemies grew—all the people who'd torpedoed my dream. The disappointment changed the way I related to the life I still had, darkening a dream job already in place and overshadowing blessings long ago bestowed. I began to regret my surroundings and resent a life I now felt stuck in. Disappointment did all this. I could not face the disappointment as disappointment.

Not all disappointments are so devastating or so dramatic. Sometimes it's less the dream job torpedoed and more the slow boil of a career playing out in disappointing ways. You look around and realize the life

you're living isn't the one you signed up for. Well-laid plans fizzle out. Relationships you banked on career off course. Opportunities dry up. Life happens.

It's the relational disappointments that hurt most. Jobs, after all, can be changed—or at least left behind at the end of each workday. And while you can complain about how much your job stinks, you don't (or shouldn't) feel such license when talking about people you love. It's one thing to feel disappointed about the way life turned out; it's another to lay that disappointment at the feet of any one person.

I think disappointment stems from three inescapable features of human life. We are timebound creatures, experiencing the world through time. As such, we constantly project ourselves into the future—sometimes forgetting both the present right under our noses and the past not far behind. We can't help ourselves, leaning into a future sometimes a few steps ahead (the delicious dinner we've planned) and sometimes quite far-off (a job that's "ours to lose").

Time and projection then meet a third reality: finitude. Some imagined futures work out. We enjoy that delicious dinner or get that dream job. Others do not. Many of our projections meet the buzz saw of finite existence, the harsh reality that not every imagined future gets its way. Much of this is a mercy. No world could survive fulfilling all our dreams. But that's hardly consolation when life sets us up for disappointment.

We might think, Disappointment's bad, but it ain't death. But some philosophers argue that death has everything to do with disappointment. After all, what is death's sting other than the loss of an imagined future? Time, projection, and fini-tude conspire to punch us in the gut, knocking us off our feet. Some never get up.

Rarely do people stop to give disappointment its due. Instead, life goes on. Someone else got the job instead of you. The world doesn't stop because your life came to a screeching halt. No one mourns your loss like you do. Instead of acknowledging your disappointment, most people would rather deflect it or explain it away: "You dodged a bullet" or "It wasn't in the cards" or even "That wasn't God's plan." Our society lacks resources for acknowledging disappointment. We have rituals for mourning death but not for disappointment.

And no one avoids acknowledging our disappointment as much as we ourselves do. It hurts too much. It's easier to store up enemies and resentment. Instead of acknowledging disappointment, we deny the inescapable features of our lives as humans. We deny humanness in the attempt to live it. Call this our gnosticism, our most intimate heresy.

The things that disappoint comprise a whole litany of life's failings. Certainly careers and well-laid plans. But also family and friends. Our bodies disappoint us with their aging, ailing, and addling. Justice disappoints those who give their lives to it only to find freedom forever deferred. And who has not been disappointed by church? To be sure, some of this comes from unrealistic expectations of something the New Testament promises will disappoint. Still, the church keeps giving us more reasons for disappointment.

Scripture thematizes the human life in time—with its projections and buzz-saw disappointments—in terms of faith. And it does not hold back on acknowledging disappointment. Adam and Eve's catastrophic disappointment over the garden. Cain's murderous disappointment when God rejects his offering. David's

disappointment when kingdom life turns out less than kingdom-like. Judas's disappointment with Jesus. In each case, God turns out to be our greatest disappointment. Is it more heretical to say this or to deny it?

The Bible reserves its greatest disappointments for scenes involving children, the embodied future. Children carry our hopes, bearing the weight of our expectations, fating us and them to disappointment. Through our kids we imagine the future and lose it. When their lives go awry the earth comes off its axis. I have known people whose disappointments over children—infertility, miscarriage, illness, death—ended their faith. I have known those disappointments myself.

No wonder God's faithfulness gets laid on the head of a single question: Will God give Sarah and Abraham children, or not? If God does, they will know God does what God promises, is who God claims. Conversely, no children, no God.

Refusing to explain things away, much less lie about the conditions setting us up for disappointment, God's word acknowledges it. The Spirit hears our disappointments just as the Son bears them, together entreating the Father's infinite life. Rather than manage expectations by asking less, God risks everything, beckoning us to faith's end, knowing full well that disappointment looms over the razor's edge between hope and despair.

Jonathan Tran teaches theological ethics at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is author of *The Vietnam War and Theologies of Memory* and *Foucault and Theology*.

January 29 – February 4, 2023

Anniversaries

None

Birthdays

Jan. 29 - Bob Zada

Jan. 31 - Susan Gabriel, Lori Hiltz, & Hadley Pozun

Feb. 1 - Emily Andrascik, Dennis Apple, Mark McQuaide, & Mindy Stohon

Feb. 2 - Eric Eschrich, Gary Gusmenotti, & Kathleen Rohrabough

Feb. 4 - Camryn Beglin

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.

Condensed Worship for Saturday, January 21, 2023 & Sunday, January 22, 2023

Prayer of the Day

P: Lord God, your loving kindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

A: Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time [the Lord] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

A: Thanks be to God!

Psalmody: Psalm 27:1, 4-9

P: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

A: One thing I ask of the Lord; one thing I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek God in the temple.

P: For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter, hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary, and raise me high up- on a rock.

A: Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies who surround me. Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary, sacrifices of rejoicing; I will sing and make music to the Lord.

P: Hear my voice, O Lord, when I call; have mercy on me and answer me.

A: My heart speaks your message— “Seek my face.” Your face, O Lord, I will seek.

P: Hide not your face from me, turn not away from your servant in anger. Cast me not away—you have been my helper; forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

A: Thanks be to God!

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,

on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

P: The gospel of the Lord,

A: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

As expected during a Church season about God bringing things to light, our appointed scriptures during this third weekend of Epiphany mention light a good bit. Using different words, but referencing the same verse, both our readings from Isaiah and Matthew speak of people in darkness receiving needed and welcome light. Though the use of different language doesn't make it impossible to see that the same verse is in use, the difference I've mentioned is still notable. At the very least two, different versions of the same verse in the one book we call the Bible lays to waste the idea that as every letter and word was being written God held and directed the hand of Scripture's writers. Though inspired by the Holy Spirit, the humanity of Scripture's writers was not overridden. Sometimes that humanity shows up, as do the change and evolution the passing of history brings about. In short, the Bible needs to be handled with care. We want to be simple and clear, but not simplistic and uninformed. There's a lot that's happened in the life of the Church since Jesus rose from the dead and we want to be in constant conversation with it.

But speaking of Jesus Christ, and getting back to the metaphor of light, it's Jesus who is our light. When in doubt, when in the dark, turn to Jesus. He's the light of the world. Jesus is always the best way forward and always our best source of information about God and the good on this side of the hereafter. But like the Bible as a whole, even Jesus needs careful handling from time to time. Today's reading from Matthew is a case in point. Jesus calls us to repent, but what exactly does it mean to repent? In real time and space, when do we actually refrain from sin and start practicing righteousness instead?

Our reading from Matthew answers these questions through an object lesson. Peter, James, Andrew, and John all drop everything to follow after Jesus. Repeated four times over, the object lesson is that we repent when we follow after Jesus; that repentance and righteousness involve doing it Jesus' way. Like the Christian tradition as a whole, Matthew agrees today that Jesus is our light; our best way forward and our best source of information about God and the good. But amidst the twists and turns of life, what does this mean? When do we follow after Jesus and when do we not? When does the light of Christ shine through us and when does it not? Is our word for it good enough or are particular types of deeds required too? Amidst the twists and turns of life when do we repent and refrain from sin; practicing righteousness instead?

We get none of these specifics from Matthew today. We get light, but not enough of it. Again, sometimes even Jesus requires careful handling. It's one of the reasons why Christians of our ilk appoint four scriptures for use each weekend. It's also why Christians of our ilk fill their worship services with other allusions to Scripture as well. When even Jesus needs some careful handling, the presence of these additional scriptures and scriptural allusions means we've got more than one place to turn for clarity. And if the scriptures read and referenced in worship don't do the trick, we've got the rest of the Bible and two thousand years of Christian tradition to consult. When even Jesus requires careful handling, we want to make sure we use all of the resources at our disposal so that we don't end up with a simplicity and a clarity that is simplistic and uninformed. And when it comes to how we repent, how we follow after Jesus, how we trade in sin for righteousness, here's how we might avoid being simplistic and uninformed.

Move one would very likely be to take advantage of what's said in today's reading from 1st Corinthians. If we let St. Matthew and St. Paul work together, maybe they'll say more together than they do apart. For instance, in today's reading from 1st Corinthians, St. Paul encourages unity of mind and purpose. He wants churches who find their unity in the Christ who was crucified before he was resurrected and seated at God's right hand. Here too Christ is our light. Here too Christ is the best way forward and our best source of information about God and the good. But in addition to these broad strokes, we also get some detail, some texture, some color which is lacking in Matthew today. As St. Paul encourages us to find our unity in the crucified Christ, he also calls out division and quarrel. This suggests we sin and fail to follow Jesus when we break apart what God has joined together, whether it be a family, a church, a community, a country, or creation itself. Sin, our reading from 1st Corinthians suggests more than once, is the practice of division. And if sin is the practice of division, then righteousness is the practice of community. If today's reading from 1st Corinthians is to be our guide, it seems pretty clear that Jesus people don't break communities apart, but instead strive to build and maintain community. Sound familiar? According to our chief musician Dan Gresh, it should.

When I met with Dan after church last Sunday to inform him of my impending resignation, Dan said that all of my sermons have in one way or another been about the importance of being community-minded, community-first people. It was an unsolicited word which proved to be quite reassuring to me. If I have in fact taught you for seven years that the way of Jesus Christ is faith active in the practice of loving and supportive community, then I've been true to the call you so graciously extended to me. The bottom line is that Jesus is our light when we retire from sinful division and practice saintly, stick together always community. But don't just take my word for it or the word of St. Paul and our reading from 1st Corinthians. To make certain you aren't being simplistic and uninformed, look for confirmation elsewhere too. And in this case, you can find the confirmation you need in the cross.

In our reading from 1st Corinthians, St. Paul more than once says there's a power in the cross that many overlook as they continue to be in the dark. If you haven't figured it out yet, the power of the cross is found in its ability to reunite what sin had always broken apart, with the splinters being God and humanity, or more widely and

appropriately, Creator and creation. On the day of his death, Christ's humanity could have broken off and away from Christ's divinity and vice versa. Christ's humanity could have said to Christ's divinity, "You ask too much. I'm going save my own neck and get out of dodge." Just as easily, Christ's divinity could have said to Christ's humanity, "No way, Jose. No way, Jesu. I'm not dying for the sinful, stubborn, stiff-necked bums you claimed as brothers and sisters on the day of your birth." But as possible as all of this was, it didn't happen. God and humanity, Creator and creation hung together. Jesus practiced community even when a cross was involved; with his later resurrection suggesting pretty strongly that the practice of loving and supportive community through thick and thin is where life that lasts is to be found both now and forever. And so, there you have it and more than once. Sin is the practice of division and the way of repentance, the way of Jesus Christ, is faith active in the practice of robust and resilient community. It's something I hope you'll remember for a long, long time to come.

When you get down to it, your job at Mount Calvary is to stick together and with Christ no matter the cost or the sacrifice involved; adding new people and new perspectives all the time. Church is never, ever, ever supposed to be about the presence or absence of particular people or about getting our way in what is to be a community of equals. Church is always supposed to be about Christ; about the practice of community; about investing in community with everything we have even when it hurts as Jesus did when he went so far as to die on a cross. Again, when you get down to it, long life ensues for communities of Christian faith when they hang together and with Christ no matter what and death is what follows after division. It's clear and simple, but it's not at all simplistic or uninformed. In many ways, Jesus' championing of robust, resilient community is what makes Jesus the light of a dark, sinful, and divisive world. In, by, and through the Holy Spirit, may we never forget it. Amen!

Prayers Of Intercession

P: Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need. Make your church one in purpose, proclaiming the message of the cross. Help us to work together across differences.

P: Energize ecumenical partnerships, including the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: We rejoice at the bounty of your creation. Fill the land and sea with your abundance. Bless harvests in the southern hemisphere and fallow fields in the northern hemisphere. Equip farmers to till and keep the earth sustainably. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: In Christ your reign comes near and calls all to repentance. Break the rod of the oppressor in every nation. Dispel the shadow of death in places of war and persecution. Grant us leaders who lift the yokes that burden those in need. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Be a stronghold for those in trouble and a rock for all who are afraid. Rouse communities to care for neighbors who need shelter, are facing maltreatment, or are isolated and lonely. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: Sustain the ministries of this congregation and all churches in this community. Nurture each congregation's unique witness to your presence; foster mutual respect; inspire our cooperation in loving our neighbors. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

P: We praise you for the faithful who have gone ahead of us, both famous and unknown. Help us to leave our nets and follow, and bring us with them to the fullness of your promise of eternal life. 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: The God of glory dwell in you richly, name you beloved, and shine brightly on your path; and the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the ✠ Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

A: Amen.