



Mount Calvary Connected

March 30, 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 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

Wednesday morning, I was in the front office with Terrie when our treasurer Bev Coughenour came in with a bag of candy for the Easter egg hunt. As I was saying thank you, Terrie took the candy and said, "I'll put it with the rest."

"The rest" of the candy that she put it with was not the pile that had already accumulated in my office from donations over the weekend. Nor was it the pile with my own contributions to the cause that I had stashed in Sander Hall the week before. NOR was it the several big bags that were waiting to be brought in from my truck, purchased with cash given to me by a church member.

"The rest" of the candy that Terrie put it with was a giant pile of donations that had accumulated on the office counter during the day Tuesday.

Friends, we have a LOT of candy for our children's Easter egg hunt this weekend. More than we've ever had in the three or four years that I've coordinated one here at Mount Calvary. Every child that participates will end up going home with a boatload of candy, along with some other neat prizes we've gathered through donations over the past year. It is amazing, and I am so grateful for everyone who gave.

In case you didn't already know, yesterday was not necessarily an easy day to be a kid in Western Pennsylvania. Across the region, dozens of "prank" calls were made to local police departments and emergency services agencies reporting "active shooter incidents" in various schools.

Even with some doubtful credibility to these reports, law enforcement and school officials responded in line with protocols that have been developed with the experience and knowledge gained from countless school shootings in the past. Schools went into "lockdown" or "lockout" status, and armed law enforcement responded to search and patrol.

It's fortunate that amid dozens of incidents reported across numerous counties, there was no REAL incident, but in many places, damage was still done.

In Somerset, my wife's students were returning from an assembly when their emergency "lockout" procedure was declared. Everyone returned to their classrooms, locked their doors, covered their windows, hid, and waited quietly for an "all clear." The teachers and students were not aware of what was going on across the region, and thus all they knew was, "this is not a drill."

My wife, who teaches pre-kindergarten, says she will never forget the look of pure terror on the face of one of her students who had to hide in their bathroom. These are four and five year olds who are already being taught lessons about "cover and concealment" straight out of police academy or army boot camp.

It's not an easy time to be a kid, in part, because our society is forcing them to grow up way quicker than I think any of us would like them to, certainly way quicker than many of us did. Even graduating high school just fifteen years ago, the closest thing we had to a "lockdown" was when they brought the police drug dogs in to sniff lockers once or twice a year and we weren't allowed out of our classrooms.

And so, while something like toothbrushes or bibles may be the more appropriate and healthy Easter gift for kids, I'm okay loading them up with sugar instead, especially if it allows them to forget about the worries of the world and just be a kid for a bit.

So once again, thanks for all the candy.

And say a prayer for our local teachers and students tonight. These are crazy times we live in.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jonathan

Upcoming Events & Meetings

Coffee Social – Sun., April 2nd at 8 am

Easter Egg Hunt – Sun., April 2nd at 10 am

Maundy Thursday Service (Mt. Calvary) - Thurs., April 6th at 7 pm

Good Friday Cross Walk - Fri., April 7th ends at 3 pm at Mt. Calvary

Good Friday Service (Benscreek) - Fri., April 7th at 7 pm

Easter Service (Mt. Calvary) - Sat., April 8th at 5:30 pm

Easter Sunrise Service (Benscreek) - Sun., April 9th at 7 am

Easter Sunday Service (Mt. Calvary) – Sun., April 9th at 8:45 am

Annual Weed and Feed - Thurs., April 13th at 5 pm

WELCA – Mon., April 17th at 6 pm

Church Council Meeting – Tues., April 18th at 6:30 pm

Social Ministry Meeting – Thur., April 20th at 6 pm

Community Shoe Drop Off – Sat., April 29th from Noon - 3 pm

The Good Friday Cross Walk

The Good Friday Cross Walk will take place Friday, April 7th, gathering and departing from Beulah United Methodist Church at noon, and making devotional stops along the way before arriving at Mount Calvary for 3pm. If you're interested in participating, see Pastor Jonathan or Ray Leverknight for more information.

Save the Date!

The property committee will not be having its usual April meeting. We will however, be hosting our annual Weed and Feed. It will be held Thursday, April 13 at 5 pm.

Bring your favorite gardening tool. A light meal will be provided. Hope to see you there!

7:00 AM Easter Sunday Sunrise Service

Sunrise Service will be held at Benscreek Lutheran Church's picnic grove. If the weather cooperates, the service will be held outside. If not, it will be moved indoors in the same picnic area. Directions will be provided, OR for those who don't want to drive, sign-up sheets are in the Narthex for those who want to carpool. We will meet at Mt. Calvary at 6:00 am, and leave by 6:20 am.

Please sign the sheet and indicate whether you can drive, or you will need a ride. Sign-ups will help Benscreek plan for the coffee and donuts served after the service.

A Prayer for Our Pastoral Search

The Call Committee is continuing with the search process for a new pastor for Mount Calvary. Please take a minute to bow your head and pray for their efforts and God's guidance in this process.

Heavenly God, we lift before you all members of this congregation. We especially ask your blessing upon those who have been given the responsibility of finding a new pastor. Grant wisdom and right judgment to those who serve on our Call Committee. Guide them to the one who you have chosen to lead us. Grant them the vision to clearly see the leader who is to come among us. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Ushers/Greeters:

April 1 – Tom and Kathy Rohrbaugh

April 2 – The Bower Family & The Swartz Family

April 6 (Maundy Thursday) - Tom and Kathy Rohrbaugh

April 8 – Dave and Stacy Saloka

April 9 – The Bower Family & The Swartz Family

April 15 – Dave and Stacy Saloka

April 16 – The Bower Family & The Swartz Family

April 22 – Dave and Stacy Saloka

April 23 – The Bower Family & The Swartz Family

April 29 – Tom and Kathy Rohrbaugh

April 30 – The Bower Family & The Swartz Family

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

Featured Article

Encouraged by donkeys

by Heidi Neumark

I recently sent a herd of donkeys from Manhattan to Montana. These included a carved wooden donkey from Prague with a barrel on his back, a yellow ceramic donkey from Mexico embellished with flowers and a fringed saddle, a three-legged donkey positioned so that only I knew his secret, a Hopi donkey bearing sacred drawings, a plastic Eeyore, and so many more. Over the years the herd increased to about 30. Until recently it was stationed on a shelf across my office window.

The donkeys had their origin in South Carolina, where I spent a year off from college on one of the Gullah Sea Islands. I learned from the descendants of those enslaved on nearby plantations, who allowed me to listen in as they sat around telling stories. I learned from lawyers and social workers who supported the islanders in their fight for land rights.

Real estate developers, eager to build resorts on the gorgeous islands, were going up to northern cities to knock on the public housing doors of islanders' distant relations, who were happy to sign away their portion of ownership of a property they'd never heard of for an easy \$100 in cash. I got to know one of the social workers, a faithful Baptist hired by Lutherans to do her undercover research and warn the relatives—an ecumenical conspiracy against land theft. I witnessed a congregation shouting in island praise houses and organizing for justice. And then I spent the summer at an inland retreat center.

At the time, I was reluctant to speak of my faith, but after the witness I beheld on the island, I felt pushed toward greater public testimony and ministry, including possible ordination. But that thought was followed by a parade of doubts: I can't speak in public. I can't preach. I'm too shy. I don't fit in.

Then one Sunday at the retreat center, I heard a young priest preach about donkeys. He mentioned that if God could use a donkey to carry Jesus into the city, God could use us, too. His words were liberating. If a donkey can carry Jesus to others, so can I. If Jesus had need of a donkey, Jesus might have need of me.

More recently, I've noticed that Jesus sends for a donkey in the village of Bethphage, which means "house of unripe figs"—fruit that is not yet ready. Jesus seeks his donkey there. I've kept my donkeys close at hand to remind me of this when I don't feel ready or ripe for a task. For almost 40 years they have done their plodding, gracious work on me and my vocation.

When I was a pastor in the Bronx, we began a tradition of getting a real donkey for Palm Sunday. A child would put on their Jesus crown and ride a donkey named Baby around the block as we followed, waving palms and singing. The men who hung out in front of the bodega down the street always looked up in amazement. After the procession, Baby would go back into her trailer as we went into the sanctuary to continue worship.

Everything went smoothly until the year it didn't, the day Baby refused to budge. Finally, and with great difficulty, we forced her back into her trailer. After that, we made do with a pony.

Soon after Baby balked, I was speaking at a protest against corrupt education officials who stubbornly refused to carry our children forward, asses who didn't deserve their increasing pay. I had a permit for the protest, but the city cut off the mic as I spoke—so I spoke louder, no longer shy about public witness.

When I moved to a church in Manhattan, we adopted the Palm Sunday donkey tradition. We parade down Broadway as people peer through diner windows or step out with their phones to record our progress. I'd procured the Bronx ponies from a local stable, but after moving, I found a stable on the Upper West Side, just 15 blocks from the church. It turns out that Manhattan ponies, like so much else, are unaffordable. It is cheaper to have a pony travel from the Bronx.

This Palm Sunday will be my last. With retirement looming, I'm doing so many things for the last time. I'll have been in New York for 40 years. I have served in loving places that accepted my failings often better than I did, something I do not take for granted. I am filled with gratitude and, of course, regret—for all the things I didn't do, or didn't do well, or didn't complete. The times when I was too weary and heavily burdened to do much of anything. The times when I felt that I was the heavy burden but found myself carried forward on the gentle flanks of sure-footed, inexplicable grace.

I've been slowly packing for the move. We bought a house across the street from our daughter, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters. It's perfect for us but rather small, and there's simply not room for everything. I've already packed up 15 boxes of books to give away, with more to come.

My other daughter-in-law is a pastor in her first call. Before she became my daughter-in-law she was an intern with us in New York, preparing for urban ministry, yet she finds herself pastoring a church in Libby, Montana, population 2,750. All of our weekly supervisory sessions took place in the presence of the donkeys, which are now on their way to Libby. Knowing that the donkeys will remain in the family and perhaps continue their ministry of encouragement made it easy to send them packing. And, of course, I can visit.

Now I have to decide what to do with the herd of cows and host of angels inherited from my mother. Not sure about the cows, but I think the angels are coming with me.

Heidi Neumark is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church of Manhattan and author of Hidden Inheritance: Family Secrets, Memory, and Faith.

Original Article: Encouraged by donkeys | The Christian Century

Birthdays & Anniversaries April 1 – April 9, 2023

Anniversaries

April 4 - Ed & Amy Brandau

April 4 - Craig & Brenda Kuyat

Birthdays

April 2 - William Smith

April 3 - Joyce Morgenstern

April 4 - Kathy Ponchione

April 5 - Linda Haberkorn

April 7 - David Berkey, Deanne Coyne, Dawn Morningstar, & Julie Reitnauer

April 8 - Susan Penrod

Remember those that prayer has been requested for:

Kim; Devin; Laura & Family; Dorothy; Jo Ann; John Alt; Jan Mertz; Denny; Jill Lisson; Jaci Hauger; Sharon; Barbara; Dennis; Mary M.; Joel Penrod; Tim Miller; Cathy T.; Paul Brodt; Kim Stayrook; Alan; Pastor David Louder; Frank Robison; Sandy; Louise; Brooke & Bill; Chuck; Dawn; Cherie; Sandy; Lorrie & Bill; Jamie Bloom; Nancy Moore; Wilma Hiltz; Johnny Nerone; Cheryl & Roger; James; Denny & Ellen; Bill; Sue; Stan McQuaide; El Warshel; Kathy Price; Beth Oldham; Stacy & Josh; Bill; Janet; Landon; Harold; Gonzales Family; Mary; Elaine, Patty and Betty Shaffer; Theresa Lydic and Family.

Condensed Worship

Saturday, March 25, 2023 & Sunday, March 26, 2023

Questions that Kick

Prayer of the Day

P: Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **A: Amen.**

First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you

know.” Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”

The word of the Lord, **A: Thanks be to God.**

Psalmody: Psalm 130

L: Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;

A: O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

L: If you were to keep watch over sins, O Lord, who could stand?

A: Yet with you is forgiveness, in order that you may be feared.

L: I wait for you, O Lord; my soul waits; in your word is my hope.

A: My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch for the morning, more than those who keep watch for the morning.

L: O Israel, wait for the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love; with the Lord there is plenteous redemption.

A: For the Lord shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

Second Reading: Romans 8:6-11

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

The word of the Lord,

A: Thanks be to God.

Gospel: John 11:1-45

P: The holy gospel according to John. **A: Glory to you, O Lord.**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. The gospel of the Lord, **A: Praise to you, O Christ!**

Sermon

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Christ Jesus who helps us grow in faith. Amen.

During the seven summers that I worked at church camp, one of my favorite jobs within the job was facilitating the high ropes challenge course... The climbing wall, the cargo net, the multi-line, and... The zipline.

During my time at Lutherlyn, we actually had two zip lines. The first was anchored into real live trees. But during my time there, we got a more professionally designed and manufactured system built from telephone poles. But in general, they were both fairly similar: steel cables suspended 50 or 60 feet in the air that you had to climb up to in order to get the thrill of zipping several hundred feet down before getting lowered safely back to the ground.

Successfully running the zipline required at least three staff members: one managing the safety ropes for climbers going up, another who helped participants lower themselves safely down at the end, and then, the most coveted and respected of jobs, “the tree person.”

“The tree person” was essentially in charge, they were the first up “the tree” into the platform at the top of the zipline. They set up all the equipment, they managed the flow of participants up and down, and when a climber came up, ready to ride the zipline, they unhooked them from the safety rope they had been tethered to, and hooked them into pulley that carry them down to the end.

It was a job with immense responsibility, you literally held the life of campers in your hands, and the speed and efficiency at which you could get them down could determine whether everyone got their turn in the allotted time.

But that responsibility was not without its perks. You got to spend an hour or two 50 or 60ft in the air hanging from a tree, AND, when you were done, the only way safely back down was to ride the zipline. If you were certified as a tree person, you were almost guaranteed to get at least one zipline ride a week, if not several.

You were the envy of all your fellow camp staff peers.

Except... When things didn't go right.

Now, because it was a somewhat strenuous climb to the top of our zipline, it was somewhat self-selecting. The kids who were most likely to chicken out usually didn't make it to the top anyway. But every once and a while, they did...

They'd make it to the top, they'd get hooked into the appropriate equipment, they'd have the proper safety commands and instructions given to them, and then it came time to jump off... And they couldn't.

Fortunately, but definitely also unfortunately, the kids who had these sorts of panic reactions were usually among the last to go. Which meant you weren't preventing others from getting the opportunity. But it also meant that you might be stuck there for a while, coaching and coaxing, trying to get the camper to make the leap of faith. It was a catch-22 of sorts, the safest AND easiest way down was to simply jump off and

enjoy the ride, but that was also the most intimidating. Kids would beg to be allowed to climb back down the way they had come up, or maybe to even be lowered down, but we weren't allowed to do that.

Sometimes they also begged for us to push them off the platform and down the zipline.

But we weren't allowed to do that either.

The philosophy that we both preached and practiced was called "challenge by choice." We weren't allowed to force them because the reality is that if I pushed a kid off, they wouldn't learn anything. They would not have any more faith in the equipment or in themselves than they had or did not have before they were pushed off.

In order for them to really have the best experience, and not be completely traumatized, we had to help them ask the question "Do I trust this?" "Do I trust myself?" And when they found the answer to that question, that's when they'd grow the most...

Some of my favorite experiences as "a tree person" were not the impressive and fearless athletes who could climb up and jump off in minutes, it was the ones who were not sure of themselves, who saw what they were capable of.

We tend to think that faith is about certainty. But arriving at certainty involves wrestling with uncertainty, asking the hard questions, testing the limits of your own faith and belief.

That's what's happening in today's Gospel. Martha is certain that Lazarus would not have died if Jesus had been there.

But she's not so certain that he can do anything now. She goes with him to the tomb, but she doesn't want him to roll away the stone, she's embarrassed that Lazarus will smell.

And Jesus says, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

It's a question with a kick. Not one pushing her off the edge of a cliff, but inviting a leap of faith. Encouraging her to have to courage, to have faith.

It's in that moment that she jumps off. It's in that moment that Lazarus walks out of the tomb. It's in that moment, that moment that begin in uncertainty, that many more come to believe.

So, have faith, but know that faith is not without uncertainty. But that when we wrestle with our uncertainty, wrestle with our fear, that's when we'll grow the most. Amen.

Prayers Of Intercession

L: Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

L: You have breathed into us the breath of life. Enliven your church. Deepen our partnerships with our companion churches around the globe, and bless the work of missionaries who accompany them. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

L: Your spirit brings life to creation. Enliven the natural world and restore ecosystems in need of healing. Uplift prophetic voices that turn us to the needs of the soil beneath our feet and the air all around. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

L: You redeem the world and its peoples. Free us from systems of oppression. Unbind nations and societies from the sins of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Raise up leaders at all levels of government who work to promote the dignity of every human life. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

L: You weep when we weep. Be present with those who grieve or who are troubled by illness. You hear us when we call to you. Deliver us from the depths of our despair, and free us from the worries that bind us. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

L: Your Spirit of life dwells in our assembly. Bless the music ministries of this congregation and all who lead us in hymns of praise and thanksgiving and in songs of lament and prayer. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

L: You are the resurrection and the life. Even though we die, we will live. With thanksgiving, we remember all your saints who now live in your eternal love. Merciful God,

A: receive our prayer.

L: We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

A: Amen.

Blessing

P: May God who has called us forth from the dust of the earth, and claimed us as children of the light, strengthen you on your journey into life renewed. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you ☩ peace. **A: Amen.**