



# The Olive Branch

March 18, 2020

A publication of Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

*At this time and until further notice, all worship services and activities are suspended, in the interests of the health of our members, our neighborhood, and the world around us.*

## Accent on Worship

### *Vicar Bristol Reading*

We are not gathering in person for worship right now, but the lectionary can still accompany us through these days. Scripture can speak God's word to us in all circumstances, even in the era of COVID-19.

The Psalm for this coming Sunday, Lent 4, is Psalm 23. This is certainly one of the most beloved and well-known psalms, with its imagery of pastures and ponds, shepherds and sheep. In a time when many of us are isolated at home, the bucolic landscapes this psalm describes sound even more appealing. I could definitely go for some still waters right now. Thankfully, experts have said that getting outside, away from large crowds, is still safe. I went running at a regional park on Sunday afternoon, where a sign proclaimed: "Nature is still open!"

Of course, the Psalmist isn't longing merely for some time among the fields. Psalm 23 uses metaphoric language to express the soul-deep longing for God's presence and provision: a restored soul, confidence in the face of evil, comfort in the face of fear. Those things might be a little harder to come by right now, when the "valley of the shadow of death" feels like it looms very close indeed.

But notice the way the Psalmist proclaims God's goodness in the mist of challenges. From the very outset, the Psalmist declares that with God as your shepherd, you have what you need. The little flock will have to navigate some treacherous terrain, but the loving shepherd will be present with them throughout the journey, no matter what - "all the days of my life," the Psalmist says. It is not that the Psalmist never faces want, fear, or death; it is that the Psalmist intimately trusts the guidance and care of the Shepherd in the midst of all life's trials.

As this week unfolds, you can come back to Psalm 23 again and again, knowing that God hears and understands your longings and that nothing will ever cause God, your shepherd, to leave you.

## Sunday Readings

March 22, 2020

### Fourth Sunday in Lent

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

March 29, 2020

### Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm 130

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45

## Alternative Methods for Regular Offering

No one is outside of God's care during this challenging time. We are called now more than ever to practice stewardship in its many forms and be the hands and feet of Christ.

Stewardship as we know is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. This is something we do exceptionally well at Mount Olive. It is about sustaining the community of care that we Mount Olive so carefully and intentionally cultivate. We come together as a community when we are physically present together as well as when we are unable to do so. As stewards, these times call for the sharing of our gifts of time and talent as well as our treasure. Extending that care, might be as simple as picking up the phone and giving a Mount Olive friend a call, sending a text, or mailing a handwritten note.

We appreciate our community's response and commitment to ensure our staff are paid, our work carried out and budget being met. Many have called and emailed to ask how to make your weekly contributions that you would have placed in the offering plate. Thank you!

We receive approximately 70% of our weekly gifts in the form of checks in the offering plate or mailed directly to the church office. This is an important part of our ability to carry out our ministry. Here are ways to continue your giving:

- The simplest way is to mail your contribution to the church office via first-class mail (3045 Chicago Ave., Mpls., MN 55407).
- Set up a regular offering through your bank via bank "bill pay" system. You tell your bank how much to send and how often, and they mail a check from your account for you. This service is most often free of charge and already used by many at Mount Olive.
- Set up a regular deduction from your bank account via electronic funds transfer (EFT) through the church's existing account with Vanco Services. Contact the church office to set this up and a form will be mailed or emailed to you. Complete the form and send it back to the church office.
- Finally, you can donate by credit card through the church website. Visit [www.mountolivechurch.org](http://www.mountolivechurch.org), go the very bottom of the home page and a "Donate" link is on the left.

The Vestry and staff are committed to continuing to serve Mount Olive and are actively working to engage our community. There will be more information forthcoming in *The Olive Branch* and TWIG on ways you can continue to share your gifts, talents and resources. We are grateful for the generosity that is shown daily from our Mount Olive community.

With Gratitude,  
Consuelo Gutierrez-Crosby  
Stewardship Director

## A Note from Cantor Cherwien

Dear Friends,

We are home safe and well, having cut short our time in Rome following their extreme preemptive restrictions to slow the spread of the virus. Rome was not yet a red zone, but the numbers throughout the country were rapidly climbing.

We were careful while there, however, and avoided high-risk contexts. We had no trouble clearing screening to come home, and are not showing any symptoms. However, we will stay home and avoid contact for this and next week to be safe.

We are grateful for the notes of concern and offers to help! Probably the best thing we can do is pray for the world, especially for our doctors and health-care providers!

- Cantor David and Susan Cherwien

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## A Word About Email ... Please check it frequently!

This is important! During this time, **email will be our primary method of contacting Mount Olive members who have email.** (Those who don't have email will be kept informed via snail mail or, if necessary, a phone call, if urgent). Please, if you have email, check it at least daily (even if you don't like to).

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## GoToMeeting – Virtual Meetings

While there will be no group gatherings at Mount Olive until further notice, we have some online meeting tools that will allow your group or committee to continue to meet “virtually.” If you have a regular gathering at Mount Olive that you would like to continue in a virtual meeting room, please contact Cha and she can provide you with our Mount Olive GoToMeeting information.

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## Update on Mary Crippen

Thank you all from the depths of our heart for your prayers and concern during Mary's treatment for lymphoma. She finished the last course of treatment a month ago and this past week her bloodwork and scans showed no active cancer. We are so grateful to God (and the Mayo Clinic) for this! As this is a chronic disease, it likely will return at some point, but we hope for years of remission before that. We'll be taking Mary off the prayer list for now. Because of the immuno-chemotherapy, her white counts are very low, however. They will rebound over some months, but right now she is vulnerable. During this time she'll work from home and not go out. Know that I also need to keep it in mind in terms of my exposure when I'm out and about. Many of you are also facing similar vulnerability, so know you are in our prayers as well.

*with love, Pr. Crippen*

## Neighborhood Ministry in a Time of COVID-19

Like all Mount Olive programs and many community organizations, Neighborhood Ministry is adapting our work in an attempt to both serve the most vulnerable in our community and keep everyone involved safe. Here are some of the ways we are adapting our programs and services in this time:

### *Diaper Depot*

I had developed a system for keeping the Diaper Depot open while reducing personal contact between customers and workers, however, our major diaper suppliers were unable to fulfill our recent orders in a timely manner due to diaper shortages in their warehouses. When we receive more stock, the Diaper Depot will reopen with an adapted system for distribution.

### *Bus Cards, Rent Assistance, and Utility Assistance*

I have developed a system for handling these requests electronically. While not ideal, since face-to-face conversation is a vital part of our ministry, this system will at least allow us to help people financially while keeping everyone safe. This system also allows me to handle these requests remotely, so if needed, I can handle them without being physically present in the Mount Olive building.

### *Other Direct Care Programs*

I was unable to develop a safe and secure way to continue providing help with laundry vouchers, identification cards, or birth certificates. Those programs are currently on hold.

Referrals for other services will be available, though the same process as our financial assistance programs, as written about above. I am doing the best I can to stay on top of which area organizations are open, closed, or working in a modified form so I can best serve our neighbors.

- Jim Bargmann, Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry

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## Olive Branch Deadline

During this time of suspended activity at Mount Olive, we plan to continue to publish the weekly newsletter. Please note that the deadline for articles is the same as it's always been: Mondays.

If you have information to be published, please send it via email to the church office at [welcome@mountolivechurch.org](mailto:welcome@mountolivechurch.org) no later than Monday, and it will run in that week's issue.

Thanks!

## From ELCA's Lutheran Disaster Response

“Early (last) Tuesday morning, a powerful tornado ripped through Nashville and other parts of Tennessee, leaving destruction in its wake. The tornado was part of a series of severe storms. At least 24 people have been killed, homes and other buildings have been destroyed, and thousands of people are without electricity. The worship space for St. John’s Lutheran Church of Nashville, an ELCA congregation, was crushed by the tornado. Lutheran Disaster Response is working with those in the impacted area – including the ELCA Southeastern Synod, In Spiritus (formerly known as Lutheran Services of Georgia and Lutheran Services in Tennessee) and local congregations – to respond with immediate relief. Given the extent of the destruction, recovery is expected to take years. We plan to accompany the synod and In Spiritus to address survivors’ needs over the long haul.”

Along with a donation from your Mission Committee, your gifts through your blue envelopes or through checks to Mount Olive clearly marked “*Tornado Response*” will be directed and used 100% for tornado recovery in Tennessee.

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## Staff and Vestry Updates from Pr. Crippen

The Vestry met virtually Monday night, March 16, and Tuesday the staff met at church (with appropriate six-foot apart social distancing!), both to talk about plans going forward. The Vestry will be communicating with each other frequently and will announce things as necessary. One decision was to ask all the outside groups who meet here not to meet here for the duration. Any congregation committees will meet in virtual fashion, in whatever way each director chooses to work with their team.

The staff will continue to work during this time, but this morning it became clear we’d prefer to work from home as much as possible and only come in when we need the facilities at Mount Olive. Cha will still be answering phones from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., M-F, as she can link her cell phone to Mount Olive’s system, so please know you can still stay in touch. She also will be doing a lot of communication connection things from home, only coming in to print things that need regular mail distribution. *The Olive Branch* will go out every week. James is not feeling well right now, so he’ll stay home until that gets cleared up.

My cell phone is on my voicemail at church, but here it is also: 612-280-4593. Please call with any pastoral concerns. Vicar Reading and I are making plans for how we’ll do pastoral ministry in this time. Phone calling will be key. We’ve been talking with our interim Cantor Fothergill about how we might bring Word and music to you all during this time. We think we’ve got a good plan started.

**Last, we’d like to set up a phone tree system involving all members.** If you’d like to commit to being in touch by phone with 5-10 households during this time apart, please send an email to me at [pastor@mountolivechurch.org](mailto:pastor@mountolivechurch.org) or to Lora Dundek at [evangelism@mountolivechurch.org](mailto:evangelism@mountolivechurch.org).

## An Update on Our Ministry Partners

Please note: All information is accurate as of the date of publication. Please see each organization's web site for current information. Situations are changing constantly.

Please also note that this is not intended to be a complete list. We work regularly with more than 20 community partners. Not all have provided us with updates to their operations or the changes they have instituted do not affect our work with them. This is only intended to update you on significant changes and needs brought about by those changes. Please continue to pray for and support our partners in ministry.

I would invite you to pay special attention to the notes about St. Stephen's and Sheridan Story.

### *St. Stephen's Human Services*

"...We know that folks sleeping outside or in shelter are at higher risk for contracting any illness, and we are engaging in extra education and action around illness prevention.

As part of these preparations, we are adding a new volunteer opportunity that involves cooking homemade meals off-site that our shelter staff can reheat and serve to guests. Please learn more about this opportunity and other ways to help here: <https://ststephensmpls.org/latest/covid-19>

### *Sheridan Story*

"...With all K-12 schools closing starting no later than March 18 and continuing through March 27, hundreds of thousands of children will face a substantial increase in food insecurity. Facing this pandemic, school districts will need to prepare for closings for even longer periods of time.... Our network is responding. We are preparing over 330,000 meals and working with over 30 schools districts in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin to provide a nutritious source of food directly to children. This is equivalent to completely filling our warehouse and emptying it in a matter of weeks."

Sheridan Story is looking for both monetary and volunteer support for this effort. Please visit [www.thesheridanstory.org/coronavirus](http://www.thesheridanstory.org/coronavirus) for details.

### *Our Saviour's Housing*

"We want to assure you that the safety of our staff, residents and volunteers is our top priority. We stress you take care of yourself and if you are feeling ill, please stay home. At the shelter in particular we are stepping the cleaning of frequently used surface with bleach and/or disinfectant spray.... We completely understand if you're concerned about your health and need to refrain from volunteering for the time being. We just ask that you inform staff as soon as possible! We will continue to be in communication with you about any updates regarding this matter."

### *Central Lutheran Church*

"As the CDC has asked groups to limit gatherings to under 250 we have decided to make some changes to our Monday meal. We will not have worship on Monday. The Free Store will be open, and we will run it in a way that limits the gathering and wait times. The same is true for the Health Commons and [Emergency Rental Assistance program]. The meal will be served at 11:30 with hot stew in to-go containers with sides and fixings. We will ask folks to not gather to eat in our building. We will try this for this Monday, see how it works and then re-evaluate what services we can continue until this virus passes."

## Mount Olive Lutheran Church

3045 Chicago Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55407

*A congregation of the Evangelical  
Lutheran Church in America*

### **Sunday Eucharist:**

**8:00 & 10:45 am**

### **Contact Us**

Phone: 612/827-5919

Fax: 612/827-4557

Web: [www.mountolivechurch.org](http://www.mountolivechurch.org)

### **Staff**

Pastor - *Joseph Crippen*

Interim Cantor - *Chad Fothergill*

Vicar - *Bristol Reading*

Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry

- *Jim Bargmann*

Administrative Assistant - *Cha Posz*

Sexton - *James Wilkes*

*Mount Olive is a Reconciling in Christ  
congregation.*

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