



Sunday Readings

April 5, 2020

Sunday of the Passion

Palm Sunday

Processional Gospel:

Matthew 21:1-11

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 31:9-16

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 26:14 – 27:66

April 12, 2020

Resurrection of Our Lord

Acts 20:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2; 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4

Matthew 28:1-10

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.

The Olive Branch

April 1, 2020

A publication of Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Accent on Worship

Interim Cantor Chad Fothergill

*Christ humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death –
even death on a cross.*

*Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name.*

– Gospel acclamation, Sunday of the Passion (Philippians 2:8-9)

Humility and exaltation. Obedience and glory. The Sunday of the Passion is rich in paradox. The grandeur of a palm procession suddenly pivots via the prayer of the day to readings from Isaiah and Philippians – a poem and a hymn, respectively – that set the stage for the Passion gospel. “Ride on in majesty,” we sing, “in lowly pomp ride on to die” (ELW 346, st. 4): our festive procession of “sweet praises” does not mask that death for which we “thirst and cry” (ELW 343, st. 3). *Christus paradox*, a four-stanza hymn by Sylvia Dunstan often sung on this Sunday, also juxtaposes contrasting and paradoxical images: Christ is our “Lamb and Shepherd,” our “gift and cost,” our “death and life.” And in the day’s proper preface from *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the presiding minister chants: “where death began, there life might be

continued on page 2

Accent on Worship, *continued from page 1*

restored,” that the one “who by a tree once overcame, might by a tree be overcome.” There is victory in defeat, glory in the cross.

This year, we encounter a new paradoxical layer at this moment in liturgical time: the palm procession, one of the church’s most extroverted gathering rites for centuries, is to be observed as gatherings are discouraged. The liturgy of palms may look smaller, more humble, and sound quieter this year – perhaps within our dwelling, or perhaps outside in our yard or around a nearby park. And yet we know that Christ enters into all times and places. The Lenten lectionary has prepared us to meet Jesus in unexpected ways: the questions of Nicodemus posed under the cover of darkness, the testimony of the Samaritan woman, the blessing of sight to the blind man with opaque mud – just to name a few.

Another hymn that is part of this Sunday’s fabric is “There in God’s Garden” (ELW 342). Like many of the other spoken, sung, and chanted words on this day, its stanzas teem with multifaceted and sometimes paradoxical images – like a tree’s ecosystem, much is wondrously woven together. Hymnal commentaries note the scriptural sweep of its first couplet: the tree of life, knowledge, beauty, and wisdom (Genesis 2) buds leaves that heal the nations (Revelation 22). The remaining stanzas allude to a wide swath of scripture: fire and holy ground (Exodus 3); words of Jesus and the psalmist (Psalm 31:5, Matthew 11:28; Luke 23:46); the singing heavens (Revelation 5) that proclaim “thanks to Christ whose passion offers in mercy healing, strength, and pardon” (ELW 342, st. 6).

I sing fragments of this hymn to myself throughout the year because I reside on Shades Mountain, the southernmost foothill of the Appalachian chain and namesake of the hymn’s tune. The mountain is a *cuesta*: on the west side there is a steep slope – a drop of some 800 feet – while to the east, there is a gradual slope replete with small brooks, coniferous and deciduous trees, and fragrant flowering vegetation. Indeed, it is God’s garden. I often hum the melody when I turn onto our street (Shades Crest Road), and “thorns not its own are tangled in its foliage” (st. 3) is a recurring refrain while I tend to the thick, thorny vines that attempt to choke the shrubs and trees in our yard. Like the vast network of biblical roots that feed its stanzas, and like the topography of Shades Mountain itself, the inner voices of the tune’s harmonization stretch out as roots and tendrils that hold the musical landscape together. Even without the text, it is a wholly satisfying composition.

Now that I have returned to Birmingham and the surroundings of Shades Mountain (see Cantor Cherwien’s note in this week’s *Olive Branch*), I am deeply attuned to the paradox of marking Passion Sunday *in absentia* – without a shofar in the palm procession, without singing this beloved hymn at the end of the liturgy. But I will be listening to these stanzas often in the coming days, singing along with your voices on the *Mount Olive Sings* recording: it is my hope that you will have opportunities to sing this hymn at home, too. Christ, the Tree of Life, enters into all times and places with healing, strength, beauty, wisdom, love, and blessing.

*See how its branches
reach to us in welcome;
hear what the Voice says,
“Come to me, ye weary!
Give me your sickness,
give me all your sorrow,
I will give blessing.”*

– ELW 342, st. 4

- Chad Fothergill, Interim Cantor

A Word About Your 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, and it will be the easiest way to contact us.** (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). If you are on the paper copy mailing list but have email, please let us know so we can save a bit of time and postage.

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.

Regular link to the Tuesday Noon Bible Study: Copy and Keep

The link for the Tuesday noon Bible study will be the same every week. Copy this text and print it off or keep it on your desk for easy reference each week.

To join from your computer, tablet or smartphone:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/179693565>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (646) 749-3112

Access Code: 179-693-565

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/179693565>

A Note of Thanks

Thank you to all at Mount Olive who offer-ed prayers and words of concern while my mother is recovering from her stroke.

The good news is that she was able to go home on March 23! She is still working on improving her strength and mobility but is happy to be at home. The support from everyone at Mount Olive has meant so much--thank you!

- Matt McCuen

Spiritual Direction

Teresa Rothausen has offered to do “Zoom (online) Spiritual Direction” for Mount Olive members and friends who have laptops or computers set up with sound and camera, and who might need it during our time apart. To see if this is for you, or for more information, please contact her directly at tjrothausen@gmail.com.

Teresa holds a graduate certificate in Spiritual Direction from St. Catherine University.

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 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 as able.

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

Cantor Cherwien Sabbatical Update

Due to the global and local situation caused by the COVID-19 virus, Cantor Cherwien, in consultation with the Vestry, has made the decision to suspend the sabbatical and he will return to responsibilities at Mount Olive as of April 1. The hope is that once restrictions are eased and we return to a more normal mode of operating, the remaining two months may resume.

Interim Cantor Chad Fothergill was also then able to return to his home in Alabama to weather this time with his physician husband, Justin. If we are able to resume, he will return. We are grateful for his gifts while here, and look forward to his gifts when and if the sabbatical leave for Cantor Cherwien is able to resume. We pray for Justin in his work as an ER doctor, and for protection for both Chad and Justin during these dangerous times.

Keeping the Sunday of the Passion and Holy Week in the Home

The Sunday of the Passion, or Palm Sunday, marks a turning point in the season of Lent. The church moves from a time of prayer and spiritual preparation into a remembrance of Christ's passion and death, into a focus on death, transformation, and new life, both in the life of Jesus and in our own lives. The forty days of Lent, which do not include Sundays, end on the Wednesday of Holy Week. And because of the turn of focus onto Christ's passion, the color of paraments and vestments in the liturgies changes from purple to deep scarlet. Scarlet is associated with Christ's Passion. It is the color of blood. It is also the color of triumph. In the alchemical process, red is the last color before gold, the last stage before realization and fulfillment.

During the month before Passover (this year, beginning April 8), observant Jews clean their houses thoroughly to remove any possible trace of leaven, because during Passover no leavened bread may be eaten. This purifying of the home is a physical enacting and a reminder of the inward purifying and assessing that needs to take place before the celebration of deliverance at Passover. Holy Week, or the Great Week, is an apt time for Christians to also thoroughly clean to prepare for the resurrection, purifying the home to symbolize the letting go that precedes new life. Clean out closets and cupboards. Give away excess.

By Wednesday of this week, take down any purple veils you may have used in your home during Lent. From Sunday to Maundy Thursday evening, you may use a piece of scarlet cloth instead. On Maundy Thursday, consider reading or chanting Psalm 116 before your evening meal. On Good Friday, remove any scarlet veils, and place a cross in a prominent place in your home. Consider leaving the TV and radio off, maybe computers too. Bake hot cross buns - there are many recipes online, and here is one: <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/hot-cross-buns-recipe-1928112> . There is another in the Lenten devotional.

Perhaps make a simple meatless soup for your meal on Good Friday - lentil or split pea or chickpea. Or if you are healthy, you could fast and just have water, for one or more meals, partly as a physical and spiritual preparation for Easter, partly as a sign of solidarity with those who are suffering hunger in the world. On Holy Saturday, begin to prepare for Easter, the festival of the resurrection. Decorate eggs, adorn the home with white and gold, bake Easter bread, decorate with flowers. Buy a brand new pillar candle to be lit for the first time at the Easter Vigil or on Easter morning - the new fire of resurrection and new life - and throughout the Easter season, up to and including Pentecost. Set out bells to ring on Easter morning or during your observance of the Easter Vigil.

The journey through Holy Week is a journey to the cross and the empty tomb, not just for Christ two thousand years ago, but for all of us in our unique lives, and the many deaths and arisings that are inherent in growing into Christ, in becoming Christ in the world.

Blessed journey!

Alternative Methods for Regular Offering

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 contributions to the church office via first-class mail (3045 Chicago Ave., Mpls., MN 55407). We are picking up the mail at the post office during this time. **Please note that we will not deposit checks until the governor's shelter in place order expires.**
- 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 to the church for you. This service is most often free of charge and already used by many at Mount Olive.
- Set up automated giving via electronic funds transfer (formerly known as "Simply Giving") through the church's existing account with Vanco Services. An enrollment form is included/attached to this issue of *The Olive Branch*. Complete the form and send it back to the church office via email or regular post.
- Finally, you can donate by credit card through the church website. Visit www.mountolivechurch.org, go the very bottom of the home page and a "Donate" link is on the left. (This method was primarily initiated for non-member givers to Mount Olive for one-time or very occasional gifts, and the fees associated with it are fairly high. It's preferable all the way around for members to use one of the previous 3 methods).

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.

Olive Branch Deadline

During this time of suspended activity at Mount Olive, we plan to continue to publish the weekly newsletter on the same schedule. 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 no later than Monday, and it will run in that week's issue.

Thanks!

Mount Olive Lutheran Church

3045 Chicago Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55407

*A congregation of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*

Sunday Eucharist:
Temporarily suspended

Contact Us

Phone: 612/827-5919

Fax: 612/827-4557

Web: 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.*

Contacting the Church Office During This Time

The best way to contact Cha at the church office during regular office hours (M-F, 8am-3pm) is via email. She leaves her church email open all day long while working from home and will quickly see a message from you and be able to respond quickly, too. So if you can, please send an email.

If you don't have email or if you need to contact the church office right away for any reason, you may also call the church and leave a message in Cha's voice mail. **Be sure to leave a message!** Our voice mail system has an outcalling feature which notifies her when a voice mail has been left. During office hours, she will call in, get your message, and return your call shortly.