



## Sunday Readings

May 3, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2:19-25

John 10:1-10

May 10, 2020

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 7:55-60

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

*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 29, 2020

A publication of Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

## Accent on Worship *Vicar Bristol Reading*

I've been reflecting on ways the biblical theme of exile can offer a theological framework for our contemporary reality amidst the pandemic, especially in the time of physical distancing.

*In exile, the community was separated from one another for an extended period of time.*

The biblical exile was not a single event but the reality of successive military conquests resulting in the forced resettlement of most of the Israelite people. Those who were left behind struggled to cope with the destruction and loss, as we read in Lamentations. The people all wondered, as we do, whether there would ever be a 'return' and how they might live into their 'new normal.' Knowing their hopes to return home quickly would not be realized, the prophet Jeremiah encouraged the exilic community to settle in where they were, to build houses and plant gardens (Jeremiah 29:5).

*continued on page 2*

## Accent on Worship, *continued from page 1*

*Many people died in exile.*

Exile was a massively disruptive catastrophe, one whose resolution was longed for but not quick in coming, and the loss was tremendous. The prophet Ezekiel recounts a desolate vision of a valley filled with bones, the remains of those who have died in exile. So much time has passed that their bones have dried to dust. In a time when we are facing the loss of so many beloved children of God and grieving that we cannot mourn them properly, Ezekiel's valley sounds familiar.

*Exile called for creative theological responses.*

With the people geographically uprooted from the Promised Land and the Temple destroyed, exile raised complicated questions about how the people might observe their faith in new ways. We, too, are separated from our usual space and practice. Yet, throughout scripture we find imaginative theological responses to help people live into a challenging future. Ezekiel envisioned a God who was not confined to the Temple, even using the provocative image of God as a wheel on the move (Ezekiel 10). The people couldn't go to the Temple, but God could still come to them.

*The exilic community clung to their faith.*

Although they questioned why this was happening, the ancient Israelites held to their trust in a faithful God. The narrator of Lamentations admits that it is hard to think about anything other than their affliction but finds hope by calling to mind the steadfast love of God that never ceases: "God's mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

*God did still care for the exilic community.*

Through Jeremiah, God promises the exilic community that there is still hope for their future and that someday they will rebuild (Jeremiah 29:11, 31:3b-4a). In Isaiah, God speaks "comfort, comfort" to the people, promising: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you... when you walk through fire you shall not be burned." (Isaiah 40:1, 43:1b-2) Nothing can shake God's covenant of compassion. (Isaiah 54:10). Exile is not forever, but the love of God is everlasting.

*Those who have died are not forgotten by God.*

It may feel like we are in Ezekiel's dry, distant valley where the bones themselves cry, "Our hope is lost. We are cut off completely." (Ezekiel 37:11). But we know how that story ends. God's grace cannot be stopped by time or death. "I am going to open your graves and bring you back," God says to the bones (Ezekiel 37:12-13). And so God does, breathing new life into those dry bones and bringing them home. That's a vision we can hold to tightly in the midst of our exile.

- Vicar Bristol Reading

## 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>

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## 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. Messages left after office hours will be returned when office hours resume.

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## Communication in the time of Covid-19

A group of about 25 people, coordinated by Lora Dundek, have been working hard to make sure that everyone in the congregation gets at least one phone call or email during this "stay home" time. And another group, overseen by Katie Krueger-McCuen, have agreed to run errands and get groceries for those who need it. If you have any need for food, supplies, or just for a friendly voice, call the church office and leave a message in Cha's voice mail (ext. 10), and either Lora and Katie will arrange for a helpful person to contact you. This is how we are church together!

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## Resources for Prayer

For those who have a practice of daily devotion and prayer and are seeking resources for prayer, Carol Austermann shares a reminder about the prayer resources available in the front section of our hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, beginning on page 72. It is a thorough and rich collection, much of which is particularly pertinent for this time. If you have a copy of the hymnal at home, check it out.

## Mount Olive in the community

Mount Olive in the Community seeks to raise up those things the people of Mount Olive are doing in their own neighborhoods while participating in the StayHomeMN programs initiated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mount Olive in the Community provides our faith community an opportunity to see examples of what the Church looks like out in the world.

The Church is not defined by a building or even a congregation; it is important to see each of the neighborhoods where we live as our "neighborhood ministry." This is always true - but acutely so now. We hope this inspires you to come to a fuller realization of yourself as the Church in your neighborhoods and take action to care for those around you.

*Please send us stories, pictures, and ideas. We want and need your involvement.*

## Sharing: The people of Mount Olive being the Church



Cynthia Prosek has been making masks for Veteran's Home in Minneapolis. Not only did she make masks for the staff, she include a number of smaller size masks for children of staff members.

Several Mount Olive members and their families have been involved in making masks or providing materials for making masks. Masks from Mount Olive member homes have gone to multiple non-profit organizations, hospitals, and individuals. One family, who wanted to remain anonymous, walked up and down their street and left this note on the doors of their neighbors:

*"I wanted to let you know that you can contact me if you need anything while we are all staying home. Because of my work in and through my church, I have access to resources to help in times of need.*

*Please contact me if you need anything and I will do my best to help out - or connect you to someone who can. I hope all is well with you and your family."*

## Inspiration: Ideas about how to connect to neighbors and community members

- Host a front yard prayer meeting (appropriately distanced, of course).
- Greet people warmly if you are out and about, especially those of Asian decent, who have experienced a higher than normal level of discrimination in this time.
- Leave a note for your local postal delivery worker.
- Ask people to donate laptops and tablets for families who are homeschooling and don't have access to technology.
- Raise funds for a cause using an online donations platform
- Intentionally support small local businesses.
- If you're musical, hold a balcony concert, or a sidewalk or driveway concert.

*- Adapted from a piece written by author and teacher Michael Frost, Director of the Missiology Department at Morling College in Sydney, Australia*

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## Education: Resources that can help as you care for others

For those of you in Hennepin County, there is a wonderful resource for finding help called Waypoint. If a neighbor expresses need for services beyond what you feel you can provide, you can let them know about this site: <https://gis.hennepin.us/waypoint/> Alternatively, if you encounter a neighbor or friend with needs that you do not know how to meet, please contact me or give them this number: (612) 216-8637. This is a special number set up for responding to assistance requests (financial and otherwise) remotely. Texting is preferred, but calling is acceptable too.

- Jim Bargmann, Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry, [neighborhood@mountolivechurch.org](mailto:neighborhood@mountolivechurch.org)



## COVID-19 and Our Mission Partners

You may be wondering how COVID-19 is affecting our mission partners around the world. Over the next weeks the Missions Committee will be sharing information from some of our partners.

This week will focus on Nigeria where our partner is Bronnum Seminary. While most of the cases have been in the southwestern part of the country, the lockdown is proving devastating. As reported, "There have been chaotic and sometimes violent scenes around hunger relief trucks that were being overrun by desperate residents who had

depleted all of their food resources."

Yesterday we received this message from the Minneapolis Area Synod:

"Bishop Svernungsen received an email plea from LCCN Archbishop Musa Filibus requesting assistance from our synod in dealing with the rapidly increasing hunger situation. In part, Archbishop Filibus wrote:

*By midnight Friday 24 April, the government is most likely to announce a national lockdown [NOTE: This lockdown did take effect}. This is extremely difficult because an estimated 60% or more struggle daily for their livelihoods and they cannot afford a 14-day lockdown. Hunger and COVID-19 lockdown cannot go together. We can see already that crime will increase – people have to eat or stay indoors. Already the Bishop of Abuja where the lockdown has been more intense tells us that people are now caught between COVID-19 and hunger. Many have no choice but to go out against the restrictions for their survival.*

Our siblings in Christ have asked for help. The Minneapolis Area Synod Council is responding to Archbishop Filibus' request by sending \$35,000 from the synod's Resurrection Fund to provide financial support for food assistance.

Anyone interested in contributing additional funds to this LCCN hunger relief effort may send a check to the Minneapolis Area Synod and designate it to LCCN COVID-19 Relief."

Your Missions Committee will consider this request.

## Stewardship Update

Thank you everyone for your compassion and commitment to the family that is Mount Olive.

We want to share an update on our management of incoming gifts. As you know, our staff are working from home and volunteer work has shifted to virtual forums. We want to ensure their safety and the safety of our members in complying with the Governor's stay at home order. We all know the importance of this in minimizing the spread of the virus.

We are working on a plan for ensuring the health and safety of our counters and being stewards of the gifts being so generously shared. Our process requires multiple people to be handling gifts and being in physical proximity of one another. We have been working on a monthly basis for managing the counting and depositing of gifts to minimize contact. We have made deposits for March and April. We appreciate the contributions that are being sent in and ask for your patience. This is crucial in our ability to carry out our ministry and will impact our ability to do so in the coming months. Thank you for your continued support.

We want to make the process easy and convenient for you. If you are okay with the delay in the deposit posting to your account, please feel free to continue sending your offering via postmail. If you would like, we have alternative methods for giving that you may want to consider:

- **Bill Pay:** You can set up a regular offering through your bank by calling and talking to someone or by logging in online. You tell your bank how much to send, how often and they will electronically transfer the amount. This service is most often free of charge and already used by many at Mount Olive.
- **Electronic Funds Transfer:** Set up a regular deduction from your bank account 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 (or use the link in the cover page of this *Olive Branch* email). Complete the form and send it back to the church office either by US mail or via email.
- **Mount Olive Website:** 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. This method is good for one time donations rather than recurring donations as the fees charged to Mount Olive per transaction are higher than the other two methods.

This has not been an easy time for us to say the least. We have been challenged in so many ways. One reassurance has been that God is with us and continues to show up in expected and unexpected ways. As Vicar Bristol said in a recent *Olive Branch*, "the loving shepherd will be present with [us] throughout the journey, no matter what." Our Mount Olive family is here for one other as well. We are grateful for the multiple ways generosity is shown daily from our Mount Olive community.

With Gratitude,  
Consuelo Gutierrez-Crosby  
Stewardship Director

## 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**

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### **Staff**

Pastor – *Joseph Crippen*

Cantor – *David Cherwien*

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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