



The Olive Branch

June 17, 2020

Sunday Readings

June 21, 2020
3rd Sunday after Pentecost,
Lectionary 12 A
Genesis 21:8-21
Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17
Romans 6:1b-11
Matthew 10:24-39

June 28, 2020
4th Sunday after Pentecost
Lectionary 13 A
Genesis 22:1-14
Psalm 13
Romans 6:12-23
Matthew 10:40-42

A publication of Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Accent on Worship

Vicar Bristol Reading

Reflections on Genesis 21:8-21

Hagar's story is a painful one. We know little of her life except that she is an Egyptian slave in the household of Sarah and Abraham, who treat her cruelly as Sarah's resentment of her grows. Hagar bears Abraham's first son, Ishmael, while Sarah struggles to get pregnant. Eventually, Sarah has a son of her own, named Isaac. It is Isaac who is celebrated and granted the inheritance, but, no matter, Sarah is still jealous. She pressures Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham hesitantly agrees, and, confusingly, even God seems to take Sarah's side (Genesis 21:12). So, Abraham packs up minimal supplies and sends Hagar and her young son out into the desert alone and unprotected. When the food and water are gone and death looms, Hagar cries out to God in desperate fear.

This story reveals uncomfortable truths about how poorly humans can treat each other and the ways power and wealth can corrupt relationships. Although it comes from a time and culture very different from our own, we might see in it reflections of our own society's legacy of injustice and oppression. There is a long tradition of African-American identification with the character of Hagar. Theologian Delores Williams emphasizes that many black Americans have had "wilderness experiences" like Hagar's, when she finds herself free yet lacking the resources needed to survive (see Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*).

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At this time, all worship services, ministries, and activities are being conducted online, not by gathering, in the interests of the health of our members, our neighborhood, and the world around us.

Accent on Worship, *continued from page 1*

But Hagar is not alone in that moment. God hears her and sends a messenger to Hagar to tell her that God knows her by name, cares for her and Ishmael, and has plans for their family. Hagar is actually the first woman in the Bible to receive God's direct annunciation and blessing. She may have been rejected by Abraham and Sarah, but she is not rejected by God. This divine intervention helps Hagar overcome her fear and find a source of water that allows her to survive. Ishmael does not inherit Abraham's legacy, but God makes a new legacy possible for him (Genesis 21:28). Likewise, God does not actively liberate Hagar from her dire situation, but God offers her presence and direction that "helps her make a *way* out of what she thought was no way" (Williams, 108).

As America grapples with the violence of systemic racism, it is worth re-hearing Hagar's story, even when it's painful. The Biblical text reminds us that God's faithfulness, presence, and blessing are available to both Sarah and Hagar, to both Isaac and Ishmael. Despite human injustice, God makes a new way possible. That is the God who calls Christians today to continue working toward the equity that will allow all people to thrive.

- Vicar Bristol Reading

A Note About the Lectionary this Pentecost Season:

As we did the past two years, in our worship during this season after Pentecost we will use the semi-continuous lectionary option for our First Readings (which come from the Hebrew Scriptures) for whole season. Year A in the semi-continuous cycle is the year of the story of God's people Israel. We'll spend the most time in Genesis, beginning with Abraham and Sarah in June, Jacob in July, and Joseph in August. On Aug. 21 we turn to the book of Exodus, and the story of Moses and the people's leaving Egypt and travelling to the promised land. At the very end, in November, we'll briefly hear of Joshua and Deborah, as the people of Israel settle in the Promised Land.

In the usual semi-continuous Second Readings for year A, we'll hear from Romans until September. September 20 we switch to Philippians, and in mid-October to 1 Thessalonians, which will bring us to the end of the Church Year, not counting All Saints or Christ the King. A reminder: the full lectionary listing is in our worship book, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Pages 39-53 in the front of the book list the readings for this season, including both semi-continuous and complementary options.

Christ in Our Home Email Subscription

Christ in Our Home is a quarterly devotional resource that encourages readers to live out their faith daily. Each reflective reading is accompanied by a daily scripture reference and prayer for the day that follows the Revised Common Lectionary.

With the outbreaks of coronavirus disease 2019 in North America and around the world many people may be without a physical copy of *Christ in Our Home*. To assist with devotional life during this time, Augsburg Fortress Publishing is offering a limited-time complementary email subscription. Sign up and we will deliver the daily devotional to your email at 4am Central Time through June 30, 2020. To sign up, visit: <https://go.augsburgfortress.org/christ-in-our-home-email-subscription>.

Congratulations to Vicar Reading

Vicar Bristol Reading had her candidacy interview last Saturday, June 13, and received approval for ordination. This is the last and most significant step toward being available for call. Now this church has declared what we all know, and what Bristol has felt from the Spirit, that God has called her to serve this church as a pastor, a minister of Word and Sacrament. Because of Michael's job, Bristol will be hoping to receive a call in the Twin Cities area. That process will unfold over the next few months. In the meantime, she will remain among us as our vicar until August 15. Congratulations and God's blessings, Bristol!

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!



And the bees say, "Thank You!
We're loving it!"

Mount Olive Gardeners Have Been Hard at Work!



Neighborhood Ministry Update

Jim Bargmann

Here a few of the things happening in Neighborhood Ministry.

Remote Food Shelf

Mount Olive has formalized an agreement with one of our food shelf partners, Community Emergency Service (CES) to operate as a remote distribution site for food, household goods, and personal care supplies.

We will operate our remote food shelf every Friday morning, beginning this week, until the need for a neighborhood source of food and supplies is eased by the reopening of our neighborhood stores.

We are in need of volunteers to help set up, to assist our neighbors in getting what they need, and to clean up after the distribution. Each Friday, we meet at 8:00 am to set up, the open for distribution at 9:00 am. We typically close at 11:00 am, then clean up. All are welcome and needed.

In terms of donations, we have noticed a particular need for personal care items and household cleaning supplies. Laundry soap is a particular need. We also need fresh fruits and vegetables and baby care supplies like diapers and wipes.

Neighborhood Walks

We are organizing neighborhood walks two to three times a week. Each time we go out, there will be a brief training on how to facilitate caring conversations with our neighbors.

Past experience has shown that these conversations can sometimes lead to requests for help. When you join us on these walks, you can be prepared to listen, pray, and perhaps work. If you have tools for basic repairs or lawn and garden work, perhaps brooms and other cleaning supplies, bring them along.

Families, this is a kid and teen friendly way to serve.

While there is no regular schedule for these walks, this ministry of caring conversation and service projects will continue for the foreseeable future. I will publish and send out dates and times as they are confirmed - two or three days at a time.

Powderhorn Park Encampment

A group of people experiencing homelessness, many displaced by the damage on Lake Street, have set up an encampment in Powderhorn Park.

The Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association, in cooperation with Mount Olive and other area organizations, has been working to provide security, food, and other basic needs.

This link will take you to a sign up for volunteer opportunities: <https://tinyurl.com/ybhqw6f>

Please consider signing up. Individuals can sign up for certain roles or households could even team up to provide a meal or clean up.

If you would choose to provide a meal, you would not have to cook unless that is what you would choose to do. Meals can be ordered from local restaurants, picked up, and then distributed by you or your family at the park.

Final Request

Does anyone have two or three extra lawn or camp chairs you would be able to let Neighborhood Ministry use for the foreseeable future? We would like to have a safe space to visit with our neighbors outside of the building, given the still very real COVID-19 concerns. A few lawn or camp chairs would enable us to have a safe space for conversation outside our building. Contact Jim Bargmann (neighborhood@mountolivechurch.org) if you can help.

New Display

Sadly, we were unable to fully enjoy the beautiful art exhibit of Aaron Silver's work, however Aaron contacted me recently to let me know that he has reworked one of the art pieces that was in the exhibit.

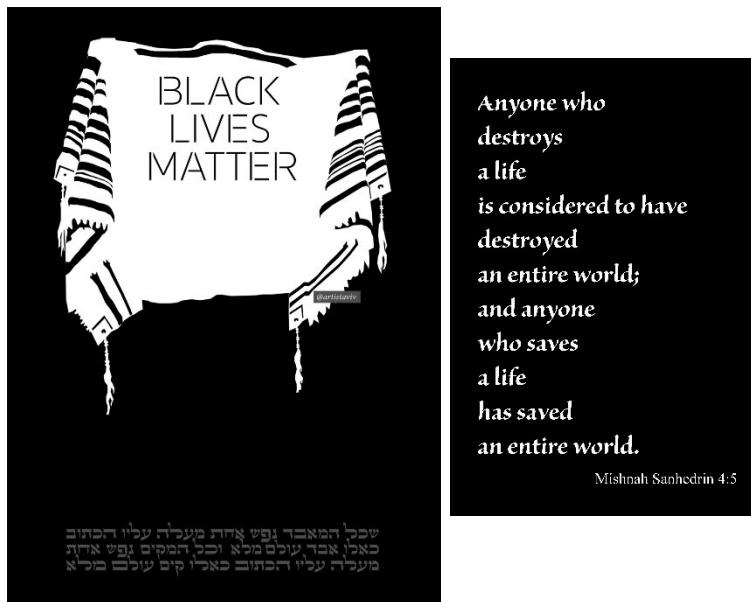
On the back wall was a small piece labeled "Black Lives Matter" on a Jewish tallit (prayer shawl). The new piece Aaron created is a poster featuring the original art piece accompanied with a Hebrew text from the Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5. "Anyone who destroys a life is considered to have destroyed an entire world; and anyone who saves a life has saved an entire world."

I bought one of the posters from Aaron and I printed out the translation. Both of these, along with a statement from Aaron, are in the new hallway display at Mount Olive.

If you would like to own one of the posters they are available in a variety of sizes. Go to Aaron Silver's website for more information. <https://artistaviv.com/black-lives-matter>.

We are unable to physically be at Mount Olive right now, but as we know the church is very much alive, vibrant, and a loving sign to the community that God does love and care for all.

- Paul Nixdorf



Black Lives Matter wrapped in a tallit



Poster print based on a papercut

About the Hebrew text

The Hebrew text is from the Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5 and means: "Anyone who destroys a life is considered to have destroyed an entire world; and anyone who saves a life has saved an entire world."

About the English text

This text is important because it highlights a terrible truth in America - as a nation, we act as though Black lives do not matter. Proclaiming this slogan is a cry to right this centuries-long wrong.

About the tallit

The tallit spoke to me because I was thinking about Jewish responsibility for *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, with visions of embracing (what the tallit does when you wear it). In the original pencil drawing of this design, I wanted to display the tallit as embracing or hugging the phrase Black Lives Matter. If the tallit is symbolic of a Jew, or of the Jewish people, the image is saying, "We, the Jewish people, are obligated to repair the world and actualize the truth represented by this phrase, a truth we often don't see happening in the world around us."

As I developed the papercut, I was forced to confront the choice to either change my method of producing papercuts (i.e. by introducing glued-on letters) or to cut into the tallis with my knife to produce the English words. I balked at doing that because it seemed initially to be violent toward the tallit. However, as I dwelled on it, I found a different meaning, which is not in the act of cutting the paper tallit, but in the result, which is to reveal that the Jewish people is also made not-whole by the existence of structural racism, and through our ignorance, silence about, or participation in it.

Read more (about this piece and others) at my website.

Aaron Hodge Silver Greenberg

<http://artistaviv.com/>

<http://instagram.com/artistaviv/>



Stewardship Reminder

Thank you everyone for your compassion and commitment to Mount Olive. We want to make the process of supporting our church financially easy and convenient for everyone. If you are okay with the delay in the deposit posting to your account, please feel free to continue sending your offering via US mail. 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, 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.

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>

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*

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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