

The Olive Branch



IN THIS ISSUE:

Accent on Worship	1
Advent Worship	2
Stewardship Corner	3
Alternative Gift Giving	4
Bible Studies Links	5
Virtual Coffee Hour	6
Thanksgiving Joy	7
Olive Branch Links	8
In Our Prayers	9

SUNDAY READINGS

Sunday, December 6 2nd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11
Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a
Mark 1:1-8

Sunday, December 13 3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
Psalm 126
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
John 1:6-8, 18-28

At this time, all worship services 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

Jim Bargmann

I have always loved the Advent season. The tone and mood of our music changes. There is backward and yet forward looking message to our

lessons. The weekly and daily rhythm, marked by candles and a wreath resonates with the natural rhythms of nature and the life that inhabits it. My own personal constitution is one of forward-looking anticipation and so I find myself naturally connected to and energized by the message, the shape, of the Advent season.

This week, we hear the words of Isaiah 40 twice, one in the first reading and then again in the Gospel, where these words, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’” applied not to a concept or idea, but to a very real person, John, and his very real work. John names his work - he knows and recognizes his calling to prepare the way for God with us, Emmanuel, Jesus.

But what is to keep this Advent message from simply being a reference to historical events and people who lived in the past? The answer is God’s own self. God gave John his calling, his work. And God does the same to us. “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” is not only John’s calling, but ours as well. There are many for whom the very real love of Jesus, the very real reign of Christ, is at best an unavailable, inaccessible, un-understandable, distant concept. At worst, some experience any reference to God or Jesus as a painful reality, fraught with painful experiences and misdirected messages. There is preparation work to do.

What does that work look like? I have found it looks like action. Any construction worker would tell you that building a highway, lifting valleys, making mountains low, leveling and smoothing ground does not happen by words alone. Preparing the way of the Lord looks like a cup of coffee offered to someone on the street corner. Preparing the way of the Lord can look like a warm meal on a cold day. It can look like diapers delivered to the door. It can look like a phone call to someone living alone. Preparing the way of the Lord can look like laundry soap. It can be a smile, a kind look, a warm greeting. These seemingly simple actions, sometimes accompanied by words, can communicate that God’s love is real and active and Jesus’ reign is a reality here and now. And these actions can prepare the way for the Lord, they can help to make a path straight, the way joyful, where before there were only rocks and bumps of pain.

Prepare the way of the Lord, dear friends. And anticipate Jesus’ imminent arrival.

*In the presence
of God.
Being the
presence of
God.*

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Wed., Dec. 2

10 am – Staff meeting
5:00 pm – Y2 Confirmation
6:00 pm – Vicar Committee
6:30 pm – Y3 Confirmation
5:30 pm – Children’s Choir
6:30 pm – Y3 Confirmation

Thurs., Dec. 3

6 pm – Thursday Bible Study

Sun., Dec. 6

Second Sunday in Advent
7 am – Worship at a Distance
9 am – Virtual Coffee Hour

Tues., Dec. 8

Noon – Bible Study

Wed., Dec. 9

10 am – Staff meeting
5:00 pm – Y2 Confirmation
6:30 pm – Y3 Confirmation
5:30 pm – Children’s Choir

Midweek Advent Worship

Under normal circumstances, it is our practice to gather midweek during the seasons of Advent and Lent. This provides us with an opportunity for deeper contemplation and prayer together in these two introspective and preparatory seasons. For liturgy at home use in our pandemic-induced year of exile, for Advent we offer two forms of observing Advent between Sundays.

1. An order for prayer in the home. A brief order of prayer to be used in the home will be provided each week. A simple service of the Word, at the center of this rite are a Scripture reading reflecting the themes of the Sunday of that week, a second reading or poem connected to that Scripture, and an invitation to intercessory prayer. The rite is begun with the lighting of an Advent wreath, or even a simple arrangement of four candles, as the prayer begins. This is suitable for morning or evening prayer, or prayer at the dinner table, and could be used every day during the week if desired.

2. An audio/video of the ancient prayer office of Compline (Prayer at the Close of the Day).

This service is the centuries old “bedtime prayer” of the Christian community. It is a 15- minute brief pattern of prayer intended for use just before extinguishing the lights at bedtime. An important dimension to this simple service is in its repetition – the more it is prayed, the more internalized it becomes. This audio/video can be used for prayer once or more each week at the close of your day during Advent. The service will not change during Advent except for an increase of the number of candles lighted on the wreath. The video consists solely of the candles of Mount Olive’s Advent wreath, and the words of the liturgy. Participants may prefer to light the candles of a home Advent wreath rather than viewing it on the video, using only the audio for the prayer office. The more often the service is prayed, you may join in as much as you’d like, or remain a participant through listening alone. For those who might wish to print a copy of the service (with music), a pdf below is provided. Our thanks to singers of the Cantorei for providing this worship aid for Advent. A link to the next week’s Compline liturgy will be sent each Saturday night with the brief order of home prayer, to be available throughout the coming week.

YouTube link for Compline, week of Advent 1 (this link will be active starting Sunday, November 29): <https://youtu.be/738QhlgrLKY>

[PDF of Compline service for printing](#)

(An Order of Service and recording for Compline has been mailed to those who receive our weekly service recordings and bulletins.)

Stewardship News

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. 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 our site 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.

A Light in the Darkness

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." ~John 1:5

This year has provided plenty of time for reflection. For me light has been something that has been part of that reflection. Light as in a source that illuminates but also as in lightheartedness, hope and joy. I must admit I have not done as much of bringing light to others as perhaps I could and should have. That is what made me think about this opportunity. How can we share our stories to bring a sense of joy and light to members of our community. I hope you will join us in sharing how you have been a light in this world or how maybe others have shined a light in your life. If anything, it brings our families, friends and Mount Olive community close together in reflection and sharing.

Reflection & Family Conversation - John 1:1-18

Share your stories here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y66qk284>

If you are unable to click on the link above, try copying and pasting the link in a separate browser tab.

In your email please include:

Your name, your story, and whether you are okay with your name being attributed to your story (Yes, No, okay with sharing but as anonymous). You can also call Consuelo if you do not have electronic access.

Light, Peace & Hope!
Consuelo Gutierrez-Crosby
Stewardship Director

A Light in the Darkness Reflection

Advent Meditation on Light

Lisa Ruff

I feel the light of Christ shining through our community in so many ways. Taking time to breathe and meditate really has helped me get through the many challenges of this year.

As a public school teacher who is also a yoga teacher, I wanted to share this with my students. I started making Mindfulness Mondays meditations, posting them for my students in our Google Classroom and using social media to send them to my yoga students. Here is one for you to try, a guided meditation on light.

<https://youtu.be/nEG5Ug756UY>



Alternative Gift Giving

The Missions Committee is promoting the idea of alternative gift giving this Christmas. Consider giving a gift from one of these organizations in honor of a loved one. New this year, Mount Olive has its own Common Hope giving tree -- online!

Lutheran World Relief	https://lwr.org/giving-category/gifts
Heifer Project International	http://www.heifer.org
Bethania Kids	http://bethaniakids.org/creative-giving-catalog/
ELCA	www.elca.org/goodgifts
Common Hope	give.commonhope.org/MountOliveGivingTree

Mount Olive Lutheran Church is sending HOPE to Guatemala with a Common Hope Giving Tree!

[Common Hope](#) is working to end generational poverty in Guatemala through a model that utilizes education as the solution. During COVID-19, together, we can meet families' immediate needs and push through this pandemic. Your purchase of a gift from the Common Hope Giving Tree will help Common Hope to continue to provide vital programming for families in Guatemala.

How to participate:

1. Go to the Common Hope Giving Tree at this link: give.commonhope.org/MountOliveGivingTree
2. Choose your gift(s) and click donate. You can give anonymously if you wish.
3. Fill out the donation page, selecting the gifts of your choosing
4. If you wish to have an ornament sent directly to a person beside yourself, check the box to "dedicate my donation" and include their mailing address in the indicated field. Common Hope will send an ornament to this person directly on your behalf.
5. If you do not opt to have the ornament sent to an honoree, you will receive the ornament mailed to your billing address unless otherwise specified.
6. And you're done! You will receive an electronic receipt within minutes to acknowledge your generosity.

12/21/2020 is the last day to choose a gift to have an ornament mailed out in 2020. Donations received after 12/18/2020 are not guaranteed to arrive before Christmas.



Hope Kit (Food Basket) \$50

Common Hope is delivering Hope Kits during the pandemic. Kits contents vary and can include everything from soap to seeds for planting.

Mount Olive Sibling Connection Opportunity

We know that several of our siblings in Christ at Mount Olive are especially isolated, lonely or are otherwise experiencing losses or grief during this season. Here's an opportunity to provide a little extra support and connection to help gladden their hearts. If you'd like to join this effort, you will be given a name (or two, if you wish), and contact information. You could then reach out in whatever way you wish - phone, letter, email, etc. Ideally, you would maintain contact at least through Advent and the Christmas season, or longer, as appropriate. No gifts are required, unless you wish to provide them. (Parents: this is a great opportunity for kids to write letters or do art projects to brighten someone's day!)

Interested in establishing a special Sibling Connection? Contact Lora Dundek by phone or email (lhdundek@usfamily.net or 651/645-6636) or call the church office. You'll get further information at that time. Thanks!

Real Life Theology: Paul helps the Romans – Thursday Bible Study Session Continues

Paul's letter to the Romans is some of the most sublime theological writing in Scripture. But Romans is also a letter, like all of Paul's other letters, written to real people in the midst of real problems in life. Using Scot McKnight's book "Reading Romans Backwards: A Gospel of Peace in the Midst of Empire," as a starting point, Pr. Crippen will lead the next Thursday Bible study series on this beautiful letter. We'll consider how Paul's beautiful theology applies not only to the lives of his Roman churches but to ours. We'll seek what light their lives (and struggles with empire and societal turmoil) might shine on ours, and how Paul's word to them also speaks to our situation.

This second Thursday Bible study series of this year begins on Thursday, Nov. 5, and will end on Dec. 17. We'll take Thanksgiving Day off, of course. The time of the study is 6:00 p.m., and should last about 90 minutes.

The link to join the meeting on your computer or tablet is: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/342516141>

It's also possible to join by phone – please consider it if you aren't comfortable with video chats. The phone number (just call it at the time of the meeting) is 1 877 309 2073. When you call in, you'll be asked for an access code. It is: 342-516-141.

Staff Christmas Gifts

As is our tradition, this is the time of year that we gather monetary gifts for our terrific church staff. If you would like to contribute, please either use the offering envelope provided especially for this, or simply note "staff gifts" on your check and send it to the church office. Please have the gifts in by Sunday, December 15.

Thanks for your generosity.

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://tinyurl.com/y4qs46v5>

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://tinyurl.com/y274v5rs>

Virtual Coffee Hour

Join fellow Mount Olive friends and members for an hour of physically distanced socializing! There will be weekly video chat meetings using Google Meet **every Sunday from 9-10 am**. You can join by video on a smartphone or computer, or you can join by phone to participate in the informal conversations. It has been wonderful to see familiar faces and catch up with each other.

There will be four meeting rooms, now with one room dedicated for the youngest of the Mount Olive family - "Cupcakes & Cookies"! You can feel free to move between them to mingle with others as you'd like. The meeting links are below (the names of the snacks are just for fun-- join whichever one you'd like). If you join with a computer, you don't need to install anything or have an account, but if you'd like to join on a phone or tablet, you will need to install the Google Meet app and log in with a Google account. If you have questions about how to join feel free to call Katie Krueger at 419-344-2727 or email katherinerkrueger@gmail.com.

Coffee & Tea

<https://meet.google.com/snm-zssf-dni>

(US) +1 407-545-7381 / PIN: 641 572 935#

Meeting code: snm-zssf-dni

Summer Sausage & Cheese

<https://meet.google.com/act-expn-hat>

(US) +1 402-509-7747 / PIN: 151 809 692#

Meeting code: act-expn-hat

Cupcakes & Cookies - Kids' room

<https://meet.google.com/vep-nyof-fzz>

(US) +1 216-930-8951 / PIN: 766 845 823#

Meeting code: vep-nyof-fzz

Book Discussion Group

The Mount Olive Book Discussion group will meet virtually on the second Saturday of each month until we can meet again in person.

The December 12 book will be *Out Stealing Horses*, by Per Petterson, and for January 9, 2021. *No Picnic on Mount Kenya*, by Felice Benuzzi.

We are using the GoToMeeting platform. Just click on the link below. If you prefer, you may join by phone.

Join the discussion from your computer, tablet or smartphone: <https://tinyurl.com/y4knn7o3>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States (Toll Free): 1 866 899 4679

United States: +1 (571) 317-3116

Access Code: 998-208-989

National Lutheran Choir Virtual Christmas Festival

The National Lutheran Choir Christmas Festival comes to audiences FREE in a virtual, multi-media format on December 11. "The Incarnation: For the Healing of the World" brings music from around the globe announcing the birth of Christ with messages of peace and joy that nothing – not even a pandemic – can take away.

Friday, December 11, 2020 – 8pm (CST) @ NLCA.com

This online presentation is FREE for all. For a Virtual Subscription to exclusive content (\$10/month), visit NLCA.com

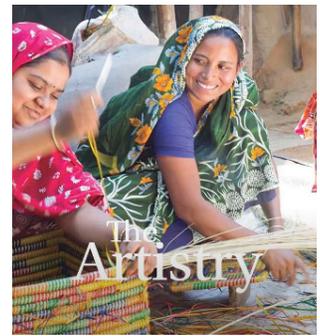
Bringing Thanksgiving to the Homeless Encampments

While the pandemic kept many of us from observing our normal rituals around community worship this Thanksgiving, the important work of God continued in the Mount Olive building. Hospitality and sharing the resources God has given us has long been a cornerstone of who we are as a faith community, and this Thanksgiving was no exception. A group informally called Bringing Thanksgiving to the Homeless Encampments, led by Mount Olive friend Marvin Applewhite, was able to use the Mount Olive kitchen as a distribution hub for over 700 Thanksgiving meals that were delivered to homeless encampments and hotels housing those experiencing homelessness in the Twin Cities. In addition to meals, Marvin's group distributed 200 coats and a variety of personal care items to those in need. In addition to providing a kitchen for their work, Mount Olive was able to donate a significant part of our unused community meal funds, already set aside to help with food insecurity projects, to help Marvin and his group accomplish their goal.



Fair Trade Sale

The Missions Committee is continuing the tradition hosting a Fair Trade Sale—virtually this year! Mount Olive members and friends can use this custom link [servv.org?a=MountOlive](https://www.servv.org?a=MountOlive) to buy handmade gifts through SERV V International. Learn more about SERV V in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nT5qyFbYQSE&feature=youtu.be>



20% of your online order today will be donated to Bethania Foundation



When you use Mount Olive's custom link, 20% of all purchases will be donated to the Bethania Foundation in India, one of Mount Olive's long supported missions. These proceeds will be going to help furnish the Shalom Home. The dedication of the Shalom home site is pictured here.

This Bethania Kids' home for 48 girls is under construction and will be completed soon (The girls are currently living in a small, rented facility). Our goal is to provide the dining room with plates, bowls, glasses and utensils—50 @ \$5.00 per child = \$250.

The Fair Trade Sale link is active from November 16-December 14. Be sure when you are shopping that you see this orange banner at the top of the page. Orders need to be placed online and can't be retroactively included.

Global food items are also available through SERV V. If you prefer the coffee, cocoa, and chocolate of the Equal Exchange program, which we have also had in the past, you can order those items here. <https://equalexchange.coop/>

As Year-End Approaches

Just a reminder that in order for a contribution to be credited as a 2020 donation and applied toward a 2020 pledge, it must be in to the church office by December 31, 2020.



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Lutheran Church in America*

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Church Staff

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Vicar – [Andrea Bonneville](#)

Coordinator of Neighborhood

Ministries - [Jim Bargmann](#)

Administrative Assistant – [Cha Posz](#)

Sexton – [James Wilkes](#)

In This Issue:

- **Accent on Worship – Jim Bargmann**
- **Midweek Advent Worship**
- **A Light in the Darkness Reflections**
- **Alternative Gift Giving**
- **Sibling Connection Opportunity**
- **Thursday Evening Bible Study Continues**
- **Bringing Thanksgiving to the Homeless**
- **National Lutheran Choir Virtual Christmas Festival**