

The Olive Branch



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SUNDAY READINGS

Sunday, December 20 4th Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
Psalmody: Luke 1:46b-55
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

Sunday, December 27 1st Sunday of Christmas

Isaiah 61:10—62:3
Psalm 148
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:22-40

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

Cantor David Cherwien

Unexpected and Mysterious

This Sunday we hear of Mary's being told she would be carrying "both the mortal and the divine" (ELW 258 "Unexpected and Mysterious," st. 2). Bringing new life into the world is indeed one of those great mysteries. And yet, as anyone who has been a part of doing so will immediately say: it rarely goes as planned. A lot of people are given children through untypical means. Some who hadn't planned to have children have them – even when unexpectedly. And not everyone does have children - in a typical way, anyway.

We humans try to guess many things about child gestation and birth based on averages, perhaps, but it seems like very few tend to fit into those. We predict things but can't know for sure. And from everything I've heard about the adoption process, that is no different. There is a tremendous wait, and then a phone call changes life forever. I've also thought that though the "child-process," one thing we learn that seems rather consistent: it rarely goes as planned. We have to let go of our need to control and accept that we are a part of a bigger picture we might not fully understand. That is especially difficult for Type A planners. And for those who float through life freely, they learn how patterns and schedules are critical and indeed necessary. But pretty much everything about parenting is, well, "unexpected." How do we learn to not only accept that, but to embrace it as a calling?

So I'm imagining Mary being told "You are going to carry *this* child into humanity." I can understand her response: "And she wondered what kind of greeting this was." But what was her response? A song: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord – my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior, for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant." Humility, yet acceptance – the great "yes" from Mary.

Perhaps this is unexpected for all of us: we are ALL called to carry *this* child into humanity. Even we male human bodies are called to do so. May we respond like Mary, and with Mary, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant." Yes, YOU. Yes, Me. The Christ Child is within us, in our souls.

So now, how do we give birth to *this* child into our world? The world needs Christ badly right now.

Actually, it always has.

- Cantor David Cherwien

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

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Wed., Dec. 16

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

Thurs., Dec. 17

6 pm – Thursday Bible Study

Sun., Dec. 20

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

Tues., Dec. 22

Noon – Bible Study

Wed., Dec. 23

10 am – Staff meeting
No Confirmation this day
5:30 pm – Children’s Choir

Thurs. Dec. 24-Sun, Jan 3

Church offices closed
Staff returns Mon., Jan 4

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 3: <https://youtu.be/mPkIVcxnfww>

[PDF of Compline service for printing](#)

Church Offices Closed Christmas Week

Church offices will be closed from Dec. 24 through Jan. 3, 2021. The Olive Branch has traditionally not been published during the week between Christmas and New Year and that will be the case this year, too.

Staff returns on Monday, January 4, 2021.

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.

Staying in Touch

Are you moving? Have you recently moved?

Don't forget to share your updated contact information (address, phone number, email) with the church office.

During this time when we don't have the opportunity to see or speak with each other in person, it's more important than ever for your friends to be able to reach you.

The church directory has been updated online and in paper format. If you would like an updated directory mailed to you, contact the church office. Likewise, if you are having trouble accessing the online directory, call the church office and we will help to get you connected.

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



Thanks to all who have sent in their pledges!

Please remember to make your [pledge](#).

Pledging is engaging in the life of Mount Olive to carry out our shared commitment to living a life in Christ through our fellowship, ministry, and stewardship together. Why [pledge](#)? It is a sign of our personal and communal commitment to one another and to the work of the church. On the practical side, it guides the Vestry in decision making and gives us a solid foundation on which we know our work can move forward. It gives us a sense of what is possible for our ministry and mission. What possibilities do you see? What will your financial gift be?

If you haven't made a pledge before, please consider doing so. For those who pledge, we thank you! If you pledge or not, we ask that you prayerfully consider what your financial commitment will be to our ministry together at Mount Olive and how it will illuminate the impact of our shared work.

To complete your pledge go to: <https://forms.gle/WdsrJ7suvCfoTWJR8> .

Year-end Contributions

In order to receive 2020 tax credit for your donations to Mount Olive, all contributions for this year must be **postmarked** no later than Dec. 31, 2020 (regardless of the date on the check).

The church offices will be closed during the week between Christmas and New Year this year. Your gifts can be dropped off at the Church office before the 24th, mailed - postmarked by the 31st or completed online!

Gifts of stock, minimum required distributions from retirement accounts, or other financial assets can be made to Mount Olive through our Thrivent Brokerage Account. Please email treasurer@mountolivechurch.org and instructions can be communicated to you or your financial advisor. These must be completed by December 31 for 2020 tax purposes.

Thank you!

Weekly Worship Emails: Not Getting Them Sometimes?

If you have been regularly receiving the weekly email on Sunday mornings with worship information and links and you've noticed that for the past week or two (or at other times) you haven't been receiving them, take a moment to check your junk mail folder. Several people with comcast.net email addresses did not receive their Sunday worship email this past weekend in their inboxes, but later found the email junk/spam folders.

Remember, you don't need an email to access the liturgies, as all of our online worship materials can also be found on the church's website home page: www.mountolivechurch.org. Just click on the first box, "Worship Online."

This Thursday's Bible Study Moves to January 7 for Final Session

The Thursday Bible study series on Romans was scheduled to end this Thursday. However, instead of this Thursday, it will be held after the New Year, on **Thursday, Jan. 7**. The time of the study is 6:00 p.m., and should last about 90 minutes. The reason for this is the session may end up needing to be split into two for content, and if that happens, then it will be more helpful to have it Jan. 14, rather than starting before Christmas and ending after.

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.

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>



Children's Choir

Children's choir, led by Mari Espeland, has been meeting on Zoom on Wednesdays from mid-September until December 2. It has involved children 4-year old preschool to second grade. We have had around 10 children each week participating!

They are taking a winter break right now, but will "re-Zoom" on January 20! If there are additional young singers who wish to jump on at that point, you would be welcome! Contact Cantor Cherwien to get on the email list to receive the link to Zoom each week.

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 (9-9:30 for the kids' room)**. 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

9:00-9:30 a.m.

<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

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 her (lhdundek@usfamily.net or 651/645-6636). You'll get further information at that time. Thanks!

A Light in the Darkness Reflection

You are the Light of the World, submitted by Ginny Agresti

Mount Olive and its people are a reliable, much needed, and greatly appreciated source of light for me in these dark days. It's everything from all the work that goes into the online services, to the thought-provoking sermons, to the amazingly beautiful music. It's especially delightful when the music for the online service is recently recorded so we can see how David is playing it. I had no idea the organ and playing it were that complex!

Matthew 5: 14-16 is an inspiration to me. *"You are the light of the world."* My "light" hasn't always been obvious to me, though I'm a statistician; data analysis is my thing. But I've discovered there are many nonprofit organizations that have lots of data, but no one to analyze it. So I'm working with several of them remotely to help them serve more of their clients/participants. In this pandemic time when we're so constrained in being with other people, there are still many ways to contribute remotely, either with specific skills, like my data analysis, or with other work that doesn't require particular skills, like writing letters. An excellent resource for lots of local opportunities of both types is <https://www.handsonwincities.org/>.

St. Olaf Musical Christmas Offerings

1. In case you were unable to view the 2020 Christmas digital stream from St. Olaf last week, All Earth Is Hopeful, it is still available as an archived stream. Here is a link to that stream and a blurb about the program: <https://www.stolaf.edu/multimedia/play/?e=3196>
2. Also, PBS, in collaboration with Twin Cities Public Television, will be offering a new television Christmas special based on the 2019 St. Olaf Christmas Festival entitled "New Songs of Grace and Truth." It will start airing nationally on December 17, but you need to check your local listing as to when it will play in your area. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, TPT has shared its broadcast schedule which you will find below:

St. Olaf Christmas Festival: "New Songs of Grace and Truth"

Experience the St. Olaf Christmas Festival, one of the oldest musical celebrations of Christmas in the United States. Led by five conductors, it features more than 500 student musicians who are members of the college's world-renowned choirs and orchestra. The festival features a rich repertoire of classic Advent and Christmas compositions, familiar carols, hymns from around the world, and contemporary pieces from a diverse range of composers and cultures, offering music that both celebrates the Norwegian American history of the college while also highlighting beautiful works from around the globe.

Friday, Dec 18 at 8pm TPT 2

Saturday, Dec 19 at 2am TPT 2

NEW Thursday, Dec 24 at 7pm TPT 2

Friday, Dec 25 at 1am TPT 2

Neighborhood Ministries: Christmas Gifts for our Neighbors

Baking Cookies!

Do you enjoy baking? Especially Christmas cookies and treats?

In addition to on-going Neighborhood Ministries programs, this year we wanted to do something special for those living closest to the Mount Olive building, many of whom have been a great blessing to us in keeping an eye on our building though the nights of civil unrest in May and June and watching out for one another. Ideally, we would like to have around 40 dozen cookies which we would divide up into gift baskets to be dropped off to our neighbors.

If you are able to bake cookies for this effort, please email Jim Bargmann at neighborhood@mountolivechurch.org and let him know how many dozen you are able to make. **Please complete your baking by Monday, December 21.** If you feel comfortable doing so, please bring your cookies to Mount Olive on that day. If you would rather, we can arrange to pick them up (contactless, of course). If you would like us to pick up your cookies, please include that request in your email, along with your address.

Gifts for Our Saviour's Supportive and Transitional Housing Residents

Our sister congregation, Our Saviour's, has a broad ranging housing program and each year we have the opportunity to give gifts to residents of their supportive and transitional housing programs. Typically, we would have a small Christmas tree in our common area at Mount Olive where you could choose ornaments, purchase gifts, and deliver them back to Mount Olive where we could then deliver them to Our Saviour's and the residents.

This year, we have moved that process online. Mount Olive has 15 residents for which we have agreed to purchase gifts. We have set up a Target Wish List for you to use in selecting gifts you would like to purchase for our neighbors. The gifts you order will be sent to Mount Olive and we will then assemble gifts baskets and deliver them to Our Saviour's for distribution. If you are interested in purchasing a gift for one of our neighbors, **please do so by Wednesday, December 16 (today!)** to allow time for delivery to Mount Olive and subsequent delivery to Our Saviour's before Christmas.

To purchase a gift, please visit [Mount Olive's Charity Registry](#).



Mount Olive Lutheran Church

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*n of the Evangelical
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Church Staff

Pastor – [Joseph Crippen](#)

Cantor – [David Chernien](#)

Vicar – [Andrea Bonneville](#)

Coordinator of Neighborhood

Ministries - [Jim Barymann](#)

Administrative Assistant – [Cha Posz](#)

Sexton – [James Wilkes](#)

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