

The Olive Branch

IN THIS ISSUE:

Accent on Worship	1
Common Hope Zoom	
Presentation	2
Lenten Fellowship	3
Diaper Depot Update	4
Building Our Home	5
Helpful Links	6
SERVV Easter Gifts	7
In Our Prayers	8



Accent on Worship

Vicar Andrea Bonneville

Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good, for God's *steadfast love* endures forever.

Psalm 107:1

In our Psalm for this week, we encounter the Hebrew word *chesed*. It is a word that isn't easily translated from Hebrew to English.

Chesed can be translated as steadfast love, mercy, grace, lovingkindness, faithfulness, goodness... the list goes on.

I find it comforting that *chesed* can't just be translated into one direct word or phrase because it reminds me that God's unconditional love can't be translated into one way of understanding God's steadfast love for all of creation. Each of us, on our own and collectively, experience the steadfast love of God in a multitude of unique (and not so unique) ways.

How have you experienced God's *chesed*? How have you shown God's *chesed* to a neighbor?

Take a moment this week and think about these questions. If you have the opportunity share your wonderings with a friend or family member. Maybe you might even ask a friend or family member these questions and listen as they share a time when they have encountered God in the past week or month.

Wondering and listening helps us expand our imagination to see ways that God is active in our community and our world. We move beyond our sometimes narrow view toward a more broad and expansive way of encountering God.

If we intentionally hold these questions as we go on walks in our communities, read the newspaper, or go to the groceries store, we may experience God's *chesed* unlike we have before or unlike we have in a while.

God is constantly moving in our lives and transforming communities to bring forth God's *chesed*.

For this we give thanks.

- *Vicar Andrea*

SUNDAY READINGS

Sunday, March 14 *Fourth Sunday in Lent*

Numbers 21:4-9
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Ephesians 2:1-10
John 3:14-21

Sunday, March 21 *Fifth Sunday in Lent*

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:1-12
Hebrews 5:5-10
John 12:20-33

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.

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

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Wed., Mar. 10

10 am – Staff meeting
Noon – Lenten Fellowship
5 pm – Y2 Confirmation
5:30 pm – Children’s Choir
7 pm – Lenten Fellowship

Sat., Mar. 13

10 am – Book Discussion

Sun., March 14***Fourth Sunday in Lent***

7 am – Worship at a Distance
9 am – Virtual Coffee Hour

Tues., Mar. 16

Noon – Bible Study

Wed., Mar. 17

10 am – Staff meeting
Noon – Lenten Fellowship
5:30 pm – Children’s Choir
6:45 pm – Y3 Confirmation
7 pm – Lenten Fellowship

Lumina Concert Available Until March 21

If you could not watch the Feb. 21 concert by Lumina, “The Veil and the Thorn,” it will be available for viewing at your convenience until March 21.

Lumina’s performers for this concert were Angela Grundstad, soprano, Clara Osowski, mezzo-soprano, and Linda Kachelmeier, alto and Artistic Director. Also performing with them was special guest, Laura Sewell, cello.

The concert can be accessed by visiting Mount Olive’s YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/DLm4AHm0_10. You can also click the link on the home page of Mount Olive’s website: www.mountolivechurch.org.

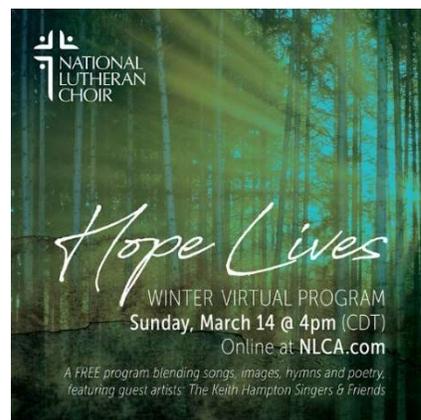
NLC Virtual Hymn Festival: Hope Lives!

Join the National Lutheran Choir and guest artists, the Keith Hampton Singers, for a FREE virtual program blending spoken reflections, songs and familiar hymns of joy and hope with new music that speaks to our present time, inviting all people of faith to sing in joy *together!*

This Sunday, March 14 @ 4pm (Central Daylight Time) @ NLCA.com.

This online presentation is **FREE** for all.

For a Virtual Subscription to exclusive content (\$10/month), visit NLCA.com



Common Hope Zoom Presentation



Mount Olive is a Faith Community Partner with Common Hope in Guatemala. All members and friends are invited to attend a special Zoom presentation on March 15 at 11:30 am or 6:00 pm. We are excited to celebrate the power of partnership!



See the invitation here: [Common Hope: The Power of Partnership Special ZOOM](#)

It is important to note that those interested must register to attend (links in invitation – it’s free!) and then Common Hope will send them the zoom link ahead of the event.

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.

Words for the Journey: Midweek Lenten Fellowship

On Wednesday afternoons or/and evenings during Lent (Feb. 24 – Mar. 24) from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. or/and 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., all are invited to gather online via Zoom to spend time in community and in reflection. Each week, Vicar Bonneville will introduce a word for reflection and provide a centering scripture reading. The time will begin in large group format and then break out into smaller groups for continued discussion/reflection and check-in with others as a way to be in community during this time.

Participate in this meeting via Zoom using this information. Either click the link, type in the meeting ID and passcode, or dial in by phone typing and typing in the meeting ID and passcode.

Join Zoom Meeting via Computer

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87426647181?pwd=QkprQ0I5bnVWVWUhtNEdGaWxnTjJzQT09>

Meeting ID: 874 2664 7181 Passcode: 031492

Join Zoom Meeting via Phone - Dial: 1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 874 2664 7181 Passcode: 031492

Note: If you are new to Zoom, contact Vicar Bonneville (vicar@mountolivechurch.org) and she will help you set it up.

Diaper Depot Update

While the vast majority of our Neighborhood Ministry programs and initiatives have continued in the pandemic, albeit in modified form, our Diaper Depot program has undergone some significant and profound changes that will likely continue post-pandemic. It was suggested that I take some time to highlight these changes in this week's *Olive Branch*.

When the pandemic first hit, it was clear that our normal way of operating the Diaper Depot, where participants from all over the Twin Cities would come to Mount Olive to purchase subsidized cost diapers, would not be safe for either volunteers or our neighbors. We moved first to a model where participants could request diapers via an order form while standing on the sidewalk and volunteers would bring the diapers up to the requestor outside the building. As we learned more about the transmissibility of COVID-19, we determined that even this amount of contact and exchange of products and money, along with the unpredictability of the weather, made this model unsustainable. We transitioned to a model where participants could text their orders to a dedicated number and diapers could be delivered to program participants' homes. This is the model we currently operate under. Logistically, this model actually works better than our previous way of operating - we no longer have to stock what we expect families will want but rather, we can purchase what is actually needed. In addition, two wonderful side benefits of this model have emerged. First, delivering diapers to family homes gives me an opportunity to see where our people live - to see their homes (at least from the outside) and the neighborhoods in which they live. It has also afforded the opportunity for more conversation, more interaction, than our previous model. Of course, all the interaction is outdoors, masked and socially distant! But, under our previous model, we operated much like a store and interactions were very transactional. Under this new model, interactions, while short, are much warmer, more open, less retail. Second, this model has opened up the option of providing for other needs without the creation of a new program. When other needs, like cleaning supplies, baby formula, food, or even rent help, are made known, one visit can provide for all of those needs, rather than requiring neighbors multiple contacts with multiple agencies.

And, we have realized two other blessings from the pandemic operation of the Diaper Depot. First, the rarity of what we do. While there are a small number of other organizations that help with diapers, the Mount Olive program is the broadest and most accessible to the widest variety of families. Others are limited by geography, background of the families, or age of the children. Currently, Mount Olive does not have any of those restrictions. We serve families from a variety of backgrounds. We are currently providing diapers for children just coming home from the hospital to age 3 and in the midst of toilet training. Our delivery area currently covers an area from Golden Valley in the west to Eagan in the east; from Fridley in the north to Apple Valley in the south.

Second, the generosity of our community has been remarkable. You, our Mount Olive community, have continued to support our work through donations of money, diapers, and household cleaning supplies, for which we are so grateful. Our fellow congregations in the Align Mpls coalition have also recognized what we are doing and have graciously provided donations of diapers, cleaning supplies, and more to support this work that is unique in this interfaith network.

So finally, here is my request: **Would you consider joining me in this work?** Ideally, I would like to add 3 or 4 delivery drivers to our diaper depot program. Currently, we deliver diapers on Wednesday afternoons. Each driver would be given 4 to 5 stops to make. Routes would be preplanned for you and sorted by geography; diaper boxes would be presorted and marked, and training would be provided. Please email me at neighborhood@mountolivechurch.org if you are interested in joining me in this powerful and unique program.

- Jim Bargmann

Building Our Home



*This week's question and answer: **Who are our partners in this effort? Part Three of Three.***

Building Our Home is an effort in cooperation with three non-profit housing developers, Beacon Interfaith, Aeon, and Alliance Housing. Over these three weeks, this space has been highlighting each of those three organizations.

This week, Alliance Housing.

“Alliance Housing was born out of the vision of Saint Stephens’ emergency shelter staff and residents who wanted to create tangible, long term housing solutions for homeless families and individuals. The organization was incorporated in 1991 and took advantage of vacant and available properties at low cost in South Minneapolis. Alliance continues to honor its history by developing housing solutions for homeless, poor and other individuals left out of market opportunities.

[Alliance] builds and manages quality, affordable housing for people with very low incomes or who need a second chance... whether or not they’ve got criminal, housing and credit mars in their past. [Alliance uses] hands on, relational property management to keep our buildings an asset for the tenants and neighbors. [They keep] rents as low as possible so low wage workers and people on a fixed income can afford to pay, [and their] board includes some of our tenants and makes decisions considering a tenant’s perspective.”

The above was summarized and adapted from information from Alliance, published on their web site, <http://www.alliancehousinginc.org>. Please visit this site for more information about their history, their approach, and projects.

While Alliance has a number of apartment style buildings in their portfolio, they are also working to diversify the affordable housing stock in the Twin Cities with some innovative projects, including one where Alliance will purchase duplexes and fourplexes, remodel them to current, modern standards, and then rent them back to families at affordable rates. This is one project funded in part by Building Our Home.

The Initiative

Working with three non-profit affordable housing developers, Beacon Interfaith, Aeon, and Alliance Housing, Mount Olive is working to build over 2100 units of affordable and supportive housing with a funding goal of 21.3 million dollars. Though our Neighborhood Ministry leadership, Mount Olive is seeking partnerships with its Twin Cities sister congregations of the Evangelical Church of America, along with other faith communities, organizations, and individuals.

The Ask

If you are able, we are asking for your support in two ways. First, financially. We have set a goal of finding 26,000 individuals, representing the active membership of our 252 Twin Cities ELCA sister congregations, to donate to this effort. With this number of participants, we would reach our goal with a donation of \$338 per person. Over the next year, are you able to contribute \$338 per person in your family? If so, you can go to the Mount Olive web site and on the donation page, we have set up a dedicated account for Building Our Home. If you prefer to send a physical check, your offering envelope pack contains a special pink Neighborhood Ministry Offering envelope.

Second, talk to others about this effort. Many in the Twin Cities have expressed concern about the lack of affordable housing for our most vulnerable. We are looking for support from individuals, businesses, really anyone who has a passion for helping ensure others have safe, affordable housing.

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 three 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.

For March 13, they will read *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro, and for April 10 the book is *The Good Lord Bird*, by James McBride.

They 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

Regular link to the Tuesday Noon Bible Study

The link for the Tuesday noon Bible study is 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>

Order Easter gifts from SERRV and be ‘three times nice’

OK, we know that sounds hype-y. But it’s true. First, you’ll be doing something nice—brightening someone’s day and the Easter season—when you buy a SERRV gift for a friend, relative, or maybe yourself. Second, your purchase will be an act of kindness and equity, because you’ll be helping to pay fair-trade wages to people around the world who make or grow these products. Third, because SERRV sends 20% of sales revenue to a nonprofit selected by the sponsoring organization (Mount Olive), March 3 through April 4, you’ll be joining in a one-time special gift to Lutheran World Federation–Jerusalem, one of the ten missions we currently support through our global missions budget.



In case you’ve forgotten, SERRV International is the nonprofit that was our source for all those lovely items we sold on Advent Sundays in pre-pandemic times—and hope to sell again after the pandemic wanes. SERRV is no upstart. It was founded in 1949 to help Europe’s refugees earn income by selling their handmade items. Now it’s helping some 8,000 artisans and farmers in 24 nations sell what they grow or make—at fair prices.

We’re this time directing that 20% gift to LWF–Jerusalem. Why?

We like to rotate the spotlight among our ten global missions, describing the central mission of each but also reporting notable

accomplishments, challenges, and next steps. LWF–Jerusalem and SERRV International have in common their beginnings shortly after World War II. LWF’s Jerusalem program was started in 1948 to provide food, milk, medicine, and clothing to Palestinian refugees. LWF–Jerusalem has long sponsored the Augusta-Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem. Today it serves Palestinians on the West Bank, in East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. Its priorities include vocational training and working to strengthen the capacities of other institutions in the area. Early this year LWF–Jerusalem reported that the first available supplies of COVID-19 vaccine would be given to East Jerusalem medical staff. It also announced the opening—with support from Canadian Lutheran World Relief—of a new program to provide Palestinian women with education, training, and employment opportunities in nontraditional fields, including some that historically have been open only to men.

LWF–Jerusalem

To start shopping, click on our “SERRV and Earn” link: <https://www.serrv.org/?a=LWFEaster> (we recommend that you copy the link and keep it handy). When you get to the site, make sure you see the orange banner at the top of the screen that says “20% of your online order today will be donated to Mount Olive Lutheran Church” (which we then give to LWF-Jerusalem). **Again, this 20% deal runs March 3–April 4.** But starting today, March 3, and continuing through March 17, SERRV is offering Mount Olive members and friends **free shipping** on personal orders of \$50+ when they use the promo code SESPRING21 (some restrictions apply).

- *Your (global) Missions Committee*



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In This Issue:

- Accent on Worship – Vicar Andrea Bonneville
- Lumina Concert Stream Available Until March 21
- Building Our Home / Diaper Depot Updates
- Lenten Online Fellowship: Wednesdays in Lent
- Book Discussion and Bible Study Links
- Easter Gifts through SERRV