



The Olive Branch

September 10, 2025

Accent on Worship

Jim Bargmann

“And God said to Moses, ‘Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.’ So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.”

- Numbers 21:8-9

Sunday Readings

September 14, 2025

Holy Cross Day

Numbers 21:4b-9

Psalm 98:1-4

1 Corinthians 1:18-24

John 3:13-17

September 21, 2025

St. Matthew,

Apostle and Evangelist

Ezekiel 2:8 – 3:11

Psalm 119:33-40

Ephesians 2:4-10

Matthew 9:9-13

“Look” is a curious word in the English language. Merriam-Webster gives no less than twelve definitions of the word look used in its verb form - not to mention that it can also be used as a noun, providing yet another three definitions.

The usage in the First Reading for Holy Cross Day is pretty literal, falling somewhere between definitions two and three: “to ascertain by the use of one's eyes or to exercise the power of vision upon.” The Israelites were instructed to literally look at the serpent on the pole to be saved from the venomous serpent bites that were a consequence, a punishment, for their actions.

Although the Biblical text does not provide a description of the pole Moses constructed, tradition (and to some extent, physics) would indicate that he likely made a vertical pole with a horizontal cross member to support the weight of the bronze snake, creating a cross shape or at least a “T” shape (a Tau cross).

And art throughout centuries has illustrated this - including one of our own Chrismons which decorate our Christmas trees, depicting just that - a serpent on a Tau cross.

So the Israelites would have been looking up to the cross to live.

And Jesus makes this very same connection in his conversation with Nicodemus, a portion of which was chosen as our Gospel reading for this upcoming Sunday: “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).

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

Accent on Worship, *continued from page 1*

The word “believe” here, as in many places in Scripture, can be translated “trust” or perhaps even “to direct one’s attention,” another definition of the word “look.”

While not in a position where we are being actively attacked by venomous serpents, we are daily bombarded with, as our order for Affirmation of Baptism so powerfully states, “the devil and all the forces that defy God,” “the powers of this world that rebel against God,” and “the ways of sin that draw [us] from God.”

It is in those times that we too can look to the cross and live. And not only when God’s reign is fully realized, but in the here and now, that we can find the strength to not only boldly promise to renounce those very powers but, remembering God’s actions in our Baptism, live them out on a daily basis.

Art: A portion of a mosaic wall at All Saints Margaret Street, London (below)

- Jim Bargmann



Calendar

Wednesday, September 10

- 10:00 am Staff meeting
5:30 pm Children's Choir Supper
6:00 pm Children's Choir rehearsals
7:00 pm Y3 Confirmation
7:00 pm Cantorei rehearsal

Thursday, September 11

- 9:30 am *Morning Prayer*
7:00 pm Narcotics Anonymous

Friday, September 12

- 7:00 pm Recovery Group

Saturday, September 13

- 9:00 am Gardening Day
10:00 am Book Discussion group

Sunday, September 14 - Holy Cross Day

- 8:00 am *Holy Eucharist*, followed by coffee and conversation
9:30 am Godly Play / Youth Discussion/ Adult Forum
10:45 am *Holy Eucharist*, followed by coffee and conversation
12:30 pm Y1 Confirmation

Monday, September 15

- 5:30 pm Family Music Time (online only)
7:00 pm Monday Night WAVE (N.A.)

Tuesday, September 16

- Noon Bible Study
5:30 pm Feminine Divine Group

Tuesday Noon Bible Study Link

The Tuesday Noon Bible Study meets weekly in person in the East Assembly Room. For those who are unable to come in person, the Bible Study is held over Zoom as well.

The link for the Tuesday noon Bible study will be the same every week. To join from your computer, tablet, or smartphone, [click here](#).

Book Discussion

For September 13, the group will consider another by an author they have appreciated before, James McBride. The book is *Heaven and Earth Grocery Store*, and is set in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. Then for October 11, two books were chosen -- related but not the same: a reread of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, and the new take on the story, *James*, by Percival Everett.

Everyone is invited to join whenever you are able, at 10 a.m. in the Library, usually on the second Saturday of each month. The group has been using Zoom to provide remote access to the sessions. If you would like to participate in the group, you can either attend the monthly sessions which meet at the church in person or join remotely via Zoom. To join from your computer, tablet, or smart phone, [click here](#).

Blessing the Animals

Sunday, October 5 – 2:00 pm

Bring your pets to this annual service of blessing!

September Adult Forums

- September 14** Vestry Committee Directors will introduce themselves and outline the work of their committees.
- September 21** **On Sunday, September 21, the Adult Forum will begin 15 minutes early at 9:15.** Get there early, grab your coffee, and settle in to hear from Tracie Ortman and Linda Edens of Bright Stars of Bethlehem. Nineteen Mount Olive members and friends will be traveling to support our ministry partner Bright Stars, and this is your chance to hear about their work and challenges. We begin early so that these folks might also encourage another south Minneapolis church to join in this partnership.
- September 28/
October 5** Cantor Daniel Schwandt will lead a 2-part series on Lutherans and the Psalms

Can't Go on the Palestine Trip But Want to Support?

You can help support change by joining us on **Saturday, Sept. 13** for the Bright Stars of Bethlehem *Hope Abounds* 6th Annual Virtual Fundraising Gala! We will go on a virtual trip to Palestine by sharing student stories, hearing from featured guest Rick Steves, and getting updates from the University President, Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb.

Watch Parties across the country are engaging congregations and friends as we strive to raise awareness and support for Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem. Although the Gaza campus was destroyed early in the war, students there and in Bethlehem are pursuing their education despite unimaginable challenges.

Our watch party is at **Edina Community Lutheran Church**, 4113 W. 54th Street, Edina, MN 55424. Members of the Mount Olive travel team will attend. Doors open at 6 p.m. CDT for Palestinian appetizers, a short film by a DAK student, and conversation. The virtual Gala, 7 to 8 p.m.; evening concludes by 8:30 p.m. Free parking is available in lots on both the east and west side of the building and on the street. **RSVP** to Kathy Showalter Fiscus at kshowalter@planscapepartners.com or 612-599-4593 **by TODAY, Wednesday, Sept. 10.**

Individuals can also participate in the virtual Gala from home by registering with Bright Stars online at brightstarsbethlehem.org/gala.

September/October Book Discussions

There is no Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The Global Ministries Committee is sponsoring a trip to the Holy Land for November 3-12, 2025, entitled, "Walking with Our Palestinian Partners." The purpose is not so much site-seeing as accompaniment (a.k.a. a "ministry of presence") for our partners there, Dar al-Kalima University College in Bethlehem and Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem. Spaces remain for travelers. If you are interested, contact Judy Hinck (judyhinck@gmail.com), but do so quickly: our trip coordinator must make commitments on airline tickets on September 1.

Whether or not you plan to participate in the trip, all members of Mount Olive are cordially invited to join two evenings of preparatory book discussions, to be led by our tour director, Prof. George Heider. The first will be held on Monday, September 22, at 7:00-8:30 p.m. in the East Assembly Room and will deal with two shorter books by the Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb: *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eyes* (Orbis, 2014) and *Decolonizing Palestine: The Land, The People, The Bible* (Orbis, 2023). Dr. Raheb is the founder and president of Dar al-Kalima University and is the most published Palestinian commentator on the issues facing his people. The second discussion will be held on Monday, October 20, also at 7:00-8:30 p.m. in the East Assembly Room. Our focus that evening will be on the Rev. Munther Isaac's *Christ in the Rubble: Faith, the Bible, and the Genocide in Gaza* (Eerdmans, 2025). Pastor Isaac succeeded Dr. Raheb as pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem and is increasingly noted as a spokesman for Palestinians.

So what is meant by "There is no Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?" Come to the discussions and see. But here's the heart of the matter: what is going on in the Holy Land today in no way resembles a contest between two remotely equal forces. Rather, it is a matter of dispossession, exile, and death meted out by one group on another. At least, that is the Palestinian perspective, which we intend to unpack in our discussions.

By all means, join us. If you are going on the trip, this is essential preparation. If you're not, this is essential information. The only prerequisite that we ask is that you read the books before coming.

Come and learn to play the recorder at Mount Olive!

We'll meet twice a month (Monday? Tuesday? Wednesday?) for 90 minutes a session. Our goal is to (1) have fun while learning or reviewing basic fingerings and reading music; (2) learn soprano-C and/or alto-F fingerings; (3) perhaps eventually play a few tunes as part of worship.

Requirements: a decent, 3-piece plastic or wood, *non-dollar store*, soprano or alto recorder; a pocket folder for music, fingering charts, etc; and purchase a \$20-25 "how-to" book after 4 weeks.

Interested? Tap me sometime, call/text/email me with questions.

Elizabeth P. Spang, MFA cell 239-410-4622 traverso4me@comcast.net

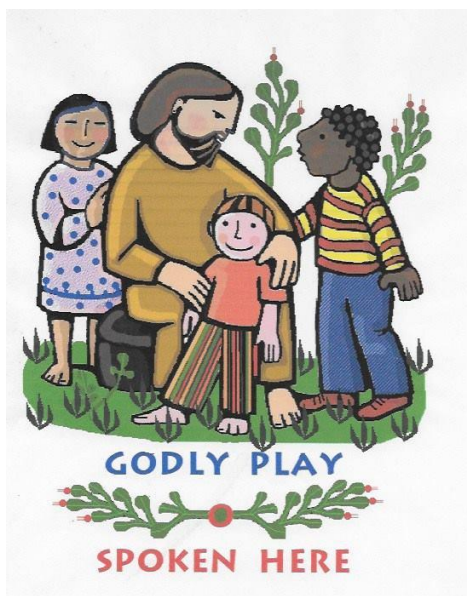
Welcome to Mount Olive's Choir School

Musical interactions with our faith begin even before a child can talk. Families with children between birth and Kindergarten are invited to join **Family Music on Zoom each Monday from 5:30-6:00 pm beginning September 15**. A caregiver: whether parent, grandparent, nanny, or another loving adult, participates actively to model and engage our youngest children in singing, playing, dancing, and praying from the comfort of your home. Our hope is that the songs, prayers, and Bible stories become part of your Christian faith practice at home. Mari Espeland will lead these sessions using "God's Wonderful World" in the *God's Children Sing* curriculum from [Musikgarten](https://www.musikgarten.com/). Please contact Mari at mari.mt.olive@gmail.com with questions and to enroll your child and receive the Zoom link and the family materials kit.

Children's Choir (1st-4th graders led by Mari Espeland) and Youth Choir (5th graders and older led by Rebekah Schulz) begin TODAY, Wednesday, September 10 at 5:30 with dinner in the Undercroft. Quick eaters will have adult supervised, though self-directed activities until rehearsal, which runs from 6:00-6:45 pm.

The new year of singing and learning in God's love will have some familiar plans and some new opportunities. Youth and Children's Choirs will sing together at four liturgies this year, including Christmas and Transfiguration. The choirs will sing separately at an additional seven liturgies. Choir School singers will join with their families, especially their grown-ups, to create a one-time family choir on Holy Trinity Sunday! An intergenerational choir will help us to observe a holy day that falls outside of the school year.

Please email Mari at mari.mt.olive@gmail.com or Rebekah at bekah.mt.olive@gmail.com with questions or to enroll your child in Mount Olive's Choir School. We are excited to sing and pray with Mount Olive's children and youth this year!



Godly Play

We had a wonderful beginning for our Godly Play year. Godly Play 1 shared the Creation story. Godly Play 2 heard from Lisa Ruff about their Common Hope partner, Laticia, who is starting her school vacation in Guatemala. Then they worked together on messages to share with Laticia about life in America.

This Sunday Godly Play 1 will hear about Noah and the Ark while Godly Play 2 will consider the Church Year and the Bible itself.

All children ages 3-Grade 1 are welcome to Circle One, and children in grades 2-5 are welcome to Circle Two.

Disaster Relief: Earthquakes in Afghanistan



The Mount Olive Global Ministry Committee has approved a \$2,000 donation from the Global Ministry undesignated offerings for the relief effort following the earthquakes in Afghanistan. The devastation from three earthquakes that struck eastern Afghanistan last week is enormous. Entire villages have been reduced to rubble, there are thousands injured, and the high death toll is rising.

Because many organizations are unable to work in Afghanistan, the committee chose to donate through Doctors without Borders. Their emergency team has already reached the provinces of Nangarhar and Laghman. They are delivering vital emergency trauma care supplies to two of the main hospitals and are coordinating with local authorities to assess how they can provide medical support.

If you would like to make a personal donation, you can give through this [link](#) or give via check through Mount Olive by designating your gift for **"Afghanistan earthquake relief."**

September Neighborhood Ministry Partner of the Month *The Lift Garage*

The Lift Garage is a non-profit auto repair service providing low-cost car repairs for income eligible Minnesotans from their shop on Lake Street or through their mobile repair van. Founded in 2013 by a social worker turned mechanic, The Lift Garage is a vital and unique neighborhood resource, providing necessary repairs so members of our community have the means to get to work, to medical appointments, to transport their kids to school, and more.

Mount Olive has chosen to support each of our Partners of the Month through a yearly contribution from our budget, and often, we also volunteer in support of their work.

On top of those financial and labor contributions, we encourage any member who wishes to donate over and above our budgeted amount to those partners doing work in their areas of passion and concern. You can do this using your offering envelopes or our online giving system. All additional contributions to our partner of the month will be distributed to the partner for the month in which the contribution is received.

For more information about the work of The Lift Garage please visit their website at www.theliftgarage.org.

Support STAND!

Common Hope in Guatemala is one of Mount Olive's Global ministry partners. They work with families in Guatemala to fight inequality through education, health care, housing, and family support. The students they work with face incredible challenges – but with the right support, they're graduating, dreaming big, and building new futures.



STAND stands for Scholars Taking Action for New Dreams. It's a campaign to raise the resources and relationships students need to succeed. In Guatemala, many young people drop out of school early because of financial hardship or lack of access. STAND is about changing that story. With the help of sponsors and donors, students are receiving academic scholarships, emotional and social support, and the encouragement to keep going, even when the odds are against them. The STAND campaign's goals are to raise \$50,000 for student scholarships, find 50 new student sponsors, and welcome 50 new monthly donors. You can learn more or make a gift here:

<https://www.commonhope.org/stand>

You're invited to a gathering with Archbishop Musa

Archbishop Musa Panti Filibus, of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, is visiting Minnesota in September and October. His visit coincides with the Minneapolis Area Synod's Bishop's Theological Conference, the Conference of Bishop's meeting, and the installation of Bishop-Elect Yehiel Curry. The LCCN and MAS have been "Companion Synods" for over 110 years. To "companion" means to show up, to listen, to show compassion, to advocate, and to accompany.

The Synod invites you, with other MAS congregations, to "companion" Archbishop Musa Filibus and the LCCN. Archbishop Musa will bring updates about the LCCN, the Lutheran University in Nigeria, current joys and challenges, respond to your questions, and be in conversation. The event is on Thursday, October 2; 2-3:30 p.m. at Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church. [Please "yes" RSVP here](#) so we know how many to expect.

Upcoming Neighborhood Ministry Educational Event

Wednesday, November 12, 12:00-1:30 pm at Mount Olive

Training for volunteer leaders and staff on harm reduction and the use of Narcan/Naloxone. This training has been one of the most requested over the last number of months. Any volunteer or staff person who has contact with the public should plan to attend. Lunch will be provided.

Mount Olive Lutheran Church

3045 Chicago Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55407

*A congregation of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*

Sunday Eucharist: 8 & 10:45 am

Contact Us:

Phone: 612/827-5919

Web: www.mountolivechurch.org

Staff

Pastor – *Joseph Crippen*

Cantor – *Daniel Schwandt*

Vicar – *Erik Nelson*

Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry –
Jim Bargmann

Administrative Assistant – *Cha Posz*

Sexton – *Jose Moroch*

*Mount Olive is a Reconciling in Christ
congregation.*

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