



# The Olive Branch

December 10, 2025

## Sunday Readings

**December 14, 2025**

*Third Sunday of Advent,  
year A*

Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalmody Luke 1:46b-55

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

**December 21, 2025**

*Fourth Sunday of Advent,  
year A*

Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

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

## Accent on Worship

*Vicar Erik Nelson*

This week, we commemorate Lucy of Syracuse, a young woman who was martyred on December 13, 304. Her story varies from source to source, but these are the consistent details: Lucy was killed because a disappointed suitor accused her of being a Christian, and she was killed in 304, during Diocletian's persecution. A common narrative says that her mother arranged a marriage for her. Lucy was not interested in marriage, and she instead wanted to give her dowry away for the poor. When her fiancée heard this, he outed Lucy as a Christian, resulting in her execution.

This story is a heartbreaking example of violence against women. It reminds us that throughout the church's history, many of its most faithful and devout leaders have been women. Many of early Christianity's critics, including Celsus and Pliny the Younger, disparaged Christianity by calling it a religion of women and slaves. The growth of the early church came because it spoke clearly and plainly about God's love for the marginalized and overlooked. The early church took action to elevate women, care for the sick, and proclaim liberty to captives.

In our time, people complain about the "feminization of Christianity," unknowingly repeating the words of Christianity's early critics. Many of the podcasters who broadcast to large audiences of young Christian men are calling for a "masculine" Christianity, one that dominates others, advocating for its own way with violence. In Lucy's name, we must reject that version of Christianity, embracing instead the "religion of slaves and women." Like Lucy, we should give of ourselves to take care of our neighbors.

*continued on page 2*

## Accent on Worship, *continued from page 1*

Lucy gained popularity in Scandinavia as her name means “light,” and her feast day falls close to the winter solstice. As her memory brings light to Europe’s frozen north, may we bring light to our neighborhoods as we follow her example of service and care. Her story reminds us that even though the Christian life of service can be costly, it’s worthwhile. Christ goes with us, as we follow Lucy’s way.

- Vicar Erik Nelson

## *Gifts that Give*

This is the last week that the Global Ministry Committee is hosting a Gifts that Give sale where you can buy Christmas gifts that also give back. Stop by the west assembly room between or after the liturgies on **December 14**. You can use cash, check or credit card.



**ADVENT GIVING TREE.** Choose an ornament to represent a gift supporting one of Mount Olive’s ministry partners. We have ornaments from ELCA Good Gifts, Bright Stars of Bethlehem, Bethania Kids in India, Common Hope in Guatemala, and Lutheran World Relief.

**SERRV INTERNATIONAL.** SERRV works to empower more than 8000 artisans and

farmers through long-term trading partnerships, helping them build sustainable employment, resources, rights, and a vision of hope in their communities. You can purchase beautiful and unique fair trade items from these artisans, including coffee and chocolate.

**BRIGHT STARS OF BETHLEHEM.** Purchase items to support the ministry of Bright Stars of Bethlehem. Our Mount Olive travelers brought back ceramics, olive wood, jewelry, textiles and other items from the Holy Land. Many of them are from Dar al-Kalima University, made by students or former students.



## Calendar

### Wednesday, December 10

- 10:00 am Staff meeting  
5:30 pm Children's Choir Supper  
6:00 pm Children's Choir rehearsals  
**7:00 pm** *Advent Vespers*  
7:35 pm Cantorei rehearsal

### Thursday, December 11

- 9:45 am Funeral Visitation: Melba Smrcka  
**10:30 am** *Funeral Eucharist*  
7:00 pm Narcotics Anonymous

### Friday, December 12

- 7:00 pm Recovery Group

### Saturday, December 13

- 10:00 am Book Discussion group  
**Sunday, December 14 - Third Sunday of Advent**

### **GIFTS THAT GIVE SALE - FINAL DAY**

- 8:00 am** *Holy Eucharist*, followed by Scandinavian Coffee Hour  
9:30 am Godly Play / Youth Discussion / Adult Forum  
**10:45 am** *Holy Eucharist, with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism*, followed by Scandinavian Coffee Hour  
12:30 pm Y1 Confirmation

### Monday, December 15

- 5:30 pm Family Music Time (online only)  
6:30 pm Recorder group  
7:00 pm Monday Night WAVE (N.A.)

### Tuesday, December 16

- Noon Bible Study  
6:00 pm Neighborhood Ministry Committee meeting  
6:30 pm Feminine Divine group

## **Scandinavian Coffee Hour This Sunday!**

Calling all Scandinavians, Nordics, and friends! Do you have a holiday treat you would be able to share at coffee hour? Does it have a special story? Please bring your treat to either or both coffee hours this Sunday, December 14. Join us for coffee and conversation, lefse, herring, krumkake, rosettes, almond cake, fruit soup, rommergrot, and more!

Can you join with contributing a homemade or purchased item, with set up, serving, or clean up? [Sign up here to help.](#)  
Thank you!

## **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**

On December 13 the group will consider Barbara Kingsolver's latest, *Demon Copperhead*. This will be the fifth Kingsolver book the group has read. On January 10, the group will consider an author new to the group, Niall Williams, as they read *Time of the Child*.

Everyone is invited to join when-ever 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.](#)



## Midweek Advent Vespers

Midweek Evening Prayer will be prayed each Wednesday evening during Advent (Dec. 3, 10, and 17), at 7:00 pm.

*All are welcome.*

## Staff Christmas Gifts

This is the time of the year that we give gifts to our staff to recognize the wonderful work that they do among us all year. If you would like to contribute to these gifts, drop your contribution in the offering plate or leave it in the office. Be sure it is clearly designated for "Staff Gifts." Thanks!

## *The Olive Branch* Publication Schedule

Please note that there will not be an *Olive Branch* published during the week between Christmas and New Year. There will be an issue published December 24, but not on December 31. Regular weekly publication resumes with the January 7, 2026 issue.

## Agenda Launch & Anti-Authoritarianism Strategy Training

On Saturday, December 13, a group of Mount Olive folks will be joining ISAIAH's Agenda Launch & Anti-Authoritarianism Strategy Training at the Minneapolis Convention Center. We will join thousands of other people of faith to hear from ISAIAH and Faith in Minnesota about their agenda through 2027 and plan a path to protect our state, neighbors, and families in the face of rising authoritarianism.

If you'd like to attend with the Mount Olive group, [register at this link.](#)

Get in touch with Vicar Nelson or Candy Husemoller for more information.

Help protect our state, neighbors, and families in the face of rising authoritarianism.

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## Have You Heard of Our Saviour's Homeless Shelter?

It's just a few blocks north on Chicago Avenue.

Some families from Mount Olive have been providing a monthly dinner to Our Saviour's guests for over 15 years. It's a wonderful and rewarding ministry. The meals are deeply appreciated by the shelter residents -it's the high point of their day. And they are quick to express their gratitude.

Our Saviour's depends upon volunteers to prepare one meal per day. They have neither the funds nor the staff to provide quality meals without help. At this time, four new teams or families are critically needed for 2026, so no one has to cook more than one meal annually.

Is that something you could do? You will feel the gratitude when you serve your first Sunday evening dinner to the residents at Our Saviour's. It's a blessing you give, and also truly receive. Please call or email me for details.

- Elaine Halbardier

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## Shared Ministry Notes

### Thanksgiving Offering

Mount Olive members shared their financial resources on Thanksgiving to the tune of just under \$3,000. According to the Second Harvest Heartland Food Bank, that amount of money will provide nearly **9,000 meals** for our hungry neighbors because of the Bank's ability to purchase food in bulk and at a discount. Thanks so much! Our sharing makes great things possible!



### A Member's Reflection on Pledging

*(Traditionally, pledge campaigns happen in the fall. However, since Mount Olive doesn't base its annual budget on the results of a pledge drive, the Shared Ministry Committee has decided that we will ask the congregation to make pledges of financial resources early in 2026. This column will offer occasional reflections by those who pledge on why this practice is important to them. This week's comments are submitted anonymously.)*

### Giving to Mount Olive is a true joy!

Pledging is something I've been encouraged to do in my various church homes throughout a lifetime of loving God and neighbor.

Pledging allows better planning, I believe--so to me it's an act of stewardship to let my siblings in Christ know what I prayerfully have determined I can give.

And sometimes I've been in this attempting-to-plan role, praying for God's guidance and the Holy Spirit's leading as to how much can be done while keeping good faith with the congregation.

So each year I pray and I pledge! With joy and thanksgiving to God!

### Parting Thoughts

Fellow Mount Olive member, Leanna Kloempken, shared this tidbit of wisdom with us lately: "*Be kinder than necessary because everyone else may be fighting some other battle of their own.*" Leanna loves to read and write and occasionally shares her thoughts. She was the Mount Olive Librarian for many, many years. Thanks, Leanna!

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## Save the Date: Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments Community Celebration

Please join us in celebrating the opening of the new Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments on **Saturday, January 10 from 11:00 am to 2:30 pm**. Their beautiful new facility is located at 2740 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. S. in Minneapolis.

Celebrate the opening of the new Simpson Community Shelter & Apartments. Take a self-guided tour, meet the Simpson staff, learn about our programs and explore ways to get involved at Simpson. Light refreshments will be served.

Simpson Housing is one of our Neighborhood Ministry partner organizations, providing vital services to those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Please plan to join us in celebrating the opening of their new facility.

## Adult Forums Through December

**December 14:** St. Lucia Scandinavian Brunch – No Adult Forum

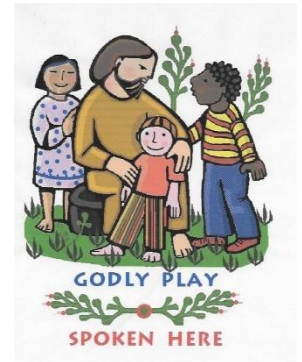
**December 21:** Christmas Service Project

**December 28 and January 4, 2026** – Christmas break, no Forum

## Godly Play This Week

**Advent:** Both Godly Play circles will be hearing the stories of Christmas. Who is telling the story? The prophets, the holy family, the shepherds, and the magi. And then on Sunday, **December 21**, both circles will join in the sanctuary to light all of the Advent candles, hear the story and leave to celebrate together. There will be no Godly Play on December 28.

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



## National Lutheran Choir Christmas Festival This Weekend

The Christmas festival is quickly approaching, and we look forward to seeing you there! The National Lutheran Choir is proud to present *Come, Dwell With Us* this December at the beautiful Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis. Alongside instrumentalists, the NLC Children's Music Ensemble, and Brian Newhouse as Narrator, this Christmas festival will be a perfect addition to your holiday season.

Friday, December 12th | 4:30pm

Saturday, December 13th | 1:30pm

Saturday, December 13th | 8:00pm

[Click here for tickets!](#)

## Winter Wear Needed!

This time of year, Neighborhood Ministry is often asked by our neighbors about warm clothes for those who come to get assistance. If you have any coats, jackets, scarves, gloves/mittens/ or hats to donate, please know we can put them to good use. Drop them off in the coat room adjacent to the kitchenette on the upper level. There is an area marked for coat donations. Mittens, gloves, hats, and scarves can be shared in the bins in the coat room. Thank you!



## Scenes from the Lefse Gathering





## Searching for Home

Symbols are compelling tools. During our time in the West Bank, our group learned about the powerful symbolism of the key among Palestinian people. In 1948, 750,000 Palestinians were removed from their land and homes during the British Partition of Israel, also known as *Nakba* ("catastrophe" in Arabic). Many Palestinians hold on to the keys of their original homes – and pass those keys to their descendants. Keys are a symbol of the Palestinians' right to return; a principle enshrined in international law that grants individuals the right to go back to their homes of origin. It is important to note that *Nakba* is not a one-time event for the Palestinians – displacements of thousands have occurred in Gaza and continue in the West Bank to this day.

Losing one's home, or being away from home for long periods, can be a profound and disturbing experience. As Mary and Joseph escaped with the baby Jesus to flee the wrath of Herod, they left their homeland for two to three years, until Herod had died. Can any of us imagine doing such a thing? Yet their hope and trust in God during this time sustained them through the trials and anxiety of such an ordeal. We were indeed witness to the suffering of the Palestinian people in the West Bank. But we heard and saw stories of resilience, trust in God and perseverance that they, too, may return to their homes one day and live life in safety and peace. May this be so, for all God's children on earth!

– Sue Browender

**Top photo:** The entrance to Aida refugee camp, near Bethlehem.

**Bottom photo:** A placard in the Aida refugee camp, listing names of former villages from which current residents called their home.





## 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

On the Web: [mountolivechurch.org](http://mountolivechurch.org)

### **Staff**

Pastor - *Joseph Crippen*

Cantor - *Daniel Schwandt*

Vicar - *Erik Nelson*

Administrative Assistant - *Cha Posz*

Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry

- *Jim Bargmann*

Sexton - *Jose Morocho*

*Mount Olive is a Reconciling in Christ  
congregation.*

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