

The Olive Branch

January 14, 2026

Accent on Worship

Vicar Erik Nelson

Sunday Readings

January 18, 2026

*Second Sunday after Epiphany
year A*

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalms 40:1-11

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

John 1:29-42

January 25, 2026

*Third Sunday after Epiphany
year A*

Isaiah 9:1-4

Psalms 27:1, 4-9

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

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

Accent on Worship

This week, our church commemorates Pachomius of Egypt, a Renewer of the Church. While he is most often remembered as a father of monasticism, I believe his life shows us ways to faithfully resist empire.

When he was 21, he and several other Egyptian young people were swept up by the Roman army and forced into their service. At the time, the empire was in the midst of civil war and turmoil, so conscription was a common way for them to reinforce their numbers. When the group got to Thebes, the Christians of the city came out to provide food and comfort to the conscripted men. This experience stuck with Pachomius.

After he got out of the army, he returned to Egypt, sought out the Christians, and was baptized. Pachomius learned from hermits and mystics, but received a vision of a more communal monastic life. Together with his brother, Pachomius reformed the movement, establishing monasteries for many people to live together in prayer and service. Pachomius's model balanced prayer with work, communal life with solitude.

If Pachomius was with us today, I believe he would remind us of the importance of prayer and solidarity in trying times. In the face of empire that treats people's lives as if they're disposable, the only way we can get through is together. Though we don't live in monasteries, I believe we share their call to pray and serve together, as one body. When we stand alone, we are vulnerable. When we kneel together, in prayer and service to our neighbors, the reign of Christ breaks into our world.

Justice Ministry Committee Updates

For those interested in getting involved politically concerning issues of justice, our statewide caucuses will all be held on Feb. 3 at 7:00 PM. The official caucus finder to help you find a caucus near you will be posted on the Minnesota Secretary of State website beginning on Jan. 14. We will also put a link for that in next week's Olive Branch.

There are several ways to get training before that:

1. Two in-person caucus training options are Sunday, Jan. 18 or Jan. 25 from 12 - 1:30 at Our Saviors Lutheran Church at 2315 Chicago Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55404. No pre-registration
2. is required.
3. DFL 20-minute online video caucus training at <https://minneapolisdf.org/2025/training>

What is a precinct caucus? Precinct caucuses are meetings run by [Minnesota's political parties](#). They are the first in a series of meetings where parties may endorse candidates, select delegates, and set goals and values (called party platforms). For more information about caucuses from the State of Minnesota website:

<https://www.sos.mn.gov/elections-voting/how-elections-work/precinct-caucuses/>

I attended the Center Down Rise Ready training about noncooperation last Wednesday, along with two other Mount Olive members. It was informative and provided research-based information. They talked about the national noncooperation movement, the power of collective noncompliance and mass noncooperation and how to connect with this movement. The training is based on the [Freedom Trainers](#) noncooperation curriculum and is infused with a spiritually-minded and expansive theological framework. They're planning to host another training event on February 4, in the early evening. I've asked for the specifics as soon as they're available and will share this with you.

If you're interested, but this day/time doesn't work for you, email me at justice@mountolivechurch.org. If enough people are interested I could put in a request for a training at Mount Olive.

There will be a conversation about the work of the Justice Ministry Committee this Sunday, January 18, after the second liturgy. We will meet in the West Assembly area.

There will be an Adult Education hour discussion about the new Justice Ministry committee on Sunday, January 25.

Look for information about specific ways to support our neighbors in a Twig email later this week from Jim Bargmann and myself. We're using the direct Twig email as a more secure way to share this information.

If you have any questions or ideas, please email me at justice@mountolivechurch.org

- Candy Husemoller

Director of Justice Ministry Committee

Calendar

Wednesday, January 14

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

Thursday, January 15

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

Friday, January 16

- 7:00 pm Recovery group

Sunday, January 18 - Second Sunday after Epiphany

- 8:00 am Holy Eucharist, followed coffee and conversation
9:30 pm Godly Play / Youth Discussion / Adult Forum
10:45 am Holy Eucharist, followed coffee and conversation
12:30 pm Y4 Confirmation
12:30 pm Justice Committee meeting

Monday, January 19

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

Tuesday, January 20

- Noon Bible Study
5:00 pm Neighborhood Ministry Committee
6:30 pm Feminine Divine group

CaringBridge Invitation

Keith Bartz is facing a challenging illness, and his daughters Rachel and Laura have created a CaringBridge site to update people on his situation. Included is also a visitor's calendar for those who'd want to schedule a visit. [Click here to go to Keith's CaringBridge page.](#)

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

Our January book group was canceled so that we, too, could celebrate JoEllen Kloehn's life. Consequently, *Time of the Child* by Niall Williams will now be the book for consideration on February 14, and in March we will wade into a whole different genre and time with *A Terrible Glory: Custer and the Little Bighorn - The Last Great Battle of the American West*, by James Donivan.

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.](#)

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!

Meal Train!

A meal train has been set up for Elizabeth Manning and Kevin Vasquez (whose daughter, Elena, was recently baptized at Mount Olive) and members of Mount Olive are invited to sign up to support them if you are able. The meal train currently goes through January. Thanks for any support you can provide! Here is the link to the Meal train signup:
<https://mealtrain.com/n90g0d>

2026 Altar Flowers

The 2026 altar flower chart is now available outside the church office. Sign up today to sponsor one or more Sundays! Flowers currently cost \$50/bouquet, \$100 for both. Consider splitting a Sunday with one or more other households to defray the cost or sponsor a full Sunday yourself. Our shared generosity ensures beauty in our liturgies throughout the year.

Thank you.

Counters for Sunday Offerings Needed

Mount Olive has 3 teams of loyal counters for the offerings and gifts which come in each Sunday. To spread the work load, we'd like to develop a 4th team. Counting occurs at a time the team determines mutually. It usually involves less than 2 hours each time.

If you think you would like to assist in this important job, please contact David Anderson, who is serving as the Financial Secretary, at dtaparkave@aol.com, or 612.730.2997, or see him on Sunday morning!

Singing the Art of Aaron Silver January 25th — 3pm

In connection with Music & Fine Arts' art exhibit, join Aaron and Rabbi Emma Kippley-Ogman, who will teach you to sing a number of song texts from the papercuts in the exhibit, with song sheets and translations. The more people attend, the more enjoyable it will be as we fill the room with song! Texts we'll sing include:

- I will build this world from love.
- You are not obligated to complete the work, neither are you free to abandon it.
- My God, the soul that you placed in me is pure.
- Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will not fear because you are with me.
- And more!

***Please Note:** The artist reception previously advertised for Sunday, January 18, has been rescheduled with this event.*

January Neighborhood Ministries Partner of the Month: *Our Saviour's Community Services*

Our Saviour's Community Services, a non-profit founded by our sister congregation, operates a shelter, which in the last year has served a vital role in providing housing for those experiencing homelessness who have recently been released from the hospital. In addition, they provide transitional housing for women who have experienced domestic abuse and permanent supportive housing for men and women who live with a mental illness, physical disability, and/or substance use disorders. In addition, Mount Olive volunteers provide meals at the Our Saviour's shelter once a month.

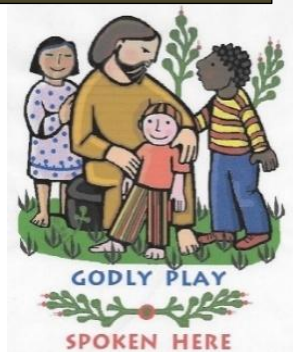
Mount Olive has chosen to support each of our Partners of the Month through a yearly contribution from our budget, and often, like our partner this month, we also volunteer in support of their work. On top of those financial and labor contributions, we encourage any member who wishes to donate over and 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 Our Saviour's work, please visit their website at <https://oscs-mn.org>. For more information about the teams from Mount Olive serving meals at the shelter, contact Elaine Halbardier at ech914@comcast.net.

Godly Play This Week

This Sunday both circles will hear about the Good Shepherd as they move along their journey through Jesus' parables, stories with so many things to wonder about together.

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



January Adult Forums

January 18 – Greg Murphy and George Heider (possibly others), will provide additional background on their recent trip to Palestine and Mitri Raheb, founder and President of Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem.

January 25 - Candy Husemoller, Justice Ministry updates

Save the Date for Taste of Palestine

Mark your calendars! **February 8** will be the Taste of Palestine.

The Global Ministry committee hosts a “Taste of” event each year, highlighting our supported ministries. This year we will learn more about Bright Stars of Bethlehem and Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem.

Our Mount Olive travelers who recently went on a partnership trip will present our adult forum on Feb. 8. In addition, there will be a forum preceding the event on Jan. 18. After the second liturgy on February 8, we will gather for a meal of typical food from Palestine, using recipes from Dar al-Kalima University’s culinary education program. Travel team members will also be present to answer questions. Please let Lisa Ruff (global@mountolivechurch.org) know if you are interested in making one of the recipes for the event. We are also looking for people to help with preparing, serving and cleaning up that day.



Heightened Security at Mount Olive - A Request from Staff

During these times of heightened vigilance in our neighborhood, it is more important than ever that we maintain the security of our building for the safety of our guests and staff members. And so we have a request from some of your staff - in particular from Jim and Cha. If you are at Mount Olive at a time other than when a liturgy is happening, please put aside your hospitality and do not hold the door open for anyone who you do not know to come in either before or after you. If you are here Monday through Friday, 8 am to 3 pm, Jim or Cha can assist whoever is at the door. If you are here outside of those times, please ask the person to come back during our normal office hours for assistance. And just to reiterate what is perhaps obvious: This has nothing to do with those seeking assistance from Mount Olive Neighborhood Ministry programs and everything to do with the current situation. We hope this is a temporary request and we can go back to being our hospitable selves in the near future.

Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments Grand Opening

In the midst of all that is happening in our neighborhood, city, state, and country, there are also things we can celebrate. On Saturday, January 10, Simpson Housing Services celebrated the opening of the Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments. This new facility was designed with all the best practices in mind - and will do a great deal to move us toward the goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. This beautiful new building includes small group sleeping areas with no bunk beds and storage for personal items to accommodate 72 individuals, a clinic run by Hennepin Health Care for the Homeless, spaces for on-site case management, a commercial kitchen and dining room, solar panels and geothermal HVAC system, green space and balconies, special accommodations for non-binary and trans individuals, and 42 efficiency-sized supportive apartment units.



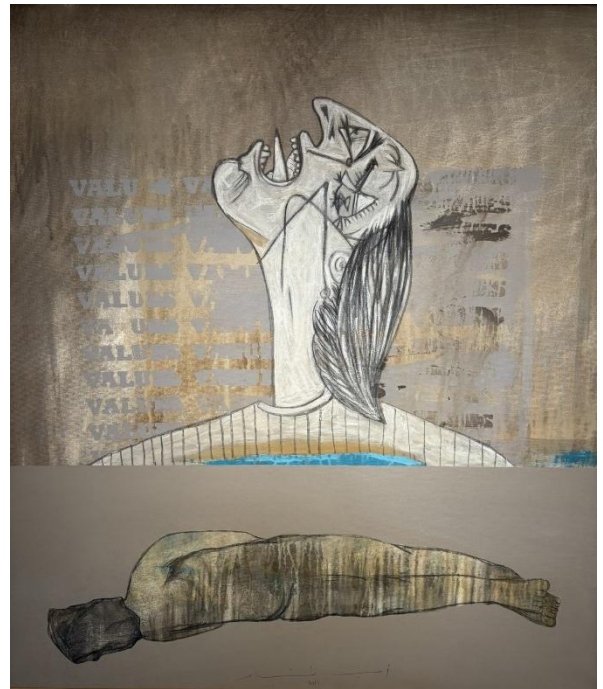
Art Piece from Dar-Al-Kalima

This painting caught my attention at Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem, one of our partners in Palestine. Dar al-Kalima is the only university in Palestine dedicated to the arts. In a context where so many Palestinians suffer from trauma and PTSD, the arts provide a vital outlet to express pain and anguish - and to begin the healing process. The university offers degrees in painting, architectural engineering, sculpture, music, jewelry, film, art therapy, and even culinary arts.

The image immediately struck me: a screaming woman in agony, a bound body beneath her, and the word *Value* repeated over and over, smeared almost into oblivion (look closely at the photo). As I stood there, thinking about the ongoing genocide in Gaza, I assumed the piece was about the value of Palestinian lives. The shirt resembled the separation wall, and I found myself wondering what other symbols I might be missing. Curious, I asked for an explanation from the artist.

What I received was a gut punch.

The painting was completed in 2015. The word is not *Value*, but *Values* - and the work is a critique of the hypocrisy behind the U.S. government's proclaimed "values" of freedom and democracy during the Iraq war. The body beneath the woman is that of a tortured prisoner from Abu Ghraib. The screaming woman herself is borrowed from a Picasso painting, used here as a universal symbol of human suffering. The repeated word *Value* represents hollow promises - words that have lost all meaning in the face of violence, humiliation, and abuse. The piece asks a searing question: what moral values truly guided these actions, and what "values" did the invasion bring to the Iraqi people?



Jim and I are often asked how the trip was. We usually answer with three words: heavy, enlightening, and spiritual.

Heavy because of the layers of discrimination and apartheid imposed on Palestinians - and because of the role played by the U.S. government, media, and some churches in sustaining these systems.

Enlightening because of the overwhelming welcome we received from Palestinians, and how grateful they were simply to have us there. We were also struck by how closely Muslim and Christian Palestinians live and work together. They are truly brothers and sisters, walking side by side.

The trip was **Spiritual** because it revealed faith as something lived, not spoken. We encountered a people whose spirituality is rooted in resilience, hospitality, and solidarity in the face of injustice. Muslim and Christian Palestinians walk together as one community, grounded in a faith that does not ignore suffering but confronts it with courage and compassion. Being present to that reality - listening, witnessing, and refusing to look away - felt like holy ground.

~ Judy Johnson

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

Staff

Pastor - *Joseph Crippen*

Cantor - *Daniel Schwandt*

Vicar - *Erik Nelson*

Administrative Assistant - *Cha Posz*

Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry

- *Jim Bargmann*

*Mount Olive is a Reconciling in Christ
congregation.*

In This Issue

- **Accent on Worship – Vicar Erik Nelson**
- **January Adult Forums**
- **Taste of Palestine: February 8**
- **Reflections from Palestine**
- **Update from the Justice Committee**
- **Sunday Offering Counters Needed**
- **January Neighborhood Ministry Partner of the Month:
Our Saviour's Community Services**