

The Olive Branch

February 4, 2026



Accent on Worship

Sunday Readings

February 8, 2026

*Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
year A*

Isaiah 58:1-12
Psalm 112:1-9[10]
1 Corinthians 2:1-12
Matthew 5:13-20

February 15, 2026

Transfiguration of Our Lord

Exodus 24:12-18
Psalm 2
2 Peter 1:16-21
Matthew 17:1-9

Accent on Worship

Jim Bargmann

What would our response be if we saw repentance? Over the past few weeks, oddly coinciding with the invasion and occupation of Minnesota by forces of our own Federal government, our readings have often mentioned repentance. Starting on the Second Sunday of Advent, we heard John preaching repentance. Then on the Third Sunday after Epiphany, upon learning of John's arrest, Jesus picked up the message of repentance. Characteristically, Jesus' ministry and message are more marked with grace and compassion and forgiveness than the sometimes seemingly harsh word "repent." But are these ideas at odds with one another? And when is a message of repentance appropriate? And if we share a message of repentance, what then would our reaction be if someone were to repent? Have we actually considered that?

These are questions that have been in my mind repeatedly since Sunday afternoon.

Invited by a friend, I had the opportunity to join the Singing Resistance group for their most recent action in downtown Minneapolis. Nearly 2000 of us met at Westminster Presbyterian where we gathered to learn songs together and be trained for the work we were about to undertake. Sunday's action? To sing, yes, but with a specific message to a specific group of people. We marched from Westminster, down Nicollet Mall, and back again - a route that would put us in front of two hotels where ICE and CPB officers were suspected of staying. At each hotel, our group of singers stopped and we sang at the windows of the hotel.

One of our songs:

*Put down your weapon, Come sing your part.
We walk the same ground, But we've been torn apart.*

continued on page 2

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

Accent on Worship, *continued from page 1*

A powerful action, for sure, based in history. There are multiple stories of what happens to authoritarian regimes when loyalists and those employed by the regime begin to defect and those defections have often, if not always, been a key part in the downfall of these regimes in other parts of the world. So a potentially impactful action undertaken by our group.

But my mind could not let go of the question. What would I do if someone actually defected and, yes, repented of their actions? How would I feel?

Our own country's history points to the danger of a society that is too quick to dismiss past atrocities and offer reconciliation. The reconstruction era following the Civil War and the years following have built a foundation of dysfunction and we, I would argue, are still dealing with that today.

But what is the faithful, Jesus following response? Repentance, as taught by John and Jesus, and indeed, throughout Scripture, means a turning, a change, has taken place. I would argue, not only a change of behavior, but of mindset, belief, and yes, of one's whole self. And this kind of change is only possible with God's own healing, brought about by the Holy Spirit.

And perhaps that is the answer. That the work of repentance isn't about us - especially someone else's repentance - nor is making the decision about the validity of someone else's repentance. We must trust that the Holy Spirit, in her wisdom, can bring about true repentance and healing - and can lead us into the ability to recognize and accept true repentance where it exists. Do we have a role at all? Certainly. In many ways, although we were a group operating outside of any one faith tradition, I see our group on Sunday acting in the spirit of Jesus and John and the prophets and disciples before and after, calling for repentance and offering forgiveness, love, and inclusion. So yes, we have a role. But it is the work of the Holy Spirit to use our words to bring about real repentance and change.

But I will admit, I continue to struggle with the idea of repentance, especially in this very specific context. It is difficult sometimes when the teachings of Scripture have to become real. But we can do this together. Struggle and learn and grow and love. Together.

- Jim Bargmann

A Note from a Neighbor

A text we received from one of our neighbors upon the delivery of food and household supplies a week ago Thursday:

"Bendiciones buenas que Dios bendiga siempre estamos muy agradecidos de parte de mi familia por la ayuda tan grande que an hecho por nosotros que el señor les bendiga siempre en su familias."

Good blessings, may God always bless you. We are very grateful on behalf of my family for the great help you have given us. May the Lord always bless you and your families.

The Olive Branch

Calendar

Wednesday, February 4

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

Thursday, February 5

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

Friday, February 6

7:00 pm Recovery group

Sunday, February 8 - Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

8:00 am *Holy Eucharist*, followed coffee and conversation
9:30 pm Godly Play / Youth Discussion / Adult Forum
9:30 am Family Music Time LIVE
10:45 am *Holy Eucharist*, followed coffee and conversation
12:00 Noon Taste of Palestine meal

Monday, February 9

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

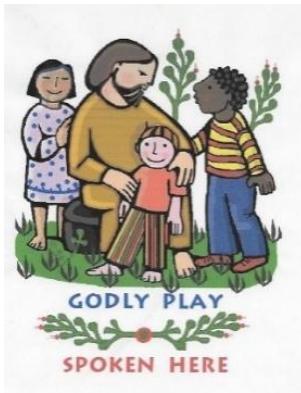
Tuesday, February 10

9:00 am Diaper Depot staff meeting
Noon Bible Study

Godly Play This Week

This Sunday we will continue telling Jesus' own stories. This Sunday, Circle 1 will hear the story of the Prodigal Son while Circle 2 will hear what the Sower has them wondering about.

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



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.

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](#).

The Olive Branch

Bethlehem

We were blessed to have had a four day stay in Bethlehem, located inside the West Bank of Palestine. According to our leader Sami, most tourists make a day trip to Bethlehem from Jerusalem because of a perception of danger. Entry to Bethlehem is indeed discouraged by large physical warning signs on entry. I felt safe in our stay with our group. We were privileged to walk the streets of Bethlehem with pilgrims from all over the world in Jesus' birthplace.

The first evening, a few of us went outside to purchase bottled water from a convenience store. We were turned around when a local greeted us warmly and walked with us to find the store. Another evening, a friendly vendor greeted us "Hello! Where are you from? Glad you're here!" with no pressure for sales. Most vendors we encountered were very desperate for business, having had little tourism in the past two years.



Walking in Bethlehem to Manger Square was an easy stroll from our guesthouse. There were no long lines to enter the Church of the Nativity, built over Jesus' birthplace, one of the world's oldest active churches.

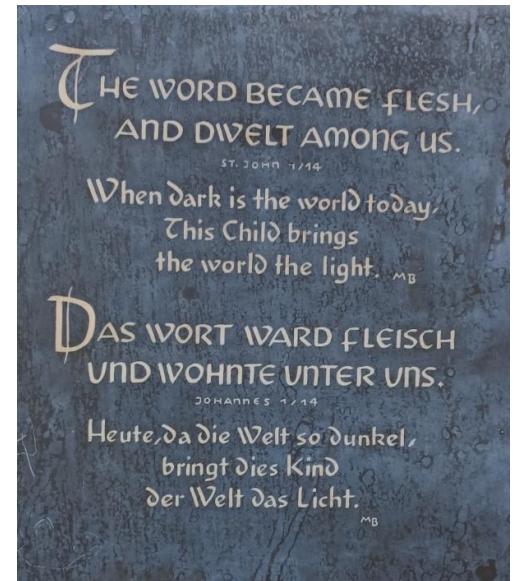
Our guesthouse, opened just for our group, was attached to Christmas Lutheran Church. One afternoon, a few of us were able to go inside the church, where in front, to the side, a baby doll was wrapped in a keffiyeh laying in rubble, not a manger. It was a startling sight. "Christ in the Rubble" is the title of the book written by Munther Issac, which we read as a group in preparation for our travel. He writes about faith, the bible, and the genocide in Gaza. It is troubling to read.

Hope was evident and demonstrated by the students and teachers at Bright Stars of Bethlehem, Augusta Victoria Hospital's presence, and the Palestinian people we met. "Existence is Resistance," shared by the Bright Stars students, states their hope, purpose, and determination for a peaceful future.

~ Linda Pipkorn

Upper photo: Plaque at St. Catherine's Church in Bethlehem
Text: *The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us! John 1:14*
When dark is the world today, This Child brings the world the light.

Lower photo: "Christ in the Rubble" - located at Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem



Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper February 17, 5:30 pm

Come join us for a pancake supper (and pancake races!) from 5:30 to 7pm on February 17 in the undercroft. Everyone is welcome!

Lent Begins.

Ash Wednesday, February 18 Holy Eucharist at Noon & 7:00 pm

All are welcome.

Paper Bags Needed!

Mount Olive Neighborhood Ministry is in need of brown paper bags with handles for delivering diapers and other resources.

If you have some you can spare, please leave them in the coat room at church. We will pick them up from there. Thanks!

Taste of Palestine

The Global Ministry Committee will host a Taste of Palestine **this Sunday February 8**. 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.

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.

Ghost Chorales

The Minneapolis Choir Collective will present a concert, "Ghost Chorales," on Saturday, Feb. 14, at 7 pm at Mount Olive. This is a concert benefitting, in part, the Minnehaha Food Shelf at Minnehaha United Methodist Church.

Tickets are available [here](#).

Upcoming Adult Forums

Feb. 8 - Taste of Palestine and discussion with the group who travelled to Palestine in November

Feb. 15 & 22 - "Practicing Hope, and Not Just 'Having It,'" a 2-part forum presented by The Rev. Cody J. Sanders, Ph.D.

Faith, hope, and love: Paul's big three in First Corinthians 13. Why do we have no catechism for learning to practice hope? Why do we often just assume we all know what "hope" means when we invoke the subject in times of despair? These two forums will take a renewed look at hope as a practice of Christian community undomesticated from optimism, or progress narratives, or wishful thinking. We will use this conversation to begin rewilding our hopeful practice in an era of polycrisis, collapse, and despair when we need communities of hopeful practice the most.

Our Neighbor Support Efforts

Now that we have a little more clarity and structure to our neighbor support efforts, I wanted to write a quick article to clarify and summarize what we are doing at this present time to care for our neighbors, specifically in terms of providing food and rent support. All our existing programs - bus cards, assistance with IDs, driver's licenses, birth certificates, diapers, and rental assistance through Align Minneapolis - are continuing unchanged.

Through the cooperative efforts of the Neighborhood Ministry and Justice leadership, we are involved in two parallel but connected efforts to care for our neighbors.

Candy Husemoller has been leading our effort to form a new partnership with Iglesia Dios Habla Hoy (DHH) where we will support their vibrant and large food delivery program.

This effort will involve picking up bulk food donations from DHH, repacking that food into boxes for individual families, and then delivering that food to homes. Most of this work will happen on Tuesdays. We will begin with a list of about 25 families, provided by DHH, but will have the ability to add families, either on our own or from the list collected by DHH as our capacity allows.

If you are interested in connecting to this work, you can [use this link to sign up](#). There are slots for specific types of work needed. Contact Candy Husemoller at justice@mountolivechurch.org with questions.

In addition, there is a growing group of families with whom Mount Olive already has a relationship, through personal connections with our Sexton or the neighborhood block captains from the Powderhorn Park and Central neighborhoods.

With these families, we are shopping for them, packing up personalized boxes of food, diapers, and formula, and then delivering them to homes. Also, with some of these families, we are providing emergency rental assistance and other services. Most of this work is happening on Thursdays. If you are interested in connecting to this work, please email Jim Bargmann at neighborhood@mountolivechurch.org if interested in joining this project or with questions. If you are interested in supporting this work financially, you can use the donate link on the Mount Olive web site (or access the same [using this link](#)) or write a check specifying "Neighbor Support" on the memo line.

And if there is any confusion about how these two programs fit together and why we are pursuing both at this time, I hope this illustration might help. In Minnesota, we love our bodies of water. With both lakes and rivers, most have a shore or beach area leading to wide sections of shallow water appropriate for swimming and other similar activities for a wide variety of people from all backgrounds and abilities. But the most bodies of water also have significant deep areas too. Here is where more intense activities can take place - boating, fishing, water skiing. And where most of the natural life of a lake finds a place to live and grow and thrive. Both the shallow parts and the deep parts are necessary for a thriving water ecosystem. This is also true in social services too. We need the broad range ministries like DHH that can serve large numbers of people quickly and flexibly. But the deeper ministries with more significant relationships, more services, and more investment in the whole life of a person or people, like our own internal program, are important too. So these two go hand in hand to form a full and thriving program of supporting our neighbors.

Please join us in either or both as your time and energy allow.

- Jim Bargmann, Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry

The Olive Branch

Singing the Art of Aaron Silver

Here are a few photos from this Music & Fine Arts event held on Sunday, January 25.



Photos by Jim Johnson

The Olive Branch

Our friends in Leipzig have been sending frequent messages of care and concern to support us as we support our neighbors who are impacted by the ICE presence in our cities. Here are just a few of the messages that they've passed along.



This image was sent to all the churches in Leipzig via Instagram. It reads: "We pray for our partner community in Minneapolis and all those affected by ICE violence."

"We are deeply saddened by the news of yet another family in your neighbourhood suffering due to gun violence. Our hearts are heavy, and we are keeping the family and the people of Minneapolis in our thoughts and prayers."

(Frank Schmidt)

"Dear Friends, I watch [the news] closely, praying with an attached heart, what happens in your city. I admire how so many people stand up against the forces of evil and for the sake of Christ, as we believe. Shalom."

(Pr. Johannes Markert)

"Dear Friends, wishing you God's wonderful strength on this journey." (Pr. Christoph Reichl)

"Our thoughts and prayers are with you"

(Anke Voigt)

"The situation reminds me a lot of the final days in communist East Germany. Despite the danger and our own fear, we took to the streets and demonstrated our stance."

(George Nischik)

"I read about...the news of little Liam. Our prayers are with you. May charity and the love of God be stranger than the cruelty of ICE. Stay safe and blessed." (Ute Weise)

"Listening to the speech of the Canadian Prime Minister in Davos, we can realize...what it is possible to do around the globe. We will pray for all of you. Peace be with you!"

(Superintendent Pr. Sebastian Feydt)

Mount Olive Lutheran Church

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*A congregation of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*

Sunday Eucharist: 8 & 10:45 am

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Cantor – *Daniel Schwandt*

Vicar – *Erik Nelson*

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Coordinator of Neighborhood Ministry
– *Jim Bargmann*

*Mount Olive is a Reconciling in Christ
congregation.*

In This Issue

- Accent on Worship – Jim Bargmann
- Taste of Palestine: This Sunday, February 8
- February Adult Forums
- Reflections from Palestine
- Our Neighborhood Support Efforts
- Messages from our friends in Leipzig