



MESSIAH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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November 15, 2020

24th Sunday After Pentecost

PRELUDE

Prayer

Leon Boëllmann

GATHERING

There are blessings meant for you to hold onto
Clutched like a lifeline, carried like a candle
for a dark way

**tucked into a pocket like a smooth stone
reminding you that you do not
go alone.**

This blessing is not those.

**This blessing will find its form
only as you give it away**

only as you release it
into the keeping
of another

**only as you let it
leave you**

bearing the shape, the imprint,
the grace it will take

**only for having passed through
your two particular hands.**

~written by Jan L. Richardson

We come to worship you, O God,

**Bless the manner in which we use that which you have given us,
That the world might be blessed through all you gift to us!**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved.

Amen.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One, **we confess that we are not awake for you. We are not faithful in using your gifts. We forget the least of our siblings. We do not see your beautiful image in one another. We are infected by sin**

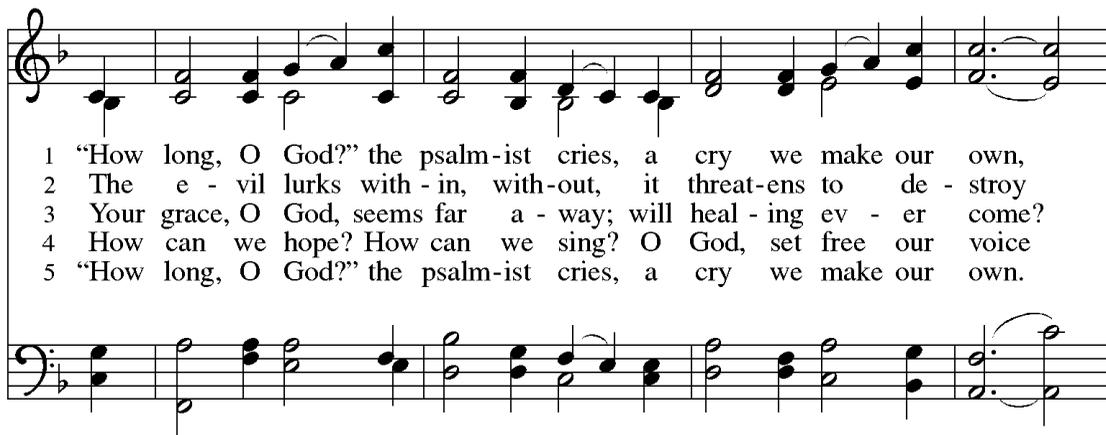
that divides your beloved community. Open our hearts to your coming, open our eyes to see you in our neighbor, open our hands to serve your creation. Amen.

Beloved, we are God's children, and Jesus, our Beloved, opens the door to us. Through † Jesus you are forgiven, by Jesus you are welcome, in Jesus you are called to rejoice! Let us live in the promises prepared for us from the foundation of the world. Amen.

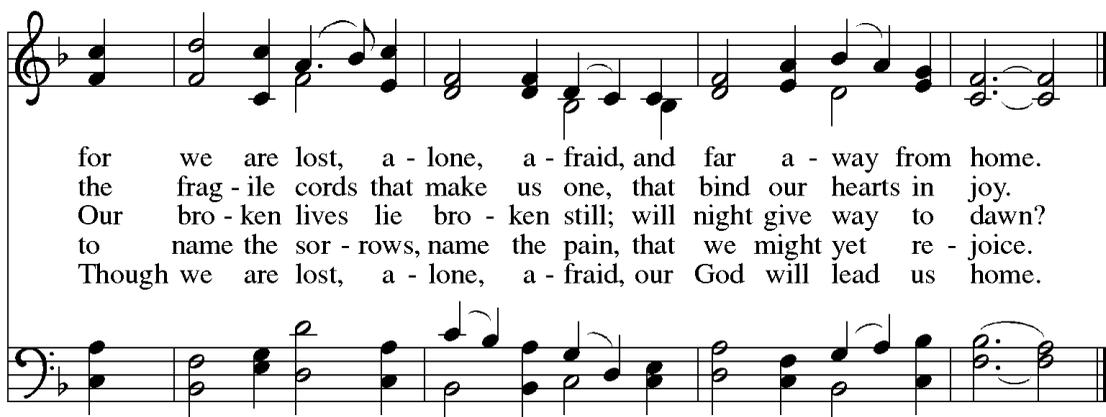
GREETING

In the name of the Father, and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

How Long, O God



1 "How long, O God?" the psalm-ist cries, a cry we make our own,
2 The e - vil lurks with - in, with-out, it threat-ens to de - stroy
3 Your grace, O God, seems far a - way; will heal - ing ev - er come?
4 How can we hope? How can we sing? O God, set free our voice
5 "How long, O God?" the psalm-ist cries, a cry we make our own.



for we are lost, a - lone, a - afraid, and far a - way from home.
the frag - ile cords that make us one, that bind our hearts in joy.
Our bro - ken lives lie bro - ken still; will night give way to dawn?
to name the sor - rows, name the pain, that we might yet re - joice.
Though we are lost, a - lone, a - afraid, our God will lead us home.

Text: Ralph F. Smith, 1950-1994

Music: LAND OF REST, North American traditional; arr. hymnal version

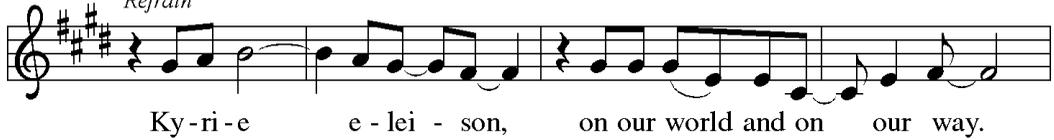
Text © 2003 Augsburg Fortress.

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KYRIE

Refrain



- 1 For peace in the world, for the health of the church, for the
- 2 That we may live out your im-passioned re-sponse to the
- 3 For peace in our hearts, . . . for peace in our homes, . . for
- 4 For your Spir-it to guide; that you cen-ter our lives in the



u-ni-ty of all; for
hun-gry and the poor; that
friends and fam-i-ly; for
wa-ter and the word; that you



this ho-ly house, for all who wor-ship and praise,
we may live out truth and jus-tice and grace,
life and for love, for our work and our play,
nour-ish our souls . . . with your bod-y and blood,



let us pray to the Lord, let us pray to the Lord.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and



peace to God's peo - ple on earth.



1 Lord God, heav - en - ly King, al - might-y God and Fa - ther,



we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you



for your glo - ry. Glo - ry to God in the high-



est, the high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



2 Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God,



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world: have mer - cy on us; you are seat-ed at the



right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.



Refrain
Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and



peace to God's peo - ple on earth. 3 For you a -



lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,



you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the



Ho - ly Spir - it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther.



A - men. A - men. A - men.



Final refrain
Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and peace to God's



peo - ple on earth. Glo - ry to God in the high -



est, the high - est, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

Prayer of the Day

Righteous God, our merciful master, **you own the earth and all its peoples, and you give us all that we have. Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom, and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

Zephaniah (like the prophet Amos in last week's first reading) presents the day of the LORD as one of judgment and wrath. Descriptions of the last day in the New Testament include details taken from Old Testament accounts of the day of the LORD.

⁷Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is at hand; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests. ¹²At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the people who rest complacently on their dregs, those who say in their hearts, "The LORD will not do good, nor will he do harm." ¹³Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them. ¹⁴The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. ¹⁵That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements. ¹⁷I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the blind; because they have sinned against the LORD, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. ¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Holy Scripture, Holy Word. **Thanks be to God!**

Psalm: Psalm 90:1-8 [9-11] 12

So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. (Ps. 90:12)

¹Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.

²**Before the mountains were brought forth,
or the land and the earth were born, from age to age you are God.**

³You turn us back to the dust and say, "Turn back, O children of earth."

⁴**For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past and like a watch in the night;**

⁵you sweep them away like a dream, they fade away suddenly like the grass:

⁶**in the morning it is green and flourishes; in the evening it is dried up and withered.**

⁷For we are consumed by your anger; we are afraid because of your wrath.

⁸**Our iniquities you have set before you, and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.**

⁹When you are angry, all our days are gone; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

¹⁰**The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength even eighty;
yet the sum of them is but labor and sorrow, for they pass away quickly and we are gone.**

¹¹Who regards the power of your wrath? Who rightly fears your indignation?

¹²**So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.**

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

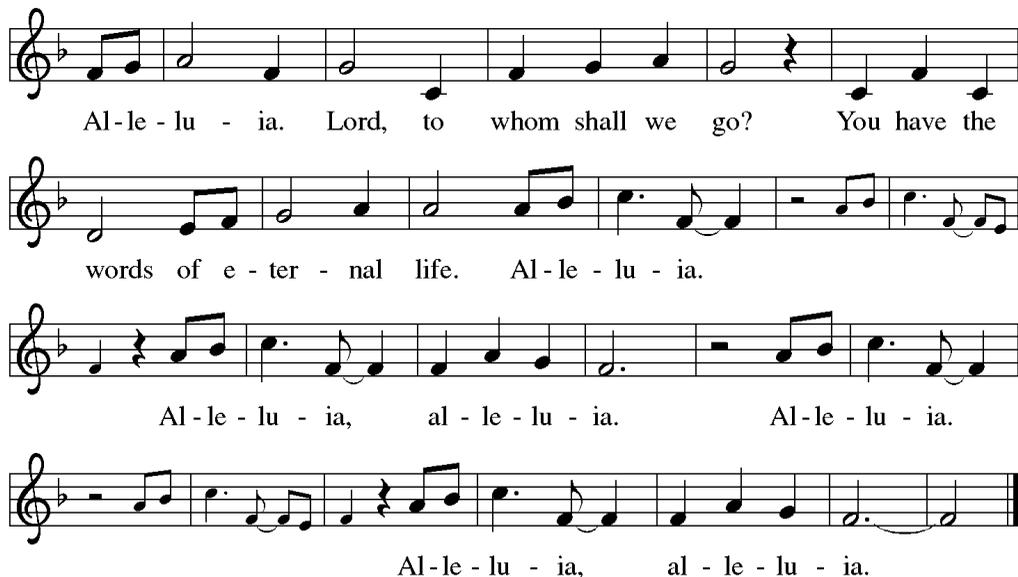
Though we do not know and cannot calculate the day of Christ's return, we live faithfully in the here and now as we anticipate the day when we will be given eternal salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of

darkness. ⁶So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Holy Scripture, Holy Word. **Thanks be to God!**

Gospel Acclamation



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make good use of the gifts that God has provided them.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁴For it is as if a man, going on a journey, ^{14a}summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering

where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?' ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

This is the Gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ!**

SERMON

Take My Life, That I May Be

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a bass line (bass clef). The lyrics are printed below the vocal line.

1 Take my life, that I may be con - se - crat - ed, Lord, to thee;
 2 Take my hands and let them move at the im - pulse of thy love;
 3 Take my voice and let me sing al - ways, on - ly, for my King;
 4 Take my sil - ver and my gold, not a mite would I with - hold;

take my mo - ments and my days; let them flow in cease - less praise.
 take my feet and let them be swift and beau - ti - ful for thee.
 take my lips and let them be filled with mes - sag - es from thee.
 take my in - tel - lect, and use ev - 'ry pow'r as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;
 it shall be no longer mine.
 Take my heart, it is thine own;
 it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
 at thy feet its treasure store;
 take myself, and I will be
 ever, only, all for thee.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.* On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Lord of the church, ignite your people with the passion of your love. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, unify us across ministries, congregations, and denominations, and refine us to participate in your activity throughout the world. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lord of creation, we stand in awe at the works of your hands and praise you for the beauty of nature; we pray especially for our Valkommen and Meadowlark Trails, for Coronado Heights, our rivers and for Lake Kanapolis. Bless the earth for your glory and restore its integrity where exploitation has caused ruin. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lord of the nations, sound forth your justice in the ears of all leaders. Increase concern for those who are most vulnerable, especially as international leaders forge trade agreements and cooperate to end human rights abuses. We pray for the peaceful transition of leadership on all levels here in the United States. May you guide our elected officials as they enter and as they depart from their posts. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lord of all in need, search out all who cry to you in distress, especially our members Rolland, Har, Donna, Walli, Betty, Gloria and Gene. We pray for friends of Messiah, Donna, Denise, Bill, Dawn, Chip, Dorothy, Erin, Stephani, Karla, Orin, Danielle, Bruce, Krista, Betty and Meghan. We pray for those in the military, Alex, Ben, Luke, Vicki, Jeremy, T.J., Daniel and Miranda and seminarian Kaylie. Scatter the heavy clouds of depression, chronic illness, unemployment, and loneliness with your radiant light. Send us as encouragement and signs of your healing. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lord of the stranger, stir up holy restlessness in us to extend love to those at the margins. Release our desire for control and open us to learn from the perspectives of others. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Lord of the living and the dead, we give you thanks for all the saints at rest from their labors.

Rouse us to live by their example, that saints yet to come may also know your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever.

Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

OFFERING

Special music will be Jacob Urban singing "Simple Gifts" arranged by Jay Althouse

Offering Prayer

God of all goodness, generations have turned to you, gathered around your table, and shared your abundant blessings. Number us among them that, as we gather these gifts from your abundance, and give thanks for your rich blessings, we may feast upon your very self and care for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Servant. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May the God of all creation, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved, who strengthens us for service, give you reason to rejoice and be glad! The blessing of God, Sovereign, ✝ Savior, and Spirit, be with you today and always. **Amen.**

Glories of Your Name Are Spoken

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Glories of Your Name Are Spoken". It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff at the top and a bass clef staff at the bottom. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment. Below the treble staff, there are four lines of lyrics, each numbered 1 through 4. The lyrics are: "1 Glo - ries of your name are spo-ken, Zi - on, cit - y of our God; 2 See, the streams of liv - ing wa - ters, spring-ing from e - ter - nal love, 3 Round each hab - i - ta - tion hov-'ring, see the cloud and fire ap - pear 4 Sav - ior, since of Zi - on's cit - y I through grace a mem-ber am,"

he whose word can - not be bro - ken formed you for his own a - bode.
 well sup - ply your sons and daugh - ters, and all fear of want re - move.
 for a glo - ry and a cov - 'ring, show - ing that the Lord is near.
 let the world de - ride or pit - y, I will glo - ry in your name.

On the Rock of A - ges found - ed, what can shake your sure re - pose?
 Who can faint, while such a riv - er ev - er will their thirst as - suage?
 Thus de - riv - ing from their ban - ner light by night and shade by day,
 Fad - ing are the world - lings' plea - sures, all their boast - ed pomp and show;

With sal - va - tion's walls sur - round - ed, you may smile at all your foes.
 Grace which, like the Lord, the giv - er, nev - er fails from age to age.
 safe they feed up - on the man - na which God gives them on their way.
 sol - id joys and last - ing trea - sures none but Zi - on's chil - dren know.

Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, alt.
 Music: AUSTRIA, Franz Joseph Haydn, 1732–1809

DISMISSAL

Beloved of God, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Psalm XVIII ("The Heavens Declare the Glory of God") Benedetto Marcello

Messiah Lutheran Church
10/31/2020

	Actual Oct-20	Actual Jan - Oct 20	Budget Jan - Oct 20
Revenue	\$10,888.22	\$134,277.77	\$123,550.00
Expenses	<u>11,190.96</u>	<u>128,746.99</u>	<u>137,325.26</u>
Surplus (Deficit)	<u><u>-\$302.74</u></u>	<u><u>\$5,530.78</u></u>	<u><u>-\$13,775.26</u></u>
Reserve Balance	<u><u>\$75,828.88</u></u>		

Members, Friends, and Family for Whom We Pray

Members of Messiah:

Rolland Christenson, Har Shogren, Donna Forsberg, Walli Ellis, Betty Peterson, Gloria and Gene Holdsworth

Friends of Messiah

Donna Stejksal	Daniels' friend	Karla Goewert	Friend of Kirsten Bruce
Denise	Pari Ford's mother	Orin Shogren	Har's brother
Bill Stephenson	Joy Janis's brother	Danielle	Robbie Peterson's
Dawn	Sharon Hoffman's Daughter	VanDeVyvere	granddaughter
Chip Brock	Bill and Caroline Brock's son	Krista Bahler	Betty Peterson's Niece
Dorothy Carmichael	Friend of Messiah	Betty Finney	Sharon Hoffman's friend
Erin Erb	Friend of Sherry Peterson	Meghan Presley	John & Margaret Presley's daughter
Stephani White	Betty Holcombe's daughter		

Serving the U.S.A.

Alex Klapp	Betty Russin's grandson	Vicki Charboneau	Elaine Eller's granddaughter
Ben Youngquist	S Hoffman's nephew	Jeremy Guy	Hensley's son-in-law
Luke Hammontree	Daniel's grandson	T.J. Paulsen	Barb Malm's child

Serving the U.S.A. Overseas

Daniel & Miranda Norland Randy/Gretchen's son & wife

Seminary

Kylie Ines

Please pray for all affected by Covid-19: Healthcare workers/administration/staff, residential staff and residents, those who seem unaffected and those who are currently aware they are infected and are fighting the virus. Also, we pray for all who are being negatively affected by the virus and it's social disruption.

WIDER CHURCH NEWS: BY JEANNE AHLERS

Lilian Mutheu and her young son, Nevil, live in Nairobi, Kenya. Nairobi happens to have one of the world's largest slums, an unsanitary and deadly place, where the buildings commonly don't have running water or electricity. Young and old alike die from such diseases as cholera, typhoid, and COVID-19. There is no money for clean water or medicine; sometimes they even have to choose between buying clean water or food.

Moreover, when Lilian leaves her home to buy water or food, she risks being raped or attacked.

Lutheran World Relief is appealing for help for people like Lilian. Clean water is essential for life and health. As we approach the season of giving, it would be good to remember our neighbors whom we don't know, but who share with us a world for whose own well-being we are all responsible.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In light of the recent local positive COVID cases, quarantine, and school changes, KICK will be postponed until further notice. We are hopeful that we will be able to start KICK back up in January, but we will just have to wait and see. Please know we are sad to not have KICK right now. We were all very excited to start, but we feel this is the best way to love our neighbors and avoid passing the virus. We hope that you all stay safe and well. We send our love and a virtual big hug. May God's Peace be with you all during a tough year.

The Swedish Supper is canceled this year due to the recent increase of COVID cases in our area. If you would like to contribute to the Swedish Supper Fund donations are always welcome and appreciated. You can give online at elimmarquette.org, or drop them off at Marquette Farmers State Bank, or mail them to:

Elim Lutheran Church
Swedish Supper Fund
403 N Lincoln St
Box 236
Marquette, KS 67464

If you would still like to give a Thankoffering this year to Women of the ELCA, it is not too late. You may either mail your offering to the church or bring it in to the office.

If you would like to give your offering online you can do so on our website at <https://www.melclindsborg.org/giving>. We are grateful for your generous support.

Bill and Carolyn Brock would like to thank everyone for the prayers, phone calls, and concern for their son Chip, after his August 17th accident. The thoughts and prayers of so many were vital to his recovery. They share the good news that he is finally home in Alaska as recuperating continues.

Advent at Bethany: Journey of the Magi

A Festival of Discovery through Hymns, Scripture, & Reflections on Sunday, Nov. 15, 2020, 4pm, Pearson Chapel. Due to COVID-19, this event will only be available through a livestream at bethanylb.edu/live

A program will be available for download featuring:

Bethany College Handbell Ensemble

Dr. Hentus van Rooyen, organist
Campus Pastor Amy Truhe, reflections

Every year at the TACOL Thanksgiving service and offering is taken to fund the Community Christmas Basket ministry. This ministry provides extra food to families in the greatest need in the Smoky Valley. Because we are not able to have the TACOL Thanksgiving service this year, and will therefore be unable to take our annual offering, we are asking each church in TACOL to consider taking a special offering for the Community Christmas Basket ministry.

If you would like to donate we ask that you designate it to the Christmas Basket fund and send the money to Shirley Reissig
PO Box 41
Lindsborg, KS 67456

Please **pray for Bethany College, the students, faculty, administrators, and staff**, that all remain healthy and mindful of best health practices, that learning be deep and strong, and that all might live into their vocation.

Please pray for **USD 400 and all teachers, students, administrators, and staff**, that they might remain healthy and mindful of best health practices, that learning be deep and strong, and the all might benefit from the community of learning.

Dala Pantry – Remember that Messiah Lutheran members are asked to provide the following items for the Dala Pantry donations – canned chicken, tuna, pickles, vienna sausages, peanut butter & jelly; Bethany is asked to bring single serving macaroni and cheese, ravioli, applesauce, fruit cups and canned tuna.

The Dala Pantry has gained a few new volunteers but is still looking for people to be of assistance from time to time. Please let Logan know if you are interested! daweslm@bethanylb.edu.

NOVEMBER 15, 2020
TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST



The importance of encouraging one another.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 25:14-30	Parable of the talents
Monday	Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18	Judgment of Judah
Tuesday	1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Encourage one another
Wednesday	Judges 4:1-7	Deborah and Barak
Thursday	Psalms 123	A prayer for mercy
Friday	Philemon 1:4-7	Philemon's love and faith
Saturday	Psalms 90:1-12	God is eternal
Sunday	Matthew 25:31-46	The sheep and the goats

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. **1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Gracious God, we thank you for the body of Christ that helps us when life is difficult and our faith is weak. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Lord God, you who make the earth fruitful, we thank you for this meal that strengthens our bodies and encourages our souls. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the Almighty God strengthen your soul through brothers and sisters in Christ.
(1 Thessalonians 5:11)

HYMN OF THE WEEK

Will You Let Me Be Your Servant

WEEKLY MILESTONES CARING CONVERSATIONS

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life. Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- How do you support someone when they are discouraged or are feeling down?
- How has someone supported you when you were in need of encouragement?
- Why do you think Christians need support and encouragement from one another?

DEVOTIONS

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

Good times and hard times can happen—and change—rather quickly (v. 3). Daily life is fragile. Life experiences can change dramatically with a phone call. What is constant is the need to care for one another and build up the body of Christ. There are important connections between this text and the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. God has gifted us to use our vocation, our calling in life as a child of God, to do God's work in the world. If we do not do this, if we ignore or hide our calling, the ministry of the church suffers. Instead, we are to trust in a God who acts; we are not to fall prey to complacency and speak and live as though God is not present and active in our lives and history (Zephaniah 1:12). Paul reminds the people that they—and we—are to reach out to others—especially our brothers and sisters in the faith. We are to do so with encouragement to live each day in faith, love, and hope because of the God who acts and has given us “salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). How are you encouraged by others to live your faith? How do you encourage others? *Pray:* **God of grace, we thank you for the cloud of witnesses that walk alongside us to strengthen us in faith, love, and hope through Christ. Amen.**

SERVICE

Jesus' parable of the talents makes a strong case for every Christian to have a calling, to use one's gifts and passions to serve the church and the world. Make a list of how to use your gifts and talents to serve the church and world around you.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

A *talent* in Jesus' day was money. Jesus tells a story about three servants. One hid his money and never used it. In our day, we think of a talent as a natural ability to be good at something. If we are good at something, we should not hide our talent but use it to the best of our ability. Drawing, singing, and dancing are a few talents. Think of what talent(s) you have and in what ways you can tell others about Jesus by using that talent. Each day this week choose one talent to use and say this prayer: **Dear God, help me to use my talents, whether big or small, so that others know you. Amen.**

In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org