

MOUNT OLIVET
STEWARDSHIP
DEVOTIONAL

Grateful
TOGETHER



mtolivet.org



Grateful **TOGETHER**

Make no mistake. We are living in strange times. And not just strange, of course, but also difficult, enormously challenging, and often frightening. Yet these are also times—we believe and confess—when God is still active, still present, and still at work to care for us and for all of God’s beloved people. We are living at a time when Mount Oliver’s mission has never been more important: to share the good news of God’s love for all the world in and through Jesus Christ. We are entering our 101st year of ministry, service, and witness, and both the challenges in front us, as well as the needs around us, have never been greater.

As we enter into this stewardship season and make our pledges of financial commitment – pledges that will directly affect our ability to live into God’s call in the coming year – I invite you to read the testimony of the pastors and program directors of our church. We don’t often use the word “testimony” in Lutheran circles, but it fits perfectly here, as some of our key leaders share both their stories and their faith in order to remind you again of the power and presence of God. As you read, I also invite you to consider where God has been active in your life and how you might share some of your blessings to help others.

We are in this together. The ups and downs, the highs and lows, the challenges, needs, and possibilities. Because we are gathered together as fellow members of the Body of Christ and current stewards of Mount Oliver’s mission and ministry.

Blessings, during these challenging and important times, for courage, hope, health, and peace!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Lose". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of "Pastor" being a large, stylized capital 'P'.

DAVID J. LOSE, SENIOR PASTOR



DAY 1 | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

And the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:6b-7

Standing near the sanctuary doors on Sunday morning is the highlight of my week. It's like an infusion of sunshine! There is such joy on everyone's face! We've been lifted up and are being sent back out into the world refreshed and inspired by the Holy Spirit. It feels like God wrapped us all in a big hug and said: "You can do it! I love you! Now go out there and be My children!"

Two of my favorite people to see each Sunday were Clara and Peggy. I'd see them coming down the aisle and my heart would start to tickle! They were quintessential church ladies: little white sweaters pinned over their shoulders, purses over their forearms, gloves in their hands. They became besties after their husbands passed away and spent every Sunday morning together; first in worship, and then laughing and catching up over breakfast.

Each week they'd share a bit of hope and wisdom with me, and tell me how grateful they were to have a friend to help them through the challenges of aging. They were two of the most positive and optimistic women I've ever known. One week following an extremely difficult breast cancer surgery, Clara walked up to me with a huge smile on her face. "We have the best news!" she said, "We wanted to help a child go to camp this summer and knew we couldn't do it alone, so we pooled our money together and between the two of us, we were able to provide a full scholarship! Isn't that wonderful?"

The joy on her face was palpable! Clara has since gone to see Jesus, but her pure joy of giving that day will stay with me forever.

– PASTOR HAMMERSTEN

Dear Lord, help me to always remember the joy that comes from serving you, and by giving from the heart. Amen.



DAY 2 | TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others,
as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*

1 Peter 4:10 NIV

Everyone has gifts, skills, passions, or talents that can be shared with others. We are all grasping for ways we can make a difference, no matter how small, during this crazy time of pandemic.

I am blessed to have the opportunity to do something I love, and to have that “something” be to help others. What’s even better is to see how the gifts of others come together--my amazing kitchen team, the staff helping pass out meals on the community dinner grab-and-go line, and the guests that pick up extra dinners to bring to others who cannot get to the church.

Each of us has our piece, our part to play, and all these seemingly small ways add up: donating to the Community Dinners, giving our weekly offerings to support Mount Olivet, dropping off paper grocery bags for meal transport, or a whole host of other contributions. We all play a part in something larger, something that may seem insignificant alone, but in tandem with others’ gifts of time, money, and prayers, can have a much larger impact.

– SALLY MCNAMEE, DIRECTOR OF CULINARY
SERVICES

*Dear Lord, help us all to find our gifts, our contributing voice, to be a part in
Mount Olivet, the service church we love. Amen.*



DAY 3 | WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

John 10:10b

When I started crew (rowing) in college I remember one of the first things my coach said to the team: “We have no rules.” At this point I turned to a friend. We were both grinning and bobbed our heads in agreement as if to say “Coach is Cool!! We can handle this.” But then he went on to say, “But we do have one principle, and that principle is that the team comes first.” If you are late to any scheduled event, use alcohol or drugs which will inhibit your performance, show disrespect for me, your teammates, your professors, or your opponents, you are placing your own needs first and the whole team suffers. If you are five minutes late, if you come to practice worn out from a big night--your boat will feel it. Everything you do influences this crew. If you live by the principle that the team comes first, you will see that everything you do, matters.”

In between times of gasping for breath and hearing insults hurled at me by the coxswain, being out on the water became a sacred place for me. It became a place for me to see the abundance of God’s blessings: the beauty of creation, the promise of God’s presence in every moment of our lives, the invitation to share God’s love with others.

We as individual members of Mount Olivet are part of the same team. We are all gifted differently, but affect each other positively or negatively depending on how we uphold our common principle: God, the giver of all good gifts, comes first in our lives. We are not owners, but stewards of our time, talent, and money. Everything we do matters.

– PASTOR MACLEAN

Gracious God, the One who offers forgiveness, hope, and peace. Today I lift up your story of generosity and give you thanks. You abound in steadfast love. In fact, you so loved the world that you gave your only Son. I pray that I can respond with a generous heart. Amen.



DAY 4 | THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

Whenever you give, don't announce it with trumpets...

Matthew 6:2

Both my parents were educators for their entire careers and because of that I grew up often witnessing their act of giving. From quietly and privately delivering holiday food baskets to those in need in the community, to offering to pay for dental work that they knew would make a difference for a young adult whose family could not afford it, my parents always modeled the act of giving.

But it wasn't until their passing did I fully realize how frequently my parents gave to others and how often it was done quietly. Over the past few years, I've had numerous individuals and organizations reach out to tell me stories about situations where both my mom and dad gave financial gifts, emotional support, and encouragement to others. Because of their beliefs in the importance and power of education, I discovered that they helped many a person with tuition, or books, or even gas for transportation to classes. Near the end of her life, my mother gave a donation to a small church in her rural hometown. My dad teased her about it as she hadn't lived there for decades and he was fairly certain no one in the church knew who she was, or why she would give such a gift. But my mom wanted to support this small struggling church because she believed in the importance of a church to a small town. Until their passing, I didn't know about many of these stories, because they never really talked about it. They simply did it, knowing that they could and that they should.

I am confident that giving to others gave my parents great personal joy. The kind of joy one has when we know someone's life was made better by our generosity, however large or small. I am grateful for my parents' example of being quiet givers. I choose to follow in their footsteps not only to honor them but because I saw the joy it brought to them and to so many others.

– BEVERLY CLAFLIN, DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP &
MUSIC

*Dear Lord, thank you for all gifts given, and thank you for all kinds of givers who
brighten this world. Amen.*



DAY 5 | FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

Perhaps you've heard this phrase often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary."

One of my best friends at Gustavus modeled her Christian faith in everything she did, but perhaps the most vibrant was the way she lived her life with money. As a college student, and a fellow worker in the cafeteria's dish room, I learned that no matter what she earned, she always gave the first 10% to church. I was so impressed! A college student, completely content and aware that what she received wasn't first hers, but was God's.

I have carried her example with me from that day forward. When I graduated from college and entered the Lutheran Volunteer Corps, earning \$80 a month (or \$20 a week), I committed to giving \$2 a week to the local church I attended. Perhaps that \$8 a month didn't completely balance the church budget, but what it did for me was priceless. It grounded me and helped me remember that my existence is not mine alone.

Giving our first 10% to the church, along with Sabbath and prayer, have been among our family's most important spiritual practices. Though we haven't always had a lot of money, we've miraculously always had enough, and the 10% that has been emptied from our bank account has given us much more joy than the 90% we've had left.

God is faithful. May we continue to trust in God's goodness and grace.

– PASTOR FREEMAN

God of abundance, teach us to set our hearts on you. Grateful for your gifts, help us to share your grace with one another. Amen.



DAY 6 | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

*The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts;
so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.*

Psalm 28:7

Why do I give to Mount Olivet? Because through its ministries, programs, and the people who make up this beautiful church, I am over and over again reminded of God's love and God's promises to be with me always.

As we all know, last spring the world took a major left turn and my body and mind went with it. The once-distant and unknown "Coronavirus" was knocking on Minnesota's door. My body went into flight mode--or really hide mode. I was overwhelmed with fear, unable to breathe, terrified to watch the news, and could hardly sit still, much less sleep. I could only imagine the horrible what-ifs and did everything I could to mitigate those possible horrible happenings--from counting toilet paper rolls to considering stopping our monthly giving to save money (which is not a particularly great idea for the Director of Stewardship!).

Through good doctors, kind pharmacists, wise friends, and a loving husband, I made it through that dark episode. One of the biggest helps for me was that I forced myself to pause, to literally breathe (breathing in for 7, hold for 4, out for 8 works wonders!) while talking to God on my never-used-as-much porch. Through the chirping birds, budding trees, and warm breeze of spring, I felt the love of God envelop me and I was calmed.

So I continue to give because I am so grateful for a life overflowing with God's promises, for a church that is filled with generous people, and for all the Mount Olivet ministries that support people from cradle to grave (including me!). The lessons I've learned through Mount Olivet about God's love help me beyond measure, and it is my honor to make sure those lessons continue for generations to come.

— KATIE STEVENSON, DIRECTOR OF
STEWARDSHIP AND COORDINATOR OF ADULT FAITH
FORMATION

*Dear Lord, thank you this day. May we fill it with joy and love, and share what we
can whenever we can. Amen.*



DAY 7 | TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:44-47

“My giving is private.”

In my first parish, the church had the practice of what they called “faith-based giving.” For that church, it meant members were asked to make pledges toward the ministry, but the pledges were never opened or viewed by anyone else, not even the church accountant. Hence, the church went about the ministry trusting it would be supported. For that congregation it worked wonderfully!

Sometimes, though, I would hear members describe, “My giving is private.” I knew what they meant. They valued the practice of not having any pressure of image or knowledge of their giving being shared with others, and how it remained a personal decision in their faith life. Yet, I found the description not entirely accurate.

While our giving is personal and it is private in the sense not many people know the inner workings of our finances, I note how it is always public. This is to say, our generosity has extremely public effect and implication. It makes huge public impact not only in what our giving goes to support, but also in how it shapes us as public individuals.

One of the reasons I’m joyful to give to a congregation is thinking about all the public effects my dollars have in the faith and lives of such a huge swath of people. From kids to elders, people in joys and struggles, and people I will likely never meet, I take joy in generosity’s public effect, and it’s fun to imagine all the ways God puts it to use.

– PASTOR RUUD

God in Christ, give us generous hearts to make your love public. Amen.



DAY 8 | WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21

What inspires each of us to give? And why do we give? We all come from different circumstances and so giving is a very personal decision. I have had the privilege of working at church for many years and have seen the generosity of our members giving in action. As a staff member, part of my responsibility includes managing the church buildings. I am keenly aware of the expense to keep up and improve our spaces and facilities. And even more mindful of the gift of your hard earned money that allows us to care and maintain the church buildings at Mount Olivet.

2020 is the Centennial year for Mount Olivet. Staff members had thoughtfully planned how we would celebrate this milestone. One of the initiatives was the focus of “Caring for Sacred Spaces.” And so while we have been separated from church since March, we have worked on the sanctuary and spaces at both campuses. In Minneapolis we have restored the stain glass windows, repaired leaks and plaster, restored the wood around the pulpit, lectern and communion rails, and upgraded the sound and lighting. At West, which is mostly new, we have also repaired some leaks, painted in the narthex and Gronseth Hall, and continued to care for this beautiful new space.

But none of this would be possible without your giving through stewardship, estate gifts, or memorial donations. We are grateful. As staff we are stewards of your generosity whether planning programming or maintaining buildings and we take that responsibility very seriously. We have learned over the past 5+ months that our faith and ministry reaches far beyond the walls of our buildings. I am grateful for your trust and generosity with your giving as we carefully plan for the next time we are together in-person and the next 100 years of ministry at Mount Olivet.

– NANCY NASH, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Gracious God, we are grateful that you continue to guide us and lead us to do your work in our homes and in our communities. Inspire us to give as we trust in the plan you have for each of us and for Mount Olivet.



DAY 9 | THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

Be still, and know that I am God!

Psalm 46:10a

Be still. This stillness is something I have struggled with through the pandemic, the feeling of treading water. Aware of the uncertainty or even safety of our future, simply not having answers and feeling incapable of planning ahead. This is not my normal, I am a planner, and I have a toddler that never stops moving! Stillness is not a part of my routine. But then it was forced upon me!

When faced with something uncomfortable I reach for the familiar, simple little things like the comforting embrace of my family, a favorite movie, or even meal that centers me. Mount Olivet centers me. The worship service with songs I can sing, and sermons I can carry throughout the week. The events that mark my calendar each year, milestones of family moments, holiday traditions, and surprises along the way. Mount Olivet is my familiar.

Through this stillness and unrest I have reached for Mount Olivet and it has delivered. Some things may look different but Mount Olivet is still our church. It is providing those things that I need to hold onto. Worship services, Pastoral Care, educational opportunities, ways to safely gather, serving our community and more! And I know Mount Olivet will not sit still, but continue to walk with us, through the stillness.

These things are important to me especially as I adjust to my “new normal.” I am incredibly grateful to Mount Olivet for being an anchor. I need my church, I love my church, and I want my daughter to experience everything Mount Olivet has to offer. So annual giving is simple for me, it is important. Contributing allows me to give back to a place that has given so much to me and so many others.

– JACKIE ENESTVEDT, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
AND COMMUNICATIONS

Dear God, thank you for Mount Olivet, thank you for the refuge and strength the church can provide in times of uncertainty. Please help us understand your presence in the stillness allowing us to hold on to what matters most. Amen.



DAY 10 | FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

*I ask the Lord for work to do, some service just for Thee,
Some heart to touch, some soul to win, some loved one to set free.*

*It need not be so very great, it should not bring me fame,
It may be just a little word, to glorify Thy name.*

A Prayer for Service from the Cathedral of the Pines Hymnal

This COP hymn has been a favorite for many people. What hits me most are the humble words of this song: that being in joyful service to others in small ways and without much fanfare is an important way to give.

My “Grandpa Bud” loved to do woodwork. Spending time with him as he worked his craft was so special, and was just one of the many ways he showed my family and me love as I was growing up.

After he had passed away, I learned that another way he showed love was by humbly giving to others. In fact, I learned that all the money he made in retirement went to fund college for my brother and me. He made money by mowing at South Haven in Edina, collecting cans to return to recycling centers, running cars to auctions to be sold. My grandpa opened a savings account for my brother and me and each week would deposit what he made. It was not that much money, but that is not the important part to me. What is important is the humble lesson he taught me and so many others: no one knew he was doing it, and he did it because he loved my brother and me. What a gift in so many ways.

As Youth Director, I know our church is blessed with so many kind and thoughtful young people who give so much by serving others. Please consider a 2021 pledge to help fund the many great activities for our youth. Happy Stewardship to all!

– GEOFF ARENSON, DIRECTOR OF YOUTH
MINISTRIES

*Dear Lord, thank you for “Grandpa Bud” and all other givers who quietly exemplify
what it means to share your blessings. Amen.*



DAY 11 | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2020

In all that we do, to God be the glory.

1 Corinthians 10:31

In junior high at a neighborhood bible study I asked the leader how much I should give financially to the church. He suggested a good starting point would be giving a tenth of my income. I said no way... couldn't do it... wouldn't do it. He countered and said it was biblically based and that we give God glory because all that we have comes from God. Given my reluctance, he suggested starting somewhere and working my way up to it. He was a wise man.

We are not what we have, we are who has us. It's about God (and always has been): God and God's love for us. God has given us all sorts of gift, talents, and skills. We are all given the gift of grace to share with others. How we go about sharing our gifts, how we carry the message of God's grace is good stewardship.

As we do a personal inventory of our gifts, we need to pray for discernment on how we are using our gifts to give God the glory. Are we, by chance, withholding something that could be a blessing to others in the body of Christ? Are we using our gifts in ways that please and honor the Lord?

– PASTOR KALLAND

Dear God, Please help us remember to live every day with this in the forefront of our minds: "In all that we do, to God be the glory."



DAY 12 | TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

Luke 6:38

The importance of giving was instilled in me when I was a young girl. Growing up as a child at Mount Olivet, I always felt as though I had an infinite number of blessings. Attending and then having the privilege of working and volunteering at Cathedral of the Pines with my closest friends in the summer, learning about God and his grace every Sunday morning, celebrating triumphs as a community, and experiencing overwhelming support in times of loss. As a child, I did not understand the connection between these gifts and the offerings my parents made to the church. I did not realize the impact these offerings had on my experience in the church.

As an adult, I see the direct correlation between the unlimited blessings we reap, and the offerings made by each of us as members at Mount Olivet. By supporting the church, each one of us is also supported. Every gift to Mount Olivet makes it possible for our members to form lasting relationships, get support in times of crisis and immense joy, learn about God's love, educate members of all ages, make music, help those in need, and continue to grow our remarkable community. Giving to Mount Olivet results in a truly immeasurable return on investment. The gifts that we receive from Mount Olivet are a direct result from the offerings and donations made by each of us no matter the size.

— ANDREA BROWN, DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL
CARE

Dear Lord, thank you for each new day and the multitude of blessings that continually surround us and provide us with opportunities to share. I give thanks for family and friends who make life more meaningful. Amen.



DAY 13 | WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

I am reminded of an essay by writer Kathleen Dean Moore titled *What it Means to Love a Place** as I think about stewardship. Mount Olivet represents many dear people and wonderful places in my life and perhaps it does for you as well.

Moore writes:

“To love – a person and a place – means at least this:

One: To want to be near it, physically.

Two: To want to know everything about it – its story, its moods, what it looks like by moonlight.

Three: To rejoice in the fact of it.

Four: To fear its loss, and grieve for its injuries.

Five: To protect it – fiercely, mindlessly, futilely, and maybe tragically, but to be helpless to do otherwise.

Six: To be transformed in its presence – lifted, lighter on your feet, transparent, open to everything beautiful and new.

Seven: To want to be joined with it, taken in by it, lost in it.

Eight: To want the best for it.

Nine: Desperately.

As the list concludes, she continues, “Loving isn’t just a state of being, it’s a way of acting in the world. Love isn’t a sort of bliss, it’s a kind of work... To love a place is to care for it, to keep it healthy, to attend to its needs. Obligation grows from love. It is the natural shape of caring... Number Ten: To love a person or a place is to take responsibility for its well-being.”

I give out of love for our church – for the many areas of ministry, for the people of Mount Olivet, for the inspiration I receive, for the work I do, and for the sense of community it provides me and others. By pledging, I feel I am contributing to the well-being of Mount Olivet.

– KATY MICHALETZ, DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN &
FAMILY MINISTRY

Dear God, we are thankful and grateful for the people and places of Mount Olivet that enrich our faith and our lives. Amen.



DAY 14 | THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2020

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

Today I share with you one of my all-time favorite devotions! I love this one so much because you can do it on your own, in a group, or as a family. To start, everyone should get comfortable. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Take another deep breath. And another. After everyone is settled, someone will read slowly and quietly:

Be still and know that I am God. (pause)

Be still and know that I am (pause)

Be still and know (pause)

Be still (pause)

Be (pause)

You may want to read through this twice. After a few moments of quiet, ask the people in the group what word or phrase stood out to them. I love this passage. It brings me such peace and comfort. What I hear is:

Be still and know that I am God: God is huge. He created everything.

Be still and know that I am: God wants us to be in relationship with him, that he is real.

Be still and know: God wants us to trust and to believe it.

Be still: God wants us to get to know him. Spend time with him.

Be: God wants us to rest in his presence. To be all that he created each of us to be.

These are interesting times we are living in. Nothing seems certain. But God is. Our faith is. I believe that! God is with us during these hard times. We must remember to spend time with God. To connect. To Pray. While I miss going to church, seeing familiar faces, listening to the choirs, and worshipping together as a congregation, I know that we are still connected through the spirit of Mount Olivet and God's love. We are not alone. God is with us. This passage helps to remind me of just that.

– KRISTI YOUNGDAHL, DIRECTOR OF
CATHEDRAL OF THE PINES

Thank you Lord for reminding me to slow down. To be still. Thank you Lord for reminding me that you are alive and well and that we can trust you, completely.

Amen.



DAY 15 | FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2020

*Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is the one
who trusts in the Lord. Proverbs 16:20*

Money is fundamentally not a freeing thing. The more we acquire, the more we feel we need, and the more we fear losing what we have. Putting our trust in money is like pouring that trust into a bottomless well. Rather than giving life, then, money can take our life. It can ensnare us, possess us. This is the opposite of a blessing. A curse?

Trust in the Lord, by contrast, sets us free. Trust in the Lord gives us life. When we trust in the grace and mercy and love of the Lord, we find those things to be infinite. There is no anxious need to earn more of it. The Lord provides abundantly.

Now of course money is a useful thing in our world, and necessary for survival for most people, but it is so difficult for us to accept that enough is enough. When Mollie and I got married, Pastor John Hogenson (yes, that John Hogenson) sat with us in his office at St. Andrew's in Mahtomedi. He told us that if we couldn't live on 90% of our income, we couldn't live on 100%. His point was that there would never be enough money in our bank accounts if we couldn't be satisfied in our hearts. "Enough" always slips out of reach and morphs into "just a little more" unless our trust and identities are rooted in something (or someone) else.

So putting our faith in the Lord, and receiving all the blessings that flow from that relationship, we are set free. And in that freedom, money becomes a lighter thing. We can give it away cheerfully, without fear or anxiety, for we know and trust that we not only have enough, but in the Lord we are enough.

– PASTOR DIXON

*O God, grant me faith in your son, Jesus Christ, and set me free from the faith I
have misplaced so often. Remind me to trust in your blessings, which are indeed
enough. Amen.*



pg. 16: Adapted from Kathleen Dean Moore, *The Pine Island Paradox* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2004), 34-36. Copyright © 2004, Kathleen Dean Moore



MOUNT OLIVET LUTHERAN CHURCH

MINNEAPOLIS CAMPUS, 5025 KNOX AVE S, MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55419, 612.926.7651

WEST CAMPUS, 7150 ROLLING ACRES RD, VICTORIA, MN 55386, 952.767.1500

mtolivet.org