

DECEMBER 2023

BELIEVING, BELONGING, BECOMING

# MOUNT OLIVET MESSENGER



*mtolivet.org*



**M MPLS CAMPUS**

5025 Knox Ave S  
Minneapolis, MN 55419  
612.926.7651

**W WEST CAMPUS**

7150 Rolling Acres Rd  
Victoria, MN 55386  
952.767.1500

## SUNDAYS

**DIAL-IN VIA PHONE**  
**833.775.1238**

11am

**WATCH THE MPLS  
SUNDAY WORSHIP  
SERVICES AT  
MTOLIVET.ORG**

9, 10, 11am

**HOLY COMMUNION**

8:30 & 11:45am

**NURSERY**

9, 10, 11am

## DECEMBER 3

**COMING HOME FOR  
CHRISTMAS  
ARE WE THERE YET?**

*Luke 1:18-25*

**M** 9, 10, 11am

**SERMON** Pastor Lose

**MUSIC** Matthew  
Valverde, tenor &  
Cathedral & Senior

**W** Choirs

9, 10, 11am

**SERMON** Pastor Dixon

**MUSIC** Cathedral & Senior  
Choirs

## DECEMBER 10

**COMING HOME FOR  
CHRISTMAS  
AN UNEXPECTED TURN**

*Luke 1:26-38*

**M** 9, 10, 11am

**SERMON** Pastor Ruud

**MUSIC** Cherub, Alleluia,  
Hosanna, Chapel  
Choirs, & 20s & 30s  
Pop-up Choir

**W** 9, 10, 11am

**SERMON** Pastor Lose

**MUSIC** Cherub, Alleluia,  
Hosanna, Chapel, &  
Senior Choirs

## DECEMBER 17

**COMING HOME FOR  
CHRISTMAS  
SURROUNDED BY YOUR  
PEOPLE**

**CHRISTMAS COMMUNION**

*Luke 1:39-45*

**M** 9, 10, 11am

**SERMON** Pastor Cieslik

**MUSIC** Cathedral & Senior  
Choirs & Vocal trio  
with harp & flute

**W** 9, 10, 11am

**SERMON** Pastor Ruud

**MUSIC** Cathedral & Senior  
Choirs

## DECEMBER 24

**CHRISTMAS EVE  
MORNING  
THE GIFT IS GIVEN**

*Luke 2:1-20*

**M** 10am ONLY

**SERMON** Pastor Hammersten

**MUSIC** Brian Haase, bass

**W** 10am ONLY

**SERMON** Pastor Freeman

**MUSIC** Elena Stabile, soprano  
*No Holy Communion service  
this morning.*

**CHRISTMAS EVE**  
*Luke 2:1-20*

**M** 2-10pm

**SERMON** Pastor Lose

**W** 2-6pm

**SERMON** Pastor Dixon

*Livestream the Mpls Campus  
services at mtolivet.org on the  
hour from 2-10pm.*

*Nursery offered at 2, 3, & 4pm  
at both campuses.*

## DECEMBER 25

**CHRISTMAS DAY  
HOLY COMMUNION  
SERVICE**

*John 1:1-18*

**M** 10am ONLY

**SERMON** Pastor Kalland

## DECEMBER 31

**FIRST SUNDAY OF  
CHRISTMAS**

*Luke 2:41-52*

**M** 9, 10, 11am

**SERMON** Pastor Ruud

**MUSIC** Amanda Jenkins,  
soprano

**W** 9, 10, 11am

**SERMON** Pastor Lose

**MUSIC** Justin Staebell,  
baritone

**NEW YEAR'S EVE**

**M** 7pm

**SERMON** Pastor Kalland

**MUSIC** Susan Steincross,  
piano

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

**HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE**

**M** 12noon

# Coming Home for Christmas

Our Advent theme this year, *Coming Home for Christmas*, evokes a mixture of emotions for me. On the one hand, I have so many treasured memories of Christmas in my home of origin. Five kids meant a lot of anticipation throughout Advent and lots of presents to unwrap on Christmas morning. The day was filled with fun, laughter, and good food. When I became a parent, the delight of Christmas day only increased, seeing the joy and wonder in our two kids. At the same time, I've had close friends whose Christmas memories aren't nearly as cheerful. Tension-filled dinner tables or a keen awareness of who was missing around the tree made this morning less merry and bright.

I suspect that tension is always a part of Christmas. Consider the ambivalence of two of the most popular Christmas songs of all time: *I'll be Home for Christmas* and *White Christmas*, both made popular in the early 1940s by Bing Crosby. The former is written as a letter from a soldier stationed overseas during WWII, telling his family that he'll be home to see them at Christmas and hopes there will be "snow, mistletoe, and presents by the tree." It's wistful, yes, but also hopeful, at least until the last line, when you realize that duty will prevent a Christmas homecoming: "I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams." The latter song, later the title track of a beloved holiday musical, also has a soulful, even mournful character as it longs for the Christmases of yesteryear. Released just a few weeks after Pearl Harbor, it was an instant sensation. But even though it was his biggest hit, Bing Crosby was reluctant to sing it on his USO tours because, as he said in an interview, "It invariably caused such a nostalgic yearning among the soldiers that it made them sad."

As I prepare for this year's Advent and Christmas, it occurs to me this ambivalence is not only natural, but perhaps right. Each and every Christmas has highs and lows for most of us, including a mixture of both joy and sorrow. Similarly, while I'm confident that we'll again have another wonderful, joy-filled Christmas celebration at Mount Olivet this year, I'm also mindful that that celebration will take place amid the ongoing war in Ukraine and the renewed violence and terror in the Middle East.

A closer look at the stories from St. Luke's Gospel that we'll read across Advent and culminating on Christmas Eve reveals the Bible is no stranger to such ambivalence. These stories are filled with the disbelief of an old man, the fear and wonder of a young woman, and take place amid the oppression occasioned by the occupation of Israel by Rome. Mary and Joseph are forced to journey far from their home at the whim of one tyrant and will soon be forced to flee their country threatened by the violence of another.

All of which reminds me that it was for just this reason that God meets us in the form of the baby Jesus, the one called Emmanuel, "God with us." Because life is at times merry and bright, and at others dark and fearful. Because each of our lives are touched by joy and sorrow, anticipation and disappointment. More than anything else, that young child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a feeding trough because there was no room in the inn, reminds us that God is committed to being with us and for us, always!

We'll prepare for this in-breaking of God's love and celebration of God's commitment to us in many ways in the coming month – through our annual Christmas Tree Lighting and Messiah Sing-A-Long on December 3, our marvelous Christmas Concert on December 10, the meaningful Services of Remembrance on December 5 (West) and December 12 (Mpls), and of course with worship services on the morning of Sunday, December 24 (one service at 10am) and throughout the afternoon and evening (2-10pm, Mpls & 2-6pm, West). Each of these celebrations – and the many you'll share with your family and friends – is an invitation to bring your whole self to Christmas, knowing that God accepts you as you are. Each is a call not to pretend that all is fine when it's not, or muster up Christmas cheer when you're sad, but rather to know that God meets you where you are – in joy, grief, and everything in between. This is the cry of the angels to those who witnessed the first Christmas, and it is the promise of the angels to those who celebrate it still: "Glory to God in the highest who comes now to bring peace and hope to all those God favors!" Including you!

Blessed Advent and Christmas!



Pastor Lose

DAVID J. LOSE, SENIOR PASTOR



# Coming Home for Christmas

Mount Olivet cannot wait to share this season with you! We hope that you will come to worship and share in our traditions that have been built for over 100 years. This year's theme of "Coming Home for Christmas" reminds us how many Christmases we have spent together.



## LIVESTREAM AT MTOLIVET.ORG

In case you cannot make it to worship this Advent and Christmas season, many of our Mpls Campus worship services will be livestreamed at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org).

### THIS MONTH:

**SUNDAYS IN ADVENT:** 12/3, 12/10, 12/17 at 9, 10, & 11am

**CHRISTMAS EVE:** 12/24, at 10am, and on the hour from 2-10pm

**CHRISTMAS DAY:** 12/25 at 10am

**SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE:** 12/12 at 6:30pm

**CHRISTMAS CONCERT:** 12/10, 3 & 5pm

**NEW YEAR'S EVE:** 12/31, 9, 10, & 11am, and a special 7pm service

## PEACE

This is the time of year when we might long very much for peace, but also find ourselves getting pulled in multiple directions that can result in anything but calm and tranquility. There can be so many fun activities and meaningful traditions vying for our precious and limited resources of time and energy. I recently had a weekend when I just tried to do too much. This awareness came to me when I found myself spinning and fuming when the schedule went "off the rails" by 30 minutes. I was blaming the very ones with whom I was trying to make all these precious memories! I am grateful for the ability to pause and reflect on this moment, just one of many times when I fell into the trap that busier is better. This Advent and Christmas, I invite you (and myself) to enter into the peace that passes understanding. Sometimes our own best understanding might lead us to think, "Sure, I can stay up late again wrapping presents or watching that Christmas movie and be just fine in the morning." In those moments, perhaps pause and ask God to enter in. Jesus is present in all the activities of our lives, and I hope Jesus reigns in those quiet and calm margins of our days and nights this season.

**SARA WATNE**, *Counseling Service*

*For more mental health resources as well as counseling services contact [hello@mtolivetcounseling.org](mailto:hello@mtolivetcounseling.org).*



## LIFE & GROWTH

### OCT 13 - NOV 14

#### BAPTISMS

**Aiden Lee Adkisson**

*son of Kaylee and Travon*

**Greta May Bryant**

*daughter of Kayla and Dylan*

**Ivie June Heffebower**

*daughter of Jena and Scott*

**Griffin James Herd**

*son of Anna and Jacob*

**Frances Lynne Herrlin**

*daughter of Kara and Mike*

**Lillie LeeAnn Hinks**

*daughter of Nicole and John*

**Violet Louise Hinks**

*daughter of Nicole and John*

**Owen Douglas Larson**

*son of Emily and Adam*

**Claire Violet Lilley**

*daughter of Elizabeth and Justin*

**Callan Henry Lindner**

*son of Jenni and Scott*

**Amara Mae McMoore**

*daughter of Amanda and Terrell*

**Ava Marie McMoore**

*daughter of Amanda and Terrell*

**Madeline Anne Rohman**

*daughter of Victoria and Eric*

**Penny James Rykal**

*daughter of Kelli and Jordan*

**Jack Norman Severson**

*son of Mary and Matthew*

**Elise Louise Thompson**

*daughter of Ellen and Zach*

#### WEDDINGS

**Leah Erickson & Brandon**

*Wilhelmy, October 21*

**Rachel Boehmke & Brody**

*Swanson, November 10*

#### DEATHS

**Bette A. Armstrong**

*1926 – 2023*

**Gary E. Hill**

*1935 – 2023*

**Alice M. Johnson**

*1926 – 2023*

**Dorothy Lasher**

*1927 – 2023*

**James M. Lerberg**

*1949 – 2023*

**Bernice C. Mattke**

*1925 – 2023*

**Patricia A. Mattson**

*1943 – 2023*

## DEVOTION

*“Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.” -Luke 1:38*

December. I don’t know of another month that carries with it so many expectations. Cookies to bake, cards to mail, presents to wrap, recitals and concerts and gatherings to host and to attend. Throw in the complications that being in relationship with other human beings brings, and well, it’s a lot. Hopes and dreams, loneliness and grief, joy and sorrow.

But at its core, December means Christmas. The story of a young unmarried girl named Mary, who was told by an angel that she would bear a son, the Son of God no less, and that she was to name him Jesus. And Mary, in astounding faith, believed the angel’s words. That is a miracle in itself. “Here I am,” she said. “Servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.”

The Christmas story is a story of angels and a manger, shepherds and wise men and a bright star. Most of all, it is a story of God’s love – of a God that loves us so very much that God sent his son, in the form of a human baby. A God that loves us so much that He wanted to know exactly what it was like to be human. To feel like we feel. To think like we think. To be worried and tempted and hungry and tired. To love and to doubt. For all our imperfections, God knows us and loves us.

*Dear and gracious God, be with us this month as we scurry to and fro, trying so hard to create memories and traditions for our families. It’s an impossible task, really. Help us to remember, in the midst of it all, that you love us. Exactly as we are. Remind us to be gentle with ourselves and others. Help us to begin each day of planning echoing the faith of Mary: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.” Amen.*

— PASTOR HAMMERSTEN



JOIN US AT THE 93RD MOUNT OLIVET

# Lutefisk Dinner!

All-You-Can-Eat Buffet



\$25 Adults  
\$5 Kids  
Under 12



Tickets at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org)  
or via above QR Code

Fri, Dec 1, 2023, 3-7pm, Mpls Campus

## Serve and Share Christmas Cheer



### CHRISTMAS FOR ALL STORE

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 11AM-3PM, WEST CAMPUS**

We need your help! Please consider volunteering for our Christmas for All event, which benefits Mount Olivet ministry partners Love INC, Redeemer Lutheran Church, and Southside Family Nurturing Center. Please visit [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org) or contact Laurie Hancer at [lhancer@mtolivet.org](mailto:lhancer@mtolivet.org) or 612.767.2267 to register to help! We thank you in advance for your generosity!



### ADVENT CALENDAR & DEVOTIONAL

We are thrilled to offer our Advent Calendar online at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org) again! The calendar begins on Friday, December 1, through Sunday, December 24. This year's Advent Devotional is written by Pastor Lose, Pastor Ruud, Pastor Cieslik, and Rev. Dr. Theresa Latini, and can be picked up at church. You may also sign up to receive the daily devotional via email at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org).



### MOCW COAT & MITTEN DRIVE

**THROUGH 12/18**

Donate new non-handmade mittens, hats, scarves, warm boots, and coats of all sizes for those who are experiencing homelessness. Donations can be dropped off at either campus. If you have any questions, please contact Laurie Hancer at 612.767.2267 or [lhancer@mtolivet.org](mailto:lhancer@mtolivet.org). MOCW thanks you for your heartfelt donations!



### POINSETTIA CHANCEL GARDEN

**ORDER THROUGH SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3**

During this special time of year, please consider honoring or remembering a loved one by purchasing a poinsettia to adorn our sanctuaries from December 17 to Christmas Day. The listing of names will be in the Sunday, December 17, bulletin. The minimum donation is \$35 per poinsettia. To place your order, visit [mtolivet.org/poinsettia](http://mtolivet.org/poinsettia) or contact Jody Barbee at 952.767.1501 or [jbarbee@mtolivet.org](mailto:jbarbee@mtolivet.org).

# Join us at our Holiday Traditions!

## MESSIAH SING-A-LONG

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3,  
3:15PM REHEARSAL,  
4PM PERFORMANCE,  
MPLS CAMPUS**

This fun and participatory event has become a special December tradition for all who love to sing the wonderful choruses from Handel's

*Messiah* with friends old and

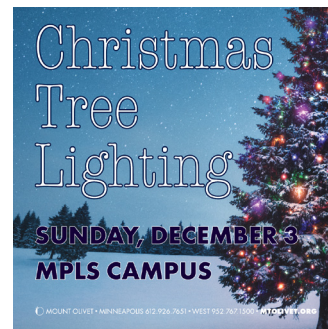
new! Performing the oratorio in December is a tradition that began in the United States over 200 years ago. On Christmas day in 1818, the Handel and Haydn Society formed in Boston gave the American premiere of Handel's *Messiah* in full, and a new holiday musical tradition was born! This year the Mount Olivet Senior Choirs will join in the fun as well as new soloists and instrumentalists!



## CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3,  
3-5PM GATHERING, 5PM  
TREE LIGHTING, MPLS  
CAMPUS ON JAMES AVE**

Join us as we light the Mount Olivet Christmas Tree on 50th and James Ave in Mpls! We will gather around our tree, share a song, and light up our small corner of south Minneapolis with grateful anticipation of the Savior and light of the world. There will be music, snacks, and even Santa and reindeer will be available for pictures!



## Christmas Offering Match

Thanks to the generosity of several Mount Olivet households, we are able to match all Christmas gifts again this year! That means each dollar you give to Mount Olivet beyond your pledge as a Christmas gift will be matched dollar for dollar.

Your gifts will go to Mount Olivet's General Fund that supports all our ministries, including the weekly Community Meals, other Community Outreach partners, Cathedral of the Pines, and the Mount Olivet Conference & Retreat Center. Thank you for your support!

### WAYS TO GIVE

**Christmas Offering Envelope:** Mailed to you in December

**Online:** [onrealm.org/mtolivet/give/Christmas](https://onrealm.org/mtolivet/give/Christmas) or use the QR Code to the right

**Contact Us:** Tricia Lerohl-Morgan in our finance office at [tricial@mtolivet.org](mailto:tricial@mtolivet.org) or 612.767.2255.

### CHRISTMAS GIFTS



### FULFILL YOUR 2023 PLEDGE



## Fulfill Your 2023 Pledge

If you have not yet completed your 2023 pledge to Mount Olivet, please do so before year-end. One convenient way to make a payment is via the QR code to the right. However you fulfill your pledge – thank you! Questions? Tricia Lerohl-Morgan, Coordinator of Financial Records, at [tricial@mtolivet.org](mailto:tricial@mtolivet.org) or 612.767.2255.





## WORSHIP WITH US!

### WINTER COMMUNION SERVICE AND LUNCHEON

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2,  
11AM-1PM, MPLS  
CAMPUS**

A worship service with Christmas readings, carols, and Holy Communion, followed by a festive lunch in Fellowship Hall, designed for members who are often unable to come to church. Please join us for this special worship service, food, and fellowship. We encourage families to attend with their loved ones; however, transportation can be arranged. To register for this event or be a volunteer driver, please contact Nancy Nelson at 612.767.2288 or [nnelson@mtolivet.org](mailto:nnelson@mtolivet.org).

### SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5,  
6:30PM, WEST CAMPUS  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12,  
6:30PM, MPLS CAMPUS  
& LIVESTREAMED AT  
[MTOLIVET.ORG](http://MTOLIVET.ORG)**

This service features a time of healing and reflection with peaceful harp music, a vocal soloist, and a time to light a candle in memory of your loved one. If you would like the first and last name of your loved one read during the service, please visit [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org) to register or contact Julie Goodman at [julieg@mtolivet.org](mailto:julieg@mtolivet.org) or 612.767.2208.

### POP-UP CHOIR FOR 20s & 30s

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10,  
10AM REHEARSAL,  
11AM SING IN WORSHIP  
FOLLOWING SERVICE  
WOODEN HILL BREWERY**

This choir was such a hit last year that we can't wait to gather together and sing again! If you have been thinking about finding a way to do some singing this Christmas and get reacquainted with friends, this is the perfect time to do so. Choose what works for you. Meet for rehearsal on Sunday, December 10 at 10am or come to rehearse on Wednesday, December 6 at 8:30pm in order to get a head start and have an excuse to meet up! Whatever your choice, mark your calendars and plan to join in for this fun morning of singing with friends!

### CHRISTMAS CONCERT: *O HOLY NIGHT*

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10,  
3 & 5PM, MPLS CAMPUS  
& LIVESTREAMED AT  
[MTOLIVET.ORG](http://MTOLIVET.ORG)**

Featuring over 350 singers and instrumentalists, this annual concert is the perfect place to pause and take in the beauty of the sights and sounds of the Christmas season. This year, the concert will include combined choirs singing *O Holy Night* with baritone soloist, Justin Staebell, and will conclude with the traditional singing of the anthem, *Peace, Peace* by candlelight. Offered at two different times in order to allow more people to attend, the free concert is presented as a gift for the congregation and community by the Mount Olivet Music Department.





# CHRISTMAS EVE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

## **10AM ONLY CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING, MPLS & WEST CAMPUSES**

Come and enjoy a morning Christmas Eve service with the lighting of the Christ Candle, the singing of Christmas Hymns, and the scripture readings of the birth of Christ.

### **2-9PM & 10PM CANDLELIGHT SERVICE, MPLS CAMPUS**

*1:30pm: Instrumental Prelude*

*2pm: Cherub and Cathedral Choirs and Orchestra*

*3pm: Alleluia and Cathedral Choirs and Orchestra*

*4pm: Hosanna, Chapel, and Cathedral Choirs and Orchestra*

*5 & 6pm: Piano Solo and Vocal Duet with Orchestra*

*7, 8, & 9pm: Senior Choir and Orchestra*

*10pm: Candlelight service with Senior Choir and Orchestra*

### **2-5PM & 6PM CANDLELIGHT SERVICE, WEST CAMPUS**

*2pm: Cherub and Cathedral Choirs, String Quartet, and Harp*

*3pm: Alleluia and Cathedral Choirs, String Quartet, and Harp*

*4pm: Hosanna, Chapel, and Senior Choirs, String Quartet, and Harp*

*5pm: Senior Choir, String Quartet, and Harp*

*6pm: Candlelight service with Senior Choir, String Quartet, and Harp*

Join in the celebration of the birth of Jesus by worshiping in-person at either campus or online (2-10pm, Mpls Campus services). These joyous services will include an inspirational sermon and the reading of the beloved Christmas scripture interspersed with numerous congregational Christmas carols. Choirs of all ages, special duets, and solos, all accompanied by orchestra, will provide beautiful music to enhance the importance of this meaningful evening. The final candlelight service of the evening ends with the singing of *Silent Night* as the congregation lights individual candles and shares the light of Christ with each other.

## **CHRISTMAS DAY**

### **MONDAY, DECEMBER 25**

#### **10AM, MPLS CAMPUS**

Join us on Christmas morning for a peaceful and meaningful Christmas Day worship service. The service will include the singing of cherished Christmas hymns, a sermon from Pastor Kalland, and the serving and receiving of Holy Communion. In addition, beautiful harp solos will fill the sanctuary with lovely music celebrating Christ's birth.

## **NEW YEAR'S EVE**

### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31**

#### **7PM WORSHIP SERVICE, MPLS CAMPUS**

Come and participate in a long standing and meaningful worship service of Holy Communion. Be strengthened by the words of encouragement and hope, as well as the musical offerings. Join in the singing of familiar and comforting hymns with the entire community. A special invitation is extended to those working programs of recovery. After the service, come to the Fellowship Hall for coffee, cookies, and friendship.

# Coming Home for Christmas

*Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" –Luke 2:8-14*

Christmas time at Mount Olivet is special to everyone who calls this their faith community and second home. It is a time that brings us all together to help us realize the love we have for one another. As Mount Olivet youth prepare for this joyous season, we on the youth staff wanted to share a few of the reasons this place and this holiday are so special to our youth community. We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas!

Our Chancel and Cathedral Choir love singing and being a part of the annual Christmas Concert. Everyone dresses up and is excited to share the anthems they have been working on in choir. A favorite of our youth, and I know many in our congregation, is the tradition of singing the final anthem, *Peace, Peace* in candlelight together with the congregation.

Our Middle School service project, Adopt-a-Grandparent, spends one program night a year singing Christmas Carols with the residents at the Mount Olivet Home. We make our way through the different floors and always end each caroling session by reading the story of Jesus's birth. Seeing our Mount Olivet residents singing loud or just humming along makes this such a special moment.

Whether it be Confirmation small groups or a special Christmas movie Hi-League, we love spending time together and the chance to just slow down a little more and enjoy the special conversation and fellowship that happens as we joyously anticipate the Christmas holiday!

Our High School service projects, Circle of Friends and MO United, celebrate with Christmas present shopping and a Christmas Party. There are always some fun Christmas memories shared and Christmas cookies eaten!

And of course, the most special part of Christmas for us is the special time we are together on Christmas Eve. The sharing of Jesus's birth, singing of Christmas Carols, hearing a Christmas sermon, and above all, being together with each other. We cannot wait to be together this holiday season! Remember that, *"Christmas is the time to come together. A time to put all differences aside. And I reach out my hand to the family of Man to share the joy I feel at Christmas time."* –The Christmas Wish, John Denver and The Muppets

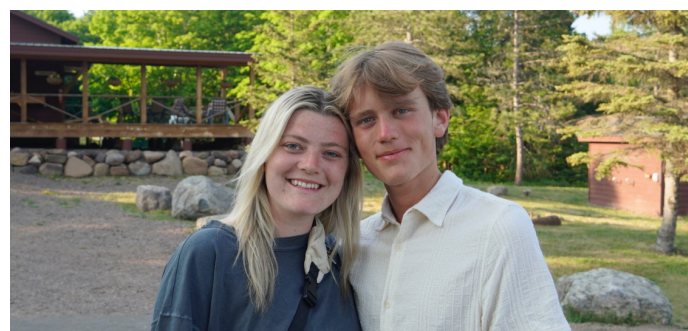
**GEOFF ARENSON**, *Director of Youth Ministry*







# HI-ER LEAGUERS (COLLEGE AGE) SHARE WHY THEY ARE EXCITED TO COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS



Christmas at home is very special to me. It is an all-too-brief period of time that I get to spend with my loved ones, both friends and family. For me, holiday time at home is valuable both because of the old traditions and new experiences. Mount Olivet is an especially nostalgic part of my homecoming every Christmas. The space, the people, and the songs are so meaningful and familiar. Especially being a student out of state, I've learned the importance of church friendships and maintaining them while away.

— JENNA DAVIS

I'm so excited to come home for Christmas for many reasons. Of course, I'm thrilled to see my parents and sister again, but I'm also really looking forward to seeing my church friends, who I haven't seen since summer. I most enjoy attending the Christmas concert with my family – it's always so much fun! I'm also excited to be back in choir again. Going to college and living in a different state has been an incredible experience, but I always cherish the comfort and joy of seeing my church community, which reminds me that my home and church will always be there for me!

— CASEY CAMPION

## UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS

### CATHEDRAL CHOIR BAKE SALE

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3,  
MPLS & WEST CAMPUSES**

Purchase your cookies after attending a worship service to support the Cathedral Choir! We thank you in advance for your support.

### JUNIOR HIGH CHRISTMAS DINNER

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER  
13, 6:30-7PM, MPLS &  
WEST CAMPUSES**

Hey 7th & 8th-graders! Join us for a Christmas Pizza Party! Don't forget to wear your ugly Christmas Sweater for the contest!

### CONFIRMATION REMINDERS!

Confirmation will be on hold for the holiday season starting December 17, 2023 through January 3, 2024. We hope to see you in worship during these times instead! Confirmation resumes the week of January 7, 2024.

### 6TH-GRADE PRE- CONFIRMATION KICK-OFF

**WEDNESDAY,  
JANUARY 10, 7PM, MPLS  
& WEST CAMPUSES**

We are hoping all 6th-graders will consider participating in our new Pre-Confirmation program. Please also consider joining Chancel Choir on Wednesdays too!

# Slow Down, Sing, and Savor Each Other

When I first arrived at Mount Olivet Conference & Retreat Center in May 2019, I wondered why every meeting room had its own piano. Two months later, one of our guest groups, the Libera Boys Choir from the United Kingdom, practiced all over our campus and then ventured out to Twin Cities' churches and community centers to share their beautiful songs. Six months after that, we welcomed 145 members of the Angelica Cantanti Youth Choir for an overnight retreat. Every Conference & Retreat Center piano accompanied and supported their choral training. I no longer wonder why we have so many pianos.

Music heals and sustains us. It improves our breathing and posture. It lowers stress and loosens tightly wound muscles. Research shows that singing, especially communal singing, releases endorphins and keeps our minds agile. It improves our mental health, as it strengthens our connections to one another. It fosters trust and cooperation with those like us and those unlike us. Participating in a choir can help mitigate social fragmentation and polarization. Coordinated singing bridges many divides, and the music created together soothes many souls.

It's not surprising to me, then, that Mount Olivet has a robust Congregational Care Department, an unmatched set of choirs and musical offerings, and affiliate ministries committed to the wellbeing of our community, e.g., the Conference & Retreat Center and Counseling Service. They each contribute to our personal and communal health! So, during this Advent season, we invite you to join us (and each other) in song. Learn about and sing your favorite Christmas Carols at our Day Advent Retreat. Gather your friends and family around the piano or walk the Conference & Retreat Center trails while belting out your favorite tunes. In brief, slow down, sing, and savor one another in this season of waiting for our Savior.

**REV. DR. THERESA LATINI**, *Executive Director of the Conference & Retreat Center*

# Women's Weekend: *Renewing Connections in the Midst of Loneliness*

**Friday, January 26 through  
Sunday, January 28,  
Conference & Retreat Center**

In April 2023, the Surgeon General declared loneliness an epidemic in the United States. Social disconnection and isolation afflicts Americans at higher rates than ever, contributing to a host of health problems and decreased productivity in work and school. Together we will explore our own experiences of loneliness as well as ways to renew our connections to each other, the larger community, God, and ourselves. We will have opportunities to be renewed by spending time walking in the woods, relaxing in the whirlpool, scheduling a massage (extra cost), journaling and reading. Led by Pastor Hammersten, Pastor Freeman, and Conference & Retreat Center Director Rev. Dr. Theresa Latini.

The retreat will begin with dinner on Friday and culminate with brunch on Sunday. Arrive on Friday afternoon and enjoy the pool, whirlpool, sauna and beautiful lounges and grounds at the Conference & Retreat Center. Register for single occupancy, double occupancy, dorm occupancy, or as a commuter. The commuter rate includes meals and all presentations, Friday evening through Sunday brunch. Double occupancy registrations require a roommate at the time of registration. Refunds for cancellations will be given until January 16, 2024. Register at [mtolivetretreat.org/events](http://mtolivetretreat.org/events) today.



## EVENT REMINDERS!

**STARGAZING EVENT WITH MIKE LYNCH:** Friday, December 8, with Saturday, December 9, as a backup date.

**DAY ADVENT JOURNEY - THE CAROLS OF ADVENT:** Tuesday, December 5, 9:30am-3:00pm

Registration information is available at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org).



# CALLED FOR GOOD: VOCATION

## TAUGHT BY PASTOR RUUD

Tuesday, January 2, 6:30-7:30pm; Mpls Campus Room 207; or via pre-recorded video

This class is part of the **Living the Message 2023-2024** series. Join in anytime!

So now that there's nothing to do, what do we do?

Spilling forth from Martin Luther's rediscovery of the proclamation of justification by grace through faith – the assurance that we are saved by Christ's work alone – was a renewed articulation and focus of how God works in and through us in daily life. After all, if we don't *do* anything to earn God's love and Christ's salvation, what's all our *doing* for now?

It was (and perhaps still is) thought that "Christian" vocations were necessarily tied to the church or some specific work of proclaiming the gospel. Luther noticed instead that Christ's work set people free to focus on the neighbor, whomever and wherever one was in need. He surmised that any place or circumstance where one's life was poured out for the sake of the need and love of others was indeed *holy* work.

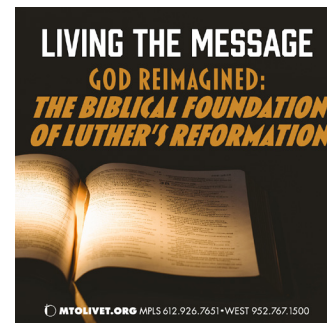
In the cross of Christ, Luther saw holy work located in the ordinary, lowly, and even despised places of the world, primarily in relationship to others. Christian vocation thus did not call a person away from the world rather toward the needs of the world, and even the simplest, most humble works of service could be held as holy and good. Join and/or tune in this January to discover more of your holy calling in the world, perhaps even in ways you never saw before, and how God is at work through us all!

PASTOR RUUD

## UPCOMING CLASSES:

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5:** Mpls Campus, Room 207 - *An Ambidextrous God: Two Kingdoms*

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 2:** Mpls Campus, Room 207 - *Called for Good: Vocation*



# WORD WITH YOUR PASTORS

## COSTLY WITNESS, COSTLY GRACE, FREE IN CHRIST: THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Wednesdays, January 10 through January 31, 10:30-11:30am, Mpls Campus

Thursdays, January 11 through February 1, 10:30-11:30am, West Campus

Also available via emailed videos

Join Mount Olivet pastors for a snapshot into the life and witness one of the 20th century's most notable Christian theologians and preachers, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Surveying some of the defining and rich theological musings and writings of this young German Lutheran pastor (Did you know he only lived to 39 years old?!) and examining how he sought to give clearer definition into how and why faith in Christ orients our thoughts, words, and deeds as Christians, we'll consider his lasting insight for us still. We'll also discuss how he became a key founder of the German Confessing Church in opposition to the Nationalist Socialist takeover of country, culture, and church, and his involvement with a plot to kill Hitler which led to his arrest and execution by the Nazis a mere month before the German surrender in World War II. Taught by Pastor Cieslik, Pastor Dixon, Pastor Lose, and Pastor Ruud. More info at [mtolivet.org/education](http://mtolivet.org/education).

**REGISTER FOR ALL ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES AT [MTOLIVET.ORG/EDUCATION](http://MTOLIVET.ORG/EDUCATION) OR  
CONTACT KATIE STEVENSON AT [KATIES@MTOLIVET.ORG](mailto:KATIES@MTOLIVET.ORG) OR 612.767.2232.**



## GINGERBREAD KIT PICK UP

Sunday, December 3, 3-5pm

Mpls Campus, \$25/kit

Take-home gingerbread kits will be ready for pick up at the Christmas Tree Lighting Event on Sunday, December 3. Kits include a gingerbread house, decorations, family games, and extra frosting. Each kit is \$25. We encourage you to purchase a kit at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org). A few additional kits will be available for purchase at the event!

Contact Katy Michaletz at

[kmichaletz@mtolivet.org](mailto:kmichaletz@mtolivet.org) or 612.767.2245 with any questions.



## MLK DAY AWAY FOR K-5TH-GRADERS!

Monday, January 15, 8:30am-4:30pm

Mpls Campus, \$50/child

We have a great day planned for kindergarten through 5th-graders at the Conference & Retreat Center! Sign up with your friends and enjoy a fun-filled day of sledding, swimming, crafts, games, and delicious food! Transportation will be provided from the Mpls Campus. Register at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org). Please contact Katy Michaletz at 612.767.2245 or [kmichaletz@mtolivet.org](mailto:kmichaletz@mtolivet.org) or

Amy Porthan at 612.767.2285 or [amyp@mtolivet.org](mailto:amyp@mtolivet.org) with questions!



## NEW 6TH-GRADE PROGRAMMING!

Beginning January 10, and continuing most Wednesday evenings throughout the school year, we will gather as a 6th-grade class at both of our campuses. Wednesday evening programming will rotate between game nights, service projects, Bible studies, and share groups (opportunities to grow closer to other members of the class and/or hear speakers). In addition, we invite 6th-graders to participate in Chancel Choir (6th-8th-grade) which meets on Wednesdays for rehearsals.

What you might expect from a Wednesday evening:

5:30pm: arrive at Mount Olivet and participate in Chancel Choir

6:30pm: \$5 dinner in the Youth Center

7-8:15pm: 6th-grade programming and dismissal

\*\* please note West Campus dismissal is 8pm

Registration for Wednesday nights is online! We hope you can join us!



## SUMMER DAY CAMP REGISTRATION OPENS IN JANUARY 2024

ELIGIBILITY DETERMINED BY GRADE AS OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

We hope to see you this summer for one (or more!) of our day camps. Summer 2024 brings 12 different themed day camp weeks between the Minneapolis and West Campuses and the Mount Olivet Conference & Retreat Center. We'll offer a few mini-camp options for middle school aged children along with *Summertime Players*. It's sure to be another fantastic summer at Mount Olivet! You may consider taking a moment to set up your CampBrain account ahead of registration opening. The full schedule will be featured in the January *Messenger*. Please contact Children's Camp Coordinator, Kristin Olson, at [kolson@mtolivet.org](mailto:kolson@mtolivet.org) with any questions!



## 2024 CATHEDRAL OF THE PINES CAMPING SCHEDULE

ELIGIBILITY DETERMINED  
BY GRADE AS OF  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

### GRADES 3, 4 & 5

Week 1: Sa, 7/20 – W, 7/24

Week 2: Sa, 8/3 – W, 8/7

### GRADES 5, 6 & 7

Week 1: M, 7/15 – Sa, 7/20

### GRADES 6, 7 & 8

Week 1: Su, 6/23 – F, 6/28

Week 2: M, 7/8 – F, 7/12

Week 3: W, 7/24 – M, 7/29

### 9TH GRADE

### CONFIRMATION CAMP

(MOUNT OLIVET

MEMBERS ONLY)

Week 1: F, 6/28 – W, 7/3

Week 2: M, 7/29 – Sa, 8/3

### GRADE 10

10th Grade Starter:

Th, 6/20 – Su, 6/23

### GRADES 10, 11, & 12

Hi-League Retreat: W, 8/7 – Su, 8/11

### GRADES 11, 12, &

### GRADUATES

Summer Starter: Su, 6/16 – Th, 6/20

REGISTRATION OPENS IN  
JANUARY 2024

## JOIN US!

### NEEDLE FELT SNOW GLOBE CRAFT CLASS

Monday, December 11, 6-8pm, Mpls Campus

Create a beautiful snow globe “painting” out of wool roving. Learn to needle felt an image on a piece of felt using roving as your “paint.” The image will be created in a small embroidery hoop that can be hung on your tree or a wall for decoration. They also make great gifts. Register by 12/7 at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org).

### BUTTER BRAID PICK-UP

Sunday, December 10, 8:30-11 am, Mpls & West Campus

If you ordered butter braids, please remember to pick up your orders on Sunday, December 10 at church!

### YOUNG IN HEART & FRIENDS

Tuesday, December 19, 12noon, Mpls Campus, \$10 per person

Young in Heart & Friends invites you to join us for great music, lunch and fellowship. Our entertainment is The Riverside Swing Band: “A Vintage Christmas.”

Take a trip down memory lane with your favorite holiday hits, with fresh and exciting arrangements that feature their horn section and band leader, Kyle Tennis. Bring a friend to share in the experience. Register by 12/16, online, or by contacting Tricia Asuncion at 612.767.2210, [tasuncion@mtolivet.org](mailto:tasuncion@mtolivet.org).

### FLYING SOLO CURLING

Saturday, January 20, 3-5pm, Chaska Curling Club, \$50/per person

Join us at the Chaska Curling Center. During this curling clinic you will learn the rules and sportsmanship of curling. There is a brief classroom style instruction where you learn the terminology, basic strategy and general information such as ice is slippery, rocks are heavy, and both are very hard! That is followed by on-ice instruction on the form and techniques of throwing stones and sweeping. The remaining time is yours to scrimmage or practice. Instructors will remain on the ice for tips and advice. Register by January 10.

### MARRIAGE PREP WORKSHOP

Saturday, January 27, 9:30am-3:30pm, via Zoom

Getting married soon? Join us for our marriage prep workshop. Cost: \$150, plus \$35 scoring fee for the Prepare Inventory. Lunch voucher included. Register by January 15 at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org).

### BOOK DISCUSSIONS

Tuesday, December 12, 10-11:30am, Mpls Campus Library

Wednesday, December 13, 7-8:30pm, Mpls Campus Library

This month we are reading *Rafferty's Last Case* by Larry Millett.



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*Christmas Eve*

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24**

**MPLS**

**10am ONLY**

**2-10pm**

**WEST**

**10am ONLY**

**2-6pm**