

DECEMBER 2025

BELIEVING, BELONGING, BECOMING

# MOUNT OLIVET MESSENGER



*mtolivet.org*

# JOIN US

## 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 7

**THE LIGHT SHINES IN  
THE DARKNESS**  
**JOHN THE BAPTIST**  
*John 1:6-9, 19-23*

**M** 9, 10, 11am  
**SERMON** Pastor Dixon  
**MUSIC** Cathedral &  
Sanctuary Choirs

**W** 9, 10, 11am  
**SERMON** Pastor Lose  
**MUSIC** Cathedral &  
Sanctuary Choirs

## 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

## DECEMBER 14

**THE LIGHT SHINES IN  
THE DARKNESS**  
**CHILDREN OF GOD**  
*John 1:10-14*

**M** 9, 10, 11am  
**SERMON** Pastor Lose  
**MUSIC** Alleluia, Cherub,  
Hosanna, & Chapel  
Choirs, Justin  
Staebell, baritone &  
brass

**W** 9, 10, 11am  
**SERMON** Pastor Kalland  
**MUSIC** Alleluia, Cherub,  
Hosanna, & Chapel  
Choirs & Linda  
Berger, piano

## DECEMBER 21

**THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE  
DARKNESS**  
**THE WORD BECAME FLESH**  
**CHRISTMAS COMMUNION**  
*John 1:14-18*

**M** 9, 10, 11am  
**SERMON** Pastor Cieslik  
**MUSIC** Cathedral & Sanctuary  
Choirs

**W** 9, 10, 11am  
**SERMON** Pastor Grangaard  
**MUSIC** Cathedral & Sanctuary  
Choirs

## DECEMBER 24

**CHRISTMAS EVE**  
*Luke 2:1-21*

**M** 10am\*  
**SERMON** Pastor Hammersten  
**MUSIC** Harp & Elena Stabile,  
soprano

**M** 2-10pm\*  
**SERMON** Pastor Lose  
**MUSIC** Orchestra & Choirs

**W** 10am  
**SERMON** Pastor Freeman  
**MUSIC** Harp & Justin Staebell,  
baritone

**W** 2-6pm  
**SERMON** Pastor Dixon  
**MUSIC** Harp, String Quartet &  
Choirs

## DECEMBER 25

**CHRISTMAS DAY**  
**HOLY COMMUNION**  
**SERVICE**  
*John 1:1-18*

**M** 10am  
**SERMON** Pastor Kalland  
**MUSIC** Emily Gerard, harp

## DECEMBER 28

**JOHN THE WITNESS**  
*John 1:19-28*

**M** 9, 10, 11am  
**SERMON** Pastor Grangaard  
**MUSIC** Justin Staebell,  
baritone

**W** 9, 10, 11am  
**SERMON** Pastor Olson Popp  
**MUSIC** Amanda Jenkins,  
soprano

## DECEMBER 31

**NEW YEARS EVE**

**M** 7pm  
**SERMON** Pastor Olson Popp  
**MUSIC** Susan Steincross,  
piano

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

# *Celebrating and Sharing God's Light*

When a child is baptized at Mount Olivet, we present the parents of the child with a lighted candle and, as we do so, we often share two biblical verses about light, both of which have been coming to mind as we enter this Advent and Christmas season. The first Bible verse comes from the “prologue,” or introduction, of the Gospel according to St. John that we’ll be reading throughout Advent on Sundays and that serves as the basis of our Advent Devotions.

John begins his Gospel by echoing Genesis: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” And then, because no single metaphor is adequate to the task of capturing Jesus’ significance, John shifts from describing Jesus as the Word to describing him as life and then, shifting once more, as light: “What has come into being in him was life,” John writes, “and the life was the light of all people.” And then comes the verse we recite at baptisms, a verse that I have been holding onto of late or, really, a verse that has been holding onto me: “And the light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

I love that verse because of how it reminds me that no matter how dark things may seem, the light of God’s love and life will prevail. And, let’s admit it, there is plenty of darkness these days. The tragedy at Annunciation, the political violence in our own community and across the country, divisiveness at home and turmoil abroad, the uncertainty of government services and policies, and more. It’s... a lot. And that doesn’t include whatever personal moments of darkness with which you may be contending – illness or loss, an uncertain future or fraught relationships. Yes, there is plenty of darkness.

Yet John reminds us that although there will always be darkness, God’s light shines on. It simply will not be defeated. That’s the promise of Christmas, when God comes to us as one of us. Or, as John writes, when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). That promise is deepened at Good Friday when we see in Jesus’ cross just how deeply God identifies with us, enduring suffering, shame, loss and, ultimately death. And that promise is finally kept on Easter, when Jesus is raised from the dead, promising that God’s love is stronger than hate and God’s life is stronger than death. Yes, there is darkness. In the world, in our lives, in ourselves. Yet the light shines on.

The second verse we recite as we give a lighted candle to baptismal parents is from Matthew and comes near the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus says, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (5:16). I love the way this verse reminds us that light and love are meant to be shared and, when shared, multiply. As it turns out, one of the best ways to dispel the darkness is to share God’s light.

You are invited to do that in a variety of ways this Advent and Christmas season. You can join us for regular Sunday worship, of course, as well as for special events like the Lutefisk Dinner, the Messiah Sing-Along, our Tree Lighting, the Christmas Concert, and festive Christmas Eve worship. Each time we gather together, we encourage each other by our presence and words and let God’s light shine. We can let God’s light shine through our Christmas offering, too, a portion of which will benefit our longtime partner Community Emergency Services (CES) at a time when those services have never been needed more. (Read more about the great work of CES on page 4.) And there are plenty of other worthy charities and volunteer activities through which you can help others and, as you share God’s light, be encouraged yourself.

We share the baptismal candle with parents hoping they will light it on each anniversary of their child’s baptism, reminding their child of God’s love, of God’s pledge of acceptance and life, and of the promise that light is stronger than darkness. That promise is also always an invitation to join the light, to share it, to watch as it multiplies and grows, and in all these ways, shines on in the darkness.

I look forward to seeing you at church many times this Advent and Christmas season, each time celebrating and sharing God’s light.



*Pastor Lose*

**DAVID J. LOSE, SENIOR PASTOR**

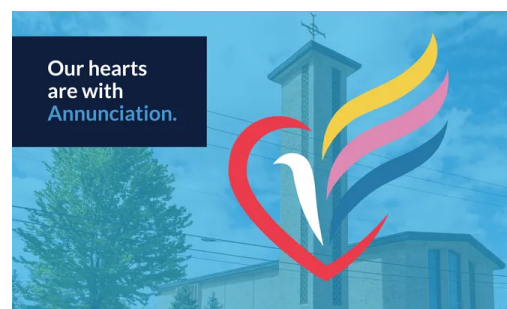
# SHARING GOD'S LIGHT AND LOVE

One of my favorite verses in Scripture is John 1:14. After describing Jesus as God's eternal and life-giving Word in the opening verses of his Gospel, John then says in verse 14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." That is, God in Jesus took on our mortal, vulnerable lives to identify fully with us. That same verse is translated in *The Message* as, "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood," reminding us that the whole point of the Incarnation, the festival we celebrate at Christmas, is that God knows us, gets us, became one of us, and drew close to us in the baby Jesus, all in order to let us know just how much God loves us.

No wonder, then, that Christmas is a time when we turn our thoughts to the needs of others. Filled by God's love, we naturally share that love with others. In addition to continuing to sponsor our Thursday drive-through Community Meal—which to date has shared more than a quarter million meals with neighbors—this fall and winter Mount Olivet is focusing on sharing God's love with and through two local partner organizations, and I want to tell you about each below.

## ANNUNCIATION CHURCH AND SCHOOL

Since the morning of August 27, Mount Olivet has been supporting our friends, members, and neighbors at Annunciation Church and School in a variety of ways, including offering support groups for families, teachers, and first responders; sponsoring trauma recovery counseling; and facilitating space and services from counselors throughout the Twin Cities for Annunciation families and teachers. This fall, we also collected donations from Mount Olivet members to support Annunciation's recovery and delivered a check for \$60,000 to The Annunciation Hope and Healing Fund. These gifts will be used to provide financial support for the needs of the church and school and to provide help to those affected by the tragedy. Our efforts to support our neighbors will not end soon, as the needs for support, care, and encouragement – especially during the holiday season – will only grow. Thank you for your generosity, prayers, and love. As the signs at Mount Olivet and so many other places in our neighborhood say, "Our hearts are with Annunciation."



## COMMUNITY EMERGENCY SERVICES

Every year, Community Emergency Service (CES) provides food, care, and support to thousands of our neighbors. Founded with support from Mount Olivet 50 years ago, CES is located in the Phillips neighborhood — one of the poorest communities in the Twin Cities — and operates one of the largest food shelves in the area. In a recent statewide survey, CES was recognized for having the lowest-cost model for delivering food to those in need, just \$0.23 per pound, compared to the state average of \$1.41 per pound. CES also provides two to three times more food per visit than the average food shelf (40 lbs vs. 14–18 lbs) and allows clients to visit multiple times per month, rather than just once. Much of its food supply is rescued from grocery stores across the Twin Cities area which supports its low-cost model and abundance of food for neighbors.

Last year, Mount Olivet gave CES \$36,000 to purchase their first set of "food lockers," an innovative way to meet essential food needs 24/7. This year, we plan to allocate \$50,000 from our Christmas gifts to help CES purchase a second set of lockers, refurbish their central food shelf, expand their ministry to assist students in need that are studying at the University of Minnesota, and strengthen their meals-on-wheels outreach to seniors. These funds are critical to continuing to help CES be "best in class" in sharing God's love with our neighbors most in need.

Thank you for your support!

SENIOR PASTOR LOSE





# THE SEASON OF GENEROSITY

## CHRISTMAS OFFERING MATCH

Thanks to the generosity of several Mount Olivet families, we are able to match all Christmas gifts again this year! That means each dollar you give to Mount Olivet as a Christmas gift (beyond your pledge) will be **matched dollar for dollar**. Your gifts will go to Mount Olivet's General Fund that supports all our ministries, which include:

### **PREACHING AND TEACHING THE WORD**

*Sunday Sermons, Living the Message, The Gospel Unplugged, Sunday School*

### **INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH**

*Cathedral of the Pines Camp, Summer Day Camps, 6th Grade Starter, Confirmation, Junior High Alive, Hi-League*

### **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**

*MOCW Circles & Events, Bible studies, Friends Forever, Hi-er League, Motorheads*

### **CARING FOR OUR FACILITIES**

*Mpls and West Campuses, Conference & Retreat Center, Cathedral of the Pines Camp, Counseling Center*

### **WALKING WITH YOU IN IMPORTANT MOMENTS OF LIFE**

*Births and Baptisms, Hospital visits from cradle to grave, Weddings, Counseling Center*

### **INSPIRING YOU WITH WORSHIP, MUSIC, AND THE ARTS**

*Sunday Worship, Christmas Concert, Choirs for all ages, School of Music & the Arts, Fika Music Series*

### **REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY IN LOVE**

*Community Meals, Donation and Food Drives, Community Partners, Mount Olivet Preschool, Summer Day Camps*

### CHRISTMAS GIFTS



Use the QR Code above or the Christmas offering envelope mailed to you in December.

## FULFILL YOUR 2025 PLEDGE

If you have not yet completed your 2025 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? Contact Tricia Lerohl-Morgan, Coordinator of Financial Records, at [tricial@mtolivet.org](mailto:tricial@mtolivet.org) or 612.767.2255.

### FULFILL YOUR 2025 PLEDGE



## MAXIMIZE YOUR YEAR-END GIVING

Are you 70½ or older? Here's your chance to make a meaningful impact while reducing your tax burden! Consider a tax-free Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Cathedral of the Pines, or Mount Olivet Conference and Retreat Center. By doing so, you can:

- **REDUCE YOUR TAXES:** Enjoy the benefits of tax-free IRA distributions.
- **SATISFY YOUR RMD:** Your QCD will fulfill your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), ensuring your generosity supports our vital ministries.

Your contribution can transform lives and strengthen our community. It's a true win-win!

### **READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

Simply ask your IRA administrator for guidance on initiating your QCD to Mount Olivet.

For more details, reach out to Tyler Hauser in the Development Office at [thauser@mtolivet.org](mailto:thauser@mtolivet.org) or call 612.767.2214.

# CALENDAR

JOIN US THIS ADVENT &  
CHRISTMAS



## DAY ADVENT JOURNEY

Conference & Retreat  
Center, 9am-3pm  
Register at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org).

TUE

02

## SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

West Campus, 6:30pm  
Memorialize a loved one at  
this spiritual service.

TUE

02

## LUTEFISK DINNER

3-7pm, Mpls Campus  
Registration encouraged at  
[mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org).

FRI

05

## WINTER COMMUNION & LUNCHEON

11am-1pm, Mpls Campus  
To register contact Nancy  
Nelson at 612.767.2288 or  
[nnelson@mtolivet.org](mailto:nnelson@mtolivet.org)

SAT

06

## MESSIAH SING-ALONG

Rehearsal 3:15pm  
Performance 4pm  
Mpls Campus  
Register at [mtolivet.org](http://mtolivet.org)

SUN

07

## CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

Gathering 3:30-5pm  
Tree Lighting 5pm  
Mpls Campus  
Santa, Reindeer, and more!

SUN

07

## SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Mpls Campus, 6:30pm  
Memorialize a loved one at  
this spiritual service.

TUE

09

## CHRISTMAS CONCERT: THE HEAVENS SHALL SING!

2pm & 4pm, Mpls Campus  
& livestreamed  
Join us for this annual  
Christmas classic.

SUN

14

## • WEDNESDAY, 24

**CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING  
10AM, MPLS CAMPUS &  
LIVESTREAMED  
10AM, WEST CAMPUS**

This special service will include the lighting of the Christ Candle on the Advent wreath, symbolizing the arrival of Christ's light in the world.



## • WEDNESDAY, 24

**CHRISTMAS EVE  
HOURLY FROM 2-10PM, MPLS CAMPUS & LIVESTREAMED  
HOURLY FROM 2-6PM, WEST CAMPUS  
NURSERY OFFERED AT 2, 3, & 4PM  
DIAL IN OFFERED AT 2PM BY CALLING 833.775.1238**

This Christmas Eve, we invite you to a special service filled with carols, reflection, and the spirit of hope and peace that the season brings. Enjoy the singing from choirs of all ages, supported by exceptional instrumentalists, and the inspirational playing of the organ. The final service of the evening concludes with the singing of "Silent Night" as we light our candles and share the light of Christ's birth with one another.



## • THURSDAY, 25

**CHRISTMAS DAY  
10AM, MPLS CAMPUS &  
LIVESTREAMED**

Celebrate the joy of Christmas with us in a peaceful and meaningful Christmas Day worship service. Join in singing beloved Christmas hymns and partake in the sacred tradition of Holy Communion. Soothing sounds of harp solos will fill the sanctuary, creating a heartwarming atmosphere as we rejoice in the birth of Christ.



## • WEDNESDAY, 31

**NEW YEAR EVE  
7PM, MPLS CAMPUS & LIVESTREAMED**

Mark the transition into the new year with a time of worship and prayer. This reflective service will include hymns, scripture, and being guided through the Examen, a centuries-old spiritual practice that helps us notice how God shows up in our past, present, and future. After the service, gather in the lower Narthex for coffee, cookies, and community.



# *Santa's Playlist: From Classics to Carols*

YOUR PASTORS' FAVORITE CHRISTMAS SONGS





**THE REBEL JESUS  
BY THE CHIEFTAINS**

It's just not Christmas in our home until we play The Chieftain's Christmas album, *The Bells of Dublin*. The Chieftains are a six-time Grammy Award-winning Irish folk band named by their government as "Ireland's Musical Ambassadors." I was first introduced to their music through their Christmas album, a gift from one of my brothers who said simply, "You're going to love it." And I did. All of the songs are built around uilleann pipes (bagpipes), the bodhran (drum), and plaintive vocals. The album includes some Christmas classics like "I Saw Three Ships" and "O Holy Night," as well as traditional Irish carols. It also features various vocal guests including Elvis Costello, Burgess Meredith (narrating), Rickie Lee Jones, and Jackson Brown. It's Jackson Brown's singing of "The Rebel Jesus" that may just be my favorite. It's sung from the point of view of a skeptic, who wonders whether the Church has missed the true point of Christmas by focusing on gifts and tinsel instead of the rebellious and expansive love of Jesus. Moving, challenging, haunting, beautiful. I can't wait to hear it again!—**Pastor Lose**

When I think about getting into the Christmas Spirit, Nat King Cole singing *The Christmas Song* sets the mood. Originally recorded in 1946, his rich baritone and perfect pitch voice brings comfort and warmth. It's calming. It's smooth. It's a holiday classic. "Jack Frost nipping at your nose, folks dressed up like Eskimos." Yes, I appreciate cold weather. And who doesn't like mistletoe. And Nat even offers a simple phrase, to kids from one to ninety-two, "Merry Christmas to you." Another favorite of mine is from Kenny Loggins. He sings a meaningful song about the joy of coming home to celebrate. It hints at homesickness and a need to belong. The Christmas season makes you want to go to familiar surroundings and people. Perhaps the singer is on a journey and feels a bit lost. There is a hint at a desire for comfort and a return to a simpler self. It might just be me, but the song has a way of asking for a warm welcome and a need to be remembered by our loved ones. —**Pastor Kalland**



**THE CHRISTMAS SONG  
BY NAT KING COLE  
CELEBRATE ME HOME  
BY KENNY LOGGINS**



**I'LL BE HOME FOR  
CHRISTMAS  
BY JOHNNY MATHIS**

One week after graduating from Gustavus, Tom and I were married and promptly hopped on the road to start our lives together, first in New York and then in Chicago. We loved the adventure of getting to know new cities and meeting new friends, but the month of December was always tough for me. Every year we would head home for a few days at Christmastime, but up until then, I missed my family and our lifelong friends and church. Whenever I was feeling really blue, I'd pull out my mom's Johnny Mathis Christmas album, put the needle to "I'll Be Home for Christmas," wrap up in a blanket, and have a good cry. Something about his beautiful melancholy voice reminded me that there were people all over the world who shared my longing for home, for church family, and I no longer felt alone. —**Pastor Hammersten**

*The Christmas Waltz* was written for Frank Sinatra in the 1950s and it is perfect. The Chairman of the Board's original performance is also perfect, but the song never really gained widespread popularity until Harry Connick Jr. reprised it in the early 2000s. I think I love it because it's nostalgic and sentimental, but also surprising. How many Christmas songs can you think of set to the waltz's characteristic three-quarter time? I hope you put it on your Spotify Christmas Party playlist, invite friends and family over, and together enjoy the song that reminds us "it's that time of year when the world falls in love." —**Pastor Dixon**



**THE CHRISTMAS WALTZ  
BY FRANK SINATRA**

I spent my first Christmas away from home in Seattle in 1998. Though I lived thousands of miles away from my family, I felt connected to them by the Christmas music played throughout the season. Most of the Christmas songs I knew and cherished were hymns, but someone gave me a Christmas CD that year entitled *A Very Special Christmas*. On it, Dave Matthews Band recorded a song entitled “Christmas Song,” that tells the story of Jesus’ life from birth to death and emphasizes the humanity of it all. Though Christmas is all about God’s power being found in the vulnerability of being human, it wasn’t until I heard Dave Matthews’ song that I really recognized my own humanity in Jesus’ story. “Christmas Song” captured for me the essence of the incarnation then, and it continues to capture it today – that God’s power is most surely found in vulnerability and love, often the places we least expect power to be found.

—Pastor Freeman



**CHRISTMAS SONG**  
**BY DAVE MATTHEWS BAND**



**THE MIRACLE IS HERE**  
**BY KELLY FINNIGAN**

One of my favorite tracks from Kelly Finnigan’s 2020 Christmas album, *A Joyful Sound*, is “The Miracle is Here.” With its warm baritone saxophone, soulful Hammond organ, rich backing vocals, and just the right touch of hope, it radiates good vibes from start to finish.

On an album that embraces the full emotional spectrum of the holiday season, *The Miracle is Here* stands out as a reassuring reminder that things *will* be okay. That’s no small feat for a Christmas song written and recorded during the chaos and uncertainty of 2020.

So turn the lights down low, pour a little Christmas cheer into your glass, and let this soulful gem wrap around you like a cozy blanket. —Pastor Cieslik

I’m more of a b-side, non-pop music listener. Sure, one of my favorite holiday moments is watching my kids sing *White Christmas* along with Bing Crosby. But, if you want to catch me in the Christmas Spirit, it will be listening to songs from my Christmas mixtape. Here are my top five:

*River*, Joni Mitchell

*Christmas Lights*, Coldplay

*White Winter Hymnal*, Fleet Foxes

*O Gracious Light/Mother of God*, The Brilliance

*All the Heavens*, Third Day

These songs speak to the beauty and chill of the season. In the stark and cold night, love was born, for us and for the life of the whole world. In our depths and in our heights. Nothing can separate us from God’s bright light, which no darkness can overcome. —Pastor Grangaard



**THE HAPPIEST CHRISTMAS**  
**BY MICHAEL W. SMITH**

**ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS YOU**  
**BY MARIAH CAREY**

I love Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole and these are my “classics,” the first ones I go to every year to kick off the season. They’re the songs that remind me of the people who have always made Christmas special. *The Happiest Christmas* is a calm, wintery song that takes me back to my childhood, where this was one of the albums played throughout the house during Advent and all day on Christmas. It’s an Olson family favorite. Then there’s Mariah, who is simply irreplaceable. Each time her hit is played, I can’t help but sing my heart out and invite others to join in with me. There’s something special about boldly, shamelessly, passionately trying to hit the high note with friends.

—Pastor Olson Popp



**RIVER BY JONI MITCHELL**  
**CHRISTMAS LIGHTS BY COLDPLAY**  
**WHITE WINTER HYMNAL**  
**BY FLEET FOXES**  
**O GRACIOUS LIGHT/MOTHER OF GOD**  
**BY THE BRILLIANCE**  
**ALL THE HEAVENS BY THIRD DAY**



# *Be the Helper: Tapping into Your Human Resilience*

In the wake of learning about violence or tragedy, Mr. Rogers recalled how his mom used to tell him: “look for the helpers—you will always find people who are helping.” Just as quickly as the morning of August 27, 2025, unfolded at Annunciation School and Church, we immediately saw these helpers. The teachers, students, parents, community members, first responders, law enforcement, chaplains, strangers, and more who were at the scene. There were incredible outpourings of support and selflessness at what seemed like every turn—from the very public helpers like skilled medical teams performing life-saving measures to the quieter, more private helpers who dropped meals and flowers, sent messages, and whispered prayers.

As a psychologist, an important part of my job is to support clients in times of grief. We talk about how grief is often a reflection of the relationship that’s been lost. When we love deeply, we similarly grieve deeply. The horror and devastation that has been experienced during and following the Annunciation event has similarly been met with an influx of unconditional love, support, and generosity. Traumatic experiences shake us at our core and leave us questioning so much. And yet almost always, they are paired with this astounding human goodness. While this can be a challenging juxtaposition to wrap our heads around, it’s the exact thing humans need in these dark hours. It’s what provides hope, light, and baby steps of healing.

The term “post-traumatic growth” was first coined by researchers Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun in 1995, formally defining a phenomenon that humans have likely been experiencing in some capacity for most of time. Tedeschi and Calhoun wrote about how, following challenging and trying life circumstances, many people go on to experience positive and life-giving psychological changes in their lives in some way. They identified five different areas where this growth tends to happen: increased awareness of one’s personal strength, greater appreciation in and for life, positive changes in relationships, greater sense of openness to life’s possibilities, and deeper spiritual connection. These changes don’t happen immediately, of course, but are rather things that can grow over time and with adequate healing and support. Traumatic experiences unquestionably shape us and, while painful, some of that can also be for good. They can prompt us to intentionally seek out jobs, relationships, or opportunities that more deeply resonate with our lived experiences and values. They can strip down the clutter of life and allow us to focus more on what truly matters. They can allow us to understand one another in more intimate, compassionate, and connecting ways. They can shift our own understanding of ourselves to one of resilience and empowerment.

Traumatic and challenging life experiences are never things that people ask for, expect, or welcome. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. However, they are often a part of our life stories. So, seek out the support you need first and foremost, so that you can begin to heal in whatever way feels best to you. Then, continue to be impacted by the experiences that have shaken you, our community, and beyond. Be impacted so that the resilience of your human spirit can surface and do good. Be open to your own version of post-traumatic growth and how it can enrich your life and the lives of those around you. And finally, continue to look for, acknowledge, and be the helper.

**ALLISON RICHARDS**, *Director of the Mount Olivet Counseling Center*

*Mount Olivet Counseling Center provides therapeutic services to both Mount Olivet members and community members and has since 1963. If you have questions or concerns about the mental health of you or a loved one, **please** reach out. We are here for you and are committed to connecting you to the support everyone deserves. Molly Pach, our Office Manager, can be reached at 612.927.7335 or [mpach@mtolivetcounseling.org](mailto:mpach@mtolivetcounseling.org). If you are having a mental health crisis, please call 988. If you are having a mental health emergency, please call 911 immediately.*

# LIVING THE MESSAGE

## STORIES THAT SHAPE US

**ESTHER 1, 4 – VASHTI AND ESTHER:  
FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS**  
**TAUGHT BY REV. DR. THERESA LATINI**  
Tuesday, December 2, 6:30-7:30pm, Mpls  
Campus Room 207

The Book of Esther highlights two courageous queens—Vashti, who said “no” to injustice, and Esther, who risked everything to save her people. Their stories inspire faithful living with dignity, courage, and integrity, even when God seems hidden. Join Rev. Dr. Theresa Latini as she delves into the stories of Vashti and Esther. All are welcome!



**GENESIS 1 & ISAIAH 40 WHEN EVERYTHING IS LOST: EXILE AND CREATION**

**TAUGHT BY PASTOR GRANGAARD**  
Tuesday, January 6, 6:30-7:30pm, Mpls Campus Room 207

What would you hold onto when you’ve lost everything? What would you want to remember and pass on to the next generation? How would you keep going amid unspeakable loss? What is the power of hope?

The exile was a time marked with violence, loss, and grief. Jerusalem was destroyed. The people were captured and carried away. How would they build a life from the rubble of the past? How would they survive? By remembering who they were. Where they came from. And who created them.

Our Genesis story, which is found in Genesis 1—*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth*—was passed down through the generations by oral tradition. But it wasn’t written down (as we know it) until the exile, hundreds, if not thousands of years later.

In the beginning, when there was nothing...God made something. In exile, even when all seems lost...God is making something. The rhythms of poetry of how life came to be found their cadence with the words of the prophets. “Comfort, O Comfort,” speaks the prophet.

Amid destruction and loss, the prophet and the priestly writer contend that God cares for God’s creation. From the beginning up to this moment. God is not finished. God will not give up on us. “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 40:28).

Creation is a story worth holding onto. God is our hope.

PASTOR GRANGAARD

## MOUNT OLIVET BOOK DISCUSSIONS

**DAYTIME:** 10-11:30am the 2nd Tuesday of each month  
**EVENING:** 7-8:30pm the 2nd Wednesday of the month  
Both held in the Mpls Campus Library

### UPCOMING BOOKS:

**DECEMBER 9/10:** *Table for Two* by Amor Towles

**2026**

**JANUARY 13/14:** *Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon

**FEBRUARY 10/11:** *Master Slave Husband Wife* by Ilyon Woo

**MARCH 10/11:** *Between Two Kingdoms: A Memoir of a Life Interrupted* by Suleika Jaouad

**APRIL 8/14:** *James* by Percival Everett

**MAY 12/13:** *The Day the World Came to Town* by Jim DeFede

**JUNE 9/10:** *The Measure* by Nikki Erlick

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ALL ADULT EDUCATION  
CLASSES OR TO REGISTER VISIT  
MTOLIVET.ORG/EDUCATION OR CONTACT KATIE STEVENSON  
AT KATIES@MTOLIVET.ORG OR 612.767.2232.**



# NOW REGISTERING

## DECEMBER 2025

**MORE INFORMATION & REGISTRATION AT MTOLIVET.ORG**

### **FRIENDS FOREVER AT SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE**

**Tuesday, December 2, 6:30-8pm, West Campus**

Join Pastor Hammersten and Friends Forever at the West Campus for a beautiful, serene worship service followed by coffee, cookies, and conversation.

### **SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE**

**Tuesday, December 2, 6:30pm, West Campus & Tuesday, December 9, 6:30pm, Mpls Campus**

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 register or contact Julie Goodman at 612.767.2208 or [julieg@mtolivet.org](mailto:julieg@mtolivet.org).

### **95TH MOCW LUTEFISK DINNER**

**Friday, December 5, 3-7pm, Mpls Campus, \$25 adults, \$5 for kids 12 & under**

Join us for the 95th Lutfisk Dinner. The all you can eat buffet includes: lutfisk, Swedish meatballs, rutabagas, boiled potatoes, pickled beets, and yes of course... butter or white sauce! **Advance ticket sales are requested.**

### **MESSIAH SING-ALONG**

**Sunday, December 7, Rehearsal 3:15pm, Performance 4pm, Mpls Campus**

This festive December tradition brings the community together in a powerful celebration of music and Christmas joy. The choirs will perform uplifting choruses alongside our outstanding featured soloists performing some of the most cherished Christmas selections from *Messiah*. Register online to sing or play. If you have questions, please contact Beverly Clafin at [beverlyc@mtolivet.org](mailto:beverlyc@mtolivet.org).

### **CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING**

**Sunday, December 7, Gathering 3:30-5pm, 5pm Tree Lighting, Mpls Campus**

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. There will be music, treats, crafts, and even Santa and reindeer will be available for pictures!

### **CHALK PASTEL DRAWING**

**Monday, December 8, 6-8pm, Mpls Campus, \$40**

Dive into the expressive world of chalk pastels—an artist's medium known for its vibrant color and blendability. In this class, you'll learn foundational techniques such as layering, shading, and blending to create depth and texture.

### **CAREER & CALLING MEETING**

**Tuesday, December 9, 5:30-7pm, Mpls Campus**

We will hear from Sally Smith, Mount Olivet member and former President & CEO of Buffalo Wild Wings. Sally will share her experiences as they relate to our theme for the year, "The Importance of Showing Up!" This ministry offers our members and friends an arena for nurturing our careers and supporting each other.

### **CHRISTMAS CONCERT: THE HEAVENS SHALL SING!**

**Sunday, December 14, 2pm & 4pm, Mpls Campus & livestreamed at [mtolivet.org](https://mtolivet.org), Free**

Filled with the beauty and joy of the Christmas season, the program features hundreds of choral singers from our choir programs, handbell choir, and a variety of gifted instrumentalists. Inspiring narration and moving musical selections come together to create an immersive experience that captures the hope and wonder of the season.

### **YOUNG IN HEART & FRIENDS LUNCHEON**

**Tuesday, December 16, 12noon, Mpls Campus, \$10**

Feel the rhythm of Sweden! *The ASI Spelmanslag*, the lively fiddling group from the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis, is bringing the heart of Sweden to life! Specializing in traditional folk tunes from the region Dalarna. Register by December 12.

### **HI-ER LEAGUE CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE**

**Wednesday, December 24, 10pm, Mpls Campus**

This is always a meaningful time to worship together and have some time after the service to reconnect. Space will be reserved for our group in the main sanctuary in the pews behind the organ. After the service, grab a special gift from the Youth Staff!

JOIN US AT THE 95TH 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 5, 2025, 3-7pm, Mpls Campus

## UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2026!

### NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR

Saturday, January 10, 9:30am-1pm, Mpls Campus

Join us for breakfast and devotions at church. Following breakfast, we will divide up and head into the community to learn about and work with our community partners: Pastor Scott's Inner-City Ministry, CES (Community Emergency Service), Lutheran Social Services, Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, and Love INC (Love In the Name of Christ).

### NEW! MOUNT OLIVET GARDEN CLUB

Thursday, January 15, 6:30pm, Mpls Campus

Join the fun and connect with fellow garden enthusiasts! This club is open to anyone who enjoys gardening and wants to help beautify the Mpls campus grounds. If you are interested in joining or have questions, please contact Lisa Boss at [lboss@mtolivet.org](mailto:lboss@mtolivet.org).

### MOCRC WOMEN'S WEEKEND

Friday, January 23 through Sunday, January 25, Conference & Retreat Center

*Meeting Jesus at the Well: Living Water for All Who Thirst*

Led by Pastor Grangaard, Pastor Olson Popp, and Dr. Latini. We will explore in depth the story of the woman at the well, one of the longest encounters between Jesus and another person.

### MOCW LADIES' NIGHT

Tuesday, February 24, 5:15-7pm, Mpls Campus, \$25

Join us as we enjoy an amazing meal and hear from Mount Olivet member, **Jill Palmquist**. Jill is the Chief Story Telling Officer at Life Time and author *In This Lifetime*. She will be speaking on the topic "What Will You Do in Your Lifetime?"

## LIFE & GROWTH

### OCT 15 - NOV 14 BAPTISMS

**Justine Advani**  
Edward Philip Buntje  
*son of Susan and Grant*  
**Rose Michaeline Buntje**  
*daughter of Susan and Grant*  
**Zachary Thomas Buntje**  
*son of Susan and Grant*  
**Hannah Jean Chapin**  
*daughter of Erin and Eric*  
**Hugh Jeffrey Chapin**  
*son of Erin and Eric*  
**Adeline Rose Coyne**  
*daughter of Megan and Justin*  
**Veronica Leah Falcon**  
*daughter of Regan and Seth*  
**Max Alan Geris**  
*son of Michelle and Grant*  
**Brooks Francis Gherity**  
*son of Anna and Matthew*  
**Betty Marie Hartung**  
*daughter of Ashley and John*  
**Eleanor Michael Hartung**  
*daughter of Ashley and John*  
**Brooks Michael Jonason**  
*son of Katie and Chase*  
**Chase Leland Jonason, Jr.**  
*son of Katie and Chase*  
**Elle Harper Jonason**  
*daughter of Katie and Chase*  
**Evan Alice Kingland**  
*daughter of Inga and Joseph*  
**Quinn Karina Kingland**  
*daughter of Inga and Joseph*  
**Luke David Nordin**  
*son of Lynn and David*  
**Rhodes Alan Norgren**  
*son of Meagan and David*  
**Brooks Mark Schiffman**  
*son of Liz and Sam*  
**Parker Henry Schlick**  
*son of Sara and Kevin*  
**Jordan AeRa Yoon Stocker**  
*daughter of Holly and Tameko*  
**Tameko Luche Stocker**  
*son of Holly and Tameko*  
**Boden Nicholas Sveen**  
*son of Mackenzie and Nicholas*

### WEDDINGS

**Gabriella Kinney & Adam Stedronsky**  
**Suzanne Mead & Noah Smith**  
**Katie Lindeman & John Erdall**  
**Leah Boldt & Andrew Young**  
**Samantha Stenzel & John Baron**

### DEATHS

**Harold F. Anderson**  
**Claudia Barstow Sellner**  
**Donna M. Daniel**  
**Lou Ann E. Hagberg**  
**Hoff H. Heiberg**  
**Marjorie E. Johnson**  
**Peter S. Macgowan**  
**Elaine K. Nelson**  
**Cammie L. Olson**  
**Roy H. Olson**  
**Thomas G. Olson**  
**Susan J. Smith**  
**James D. Stoneburg**  
**Lois A. Thompson**



# CATHEDRAL OF THE PINES CAMP & SUMMER DAY CAMPS

Registration for Summer is just around the corner! We will have two registration periods for both Cathedral of the Pines Camp and Summer Day Camps. Mount Olivet members will receive an early access link via email to register for camps.

If you would like to know your membership status, please contact Kris Johnson at [kjohnson@mtolivet.org](mailto:kjohnson@mtolivet.org) or 612.767.2253.

Grade eligibility is determined for both COP and Day Camps by their grade as of September 1, 2026.



**MOUNT OLIVET MEMBER-ONLY REGISTRATION  
WILL OPEN MONDAY, JANUARY 12 AND CLOSSES  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14.**

**OPEN REGISTRATION BEGINS ON  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20.**

## **GRADES 3, 4, & 5**

Week 1: Saturday, 7/25 - Wednesday, 7/29

Week 2: Saturday, 8/8 - Wednesday, 8/12

## **GRADES 5, 6, & 7**

Week 1: Sunday, 7/12 - Friday, 7/17

## **GRADES 6, 7 & 8**

Week 1: Tuesday, 7/7 - Sunday, 7/12

Week 2: Monday, 7/20 - Saturday, 7/25

Week 3: Wednesday, 7/29 - Monday, 8/3

## **GRADE 9**

### **(MOUNT OLIVET MEMBERS ONLY)**

Confirmation Camp Week 1: Saturday, 6/27 - Thursday, 7/2

Confirmation Camp Week 2: Monday, 8/3 - Saturday, 8/8

## **GRADE 10**

10th Grade Starter: Wednesday, 6/24 - Saturday, 6/27

## **GRADES 10, 11, & 12**

Hi-League Retreat: Wednesday, 8/12 - Sunday, 8/16

## **GRADES 11, 12, & GRADUATES**

Summer Starter: Saturday, 6/20 - Wednesday, 6/24

## **LOTTERIES FOR ADULT & FAMILY SESSIONS**

Lottery for adult and family sessions will be open January 20 through February 2 via Campbrain.

All lottery results will be communicated via email by February 10.

To view weeks, visit [cop.mtolivet.org](http://cop.mtolivet.org).



**MOUNT OLIVET MEMBER-ONLY REGISTRATION  
WILL OPEN TUESDAY, JANUARY 13 AND CLOSSES  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 15.**

**OPEN REGISTRATION BEGINS  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21.**

## **MPLS CAMPUS DAY CAMPS**

### **GRADES K THROUGH 5**

June 8-12: Splash into Summer

June 15-19: God's Kids Sing!

June 22-26: Going Wild

June 29-July 1: Nature Camp

July 6-10: Treasure Island

July 13-17: Imagination Creation

July 20-24: Cooking Week

July 27-31: Super STEM Summer

August 3-7: Art Explosions

August 10-14: Out of This World

August 17-19: Games Galore

## **WEST CAMPUS DAY CAMPS**

### **GRADES K THROUGH 5**

July 6-10: Cooking Week

July 20-24: Imagination Creation

## **MPLS CAMPUS MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMPS**

### **GRADES 6-8**

June 9-11: Mini Camp: *Outdoor Adventures at MOCRC*

June 23-25: Mini Camp: *Cooking Camp*

July 13-17: *Summertime Players!* (Grades 6-9)

August 17-19: Mini Camp: *Games Galore*

## **MPLS CAMPUS HIGH SCHOOL DAY CAMPS**

### **GRADES 10-12**

July 13-17: Team STP!

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*Christmas Eve*  
**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24**

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| <b>MPLS</b> | <b>WEST</b> |
| 10am        | 10am        |
| 2-10pm      | 2-6pm       |