



## "The Invisible Cross"

February 14 is Ash Wednesday which marks the 40-day period leading up to Holy Week and Easter. Lent is a season of prayer, fasting and repentance. We mark the beginning of this season by placing a cross of ashes on our forehead (or the back of the hand) on Ash Wednesday. "Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42:6 NIV

Being honest, it felt a little weird growing up and having ashes scraped across my forehead, not fully understanding its meaning or purpose. As I got older I remember studying Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and hearing His words: "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting." Matthew 6:16 NIV

*Don't disfigure your face.* These words stuck in my mind while walking to the altar rail. Why are we disfiguring our faces when Jesus told us not to? Am I trying to be pious by this action, making it important that others see what I am doing?

If you're like me, you've had children or grandchildren when they are young, ask a million questions about everything. My daughter calls her son and my grandson "the question man." So, how would I explain to a six-year-old why we put ashes on our forehead once a year?

I would say, "Did you know you have a cross on your forehead? It's true, but the cross on your forehead is *invisible*. When you were baptized, a pastor made a cross on your forehead and on your heart. You were sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own child forever. That cross is still there, but you really can't see it. It's a reminder that you belong to God and that God loves you very much."

On Ash Wednesday, we don't *disfigure* our faces so others can see how pious we are. In fact, it's just the opposite. By making visible again the cross that we received at Baptism, we acknowledge our impiety, our lack of repentance, our apathy to the suffering in the world. The renewed visibility of our baptismal crosses indicts us for our indifference to our baptismal promises.

We look in the mirror and see a pair of lines, crude charcoal calligraphy. And we remember what it means to be a follower of Christ, to be sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's own forever. We remember that we have only a limited time on this earth to make a difference in the lives of those we meet, to show forth the love and light of God to a world too familiar with darkness. Disfigurement happens when we rub the ashes away and *forget* that there is still a cross written on our foreheads.

On Ash Wednesday we make that cross visible, if but for a brief time. This small, crudely drawn cross reminds us of another cross, the one He died on for us, and the one that Jesus calls his followers to pick up when they decide to follow him. All too often, this cross also fades into invisibility, a wooden victim of our lethargy and misplaced priorities. During the season of Lent, we are given the opportunity to discern how to make that cross visible again.

Connecting People to Jesus,  
**Pastor Jon**



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## Sermon Series

### SERIES: "White As Snow"

**February 3/4**

"Redeemed"

*Ephesians 1:3-10;*

*Colossians 1:11-14; John 3:16-17*

**February 10/11**

"Made New"

*2 Corinthians 5:13-21; Luke 1:26-38*

### LENTEN MIDWEEK SERIES: "Wilderness Time"

**February 14**

"A Time of Learning"

**February 21**

"A Time of Challenge"

**February 28**

"A Time of Dependence"

### LENTEN SUNDAY SERIES: "From the Ashes"

**February 17/18**

"Temptation"

**February 24/25**

"Humility"





# BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

## • WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES •

**Hope Full Women's Bible Study:** All ages welcome. Meets every other week (February 6, 20), 6:30-8:30 PM in the Family Center. We will begin our Bible study with "Jesus & Women, in the First Century and Now," by Kristi McLelland. Contact Carol Hoopman (763.486.9177) if interested.

**Early Morning Wednesday Women's Bible Study Meeting Online:** Our Women's Bible study is supporting each other in our quest for a closer relationship with our Lord and Savior. We are currently reading and discussing Elijah, Faith and Fire by Priscilla Shirer. Email Paulette Lenz at [mp.lenz@gmail.com](mailto:mp.lenz@gmail.com) to join the group or to learn more about how we do this online.

**Exploration & Discovery Bible Study - Wednesday Edition:** This study group meets 9:00-11:00 AM on Wednesdays in the Junior Youth room. The group is in progress studying Paul's letters to the Romans. Jim Rootes is the facilitator for this study.

**Senior Fellowship & Bible Study:** We will meet on February 2 and February 16 from 9:30-11:00 AM in Cana Hall. Treats and refreshments are provided. Questions? Contact Lynn Antoine 763.777.0412.

**First Place 4 Health Group & Bible Study:** This group meets in the Conference Room each Thursday from 6:30-8:30 PM. Please contact Janet Orrick (763.323.0939) if interested.

## • SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY •

**Exploration & Discovery Bible Study – Sunday Edition:** This study group meets each Sunday at 9:15 AM in the Conference Room. The topic is "Stuff They Didn't Teach Me in Sunday School." The study is based on 140+ episodes from Lutheran Hour Ministries. We are completing the 27 episodes dealing with the "period of kings." The next episodes will discuss the prophets. Jim Rootes is the facilitator for this study.

**Cana Hall Adult Bible Study:** Meets in Cana Hall for a Bible study with Pastor Jon at 9:15 AM each Sunday.

## MIDWEEK MEALS WEDNESDAYS: 5:30-6:15 PM

Served each Wednesday evening, including each Lenten worship, February 14 through March 20.

Enjoy a meal from 5:30 - 6:15 PM each Wednesday night unless there are dangerous weather conditions. Please call the church during business hours or check Facebook before coming to the meal if weather conditions are questionable. Please enter through Door F. You may park in either church lot or at the park across the street.

A big thank you to the many generous people who help make our meal possible! Your prayers and donations are greatly appreciated! Please contact Jerusha 763.280.3047 or by email [rua\\_76@hotmail.com](mailto:rua_76@hotmail.com) with questions, or if you would like to volunteer or donate.

Please pray for God to help us make room in our hearts to grow closer to Him during this Lenten season.





# WOMEN OF MOUNT OLIVE

At this month's meeting, Rob from Stepping Stones Emergency Housing in Anoka came to speak to us about what this ministry does for the community. This ministry is set up for people experiencing homelessness in the Anoka County area. How can we at Mount Olive help? Pack and deliver care packages to these individuals and families by showing them they are children of God by showing them compassion and a listening ear if needed. Look for more information to come regarding this ministry.

In place of the February meeting, we are encouraging donation of your time to help our Preschool at their annual Family Fun Night on Friday, February 9 from 5:30-7:00 PM. Please see the sign-up in the Welcome Center on how you can help.

In place of our March meeting, we will be hosting another painting class (date to be decided). Everyone had a great time painting and hanging out with each other.

REMINDER: The Quilters meet every Tuesday from 12:30- 3:00 PM. All are welcome to come; no sewing skills required. They have a blast getting together and creating quilts for those in need.



WE ARE OPEN!

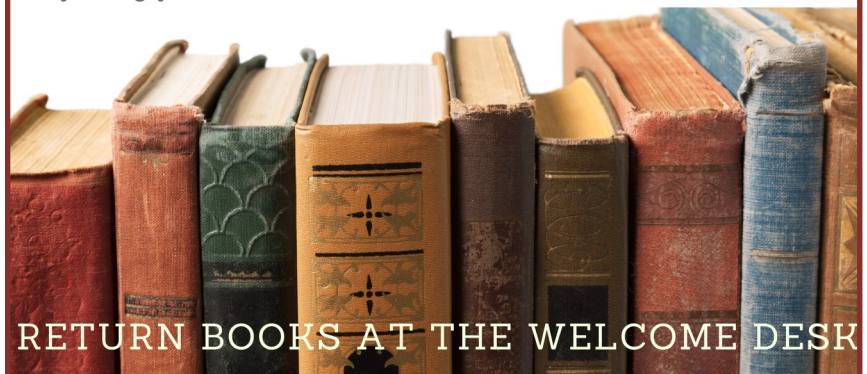
## MOUNT OLIVE LIBRARY

- **MAIN LIBRARY** (next to the Coffee Shop)
- **CHILDREN'S LIBRARY** (Room 1109, across from the Main Library)
- **BIBLE STUDY DVD'S, LEADER'S GUIDES, PARTICIPANT BOOKS** (upstairs "old library" area)

### HOW TO SIGN OUT YOUR CHOSEN BOOK, STUDY OR DVD?

*At this time, please sign out your items on the sheets on the clipboards. Also, please fill out the "Library Information Sheet" form, and return to the Welcome Desk. Your information will be entered into the Library Database and in the future you will then be able to pull up the database and search for items of interest.*

*\* Once we have your information entered, you will receive an email with the link to use to access the online library database by using your "Patron #."*



RETURN BOOKS AT THE WELCOME DESK



# CobWeb Corner



## IS READY FOR VOLUNTEERS

Come anytime during church hours 9 AM to 4 PM. Supplies are located inside the office supply closet and a key is available at the Welcome Desk.

A few of the areas that need regular cleaning are:

- Cry Room
- Building Entrances
- Sanctuary glass doors

Your gift of time is greatly appreciated.

Contact Pam Schwandt for more information [pamschwandt@gmail.com](mailto:pamschwandt@gmail.com)

Mark your  
Calendar



**American  
Red Cross**

Blood  
Services

**MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH  
BLOODMOBILE**

**Monday, March 4, 2024 • 12:30—6:30 PM**

## upcoming EVENTS

### PARENTS OF A PRODIGAL

Support Group

February 4, 18

6:30 - 8:30 PM

### BREWS AND GOOD NEWS

Men's Ministry Group

February 8, 22

6:30 - 8:00 PM

### HOPE FULL

Women's Bible Study

February 6, 20

6:30 - 8:30 PM

## It's never too soon to be thinking about SPRING & FLOWERS & EASTER

We are looking for someone to oversee the ordering and organizing of the beautiful Easter Garden that is created each year.

Support is provided and new ideas are always welcome!

Contact Brenda Schwarz if you have questions or are interested:  
[brenda@mtolive-anoka.org](mailto:brenda@mtolive-anoka.org)





# adult CHOIR

DO YOU LOVE MUSIC?  
GIVE US A TRY!



JOIN US

Rehearsals:

Wednesdays at 5:30 PM

Sing once a month at 8:00 AM service

Contact Rachelle Lapham at  
biopurduette717@gmail.com if you are interested



## BIBLE BASICS

SUNDAY, APRIL 14 • 11:30 AM  
FAMILY CENTER

Third grade and older who want to learn  
how to use the Bible

Pizza will be provided.

For more info contact Jerusha at rua\_76@hotmail.com

Join Us!

## BELL CHOIR

We still have a  
couple of openings!

We typically perform once  
a month. Come have fun  
learning worship pieces  
for Sunday services and  
special occasions!

ALSO: We need a  
temporary ringer for treble  
clef bells in February.

Contact Karen Keast  
612.720.1168

WEDNESDAYS

After Lenten Worship Services

NO practice on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14



VBS 2024  
SAVE THE DATE

June 24-27  
9AM-Noon

more info coming soon



# MOUNT OLIVE CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

Registration for the 2024-2025 preschool year is now open! Contact the school office if you have any questions: 763.421.9048 / [cari@mtolive-anoka.org](mailto:cari@mtolive-anoka.org).

The preschool is hoping you can join them at Culvers in Anoka on Tuesday, February 27. They are hosting a fundraiser for the preschool. Ten percent of all sales will be donated to the preschool!



**Culver's**

**CULVER'S ANOKA**

**MAKE YOUR Meal Matter**

**TUES., FEBRUARY 27 • 4:00 – 7:00 PM**

**JOIN US FOR DINNER! 10% of all sales will be donated to**

**MOUNT OLIVE CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL**

There is no limit to how much heart you can put into the community – and we're always looking for ways to help our friends and neighbors. Join us and consider giving what you can to our local cause today.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

**Give LOCAL**  
FOOD. FAMILY. FUTURE.

**Culver's**

**CULVER'S ANOKA**  
800 W. Main Street  
Anoka, MN  
763.323.6566

## YOUNG ADULT

L.I.F.E.



Please keep the following young adults in prayer this month and stop to sign a card for each of them on **Saturday or Sunday, February 3, 4.**

### Prayer for Mentorship

Lord, I lift \_\_\_\_\_ up to you today and pray that you would bring a strong mentor into their life. Help them to find someone that will challenge them to grow in their faith and who can help guide them to You. Provide someone to disciple them so that they can become stronger in their faith. Lord, soften their heart to receive all that their mentor pours into them as they teach and encourage them in how to become more like Christ. Help them to humbly accept their mentor's correction in areas that they need to grow and celebrate in areas of success. Help them to learn how to be a mentor to others and to guide and encourage the next generation of believers so that they will also become strong members of the body of Christ, grounded in their own faith. Amen



Caleb Chesser  
Ryan Wylde

Rachel Jerzak  
Kaitlyn Way  
Isabelle Hoopman

Alyssa Okeson  
Madison Way





## WOW: A 4-Week Series from the Gospels on Jesus' Miracles.

### SERIES OVERVIEW:

Whether it's a rocket car powered by soda and mints or a tornado in a water bottle, there's so much in our world that can fill us with awe. The world of STEM is full of things that look like little miracles, but they're nothing compared to the miracles God can perform. In this four-week series,



kids will take a look at some of the miracles that Jesus performed during his ministry. Through stories showing the power of Jesus, they'll no doubt say, "Wow! Jesus has the power to heal, to calm our fears, to provide, and to save."

### Tip of the Month: REAL CONNECTIONS IN AN ONLINE WORLD

If our world will never be less online than it is today, how should that impact the way we parent? If social media or virtual connection points aren't going away, how do we help kids and teenagers navigate that world and understand their own relationships? We have a few tips that may help.

**1. Introduce them to your friends.** You have friends you stay connected with online and that's a great use of social media, but it can also be a great teaching opportunity. You can introduce your family to the friends you interact with online, explain how you met them, and share stories you remember. Make sure they understand this is a real person and your relationship with them matters.

**2. Encourage and model kindness.** An online world can empower people to be bolder and meaner online than they would be in person. Break that trend by being purposefully kind and loving to your neighbors, even your virtual neighbors. Leave kind comments, share photos of the people you love, and promote local businesses intentionally while encouraging teenagers to do the same online and when they're physically present.

**3. Talk about safety.** Dating apps, friend-finding apps, and social media platforms all provide opportunities for real connections, but can also lead to unwanted attention. These things are here to stay, so while creating restrictions is great, talk openly about the dangers of online connections so teenagers know they can come to you if they feel unsafe.

**4. Unplug.** The internet isn't going away, but we can walk away from it when we need to. You can tell kids and teenagers to limit their screen time, but this works much better when you model it. Set limits for yourself and when you're in a room with your family, be in the room! Our world is constantly changing, so let's be ready to adapt our strategies to continue to help our kids and teenagers thrive.



Mount Olive Christian Preschool is hosting  
a FAMILY FUN NIGHT for preschool  
families and Sunday School families!





