



MOUNT OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Musical, Liturgical, Welcoming

3045 Chicago Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55407-1595

612/827-5919, fax 612/827-4557
www.mountolivechurch.org

November 6, 2024, from Pr. Joseph Crippen

Beloved ones,

This is a day of great sadness, fear, and dread over the future. This is not about parties or normal politics. We've all been in congregations with good people who were Republican, Democrat, independent, whatever, who disagreed about policies but cared about the good of the nation and our people.

We are now, for the second time, facing a term with a leader who is a convicted felon, a rapist, an insurrectionist, a traitor, a business cheat and fraud, one who doesn't care for the people of this country or our deeply held values as a democracy. Who has promised to tear down, to take revenge, and has proven to be in this only for his own gain. We are entering some very hard times.

The real problem is that we must now admit we live in a country where half of those who vote are just fine with someone like that in the highest office in the land. With someone so evil they wouldn't want him at their business or in charge of their children. That's the hard thing to swallow. This is who we are as a country. It's probably going to be that way for a while.

But what hasn't changed is that there are millions of people of good will who care about their neighbors who want to make this a better place, a place where all are safe and fed and live with justice and in peace. People like you, our family here at Mount Olive. You are still the loving, caring, Christly disciples I've always known, and the grief you feel is because you have learned to love what God loves and to see as God sees. You are still you, and Christ is still with you. That gives me much hope.

Here are some things that perhaps might strengthen your hope and your courage to continue to be Christ's love in your world. This is a little long, but I hope worth your time to read and ponder.

- ◆ In Psalm 146, which we'll sing Sunday (**but it would be a good one to pray today, and the rest of this week**), we will sing "put not your trust in rulers, in mortals in whom there is no help." It doesn't mean don't trust any leaders. We have many faithful ones. It means don't expect your rulers to take care of those who really need to be taken care of. They'll probably disappoint. But this psalm goes on to rejoice that God cares for all these and brings them life: the oppressed, the hungry, the captives, those who are bowed down, the stranger. And if God cares for them, God is going to work in you and me and in many to make sure they're taken care of.
- ◆ **Consider narrowing your focus in these days.** You don't have to worry about everything, especially things outside your control. Focus on what you can do, what you can actually make happen.
- ◆ **Maybe consider stepping away from social media for a breather.** It can draw you into a deep spiral of anxiety and fear. Instead, talk to a real person – call them, text them, invite them to coffee. If you can't think of anyone to weep with, vent to, open up with, pray with, give me a call. Please.

Another thing that hasn't changed is that Christ still says if you want to serve him, care for those who are hungry, or naked, or thirsty, or strangers, or in prison, or sick. They're still where you'll find God. They still need your care. To that end, here are some other things you can do:

- ◆ **Help with our Neighborhood Ministry Committee?** The Neighborhood Ministry Committee has been in a time of transition these past couple years, as long-term members of it have stepped away

to well-earned rest. We could use some new energy, new eyes, new hearts to help plan and dream and look forward to how we will serve Christ here. Talk to Jim Bargmann or me if you're interested.

♦ **Can you help our neighbors in other ways?** We have dedicated folks helping with some of our ministries. But we can always use more hands, and we need Jim to be able to do the part of his job where he works on new programs and ideas, even for an hour or two a week. Right now the flood is so high, he barely has time for that, and some extra, willing folks could make a difference.

♦ **Pray for Jim Bargmann, our neighborhood ministry coordinator.** His job just got a lot harder with this, and he's our ambassador and partner with so many of our neighborhood partners and organizations and congregations, working on so many issues of need. While you're at it, pray for all those leaders and workers like Jim who are on the front line of caring for those who are Christ in our city and around our nation. They're all going to need it.

♦ **What will we share, and pledge?** The Vestry intended to have a stewardship TWIG for this week, as we're collecting pledges for 2025 on Sunday. We're not going to send that in these challenging days. But here are some things to consider. We're a family in Christ who's committed to doing Christ's work in this place. To provide worship so we can be fed every week by God's grace and sent out strengthened, to provide education, so we can learn more of God's way for us, to care for this building so we have a place our neighbors can come for help and we can gather to be together, to support many neighborhood partners doing amazing work for those in need, to support global partners who are also Christ in their place. And so much more. We do much good together, and as a family we look to each other and each of us says what we can share of our wealth to make that happen. So there will be gray pledge cards in the pews Sunday and you can put them in the offering. What do we want to financially share with each other so that we can end this year strong and also be ready to do what God needs us to do in 2025? If you're concerned about where this country is going, this is a way you can help and work with your family here.

Be of good cheer. This is going to be hard. But you are God's, and together we'll keep doing what we do. I am in awe of the amazing people here who embody Christ's love for others and who do so much here and in their lives and world to make a difference. I have no doubt God is with you and our work, I see it all the time. So be of good cheer. Trust in God's love for you, for our community, for the world. If those who care for the people and things we care for are a minority in our nation now, so be it. That's pretty normal in human history. And it doesn't matter what others think or do. We know what we're called to be and do.

And let's be good to each other. It's OK to be angry, to cry, to feel lost, to do whatever you need to do to process this. Let's give each other room for whatever we each need to do to deal with this. Let's talk. Let's pray. And then get back to work. Together. With the Spirit's grace and help.

Many of us here at Mount Olive treasure these words of Rabbi Rami Shapiro, so I'll end with them now: **"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work. Neither are you free to abandon it."**

God has not abandoned us or this nation or this world. I see God in you every day. Trust that, and let's do what we can, when we can. With God's grace, we will bring hope and healing in this world.

In Christ's love,

