



Mt. Olive
Lutheran Church
Rooted in God's Grace

2023-2024
Faith Exploration Opportunities

at
Mount Olive Evangelical
Lutheran Church

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EXPLORE MOUNT OLIVE

During this session we will have conversation regarding Mount Olive's various ministries and opportunities for spiritual growth. We will share with you our vision for being a discipling congregation. Together we will discuss how our community can best accompany you in your own faith journey, even during the midst of our pastoral interim.

Our next *"Explore Mount Olive"* is scheduled for **Sunday, October 22nd, at 11 a.m.** On **Sunday, October 29th**, during worship, you will be officially welcomed into our community of faith. Everyone who is interested in learning more about the faith community called Mount Olive should contact the church office or Pr. Sandy.

GROWTH IN DISCIPLESHIP

Mount Olive partners with parents to help them share their faith with their children. Mount Olive is committed to offering a variety of events and classes to encourage and empower parents in this holy and marvelous responsibility.

Baptism: Baptism is a most wonderful gift from God where God claims us as his own and promises that God will never let us go. Please contact the church office for more information or to schedule a baptism for you or your child. As a gift to families, Mount Olive includes a copy of the Spark Story Bible to the newly baptized. Reading the Bible together is a wonderful way to grow together in faith.

Cradle Roll: As a way to help parents share their faith with their children, families with newborns through age three are included in mailings with age-appropriate materials to help nurture faith at home.

Entrance into Faith Explorers: Sunday School: As your children grow, Mount Olive supports families by offering our Faith Explorers: Sunday School during September through May. If families choose to participate, Sunday School is offered for 3-year-olds through 5th grade as our SS faith exploration guides walk alongside parents in telling the story of God's love and grace. Children entering Sunday School are presented with either a Spark Story Bible or a Spark Book of Psalms as appropriate. In 2023, this faith exploration presentation is celebrated on **Sunday, September 24th, at 9:45 a.m.**

SALSA Bible: Come and explore the wonders of God's Word as we "SALSA" through the bible! Third grade families will get an official invitation, but all are welcome to join the SALSA exploration team. This adult and child experience is held in the Fellowship Hall on **Sunday, September 17th, from 11 a.m. – 12 noon.** Then, during the Sunday School opening on **September 24th, at 9:45 a.m.,** we will SALSA and celebrate with the families as they present their children with their very own grownup Bible.

Faith Explorers: First Communion: Children are offered the opportunity to explore the sacrament of Holy Communion during this mini-course. Together with their parents, grandparents, or another significant adult, the students learn why we have communion, and what God does for us through this wonderful gift. This course is pastor-led and culminates in the participants receiving their first communion during Holy Week on Maundy Thursday. Invitations to the class are sent to families with 3rd graders. If you have an older child who has not participated in this class or a younger child who you feel is ready to receive communion instruction, please contact Pastor Sandy or the MTO office regarding your family's participation in the session. This course will be offered on **Saturday, March 16th, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.** First communion is on **Maundy Thursday, March 28th.**

Faith Explorers: 4th & 5th Grade Mini-retreat: Students in 4th and 5th grade will have their own mini-retreat at Mount Olive on Saturday, **January 27th, from 3:30-5:30 p.m.** The retreat's main purpose is to help the students understand how important they are in God's family and how they are called at baptism to be a disciple of Christ. The retreat will include a snack, faith exploration and FUN! learning,

Faith Explorers: Sunday School: Sunday School is offered for three-year olds through 5th grade from 9:45-10:45 a.m. In 2023-24, Sunday School registration is available on **Gathering Sunday, Sept. 17th or on any Sunday.** The first full day of Sunday School will be on **September 24th at 9:45 a.m.** as we continue our exploration of God's love for all humanity, as shown through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Each Sunday at 9:45 a.m. from **September 24th through May 19th,** with a few noted exceptions, we meet as Pre-K through 5th grade in the Sanctuary for our opening where we light the altar candles, sing, pray, celebrate birthdays, and hear a short message from Pastor Sandy or Cindy Dobberke about the lesson for the day. Then we head off to learn, share, and grow in faith. Our lesson plan follows the big stories of the Bible, using resources from Spirit and Truth Publishing. All households and guests are invited to participate in the Sunday School Christmas program, held on **Sunday, December 17th, during the 10 a.m. worship service.**

Faith Exploration for adults is discussed in other parts of this brochure.

Unless otherwise noted, there will be no Sunday School on the following dates: Blessing of the Animals worship service, **October 1st**; Christmas break, **December 24th and 31st**; and Easter Sunday, **March 31st.** Registration forms can be found on line at <http://www.mountolive-elca.net/>.

Faith Explorers: AoB: Our Affirmation of Baptism is a three-year opportunity for 6th through 8th grade students, their families, and other interested participants to explore their faith using teaching, discussions, and experiences involving the Bible, Martin Luther's Small Catechism, and faith in daily life. The program typically begins when students are in 6th grade. We typically meet on the first Tuesdays of each month from 6:30-8:00 p.m., September through April. Please contact Cindy Dobberke at cindy.dobberke@mountolive-elca.net for further information.

Our first session is **Tuesday, September 19th, from 6:30-8 p.m.** when all families are invited to join us for dinner.

We also offer cross-generational service and fellowship opportunities for all AoB participants. Watch for further info details on the website, weekly emails, bulletins, and in the newsletter.

Faith Explorers: 9th Grade AoB Sessions: As a continuation of their life-long faith and AoB journey, Mount Olive's students will further explore affirming their baptism during a mini-retreat on **Saturday, September 24th, from 11 a.m. – 12 Noon.** The youth are invited to affirm their baptisms during the 10 a.m. worship service on Reformation **Sunday, October 29th.**

Faith Explorers: Vacation Bible Camp: is held for three-year-olds through 5th grade during one week in the summer. We typically meet from 9 a.m. to 12 noon for songs, skits, crafts, and games, all while exploring faith and learning about God's amazing love as shown through the life of Jesus. Older youth and adults help make this a great time for sharing our discipleship stories and exploring faith together!

Special Opportunities: Special opportunities are offered periodically throughout the year for all generations. Be on the lookout for events which invite all to explore their faith while learning and growing as disciples of Christ.

BIBLE/ADULT STUDIES

Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study: In an informal setting, adults explore various books of the Bible and how they address the religious, moral, ethical, and social issues faced by Lutheran Christians today. Discussion/class topics are publicized in the weekly church bulletins and monthly newsletters. Discussions begin on **Sunday, September 24th, at 9 a.m.** in the Library.

For the 2023-2024 education season, the Adult Education group will continue the study of the book of Genesis started last year with its stories of stories of sin and judgement, stories of the promise of salvation, stories of corruption, lust, and murder. We'll also be having a special Advent study and finish the year with a study of women in the Bible. Join us for the education and fellowship. Join us to just listen or to participate in the discussion. Join us for a few sessions or for many sessions. We're looking forward to welcoming you!

Everyone is welcome! No experience is necessary! These studies are conducted throughout the year on Sunday mornings. **Unless otherwise noted, there will be no Sunday Adult Education on the following dates:** Thanksgiving Break, **November 26th**; Christmas Break, **December 24th & 31st**; Palm Sunday, **March 24th**; Easter Sunday, **March 31st**; and Mother's Day, **May 12th**.

For more information, please contact Laura Conry, Dwight Cruikshank, Glenna & Bruce Gunderson, Betty Hinkelman, or Eva Schindhelm.

Weekly Text Study: On Wednesday mornings from 9-10 a.m., you are invited to join Pr. Sandy and others share in facilitating, learning and discussing the Bible reading for the upcoming Sunday worship. Contact Pr. Sandy for more information.

Gather Faith Exploration Group:

Looking for an opportunity to explore and share your faith with others? Please join us for a low key, no experience needed discussion. This once-a-month study and discussion group meets in the Mount Olive Fellowship Hall at **9:30 a.m.** on the second Tuesday of each month and uses Gather magazine from the Women of the ELCA and their bible study offerings as a resource. In 2023, the first session is **Tuesday, September 12th**. For more information, please contact Glenna Gunderson or Cindy Dobberke at cindy.dobberke@mountolive-elca.net.

This year's monthly topics are as follows:

Fall 2023 "Holy Places" Bible study by the Rev. Dr. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni

Physical places often shape our identities, relationships and faith. "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it," Paul writes. Part of what this means is that faith doesn't just reside in our thoughts or emotions. Faith resides in our whole bodies, and how our bodies "live and move and have our being" in the sacred places where God encounters us. In this Fall 2023 Gather Bible study, written by an ELCA missionary living in Jerusalem, we'll explore what holy places mean, not only for the Holy Land of the Bible, but for each of us, wherever we may be.

- **September 12, 2023** -- Holy places: Home
- **October 10, 2023** -- Holy places: Sanctuary
- **November 14, 2023** -- Holy places: Pilgrimage

December 12, 2023: Advent devotional: “Topsy-turvy” by the Rev. Hannah Hawkinson

In her song, Mary, the mother of Jesus, praises God for turning the world upside down—or perhaps, turning the world right-side-up! Gather’s annual Advent devotional focuses on the Magnificat song of Mary (see Luke 1:46b-55), as well as parallel topsy-turvy stories of Mary’s ancestors, including Shiphrah and Puah (Exodus 1), Hannah (1 Samuel 1-2), the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27), Hagar at the well (Genesis 16 and/or 21) and Ruth and Hagar.

Winter/Spring 2024: “Scripture and nature: Teachers of faith” by the Rev. Sara Olson-Smith

Jesus regularly invokes nature in his teaching, drawing us into deeper relationship with the created world. But it’s not just Jesus inviting us to see creation as teacher and kin. The scriptures themselves help us see the important role of the created world in God’s story and saving work. This four-session Bible study explores how biblical stories of the natural world help us to grow our love for and commitment to God, other people and our beloved earth.

- **January 9, 2024**
Weather: Powerful force for change
- **February 13, 2024**
Creatures: Our siblings in praise and trust
- **March 12, 2024**
Rivers: Springs of life and hope
- **April 9, 2024**
Food: Daily bread for the health of the world