



*Summer Devotions*  
*2018*



*Mount Olive Lutheran Church*

## ***Welcome***

Welcome to the Summer Devotion Book for 2018. The devotions included have been written for weekend worship or devotionals for individuals and families who are camping, on the road, on vacation or away at a cabin. This summer, each devotion is based upon our vision and mission given us by our Savior. Our prayer is that each devotion will awaken your awareness of the presence and call of Christ no matter where you may be. No message is more important than the message that takes people to the cross and empty grave of Jesus Christ where God offers His hope, His joy, His love, His grace that changes everything! It is my prayer that your eyes will be directed outward to see the need for Jesus in others around you in your family, circle of friends, at work or in your neighborhood.

- Pastor Jon

## ***Worship and Word***

Here is a suggested 'order of service' as you set apart time for this devotion:

- Relax:** Before you start, take a minute to pause, relax and quietly ask God to prepare you to meet Him in this time of devotion.
- Read:** Ask someone to read the Scripture reading(s) assigned for that devotion. Then another can read through the devotional thought given.
- Reflect:** Take a few minutes to discuss the devotion. What strikes you? What would you add? What questions do you have? Do you see any applications to your life?
- Request:** Invite someone to read the Closing Prayer. You may want to add personal and family prayer requests at this time. Take time to thank God for who He is and His gifts you are enjoying.
- Respond:** Take a moment to consider the Application Activity. Put it into practice!

## ***Work and Witness***

In John 13:17 Jesus said, "*Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*" In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus also illustrated that the wise person is the one who hears His words and puts them into practice. That person is building His life on the foundation of solid rock. Our prayer is that not only will you read the enclosed devotions, but put what you read into practice, experiencing the blessing that comes from obedience. That is the *work* of faith and your life *witness!*

*June 3, 2018*

***“What It Means to Be a Member of Christ’s Church”***

**Scripture Readings:** Acts 2:42-47; Galatians 5:19-26

When Jesus went back to heaven, a new church was formed on the life and teaching of Jesus as taught by the disciples of Jesus. The members of this new church were excited about this new teaching and they enjoyed getting together for worship, study and fellowship. (Acts 2:42-47) They focused on the disciple’s teaching, communion, prayer and fellowship with one another. The church grew in numbers daily.

Through our Baptism we became members of Christ’s church on earth. We also become a member of a local church like the Christians in the Book of Acts. Like them, we should be excited about getting together at church for worship, teaching, prayer, Holy Communion and the opportunity to serve in Christ’s church.

When we became members of Mount Olive we made a covenant or promise to God. First, we promised to share the responsibility of the congregation by praying for its growth, bringing the unchurched to attend, and by warmly welcoming those who visit. Second, we promised to serve the ministry of the church by discovering our gifts and talents, and by developing a servant’s heart. Finally, we promised to support the message of our church by attending church regularly, by living a godly life, (Gal. 5:19-26) and by giving money regularly to support the church.

Our membership is a gift from God. Our life in the church becomes our response of thanksgiving and praise.

**Application Activity:** Discuss the membership promises above. Why is it important to make those promises? For us individually? For the church?

**Closing Prayer:** Have each person thank God for one thing.

*June 10, 2018*

***“Mission, Vision and Core Values”***

**Mission Statement for Mount Olive**

*What are we doing?*

*“Living to Love People to Christ”*

**Question:** How can we “love people to Christ?” Discuss.

**Vision Statement of Mount Olive**

*Where is God taking us?*

As God’s family at Mount Olive Lutheran Church,  
We are firmly rooted and growing in God’s Word,  
Raising up the next generation to know and follow Jesus Christ,  
Joining Him in His compassion and work of rescuing the lost  
and healing the broken, starting at Mount Olive,  
Reaching out to our community and extending to where God  
leads.

**Discuss:** What parts of our vision do we do well at Mount Olive?  
What areas need improvement as you see it?

**Core Values of Mount Olive**

*Why are we doing it?*

**Grounded in the Bible** (John 1:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:16)

**Bring the Gospel of Jesus to all people** (Matthew 28:18-20)

**Believe in the power of prayer** (Matthew 6:5-14)

**Serve with YOUR spiritual gifts** (1 Cor. 12:4-7; Eph. 4)

**Grow toward a Christ-honoring walk** (Eph. 4:25-26; Col. 3)

**Seek to understand the needs of cultures and generations**  
(1 Corinthians 9:20-22; Colossians 4:5-6)

**Share** which core value each family member will pledge to improve on the rest of this year. Then close with popcorn prayer - everyone shares something for which they’re thankful.

# June 17, 2018

## “Regaining Vision”

**Scriptures:** Luke 15:1-10; Acts 1:4-8

In 2009, Mount Olive adopted a Vision Statement to give a framework for who we are as a congregation, and what we are to be doing. One of the first sermon series I did when I came here was to help us regain some vision on the mission given to us by God. We focused on the four **R’s** contained in our Vision Statement:

- 1) Being firmly **rooted** and growing in God’s Word. (2 Tim. 3:14-17)  
As a tree draws nutrients from the soil, we draw spiritual nourishment from the Father as we learn and grow in His Word.
- 2) We want to **raise** up the next generation (Psalm 78:4-7), as we seek to leave a legacy with our children and their children, to know and follow Jesus Christ.
- 3) We want to join Jesus in **rescuing** the lost (Luke 15:1-10) and healing the broken. We lift our hands in compassion and service to lift and lighten the burdens of others.
- 4) Finally, led by Christ’s Great Commission we want to **reach** the lost in our community for Jesus, and to wherever God leads us (Acts 1:4-8). That should become our “soul purpose,” using God’s love and our commitment to reach beyond the walls of our church to reach the lost.

In 2014, I introduced a more focused look at our vision called MOLC 2024. This is not changing our church’s vision and purpose, but refining our spiritual eyesight as we focus on part of that vision. MOLC 2024 helps us to add a lens to bring focus especially to the last two **R’s** - making **rescuing** and **reaching** a priority.

**Application Activity:** Brainstorm together as a family about what activities at Mount Olive right now are seeking to “rescue the lost and heal the broken?” What activities “reach out to our community, and extends to where God leads?”

**Closing Prayer:** Pray for people in your extended family, or known by your family, that need to hear about Jesus.

*June 24, 2018*

***“Rescuing the Lost and Healing the Broken”***

**Scripture Readings:** Luke 15:11-24; Isaiah 61:1-3

**Application Activity:** Read the parable of the Lost Son in Luke 15:11-24. Why do you think the lost son decided to leave home? (to try to make it on his own; to get away from his father’s values) What was it that caused the lost son to come to his senses? (he hit “bottom,” realized he was wrong, and had guilt over what he had done) Who is the father in the parable? (God, who is merciful and forgiving) Who is the son in the parable? (anyone who runs away from God, and thinks he or she is better off alone)

In Isaiah 61, we hear that God sent the prophet Isaiah to help others. Read verses 1-3 together. But, God also sends us in the same way to help others: preach good news to the poor, bind up (heal) the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom for the captives, and comfort all who mourn.

As a congregation, Mount Olive is called and equipped to do these important tasks. The congregation has called pastors to preach, counsel those in difficult situations, and comfort those who have lost loved ones. But, this helping and healing ministry also is to be done by all of us. What ministries do we have at Mount Olive that helps others in need, and others who are struggling in some way?

(Stephen Ministry, 1-on-1 care; Human Needs Ministry; Midweek Meals; Manna Market - once a month food ministry that provides food to 100+ families; Blessed Boutique; and the Quilters)

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, when you were here you healed the sick, fed the poor, and reached out to the hurting. Help me to have your eyes to see those in need around me. Help me to find ways to help others, and serve them where I can. Amen.

*July 1, 2018*

**“Treating People Like Jesus”**

**Scripture Reading:**

*“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”* Matthew 25:40

Being a pastor for 35 years, I have learned something very important about the work we do together in the church—you don’t have to be clever or profound to make a real difference in people’s lives. Sometimes with focus on gadgets and tricks, when all we need to do is be like Jesus—treat people the way Jesus would. Here are some building block for success:

**Building Block #1**—Be committed to small things. Mother Theresa said she did small things with great love. I’ve come to believe that is the best we can do.

**Building Block #2**—Be real. People who are genuine in their behavior draw others to themselves.

**Building Block #3**—Be willing to take a risk. Sometimes you have to step out and take a chance, even if you might look silly. That’s okay—it’s worth it if we’re doing God’s will.

**Building Block #4**—Be willing to be near the least, the lost and the lonely. When we are around the needy, looking for ways to show them God’s love, His Spirit flows through us.

**Application Activity:** We have to be willing to act in simple ways to change lives—read Matthew 25:31-40 and identify simple acts. What are some simple acts you can do for others at home, at church, at school, at work or in your neighborhood? List them.

**Closing Prayer:** Close with the Lord’s Prayer.

*July 8, 2018*

***“Reaching Out to Our Community...”***

**Scripture Readings:** Matthew 5:13-16; Matthew 28:16-20

Our Vision Statement says that we will join Jesus in His work by “**reaching** out to our community, and extending to where God leads.” Why is this so important, so vital? Did you know that on a given Sunday, there are 18% of Minnesotans in church, which means there are 82% that are not! 1 in 3 Minnesotans are un-churched. On a larger scale, 40 million people die without Christ worldwide EACH year.

Read Matthew 28:16-20 together. This is Christ’s Great Commission. We don’t say Christ’s Great “Suggestion!” A commission is a calling, a command. “Go,” “make disciples,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” are the four verbs used in the Great Commission. Which one is the command? (To make disciples - from the Greek).

Acts 1:8: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* Translated into our context, we are to be witnesses to our Jerusalem - Anoka; in Judea - Minnesota and Samaria - the United States and to the world.

What are some ways Mount Olive reaches out to the community and extends to where God leads? (National Night Out, Trunk or Treat, our Preschool ministry, trips and projects in Idaho, Haiti, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe).

**Application Activity:** Draw a map of your immediate neighborhood at home., putting names of the neighbors you know. Devise a family plan for getting to know your neighbors better, and look for opportunities to invite them to church.

**Closing Prayer:** Pray for your neighbors.



*July 15, 2018*

**“What Is a Missional Church?”**

**Scripture Readings:** Genesis 12:1-5; John 20:19-23

One of the catch phrases in recent years among Christians is the “missional church.” But, what is it? What is being missional? Listen to what I said in the first part of MOLC 2024: Being a missional church means we are trying to make everyone a part of God’s mission, letting the church walls become windows of opportunity into our community. We change our personal and corporate (congregational) focus from inward to outward.

Reggie McNeal in his book *“Missional Renaissance,”* shares the five promises of a missional community (church) member.

- 1) Be authentic.
- 2) Serve a greater cause than yourself.
- 3) Create community.
- 4) Be generous and practice hospitality.
- 5) Sent by God each week as a missionary to the world.

As a congregation we need to find more ways to engage, invite and ignite our community for Jesus! This would include invitation, visitor follow-up and outreach.

**Application Activity:** Discuss how you as individuals and as a family, can fulfill the five promises above at Mount Olive and in your everyday lives.

**Closing Prayer:** Make me a servant, humble and meek. Lord, let me lift up those who are weak. And may the prayer of my heart always be: Make me a servant, make me a servant, make me a servant today. Amen.  
(Kelly Willard, 1982)

*July 22, 2018*

**“Three Types of Churches”**

**Selected Scripture:** Acts 4:32-37

**Three Types of Churches**

- 1) **Maintenance or Status Quo Congregation** - staying the course - “I like things the way they are.” No need for change seen among most members.
- 2) **Attractional Congregation** - “If you build it, they will come” - still the dominant approach of most churches whether traditional, contemporary, seeker or emergent style of worship and approach.
- 3) **Missional Congregation** - Missional is a way of living, not an affiliation or activity - everything is focused on the *missio dei*, the mission of God.

**What is the Mission of the Church?**

*Mission* often refers to what happens *outside* the church for other people or groups. *Church* often refers to what happens inside the church for those inside. One could say that the mission of the church is to attract, worship, equip and then send.

We become *missional* when we realize that God’s mission is our mission. Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.” (John 15:16)

**Application Activity:** Discuss with one another as to which type of church Mount Olive Lutheran Church is. If not missional, what would it take to become a missional church?

**Closing Prayer:** Once again, lift up people you know that need Jesus, and pray for them.

*July 29, 2018*

***“Our Missional Focus at MOLC”***

**Scripture Readings:** 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Colossians 4:2-6

Did you know that we have a “Statement of Missional Focus” here at Mount Olive? Well, we do. It proclaims:

“The members of Mount Olive Lutheran Church think, plan and act in alignment with God’s calling in the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20) The vision, mission, staffing, policies, priorities and budget are intentionally determined in light of our role to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with our community and to the very ends of the earth. This missional focus is as important as serving the needs of our existing members.”

Our Minnesota South District of the LCMS shares these characteristics of a missional church:

- 1) The leaders practice strong spiritual disciplines such as prayer, personal devotions, daily Bible study, and Biblical principles of stewardship.
- 2) The leaders authentically articulate what the Gospel means in their life.
- 3) Members have a clear understanding of the needs of the unchurched in their community.
- 4) Leaders set missional goals and have a method of accountability to them.
- 5) Members do not expect called staff to “do” the ministry but to equip them for the use of their spiritual gifts.

**Application Activity:** Discuss: “Why does Mount Olive exist?”

**Closing Prayer:** Close with the Lord’s Prayer.

*August 5, 2018*

**“Areas of Missional Focus”**

**Scripture Reading:** Galatians 5:13-18

Some may think that a church either focuses on its own members and their needs, or on the needs of others at the expense of our own needs. But, in reality the church needs to be both. Mount Olive needs to nurture, equip, and send its member, and needs to be about the mission of God (seeking the lost for Jesus). This key “missional” aspect is as important as serving the needs of our own members.

**5 Key Areas of Missional Focus**

**Worship**...is vibrant and Christ-centered.

**Discipleship**...is strong, calling members to grow in and through the Word of God.

**Service**...that connects the community to Christ.

**Outreach**...is focused on those who do not yet know Christ as their Savior.

**Leadership**...multiplying servants to multiply ministry.

**Application Activity:** List one way YOU can be missional in...

- ◆ Your home and personal life
- ◆ Our church
- ◆ Our community/your neighborhood

**Closing Prayer:** Close with the Lord’s Prayer.

*August 12, 2018*

**“Redefining Evangelism”**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 14:15-24

*“Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.”* Luke 14:22b

“Jesus, friend of sinners.” That is a line from a Casting Crowns song, and it says it all regarding Christ. He spent His time with prostitutes, tax collectors and lepers; He would spend His time with the rejects of today given the opportunity. Who would He be with in today’s world? Jesus accepted everyone on the spot, although He didn’t necessarily approve of everyone’s behavior. To be a great church we must do no less.

To become a great church, we need to find more and better ways to become more inclusive, a place where **Everyone** is welcome.

Redefine *evangelism* to mean “bringing and including.”

Establish an easy process for bringing newcomers into the life of your church, and diligently follow up on those new people God brings our direction.

Observe the spiritual progress of those God is bringing us.

Talk about inclusion with our staff and leaders again and again and again. The success or failure of what we do rides on our ability to include newcomers in what we are doing.

**Closing Prayer:** Father, thank you for including us in Your family. Thank you for that sense of belonging in Jesus. Help us to welcome everyone in our church. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

# *August 19, 2018*

## **“A Welcoming Atmosphere”**

**Scripture Readings:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-7; John 12:1-3

*“Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived,  
whom Jesus had raised from the dead.*

*Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor.”* John 12:1-2

All churches create an atmosphere. “Atmosphere,” as used here, is what people feel in a church. It’s not the things that are seen, but the unseen. Those unseen intangibles are speaking volumes to our members and are especially noticeable to newcomers.

Whenever Jesus passed through Bethany he stayed with Lazarus, Martha and Mary. He probably liked staying there because he felt welcomed. That family created an atmosphere of hospitality.

Besides truthfully proclaiming and teaching God’s Word and faithfully administering the Sacraments, what are some things we can do to make people feel at home? Coffee shop, goodies, midweek meal, good lighting, cleanliness, colors, flowers, and building temperature are some simple things we can do to make people feel welcome.

A more difficult challenge is to treat everyone in our church family, and those who walk through our doors for the first time, with love and respect no matter what (1 Cor. 13:1-7). “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

**Application Activity:** Make a list of ways we can be more welcoming at Mount Olive on Sundays or at special events. Please share those ideas with Pastor Jon next time at church.

**Closing Prayer:** Ask for prayer requests from family members. Close with the Lord’s Prayer. Amen.

# August 26, 2018

## Outwardly-Focused People

**Scripture Readings:** Acts 1:3-8; Matthew 5:13-16

*“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”* Matt. 5:14-16

Our church, our staff, our leaders, our people are all aimed in some direction. We are either looking mainly inward or mainly toward the outward side of things. The question is, are we preoccupied with who is already here and the never-ending series of problems those folks bring with them or are we aimed at the issues of the not-yet-connected people?

It's a matter of growing or not growing, moving forward or stagnating. It's easy to fixate on the already-gathered and stay busy for the rest of our lives with those already-connected people. But is that what we are really called to do? We are called to move forward always. We are called to intermingle our purpose with all those nearby. Being a disciple is doing what Jesus did, and He was always looking out, focused on those not connected to Him. So should we.

**Application Activity:** Read Matthew 5:13-16 and list ways that you can be salt and light to your family, your friends, your neighbors, your workmates or classmates. Make a plan to reach one person for Jesus when you get home this week.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me. Thank you for saving me. Help me live for you. Join together in the Lord's Prayer.

## *September 2, 2018*

### **“A Focus to Life”**

#### **Scripture Reading:**

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,  
as working for the Lord, not for men,  
since you know that you will receive an inheritance  
from the Lord as a reward.*

*It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”* Colossians 3:22-24

I want to close this devotional booklet with a thought by Max Lucado from his book, *Just Like You*.

“When do we get our first clue that Jesus knows he is the Son of God? In the temple at Jerusalem. He is twelve years old. His parents are three days into the return trip to Nazareth before they notice he is missing. They find him in the temple studying with the leaders.”

“As a young boy, Jesus already senses the call of God. But what does he do next? Recruit disciples and preach sermons and perform miracles? No, he goes home to his folks and learns the family business.”

“That is exactly what you should do. Want to bring focus to your life? Do what Jesus did. Go home, love your family, and take care of business. *But Max, I want to be a missionary.* Your first mission field is under your roof.”

Dear friends in Christ, God’s mission needs to become our mission, whether at home, at school, at work, at play or at our church. God wants all people to be saved. Let’s share Jesus with someone today.

**Prayer:** Popcorn prayer - each says what comes to their heart.