



# Olive Leaves



December 2023 / January 2024

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## From Our Pastor: "What Child Is This"

*Pastor Walt Harper*

*walt.harper@mtolivesc.org*

So, first of all: the music of Christmas is fantastic. It's full of joy, often set to delightful melodies. It's full of hope, and the idea that God always keeps His promises. And of course it's always focused on Christ, the Baby in the manger, the Messiah who has come to take away His people's sins.

Some of my favorites are:

- "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"
- "Silent Night"
- "Angels from the Realms of Glory"
- "Angels We Have Heard on High"
- "O Come, All Ye Faithful"
- "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"
- "Joy to the World"

Above them all, for me, is "What Child Is This," which is #370 in our hymnal.

It's set to the tune of "Greensleeves," which is a charming and sing-able tune. It's three simple stanzas, but it packs in lots of good stuff.

What Child is this? The hymn starts with a question. And it answers the question: "This is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing." Jesus, shepherds, angels. The writer William Dix is putting a lot of the Christmas Narrative into a few words, and he calls to mind familiar and beloved verses from Scripture.

But stanza 2 is a real favorite for me. Christmas is joyful, and celebratory. But why has this Christ come? "Nails, spear will pierce Him through; the cross be borne for me, for you." I've always loved that Dix takes us to the manger, with the shepherds and the angels, and then turns us toward His cross. What does this leave for us? "Hail, the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mary."

Stanza 3 brings in still more of the Birth Narrative, and again applies it to us. "So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh." Now we're at the Wise Men. What does this mean?



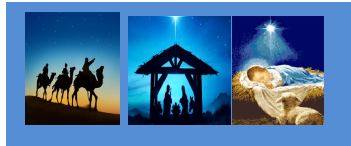
# WHAT CHILD IS THIS?



"Come, peasant, king, to own Him." Christ is born, the Messiah has come! And in Him, all are welcome.

"The King of kings salvation brings; Let loving hearts enthrone Him...Joy, joy, for Christ is born, the Babe, the Son of Mary!"

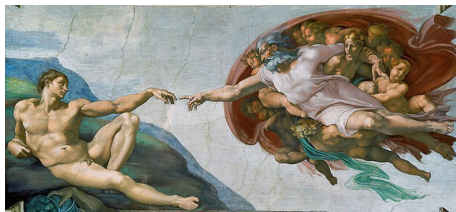
Anyway, that one's my favorite. What's your favorite Christmas hymn?



## **From Our Associate Pastor: Christian Art: Part 1 of an ongoing Series**

*Pastor Colin Ford*  
*colin.ford@mtolivesc.org*

Art, a profound expression that has adorned the annals of history, finds its most sublime manifestation in Christian art. Artists, ranging from sculptors to painters to poets, have captured the essence of Christian spirituality in a myriad of styles, from classical to modern. It is imperative for us to pause and reflect upon the depth and richness of these artworks, each a visual narrative that speaks volumes, encapsulating the profound messages of our faith. If the Bible, with its nearly 800,000 words, speaks to us through its stories, then each picture, as the saying goes, is worth a thousand words. Let us take a moment to appreciate, study, and digest some of the art that has been bestowed upon us.



The Sistine Chapel ceiling, a masterpiece of Renaissance art, hosts the iconic fresco panel, "The creation of Adam," by Michelangelo Buonarroti. This breathtaking painting depicts the biblical narrative from Genesis in which God breathes life into Adam, the first man. God, portrayed as an elderly, white-bearded figure wrapped in a swirling cloak, extends His hand toward Adam, who is positioned on the lower left, entirely nude.

Observe the detail that stands out, like the almost-touching hands of God and Adam, an image now iconic of humanity. The nuance lies in the near proximity—God's intent expression and Adam's seeming unawareness, his hand reaching out almost limply. Yet, if you shift your attention to God's left hand, it touches one of the cherubs whose eyes appear awakened, filled with intellect soon to be bestowed upon Adam.

The billowing red cloak behind God conveys intelligence—a brain. What do you see? Perhaps a depiction of a brain, signifying the creation not just of Adam but the endowment of an intelligent soul, a sense of self that distinguishes humanity from other creatures. In a time where some claim humanity is no different from animals, Michelangelo's masterpiece challenges this notion.

Further, in God's cloak, a woman is discernible, not a cherub, but possibly Eve. Could Michelangelo be alluding to the predestined creation of Eve as a suitable helper for Adam, as mentioned in Genesis 2:28? Even in the depiction of Adam's ribs, Michelangelo meticulously highlights an extra rib, emphasizing attention to detail.

As Christians, we are blessed with an abundance of art from various corners of the world and diverse time periods, much of which stands among the finest ever created. Take the time to appreciate the art that conveys the beauty and depth of scriptures in a single piece. While this series is ongoing, delve into the wealth of Christian art that enriches our tradition and contemplate the profound message it holds.

## From our President

*James Crosland, President*



Happy December! Church council sent the 2024 budget to the voters last month, and it was unanimously approved. The voters also approved the capital expenditure to hire a contractor for a new roof from the Board of Trustees' estimates. A huge thank you to our voters' assembly for offering your wisdom and expertise in the daily operations of Mt. Olive. There are still a few capital items that need to be addressed, including the sewer project and parking lot repairs. We are continuing to work with vendors on these projects.

As most of us know, Lay Minister Bill has officially retired. I am happy for him but sad that he is out of that role. I will still call him when I need his advice and wisdom. Thank You Bill for all of your hard work and dedication to Mt. Olive.

**Safety Tip:** It is the holiday season! Please watch your surroundings and your belongings.



### December 2023 Lectionary

Date	Festival	First Reading	Psalm	Epistle	Gospel
December 3	Advent 1	Isaiah 64:1-9	Psalm 80:1-7	1 Cor. 1:3-9	Mark 11:1-10
December 10	Advent 2	Isaiah 40:1-11	Psalm 85	2 Peter 3:8-14	Mark 1:1-8
December 17	Advent 3	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11	Psalm 126	1 Thess. 5:16- 24	John 1:6-8, 19- 28
December 24	Advent 4	2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16	Psalm 89:1-5	Rom. 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38
December 25	Christmas Day	Isaiah 52:7-10	Psalm 2	Heb.1:1-6 (7-12)	John 1:1-14
December 31	Christmas 1	Isaiah 61:10- 62:3	Psalm 111	Gal. 4:4-7	Luke 2:22-40

### January 2024 Lectionary

Date	Festival	First Reading	Psalm	Epistle	Gospel
January 7	Epiphany	Is. 60:1-6	Psalm 72:1-11	Eph. 3:1-12	Matt. 2:1-12
January 14	Epiphany 2	1 Sam. 3:1-10	Psalm 139:1-10	1 Cor. 6:12-20	John 1:43-51
January 21	Epiphany 3	Jonah 3:1-5, 10	Psalm 62	1 Cor. 7:29-31	Mark 1:14-20
January 28	Epiphany 4	Deut. 18:15-20	Psalm 111	1 Cor. 8:1-13	Mark 1:21-28

### Mid-Week Advent Services and Christmas/Epiphany Services

Date	Service	Service Times
December 13	Mid-Week Advent 2	12 Noon Service/ 7:00 pm Evening Service
December 20	Mid-Week Advent 3	12 Noon Service/ 7:00 pm Evening Service
December 24	Advent 4	Sat. 5:00 pm & Sunday: 8:00 am/10:30 am
<b>December 24</b>	<b>Christmas Eve</b>	<b>4:00 pm &amp; 7:00 pm – Candlelight Services without Holy Communion</b>
<b>December 25</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>	<b>10:30 am Service with Holy Communion</b>
<b>December 30/31</b>	<b>Christmas 1</b>	Sat. 5:00 pm & Sunday: 8:00 am/10:30 am
<b>January 7</b>	<b>Epiphany</b>	Sat. 5:00 pm & Sunday: 8:00 am/10:30 am

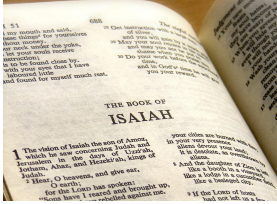
Lunch will be served immediately following the Mid-Week Noon services.

## Board of Stewardship

*Naven Olson, Chairperson*

(All Scripture verses are from NASB)

On December 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> we will gather to remember the birth of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In October and November our congregational Bible-reading plan had us reading Isaiah. So I will briefly discuss how Christ's ministry was prophesied by Isaiah.



Isaiah 9:6 speaks of His deity: *"For a child will be born to us; a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."* Then in Isaiah 53 he speaks of His atoning death and glorious resurrection: *"But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All*

*of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."* Isaiah 53:5-6 states, *"He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand."* Isaiah 53:10b.

Isaiah 9:7 speaks of His eternal reign: *"There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness, From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."*

Let us not look for worldly solutions. Let us remember the words of Hebrews 13:14, *"For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come."*

Let us give generously of our resources, time, talents and efforts so that many more will know of Jesus and what He accomplished. Let us be in church weekly and in Bible study and prayer daily. Let us reach out to unbelieving and unchurched relatives, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. For faith in Jesus or unbelief is a matter of eternal life or eternal death. (Read John 3:16-18.)

## The Board of Fellowship

*Jill Brabham, Chairperson*



The Advent lunches will be held on December 6th, December 13th, and December 20th. The Preschool Staff has graciously offered to provide the meal for December 6th! There will be a poster in the Narthex the week after Thanksgiving if you would like to sign up to provide the food for one of the other two lunches. You can also contact Jill Brabham at 803-587-9116 or [Jillian17L@gmail.com](mailto:Jillian17L@gmail.com) to sign up.

**Beginning now and through Friday, December 15th**, the Fellowship Board is accepting non-perishable individually wrapped food items for our Christmas baskets. Individually wrapped suggestions include: raisins, peanut butter crackers, instant oatmeal packets, hot chocolate packets, Little Debbie cakes, fruit cups, sugar-free and regular candies (no chocolate, please). Please do not send anything that must be refrigerated. All non-perishable donations can be left on the kitchen counter. Thank you for helping to brighten the holidays of those experiencing special circumstances!

The time has come to say thank you for all the MANY things our wonderful Lay Minister, Bill Boykin, has done for Mt. Olive over the years, and to wish him well in his retirement! Be on the lookout in the bulletin and by email regarding a retirement party in January, 2024.

We hope everyone has a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

## The Board of Evangelism

*Aresa Boykin, Board Member*

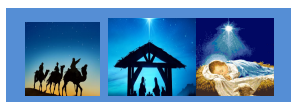
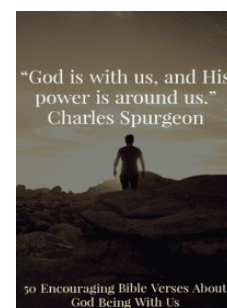
**"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned," Mark 16:15-16.**

You cannot read through the New Testament and discount the reality that the disciples gave themselves entirely, to the point of death, so that the world might come to know Jesus. In the same way, Jesus commands Christians to do the same because evangelism is meant to be a part of every Christian's normal life.

In pondering my own heart, I realize that the way to engage in evangelism is by getting over myself. I have to ask myself, "Is my image or the opinion of others so important that I would withhold from someone eternal life with a God who loves them perfectly?"

In Jesus' conclusion of the Great Commission, He tells his disciples, **"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).**

Our power for evangelism is that God is with us. He doesn't send us out alone. His love, power, and presence are fully available to us when we seek to share the gospel with others. When you tell others about Jesus, don't speak of Him as if He is not with you. Don't pray as if He doesn't move and work miracles. Instead, share the reality of God's nearness with a world that needs to be touched by a revelation of His love. May you be empowered to share the gospel with someone today so that they might come to know the power and presence of God. And may the world change around us as we humbly and courageously proclaim the goodness of our heavenly Father. (Adapted from a devotion at first15.org.)



## The Board of Public Relations: 12 Days of Christmas

*Sue Strouse, Chairperson*

The Twelve Days of Christmas is a festive season that begins on Christmas Day, December 25th, and culminates on Epiphany, January 6th. It's a time for Christians to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ and the events leading up to it. The Twelve Days of Christmas are also a time for celebration, feasting, and family gatherings.

The Twelve Days of Christmas has a focus on liturgical celebrations and spiritual reflection. During this time, churches often hold special services, including daily readings from the Bible and hymns related to the Christmas season. Following is a breakdown of the Twelve Days of Christmas and their significance.

The 1st Day of Christmas (December 25th) is Christmas Day, the central day of the Twelve Days of Christmas, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ. The 2nd Day of Christmas (December 26th) is St. Stephen's Day honoring the first Christian martyr, who was stoned to death for his faith. The 3rd Day of Christmas (December 27th) is St. John the Evangelist's Day celebrating the life of one of Jesus' closest disciples, known for his writings and his role in spreading the Gospel. The 4th Day of Christmas (December 28th) is Holy Innocents' Day commemorating the massacre of infants by King Herod in an attempt to kill Jesus. The 7th Day of Christmas (December 31st): New Year's Eve marks the end of the year and the beginning of a new one. The 8th Day of Christmas (January 1st) is New Year's Day, a time to celebrate new beginnings and fresh starts. And the 13th Day of Christmas (January 6th) is Epiphany that marks the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas and celebrates the visit of the Magi to worship the infant Jesus.



## Mount Olive Preschool

*Anna Brent, Preschool Director*

*803-781-7180 - preschool@mtolivesc.org*

*Web: mtolivesc.org/preschool - Facebook.com/mountolivepreschool*



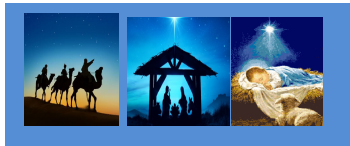
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the preschool! Our halls are busy with Christmas crafts, learning about the reason for the season and practicing for our Christmas program! We are looking forward to sharing the joy of the season with our preschool families in person this year.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! We will have a special performance for church members on Wednesday, December 13 at 11:15 am in the Fellowship Hall. Please plan to join us to watch our short program, "Happy Birthday, Baby Jesus!" before the noon Advent service. We will have another program for preschool families and their guests at a separate time.

We are so thankful for your generous hearts and faithful support and feel privileged to have the opportunity to serve our preschool children and their families and spread the good news of the Gospel. If you did not receive a prayer card in your worship guide on October 19<sup>th</sup>, please look for the extras that are attached to the preschool bulletin (outside the Fellowship Hall).

The hallways will be quiet during the Christmas break from school, but we will return on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, ready to see what the Lord has in store for us in 2024.

As always, if you have any questions, please contact me!

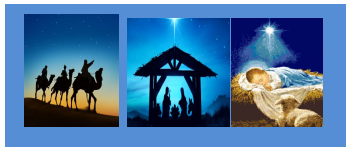
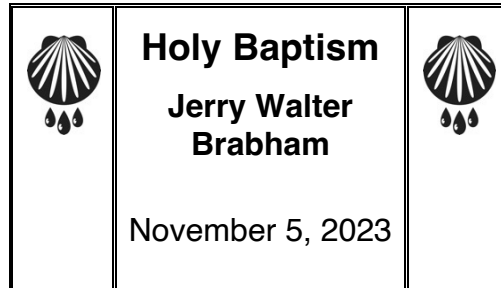


### Join a Bible Class

Winter 2023-2024 Sunday School & Bible Classes – 9:15 AM			
Infants – age 2	Nursery	Parents may stay with their infants & toddlers in the nursery. Please listen to the worship service through the speaker. Please sanitize the toys with which your child has played.	
Circle of Friends	Preschool Area	Faithful Group of Volunteers	Bringing Jesus to Special Needs Children
PK3 – 4th Grade	Upstairs Classroom	Jessica Dennis, Megan Weed, Brandy Maye, & Amanda Dalton	The Birth of Jesus Learning Christmas Carols
Confirmation Class	Preschool Area	Pr. Walt Harper	A two-year study of Luther's Small Catechism and the Bible
Middle School Youth	Wagner House	Rick Baden	Bible Study
High School Youth	Wagner House	Joel & April Fancey	Bible Study
Adults	Fellowship Hall	Pr. Colin Ford	The Books of Proverbs & Ecclesiastes
Downstairs Classrooms are accessible by stairs and elevator.			



## Pastoral Acts



## December 2023 - January 2024 Birthdays

12/1	Connor Weed	1/16	Laura Shealy	1/17	Stephanie Lewis
12/4	Greg Ervin	12/22	Austin Perkins	1/18	Johnna Duncan
12/4	Richard Weed	12/23	Charles Fletcher	1/19	Mitch Greer
12/8	Noelle Nettles	12/23	John Meyerhoff	1/19	Louie Selle
12/8	Jenn Weed	12/23	Shari Selke	1/19	Shirley Vogel
12/10	Laura Laprise	12/26	Natalie Osborne-Smith	1/21	Carol Fong
12/11	Samuel Fancey	12/28	David Fletcher	1/21	Kim Perkins
12/11	Wanda Witt	12/30	Don Angen	1/25	Andrew Rosinski
12/12	Janet Jabs	12/30	Sherry Ervin	1/25	Abigail Setterlund
12/12	Rich Keller	1/3	Page Fletcher	1/25	Richard Shealy
12/12	Christopher Meetze	1/4	Arabella Prag	1/25	Evan Williams
12/15	Blake Cook	1/5	Rebecca Selle	1/26	Kim BouFawaz
12/15	Lu Donlon	1/7	Mary Lou Tedder	1/26	Emma Dennis
12/15	Pastor Walt Harper	1/9	Shanna Stuck	1/28	Neide Nieto
12/16	Liezl Baden	1/9	Peggy Weed	1/28	Sheryl Springer
12/17	Abigail Sharpe	1/10	Dianne BouFawaz	1/30	Geri Harper
12/18	Todd Barrett	1/13	Dimitri Harper	1/30	Rachelle Kapalka
12/22	Lee Meetze, Jr.	1/14	Hal Hoffman	1/31	Cindy Soto

## December 2023 - January 2024 Anniversaries

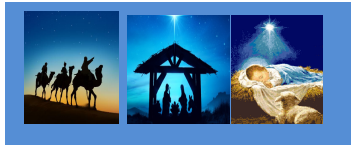
12/2	Charlie & Jaime Stuck	12/28	Lu & Pat Donlon
12/4	Tim & Shanna Stuck	12/28	Harold & Sarah Jones
12/17	Don & Gloria Meetze	12/29	Richard & Barbara Chesley
12/19	Kevin & Mandy Kibler	12/31	Johnny & Joe Ann Barrett
12/22	Natalie & Eric Smith	1/20	Eddie & Dana Magic
12/23	Matthew & Page Fletcher	1/25	David & Sandra Stepanovich



## Read the Bible in Three Years

December 2023							
Dec 1	Hebrews 1	Dec 9	Hebrews 9	Dec 17	Jonah 4	Dec 25	Mark 1
Dec 2	Hebrews 2	Dec 10	Hebrews 10	Dec 18	I John 1	Dec 26	Mark 2
Dec 3	Hebrews 3	Dec 11	Hebrews 11	Dec 19	I John 2	Dec 27	Mark 3
Dec 4	Hebrews 4	Dec 12	Hebrews 12	Dec 20	I John 3	Dec 28	Mark 4
Dec 5	Hebrews 5	Dec 13	Hebrews 13	Dec 21	I John 4	Dec 29	Mark 5
Dec 6	Hebrews 6	Dec 14	Jonah 1	Dec 22	I John 5	Dec 30	Mark 6
Dec 7	Hebrews 7	Dec 15	Jonah 2	Dec 23	II John	Dec 31	Mark 7
Dec 8	Hebrews 8	Dec 16	Jonah 3	Dec 24	III John		

January 2024							
Jan 1	Mark 8	Jan 9	Mark 16	Jan 17	Zechariah 8	Jan 25	Job 2
Jan 2	Mark 9	Jan 10	Zechariah 1	Jan 18	Zechariah 9	Jan 26	Job 3
Jan 3	Mark 10	Jan 11	Zechariah 2	Jan 19	Zechariah 10	Jan 27	Job 4
Jan 4	Mark 11	Jan 12	Zechariah 3	Jan 20	Zechariah 11	Jan 28	Job 5
Jan 5	Mark 12	Jan 13	Zechariah 4	Jan 21	Zechariah 12	Jan 29	Job 6
Jan 6	Mark 13	Jan 14	Zechariah 5	Jan 22	Zechariah 13	Jan 30	Job 7
Jan 7	Mark 14	Jan 15	Zechariah 6	Jan 23	Zechariah 14	Jan 31	Job 8
Jan 8	Mark 15	Jan 16	Zechariah 7	Jan 24	Job 1		



### Thoughts, Prayers, Calls, & Cards

***"And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God." (Romans 8:27).***

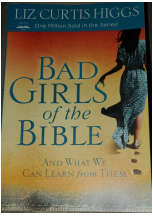
For our homebound friends at Christmas: We know that the holidays may be a little different for you as you are unable to physically join us in church. However, we want you to know that you are not alone and that you are still an important part of our church family. We pray that you feel God's presence working in your life and that you are filled with the wonder and glory of His unfailing love for you. May you and your family have a blessed Christmas!



And to our congregation, please remember our homebound friends with thoughts, prayers, phone calls, and cards. Contact information is in the church directory. Let's make a special effort to connect with one another!

Don Angen	Cleta Dunaway	Anita Meetze	Eva Mae Monts	Mandy Schultz
Nadia R. BouFawaz	Betty Hunter	Laura Meetze	Cyndi Nelson	Linda Schmidt
Phil Carter	Harold/Sarah Jones	Laurie Meetze	Polly Roland	Shirlean Sons
Shirley Curry	Carolyn McCartha	Margaret Meetze	Twila Sandt	Henry/Louise Weed
		Thelma Miller		

## Announcements & Opportunities



### Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club has a new book, *Bad Girls of the Bible* by Liz Curtis Higgs. We will meet on Tuesday, December 5th, 7 PM, at Renee Harper's home for a Christmas celebration, and then on Tuesday, January 2nd and Tuesday, January 16th. ALL women of the congregation are welcome to join in this class taking place in the Fellowship Hall at 7 PM.

### February Newsletter Deadline –January 26, 2024

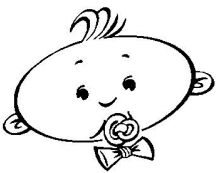
Your next deadline for submitting articles for the February 2024 issue of the Olive Leaves is **January 26, 2024**. Please send your ½ page, nonpolitical articles to Sue Strouse at [slstrouse@gmail.com](mailto:slstrouse@gmail.com).



### Secure E Giving Reminder

E giving contributions are on the rise. Have you thought about giving this a try? The link to set up your account is on the home page of our church website, [mtolivesc.org](http://mtolivesc.org). You may give through your checking account or credit card. Our E giving is powered by VANCO, a secure company that follows strict and safe policies. Even though the E giving page looks like our website, Mt. Olive will have no record of your account, your card number, or your personal information. If you need help setting up your account, contact Aresa Boykin.

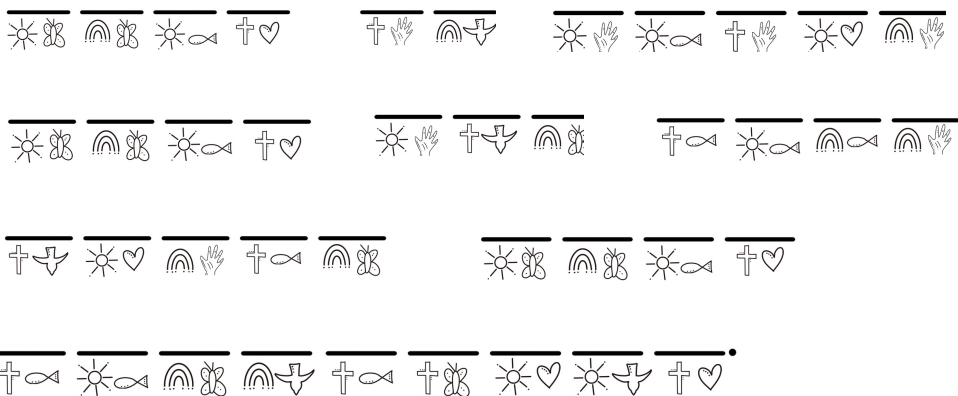
### Nursery "Cry Room" Reminder



Mt. Olive has a newly renovated nursery that is located downstairs, just behind the sanctuary. Parents are welcome to stay with their children during any worship service. There is a speaker so you will be able to hear the worship service. Parents, as you are leaving, please tidy up and sanitize the toys with which your child has played.

## Kids' Korner

P



Use the grid to discover what James 5:13-18 advises when challenges loom.