

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Last week in worship, we met two cousins, Elizabeth and Mary.

Elizabeth had lived much of her life fighting doubts about her worth, shaped by a false narrative that tied a woman's value to her ability to bear children. Something she had been unable to do. And then she conceived, beyond the age of what was reasonable or possible. She carried a child whose purpose was to *prepare the way for the Lord*.

Her much younger, unwed cousin Mary fled her home, escaping whispers, stares, gossip, and harsh judgment. She lived under the very real danger of being condemned for adultery. And yet, she too carried a child—the child through whom the world would be saved.

In their stories, witness, and call, we saw that God brings **unexpected joy** to those the world never expected to belong in God's kingdom.

As followers of Jesus, we too are called to share joy in unexpected ways.

There is joy for the brokenhearted, those who are hungry, those who mourn, and joy for those who may not yet know God's love—but experience it through the hospitality, grace, and love we offer.

This week we will talk about Merciful Love. Give Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26 & Luke 1:57–80 a read and let the Holy Spirit start to stir in your heart and prepare you for what God has to say to us on Sunday.

See you in worship!

Pastor Becky

### **Ways to share LOVE with those experiencing Food Insecurity**

**Donate Items for the Upper Rock Island County Food Pantry located at Messiah Lutheran Church.** Immediate needs: pancake mix, cake mix, children's cereal, corn muffin mix, canned pasta, condiments (ketchup & ranch).. ***Be sure that your donations are within the “best by/best use” expiration date and that the item has not been opened. The food pantry cannot accept items that are expired.*** Thank you for your continuing support of this ministry!

**Support places that support the people with your prayers, presence, or gifts:**

Two Rivers UMC Weekly Meal Sight [Service – Two Rivers Church](#)

Cafe on Vine [Building Community One Meal At A Time | Café On Vine](#)

NEST Cafe [NEST](#)

### **Ways to share LOVE with our neighbors at Whispering Hills**

**Items for Mission Welcome Kits:** The Mission Committee is preparing ongoing Welcome Kits for new residents at Whispering Hills. The following items are needed: shampoo, body soap, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, dish soap, small laundry detergent, cleaning wipes, small all-purpose cleaner, single-roll paper towels, and a 4-pack of toilet paper. Thank you for your donations and support of this local mission!

### **Ways to share LOVE with victims of Hurricane Melissa**

**UMCOR International Disaster Response** (Advance #982450)  
<https://igrc.brtapp.com/page/donate/umcor-international>

**Midwest Mission Hurricane Relief** (Advance #6620)  
<https://give.midwestmission.org/donate/hurricanerelief>

### **Ways to share LOVE with the Leesman Family**

**Prayers: Pray! Pray! Pray!** Please continue to PRAY!

**Meals or monetary donations:** If you would like to donate a meal, please contact Kathy. Monetary donations towards fuel for Erin and/or takeout meals while she and the kids travel to Peoria can also be made. Please let any of us know, and we will make sure she receives it.

**Child care:** If you would enjoy spending some time with Lewis and Wesley, Please let us know if this interests you.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**If you need anything church related, please contact Pastor Becky, Nikki, or Kathy until further notice.**

Pastor Becky: 309-292-2287  
Nikki Stuart: 309-738-8099  
Kathy Mahraun: 646-729-3919

**If you would like to schedule an event at the church,** contact the church office at 309-848-4050 or [portbyronfirstumc@gmail.com](mailto:portbyronfirstumc@gmail.com). Someone will provide you with the building agreement, policies, and forms to book the date on the church calendar.

**Every Wednesday-** GROW: a faith community for youth in grades 6-12. Doors open at 6:30 pm, Dinner is at 7:00 pm, and Discipleship Activities 7:30-8:30 pm.

**Every Sunday-** Discipleship Groups for PreK-12th Grade 9:30 am-10:15 am

We're excited to announce our **2026 Summer Youth Service Trip to Detroit, Michigan**, to partner with **Motown Mission** as we serve and learn more about city and our neighbors who live there. We have 20 youth spots reserved for students in grades 8-12 for the week of July 19-25, 2026. See Pastor Becky for more information! Deposits and paperwork are due by February 1<sup>st</sup>. Incentives for those who register early!

### **Coming Up-**

\*We're looking for volunteers to prepare and serve meals for our GROW community second semester! Sign up as an individual, a family, a friend group, or a service team!

\*If you/your family/your friend would like to be an Advent reader, please let Pastor Becky know!

**Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>**, Choir Practice 9:30am

**Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>**-Kids Korner after the Children's Message

**Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>**, Choir Sings during worship

**Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**-Christmas Eve Celebration Service 7 pm. We will have a time of fellowship following the service.

If the 7 pm time does not work for you, or you prefer a quieter, more reflective Christmas Eve, the Sanctuary will be open and available until 10 pm for anyone to come and sit in the presence of God in that place, surrounded by the lights all aglow.

**Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup>**-Guest Speaker, Mary Land

**Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>-Saturday, January 3, 2026**-Pastor Becky on vacation. Please contact Kathy Mahraun or Nikki Stuart with any emergencies.