



# Mount Calvary Connected December 3, 2020

*Mount Calvary Connected is a weekly newsletter that will be sent out each Wednesday while the church is pressing "pause" on in-person gatherings. Our goal is to keep you connected to your faith and your church with messages from our pastors, health information, and ways to share Christ's love during our current national crisis.*

**Pastor Scott Klimke**

Cell-Phone: 570-367-3421

Email: [sklimke6@gmail.com](mailto:sklimke6@gmail.com)

**Pastor Jonathan Adams**

Cell-Phone: 412-817-6704

Email: [revjonoadams@gmail.com](mailto:revjonoadams@gmail.com)

## A Message from Pastor Jonathan,

And so, we begin the season of Advent, the time of expectant waiting and preparation leading toward the celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas. Already so early in the season, Bekah, Annabelle and I have made trips to Altoona for Lakemont Park's "Lights on the Lake" and into downtown Johnstown to see the Christmas tree in Central Park. We're especially looking forward to a new Christmas light display being put on this year as a fundraiser for Camp Harmony, and we'll probably visit that along with a few others throughout the area.

Visiting light displays and cruising through neighborhoods looking for pretty decorations is an annual tradition for us, but we've begun a bit early this year as we look for "safe" things to do as a family, but also as we crave the joy that the light of Christmas can bring.

It doesn't seem like we're alone in this, either. Our usual travels through Conemaugh Township, Richland Township, and beyond have revealed that lots of people are decorating for Christmas earlier than normal. Whether it's out of a desire to provide some amount of joy for their neighbors, or maybe because it brings them their own joy, people are pulling out all the stops in their decorating.

Which brings us to the inevitable elephant in the room: Christmas will look different this year. Social gatherings and worship will come with many of the same precautions we've known for months, some of these events may even end up cancelled. Some time-honored traditions may need to be set aside in hopes of seeing better days in the future. Worse yet, we know that some of our neighbors will have fallen on hard times due to un- or under-employment.

But even as Christmas *looks* different, we as Christians need to remind ourselves that it will never *be* different. Long, long, ago, "*The Word became flesh and lived among us...*" (John 1:14), "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*" (John 3:16). Nothing can change the truth in those two statements: the Word became flesh and lived among us because God loved the world. And the world was forever changed by that word.

Christ is still with us. Jesus was born into the darkness of a hurting world, in the austere and unimpressive environment of a manger, in order to bring joy and peace to the world. That same joy and peace is still offered to us through faith and the Holy Spirit. Regardless of what happens in the next few weeks, and regardless of what our Christmas celebrations may look like, we must allow our faith to be our guiding light, trusting that we will ultimately be led to the light of Christ even when the world seems darkest.

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Jonathan

## **CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICE**

4:00 pm Children Service/Candlelight  
7:00 pm Candlelight  
10:00 pm Candlelight



Reminder that these services are subject to change due to uncertain health situation.

---

## **CHRISTMAS DECORATING**

Please plan to stay after the service this Sunday, December 6 or come about 10:00 am to help decorate the church for the Christmas Season. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

---

## **WEBSITE**

Our website has been updated and redesigned. Please check it out at <https://www.mt-calvarylutheran.org>. If you have any feed back, please call the church office (814-266-4859) or let the pastors know.

---

## **LIVE STREAMING WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION**

At Mount Calvary Lutheran church, we strive to spread the good news of the gospel by any means available. Today's technology allows us to provide alternatives to in-person worship. This includes social media such as Facebook, internet live streaming, recorded sermons, and through FM radio broadcasts.

Mt. Calvary hosts live broadcasts of the liturgy at 8:45 AM Sunday mornings. The broadcast can be heard by tuning your radio to 88.3 FM if you are near the church. We can also stream the service live over the internet. By clicking the following link, you can gain access to the live stream audio. <https://streams.radiomast.io/96172026-6cba-407b-9090-e150b471ae0e>

We want you to stay connected to Mount Calvary, even if you cannot be here in person. Help us spread the good news of the gospel by inviting friends to tune in, as well. Everyone is welcome to use any of these methods to join us and hear the message and teachings of Jesus Christ. Facebook Live versions of the service will be made available on Wednesdays most weeks, but on other days as well depending upon the schedule of the preaching pastor. Our Facebook page is found at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of Johnstown, PA.

---

## **Salvation Army Bell Ringing**

Mt. Calvary will be volunteering to ring bells for The Salvation Army's Red Kettle Collection. This year we will be doing it on Saturday December 12 from 10-5 at Market Basket. A sign up sheet is on the table in the narthex if you would like to volunteer. If you are unable to attend services, but still would like to sign up for a block of time, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you!

---

## **Luther Home Christmas Gifts**

Lois Gallus will be getting names for Christmas gifts for residents of Lutheran home, if interested please contact her at 241-3470.

---

## **Family Kitchen Volunteers**

Mt. Calvary will be helping serve food at the Family Kitchen on **Sunday December 6 from 11-1**. Due to social distancing, we will be filling containers with food and then will hand them out the door to those in line. If you would like to volunteer, or have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880.

## Harvest Home Food Collection

We will be collecting much needed non-perishable food items now through **December 13** to be distributed to a local Food Pantry. A table will be set up in the narthex for your generous contributions.

---

## Backyard Ministries Socks and Toy Collection

As we enter the holiday season, they are asking that we once again collect a pack of socks and a \$1 toy for the children of Coopersdale. Just like the hats and gloves, labeled bags (size and gender) will be in the narthex. Once you have the items, you can return them in the bag to the blue bin outside the church, or the labeled bin in the narthex. All donations must be in by **Wednesday December 16**. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you for your continued support!

---

## Family Kitchen Christmas Collection

Each year the Family Kitchen has a Christmas dinner where they give the attendees a gift basket. This year Mt. Calvary is responsible for providing boxes of cereal for the baskets. If you would like to donate a box of cereal, you can place it in the blue bin outside the church, or the labeled bin in the narthex. All donations must be in by **Wednesday December 16**. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880.

---

## The Giving Tree

The Giving Tree will be set up in the narthex. On the tree you will find gift tags with "Bag of Candy" written on them. Take a gift tag for candy and place candy under the tree. Also on the tree will be envelopes marked with different denominations. Return your envelope designated "Helping Hand Mission" in the offering plate or drop o at the Church Office. All donations will go to the Helping Hand Mission in Portage, PA. Mt. Calvary has been reaching out to the Helping Hand Mission for many years. Thank you for being a "Helping Hand"!

---

## Christmas Pageant

A slightly different holiday season calls for "A Slightly Different Christmas Pageant!" This year's Christmas program by the youth of the church is entitled "A Slightly Different Christmas Pageant" and will be social-distance friendly with families contributing pre-recorded segments that will be edited into a video to be shown in worship and online. If you have kids, watch for information from Pastor Jonathan about how to participate!

### About Our Members:

Thank you to everyone for the cards, prayers, and concerns for the loss of my wonderful husband, Bill.  
Barb Kane

**Marley Family** is moving to Maryland to be closer to their kids and grandkids. They will miss their friends and church in Johnstown.

**Deb Zilch** is recovering at s nursing facility closer to her home.

Reminder to please pray for our members and their families that are affected by COVID 19.

---

## Kid's Corner with Pastor Jonathan

Each week, Mt. Calvary will be publishing "Kid's Corner" as an offering for our children and families. Kid's Corner is part Sunday school lesson, part children's sermon, and all about sharing God's love. Join us each week for this and other online offerings from Mt. Calvary on our church Facebook page: Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of Johnstown, PA.

## **Birthdays and anniversaries for the Week Dec. 6 - Dec. 12.**

**Dec. 6** - Jan Hunter, James Popovnak, Adam Pozun, Shannon Presser

**Dec. 7** - Rebecca Daly, James Mangus, Carris Wasnick

**Dec. 8** - Jeremy Blough, Jill McEntee, Betty Schofield

**Dec. 9** - Nicholas McNiesh, Lisa Popovnak

**Dec. 10** - Brooke Adamy

**Dec. 11** - Kim Marley

**Dec. 12** - Dalton Blough, Nadine Carr, Marcus McKool, Keegan McQuaide

**Dec. 7** - Tyler & Julieanna Brown (7 years)

## **Remember those that prayer has been requested:**

Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Brooke, Tom, Shiloh, David, Jennifer, Adam, Midge, Joanne, Rick, Bob Jones, Patti Sliko, Joe, John, Scott, Carlye, Mark, Betty, Lucy's Family, Leslie, Mountain Family, Kim, Tim, Linda & Dick, Kim, Brian, and Jamie.

## **Support of Mount Calvary**

Through the end of October, Mount Calvary's monthly expenses have been averaging about \$17,655. This is in the neighborhood of \$4,260 a month less than budgeted. Thanks to your generosity and the faithfulness of your leadership team, Mount Calvary has not yet had to dip into reserves in spite of all the disruption introduced by the pandemic. We're a team and the entire team deserves a thank you!

Thus far this fall monthly giving has dropped a bit from where it was earlier in the year. This is not entirely surprising since September and October have more often than not proved to be lighter giving months. But let's remain vigilant and take nothing for granted. Provided we all do our part, there's no challenge we cannot overcome.

## **CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29<sup>th</sup>.**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**A: Amen.**

### **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 64:1-9**

*This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.*

<sup>1</sup>O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—<sup>2</sup>as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! <sup>3</sup>When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. <sup>4</sup>From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. <sup>5</sup>You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. <sup>6</sup>We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous

deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. <sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. <sup>8</sup>Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. <sup>9</sup>Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

### **PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19**

P: Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.

**A: In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up your strength and come to help us.**

P: Restore us, O God; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

**A: O LORD God of hosts, how long will your anger fume when your people pray?**

P: You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

**A: You have made us the derision of our neighbors, and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

P: Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

**A: Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

P: And so will we never turn away from you; give us life, that we may call upon your name.

**A: Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.**

### **SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9**

*As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.*

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup>for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—<sup>6</sup>just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—<sup>7</sup>so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup>He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **GOSPEL: MARK 13:24-37**

*Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>24</sup>"In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup>and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. <sup>26</sup>Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup>Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

<sup>28</sup>"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup>Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>32</sup>"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup>It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. <sup>35</sup>Therefore, keep

awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn,<sup>36</sup> or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly.<sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

## **SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT**

The words “how long” are quite variable. Sometimes they just mark the passage of ordinary time. How long until my car is done? How long do I have to complete this test? How long until school’s out for summer? But as the words “how long” mark off ordinary time, they can also announce the presence of sacred time. How long until this baby is born? How long until this person is baptized? How long does my loved one have to live? And then there are those instances when the words “how long” serve to express a sense of urgency and unrest.

How long until a vaccine is approved and widely distributed? How long will current strictures on indoor gatherings last? How long will each day find two thousand or more Americans dying thanks to a global pandemic? How long will our nation remain divided and politically hamstrung? How long will political spin and manipulation talk louder than science and common sense? It’s where we are at present. Expressing a sense of urgency and unrest, we’re quite often asking, thinking, and feeling, “How long?”

In this regard, we’re perhaps ready to do Advent more than we usually are. How long, as in the sense we’ve been asking it lately, is one of this season’s defining questions. Far from inquiring after how many days it will be until we hear of Jesus’ birth, Advent inquires about how long it will be until God sets things in order once and for all. Today our two Old Testament readings travel in this direction. In our reading from Isaiah, God is urged to tear open the heavens and set things straight immediately. Being a second-class player in the arena of political affairs, Israel is sick and tired of setbacks in its efforts to become a healthy and viable nation. How long will the shame and disgrace go on Israel wants to know. And then, in our psalm Israel repeatedly cries out to God, “Restore us! Let your light shine upon us! Save us!” This too is the language of how long! How long, O God, will you force us to endure less than what you have promised and less than you evidently desire for us? This is the stuff of Advent. How long will it be before Christ comes again with a new heaven and a new earth in tow? How long will people of faith like you and me have to hunger and thirst after righteousness in a world where it’s often in short supply?

Thankfully, when we ask, feel, and think such questions, we don’t need to do so quietly. In our faith at least, it’s okay to get after God a bit and do our best to kick things into gear. If a life of faith was to be a life of stoic and silent resignation, God’s word wouldn’t include passages like the ones we’ve heard and read today thanks to the prophet Isaiah and the author of Psalm 80. What God desires from us isn’t a robotic relationship devoid of passion and emotion. What God wants is a relationship that includes all of us. To use myself as an example, I’m not just my faith. I’m also my fears. I’m not just my belief. I’m also my doubts. I’m not just my happiness and contentment. I’m also my pain and my restlessness. Like a good spouse or a lifelong friend, God wants all of this from me and God wants all of it from you too.

I mean let’s not forget that Jesus did teach us to pray, “Hallowed by thy name! Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done not just up in heaven, but also down here on earth!” These are the prayers of the restless. These are the prayers of those who still hunger and thirst for more. These are the prayers of those who in their own way say, “God, get after it! Get down to business! Tear open the heavens and come down to set things straight!” And so, when this is where we find ourselves, as we likely do now, let’s not hesitate to ask, feel, and think, “How long?” Both Scripture and the gift of prayer tell us it’s healthy and natural.

But as we heed and honor the encouragement to lay it all out there, holding nothing whatsoever back from God, let’s also recognize that Scripture and prayer are going to tell us something else too. They’re going to say that when it comes to our relationship with God there’s a lot which still remains classified; a lot we’re going to have to wait to learn at another time. To quote our reading from Mark, there are going to be times when only God the Father knows; times when the gap between heaven and earth shall remain intact longer than we would like. It’s part of what we recognize when we pray, “Our Father who art in heaven.” God’s in

charge and we're not. God's up there and we're down here. It's for similar reasons that we also conclude The Lord's Prayer with the words "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever ever." When it comes to many of the things we want when we ask, feel, and think, "How long," God holds all the cards and there shall be no changing this. Until Christ comes again, there shall be much in our relationship with God which remains classified.

But as there's that which remains classified, there's also that which has been declassified or soon will be. Our mission as the Church is one example of this. Here at Mount Calvary, we summarize that mission by saying we're around to invite every generation on a shared journey to Christian growth. This is entirely consistent with Scripture and the hopes and dreams for the future that were prevalent when we began our time together going on five years ago. Whether we or our neighbors are healthy or ill, we're around to invite people of every age and origin into the Good News of Jesus Christ. As political parties and politicians connive and scramble to reserve all the power for themselves, we share the journey and all that it requires. And whether we're new or old to congregation, we keep at it out of the recognition that we're all always in need of Christian growth. No matter whatever else may remain classified, this shall remain declassified. It's always going to be on the table and out in the open for us to pursue. And, and, and, our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians assures us we can get it done; promising us that thanks to God we have every spiritual gift that both today and tomorrow shall require. And this applies not just to the congregation as a whole, but also to every one of us individually.

You see, when St. Paul wrote to those at Corinth long ago, he was addressing people who thought church was about the few rather than the many. At least some of the Corinthians thought that these people were more important than those people; that these spiritual gifts were more to be desired than those spiritual gifts. It's why straight out of the gate, as we've seen and heard today, St. Paul begins his letter to the Corinthians by telling them they're well-stocked and not short on inventory; having everything they need to endure and succeed until the day of Jesus Christ. Until the day of Jesus Christ, this collection of people will do. Until the day of Jesus Christ, the present collection of spiritual gifts will get the job done. To each has been given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Now it's just time to live and function like this were really and truly true; time for each member and participant to stay in their own shoes and skin so that they might be the unique and vital child God has forever adopted through baptism and blessed with the ongoing tutelage of the Holy Spirit. And so, as we ask, think, and feel, "How long," may we also ask, think, and feel, "What now?" On some occasions the answer will be immediate. On other occasions it will take time to develop. But in ways various and consistent, the answer will merge and always involve two things. It will involve us inviting every generation on a shared journey to Christian growth and it will involve each of us contributing to that mission not as somebody else, but as ourselves; the collection of unique and vital children God has forever adopted through baptism and blessed with the ongoing tutelage of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

P: We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for justice, peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: We pray for this planet in need of restoration: for devastated habitats, polluted waters, thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it. Hear us, O God.

**A: Your mercy is great.**

P: We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who suffer. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change: for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity. (Local feeding or housing ministries may be named). Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: We pray for the people in our families and congregation who live with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, addiction, and other invisible illnesses (*especially*). Ease their suffering and support them when they struggle. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: We give thanks for the lives and witness of those who died while waiting for justice, peace, or healing, those whose names we know and those whose names are known only to you. Sustain all who still yearn for the completion of your redeeming work. Hear us, O God. **A: Your mercy is great.**

P: Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **A: Amen.**