



Mount Calvary Connected January 21, 2021

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.

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Annual Reports are ready for pick up in the narthex or you may go to <https://rebrand.ly/MCLCAAnnualReport> to download a copy.

LIVE STREAMING WORSHIP SERVICE INFORMATION

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>

Weekly worship bulletins can be found at: www.rebrand.ly/MtCalvaryWorship

Annual Congregation Meeting

Annual meeting will be held on **Sunday, February 7**, approximately 10:00 AM. If you plan to attend, please be at the church by 9:45 AM.

Backyard Ministries Cookie Collection

Each week, Backyard Ministries usually has a small pack of cookies to give to each family they visit at the Coopersdale Homes. These cookies were made by other churches in the area. However, due to social distancing they have not been gathering to bake. They are asking Mt. Calvary to donate 200 packs of cookies (store bought is ok, if they are not individually wrapped packs, they can be 5 in a zip lock bag) a month for them to deliver. The first pickup being on **February 4** and then continuing on the **first and third Thursday of each month**. Cookies can be placed in the bin outside the church, or the labeled one inside. If you have any questions please contact Mike Kozak at 244-6880. Thank you for your continued support!

Flower Chart

The flower chart is in the narthex. Cost of the flowers have gone up to \$50.00 this year. The price includes the flowers and delivery.

Year-Round Giving Tree

There will be a new Giving Tree in the narthex that will be up for all of 2021. Each month a different group/organization will be selected to receive the donations from the tree. For January, all proceeds will go to Pro Papa Missions to help the country of Honduras which has been hit hard by hurricanes and COVID-19. On the tree you will find an envelope attached to a handmade face mask. The suggested price on the envelope is \$3, however, any amount will be accepted. Envelopes can be returned to the collection plate or dropped off at the church office. Thank you!

About Our Members:

Pat Conklin is known to be in the hospital.

Brent Williams's brother and Mark Williams's uncle, Alan Williams passed away on Jan. 3, 2021

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

Birthdays and Anniversary for the Week Jan. 25 - Jan. 30.

Jan. 25 - Austin Artim, Lauren Rose, Jacob Urban

Jan. 26 - Pamela Grzybicki, Larry Hockensmith, Kadyn Kobal, Hailea Morningstar, Tyler Schellhammer

Jan. 27 - David Carney Jr., Beverly Coughenour, Margaret Diehl, Philip Elliott, Ronald Punako Jr., Audrey Ritko

Jan. 28 - Heather Bivona, Tanya Bivona, Doris Loftis, Paula Popp

Jan. 29 - Miriam Horner

Jan. 30 - Nathan Barkley, Albert Johnson, Jamie Wion

Jan. 28 - Dustin & Melissa Pringle (12 years)

Remember those that prayer has been requested:

Patti Sliko, Bruce and Carol, Julie, Joel, Andy, Adam, Linda & Dick, Jamie, Don, Joanne, Shirley, Chris, Tracy, Flanagan Family, Roy, Joyce, Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, and Rick.

Support of Mount Calvary

Through the end of November, Mount Calvary's monthly expenses have been averaging about \$17,685. This is in the neighborhood of \$4,225 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! Now all that's left to do this year is to top things off with another strong and robust December as we have done for many years running.

CONDENSED WORSHIP FOR THE WEEKEND OF SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 2021.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Thanks to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, praising you day- to-day with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

A: Amen.

FIRST READING: 1 SAMUEL 3:1-20

At a time when visions are rare and unexpected, the LORD comes to Samuel and calls him to speak the divine word. Though just a boy, Samuel responds to God obediently, as Eli the priest has taught him to respond. This marks the beginning of Samuel's prophetic ministry.

¹Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

²At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" ⁵and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down.

⁶The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." [¹¹Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. ¹²On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

¹⁵Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." ¹⁷Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." ¹⁸So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him."

¹⁹As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.]

SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

Paul helps the Corinthians understand that God has claimed the entirety of their lives through the death of Christ. Hence Christian relationships and conduct, including areas of human sexuality, are to reflect the reality that we belong to Christ and that the Holy Spirit lives within us.

¹²"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." ¹⁷But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

GOSPEL: JOHN 1:43-51

In John's gospel, Jesus' ministry begins with the call of disciples, who then bring others to Jesus. Philip's friend Nathanael moves from skepticism to faith when he accepts the invitation to "Come and see."

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

⁵⁰Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT

I’m the son of a dad who taught middle school math for nearly forty years and a mother who taught first grade and special education for a long time herself. Whatever else I am, I am a teacher’s kid. In elementary school, the final bell didn’t send me home to play like the other kids. I had to stay behind and wait for my mother to finish her lesson plans. Unlike my classmates, school also did not take me out from underneath the watchful eye of my parents for a good part of the day. If my parents weren’t correcting me in the halls or out on the playground, then the other teachers, their friends and colleagues, were; making sure my parents were made aware of any newsworthy information. Put plainly and simply, it’s not easy to be a teacher’s kid; particularly when you attend the district where your parents teach, as I did until I was fourteen.

It’s also not easy being a child of God. Start with how one becomes a child of God in the first place. It’s not easy. It requires divine intervention. It takes an act of God. By way of demonstration, in today’s reading from John, Philip gets a little too big for his britches. He boasts to Nathanael, “We, we, we have found Jesus; the very hope of Scripture!” How differently the prior verse tells the same story! There, it’s Jesus, God in the flesh, who finds Philip; not Philip who finds Jesus. And before the dust settles, it shall also be Jesus, God in the flesh, who finds Nathanael and brings him to belief. Nathanael was left skeptical and nonplused by Philip’s initial description of our Lord. But in the end, Jesus, God in the flesh, overcame this less than auspicious start and found Nathanael, just as Jesus had previously found Philip. This is how it always goes in John’s gospel.

As John tells it, no one can see the Kingdom of God without first being born from above, just as no one can enter the Kingdom God without first being born of water and the Holy Spirit. Becoming a member of God’s family, becoming a child of God, becoming a member of the Church through faith, is not a run of the mill transaction which we can transact ourselves. It requires divine intervention. It takes an act of God. And if becoming a child of God in the first place isn’t easy, might this have something to say about how it actually is to be a child of God?

It does. Being a child of God isn’t easy. From the moment we come to faith through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit, we’re set apart for special duty and are never again our own. St. Paul tries to get at this in today’s reading from 1st Corinthians when he points out that our freedom in Christ is not a blank check. To be sure, we are free in Christ. We’re free from sin, death, and the devil. We’re free of whatever previously stood in the way of our inheriting the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. But our real and genuine freedom in Christ has come at a price which we did not pay ourselves. Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose again to set us free. The Holy Spirit dwells in us so we might have the faith which lays claim to the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice. We’re free, but not for anything. We’ve been freed to do it the Lord’s way. We’ve been freed to follow the Spirit’s lead. Like good and obedient children would, we’ve been freed to say to our Father in heaven, “Thy will be done.” And today, whether it’s Eli’s care for Samuel, what is to be the Corinthians’ responsibility for each, or Philip’s care for Nathanael, we’re told the very essence of God’s will for our lives is found in taking care of each other spiritually. What an awesome responsibility and monumental task. What an illustration of how it is not easy to be a child of God.

Just think of how it goes for Eli. As responsible for Samuel as we are for each other and those who aren’t here yet, it takes him three attempts before he’s able to lead his protégé in the right direction. Evidently, there will be a lot of trial and error in our care for one another before we get it right sometimes. Then in our reading from 1st Corinthians St. Paul’s stewardship of the congregation is threatened by one or more bad apples who are running around leading R-rated lives. Evidently, even when we do get our care for one another right, there will those who want to set things back. And let’s not forget that Philip’s initial approach with Nathanael left a lot to be desired. Evidently, encouraging faith, hope, and love on the part of

others isn't like waking up in the morning. It doesn't just happen. It takes effort and forethought. But in spite of the challenges and the missteps involved, Samuel does eventually hear the Lord's voice, Jesus and Nathanael do eventually connect, and Corinth does go on to a future that includes two letters bearing its name becoming holy writ. This suggests that though being a child of God isn't easy, it is an effort supported by the grace of God; with the word of the Lord somehow, somehow not returning empty. In the end, we don't have to do it all, any more than we have to perfect. God's forgiving grace can take the most meagre of efforts farther than we would ever imagine it would travel.

Trusting that the God will take care of what we can't handle and borrowing a line from Philip, we've just got to say to the lapsed and the never before involved, "Come and see. Come and experience Jesus with me and with others. Come and check this church thing out." And by the way, this really and truly works. Here at Mount Calvary, we know that 80% of those who do come and check things out return again. The trick is actually getting people to visit in the first place. And so, trusting that the word of the Lord shall not return empty, let's say, "Come and see" an awful lot. To borrow an analogy born of my youth in America's Dairyland, let's place a premium on leading one another and those we don't know yet out of the pasture and into the barn where God shall draw out the milk of faith, hope, and love. Again, being a child of God isn't easy, but it is an effort supported by the grace of God. Most of the time we just have to get people to church and God will take it from there. But as effective as this generally is, it doesn't always work. Sometimes, as evidenced by our reading from 1st Corinthians, people come to church, get involved, and keep carrying on as they did before. What then?

It's here where being a child of God charged with care for the Church and the world God loves can get really tough. Not often, but still sometimes, our message will have to go beyond the words "come and see" so the words "cut it out" might also be put into circulation. Today, we remember that Samuel once had to deliver an uncomfortable message to Eli; a message precipitated by Eli's failure to say to his sons, "Cut it out!" And in ancient Corinth, we've heard today, St. Paul once had to say, "Cut it out," to those who were encouraging sin through their R-rated lives. To be sure, this shouldn't happen without a clear word of God in support of it. But sometimes it will have to happen. The good news is there's the grace of God here too.

You see, beyond the grace of God which brings to the finish line that which we have left imperfect and incomplete, there's also the grace of God that empowers and enables us to speak the sometimes necessary words, "Cut it out." Samuel once experienced this fortifying grace. So did St. Paul. Along with forgiving grace that carries imperfect beginnings to unexpected ends, may we also experience this fortifying grace of God here at Mount Calvary Lutheran as well. If it happens, and we can trust that it will, our story will become the story of Samuel as told by the final verse of our first reading today. Though the way won't always be easy, with the fortifying and forgiving grace of God involved with our efforts to care for one another and those who aren't here yet, we'll be able to look back on things and say, "The Lord was with us and did not let our words fall to the ground;" in the process proving that Isaiah was spot on when he once was inspired to write that the word of the Lord shall not return empty. Amen!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

P: For the body of Christ gathered throughout the world and for all servants of the gospel, that following Jesus, the church lives out its calling every day, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: For the well-being of creation, for plants and animals, and for all that God has marvelously made, that we serve as wise stewards of Earth, our home, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: For police officers and firefighters, for attorneys and paralegals, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are sick or grieving, and for those who are imprisoned or homebound (especially), that God console all who suffer, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: For our neighborhood, for visitors joining us for the first time or returning, and for those absent from our assembly, that all who seek to know God are nourished by word and sacrament, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us (especially Antony and Pachomius, renewers of the church), that their lives give us a vision of the gospel in action, let us pray. **A: Have mercy, O God.**

P: Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **A: Amen.**