



Mount Calvary Connected February 25, 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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"But Lent" by Diana Carroll

I would love to become
the kind of person
who makes sure the dishes
are done every night
so she can wake up
in the morning
to the peaceful welcome
of a clean kitchen.

I would love to become
the kind of person
who replies to every email
the same day it arrives
and keeps a neat,
nearly empty inbox.

I would love to become
the kind of person
who never picks
at her cuticles
or bites
at her lips
or chews
at the insides
of her cheeks
until the dentist
gives her a lecture about it.

But Lent
is not for trying
to become someone
I am not.
It is for honoring
the person
I already am.
My wholeness.

My integrity.
My belovedness.

And so,
in this holy season,
I will not strive
for self-improvement.
I will not seek
to create new habits
or to break
the old ones.
I will not squeeze myself
into impossible expectations
guaranteed to leave me angry
and disappointed
when I fail.

Instead,
I will do nothing
but breathe,
receiving the quiet gift
of every inhale
and every exhale,
receiving it even
when I am too busy
or distracted
to notice.

Somehow,
God is present
in the breath,
in the breathing.
And from time to time,
if I simply
stop trying, I may be given
the grace of knowing it.

A Message from Pastor Jonathan

Dear Friends in Christ,

In today's newsletter, I'm sharing with you a poem called "But Lent," written by Diana Carroll, an Episcopal rector in Annapolis, Maryland.

When this poem was shared with me, just a few days ago, I couldn't help but find it so incredibly and deeply relatable. All too often, I am led to dwell on my shortcomings, focusing on the type of person I want to become. And when we begin to think about Lenten disciplines, things that we might fast from, or otherwise "give up," oftentimes those very same shortcomings are the first things to come to mind.

I'd love to become the kind of person who doesn't stop at Sheetz for an overpriced cup of coffee or bottle of pop just about every day. I'd love to become the kind of person who is able to keep up with laundry throughout the week rather than waiting for it to pile up to the point that we need clean clothes. I'd love to become the kind of person who focuses more on my health.

I'm sure that each of you have an image of the kind of person that you would like to become. And maybe, like me, you've come into the season of Lent once or twice over the years trying to use it as the motivation to change your habits. Maybe you've even done it and been successful in the past.

But Lent, as the poem indicates, is not a season for changing who we are as much as recognizing who we are, and most importantly, whose we are.

We are each beloved children of God, and as we journey through this somber season of the church year, we are reminded that we are nothing outside of that relationship, that we so desperately need God in our life, and unfortunately, deepening our relationship with God is rarely as easy as forgoing a cup of coffee.

But it can be as easy as remembering how great and glorious a gift it is to breathe and be alive. Every other good and great gift we receive in life stems from that first and foremost. God is present with us in each and every breath.

I think that's where I'll try to re-center myself this Lenten season. Not on trying to change myself, but rather in giving thanks for who I am and what I have already been blessed with.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Jonathan

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

*Feliz Día
del Amor
y la Amistad*



Valentine's Day in Honduras is known as the **Day of Love and Friendship**. It's a time when people remind one another of how much they appreciate their friendship.

The "**Giving Tree**" is dedicating January and February donations to Pro-PAPA Missions for work done in Honduras, mainly in the town of Urraco. In the aftermath of two major hurricanes and in the midst of the Covid pandemic, progress is being

made on getting the roads passable and the waterline rebuilt to get potable water to the community. Since 1997, the mission of Pro-PAPA concentrated on housing, medical and dental, and scholarship. This partnership between Honduras and Johnstown began with Brigades coordinated through Conemaugh Hospital and Habitat for Humanity. The work continues despite many setbacks and loss of some key people. We take the rest of the month to let you know how much we appreciate the people of Mt Calvary for your support and prayers!

The Passion of Christ,

First Four Wednesdays in March at 7 PM

Sequential Viewing and Discussion of the movie "The Passion of the Christ"



Evangelism Committee Meeting

The Evangelism Committee Meeting will be Tuesday, March 2, at 6:30 PM.

Backyard Ministries Cookie Collection

Mt. Calvary has been asked to donate 200 packs of cookies per month (store bought is ok, if they are not individually wrapped packs, they can be 5 in a zip lock bag). They will pick them up 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!

Flea Market

Mt. Calvary will again this Spring have a Flea Market. The Flea Market is scheduled for May 8, 2021 from 8:00 to 12:00. When you are cleaning out closets this Spring, please keep us in mind and donate all those items that you want to part with, so that someone else can enjoy them. If you haven't used an item in the last 12 months or so, and want to donate it to the Flea Market, you can bring it to the church sometime after the end of March and deposit it in the old lounge next to Sander Hall. **PLEASE NO TV'S OR CLOTHES.** If you have any questions, please contact either Janis Daily or Joan Bunnell.

Items marked for sale

The following items are being marked for sale at this year's flea market:

- 1 ornate piano and organ (located in choir room)
- bolt of fabric (found in storage room)
- Magnus toy organ (storage room)
- Sheppard robes and accessories (third floor closet)
- Empty shoe boxes and easter baskets (third floor closet)
- Bible school supplies (third floor room)
- Many boxes of wicker plate holders. (third floor closet)
- Overhead proj. (old lounge closet)
- Quilting frame and accessories
- Old flowers and old xmas decorations (crawl space steps by old lounge)

If these items are still in use at the church or if they belong to you, please let someone from property committee know.

Birthdays for the Week Mar 1- Mar. 7.

Mar. 1 - Remi Reininiger, Brynlee Wormer

Mar. 2 - Alexander Pozun

Mar. 3 - Ashton Spangler, Betty Waters

Mar. 4 - Ranee' Grush, Jennifer Knepper, Melanie Perry

Mar. 5 - Robert Wagner, Jr.

Mar. 6 - Malia Decker

About Our Members:

Upon exiting the congregational meeting on February 7th, it occurred to me that it was a blessing to be gathered in our house of worship again. What a journey it has been since we gathered a year ago for our last meeting. How thankful we are for the light Mount Calvary has been--always there to guide us through a path filled with uncertainty, darkness, and worry. Thank you, Pastor Scott, Pastor Jonathan, council, staff, and Mount Calvary members. Your strength, leadership, and willingness to adapt has kept that light on and moving forward on a path through drive-ins, parking lots, and home worship. No play book was available, but surely one has been written. Thank you again and know how appreciated you ALL are. The Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, (Psalms 119:105). Brian Hiltz

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

Remember those that prayer has been requested:

Dolly & Chis Palm, David, Karen, Lauren, Billy, Rick, Joe, Pat Conklin, Gerald Barrick, Patti Sliko, Brooke, Balogh Family, Grosholz Family, Dean, Paul, Catherine Kinzey, Heidi and Florence George, Linda & Dick, Lauren, Mark and Deb Rychak, and Jim and Dot Karl.

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, FEBRUARY 21, 2021.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, you delivered Noah and his family from the flood and your Son from wilderness temptation. Now deliver us from evil and lead us not into temptation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: GENESIS 9:8-17

Today's reading is the conclusion to the flood story. Because of human sin, God destroys the earth by flood, saving only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment. As in the first creation, God blesses humanity and establishes a covenant with all creatures.

⁸God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

SECOND READING: 1 PETER 3:18-22

As God acted through Christ's suffering and death to bring us to God, so God acts through baptism to save us from a sinful existence. This spiritual cleansing marks our new life in Christ.

¹⁸Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

GOSPEL: MARK 1:9-15

The Spirit that comes upon Jesus at his baptism sustains him when he is tested by Satan so that he might proclaim the good news of God's reign.

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

SERMON BY PASTOR SCOTT

On the first Wednesday in March at 7 PM, and then for the next three Wednesdays at the same time, we'll be gathering in this sanctuary to watch and discuss the movie "The Passion of the Christ." One of the controversies surrounding this film was whether its compression of the four gospels into one, harmonious story was good or bad. This has been a longstanding source of tension in the Church. As of now, the earliest list we have of all the New Testament books in their final order dates to 367 AD. The material which became the New Testament was in circulation well before then, but it took a while for a final library of books to be settled upon. Interestingly, those who established the final canon of the New Testament included four gospels rather than just one account of what transpired between Jesus' birth and his ascension into heaven. It's not that a harmonization of the gospels into one book didn't exist. It did. Thanks to a guy named "Tatian," a consolidation of the gospels into just one book had been around since about 160 or 170 AD. But in the end, Tatian's harmonization of the four gospels didn't make the cut. Our ancestors in the faith thought there was value in having four, somewhat unique portraits of Jesus rather than just one, homogenous account. The basic thought was that Jesus was too big and too multi-faceted to be fit into the cover of just one book. Folks like me have been taught to honor this ancient preference for diversity. Our teachers have said, "When Mark is the appointed gospel, then preach Mark, not Matthew, Luke, or John."

If things turn out as I intend, I'm going to honor this counsel today. But it's going to be tempting to stray from or supplement Mark. When it comes to Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, Mark tells us almost nothing. To be sure, his few details loom large in comparison to John since the fourth evangelist has no account whatsoever of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. But as compared to Matthew and Luke Mark is detail-deprived. Though they order them differently, Matthew and Luke give voice to the precise temptations Jesus endured out in the wilderness. Mark does not. Unlike Mark, Matthew and Luke also highlight the scriptures Jesus trusted and obeyed as he did battle with the devil. As for Luke himself, he adds the notable suggestion that the most significant temptation of Jesus didn't happen out in the wilderness, but when through Judas Iscariot and others Satan arranged for Jesus' torture and eventual crucifixion, death, and burial under Pontius Pilate. It's all good stuff. It's tempting to rely on it today. But this would be to ignore, or at least diminish, Mark's unique, detail-deprived telling of Jesus' temptation out in the wilderness. What's a preacher to do?

The answer: Stick to Mark! Stick to Mark!. Stick to Mark! And so, sticking with Mark, let's start here. With today's reading from Mark only carrying us fifteen verses into his gospel, this is already the second time the evangelist has mentioned the wilderness. First, John the Baptist is described as a voice in the wilderness. Now Jesus is driven out in the wilderness to do battle with the devil. Might this decided and obvious emphasis upon wilderness experiences have something to say about one of Mark's primary objectives and concerns as an author? I think so. Talk of the wilderness conjures up thoughts and feelings of being alone. We get lost in the woods; separated from the comforts and the community of home. A couple of weeks ago we heard that Jesus withdrew to the wilderness to be alone. And at first, Snow White seems to be alone in the wilderness. Early on in his gospel, might Mark keep going back to the wilderness because he intends to teach and preach about loneliness?

The events that follow today's reading from Mark do nothing to detract from this impression. In Mark, Jesus says one thing from the cross. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." In Mark, Mary, the mother of God, isn't at the foot of the cross like she is in John. She can't be because she has previously written off Jesus as some kind of looney-tune. In Mark, Jesus encounters a crowd of hungry humans who have fallen through the cracks who the evangelist describes as sheep without a shepherd. And quite notably, in our earliest and best versions of Mark, Jesus and his disciples never connect after Easter. The tomb is empty, but there's no post-resurrection encounter between Christ and his Church. Are the first disciples alone? Are we alone? Am I or you alone?

Without a doubt, Matthew has an answer on the ready for such questions. The final words of his gospel find Jesus saying, “Lo, I am with you, even unto the end of the age.” But this is Matthew not Mark. In Mark, feelings of loneliness aren’t so quickly and clearly resolved. Quite helpfully this tells us we may very well betray our mission as the Church when we whitewash or gloss over the hurts and misgivings of others. Our job is to enter into those hurts and misgivings; recognizing their reality and consequence before we transition to the Good News at our disposal. Let’s face it. To steamroll over that which challenges our Glad Tidings as the Church is to suggest pretty strongly that we fear those tidings won’t remain good if they have to contend with too many challengers. If I’m to preach the assigned text every week, then we’re all to honor the feelings and the fear of each, unique human being we encounter in our own preaching and teaching. It’s the only way our Good News shall prove to be authentic and credible. For Mark, life comes with bitter pills which can’t be extracted by one run through the Heimlich Maneuver once we’ve swallowed them. The feeling that we’re alone, that we’ve been abandoned by God and the good, is one of these bitter pills. Through his repeated return to the wilderness, Mark seems to suggest it’s what the devil is always tempting us to believe so we might abandon God’s way for the world’s way. And if Mark is to be trusted, we won’t do ourselves any favors as the Church if we minimize, belittle, or discount just how alone we humans can sometimes be made to feel.

Yet even as Mark doesn’t jump from the bad to the good too quickly, he does eventually make this leap. In today’s reading, angels do wait on Jesus. It also seems fair to assume that the Holy Spirit Jesus receives on the day of his baptism, the Holy Spirit who very quickly drives Jesus out into the wilderness, stays with our Lord the whole time he does battle with the devil. What’s more is that in the Church Jesus eventually finds a new family that compensates for the absence of his birth mother. And on Good Friday, when Jesus exclaims, “My God, my God, why you have forsaken me,” the fact is that he’s quoting Scripture; seemingly deriving comfort and hope from how the psalm he quotes begins with a cry of loneliness, but ends with visions and promises of redemption and relief. Though he’s a lot more empathetic and pastoral than Matthew, honoring our oh so human feelings and fears before preaching Good News, Mark, like Matthew, would agree that we’re never alone. There’s the Holy Spirit we receive at baptism. There are the angels which the gospel of Mark says our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ now commands. There’s one another and the Christian community of many times and places. There’s the Bible. There’s the sacrament of holy communion which sustains us out in the wilderness; with communion long being the primary here and now experience of how Jesus has risen from the dead, never to die again.

And so, when the not too soon and the not too late time to prescribe it arrives, what is the balm to be for the feeling that we are alone and therefore have no choice but to give in to the dog eat dog way of the world? Well, today’s final song is going to say we should drive a truck when we get lonely. I think Mark would concur, but with this important corrective. Rather than driving a truck, Mark would have us row a boat, with the boat being an emblem for the Church and all the ways in which it enables unbroken community with the Holy Trinity and a great cloud of Christian witnesses from ages past and present. Amen!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

P: In Jesus your realm has come near to us in every place and time. Give your church throughout the world a spirit of humility and repentance; teach us to trust always in the good news of your salvation. Hear us, O God.

A: Have mercy, O God.

P: You have made a covenant of mercy with every living creature. Protect all the earth’s creatures from destruction (*especially . . . here local environmental concerns may be named*). Empower the work of biologists, conservationists, and science educators. Hear us, O God.

A: Have mercy, O God.

P: All your paths are steadfast love and faithfulness. Direct the words and actions of leaders in our community and throughout the world, that they may maintain justice for the lowly. Hear us, O God.

A: Have mercy, O God.

P: Even in the wilderness you are with us. Walk alongside migrants and refugees crossing dangerous lands. Tend to those whose lives feel desolate. Give healing and strength to all who suffer (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

A: Have mercy, O God.

P: In the covenant of baptism you claim us as beloved children. Nurture us in our baptismal identity and teach us to live within it for the sake of others. Strengthen this congregation's ministries of care and concern (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

A: Have mercy, O God.

P: In baptism you join us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We praise you for all those who have died trusting in your faithfulness. Bring us with them to the fullness of your reign. Hear us, O God.

A: Have mercy, O God.

P: We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A: Amen.